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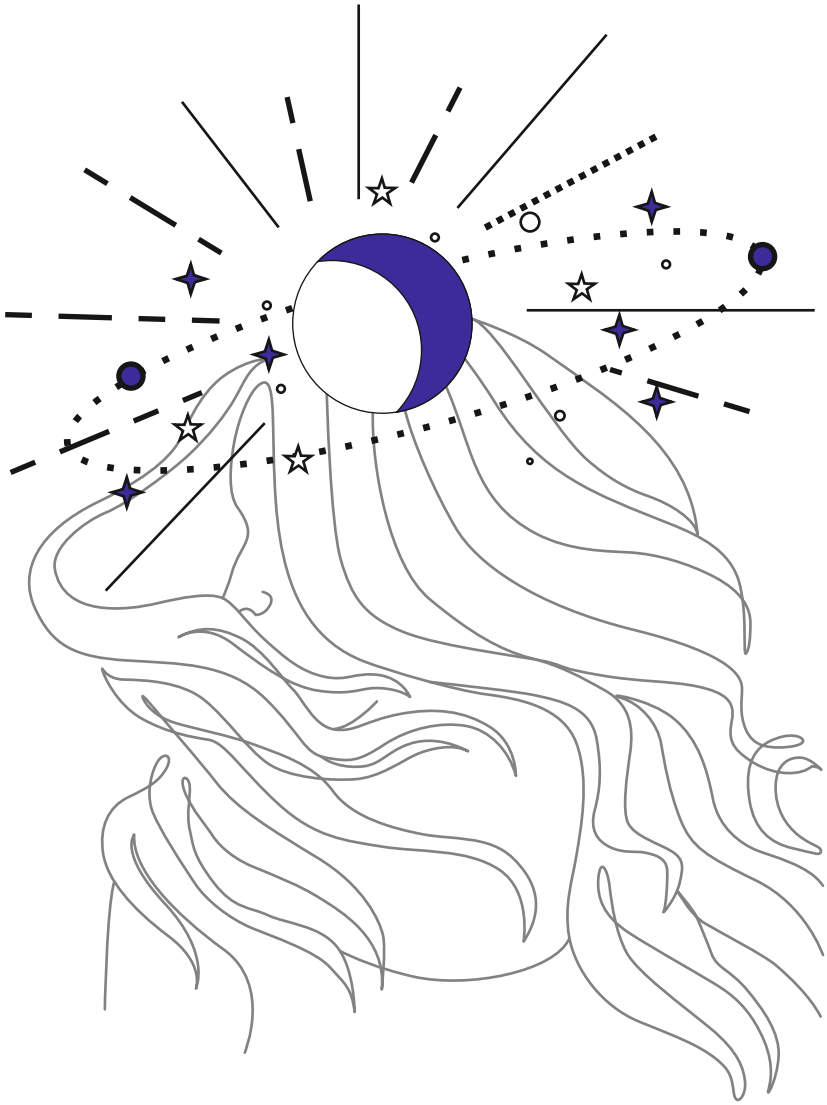

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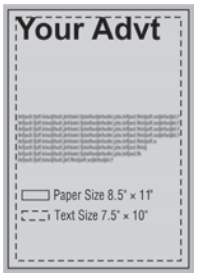

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EDITORIAL

SAR: Where Science Meets Humanity and Faith for a Better World

Miro Jakovljević

Science, Art and Religion (2022): 10.5005/jp-journals-11005-0023

"We must learn how to place morality and responsibility ahead of politics, science and economy"–from Vaclav Havel's speech to the U.S. Congress

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Welcome to the Science, Art, & Religion, the Summer/Autumn 2022; Volume 1, No. 2–3. Our VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) world[1] is now confronted by the devastating consequences of the war in Ukraine, the 3 years of COVID-19 syndemics, the frightening challenge of climate change, and an increasing economic recession and emerging potential global famine. This unprecedented cluster of atrocities shows devastating effects on the total health and well-being of populations across all low-, middle-, and high-income countries. Here I would like to remind us of the words of Viktor E Frankl[2] at the end of his book Man's Search for Meaning: "For the world is in a bad state, but everything will become still worse unless each of us does his best. So, let us be alert—alert in a twofold sense: since Auschwitz, we know what man is capable of. And since Hiroshima we know what is at stake." You have probably had many times opportunities to see and read the table on which was written "Mind the gap." This phrase is aimed to warn us to escape possible dangerous consequences. However, have you ever thought about empathy gaps and intergroup empathy bias and dyspathy and how to overcome divides, conflicts, and possible tragedies rolling on the horizon? Unfortunately, many people feel less empathy for strangers who belong to a different racial, political, social, or religious group in comparison with strangers who belong to the same group.[3] What is more pathological is intergroup dyspathy manifesting in feeling pleasure in response to out-group members' adversity (Schadenfreude) and displeasure in response to their success (Glueckschmertu) and which is commonly associated with discrimination and readiness to harm others.[3]

Empathy is a basic human capacity that manifests itself in different ways in different cultures, contexts, life scripts, and stories.[4] It is a way of creative, sensitive, and meaningful being in the world, a vital quality of civilized life, and a powerful agent of positive transformation when practiced daily, background for brotherhood in humanity. One of the essential SAR journal missions is to promote cooperation between science, art, and religion in Bosnia and Herzegovina and educate for a better world, public and global well-being, compassionate society, and empathic civilization.[5,6] Science, art, and religion as historically autonomous human activities are grounded on different beliefs, principles, methods, interpretations, and conclusions. Inspiration for our "Hero's Journey" involves (1) making synergies between different ways of thinking and bridging methods of research and knowing the world and life; (2) bridging world views, different cultures, frames of reference, and practices; (3) promoting a tradition of good neighborliness, togetherness, and solidarity ("zakon dobrog komšiluka"), a culture of empathy, global humanistic self, public and global mental health and mutually enriching. To paraphrase the love definition of Viktor E Frankl empathy based on love is the only way to understand the innermost core of other human beings, to see which potential is in them, which is not realized but yet ought to be actualized, and to make them come true. We truly believe that the "triad of empathy with reason and cooperation make a great combination" to be a source of energy that motivates, inspires, and mobilizes people to create compassionate societies and empathic civilizations instead of clashes of civilizations.

We are particularly appreciative of stellar articles in this issue relevant to the culture of empathy and brotherhood in humanity. Bosnia and Herzegovina is the right place for applying the strategic harmony model,[7] brotherhood in humanity,[8–11] and promoting principles of empathic civilization. Empathically integrated sciences, arts, and

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religions in creative dialogues as allies can significantly contribute to the healing of the broken spirit of Bosnia and Herzegovina and promote ideas of a compassionate society and empathic civilization. We are also grateful to all other colleagues for their contributions to this issue.

With kind regards and best wishes to all of you to stay well and be safe.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Compassionate Society and Empathic Civilization: Utopia or Transformative Idea for Better Future

Miro Jakovljević

Abstract

Humankind has been divided for thousands of years into diverse civilizations characterized by different, commonly irreconcilable views on the world and confronting ethical values leading to bloody wars from time to time. A global culture of empathy seems to be a key to the very survival of humankind and life on our planet. Good, creative, and empathic communication is a background of individual and collective mental health. To live healthily and enjoyably in multicultural and multinational environments, it is of the essential need to have empathy skills that allow people to better understand each other, their perspectives, opinions, emotions, and behavior, making life environment more harmonious, creative, and secure. Bosnia and Herzegovina, characterized by the deep crisis of identity associated with a severe epistemic, ethical, and dysempathic crisis, is the right place for applying the Strategic Harmony Model and promoting principles of brotherhood in humanity and empathic civilization. Empathically integrated sciences, arts, and religions in creative dialogues as allies can significantly contribute to the healing of the broken Bosnia and Herzegovina and promote ideas of a compassionate society and empathic civilization.

Keywords: Brotherhood in humanity, Compassionate society, Culture of empathy, Dysempathy, Mental health.

Sažetak

Čovječanstvo je tisućama godina podijeljeno na različite civilizacije koje karakteriziraju različiti, često nepomirljivi pogledi na svijet i suprotstavljene etičke vrijednosti koje s vremena na vrijeme dovode do krvavih ratova. Čini se da je globalna kultura empatije ključ samog opstanka čovječanstva i života na našem planetu. Dobra, kreativna i empatična komunikacija temelj je individualnog i kolektivnog mentalnog zdravlja. Za zdrav i ugodan život u multikulturalnim i multinacionalnim sredinama od ključne je potrebe posjedovati vještine empatije koje omogućuju ljudima bolje razumijevanje jedni drugih, njihove perspektive, mišljenja, emocija i ponašanja, čineći životno okruženje skladnijim, kreativnijim i sigurnijim. Bosna i Hercegovina, koju karakterizira duboka kriza identiteta povezana s teškom epistemičkom, etičkom i disempatijskom krizom, pravo je mjesto za primjenu Modela strateške harmonije i promicanje principa bratstva u čovječanstvu i empatične civilizacije. Empatijski integrirane znanosti, umjetnosti i religije u kreativnim dijalozima kao saveznici mogu značajno doprinijeti ozdravljenju slomljene Bosne i Hercegovine i promicanju ideja suosjećajnog društva i empatične civilizacije.

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Introduction

Progressive thoughts rest, first, on the value of empathy—putting oneself in other people's shoes, seeing the world through their eyes, and therefore caring about them. The second principle is acting on that care, taking responsibility both for oneself and others, the social as well as individual responsibility. The third is acting to make oneself, the country, and the world better"–George Lakoff https://cultureofempathy.com

From time to time, there comes a time when we should seriously ask ourselves and ponder what authentic human nature is, what is new normality, whether wars are our fate and whether we must be prisoners of selfishness and hate. Many people believe that man is evolving, that science and technology will bring us to a bright future, and that the majority of humans deep inside tend and wish to do good,

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to experience nice and beautiful things, to think good and positive thoughts, and make decisions with positive aims. With the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemics and misinfodemics and additionally the war in Ukraine, our volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) Anthropocene world has fundamentally shifted into the zone of higher risk and dangers affecting our mental health. The widespread hope and belief that human beings had become increasingly "civilized" was shattered. Volatility means that the world is not steady due to different and multiple crises related to the COVID-19 pandemic, rapid climate change, air pollution, deforestation, political clash and wars, decivilization, and rebarbarism. A recent example of volatility is the war in Ukraine, claimed as a special military operation that has changed world politics dramatically. Wars all over the world are a significant source of mental health problems and disorders, but also consequences of the diverse collective psychopathology.[1–3] Today, it is clear that warfare is associated with collective psychopathology in different ways. Over 200 million people were killed in the 20th century, the century of megadeath, as a result of the sick political mind. Former Secretary-of-State Zbigniew Brzezinski states that the twentieth century was dominated by the "politics of organized insanity."[4] According to Friedrich Nietzsche, in individuals, insanity is rare; but in groups, parties, nations, and epochs, it is the rule (https://www.goodreads.com). " Pathocracy (Greek pathos–evil, pain, suffering; Kratos–rule) or kakistocracy (Greek Kakistos–worst, superlative of Kakos–bad; Kratos–rule) is an illness of some political, social and religious movements followed by entire societies, nations, and empires. Pathocracy, kakistocracy, and kleptocracy feedback on each other. According to Lobaczewski, all pathocracies of the world are and have been so similar in their essence.[5] Ponerogenesis (Greek Poneros–evil), the process of the genesis of evil, is usually associated with dark tetrad personality features, a sense of being better than others, having the historical right to rule over them, and political ideologies that identify and create enemies.[6] People with dark tetrad personalities are characterized by self-aggrandizement (narcissism), manipulative behavior and taking advantage of others (Machiavellianism), impulsivity and lack of empathy (psychopathy) and sadism (cruelty for pleasure). Although these four personality characteristics describe persons who are prone to cruel behavior and abusing others, each one has a distinct profile.[7] Narcissism is characterized by grandiosity, pride, egotism, and a lack of empathy. Machiavellianism is characterized by the manipulation and exploitation of others, and absence of morality, unemotional callousness, and a high level of self-interest. Psychopathy is characterized by impulsivity, selfishness, lack of empathy, callous and unemotional traits, and remorselessness. Spellbinders are powerful speakers, very talented at charming and leading large ponerogenic groups of people and indoctrinating the public.[5] A pathocracy is created when an ever-strengthening network of psychopaths takes over control of a society or state, and during history, pathocracy has affected different social, political, and religious movements with tragic consequences.[5] In order to prevent tragedies during periods of identity and social/political crisis, understanding the ponerogenic factors and ponerization processes is fundamental.

Empathy is a basic human capacity that manifests itself in different ways in different cultures, contexts, life scripts, and stories.[8–10] It is a way of creative, sensitive, and meaningful being in the world, a vital quality of civilized life, and a powerful agent of positive transformation when practiced daily. However, the sad fact is that intergroup empathy bias is still common, and many people feel less empathy for strangers who belong to a different racial, political, social, or religious group in comparison with strangers who belong to the same group.[11] What is more pathological is intergroup dyspathy manifesting in feeling pleasure in response to out-group members' adversity (schadenfreude) and displeasure in response to their success (Glueckschmertu) and which is commonly associated with discrimination and readiness to harm the others.[11] What we need now is VUCA empathy solution: (1) vision of compassionate society and empathic civilization as a transformative idea for the better future, (2) understanding and mutual respect at intercultural, local, and global level, (3) cooperation in creating well-being and health for all, and (4) agile activity in promoting empathy, trust, cooperation, partnership, and friendship. Good, creative, and empathic communication is a background of individual and collective mental health.

The Empathy Triad, Mental Health, and Sane Altruistic Compassionate Society

"There is a nobility in compassion, a beauty in empathy, a grace in forgiveness"–John Connolly. Empathy based on love is the most essential and basic core element in human communications, which leads to healthy, creative, flourishing, and well-functioning families, communities, nations, societies, and civilizations. The human tendency to care about and share other people's mental experiences is very important in dialogue, peacemaking, negotiation, mediation, education, cooperation, and creating social networks, communities, and identities. Through empathy, we discover our joint humanity, and we are aware of who we are; we are aware of other peoples, our and their mental states, inner experience, and identity. Human beings are biologically wired to need connection, attachment, recognition, validation, and belonging. It involves empathy for difference and openness to diversity. Education for love, empathy, and compassion are pillars and foundations of a better future for all. Compassionate society as the final and the noblest result of empathy is an esprit de corps of the empathic civilization of love and peace.[12]

Empathy in human relationships is not something ready-made. We live in a world of ideas, and we are creatures of ideas that provide the impetus for our behavior. A culture

of empathy begins as an idea or principle that human beings must somehow develop and live up to in their life views, behavior, and communication. Establishing a connection between empathy, mirror neurons, and brain neuroplasticity indicates that empathy, mentalization, and emotion-sharing abilities as qualities can be learned. The statements mentioned in the first issue of our journal Science, Art and Religion[13,14] that all that is important come in triads may be applied to empathy. There are three different processes related to empathy: (1) feeling what another person is feeling, (2) knowing what another person is feeling, and (3) having the intention to respond compassionately to another person's distress.[15] Empathy has cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and narrative dimensions, so we can speak about cognitive empathy, emotional empathy, behavioral (compassionate), and narrative empathy.[16] Cognitive empathy is the ability to recognize and understand how and what other people are feeling and the ability to see situations from their perspective. Emotional empathy is the capability to feel what and how other people are feeling. Compassionate empathy is the desire and readiness to help other people deal with their problems and emotions. Empathy drives many behaviors that enable us to gain and endure love, power, trust, and respect to benefit from the wisdom of others.[17] Trust is usually established when people understand, empathize, wish, and try to help each other. There are also three levels of phenomena related to empathy: the individual (experience of emotion), the interpersonal (communication of empathy), and the representational (ideas about empathy). Humans are storytelling beings. Storytelling is an important way for people to communicate, connect and collaborate with each other. Narrative empathy represents one's ability to enter and tune another's frame of reference, mental model, inner/mental world, and life story. Narratives and stories have the power to elicit and foster empathy at the individual and collective levels. The story teaches how to behave and live in general as well as, with the experience of the traumatic events, discovers the true values that should be followed and the meaning of life in adversary and happy times. Finding a new, true individual or collective/national self is associated with a re-authoring life story, personal or collective growth, self-actualization, and reaching one's individual or collective full potential. A culture of empathy is an essential determinant of moral behavior and a fundamental cornerstone in creating moral communities and global ethics. In our world, much more connected and interdependent than ever before, human success relies more and more on large-scale cooperation among a diversity of cultures and political systems.[18] Intercultural empathy or interpathy is a transcendental expansion of empathy that relates to "thinking with," "feeling with" and "cooperating with" those whose cultural context is very different from one's own. When we cross-cultural, national, or political boundaries, we enter into strange territory where new languages are spoken, new epistemic and laws are practiced, and different values are followed, so the possibility of misunderstanding, miscommunication, alienation, and conflicts are high. Interpathic understanding, "thinking and feeling with" another across cultural and political boundaries, requires a willingness to bracket one's own epistemology and life philosophy and enter another.[19] Interpathy as empathy for different cultures, ideologies, and politics, even for enemies, is crucial for humankind's survival and peace in the world.

The Hatred and Fear or the Compassionate Society and Empathic Civilization

"All wars derive from lack of empathy: the incapacity of one to understand and accept the likeness or difference of another"–Marya Mannes

Wars, hate, and mass killings of the Dark Ages appall us but continue to take their toll today.[20] Many peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina are still prisoners of hatred, hostility, and fear. In a short story entitled "A Letter from 1920" (published in 1946), Nobel Prize winner Ivo Andric[21] wrote: "Bosnia is a wonderful country, fascinating, with nothing ordinary in the habitat or people. And there are mineral riches under the earth in Bosnia, so undoubtedly are Bosnians rich in hidden moral values, which are rarely found in their compatriots in other Yugoslav lands. But, you see, there is one thing that the people of Bosnia, at least people of your kind, must realize and never lose sight of—Bosnia is a country of hatred and fear … but it is precisely this that needs to be recognized, confirmed, and analyzed. And the real harm lies in the fact that no one either wants or knows how to do it. The fatal characteristic of this hatred is that the Bosnian man is unaware of the hatred that lives in him, shrinks from analyzing it, and—hates everyone who tries to do so….

The hatred which sets man against man and casts both into misery and misfortune drives both opponents to the grave; hatred is like cancer in an organism, consuming and eating up everything around it, only to die itself at last; because this kind of hatred, like a flame, has neither one constant form nor a life of its own: it is simply the agent of the instinct of destruction or self-destruction…

So your love remains inert, but your hatred is easily spurred into action. And you love your homeland, you passionately love it, but in three or four different ways which are mutually exclusive, often come to blows, and hate each other to death...

Perhaps in Bosnia, men should be warned of hatred—of innate unconscious, endemic hatred. Because this poor, backward country, in which four different faiths live cheek by jowl, needs four times as much love, mutual understanding, and tolerance as other countries.

This uniquely Bosnian hatred should be studied and eradicated like some pernicious, deeply-rooted disease…

And in a country like present-day Bosnia, the man who does not know to hate or, what is still better and harder, consciously does not want to hate, is always a foreigner and freak, often a martyr…

"I wish you and our Bosnia the best of luck in its independent life in the new state."

Our history is filled with periods of war and peace, and both wars and peace begin in the minds of men. Founded on a double bind situation of falsified history, false democracy, illusory humanism, false fraternity, and unity for a long time Yugoslavia by the time became a politically sick society and was destroyed in the bloody wars in the 1990s.[1] Unfortunately, during the former Yugoslavia wars, Bosnia and Herzegovina really became a dark villa-yet, a country of hatred and fear. Now 27 years after the war, it seems that people in Bosnia and Herzegovina live in the parallel worlds of "moral strangers" and "epistemic strangers" who divided themselves into "good people" and "bad people" because they do not believe in the same things and understand them differently, even if the same or very similar words are used. When human beings and people are divided into the "good" and the "bad" both are prone to lose their humanity, and life is treated as a zero-sum game. Cultural and political differences are not seen as an opportunity for growth but rather as a battleground for selfish interests: the gain of the one is the loss of the other, "there is only one truth, namely ours," "guilt is always on the part of others," war criminals have become national heroes … In sick societies, moral monsters and dark empaths characterized by Machiavellianism, psychopathy, narcissism, and sadism often hold important positions and power. The leading political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina, unfortunately, are tempting fate and seem to be, as Thomas Hobbes metaphor describes, in "the state and posture of Gladiators; having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another."[22] In Hegelian style human history can be described as a struggle for recognition, dignity, respect, and identity. Bosnia and Herzegovina has been challenged by a deep crisis of identity. Identity is an important issue from the perspective of the individual, public, and global mental health and human behavior. According to Fukuyama "identity can be used to divide, but it can and has also been used to integrate."[23] What we can do now is to be more aware of the fatal risks and promote a culture of empathy to make Bosnia and Herzegovina more resilient and antifragile, some kind of little Switzerland on the Balkan.

Transformative Power of Empathy: Empathic Civilization as a World Waiting to be Born or a Clash of Civilizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina

"Empathy is the medicine the world needs" —Judith Orloff. "Either man will abolish war, or war will abolish Man" — Bertrand Russell.

Humans are social beings who survive and thrive on empathy. The relevance of empathy shows itself, particularly where there is pain, suffering, and despair. How to increase empathy in a fractured world and unite society in Bosnia and Herzegovina? How to end the culture of wars or culture wars? How to create a win-win story in Bosnia and Herzegovina?

Human beings are creators of ideas and worldviews and storytellers, narrators who live their lives in relationship networks connecting one another and cooperating through the stories they create, tell and live. We give meaning to our lives, our families, our nations, and the world through the stories we tell ourselves and others; hence we define our experiences, history, culture, civilization, and destiny at both material and symbolic levels.[24] The stories people in Bosnia and Herzegovina tell about themselves not only describe themselves, their history and experiences, their life values, mindset, and philosophy but also divide themselves into national, epistemic, empathic, and ethic gaps. Sad to say, many people have still believed war is glorious both in itself and in its aims. An important source of wars is the view that war is either of the need for self-defense or that conflict cannot be peacefully resolved through agreement, compromise or cooperation.[6] Due to our narrative self, enduring collective resilience, coherence, and power come from telling stories that gather and unite. Our personal, national, religious, and civilizational identity and meaning in life are based on the stories we tell over the course of our lives.[17] In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is a choice between a clash of nations belonging to different civilizations on one side and the culture of empathy and a story of an empathic civilization on the other side.[8] From the public mental health perspective, one can say that Bosnia and Herzegovina is suffering from divided self (us versus or against them in many forms) and multiple identity disorders with multiple identifying confrontations at political, religious, economic, and psycho/cultural levels.[25]

Despite the intensive globalization and an attractive idea of a global humanistic mind and empathic civilization, our world is still divided into rival nations, religions, states, and alliances with confronting ethics, empathy deficits, empathic gaps, and dyspathy. In 1993 Samuel P. Huntington identified eight civilizations the "Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and possibly African, and stated that civilization would clash in the future and that dominant conflict would be between 'the West and the rest."[26] According to Zakaria[22] "the West and its values were sweeping the planet, but it turned out that not everyone was happy about this." The wars in former Yugoslavia in the 1900s could be described as a clash of civilizations at the local level as well as the war against Ukraine has some elements of the clash between the Slavic-Orthodox and Western civilizations with some reflections on to present situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina where the Western, Slavic-Orthodox and Islamic culture meet each other.

Transformative empathization offers hope and solution for broken relationships and stuck institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as for its salvation and progress. As Mahatma Gandhi, who was Hindu said, "I am a Muslim and a Hindu and a Christian and a Jew so every empathic man in Bosnia and Herzegovina may say " I am a Serb and a Croat, I am a Bosnjak and a Jew." Homo empathic who lies within each of us may quell the savage beast that dwells within all

of us. Education for love, empathy, and compassion are pillars and foundations of the individual as well as of the collective mental health and an esprit de corps of the empathic civilization of love.[14] Promoting dialogue among nations and religions and creating an empathic humanistic cooperative political psycho-culture may contribute to the development of a global civilization of love and peace.[27,28]

What guidelines can be recommended to address the broader manifestations of the hatred and fear that tear apart Bosnia and Herzegovina today and to escape the new clash of the Western, Ortho-Slavic, and Islamic civilizations? What can the academic community, policymakers, and ordinary people do to establish a little Switzerland on the Balkan evolving to its fullest human potential of "hidden moral values?" Envision a future in which nations and religions are infused with more empathy and compassion, transforming our world into a brotherhood in humanity.[29–32] In search of a compassionate, sane society, intercultural empathy and public mental health in Bosnia and Herzegovina we need a critical mass of harmonious leaders in all segments of our life, such as politics, science, religion, business, culture, education, and sports.[14,33,34] The aim is to break the cycle of hatred and fear. According to Srica[33,34] harmonious leaders see through the eyes of others; they are generous, love consensus, and want everyone to win. Bosnia and Herzegovina is the right place for applying the Strategic Harmony Model and promoting principles of brotherhood in humanity and empathic civilization. Empathically integrated sciences, arts, and religions in creative dialogues as allies can significantly contribute to the healing of the broken Bosnia and Herzegovina and promote ideas of a compassionate society and empathic civilization.

Conclusion

The crucial message of this paper is that we should reexamine and improve our basic understanding of challenges, historical paradigms, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Empathy, as a cognitive, affective, and behavioral response to the situation of others and the source of individual and collective creativity, is an ideal that may transform our personal lives as well as our society and global world.[35] COVID-19 pandemic and misinfodemic and particularly the war in Ukraine, are wake-up calls for greater global empathic solidarity, better international respect, trust, and cooperation, and the promotion of public and global mental health.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Transformative Leadership: In Search of TEST Values

Velimir Srića

Abstract

The article is based on the book "EmpowerUs: From Crisis to Strategic Harmony" [Kaufman I, Srića V. (2020)].[1] It discusses the Strategic Harmony as a new mindset or a mental framework for dealing with the main global problems and issues. In other words, it is a "fix society" model based on transformative leadership. It starts with an attempt to rediscover the core values that should drive leader's behavior and lead to better outcomes. We call them the TEST values (Trust, Empathy, Sustainability and Transparency). They should be combined with Transformative Love as a tool to overcome any discord, organizational conflict or other source of broken institutions, and relationships involving humans. Also, the TEST values should be applied together with Transformative Power, the passion and commitment to one's values that potentiates and increases the potential for transformation that leads to Strategic Harmony. Global transformation starts as self-reflection aimed to find innovative ways to unify around completing goals and achieving Strategic Harmony. A new generation of leaders driven by TEST values and transformative love and power could serve as catalyzers of needed global changes.

Sažetak

Članak se temelji na knjizi "EmpowerUs: From Crisis to Strategic Harmony". U njemu se raspravlja o strateškoj harmoniji kao novom načinu razmišljanja ili mentalnom okviru za suočavanje s glavnim globalnim problemima i pitanjima. Drugim riječima, to je model "popravka društva" koji se temelji na transformativnom vodstvu. Počinje s pokušajem ponovnog otkrivanja temeljnih vrijednosti koje bi trebale potaknuti ponašanje vođe i dovesti do boljih rezultata. Nazivamo ih TEST vrijednostima (povjerenje, empatija, održivost i transparentnost). Treba ih kombinirati s transformativnom ljubavlju kao alatom za prevladavanje bilo kakvog neslaganja, organizacijskog sukoba ili drugog izvora poremećenih institucija i odnosa koji uključuju ljude. Također, TEST vrijednosti treba primijeniti zajedno s transformativnom moći, strašću i predanošću vlastitim vrijednostima što potencira i povećava potencijal za transformaciju koja vodi do Strateške harmonije. Globalna transformacija počinje kao samorefleksija s ciljem pronalaženja inovativnih načina za ujedinjenje oko ispunjavanja ciljeva i postizanja strateškog sklada. Nova generacija lidera vođena TEST vrijednostima i transformativnom ljubavlju i moći mogla bi postati katalizator potrebnih globalnih promjena.

Keywords: Empathy, Strategic Harmony, Sustainability, TEST, Transformational leadership, Transformative love, Transformative power, Transparency, Trust, Value.

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Introduction

The article is based on the book "EmPower Us!: From Crisis to Strategic Harmony" that I published with Ira Kaufman as a coauthor (https://empowerus.world/). In his introduction to our text, Philip Kotler, "the father of modern marketing," wrote: "There are many how to "fix society" books. This is one of the best I have read."

In another "fix society" book,[2] a Lebanese American scholar, Nassim Nicholas Taleb, noted that "humanity has never faced such deep social and economic problems, and at the same time, was equipped with such a low level of understanding of the scope and reach of these problems." It is not even necessary to point out that we are surrounded with striking examples of these interrelated and conflicting realities: shareholder against stakeholder capitalism; liberal democracy versus autocratic societies; coronavirus disease 2019 and depression pandemics; ecological dead-end street.

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Why, despite our access to powerful technological innovations, are we unable to address most of these burning issues? Why are we still pursuing questionable goals, trusting

the same unsustainable pathways, and accepting the old excuses that block purposeful action?

The problem lies in our deteriorating values and unwillingness to empower them. In the meantime, we allow the health and direction of our planet to deteriorate, even though we have the potential to reverse this process.

Strategic Harmony: A New Framework

Today, most executives (businesses, nonprofits, and government) feel uncomfortable and struggle with the exponentially changing and uncertain environment. Some researchers used to call it VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) because it is nicely described through VUCA. In our book on Strategic Harmony, Kaufman and I suggest addressing the VUCA reality with an appropriate PACE (purpose, agility, collaboration, and elasticity). It means that each problem faced by the decision-makers can be resolved with appropriate practical steps. More specifically, volatility should be balanced by purpose, uncertainty calls for agility, complexity can be overcome by collaboration, and ambiguity should be addressed with elasticity, as presented in the following Table 1.

Let us take a closer look at the transition from the VUCA realities to a PACE reset. We already mentioned that there is an opportunity in every crisis. In this case, it means that we should see the realities as assets. Here is a short description of the four steps of the PACE reset.

- Purpose: Because constant change fuels volatility, it is imperative that leaders focus their team on the purpose of a clear vision of the future. The purpose (reflected in the values and mission of an organization) gains power as it is adopted and integrated across all organizational units. Purpose rebalances volatility.
- Agility: Today's leaders facing uncertainty and volatility must be agile to deal with changes rapidly, flexibly, and ethically. Even though strategic plans and forecasts can be useful, they should be abandoned when they impede innovation. All organizations must maneuver and act quickly to leverage opportunities or to respond to threats without rigid adherence to bureaucratic procedures. Agility integrates uncertainty.
- Collaboration: In the face of complexity, the organization must refine and expand on "collaborative teams" who are able to address the new forces and challenges. Collaboration within an organization (between its departments and functions) and externally between the organization and its partners (clients, customers, suppliers, academic institutions, and even competitors) is the key driver of innovation. Using the vast opportunities for connectivity, organizations that are open to collaboration will be able to leverage innovation to drive exponential growth. Collaboration diffuses complexity.
- Elasticity: Organizations and businesses facing ambiguity must expand beyond their reactions to the new realities. The leaders must be resilient to develop a better understanding of the needs and expectations of all stakeholders. This includes clients, customers, employees, partners, and community, to ensure that the four Ps of sustainability (people, planet, profit, and prosperity) are met. Elasticity allows for ambiguity without reactivity.

Table 1: Transition from the VUCA realities to a PACE reset

VUCA realities	*PACE reset*
Volatility	Purpose
Uncertainty	Agility
Complexity	Collaboration
Ambiguity	Elasticity

In our opinion, the journey must begin inside by rediscovering the core values that should drive our behavior and lead to better outcomes. If afraid or unsure whether we were hit by the virus, we had to be tested. This book proposes a value TEST for the whole of humanity. It means building trust, propelling empathy, igniting sustainability, and living transparency. Also, this book advocates two basic forces that define what we are, why, and how we act, and they are power and love. By TESTing power and love, we can get closer to our final goal, Strategic Harmony.

Successful transformation requires a realignment of values, purpose, and mindset. It is a spiritual commitment to change the way we think and manage, and it takes courage. It is a high-risk operation because traditional executives do not have experience in changing values or letting go of control. The needed spiritual change is threatening to the soul, ego, and relationships; equality reigns, and myths are broken that support their past actions.

Let us examine how strategic interfaces with harmony and why we use that expression.[3] We call it "strategic" because it is driven by a specific intention to create a values-driven plan that is inclusive, trusting, empathetic, sustainable, and transparent. We call it "harmony" because it is a congruent combination of diverse elements and mindsets, resulting in unified and collaborative outcomes, shattering our status quo (Srića, 2014).

The Solution: Address the Gaps with Strategic Harmony

What is Strategic Harmony? Poetically speaking, it's a balance between the five Hs. We need to reestablish full harmony among what we think with our heads, what we do with our hands, what we feel with our hearts, and what we hope for (our purpose). Pragmatically speaking, it is a mindset helping us to realign our ethical compass and redesign the broken world by bridging the gap between cultures, nations, companies, generations, leaders, and the people they represent. Basically, we need a better set of values, models, and practices to build a more sustainable and harmonious future.

Strategic Harmony looks through new lenses at the challenging conditions and mobilizes radical yet collaborative solutions to assess and evaluate our impact on the future.

We must self-reflect on how we live our core values and how our leaders direct our institutions. Change begins with

transforming the mindset and continues through good leadership practices.

As far as the core values are concerned, we are and do what we believe. Our core values-driven mindset leads to action and creates outcomes. If we reject the outcomes, we must question the values, beliefs, and mindset. As Albert Einstein[4] noted, "we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them." It is obvious that the values we preach are not the values we live by. John Steinbeck[5] clearly defined the gap, "…the things we admire in men, kindness and generosity, openness, honesty, understanding, and feeling, are the concomitants of failure in our system. And those traits we detest, sharpness, greed, acquisitiveness, meanness, egotism, and self-interest, are the traits of success. And while men admire the quality of the first, they love the produce of the second."

As far as leadership practices are concerned, most executives, politicians, businesspeople, administrators, and managers don't interact with or listen to the stories of their constituencies. They do not have the courage and flexibility to act upon what they see, hear, and feel. This one-way and top-down communication is creating a gap in trust between elected leaders, citizens, executives, and their stakeholders. The Edelman Trust Barometer 2018,[6] supports these conclusions, as it reveals reduced trust across the institutions of government, business, media, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The credibility of leaders dropped to an all-time low of 37%, plummeting in every country studied. Trust in media is at an all-time low in 17 countries, while the government is the least trusted institution in half of the 28 countries surveyed. There is a steep decline in the United States, with a 37-point aggregate drop in trust across all institutions. At the opposite end of the spectrum, China experienced a 27-point gain. The gap is the discrepancy between public trust and trust in Chinese brands abroad. These statistics reveal a growing polarization between citizens and the market economy.

We are surrounded by conflicting realities and linked dualisms, for example, polarized citizens protecting their turf versus electors striving for harmonious/sustainable solutions, egotistical leaders versus empathic "servant leaders," concentrated wealth versus efforts to reduce poverty, escalating unemployment versus expanding high-tech jobs, radicalized youth versus inspired millennials, and exploding technologies healing the planet versus destroying the world order. By connecting and linking these opposite forces, we accept their divisive nature as the norm that continues to influence our thoughts and our actions. These less-than-value-neutral dualities and polarities accentuate the gap in our minds, hearts, actions, and intents, widening the gap in our society between leaders' promises and people's actions.

In each case, the different situations are outcomes of conflicting values and mindsets that drive behavior.

- If we want new outcomes, we need to transform our mindset.
- If we want organizational transformation, we must acknowledge and challenge the gaps between our words and actions.
- If we want to build systemic change, we need to challenge the linked polarities in society that have become the norm and the myths they have created that underpin our thinking.

We believe that the journey toward transformation must begin internally with rediscovering power and love as drivers of transformation and the TEST values—trust, empathy, sustainability, and transparency. Also, we strongly believe that the basic forces that define relationships are to be power and love. These forces, combined with our values, are drivers of action and change, serving as the foundations for Strategic Harmony.

As for power, we live in the age of global shifts that are dramatic, with the old being challenged by the new. According to Heimans and Timms, the old power works like a currency. It is held by few, and when gained, it is jealously guarded. The powerful have a lot to store and spend. So, they keep it closed, inaccessible, and leader-driven. It enslaves and captures and makes the powerless majority feel miserable and unhappy. On the contrary, new power operates like a current. It is available to many; it's open, participatory, and peer-driven. It empowers and connects. It is not supposed to be kept and abused but channeled and distributed.

Heimans and Timms[7] focus on how to make power work for building movements and spreading ideas. The old power favors exclusivity, competition, and authority, while the new power rests on open-source collaboration, sharing, and crowd wisdom. The old power is protected by discretion and confidentiality, while the new power requires radical transparency. The values associated with the old power are managerialism, institutionalism, loyalty, and long-term affiliation, while the new power relies on self-organization, networked governance, conditional affiliation, and participation.

Power affects each stage of the strategic transformation process. We build on their work, as we see transformative power as a tool based on self-reflection, values, and ethical compass used to transform culture, mindset, and decision-making. This integration is essential in shifting from old power to transformative power.

Old power is derived or gained from resources, status, and position in the organization. One strives to gain "capital" of money and rank. It generates a competitive social order and a win-lose work environment. Transformative power is based on values of trust, empathy, respect, and openness to change, and it is earned from relationships with all stakeholders through a loving, open, and two-way channel. Capital is earned in facilitating understanding, creativity, and solutions among coworkers instead of power over somebody. According to Abraham Maslow,[8] "the more influence and

power you give to someone else in their team situation, the more you have for yourself." Transformative power is based on "equal" sharing of power and being responsive to other stakeholders' needs. This model challenges the competitive "win-lose model" in favor of a collaborative approach—if one partner wins and the other loses, both lose—because the loser always makes the winner pay.

Old power is based on scarcity, derived from closed relationships, resources, status, rank, and position in an organization. It is cold and calculating, forcing a position and point of view. It is negotiated, promoted, defended, anchored, and tied to its scarce source and self-interest. It reflects strength, influence, money, and might. Like capital, it is owned, coveted, and protected. Old power is control over someone or something.

The world is mostly broken because of such use of power. To fix it, traditional leaders must be willing to give up that exclusive control to encourage inclusive participation and nurture transformative power. In contrast with the old model, the new one is driven by abundance, earned from open relationships, accomplishments, and ethical actions; it's based on respecting people, networks, and entrepreneurship; and it is driven by the consistency of one's values.

Why are we still enslaved by the forces of old power? In a Zen story,[9] a horse suddenly came galloping down the road. It appears that the rider had somewhere important to go. The crowd standing alongside shouted, "Where are you going?" The rider replied, "I don't know! Ask the horse!"

Of course, the horse symbolizes the power of habits. We live at the mercy of our old habit energies, which are based on prevailing values and culture. Like the horse, an old power is pulling us along, making us run and hurry on our road to a local disaster or a global catastrophe. Our book aims at teaching us how to take back the reigns and use transformative power to fix the shattered institutions and the broken world.

But it's not just habits; maybe it's also human nature. According to Maslow,[8] the person who seeks power is the one who is just exactly likely to be the one who shouldn't have it because he neurotically and compulsively needs power. Such people are apt to use power very badly.

What is transformative power? If you "Google it," there are many descriptors of the venue that has it (e.g., storytelling, declaration of independence, education, and environment), but no explanation of what it is, how to access it, how to accelerate, or increase the power. We define it as the passion and commitment to one's values that potentiates, and increases the power of the transformation that leads to Strategic Harmony. As an example, look at the former United States prosecutor and Central Intelligence Agency agent,[10] who won a recent Democratic primary in Florida, United States, with 65% of votes over opponents. He based his success on values, explaining that voters are ready for honest leadership and a renewal of an American service ethic that really has the power to be transformative. He also added that transformative power is something that can get us through a very difficult time. It has a power that has the potential to be unifying.

Transformative power comes from within because of self-reflection. The only problem is that most people are slow learners. Namely, at some point in time, we want to change the broken world but sooner or later give up. Our book points out that we can do it by changing ourselves. It's never too late to start, especially if we are driven by transformative love.

Transformative Love

The word "love" has many different meanings depending on the culture, language, and context. Love has been limited to focusing on personal relationships, but its roots found in the texts of world religions convey a more expansive vision. For example, the Bible says, "We wish for others that we wish for ourselves," and, "Do unto others as you do unto yourself." Quran says, "Love for your brother what you love for yourself."

In his already-quoted book on Management,[11] published back in 1965, Abraham Maslow defines love as the happiness of the other that makes you happy. The happiness of the other, including the broken world and its institutions, is the clearest reflection of transformative love.

Love is based on uniting with those that we respect, trust, are attracted to, and are committed to. We love whatever we are dedicated to, a mate, our creator, leader, friend, country, religion, favorite brand, sports team, film, book, idea, etc.

Love is based upon empathy, the ability to look at the world from other people's shoes. It means caring and thinking of the other person as a priority. It's about removing obstacles in front of another person. It's about achieving trust, equity, justice, and equal opportunity in a healthy, secure, and sustainable environment.

Love can easily be abused as we rush into relationships for sex, sell unhealthy goods to make a profit, or make false promises to constituents to get their votes. These contradictions are the stuff of today's market-driven economy and digital relationships throughout societies. We must not forget the power of feelings because people may support the best charity and the worse terrorist organizations out of love, passion, and commitment.

Like power, there are also the old and the transformative love. The old is selfish and controlling; the transformative is supportive and enriching. The old is like a chain; the transformative gives you wings. According to Nicholas Sparks, the best love is the kind that awakens the soul that makes us reach for more, plants fire in our hearts, and brings peace to our minds.

Transformative love is realized through values of compassion, empathy, and understanding—with clients, employees, and other leaders. Even the human body is designed to thrive on love.[12] It's a feeling that makes people more positive, resilient, optimistic, persistent, healthier, and happier. Conversely, the body's biochemistry is negatively affected when it's not received.

Transformative love is a solution and salvation to any discord, organizational conflict, or other sources of broken institutions and relationships involving humans. It starts as self-reflection, aimed to find innovative ways to unify around, complete goals, and achieve Strategic Harmony. As such, it is a vehicle for achieving better collaboration. Transformative love is placing others above us, putting our purpose above proving to be right, or above our desire to achieve something.

Transformative love has many faces and can be seen as the love of purpose and values, love of the mirror or feedback, love of the challenge, love of our constituency and other people's needs, love of right action, and love for change. Transformative love is based on passion, commitment, heartfelt energy, and openness. As a creative expression of harmony, it provides a model in emotional and romantic relationships to use that force for tolerance, compassion, and understanding in driving transformation. It is based on the inner trust and confidence of just being you with no masks. This translates to your message being genuine, authentic, and deserving of trust.

Transformative love is based on abundance. It is realized from mutual interests and shared purpose with consumers, citizens, clients, employees, and team members. It creates a collaborative environment, stimulates innovation, and generates outcomes beneficial not only for an organization but for all its stakeholders. Transformative love opens transformative solutions and drives advocacy.

A critical key to Strategic Harmony is the transformative power of love. We need to create a mindset of love for all stakeholders. Customers must love our products and services, employees must love the culture and work environment, suppliers/wholesalers/partners must love and feel engaged with the distribution of the product, the community must love and support the business's local impact, and investors must love and thrive on the sustainable outcomes of the business.

Transformative love can change the global culture through a passionate commitment to one's values and purpose. It means to love the opportunities generated by high-velocity exponential change. It means to love the equality of opportunity for all people. It means loving honest, open, and accountable communication as the basis for trust in relationships. In the end, it means to love, and tolerance for all people experienced through compassion and relationships.

Transformation starts when an organization manages to pass the TEST. These values must be aligned with an ethical standard, a compass that goes beyond local and cultural morals. The TEST integrates values and ethics to benchmark the strength and potential of an organization to bring forth change in the marketplace or society. The values of each team member should be congruent and harmonized to build and sustain the organization's culture.

The first value that seems to be disappearing is trust. At the last World Economic Forum, 86% of global executives suggested the world is facing a major leadership crisis—with executives having <50% confidence and trust in the leadership of the business, media, government, education, and religious institutions.

As far as the average trust in national governments of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development countries is concerned, it has declined every year between 2009 and 2014, from 44 to 38%. The 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer finds that two-thirds of the countries under the survey are "distrusters." It means that under 50% of their population trusts the mainstream institutions of business, government, media, and NGOs to do what is right.

In order to achieve that consistency, the leadership team should regularly TEST seven areas for values consistency.

- TEST your mindset.
- TEST your culture.
- TEST your innovation process.
- TEST your business model.
- TEST your execution strategy.
- TEST your day-to-day operations.
- TEST your sustainable impact.

Trust

Imagine a world in which two people decide to work together and they know they can completely trust each other. It means that they openly discuss everything and exchange all information. They deliver what was promised and always tell the truth. The outcome is that they need no contracts, lawyers, or courts to settle disputes. They are quick, efficient, and transparent, not to mention the low costs of "unnecessary legal infrastructure."

According to recent studies, trust is quickly becoming the global—and most valued—currency of modern times. Trust generates the power to transform stakeholders and institutions. If we are not working to build and demonstrate it, then the future might be about to leave us behind.

Trust is a form of energy that changes over time. It is something committed to one's care for use or safekeeping as a responsibility. Trust is both an emotional and logical act.

We feel trust. Emotionally, it is where we expose our vulnerabilities to people, believing they will not take advantage of our openness. Emotions associated with trust include confidence, companionship, friendship, love, agreement, relaxation, and comfort.

We sustain trust. It is the ultimate human currency. It impacts our environment at every level, from values to community sustainability. It transcends relationships, institutions, and markets.

We build trust. Trust is built on intent or motives, actions, capabilities, and results. In a business model, we access forms of energy that are exchanged, aggregated, augmented, and leveraged. Energy can come in the forms of money, trust, resources, and harmony (people). When energy is harmonized and aligned, its direction is focused and provides more power. In the case of a trust, the individual's and organization's objective is built upon to develop value.

Reputation is built on trust. Leaders require trust to lead and govern. A start-up must generate trust in the company, the team, and the business model to attract investors.

Trust builds harmony. Trust is the basis for movements, religions, and political parties. Trust in one's mission and business model is the force behind all institutions, organizations, and businesses. Trust in mindset facilitates change. Trust in products and services generates value. Trust in people builds relationships. Trust in customers, employees, and managers builds powerful business systems. Trust in technology builds networks and online communities. Trust in customer experience drives advocacy and champions. Trust in organizational culture builds employee loyalty and productivity. Trust between departments generates collaboration and innovation. Trust within a supply chain develops efficiency and generates performance. Trust between stakeholders generates results and sustainable outcomes. Trust in economic relationships drives the sharing economy.

Trust is mutual and binary in nature. It's like virginity or pregnancy. One cannot be a little pregnant or a little virgin. Look at the following story. There was a farmer who sold a pound of butter to a baker. One day the baker decided to weigh the butter to see if he was getting the right amount, only to find out that he wasn't. Angry, he took the farmer to court.

The judge asked the farmer if he was using any measure to weigh the butter. The farmer replied that he had a scale. He explained that every day when the baker brings him a pound of bread, he puts it on the scale, and gives in return the same weight in butter. If anyone is to be blamed for the wrong weight, it is the baker.

Typically, business organizations are built on such "mistrust." They require an extensive net to control every facet of economic, public, and private life. Due to its complexity, the net lacks logic; it becomes inconsistent and hard to implement. In principle, it stems from the idea that everything is banned if not specifically permitted. Defiant employees are not trusted. They must be controlled.

Empathy is defined as the ability to get in tune with another person and learn to be in their shoes. It is the capability to feel and comprehend others' emotions while imagining what someone else is feeling. Empathic people listen attentively to others and can facilitate communication. They tend to be more generous and concerned with others' welfare.

Empathy

In our broken world, "radical empathy" is gaining traction as a deep commitment to changing the world, one person at a time. It is getting to the root of relating to and caring for each other through shared experiences. It generates a more compassionate and connected world.

Empathy is the core ingredient in designing and sustaining a purposeful brand. Companies must be obsessively focused on user experience to build successful and responsible brands in our transparent world. Also, empathy is trending as "essential learning" at major business schools (e.g., Harvard) and has become critical in developing a purposeful business. Companies focused on actively listening to employee and customer feedback and developing sustainable relationships based on employee loyalty and customer experience. Empathetic boards incorporate company values in expanding return on investment to include both profit and social impact.

Here is a Zen story on empathy. Dissatisfied with his progress, a student decided to leave the temple, situated at the top of Ping mountain. One evening, he knocked on his teacher's door to say goodbye. Leave if you want to, but let me accompany you tomorrow on your way down the mountain, responded the teacher.

When they set out in the morning, the teacher asked the student to look around and tell him what he saw. I saw the valley, encircled by mountains, in the center, there is a lake and an old city said the student. When they were halfway down, the teacher repeated the question. I see the walls of the city, the brown rooftops, the port, and many boats sailing on the lake answered the student. When they arrived at the city walls, the teacher repeated the question. I see dogs and children playing, a group of traders taking livestock to the market, a few sailors loading wooden boxes onto boats, and a bunch of noisy children throwing rocks into the lake answered the student.

The path to knowledge is like a journey down the mountain, said the teacher. Wisdom can be attained by understanding that what we see from the top is not identical to what we see from the midpoint or from the bottom. Knowing this helps us reject prejudices, opens our minds to learning, feel compassion for others, and teaches us to respect what we don't see from where we stand.

Empathy is essential as the ability to look at the world through the eyes of others, as well as to reconsider and change one's point of view. It is rooted in humility.

Sustainability

Once the organization is functioning in harmony with its values and its stakeholders, it is on the journey to sustainability. This involves a commitment to sustainable principles across all the business interfaces with the external environment, including purposeful design, community, and impact.

What does sustainability really mean? The Great Law of the Iroquois (American Indians) states that the decisions we make today must benefit our children seven generations into the future. Few people on the planet will disagree with the requirement to meet today's needs without compromising our common future. However, there are many different facets of sustainability, how it is interpreted and critically how it is applied.

Sustainability is living within the resources of the planet without damaging the environment now or in the future. Sustainability is creating an economic system that provides for quality of life while renewing the environment and

its resources. In a sustainable world, everyone can have fulfilling lives and enjoy a rich level of well-being within the limits of what nature can provide. Sustainability means taking a long-term view of how our actions affect future generations. Therefore, it means living a life of dignity in harmony with nature. Still, another definition of sustainability focuses on using resources efficiently, working to preserve cultures, protecting natural ecosystems, raising aspirations, and extending opportunities for all. Finally, "sustainable relationships" are the foundation of brand and employee loyalty, as well as sales and financial interactions.

Sustainability is both a value and a behavior. It interconnects all ecosystems and how they affect each other. It is based on a spiritual view of the circular use of all resources, mental, physical, environmental, financial, and social. Initially, we temporarily borrow resources from nature and use them as goods and services, and then return them to the natural environment through a continuous circular process. Basically, sustainability creates a positive future for the climate, our planet, our organization, and our life.

Transparency

For many years, transparency was a term used in science to denote a material that one could totally see through. As the financial crisis hit the global markets, major financial institutions were confronted with their breach of ethics, hidden data, information, and the illegal actions of some executives. Transparent financial transactions and governance were demanded. During the same period, social media began to thrive based on open, candid exchanges and content sharing. Every connected individual could publish content and influence the connections in the network. Thus, by design, social media requires transparency.

Every person's honesty and credibility are transparent when it is established in the eyes of others. The prospect of being open and vulnerable is expected and a necessity for survival in the digital age. For some organizations, the transition to digitalization and transparency is a major benefit, but to others, it threatens their culture and business model, generating a threat and greater risk.

Transparency invites trust by revealing there is nothing hidden or altered. It allows objects, data, information, and people to be seen clearly through the medium of integration. It reveals all facts and actions taken, even when some of them are uncomfortable. It enables open dialogue in areas of disagreement to facilitate mutual understanding. Transparency calls for the "democratization of data," expanding access to business information from traditionally coveted sources, and providing the tools to analyze it for a broader audience.

A culture of transparency requires a purposeful and methodical system-wide process with real-time monitoring and open dialogue. As such, transparency is the cornerstone of trust. It ensures accountability, as it makes people and their skills, knowledge, and ideas visible and accessible to all their colleagues. It helps to build interpersonal trust, which is vital for people to share and collaborate with each other.

In today's ever-changing environment, it is essential that organizations make full use of their assets—information/data and people—to improve their responsiveness, productivity, and ability to innovate constantly. It is easy to use social software to increase "technical transparency" across an organization. But to create a culture of transparency requires changes in mindset and the related behaviors and practices.

The global environment of social connectivity and real-time news updates increases external and internal pressure on organizations to become more transparent. This pressure is not only coming from customers and employees but also from stakeholders (investors, media, community, and government). In such a setting, the culture of transparency is the only sustainable strategy.

It is obvious that the four TEST factors are not independent, as the values interface and augments each other. The result is synergistic (e.g., two or more agents work together to achieve something either one couldn't have achieved on its own). Synergy, of all the four TEST values, is a powerful benchmark for individuals, organizations, and even governments engaged in transformation. It's the concept of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts.

If you want TEST, live it on every occasion.

Concluding Notes

We believe that the broken world requires these four values to achieve sustainable transformation. If they are lived consistently in our organizations and personal lives, we should experience major transformation and realigning of our institutions.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Through Interreligious Dialog to Human Brotherhood

Aziz Hasanović

Abstract

Talking about brotherhood/sisterhood implies the human race in general. We will try to shed light on the compatibility of all heavenly religions regarding this topic from an Islamic perspective. In the following sentences, we present Islamic theological frameworks as well as examples of good practices that help us develop our own views and clear attitudes about human brotherhood.

Keywords: Brotherhood, Dialog, Human brotherhood, Interfaith dialog, Islam, Qur'an, Sunnah.

Sažetak

Govoriti o bratstvu, svekolikom bratstvu, ljudskom bratstvu, u konkretnom slučaju podrazumijeva i sestrinstvo ili općenito ljudski rod. Islamskim pogledom u ovu tematiku pokušat ćemo osvijetliti kompatibilnost svih nebeskih religija glede ove teme. Narednim rečenicama donosimo islamske teološke okvire kao i primjere dobre prakse koji nam pomažu u razvijanju vlastitih pogleda i jasnih stavova o ljudskom bratstvu.

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Introduction

Based on the Charter of Human Fraternity signed by Pope Francis and Sheikh Al-Azhar Dr Ahmed At-Tayeb on 4th February 2019 in Abu Dhabi in the presence of over 500 delegates from all over the world, representatives of all religious denominations, and organizational forms, we can say that the notion of human brotherhood takes a whole new dimension. Openness, wisdom, courage, and faithful sincerity, which come from the greatest religious and moral authorities of today, made the greatest civilizational leap in the 21st century. For those of us who participated in the creation of this Charter and witnessed this historic act, it is a great pleasure but also an additional obligation to ensure that the Charter does not remain "one more letter written on paper." This act enabled all of us to witness the creation and signing of the Charter, as well as its promotion and implementation, and to be a part of this great, universal, religiously acceptable, and theologically based idea. All the people of goodwill in the world have warmly welcomed this great step forward. The fact that the international community declared 4th February (the day of the signing of the Charter) as the International Day of Human Fraternity is pleasing. Thus, the annual calendar got the new term—human brotherhood, which will serve as a reminder that this topic is regularly raised among people. At the same time, it is a great recognition of the signatories of the Charter itself and a confirmation of the need for quality ideas and breakthroughs that deserve the attention of the whole world. All this supports the need to avoid and prevent all forms of behavior that lead to different forms of conflicts, which we, unfortunately, witness everyday. We, who follow different paths to the one God, must take this as part of our own mission and transmit it into daily programs. As stated in the title of this work, we will deal with the Islamic vision of human brotherhood through the prism of the sources of Islam and good practice encouraged by Muslims.

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Theological Frameworks of the Human Brotherhood

Sometimes there is certain skepticism toward conducting interreligious dialog. Some tend to go so far as to call the dialog between Christians and Muslims a mutual attempt to conduct evangelization/Islamization, respectively. Such fear has no ground in the facts because the Qur'an encourages us to open toward others, strengthen our relations, and persist in the dialog.

"O people, We create you from one man and one woman and divide you into nations and tribes so that you may know each other. The most honorable with God is the one who fears him the most. God truly knows everything and nothing is hidden from him."

If we look at the mentioned Qur'anic line/verse, we notice that the almighty God is referring to all mankind, emphasizing the universal principle of brotherhood among people. So, the invitation is not addressed only to Muslims but to all people. All people make one family, and it is clearly emphasized that the division into nations and tribes does not aim to alienate each other but rather requires better mutual acquaintance/lite'arefuu/, respect, appreciation, understanding, trust, and brotherly cooperation. It is also clear that this large family is not individually and collectively valued or viewed through belonging to a tribe, people, nation, position, or any other determinant but, as the only parameter of evaluation, is viewed from God's side through the prism of piety, serving only him /taqwa/, which serves moral greatness and spiritual development.

Famous interpreters of the Qur'an/mufessirs/ Zamakhshari, Razi, and Baydawi interpreting the following line/verse/—"O people, We made you from one man and one woman we create..." indicate that this equality of biological origin is reflected in the equality of human dignity that is shared by all.

Al-Zamakhshari, in his interpretation of part of the mentioned line/verse/—"We divide you into nations and tribes so that you may know each other...," says—"Have in mind that all people belong to one human family without any innate superiority of one over the other. In other words, the evolution of people into "nations and tribes" is intended to enhance rather than diminish their mutual desire to understand and appreciate the essential human unity that underlies their external distinctions. Accordingly, all racial, national, and tribal prejudices/asabiyya/ are condemned in the Qur'an as well as in the hadith."

The famous commentator of the Qur'an, Sayyid Qutb, in his commentary "In the shade of the Qur'an," commenting on this line/verse/ says—"O people! The one who calls you with this invitation is the one who created you from one man and one woman." He will explain to you the purpose of your division into nations and tribes. The goal of this division is not mutual killing and conflict. The division's goal is familiarity and harmony. Differences in languages and colors, differences in habits and morals, differences in giftedness, and readiness to help are differences that do not require conflict and discord but cooperation to assume all obligations and fulfill all needs. Color, nation, language, homeland, and more have no importance in God's standards. There is only one standard according to which values are determined and with which one knows the advantage of one person in relation to another. "The most honorable by God is the one who fears him the most."

The view and interpretation that we saw through the prism of four famous interpreters of the Qur'an from different times are almost identical. All of them point to the same origin of humanity, which eliminates any reason for conflict on Earth and decreases all possibilities for starting enmity. The pride through taqwa (awareness of God's presence and existence) is the true quality that is before any other that might be considered. In support of this claim is the hadith of God's prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him—"You are all descendants of Adam, and Adam was created from the Earth. It is forbidden to brag about your ancestors or you will be lesser than a scarab before God."

We find similar Qur'anic content in other chapters where the almighty addresses all people, points to the same source, and encourages unity, respect, and cooperation—"O people, fear your Lord, who created you from one man, and from him is also he created his second, and from the two of them he scattered many men and women. And fear God with the name by which you pray to one another and do not break the ties of kinship, because God is truly watching over you."

Calling people to commit to God for the sake of the common root, "who created you from one man," and pointing to a common family, "and from him he also created another," ending the line/verse/ with a warning to a man that God watches and follows him, "because God, verily, He watches over you constantly," begins the chapter /sura/ An-Nisa.

These facts show that humanity has sprung from one will, unites in one family, meets in one thread, stems from one basis, and belongs to one origin. If people understood these facts, every spark of difference would disappear in their feelings. True knowledge of these facts would be the greatest guarantee for the elimination of racial, class, religious, tribal, national, gender, or any other determinants. Putting any determinant in front of this knowledge means moving away from true God's intention and misunderstanding God's plan for creating man on Earth.

The second fact, there is no difference either fundamentally or in nature between man and woman. The difference is only in readiness to fulfill their role. In the mentioned Qur'anic verse/line/, the family and its role in society are defined. The Qur'anic texts give great attention to the family, where all the details are described and all the rights and obligations are specified. A true understanding of this God's message expressed in the first verse/line/chapter of En-Nisa/women/ is the best prevention of all conflicts and bigotry in the world and a direct reference to the brotherly dimension of humanity.

The Common Platform of the Heavenly Religions

The concept of brotherhood in revealed religions is universal, and through the messages of all God's messengers, he promoted the idea of monotheism, submission to God alone, and respect for moral standards. The Qur'an emphasizes this dimension in several places—"Say: "O followers of the Book, come and let us gather around one word that we and you have in common." That we do not worship anyone but God, that we do not consider anyone equal to him, and that we do not regard each other as gods, besides God!" So if they don't agree, you say: "Be witnesses that we are obedient and loyal to God!"

The word "kelima" primarily means "word" or "expression" and is often used in a philosophical sense to denote "judgment" or "principle." It is clear from the aforementioned invitation that it was addressed to Jews and Christians because they are followers of God's books/Ehlul-kitab/. In Islam, worship, the performance of all duties, charity, and a complete system of moral order or moral theology or theology of morality, is directed only toward God and love for God's sake. Only in such an approach a person becomes free, unbiased, and ready to understand the essence of systems, programs, religious laws, laws, values, and standards that are received from God. All people, without distinction, are equal before God. None of them takes each other as a superior being worthy of worship besides the one God. Islam, in this sense, represents a strong belief in one God which was preached by every messenger of God. The almighty God sent messengers to save people from worshiping something other than him and to save them from injustice by following his orders to achieve God's justice.

Instead of a Conclusion

Inspired by the Charter on Human Fraternity signed by Pope Francis and Dr Ahmed At-Tayyeb, the two leaders who started changes through a call for peace in the world and a life without violence and bloodshed, the Meshihat of the Islamic Community in Croatia and the Croatian Bishops' Conference organized an international conference on "human brotherhood—the foundation of peace and security in the world" with which they marked the anniversary of the signing of that great historical document. The conference was held on the 4th and 5th of February 2020 as part of the Republic of Croatia's presidency of the Council of the European Union. At the end of the conference, a large number of participants from all over the world representing different religious denominations adopted the Zagreb Declaration on Human Fraternity to strengthen peace and security in the world.

The participants at this conference pointed out the importance of promoting the value of human brotherhood as the most important point for achieving world peace and harmony in society, stressing that brotherhood is pure in nature and represents the essence of human purity. It is far from any extremism, be it political, religious, ideological, or racial. Those deviations do not respect the fraternal bonds between people or their common values; rather, they build the foundations of hate speech, egoism, closure, and conflict with all the evil it carries within itself. The participants also emphasized the importance of the Charter on Human Fraternity as a document from which inspiration for promoting the value of peace and security in the world is drawn. The document also raises awareness that peace is not everything, but without peace, everything else loses its value. Clear recommendations were also given for the best implementation of the provisions on human brotherhood indicated in the Charter.

The last in a series of positive documents that affirm human brotherhood is the encyclical of Pope Francis on brotherhood and social friendship, Fratelli tutti (FT). In this document, Pope Francis refers to the Charter on Human Fraternity (285). Pope Francis has said that he is happy to recall the memories from the brotherhood meeting with Dr At-Tayyeb and also to reconfirm their statement that indicates the fact that religions do not ignite a war, conflicts, or hate speech, nor do they foster enmity or any form of extremism. Religions do not call for violence or bloodshed. These tragic realities are the result of alienation/deviations from religious teachings. They are the result of using religions for political purposes, as well as the interpretations of religious groups that, in some historical periods, abused the influence of religious feelings in people's hearts...."That's why I want to repeat here the appeal for peace, justice, and brotherhood that we made together."

With this encyclical letter, Pope Francis invites us to actively get involved and participate in the rehabilitation and support of societies affected by different challenges (FT 77); life is not a time that passes but a time of encounter (FT 66); globalization brings us closer, but to less extent makes us brothers (FT 12); there are no "others" or "them," only "we," (FT 87). The claim that all human beings are brothers and sisters obliges us to new perspectives and the development of new responses (FT 128).

Expressions that permeate the new encyclical of Pope Francis, such as meeting becomes a lifestyle, passion, and desire (FT 198), life is the art of meeting (FT 215), a culture of meeting (FT 216), give us encouragement and hope, and additionally oblige us to strengthen the cultural dialog and to build mutual trust to make this world better. It is the sacred duty of believers.

Bringing together many documents and statements of the highest authorities in Croatia and the world and offering them to the public facilitates the implementation of interreligious dialog and dialog in general, raises awareness of its importance, and encourages dialog as a means of promoting peace and security in society. That's how I understood today's meeting, and I have gladly accepted the invitation to participate in it, for which I am especially grateful to the center for the promotion of social teaching of the church.

REVIEW ARTICLE

The Possibility of Building Brotherhood between Christians and Muslims

Ivan Platovnjak[1], Ahmet Türkan[2]

Abstract

Relations between Muslims and Christians have assumed different dimensions throughout history. There are examples of peaceful relationships as well as tensions. The meeting of Saint Francis of Assisi with Sultan Malik-el-Kamil and the letters and gifts between Sultan Abdulhamid II and Pope Leon XIII are two examples of friendly relations. Pope Francis, in his encyclical Fratelli tutti, encourages all Catholics and other Christians to be aware of the importance of building brotherhood not only among all those who believe in Christ but with those who belong to other religions as well. Tense relations between Muslims and Christians due to many reasons, such as war, migration, fear, and prejudices, are obvious upon examining European history. A number of political problems also contribute. However, there were also periods when the culture of living together was highly developed. It is noteworthy that today there are mutual prejudices between Muslims and Christians for many reasons. In order to eliminate these prejudices, various issues will be addressed in this paper. In the first part of the paper, the negativities will be set aside, and the examples of good relations in history between Muslims and Christians will be emphasized. The second part will emphasize the verses in the Bible and the Quran that express the importance of living together.

Keywords: Bible, Brotherhood, Christians, Christian-Muslim relations, Muslims, Quran.

Sažetak

Mogućnost izgradnje bratstva između kršćana i muslimana odnosi između muslimana i kršćana kroz povijest su poprimali različite dimenzije. Postoje primjeri mirnih odnosa kao i napetosti. Susret svetog Franje Asiškog sa sultanom Malik-el-Kamilom, pisma i darovi između sultana Abdulhamida II i pape Leona XIII dva su primjera prijateljskih odnosa. Papa Franjo u svojoj enciklici Fratelli tutti potiče sve katolike i druge kršćane da budu svjesni važnosti izgradnje bratstva ne samo među onima koji vjeruju u Krista, nego i s pripadnicima drugih različitih religija. Napeti odnosi između muslimana i kršćana su zbog brojnih razloga kao što su: ratovi, migracije, strah i predrasude vidljivi su nakon proučavanja europske povijesti. Tome također pridonose brojni politički problemi. Međutim, bilo je i razdoblja kada je kultura zajedničkog života bila visoko razvijena. Važno je napomenuti da danas postoje međusobne predrasude između muslimana i kršćana iz mnogo razloga. Kako bismo otklonili ove predrasude, u ovom radu se obrađuju različita pitanja. U prvom dijelu studije prikazat će se određene negativnosti i istaknuti primjeri dobrih odnosa u povijesti između muslimana i kršćana. U drugom dijelu bit će naglašena mjesta, odnosno ajeti u Bibliji i Kur'anu koji izražavaju važnost zajedničkog života.

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Introduction

A review of European history reveals strained relations between Muslims and Christians for many reasons, including war, migration, fear, and prejudice. Many political problems also contribute to this. However, there have also been periods when the culture of living together was highly developed. With this paper, we want to show the different possibilities that are given to us, on the basis of good examples from history, and especially on the basis of our holy books, to build brotherhood between Muslims and Christians.

The first part of the paper will highlight examples of good relations in history between Muslims and Christians. The second part will highlight verses from the Bible and the Quran that express the importance of living together in brotherhood.

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Examples of Good Relations in History between Muslims and Christians

The good relations between Muslims and Christians and the culture of coexistence begin at the time of the Prophet Muhammad. After the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) received a revelation, he met the Christians in Mecca. Waraqa bin Nawfel, who could write the Bible in Arabic and also speak Hebrew, was one of them. The Prophet Muhammad met with Varaka, who was the uncle of his wife Khadija and listened to his advice.[1]

Another Christian community to which the Prophet Muhammad became close was the Abyssinian Christians. He sent Muslims, who were overwhelmed by the persecution of the polytheists in Mecca, to Abyssinia, the country of the ruler named Najashi. Najashi protected the Muslims in his own country and gave them the opportunity to practice their religion freely. In addition, there were sincere and friendly relations between the Najashi and the Prophet Muhammad. Muslims stayed there for a long time.[1]

After Nejashi's death, relations with Abyssinian Christians continued. A Christian delegation of 60 people from Abyssinia, who came to the city of Medina in 632, met with the Prophet Muhammad in the mosque (Masjid-i Nebi) and performed their prayers in a corner of the mosque when it was time for worship.[1]

The Prophet Muhammad migrated from Mecca to Medina with the Muslims in 622. An agreement (Medina Agreement) was signed in Medina, which provided for living on a common ground with other religious groups other than Muslims.[2]

Good relations between Muslims and Christians continued after the Prophet Muhammad. After Caliph Omar took Jerusalem peacefully, Patriarch Sofranius gave him a tour of the city. One of the places that Caliph Omar visited was the Church of Resurrection. Omar granted important rights to Christians. The edict, called the "Covenant of Omar," was maintained by the sultans who came later. Ayyubid Sultan Selahattin Eyyubi and Ottoman Sultan Yavuz Sultan Selim always maintained these rights. In fact, when different religious groups claimed rights to the Church of the Nativity and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in 1854, the edict given by Caliph Omar came to the fore.[3]

In the early centuries of Islam, relations between Christians and Muslims were good in practice. When Muslims conquered new territories, they did not demand that Jews and Christians convert to Islam but rather that they be given the status of "dhimmis," which allowed them to live their faith and have their own Christian communities. In Syria and Egypt, Muslim rulers also employed Christians in important positions. Some believe that tolerance in a pluralistic society was an Islamic rather than a Western invention. One example is the treatment of religious minorities during the Ottoman Empire, where four religions were officially recognized: Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Armenian Christianity, and Judaism.[4]

The crusades caused great tension between Islam and Christianity. But during the fifth crusade in 1219, St Francis of Assisi visited the Muslim leader Sultan al-Malik al-Kamel and his nephew Salah al-Din in Egypt. After three weeks of mutually respectful talks, St Francis returned to the Christian camp. He encouraged Christians to put aside their differences of belief and to, imitate Muslims in prayer and worship and join them in serving the poor. He instructed his brothers in a mature manner not to try to convert Muslims. Later, as a *quid pro quo*, the Sultan granted the Christians control of Bethlehem and part of Jerusalem and a corridor to them from the sea.[5]

In medieval Andalusia, in southern Spain, the most harmonious period of coexistence between Muslims, Christians, and Jews under Muslim rule was about 250 years (from 756 to the turn of the millennium). They lived a common life (convenience) with considerable mutual respect. At the University of Córdoba, founded in 968, Muslims, Christians, and Jews studied together.[6] The Christian theologian John of Segovia and the humanist philosopher George of Trebizond advocated a Christian-Muslim peace conference between the 14th and 15th centuries.[7,8]

One of the important places in which there is a culture of living together in Bosnia. Mehmet II, who took the city in 1463, gave important rights to both Orthodox and Catholics living there. The edict given to the Catholic French still maintains its existence today. The edict granting freedom to the Franciscan priests is one of the most important documents symbolizing the friendship between Muslims and Christians for 559 years. The content of Mehmet II's edict is as follows:

> "I am Sultan Mehmet Khan; Let it be known by all ordinary and distinguished people that I have given a great favor to the Bosnian (Franciscan) clergy who hold this Sultan's command in their hands, and I have commanded: No one will interfere or trouble the mentioned people and their churches, and they will live in my country without hesitation. And even those who run away will be safe. They will come and sit fearlessly in our country and settle in their churches. Neither I, nor my viziers, nor anyone from all the people of my country will touch, attack or hurt their lives, property, or churches. I swear by the name of the Provider who created the heavens and the earth, by the name of the Quran and our great Prophet, by the name of one hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets and the sword I am wielding, that as long as these people obey my command, no one will disobey what is written. Know like that."

This edict given by Sultan Mehmet was constantly repeated by the later Ottoman sultans, and an act contrary to the privilege given to the Bosnian Catholic priests was prevented.[9]

The Ottoman State also helped the Latin priests in Bosnia to perform their official religious duties in the institutional context. Necessary precautions were taken by the Ottoman

State during the Bosnian Latin Archpriest Filib's visit to the churches in the Bosnian province. The security of his travel was ensured by giving an official security guard to the Archpriest. In the official letter sent from Istanbul to the Governor of Bosnia, it was also requested that the necessary assistance be provided by the governorship in the places where the nun visited.[10]

One of the important places where the culture of living together is experienced in Istanbul. Both Jews and Christians were given important rights in the city. Patriarchs responsible for their congregations were given important rights, and their religious beliefs were not interfered with. In addition, it is seen that there are mutual gestures on religious holidays. Patriarchs expressed their joy by sending eggs to the Ottoman Sultan at Easter time. In return for the patriarch's gesture, the Sultan congratulated them on their feast and provided financial assistance to their congregations. Patriarchs also congratulated Muslims on Eid-al-Adha.[11]

The mutually friendly relations between the Ottoman Sultans and the Holy See are also important. In the 19th century, it was seen that the dimension of these relations was at a much higher level. The semi-official mutual relations established during the reign of Sultan Abdulmecid (1869–1861) reached their peak during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876–1909). During this period, while Pope Leon XIII sent various gifts to the Sultan, the Sultan also sent gifts to the Pope. In addition, various medals were given to the Ottoman statesmen by the Papacy, and gifts were given to the papal officials by the Sultan in the same way. Pope John XXIII has a special place in Turkey. Roncalli, who served in Turkey between 1935 and 1944 before he became Pope, is a very popular person among Turks. He was even called the "Turkish Pope" in this sense (Çoban, 2014: 193). Roncalli described the years he spent in Turkey as the best years of his life.[12]

Although there have been good relations between Turkey and the Vatican since the Ottoman State for a long time, there have been no official visits at the highest level. The visit of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, Adnan Menderes, in 1955 is important in this respect. The visit of Menderes is considered to be the first visit of the Turks at the level of prime minister. Although Pope Pius XII was seriously ill, he wanted this visit to take place. According to the newspaper report of that period, the reason the Pope attached importance to the visit of the administrator of a Muslim country was to act together with the Muslims against communism. Thus, bilateral relations would become tighter (Milliyet, 2nd February 1955).

Four Popes have visited Turkey so far. The first of these was by Pope Paul VI in 1967. The second visit was by Pope John Paul II in 1979. Pope Benedict XVI, who went to Turkey in 2006, prayed together with the Mufti of Istanbul at the Blue Mosque.[13] The last visit was by Pope Francis in 2014. The Pope was welcomed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the Pope and the President talked about many issues, especially the fight against terrorism, Islamophobia, Christianophobia, and freedom of religion. The Pope thanked the President for welcoming Syrian immigrants who took refuge in Turkey.[14]

In response to the Pope's visit to Turkey, four years later, on 5th February 2018, there was a visit from Turkey to the Vatican. After 59 years, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's visit to the Vatican is important in terms of being at the Presidential level. Issues such as developments in the Middle East, the status of Jerusalem, and Turkey's hosting of refugees were discussed in a friendly atmosphere. "At the end of their meeting, Pope Francis gave President Erdogan a bronze medallion depicting an angel embracing the northern and southern hemispheres while overcoming the opposition of a dragon."[15,16]

In November 2021, President Tayyip Erdoğan met with Pope Francis at the Vatican. During the meetings, issues such as Turkey-Vatican relations, developments in Jerusalem, regional problems, the human tragedy in Syria, terrorism, and the fight against xenophobia were discussed. The meeting also emphasized the inaccuracy of associating religions with terrorism. President Erdoğan presented the Pope with a miniature Iznik tile depicting old Istanbul in 24 pieces and Mevlana Celalettin Rumi's Masnavi. The Pope also presented President Erdogan with a medallion symbolizing peace.[17,18]

In Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, West Africa, India, and South-East Asia, Islamic society, education, religion, and culture were undermined and severely humiliated by European colonial powers. All this made many Christians feel uncomfortable. At the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), the Catholic Church changed its attitude toward Islam. The decree *Nostra Aetate* called on Christians and Muslims to "strive earnestly for mutual understanding" and to "work together to safeguard and promote social justice, moral values, peace, and freedom." "He urges that all people of all faiths should respect one another, transcend all discrimination, live in harmony, and serve universal brotherhood."[19,20]

Paragraph 841 of The Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks of the Church's relationship with Muslims when it quotes the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council: "The salvific decree, however, also includes those who confess the Creator; among these, in the first place, are the Muslims, who consider themselves to be confessors of the faith of Abraham, and who, with us, worship the one and only, merciful God, who will judge men on the last day." [21,22]

Pope John Paul II strongly advocated for better relations between Christians and Muslims. During his visit to Morocco in 1985, he encouraged all young Muslims to build a "fraternal world" (John Paul II 1985, 7). In his speech, he stressed, among other things, how we all have "one and the same origin and one and the same final goal: God," who enlightens our consciences and requires every person "to respect every human creature and to love him as a friend, a companion, a brother." Toward the end, he points out:

> "I believe that we, Christians and Muslims, must recognize with joy the religious values that we have in common and give thanks to God for them. Both of us believe in one God, the only God, who is all Justice and all Mercy; we believe in the importance of

prayer, of fasting, of almsgiving, of repentance, and of pardon; we believe that God will be a merciful judge to us at the end of time, and we hope that after the resurrection he will be satisfied with us and we know that we will be satisfied with him."

Texts from the Bible and the Quran that Promote Building Brotherhood

The Bible does not speak directly about the relationship between Christians and Muslims since it predates Islam. But it does contain points of departure that help Christians to build brotherhood with Muslims.

At the beginning of the Bible is an account of the creation of the world and of man (Genesis 1-2). This is the starting point that we can and must see in every human being, a brother or sister. This is the basis of all the efforts of Church teaching and of the Popes since the Second Vatican Council. The *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* thus stresses, that God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and "has called them to live together as brothers and sisters, to fill the earth and make known the values of goodness, love and peace."[23,24]

The Bible speaks much of Abraham and his faith in God, which I revealed to him and to which he was obedient in faith (Genesis 12–25). For Christians, he is thus the Father of all the faithful (Rom 4:16–17). In him, Christians can see Muslims as brothers in the faith of Abraham. The Quran also praises Abraham (Ibrahim) as a prophet and a model in obedience to God (Al-Baqarah, 2:127–128). He is a good model of faith (Al-Mumtahanah, 60:4). According to the Quran, the right to his inheritance goes to all who follow him (Ali 'Imran, 3:68). This criterion is linked to the Quranic exhortation to "excel one another in good deeds" (Al-Ma'idah, 5:48), is, according to Mitra,[25] "the basis for the interreligious dialogue that should take place under the Abrahamic tent."

Jesus sums up the whole of the law and the prophets in two commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself."" (Mt 22:37–39; Mk 12:28–34; Lk 10:25–28). In these two commandments, Christians and Muslims are brothers since they also share the Quran's commandment to love God and love one's neighbor, as the drafters and signatories of "A Common Word Between Us and You"[26] have particularly emphasized.

Jesus also gives his disciples the golden rule: "So whatever you want people to do to you, do also to them. For this is the law and the prophets." (Mt 7:12) So if Christians want Muslims to be good to them, they are first called to be good to them. If they will be brotherly to them, then it is possible that they will be brotherly to them. Jesus revealed God the Father, who loves first, freely, and invites his disciples to love first also and to be merciful as his Father and their Father is merciful (Lk 6:36).

Jesus gives His disciples the commandment to love their enemies: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may become sons of your Father who is in heaven." (Mt 5:44-45) Only in this way will they be perfect, just as their "heavenly Father" is perfect (Mt 5:48), who excludes no one from his love, just as the rays of his sun and the rain exclude no one (Mt 5:45). If Christians are therefore called to approach every one of their enemies in this way, how could they not approach every Muslim who, because of his faith, is not yet an enemy, since he is a son/daughter of the same Father.

According to the religion of Islam, all people are the children of Adam and Eve. In the Quran, it is stated that humans are brothers because they are descended from the same mother and father. It is mentioned in the Quran: "O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may "get to" know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you" (Al-Hujurat, 13). As stated in this verse of the Quran, there are many different nations in the world. No matter what community they belong to, people should get to know and agree with each other. Their acquaintance and agreement naturally result in the creation of a culture of common coexistence.

The Prophet Muhammad states that humans are equal by creation: "O people! Be aware that your Lord is one. Your father is one too. Know that an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, and a non-Arab has no superiority over an Arab. The red-skinned has no superiority and virtue over the black-skinned, and the black-skinned over the red-skinned person. (You are all equal) Superiority and virtue are only due to taqwa (piety)..." (İbn Hanbel, V, 411).

In the Quran, it is stated that people can live together even if they are different in lineage and belief, and they are invited to meet at a common point. "Say, "O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you - that we will not worship except Allah and not associate anything with him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah." (Ali 'Imran, 64)

In Islam, the belief was not used as an element of oppression at the point of coexistence with a difference. Great sensitivity was shown to the freedom of religion and conscience, and compulsion in religion was prohibited with the verse of the Quran (Baqarah, 256).

As can be understood in the light of the verses of the Quran and hadiths above, the beliefs of others were respected in the Islamic tradition, and a culture of living together in the multitude was developed. The pluralistic cultural policy of Islam also applies to Christianity. In fact, there is a closer interest in Christianity. The Quran states the following regarding the subject: "You will surely find that of all people they who say: "We are Christians," are closest to feeling affection for those who believe. This is because there are worshipful priests and monks among them and because they are not arrogant." (Ma'idah, 82)

Instead of a Conclusion

Since his election in 2013, Pope Francis has continued the work of John Paul II and has repeatedly encouraged the Catholic Church to strengthen dialogue with Islam because Muslims are brothers and sisters of Christians. In his encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium*, which is, in fact, the manifesto of his Papacy, he instructs Christians to "avoid hostile generalizations" about Muslims and to be aware that "true Islam and the proper interpretation of the Quran are opposed to all violence."[27] The Pope particularly emphasizes:

> "In order to sustain dialogue with Islam, suitable training is essential for all involved, not only so that they can be solidly and joyfully grounded in their own identity, but so that they can also acknowledge the values of others, appreciate the concerns underlying their demands and shed light on shared beliefs. We Christians should embrace with affection and respect Muslim immigrants to our countries in the same way that we hope and ask to be received and respected in countries of Islamic tradition. I ask, and I humbly entreat those countries to grant Christians freedom to worship and to practice their faith, in light of the freedom which followers of Islam enjoy in Western countries!"[27]

For a fruitful dialogue with Islam, words alone are not enough, but action is also needed. In his encyclical Fratelli tutti (2020), in chapter eight, he shows how all religions are at the service of the world's brotherhood. The ultimate foundation of this is openness to the Father of all men.[28] In him, the worth and dignity of every human person are guaranteed since everyone is a son or daughter of God. He stresses that the Church is "at the service of the development of man and of world brotherhood" and that in every faith, it respects what is "true and holy" in it. For Christians, "the source of human dignity and fraternity is the Gospel of Jesus Christ." In it is an invitation "to universal love." For others, the source of this is different wellsprings. He believes that "the way of serene, orderly, and peaceful coexistence can be achieved by accepting differences and rejoicing that we are all brothers because we are children of the one God." "Sincere and humble adoration of God does not lead to division, hatred, and violence, but to respect for the sanctity of life, respect for the dignity and freedom of others, and a loving commitment to the good of all.." He believes that every religious leader "is called to be an 'artisan' of peace, uniting and not dividing, extinguishing hatred and not concealing it, opening the paths of dialogue and not erecting new walls!" Almost at the end of the encyclical, he summarises the "call for peace, justice and fraternity" he made with the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyebomr at a fraternal meeting, with which he also signed on 4th February 2019 a Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together. On the base of this document has been established the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity was. "The principles of compassion and human solidarity embodied in this text are the same ones that later inspired the declaration that designated 4th February as the International Day of Human Fraternity, as it has been stated by the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, on different occasions."[29,30]

The visits of the Popes to Muslim countries and the meetings of the leaders of Muslim countries with the Pope in the Vatican are important for the development of brotherhood and good relations between Muslims and Christians. It is observed that these talks, which were held on many issues such as Islamophobia, Christianophobia, xenophobia, the Jerusalem issue, immigration, and refugees, made a sound in the world press. It is hoped that a further increase of such talks on different platforms and further expansion of mutual dialogues will contribute to world peace even more. Thus, misunderstandings from the past will be avoided. For this, first of all, friendly mutual understanding is required. Afterward, it is necessary to come together and highlight the beautiful examples of history. As the famous mystic Yunus Emre said:

Let us meet
Let us make it easy
Let us, love, let's be loved
The world does not belong to anyone.[31]

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REVIEW ARTICLE

About Peace among Religions or How to Achieve Peace among Religions

Fahira Fejzić-Čengić

Abstract

The volume of Nikola Kuzanski's short book On Peace among Religions contains great thought. And this world needs wisdom on how to achieve peace among religions. Originating as a polylogue of Christians, Muslims, and Jews at the time of the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul and hinting at the important dilemmas of different interpretations of one principle—Abrahim's monotheism—it still brightly illuminates the corridors over which falls a huge dark shadow of an abyss or abyss that cannot even be seen. Kuzanski's goal is to seek the invisible communion behind diversity on the surface. After Byzantium fell under the Ottomans and the people fell into fear, anger, and depression.

But this is not a cheap production of a new religion, which is emphasized as an intention in our time, but he believes that if people had time and leisure for self-knowledge, they would find the right path.

Keywords: Idols, Invisible togetherness, Peace, Religious narrative, Self-knowledge, Visible differences.

Sažetak

Svezak kratke knjige Nikole Kuzanskog O miru među religijama sadrži veliku misao. A ovaj svijet treba mudrost kako postići mir među religijama. Nastao kao polilog kršćana, muslimana, židova u vrijeme osmanskog osvajanja Istanbula, a nagovještavajući bitne dileme različitih tumačenja jednog načela–Abrahimovog monoteizma–i danas jarko osvjetljava hodnike nad kojima pada ogromna tamna sjena ponor ili ponor koji se ne može ni vidjeti. Cilj Kuzanskog je tražiti nevidljivo zajedništvo iza različitosti na površini. Nakon što je Bizant pao pod Osmanlije i narod je pao u strah, bijes i depresiju.

No nije riječ o jeftinoj proizvodnji nove religije, što se u našem vremenu ističe kao namjera, već smatra da bi ljudi, kada bi imali vremena i slobodnog vremena za samospoznaju, našli pravi put.

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Introduction

After the Ottomans conquered Istanbul by Sultan Fatih Second, Catholic Bishop Nicola wrote a scripture pushed by fear of Islam about peace among religions. Fear of Islam, one might say, never disappeared; nevertheless, somewhat unusual, for it is the middle ages and not the age of liberal interreligious courses. Somehow, the scripture is a segment of the de-absolutization of Christianity, which is not common even today. The scripture dominates a dialogue with Islam. At least other religions are present. The idea of a peaceful life next to each other also promoted Basel Council in 1431 and in 1437, concerning relations between Eastern and Western Rome, caring for harmony within the Catholic Church. Kuzanski also wrote the work "Examination of the Quran" in 1441. where he theologically dealt with Islam. This is an ecumenical conversation. The word is Jesus Christ, Peter, and Paul, while Muslims are Arab and Turkish. The Jew is also present, the Czech is a Hussite, and the regional Christians are English and German. Apparently, the goal is to take a peaceful approach toward Islam among the more educated class because he considers that without a lot of knowledge about this matter, one need not even think to discuss it. Participants of the dialogue need to know the matter, and after, they need to seek togetherness in the depths of ideas outside of different appearances in different religions. For the most part, it is the same today. In the depths of sincere believers, there are unique ideas of life, death, God, creation, the devil, sin, conscience, and ethics.

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Common Principles of All Religions: Prophecy

The Ottomans are advancing toward Europe, winning militarily, Islam is spreading in all directions in the coming centuries, and Kuzanski wants to strengthen Catholics and encourage them to act rationally. Today's secular and atheist citizens of Europe could read this text more carefully and try to learn how stereotypes about the upcoming peacetime migrations of Muslims as migrants are more harmful than helpful. In the scripture, Kuzanski subtly moves away from the Trinity because Islam does not explicitly allow God to have a double or a child. In fact, it is the greatest possible sin in Islam, which the holy Quran calls the greatest blasphemy/shirk.

Kuzanski says all religions assume the same. The wiser among us must understand and recommend this. Something like natural religion, like man's innate need for spirituality and transcendent happiness. And different forms of a particular religion are only expressions of a natural one. That is why some thought that Kuzanski, in this writing, was the forerunner of Lutheranism or the propagator of the religion of the mind. But Kuzanski himself says that the wise cannot be wise without the divine word. He pleads for the truths that all religions presuppose implicitly; there is no salvation without divine order and divine word. And the wisdom will be to find principles that are common. Is that possible today? What would be the principles?

Dialogue, or less often polylogue, is indeed an interesting form of communication, argumentation, and finding common principles, reaching wisdom. For example, Lucian of Samosata has dialogues decorum, Conversations of the Gods, the old church has Methodius of Olympia, and also dialogues. There are also the dialogues of Octavius Minuncio Felix (2nd century) and the treatise AL Chazari by the Jews of Yehuda ben Halvi, 1080. There is also from the 12th century Dialogus inter Philosophum Judaeum et Christianum by Peter Abelard and from the 13th century Isagoga Odanis from the order of Abelard, then Opus tertium by Roger Bacon, 13th century. A more modern form of a similar thesis is, perhaps, the story of Vladimir Solovyov, the Antichrist, who has a council in Jerusalem at the end of time. World Emperor, and Antichrist proclaims himself the leader of Christianity.

Walk through Dialogue to the Wisdom of Everyday Life

For Kuzanski, Catholic doctrine is closest to the truth, but it does not try to convert all other participants in the polylogue to Catholicism. First of all, the scripture works missionary toward the Catholics themselves. He cared that philosophy, as the supreme intelligence, operates among the few. It is the wise who discuss with him, not the priests.

Today, too, following Kuzanski, more theologians would have to study or at least read philosophers and philosophy, connect and analyze things with superior truth, respond to dilemmas and trilemmas in the world, and so philosophy could become a kind of medium of peace. Of course, its practical aspect is a real living ethics, working active morality, and a real empirical moral manifestation of everything around us.

For Kuzanski, it is often a platonic philosophy, an idealistic philosophy that trembles with admiration and gazes at cosmic spaces as divine perfection and not as capital, the profiteering transformation of space into the field of production, consumption, tourism, and other forms of exploitation that corporations and companies imply the so-called applied science and technology and the so-called development of modern man and modern humanity.

In all religions, it is possible today to see one big truth, but it is not easy to define and say as one axiom, and it is not the same as the dogmas of the Catholic Church, with the dogmas of hierarchy. This one common truth can only be seen as one general tremendous mental and mystical insight. Kuzanski does not create any Esperanto faith as Lazar Ludwig Zamenhof once did, creating a unique spoken language for all the people of the world as the Esperanto language, which of course, has neither come to life nor is it possible to come to life (I have personally studied for a few years and I dealt with it) as a utopia at the isolated mountain, but above all, it is an idea of harmony. Because of necessary future peace among people, it is also necessary to empower what is common to all religions. Prophecy is among the first axioms.

Traditions and Idols as Substitutes

Religions today often substitute with traditions which can be, but often they are not authentic. People are often attached to banal habits that fit all hierarchies of the world, esoteric, political, economic, intellectual, religious, economic, banking, medical, pharmacological, technical, and technological. From there grows a vast forest of vanity and habits which are a substitute for the original human nature and which cover the original forms of the original truths of all the divine truths of the world. Flasch said: "If people had time and leisure for self-knowledge, they would find the right path." (Kuzanski in Flasch; 2005; 24). How much leisure is present in modern people today is unthinkable for middle-aged people, for example. But, modern people are not in literal leisure; in our country, it is a matter of filled leisure, leisure filled with constant monitoring of media content, clicking on the Internet and smartphones, computer or laptop accessories... leisure that radically increased fun, idleness, laziness, banalization of everything around us... there is little time left for self-knowledge or only a few moments among the few individuals who dare to read, write, and search for books that are canonical and that fertilize our cognitive and experiential field.

Kuzanski wants to say that in Catholicism, there is more of this explicit that other religions, especially Islam, carry as implicit. Therefore, for him, Catholicism is one degree higher, so he is a Platonist, an idealist. Terms like *compilicatio* i *explicatio* are important to him, first to mark bending, second to mark developing. That is, the first to mark everything that is as one compressed and gathered into unity, while at the

level of emotions, sense, and experiences, always a mighty multitude and multiplicity determined by this explicatio.

Are there live possibilities to read Kuzanski in a modern way, from the idea of the world ethos of Kung, up to the theory of pramonotheism, which is a base of all religions, Schmidt would say? The modernity of this scripture is to initiate dialogue, a useful, honest discussion that is a permanent task of the people. Later on, in a similar way, behave structuralists and liberal theories of religion. If we take into account that the method of religious-historical teaching, exegesis, and philosophy are still the basic tools, the basic possibilities to achieve peace among religions with the help of the mind. From our side, we shall add Sufi mystic Ghazali, who will add to this method the way of the immediate appliance of knowledge, virtue is immediately recognized, and where the co-chair is by no means belittled... Kuzanski said:..." for only eternal life itself is the last desire of the inner man, that is, the truth to which only one aspires since it is eternal, eternally nourishing mind." (Kuzanski, 2005; 53) with a goal to persuade an earthly man to live with his inner rhythm and not the outer one.

Our age is just calling for living by external inputs, by external incentives and rules that come to us from outside. Moral, ethical, empirical, and practical rules are all around us, materialized, technicalized, separated from us, enslaving, unbridled, those that demand our daily and nightly rejuvenation, bringing ourselves to the attention of the environment, the world, and society. Just a small step to the inwards, toward oneself, to the peace with oneself, toward one's own aura, will mean a lot for the live ethics, for the live observation and self-discipline, for authentic self-consistency. That honesty and truthfulness should come from religion, school, family, philosophy, science, from everywhere. But it is nowhere to be found. Our world of vain modernity is cold and hungry. Our world we are in is empty and harmful.

The Violence of the Idols and Global Idolatry as Modern Deceptions, Magic

I have taken over this semititle from fra Mile Babić, from the book of the same name, in which he explains in a pregnant way idolatry and profanity of the modern world and modern people of this epoch.[a, 1] Because of missing ethical and other responsibilities of modern people. Referring to Karl Jaspers, according to the parts of the book entitled "The Question of Guilt," as well as to Hans Jonas, emphasizing responsibility for the evil, both of them, thinking of the post-concentration-camp age, realized that no man, if he is a moral being, is neutral to all the evils of the world, even to the concentration camps themselves. Previous punishing activities and even the guillotine itself imply punishment to a man who is a person and is not dehumanized; in some minimal way, human dignity is recognized. In the camps of Nazism and Stalinism, they are killed "with the same perfection like animals and plants are killed and processed in the factory."[b] So there are at least four human responsibilities: criminal, political, moral, and metaphysical. The courts are responsible for criminal liability, and they judge individuals or sometimes states for murders and massacres. Political responsibility bear all citizens the right to vote if they elect authoritarian leaders. Every person has his/her own moral responsibility if and when his conscience. If you kill an innocent man by someone else's order, you are also responsible because you have your own conscience, and you are not obliged to act on orders.

If the conscience of a person is silenced, then we are on the way to entering totalitarianism and letting it enter all our pores of life, and free conscience is a precondition of all freedoms. Finally, every man has his own metaphysical responsibility for every other man and the survival of humanity and for the survival of the divine world and the divine existence of order in the cosmos. But this responsibility man has possessed only if he believes in some metaphysical values, that is if he is at least sometimes aware that there are values that transcend him. The modern world is a world of modern idols. Money and profit are idols. Greed, egoism, and carierism, too. The nation is one of the more common idolatries of modernity. It is a small godhead for which it is worth doing everything good but also everything bad. Modern atheists and theists define for themselves what God is and what he is like as if it were objectively provable knowledge. But what is that God if one average man can define with his thought and modest language? The French theologian Christian Duquoc has shown that the God of the Christian conquerors of "West India," that is, Latin America, was a mere idol in the massacres of Indians. And they were just greedy for new wealth and conquering of territories and nothing more. Every God calling for greed and approving crimes is not a live God but an idol created by a man in his own image and likeness. In the long war history in the warfare of Catholics and Lutherans, the question was where the true God was, in the Vatican or in Germany. It remains that no institution can dispose of God as with his own property, God is not local, and that is one more idol. Francis Bacon can help us to recognize prejudices that make it impossible to know the truth and nature through his critics of *idols tribus, specus, fori i theatri.* Apparently, he was aware that prejudices are

[a]In a part of his book, he mentions the beautiful order of the established historical statehood of Bosnia, which is often changed and changed by many Western and especially European authors. Bosnia was an independent kingdom for most of the period from 1180 to 1463, from 1580 to 1878, an eyalet in the Ottoman Empire, from 1878 to 1918, a crown country within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, from 1945 to 1992, a federal republic. see more on page 25 in the book by Mile Babić, "Violence of Idols," Sarajevo, 2002, Did

[b]Ibid. p.44

made when man interprets the world, starting from himself only and adapting it to his own needs.

Namely, from his ego *ex analogia hominis*, from where anthropomorphism, anthropocentrism, today Eurocentrism, Orientalism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia will strongly develop.

Nietzsche writes in the Antichrist about God as his own need and that the church is the opposite of everything that Jesus Christ advocated. Hence, he radicalized thought to such an extent that the Christian God is the one who is the enemy of life and to whom the enemies of life adhere.

Emanuel Levinas will say that all Western metaphysics is, in fact, a metaphysics of war, constant oppression, and removal of the other, of reducing the difference to the same as a kind of egology if you can say so.

Accepting Feuerbach's critique of religion, Karl Barth says, as Mile Babić alleges:

"Until now, almost every theology has been anthropology. By this, he meant that theology was man's speech about himself, not a speech about God. And if a person's speech is about himself, then it is called self-worship or idolatry."

(Babić; 2022, 51)

He will argue that man conceives God as he conceives himself and the world.

It is *corruptio boni pessima*, which means when what is good and the best is corrupted, the worst corruption occurs. On the trace of Hegel, Pascal Bruckner claims that the modern individual, after all, emancipation, has lost their safety and is weak to bear responsibility. It tries to release itself through infantilism *or* victimization. This is a global situation in societies and individuals in the 21st century. They are infantile at first because adults behave like spoiled children; everyone is always right, no one is to blame, and everyone wants to be privileged as children. On the other side, there is victimization, where adults would like to be seen as victims, considering themselves at the same time like somebody not able to do evil, they are all martyrs, and somebody else is guilty of everything. Both infantilism and as well as victimization make modern people incapable of responsibility.

Then the criminals feel very well and successful when they commit crimes, but it is not clear why they don't perish

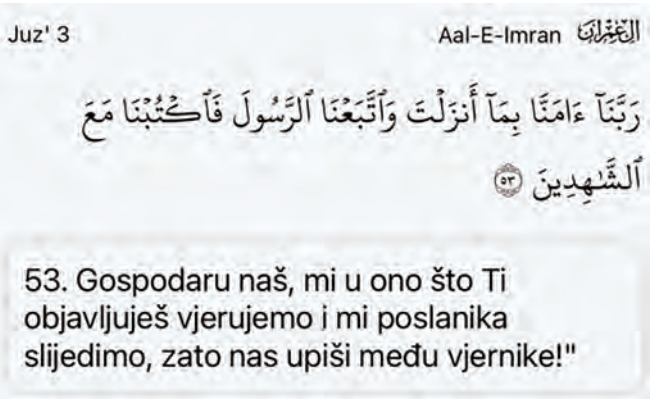

Fig. 1: Chosen words of Prophet Ibrahim

because of the force of their evil. In a strange way, they have a metaphysical foundation and justification (excuse) for their crimes, and this is again provided to them by their idols. All nationalists consider their nation the best, the most innocent, and ontologically moral. Fake godheads are necessary to unsecure, unconfirmed, and frightened people. That is why the modern global, basically nationalist and authoritarian-totalitarian system lives and is maintained by the development of fear. All modern democracies live in fear; the pandemic age has confirmed that very well. The period justified Noam Chomsky and the strong thesis that democracies need "necessary illusions" in order to survive. Fear is the strongest emotion in maintaining irrational everyday life all over the planet. All such, if they are still considered believers and have betrayed the essence of faith, they are destroyers of faith. Individual believes in God, not the collective.

Nothing in Cosmos can be Stopped

The new era begins with the birth of the Prophet Jesus/Isa (peace be on him)/Jesus of Nazareth. And he was born in a special way. To reflect on this project of God so that he may be born and play the role he is and he will continue to play in the so-called last days, returning to planet Earth to establish complete peace and justice, as much as he is present in the Old and New Testaments, so much is also present in the Quran, the book of Muslims, and the Jewish Prophet Moses/Musa (PBUH) of Egypt even more.[c]

[c](Fig. 1) With these chosen words, Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH), The Friend of God, as he is addressed by God himself, confirms his mission and immeasurable devotion. From Abraham (PBUH) goes his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob, whom they called Israel, went, and they named him Israelites or Benu Israel. The Quran mentions this life before the new era a lot. The Quran calls many Benu Israel … admonishes them. They were mostly associated with Moses/Musa (PBUH), who was to bring them into the promised holy land of Jerusalem. It is part of Palestine, Syria, Jordan, part of Egypt, and Turkey, that is, the sham holy land. This is where civilization began, and all important historical events took place. There is history. And Isa (PBUH) is important for the new era, and his mother, Maryam as the purest woman in the world. She gave birth to Isa (PBUH) without a man. All the other prophets were born with both parents, and Isa (PBUH) was born without a father and this appearance and conception of a boy through the envoy of the angel Gabriel (Gabriel), with whom Mary will be delighted. She wonders:" How could I give birth without a husband? I am not a prostitute…," and it was the people around her, Ben Israelis, who called her a prostitute when the child was born. God commands her to keep quiet. Let your answer be silence.

The method of silence is obviously effective in special moments of life.

Also, the idea of a totalitarian Pharaoh is also significantly present. Jesus/Isa (PBUH) was mentioned 24 times, and Moses/Musa (PBUH) five times more in the Quran then Isa (PBUH).

So, the Quran is viewed in this way as very inspiring, significant, and hierarchical. For any discussion of peace among religions and harmony among announcers, heralds, prophets, or peygambers, they are all in some way synonymous, actual, and useful.

The Quran itself mentions in the chapter the Ants (Surat al-naml), in a sentence (ajet) 76, an instructive message: This Quran tells to sons of Israel mostly about things they diverge (Quran; 1984:382).[2]

Just as Jesus of Nazareth and Moses were Egyptian Israelites, Jews, or Jews by genotype, they are embraced in a very easy way in this single item. And their followers, divided into incredible sects, Judaism and Christianity, therefore diverging, can look for a guide in the Book, which they more or less disdain.

Therefore, a little more attention will be paid to Jesus/Isa (PBUH) or to the Word, as Kuzanski metaphorically calls Jesus Christ in his mentioned treatise.[3]

Isa (PBUH) is the son of Maryam; this is highlighted in 14 places in the Quran each time in order to determine *his* mother's concrete line of coming into the world and to divert attention from the most specific possible coming without a father-into-existence.

Then, it was mentioned that he spoke from the cradle as a baby and added: "I will receive the book, I will be blessed wherever I am." His spirit (*ruh*) is truly a blessing. Therefore, his return, descent from heaven, is expected to establish the kingdom of justice and abundance with this blessed spirit (ruh). That would be potential peace among religions; what is the title of this paper, what we know as the narrative of the descent of the kingdom of heaven on Earth? All three religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, mention this kingdom of heaven on Earth, provided that the differences in the manner and personalities of who will preach and how are not exactly the unity of all. Even complete peace among religions seems distant, as they seem divided today.

So, for centuries there has been an unknown about him, Jesus/Isa (PBUH), Jesus Christ, or the Messiah. The Israelites, the Jews, therefore, seek a savior to come as the Messiah, while Isa (PBUH) is an Islamic term for the Messiah, as opposed to Dajjal/false savior,[d] so if there is a true and false savior, then this plot of peace among religions is complicated. The Israelis have been looking for a savior for the longest time, >5000 years-they are still waiting for him. And Allah/God says in the Holy Quran – "…wait, and we are waiting." According to Christianity, the true Jesus has been waiting for the Messiah from heaven for about 2000 years, who, according to Judaism, is also a "false savior." Muslims are waiting for Isa (PBUH) and h. Muhammad Mahdi as his forerunner or assistant. Because Muslims accept all the prophets, including Moses/Musa and Jesus/Isa, they have no problem with universal interpretation, whether it is Semitic, Hamit, or whatever genotype … emphasizing racial affiliation or ethnicity is a great sin in Islam! Namely, Islam was revealed to all mankind, to all people, and to all jinn as invisible beings (which is instructive to think about and make out their worlds in the age of extraterrestrial narratives and secret societies).

It is a drama about the last times we are going to meet, as well as others in human history completely present. Because existence without such complexities would be, can be, monotonous, simple, presumably. Life, as it is, asks for drama, dynamics, and rhythm.

And Isa (PBUH)/Jesus will come and kill Dajjal, the false savior, therefore, good will overcome evil, which is the meaning of the existence of the divine world, and then there will be no Ahlul Kitab, the owner of the book, therefore a true monotheist who will not accept and follow him. This is considered to be the final peace among religions.

How it will be in reality—we can only assume. Up to that happy moment, it is possible that big and numerous dramas will happen at the horizons of existence. Both spiritual and materialized. That drama will require both—sacrifices and breakages every time. Drama is visible today at every corner of the planet and even in the Universe. In those dramatic moments, it is necessary to have strength and mind that differences are dialogically, polylogically, and mentally ignored. If there were more and more true philosophers, mystics, spiritualists, and philanthropists influencing the world and the consciousness of leaders and the privileged, it would be easier. But, as the number of corrupt seducers and decision-makers that affect everyone has increased, the future drama of existence will be much more dramatic.

He will follow the sunnah or the law of Prophet Muhammad in his return, as the Holy Quran proclaims, God's last revealed truth. That is why Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) appears, the last in full historical light, with witnesses of every statement and act of the mission to reconcile the two conflicting

[d]Alternative, subversive, or secondary media bring narratives that interpret some of these great themes. See, for example, the podcast pulcherimus with American priest Chad Ripperger; then podcasts with Orthodox theologian Luno Randjelovic on John's revelation, Adventisto sacramento, or with the Turkish-Kurdish mystic Mehmet hocom # hmehdi2022 #hzmehdias # hmehdi … YouTube channel….

views, Benu Musa and Benu Isa, followers of Musa[e, 4] and followers of Isa.

The human Adamic race, the Ibrahim people while from Ismail (PBUH) and Muhammad (PBUH), go the line of the al-ummah, of what is meant by that today.[f]

Why is a new era being counted from the birth of Jesus? Earlier measuring of time started with a few thousand years backward. But the beginning of the new era is from this birth date. However, the eastern version of Christianity is held on January 7th, the western version is held on December 25th, while the secular version is held on January 1st as the beginning of the New Year. Every year. It is obviously quite diverse and pluralistic. And there is a gap for idols. And the terms devil and shaitan can also be used.[g]

I will complete the rounding point on this topic with the reflections of the classic Islamic author Muhammed el Ghazali from the work "Deliverance from Delusion" who, after criticizing Kalam, Batini, and philosophers, observes the Sufi path of knowledge and states, after 11 years of solitude and self-knowledge. "Everything that rests or moves in them, their exterior and their interior, is all ignited by flames from the depths of the prophecy. And apart from the light of the prophet, there is no other light on the face of the Earth to illuminate."[h] Actually, the pathways of Sufi gnosis and life are solid connections consisting of knowledge and acting in accordance with that knowledge.

The aim of the action is to remove personal barriers and cleanse the character of bad qualities until their hearts completely give up from ego, self, and Himba and leave space in themselves only for God.[5,6] What is the most peculiar of them is that their knowledge is not acquired through theoretical studies but by tasting and experiencing states

[e]The Benu Israel, as a chosen people, ate from heaven, were privileged, but sought more, and after they had broken all the covenants and remained disobedient, they would be tempted. After the full circle, everyone with this or that narrative will be judged on Judgment Day. No one else will be able to reconcile and clarify this until the last prophet directly proclaimed by the Gospel of Barnabas, Muhammad (PBUH), makes the middle ground between these extremes. A pure monotheistic God, a perfect creator, and a Universal Lord free from blasphemy and shirk, whom Christians say declared Jesus/Isa a son of God, and some Jews declared Uzeyr, a son of God. Today's Amish or Tung people are most similar to the ascetic life and modesty of Jesus/Isa (PBUH), and they are so few that they are a special exception to the majority who plunder wealth, territory, and human lives, not to mention the other privileged exploiters and neocolonialists of today. This world needs ummetun vesata—the middle path between these extremes. Anyone who accepts the most beautiful religious habits, humanity, sincerity, kindness, beauty, morals, and nobility in the face of all versions and opposites with a pure heart and mind can stand in the middle path, and we are taught about this in the Quran.

[f]Jesus/Isa himself is an Israelite. And most of the prophets in those few thousand years of Benu Israel have an important role on the world stage of life and to whom the coffin will belong. They were protected by food, supplies, and everything, but they sought to cultivate the land, so they sought a strong ruler and got through Prophets David and Suleiman, as well as magic, the magic that will start from those times. And shirk, polytheism. Benu Israil, did not accept Jesus/Isa (PBUH). However, they saw all the miracles shown in their favor. And the dining table with food (sofra) from the heavens was sought and received in the time of Jesus/Isa (PBUH). When he felt this disbelief/*kufr* in his followers, he said who are my helpers? The apostles told him (Hawwarijyun/disciples), we are your helpers, and we are the first Muslims / to surrender unconditionally to God. All the prophets are Muslims, obedient to Allah, obedient to God. And they secretly believed and acted because they were in danger. They even killed him, that is, tried to kill him; Jesus/Isa (PBUH) and Allah says in the Holy Quran it seemed to them that it had happened. After 300 years, the speech of Jesus/Isa (PBUH)–Ingil/Gospel becomes public teaching. In 317, Constantine stood on the side of Isa's followers and proclaimed this teaching as the public religion of the Byzantine Empire. For 1000 years, they were one, Isaiah, then divided by Matthew, Luke, and John, but also by Barnabas. He, Barnabas, is not recognized by official doctrine because this scripture mentions the last prophet, Muhammad (PBUH).

[g]Why that evil deeds began to appear as bad deeds? When heresy/shirk begins, the murder of his own brother (Habil and Kabil), first fornication/zinaluk, and various tricks are taught to him directly by Satan. Some inspirations are whispers through evil forces, demonic forces, and energy that are very active. The statues were created that way. Satan has the task of seducing and offering delusions. Constantly active, tireless, and fun. The idea of midnight as a deaf age is special. Dawn is beautiful, dawn is breaking, and roosters are crowing, but in the deaf age, the devils are scattered about the earth going from their throne out of the deep water and offering their services.

[h]See the pages of the book M. Gazhali, "Deliverance from Delusion," chapter Paths of the Sufis, pages 63–93, Publisher Neimar Visoko, 1998, translation and discussion by professor Dr Hilmo Neimalrlija.

that change man for the better.[i] Really, there is a level of gnosis behind the mind.

There is an eye behind the mind that opens for some. By then, with the eyes of the heart, a man is able to see hidden things:

"And what will happen in the future, and other things inaccessible to reason such as rational cognitions are not available to the power of discernment, and just as the achievements of that power are not accessible to sensory perception." Likewise, some people who are at the level of reason reject religious cognition and consider it unbelievable. This is utter ignorance, for they hold unreliable those things at a stage which they themselves do not reach, so the prophecy is a description of the degree to which there is an "eye" endowed with light in which the invisible is shown, and things become visible that reason does not reach.[j]

Indeed, the text would be incomplete without the strong thoughts of Muhjuddin ibn Arabi with European roots of birth, Endeluz in the time of Islamic rule, in the cult book "Meccan Revelations" says:

One who has no revelation has no knowledge too. The God who is worshipped at the base of reason without faith, moreover, it is precisely the imagined God who is the product of reason itself and according to what the consideration of the reason in question offers him. That's why his reality is different, observing from the angle of the individual mind. And prophets from Adam to Muhammed (peace be on him) spoke about the same God; neither of them ever parted; they always confirmed each other. The parliamentary system has never come into question (i.e., one of them has never challenged the other). The Exalted One has described himself in a multitude of descriptions typical for creatures, such as coming, arriving, appearing to something, being limited, having curtains, having a face, an eye, eyes, hands, being satisfied, not liking something, to get angry, to rejoice, to smile, like all the other credible information given in the Book of God and the prophetic tradition.

The reason is that scientists are followers of the deputies, and the deputies do not leave dinars or gold coins, dirhams, or silver coins but have left their knowledge as a legacy.

(Ibni Arebi, 2009; 140–146)[7]

Conclusion

A big task is in front of philosophers, gnostics, thinking beings, theologists, and all those who possess "eyes of the heart" for the times we live. There are more unuttered than utter things. There is more need to cross the hardest and the shortest road in front of them, the distance from the heart to the mind, about 20 cm long only, with more modesty, love, and humility, seeking the truth, wisdom, and the good, without the thought of swearing an oath to something or someone opposite never harming your interlocutors, as classic Ghazali advised. Then such an important deliverance from delusion could be expected![8]

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[i]What is the difference between knowing a person's determination of health and satiety, their causes and conditions, on the one hand, and being healthy and full, on the other hand, such is the difference between the Sufi path and other knowledge … it became clear to me that there is no hope to eternal happiness except with piety and personal abstinence from passion. The most important thing is to break the ties of the heart with this world, to break with worldly illusions, to turn to eternal abode, and to turn to the highest point of longing for God the Exalted. And that requires renunciation of honors and riches and evasion of what preoccupies and binds about 6 months; God has tied my tongue and prevented me from teaching (he was the most famous professor in Baghdad of his time for over 300 students). That tied tongue caused sadness in my heart and deprived me of the ability to digest and take food; bread did not go down my throat, and I could not digest any food. I left Baghdad, having previously divided my wealth; I passed Syria, Damascus, Jerusalem, Mecca, Medina, and Hijaz. It lasted 10 years. One who has not experienced any of this knows the reality of the prophecy only by name. And the miracles of the holy people are, in fact, the first announcements of the prophet, such were the states of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) when he went to the hill of Hira to connect with his Lord in solitude and to serve Him. This state is experienced by those who follow the path of the Sufis or who associate with them because Sufis are people who do no harm to their interlocutors." This is how Ghazali's beautiful definition is summed up: "Science is the establishment of truth on the basis of evidence! Tasting is a close connection to such a condition. Faith is the acceptance of oral testimonies and testimonies of experiences with good thinking," quoted fragmentarily according to the already mentioned book "Deliverance from Delusion."

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Islamic Tradition of Bosniaks as an Example of Coexistence and Respect for the Other and Different

Safvet Halilović

Abstract

Ever since the advent of Islam in these areas, Bosnian Muslims have been members of the mainstream of Islam (Ahl as-Sunna), and when it comes to partial religious matters, they have followed one of the oldest mezheps (law schools) that originated in Islam, the Hanafi mezhep. Thus, for almost 6 centuries, Bosniaks, as indigenous European Muslims, have had their own religious tradition, which, despite going through different, often very difficult stages (wars, exile, occupation, dictatorial regimes, isolation from the Muslim world, etc.), have managed to maintain a high degree of originality and foundation in the primary sources of Islam.

The Islamic tradition of Bosniaks is, in fact, considerable experience accumulating over a long period of time, which helps the Muslims of this region to survive and preserve their religious identity despite the harsh environment and all kinds of hardship they have been exposed to Bosniaks, as indigenous European Muslims, have one advantage over other Muslim nations: they do not view modern civilization from the side or from afar but live in its very center and fully feel its impulses and its nature. This means that they feel its strengths and weaknesses, but also their needs better than others. At the same time, they inherit Islam, preserve and nurture it as a treasure and study it with love and loyalty in their hearts. They have never departed from its mainstream practice, turned it into a sect, or ideologized it. Also, they have withstood the challenge of extremism, radicalization, and intolerance of others and their difference. On the contrary, other religions and worldviews have always been respected within their religious tradition. This was especially demonstrated by the followers of Christianity, both Roman Catholic and Orthodox, with whom they have always cherished good neighborly relations and treated their religion, holidays, and customs with the utmost respect. Bosniaks have also had a good relationship with Jewish community members. The tolerance of Bosniaks toward others and different ones was especially demonstrated during the aggression in Bosnia and Herzegovina, when genocide was committed against Bosniaks and when over 900 mosques, several 100 maktabs, and other sacral objects were destroyed and devastated; even in such cruel conditions, Bosniaks did not resort to retribution and did not demolish and desecrate others' places of worship and sanctities, which provides solid evidence of their high tolerance, respect for other religions, and their readiness for peaceful coexistence.

Keywords: Bosniaks, Coexistence, Islamic tradition, Moderation, Tolerance.

Sažetak

Još od od dolaska islama na ove prostore, muslimani Bošnjaci su po pitanju vjerovanja pripadnici glavnog toka islama (ehli-sunne), a u parcijalnim obredoslovnim pitanjima slijede jedan od najstarijih mezheba (pravnih škola) koji su nastali u islamu, a to je hanefijski mezheb. Dakle, već gotovo šest stoljeća Bošnjaci, kao autohtoni evropski muslimani, imaju svoju vjersku tradiciju koja je, i pored toga što je prolazila kroz različite, često veoma teške etape (ratovi, progonstva, okupacije, diktature, genocidi itd.), ipak uspjela sačuvati visok stepen originalnosti i utemeljenosti u primarnim izvorima islama.

Islamska tradicija Bošnjaka je jedno ogromno iskustvo koje se akumulira dug vremenski period i koje muslimanima ovog podneblja pomaže da, i pored surovosti okruženja i svakojakih teškoća kojima su izloženi, prežive i sačuvaju svoj vjerski identitet. Bošnjaci, kao autohtoni evropski muslimani, imaju jednu prednost u odnosu na druge muslimanske narode: oni na savremenu civilizaciju ne gledaju sa strane, ili izdaleka, već žive u samom njenom središtu i u potpunosti osjećaju njene impulse i njenu narav. To znači da bolje od drugih osjećaju i njene prednosti i njene nedostatke, ali i potrebe. Istovremeno, baštine islam, čuvaju ga i njeguju kao dragocjenost i proučavaju ga s ljubavlju i odanošću u srcu. Nikada nisu odstupili od njegovog općeg toka i skliznuli u sektu, ili ga ideologizirali. Također, nikada nisu podlegli izazovu ekstremizma, radikalizacije i netolerantnosti spram drugog i drugačijeg. Naprotiv, druge vjere i svjetonazori su u okrilje njihove vjerske tradicije uvijek imali puno uvažavanje i respekt. To je posebno izraženo prema sljedbenicima kršćanstva, svjedeno radilo se o rimokatolicima ili pravoslavcima, s kojima s uvijek gajili dobre komšijske odnose i maksimalno poštivali njihovu vjeru, blagdane i običaje. Također, Bošnjaci su i s pripadnicima jevrejske vjere imali veoma korektan odnos.

Tolerancija Bošnjaka prema drugima i drugačijima posebno je došla do izražaja za vrijeme agresije na Bosnu i Hercegovinu, kada je nad Bošnjacima počinjen genocid i kada im je srušeno i devastirano preko devet stotina džamija, nekoliko stotina mekteba i drugih sakralnih objekata; .čak ni u takvim okrutnim uvjetima Bošnjaci nisu posezali za odmazdom i nisu organizovano rušili i skrnavili tuđe bogomolje i svetinje, a to dovoljno govori o visokom stepenu njihove tolerantnosti, uvažavanju pripadnika drugih vjera i spremnosti na miran i pošten suživot s njima.

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A Brief Introduction to the Historical Background of the Origin of the Bosniak Islamic Tradition

The linguistic structure of this term comprising three elements (ethnicity, geography, and religion)—Islam requires the phenomenon determined by it to be observed and considered through the totality of the circumstances related to the elements of its terminological structure, that is, Islam, tradition, and the Bosniaks: Islam—as the fundamental value orientation and the primary spiritual orientation of the Bosniaks, the tradition—as the set of all theoretical and practical accomplishments, and the Bosniaks—as a specific social category within the Muslim corpus, determined by the permeating but distinctive elements in relation to other Muslim groups. To define, analyze, and establish the proper development program of Bosniak Islamic tradition, it is absolutely necessary to take into consideration both elements (common and specific), that is, to observe the situation from both perspectives.

Berlin Congress and its outcomes are the new era turning point, which brings the Bosniaks still an uncompleted period of permanent destabilization on many different bases. Since 1878, the possibility of realization of the Bosniak Islamic tradition as the leading principle of their spiritual culture has transited from supportive to confronting milieu of the ruling, and in different epochs, even mutually significantly different system frameworks. Nowadays, it can be observed that the circumstances arranged in such a manner were aimed to lead to successive reprogramming of the spiritual code of the Bosniaks (either by manipulation or by force).[1–3]

Under such circumstances, since the Ottomans withdrew in 1878 until the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period 1992–1995, Bosniak cherishing of Islamic tradition mainly functioned as a closed and static phenomenon resistant to any programmed changes under external (un) friendly influence. The reasons are numerous: state systems either unfriendly or destructively oriented toward the Bosniaks, the elements of self-isolation coerced by the threat of spiritual endangerment and biological disappearance, inability to cope under continuous changing of social circumstances, lack of human resources caused by continuous elimination of prospective leaders, promotion of religiously impotent political Bosniak "authorities," planned shutdown of educational institutions, agricultural reform and robbery of waqifs, directed economic weakening, biological exhaustion by periodical local, and world wars, etc.

Nevertheless, in spite of all the above said, Muslims and the Bosniaks, have managed to preserve a high degree of originality in their own religious tradition. Traveling through the Balkans where the Bosniaks live, in the first place through Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sandžak, only a glance suffices to become convinced that the Muslims live there: the mosques are being built, the prayer adhan is heard, the worship prayers are being done in the Islamic congregation, people fast in the month of Ramadan, Zakat is given, people make the pilgrimage, there are Islamic religious schools and faculties, the Islamic religious days and holidays are celebrated, the qurban is ritually sacrificed, and sacrifice is offered for the newly born children, etc.[4–9]

In short, the Bosniaks manifest their devotion to Islam, believing in the principles of the Islamic faith and obeying, according to their own circumstances, the partial principles and rules of Islam.

One can certainly say that there is a great number of Bosniaks who are not devoted to Islam, who fail to do the worship prayers, who fail to fast in the month of Ramadan, and who do not follow the Islamic rules. Such must be said that it is not just the case with the Bosniaks. Even more, numerous Muslim communities, such as the Turks, Arabs, Pakistanis, and other nations, have ones who are not believers at all or who fail to practice Islamic principles and rules in their daily life. The well-known is the Noble Quran principle which says: "One may not be initiated into the religion by force." It is important to have the freedom that enables people to practice Islam, and people should be invited to join Islam in a dignified manner, explaining to them its foundations, essence, principles, and rules.

The thorough analysis of Bosniak Islamic tradition can show that their tradition is, in fact, very compatible with the principles of the Islamic middle way (al-wasatiyyah al-Islamiyya), proclaimed in the Islamic Charter, a very important publication issued by the International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS).[a] This very important document, written by eminent contemporary Islamic scholars with an international reputation, states, among other things, the concept of positive moderation based on the equilibrium and moderation in observations related to faith and life, without

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[a]Islamic Charter was published as an integral part of the resolution of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the interpretation of Islam, Sarajevo, 2006, and afterward, it was published as a separate publication two times, in 2010 and 2012. The chart was translated from Arabic into Bosnian by Safvet Halilović and Mehmed Kico.

any extremism and exaggeration, but which also does not deny nor does any damage, and it also says:

"Islam is marked by moderation in everything and, therefore, moderation is the fundamental characteristic and property of its followers, as it is said in the Noble Quran: *Thus we have made you a just and moderate nation* (The Holy Quran, 2:143). Moderation that we trust is a positive equilibrium in all fields: faith-related (aqidah), practical, material, conceptual, individual, and social. Islam, in the life of an individual, makes the equilibrium between the spiritual and the material, the reason and the heart, the right and the duty, the life in this world, and the preparation for the hereafter *"Our Lord! Give us in this world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good... (2:201); ... but seek, that which Allâh has bestowed on you, the home of the Hereafter, and forget not your portion in this world"* (28:77). On the contrary, Islam establishes precise balances between the individual and the society. The individual is not given the rights and freedom with which he can endanger the interests of the society, as it is done by capitalism, nor does it give the society the power in management which enables it to oppress the individual, exhaust, and squash him, as it is done by socialism and communism. In fact, it gives the individual his rights, and it gives the society its rights but without oppression and without doing damage. This is regulated by the Sharia legal regulations and rules" (*Islamic Charter of the IUMS*, 2006:93–94).

Considering the contemporary events in the part of the world traditionally called "Islamic," unfortunately, various disruptions, antagonisms, conflicts, fractions, and other deviant phenomena and problems can be observed. One of the serious issues is the question of radicalism and extremism, which are, eventually, associated with the problem of terrorism, and it is also caused by neglecting "the principles of the middle way," which represent the very essence of Islam and its doctrine. Owing to its ulema and the Islamic community proclaiming the moderate, that is, the middle course in the interpretation of Islam which does not allow any extremism and exaggeration, the Bosniaks have managed to avoid that, which, unfortunately, happened among some other Muslim people, and that is the occurrence and strengthening of violent extremism and radicalization. This is a very important segment showing why it is absolutely necessary to preserve and affirm the Islamic tradition of the Bosniaks. In this respect, some other segments of the Islamic Chart that make a clear distinction showing the compatibility of the Bosniak Islamic tradition with the principles of the "Islamic middle way" can be mentioned, and it is the course that does not allow any extremism and radicalization but, at the same time, it also does not allow any unstable approach to Islam and reduction of its constants (*thavābit*).[10–12]

"We are convinced that exaggeration in faith can be destructive for an individual and the society: "beware of exaggeration in faith, it destroyed the ones before you" (Hadith conveyed by Ibn Majah, Al-Nasa'i, and Ahmad). It is also destructive to be unstable in faith, its values, doctrines, and rules. Therefore, let us stick to the middle way as the guideline in all the fields. That course suits the community and, in this way, the state of the religious community is correct. The idea of this course can be understood in this: the middle way between the proponents of only one madhhab, on the one hand and those advocating cancelation of all madhhabs, on the other; middle way with respect to tasawwuf, between the ones that accept it even when it is deviant, and those who absolutely reject it; the middle way between the ones who take the reasoning as the judge even when it is contrary to categorical Sharia text, and those who completely exclude the mind even in understanding the text; the middle way between those who absolutely negate inspiration (ilhām) and do not recognize the existence of any of its traces, and those who exaggerate in referring to it to such an extent that they take it as a source of Sharia rules; middle way between those who advocate strict standpoints (tešeddud) even in the marginal issues, and the proponents of the superficial approach even in some fundamental issues and principles; middle way between philosophy of the idealists almost uninterested in reality and the philosophy of the realists who do not believe in great ideals; middle way between the proponents of inalterability even when it is about the means and the instruments and the ones who advocate the changes even when it is about the principles and aims; middle way between the proponents of the revival and ijtihad even in the bases of faith and its irrefutable truths and those who advocate noncritical following (taqlid), who are the opponents of ijtihad even when it is about the problems of the modern time unimaginable to the former generations; middle way between those who neglect the inalterable Sharia texts referring to the aims of Sharia and those who neglect common aims referring to the external meaning of the texts; middle way between the ones who invite for unreserved opening toward the world and those who invite for unjustified self-isolation; middle way between the ones who exaggerate when they proclaim even the pious Muslims to be nonbelievers and those who are indifferent even when it is about the apostates, enemies of faith or traitors acting on behalf of the enemies of the Muslims; middle way between those who exaggerate in prohibiting everything creating an impression that nothing is permitted and those who exaggerate in permitting everything as if there was nothing prohibited in the religion; middle way between those who are submerged into the past, absent from present and the future, and those who forget the past as if they wished to leave it in the oblivion for ever" (Islamic Charter, 2006: 93–95).

Compatibility of the Bosniak Islamic tradition with these principles can be mostly recognized in the written papers of the Bosniak aleems who cherish the Islamic tradition of their people and who write the texts in the media of the Islamic community and publish their books in its official publishing company (El-Kalem) or in the publications of the educational institutions of the Islamic community (faculties and Islamic religious schools). Therefore, it is very

important for the contemporary Bosniak aleems to continue the tradition of their predecessors who wrote the most important books and papers in almost all Islamic disciplines: tafsir, hadiths, fiqhs, usulas, tasawwufs, etc. and who, at the same time, actively participated in all social events and streams, counseling their own people and protecting them from everything that could endanger their physical and spiritual/Islamic survival and stay in this territory. They did not wait for anyone to teach them "orthodoxy" and "pure" Islam, but they themselves studied the fundamental sources of Islam, and on the basis of these sources, they respected the reality, environment, and circumstances under which their people lived; they sought the best solutions that could not be found or proposed at that time. All this contributed to the shaping of the Islamic tradition of the Bosniaks, and as aforesaid, it passed through different stages and tumultuous events, still retaining a high degree of originality established by the sources of Islam. Under no circumstances should this be understood as if the Bosniak Islamic tradition was a static category, not subjected to criticism and questioning aimed to improve and better it.

This paper is aimed to do this: to give its contribution and to reconsider the possibility of affirmation and improvement of the Bosniak Islamic tradition. Recent events in the Islamic and Arabic world support our thesis that the Bosniak Islamic tradition ought to be preserved and improved/affirmed; it should not be destroyed or undermined as it is being done by some groups and individuals coming (or being financed) from such countries with the aim to promote the "true" Islam, and who, with their work and activities, create confusion and disorder, causing disturbance and anxiety among the Muslims here.[13–17]

Islam and Relations with Non-muslims

As clearly seen in everything mentioned above, the Bosniak Islamic tradition is founded on primary Islamic sources, and it corresponds to the principles of the Islamic middle way (al-wasatiyyah al-Islamiyya). Therefore, we, the Muslims, the Bosniaks, believe that the Sharia principle of the relation of Muslims with non-Muslims is reflected in the messages stated in the following verses/ayahs of the Noble Quran:

"Allâh does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion nor drove you out of your homes. Verily, Allâh loves those who deal with equity. It is only as regards to those who fought against you on account of religion and have driven you out of your homes, and helped to drive you out, that Allâh forbids you to befriend them. And whosoever will befriend them; then such are the wrong-doers" (The Holy Quran, 60:8, 9).

The second verse/ayah defines the logic of the relationship with the non-Muslims during the war, and that is the prohibition of cooperating and associating with them. With respect to the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims under the circumstances of peace, it is briefly stated in the first verse/ayah, pointing out two things: doing good and equity. These two principles are required by Muslims to be respected in relation to all people, even if it is about those who negate Islam, as long as they do not rise against them and fight against those who invite Islam and do not disturb their followers. As regards the pacific ones who do not fight against the Muslims because of their religion, do not drive them out of their homes and land, and do not support their banishment, almighty Allâh loves those who deal with equity and those who do good. Equity (al-Qist) is righteousness (al-'Adl) and benevolence (al-Birr) means doing good (al-Ihsān).

Equity means that the right without deprivation is given to the one to whom it belongs, and righteousness is when one disposes of more than belongs to him. Equity is when one exercises his right without expanding it, and righteousness is when one waives some of his rights. It can be noticed that the Noble Quran uses the word righteousness (al-Birr) in relation to those who are not Muslims and, in Islamic practice, this word is used to refer to the most sacred rights that come after the right of the almighty Allâh, and these are the rights of the parents referred to as birru-l-valideju, that is, doing good to the parents.

In Islamic legislation and legal practice, the special place is dedicated to non-Muslim followers of the scripture. The notion the followers of the scripture (Ahl al-Kitāb) refers to those whose religion is basically founded on one of the divine revealed scriptures, such as the Jews and the Christians whose religions are based on Tawrat (Torah) and Injeel (Testaments).

The Noble Quran orders that the conversation with them about their religion must be done in the kindest possible manner (billeti hije ahsen) so that the discussion does not produce any argument or burst chauvinism and hatred in their hearts.

The Almighty Allâh says:

"And argue not with the people of the scripture unless it be in a way that is better, with good words and in good manner...except with such of them as do wrong, and say to them. We believe in which has been revealed to us and revealed to you; our Ilâh (God) and your Ilâh (God) is one and to Him, we have submitted" (The Holy Quran, 29:46).

Islam allows having meals with the followers of the scripture just as it allows the family ties with them in marriage with their good and chaste women according to the regulations of the Noble Quran defining marital life based on affection and mercy... "and among his signs is that He created for you the wives from among yourselves, and He has put between you affection and mercy..." (Ar-Rûm, 21). In this manner, the almighty Allâh allows the Muslim to take a non-Muslim to be his housewife, his partner in life and the mother to his children and that uncles and aunts, grandfathers and grandmothers of his children may be non-Muslims.[18–21]

The Holy Quran emphasizes:

Made lawful to you this day are At-Tayyibât.... and yours is lawful to them. Lawful to you in marriage are chaste women from the believers and chaste women from those who were given the scripture before your time when you have given their due Mahr desiring chastity not committing illegal sexual intercourse, nor taking them as girlfriends (5:5).

Islam and the Dialogue

Reading the original texts of Islam, we learn that Islam is the religion that obliges its followers—the Muslims to lead the dialogue with others. This is an integral part of the concept of referring to Islam as revealed by almighty Allâh to His Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and all the Muslims after him, in the manner as stated in the words of the almighty: "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better" (16:125).

With respect to advice, this verse/ayah says that it suffices that it is fair, but, as long as the dialogue is concerned, more is required... a way that is better... since the advice is given to the one who agrees and the dialogue is led with those who have different opinion, so it is desirable to carefully choose the words and do it in a manner in which we cheer them up and become closer to them.

When the Noble Quran is observed with due attention, it becomes clear that the book of dialogue is matchless: the dialogue between Allâh's prophets and their people, as can be seen in the dialogue of Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, Hud, Salih, Šhu'ayb, and others, with their people, in a number of surah in the Noble Quran; the dialogue between almighty Allâh and his creatures—almighty Allâh led the dialogue with his angels when He wanted to create the man. Moreover, the Noble Quran mentions the dialogue between Allâh and the worst creature, Iblis. It is a long dialogue mentioned in several surahs of the Noble Quran (see surah: Al-A'rāf, Al-Hiğr, Al-Isrā', Sād).

Therefore, we are open to a constructive and positive dialogue with anyone who differs from us as long as they wish to seek the truth without imposing their opinions, their philosophy, or their politics. We especially wish the dialogue with the followers of the scripture, particularly with the Christians.

The Noble Quran teaches us ethics of dialogue saying: "And argue not with the people of the Scripture unless it be in a way that is better except with such of them as do wrong: and say to them "We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you: Our Ilâh and your Ilâh is One and to Him we have submitted" (The Holy Quran, 29:46).

Muslims are ordered to have a dialogue with the followers of the scripture, the Jews and Christians, in the best and the most appropriate manner, except with those among them who are not righteous and who cross the boundaries in their behavior, there is no dialogue with them. The Noble Qur'an orders the believers to stick to the following principle in the dialogue with the followers of the scripture (the Jews and Christians): billeti hiya ahsan..., that is, lead the dialogue with good words in a way that is better, with good words and in a good manner. In this respect, it is desirable to remind of the common standpoints agreed by all the followers of the divine revelation, avoiding disagreement as said by almighty Allâh... and say "We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you: Our Ilâh and your Ilâh is One and to him we have submitted (29:46)." This verse/ayah emphasizes the touchpoints in order to bring the parties in the dialogue closer to each other, with the exclusion of the ones who are not righteous and with whom there cannot be any dialogue.

It is important to point out that Muslims lead the dialogue with the followers of the Scripture honestly and not for the reasons of tactics since we are firmly convinced in the necessity of the dialogue and not in the necessity of a conflict. In this respect, an eminent contemporary scholar Yusuf el Karadavi, the president of the IUMS, pointed out in his opening speech at the founding convention of the Union in London in 2004:

"We want to say very clearly that the Union for Muslim Scholars is not some self-isolated association, but it is open to the surrounding world, to all believers, civilizations, and philosophies. With its apparently purely religious starting point, the union believes in the numerousness of races, languages, religions, and cultures. It believes that almighty God is one, and everything else is numerous, and that numerousness is the expression of the will of Allâh and His wisdom. The union believes in the necessity of dialogue among those who are different, and it does not believe in stirring up conflicts. It believes that the dialogue can be fruitful if it chooses the right causes, if it has honest intentions and goodwill, respecting ethics, which is, according to the recommendations of the Noble Quran, fulfilled through the talks in the way that is better. For these reasons, we are open for dialogue, especially Islamic–Christian dialogue, since Jesus (Isa, Mesih, peace be upon him), his mother, and the Scripture that was revealed to him have a special place in the Noble Qur'an and among the followers of Islam."

Respect for Others and Otherness is a Fundamental Determinant of the Bosniak Islamic Tradition

The Bosniaks, as the indigenous European Muslims having their authentic Islamic tradition, always have respected other religions and views. They have never converted anyone into their religion, never persecuted anyone because of a different religion or a different race, nor have they fought wars using the expressions such as "humane displacement of population," "cleansing of the non-Bosniaks," or using the language of modern times, killing anyone at any time for the sake of the concept of "final solution" (genocide). Others and the different ones have always been safe and protected among the Bosniaks; it suffices to remember the persecution of the Serbs and the Romani people during the fascist regime who were defended by the Bosniak intellectuals

and other eminent persons at the beginning of the World War II, despite the fact that they exposed themselves and their families to the deadly danger. Much longer ago, in the 15th and 16th centuries, the Bosniaks gave sanctuary to the Jews, the Sephardi, when they were banished from Spain. All this illustrates the unquestionable determination of the Bosniaks, and Muslims, to be tolerant, to respect others and otherness, and to give their maximum in advocating dialogue and peaceable coexistence.

Taught by the enlightening instructions of our honorable religion Islam, the Bosniaks have always had a high degree of tolerance and respect for other religions and traditions. The proof of this fact is not only the churches, cathedrals, and synagogues built in the vicinity of the mosques, as is the case in Sarajevo and many other places where the Bosniaks make the majority, but also the thoughtfulness, solidarity, and full respect and estimation for the followers of other religions and ethnic groups. It is well-known that in the height of the Siege of Sarajevo and its daily bombing from the surrounding hills by the Serb criminals, the temples of the orthodox religion in that city remained untouched. The same case was in other places controlled by the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina: the Bosniaks did not avenge the aggressors, they did not demolish their temples, nor did they demolish their cemeteries; they did not systematically kill innocent civilians or rob their property. All this shows to what an extent these European Muslim people are civilized and who, in spite of everything done to them (demolishing of mosques, torture, killings, persecution, rapes, etc.), have never accepted the challenge of extremism and radicalization.

Nevertheless, it seems that some cannot cope with the fact that the Bosniaks have remained the majority in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in spite of everything they have experienced and survived during the recent aggression, aimed to totally exterminate them as the people or to reduce their number to the level of some religious community deprived of their rights, as is the case in Myanmar from where we have recently received the news.

However, it is obvious that some cannot cope with the fact that Bosniaks still exist as people. Therefore, it is necessary for them to try and use propaganda to produce lies and insinuations. The Bosniaks are supposed to be presented as extremists, radical, and dangerous fanatics in order to disable their normal development and functioning. It is, in fact, the narrative promoted in this part of the world for a long period of time by the ones who have the greater state plans for the country inhabited by the Bosniaks for centuries. This is, unfortunately, still the interest of those highly positioned political officials coming from the neighboring countries who give such statements supporting the Serb and Croatian projects of the greater state. Their statements have very negative connotations and are, undoubtedly, very encouraging for the Serb and the Croatian extremists aspiring to Bosnia and Herzegovina and wishing to destabilize it. Presentation of the Bosniaks as extremists and radicals supports the tendencies which disturb and aggravate Bosnia and Herzegovina in the process of European and Euro–Atlantic integrations.

For all the above reasons, we have the right to ask this question too: is the intention of such islamophobic statements to justify the genocide and other atrocities committed by the aggressor on the Bosniaks and to give amnesty to those who committed them? The same rhetoric was used by those who started the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of the 1990s and who spoke about the "fundamentalism" of the Muslims at that time and saying that they endangered Europe. Thus, they spread the rumor that here, on the "Bulwark of Christendom," Europe should be defended from "Muslim invasion." Then, everybody saw that this story about the "Bulwark of Christendom" ended in slaughters, persecutions, and concentration camps. All these are questions and worries induced by those serious qualifications of the Bosniaks since it is well-known that the Bosniaks live in a region in which their environment is not at all friendly because their neighbors continuously deny their language and all those elements that enable one nation to develop normally and to exist in a certain region.

Despite all this, the Bosniaks, by God's grace, still live and do not allow themselves to succumb to radicalization and extremism since the Bosniaks have never committed any religious violence or acted with exclusivism; they have always respected others and otherness to the maximum extent. It is simply permeated in the very substance of the Bosniak people, who have a rich Islamic tradition, which has taught them to love and cherish what belongs to them and to respect what is not theirs and not to disturb. For all these reasons, it is not at all fair to accuse the Bosniaks of radicalism and extremism since it is completely incompatible with their own self and their religious tradition.[22,23]

Conclusion

In the end, we consider it essential to point out the following: there are many fields in which those who believe in God, his messages, and the future world (and here, I refer to the Muslims, Christians, and Jews in the first place) can successfully cooperate and lead a good dialogue. We take the liberty to single out the following:

The field of faith in God and the future (eternal) world: in order to oppose, altogether, the arrogant materialism denying the metaphysical world and everything that is not sensory and spreading atheism around the world, claiming that the complete story of life is nothing but the wombs giving birth and the ground that swallows with nothingness afterward as it is described in the Noble Quran we die and we live, and nothing destroys us except ad-Dahr (Al-Jâthiyah, 24). We could also act together toward those groups who declare to believe in God, but, in practice and thinking, they fail to find the place for him, let alone to follow what almighty God orders and prohibits.

- The field of ethical values: inherited by humankind from the messenger's missions. It is very important to oppose

the burst of debauchery and immorality that has almost completely destroyed all moral values of humankind.

- The field of justice, honor, and freedom: all of these are related to human rights and sovereignty of people and their rights to live freely in their own country. The most distinct example of deprivation of those rights is the oppressed Palestinian people whose blood is shed on a daily basis, their homes are demolished, their land is confiscated, their loved ones are abused, and their sacred places are desecrated in sight of the civilized world.

These are the fields in which all those who believe in God, his messages, and the future world can cooperate. In this, a very fruitful and useful dialogue can be led with the aim of affirming humanity and general well-being. That is, globally, the dire need of the man of the present time.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Inclusivism and Tolerance

Ivan Andrijanić

Abstract

In this paper, Paul Hacker's idea of inclusivism and its distinction from tolerance will be problematized; but not before the very notion and idea of tolerance are discussed, that might actually be conditioned by modern worldview and experience. Paul Hacker argues that Hinduism is not tolerant but an inclusivist religion and that a tolerant religion can only be one where a clear difference between "itself" and "other" is established. The article will present examples of Bhagavadgītā, which corresponds to Hacker's notion of inclusiveness, and the example of Dārā Šukūh, which corresponds to the concept of tolerance. However, while tolerance is a concept developed in the Western cultural and religious milieu, in Hinduism, there are many examples of inclusivism without the hierarchization of included concepts. That is why this paper would propose to postulate two types of inclusivism, one with hierarchy and the other without. An example of inclusivism without hierarchization might be Ramakrishna. The conclusion is that the situation is complex and that both types of inclusivism, the one with hierarchization and the one without, have the potential to regulate the daily practice of toleration in society.

Keywords: Exclusivism, Hinduism, Inclusivism, Intolerance, Tolerance.

Sažetak

U ovom radu problematizirat će se ideja Paula Hackera o inkluzivizmu i njegovom razlikovanju od tolerancije; ali ne prije nego što se prodiskutira sam pojam i ideja tolerancije, koja zapravo može biti uvjetovana modernim svjetonazorom i iskustvom. Paul Hacker tvrdi da hinduizam nije tolerantna već inkluzivistička religija, te da tolerantna religija može biti samo ona u kojoj se uspostavlja jasna razlika između "sebe" i "drugih." U članku će biti prikazani primjeri Bhagavadgīte, koja odgovara Hackerovom pojmu inkluzivnosti, i primjer Dārā Šukūha, koji odgovara konceptu tolerancije. Međutim, dok je tolerancija koncept razvijen u zapadnom kulturnom i religijskom miljeu, u hinduizmu postoje mnogi primjeri inkluzivizma bez hijerarhizacije uključenih koncepata. Zato bi ovaj rad predložio postuliranje dva tipa inkluzivizma, jedan s hijerarhijom i drugi bez. Primjer inkluzivizma bez hijerarhizacije mogao bi biti Ramakrishna. Zaključak je da je situacija složena, te da oba tipa inkluzivizma, onaj s hijerarhizacijom i onaj bez hijerarhizacije, imaju potencijal regulirati svakodnevnu praksu tolerancije u društvu.

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Introduction

Originally, this paper was presented at the symposium "Faith in God–unites or divides?" which was held in the beautiful atmosphere of the European Academy in the Banja Luka diocese. The context of the symposium is a commendable project of the European Center for Reconciliation, Peace, Interreligious and Interethnic Cooperation at the "Maria Zvijezda" Meeting House. Within the project of developing interethnic and interreligious dialogue between the Bosniak (Muslim), Serbian (Orthodox) and Croat (Catholic) communities, this paper will problematize some aspects of interreligious relations in the context of the Indian subcontinent. This paper is conceived as a kind of meditation on the issues of inclusivism and tolerance within the framework constructed by the German Indologist Paul Hacker (1913–1979). The issue that this paper will address is the relationship between the concepts of inclusivism and tolerance; are they mutually exclusive? Do they belong to different sides of the same spectrum? A related question is whether they operate in different thought and value systems. The question of toleration, or rather, the peaceful coexistence of communities belonging to different religions, is deeply related to the main framework of the project, namely the question of how much religion divides and how much it unites members of different communities.

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Religions of the Indian Subcontinent and Paul Hacker's Concept of Inclusivism

From an early age, the Indian subcontinent was considered a place where different religions coexisted in peaceful coexistence. Halbfass[1] cites the early (possibly even the earliest) example of Francois Bernier (1620–1688), who stayed in India from 1658 to 1670. Bernier conveys the opinion of a Hindu Brahmin priest who does not claim that Christianity is wrong and that it is quite possible that it is good for Christians and that God has created different ways to reach heaven. Halbfass also conveys a very similar claim about the Brahmins made by Immanuel Kant, probably referring to Bernier. Another early example of a report on Hindu tolerance could be, according to Halbfass, the missionary Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1682–1719), who also described religious tolerance and pluralism in India. During romanticism, the news of Indian tolerance is transmitted by Herder, and to this day, it is a matter of widespread popular opinion to consider India a distinctly benevolent and tolerant country.

This notion was examined more closely and questioned by Paul Hacker. He gradually developed the concept of inclusivism in his works. Hacker's posthumously published work, Inklusivismus (Hacker 1983), contains the main tenets of the theory at its most advanced stage.

The concept refers primarily to a specific Hindu way of dealing with foreign religions and worldviews, which, contrary to the widely accepted view, does not correspond to the notion of religious tolerance. Hacker understands inclusivism as a tendency to assimilate certain alien religious notions and ideas or earlier stages of one's own religion. It is important for Hacker to emphasize that the assimilation of alien elements takes place unconsciously about the process and that there is no explicit reflection on the process. Moreover, there is no explicit awareness that the assimilated elements are foreign or different. For Hacker, everything that is understood in the West as tolerance in Hinduism is actually inclusivism. The foreign elements are incorporated into the existing theological or philosophical system and declared as their own. An appropriate definition of inclusivism can be found in Halbfass' (1990: 411) paraphrase of Hacker's words (1970: 20; Kleine Schriften, p. 599) in which he says that inclusivism is the practice of "…claiming for, and thus including in, one's own religion or world view what belongs in reality to another, foreign or competing system." Halbfass' addition to Hacker's original expression in which he distinguishes the "other" from the "foreign" is not accidental because inclusivism can mean the assimilation of a concept that belongs to another Hindu sect or earlier stage of religious development and therefore does not have to be "foreign" as elements of a religion that does not belong to the Hindu religious horizon. Hacker (1983: 15–17) cites the example of Bhagavadgītā (9, 23), where Kṛṣṇa claims that those who worship other deities serve him in fact. The example of Bhagavadgītā is actually even more productive as an example of inclusiveness in the light of Mislav Ježić's[2–5] studies of Gītā's layered structure. Analysis of historical text layers, namely, reveals different historical teachings. The epic layer, then the first *Sāṃkhya* layer, the hymn in *triṣṭubhs*, the first Yoga layer, and the Upaniṣad layers are all united in the final Bhakti redaction. These different layers contain the teachings of warrior ethics, the teachings of the philosophical systems of *Sāṃkhya*, Yoga, and Vedānta, which are hierarchically arranged and subordinated to the synthesis of Bhakti, devotional service to the Lord. All these teachings that belong to the Hindu religious horizon are incorporated into the Gītā system with the devotional Bhakti and theistic Vedānta philosophy at the top. This example also shows Hacker's idea that the assimilation of a foreign element creates a hierarchy of concepts in which the foreign assimilated element is pushed to a lower position in the hierarchy. Hacker's (1957: 178)[6] example of Tulsīdās, a 16th century poet, shows how this "inclusivism" and hierarchization works among Hindu sects; in his *magnum opus*, Rāmcaritmānas, Tulsīdās portrayed the Hindu god Śiva, the highest deity of Śaiva cults, as a worshiper of Rāma, whose cult Tulsīdās promotes. By including Śiva in his own system, Tulsīdās, in fact, claimed the Śaiva religion in its entirety for his own.

Hacker's concept of inclusivism developed gradually. The term inklusivismus and its related forms (inklusivistisch) appear for the first time in Hacker's 1957 paper, which deals with the concept of "tolerance." Already in that paper, Hacker put forward a thesis that he would later develop to its ultimate consequences, that fitting and assimilating foreign elements without explicit reflection on the process is not "tolerance."

On the soil of the Indian subcontinent, however, one can find an abundance of obvious examples of peaceful mutual coexistence and respect between different religions. It would not be valid to conclude that Hindu inclusivism must be intolerant because it does not correspond to the idea of tolerance. Hacker must have been aware of this difficulty, so he introduced a distinction between doctrinal and practical tolerance. Hinduism cannot be doctrinally tolerant because it includes foreign elements unconsciously, without reflection on the process, and therefore does not develop a doctrine of tolerance. On the contrary, Hinduism is for Hacker capable of practical tolerance on two levels: on the one hand, on the level of state and legal order. Hacker cites a well-known example of the king Aśoka (3rd BCE), but we can add, as an example, Gupta and Vākātaka kings (4th–5th centuries) and their patronage of the different religious institutions as analyzed by Bakker.[7] On the contrary, practical tolerance is visible on the private level practiced by the individual. Although Hacker shows some examples of intolerance, such as the treatment of "Mlecchas" (non-Hindus) in the Hindu law books, he concludes that inclusivism is what characterizes Hinduism and that the notions of "tolerance" and "intolerance" are inappropriate to describe Hinduism. At the end of the article, Hacker makes the important claim that the concept of tolerance is of European origin and that it has its origins in 18th-century European Deism.

In his posthumously published article, Hacker (1983) sharpens his 1957 ideas and draws ultimate consequences from them. He abandons the idea that Hinduism can be "practically" tolerant in favour of claiming that everything we consider tolerant in Hinduism is almost always inclusivism. Why? The idea of the sameness of all religions precludes the possibility of tolerance because it is not possible to postulate the "other"; tolerance is possible only in conscious and self-reflexive dialogue with the "other." It is obvious that Hacker believes that, for example, Tulsīdās' Vaiṣṇavism cannot be included in the dialogue with Śaivism because Tulsīdās appropriates Śaivism, it makes it one with Vaiṣṇavism. Similarly, in the Bhagavadgītā, karma yoga (yoga of action without desire for the fruit of action) is included in the system, but it is still suggested that the action dedicated to God, that is, letting God act through devotee, is a more effective form of nullifying the effect of karmic retribution.

Therefore, the conclusion that Hacker must draw is that the necessary prerequisite for tolerance is exclusivism in the sense of full awareness of the diversity and separation of one's own religion or thought system from another with whom one is in contact. In this sense, it is clear that exclusivist religions like Christianity or Islam carry within themselves a necessary precondition or potential for the development of tolerance. And this leads Hacker to the controversial conclusion that Christianity is a tolerant religion, unlike Hinduism, which is not. Hacker, however, warns clearly that this does not mean that Hinduism is intolerant, but only that the concept of tolerance is inapplicable to Hinduism.[8–10]

It could be said that Hacker's concept of inclusivism was accepted in the circles of experts on Eastern religions. Numerous studies have been devoted to various aspects of inclusivism, for example, Kristin Beise Kiblinger[11] on Buddhist inclusivism, Törzsök[12] and Sanderson on Tantric Śaiva inclusivism or Peter Bisschop[13] on lay Śaivism.

On the contrary, Hacker's ideas of inclusivism and tolerance were not so much discussed in the secondary literature; an exception appears to be Adluri and Bagchee, who criticize Hacker, albeit more in the context of his affiliation and adherence to Catholicism and his theological writings.

Here I would like to approach some of Hacker's ideas from a slightly different point of view. First, Hacker's idea of inclusivism implies a hierarchical assimilation of foreign concepts. However, what to do with examples where we do not have hierarchization? A good example of a structural difference between both approaches, hierarchical and nonhierarchical inclusivism, can be seen in the example of the modern Hindu religious mystic Ramakrishna and his disciple Vivekānanda. Vivekānanda, known as the first great Hindu teacher in the West, became a kind of blueprint for many later Hindu gurus in the 20th and 21st centuries. His hierarchical inclusivism is evident in numerous texts. Vivekānanda certainly tolerates and deeply respects all religions and philosophies but still considers the mystical experience of the nonduality in the spirit of monistic Advaita Vedānta to be the pinnacle of spirituality. As a characteristic example of inclusivism, Hacker mentions him often.

However, Vivekānanda's spiritual master, Ramakrishna, is structurally different. In "The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna," conversations of Ramakrishna recorded by Mahendranath Gupta, Ramakrishna describes his views, his spiritual path and mystical experiences. Ramakrishna, who often speaks in parables, cites in several places in the "Gospel" the example of a substance called jal by the Hindus, pānī by Muslims and water by Englishmen. On the same page (p. 135), Ramakrishna emphatically exclaims that the same reality is called Āllāh by some, God, Brahman, Kāli, Rāma, Jesus, etc., by others. Such claims, common to Ramakrishna's discourse, testify to a nonhierarchical approach that is not easy to label as inclusivism if hierarchization is the main constitutive element in the concept. A very similar idea is seen when William Jones[14] explains why Christian missions will not succeed in converting Hindus:

"…the deity, they say, has appeared innumerable times, in many parts of this world and of all worlds, … and though we adore him in one appearance, and they in others, yet we adore, they say, the same God, to whom our several worships, though different in form, are equally acceptable if they be sincere in substance."

As far as religious practice is concerned, it is known that Ramakrishna has tried his hand at various types of Hindu religious (devotion to Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, and the Goddess) and philosophical traditions. In 1864, he was initiated by the itinerant monk Tota Puri to the nondualistic Advaita Vedānta in the tradition of Śaṅkara. Later Ramakrishna also tried his hand at Islam and Christianity and came to the conclusion that all paths lead toward the same goal. But for Ramakrishna, Advaita Vedānta was only one of the paths to the ultimate goal, while for Vivekānanda, Advaita Vedānta is the highest goal, thus creating a hierarchy that is, at least to me, unnoticeable in Ramakrishna. Moreover, despite a mystical experience on the path of nondualistic Vedānta, Ramakrishna, as is evident from "The Gospel of Ramakrishna" and biographical work about him, continued to worship the goddess Kālī. Stories of Tota Puri's disappointment with Ramakrishna's adherence to Kālī worship, even after the realization of nondual absolute, vividly show the point of Ramkrishna's teaching. In the inclusivism of Advaita Vedānta, devotion to a personal deity is a valid path, but only as a preparatory to the ultimate realization of the nondualistic absolute. In Ramakrishna, there is an obvious awareness of the "otherness" of different paths he has tried, although Advaita terminology and concepts are clearly visible.

Hacker sets three conditions for the development of tolerance: a clear awareness of other's "otherness," a conscious decision about the validity of the "other," and awareness of and reflection on the process itself. In Ramakrishna, who is neither a scholar nor a theologian, the third condition is not present, and from Advaita terminology, the elements of inclusivism can also be seen. In Ramakrishna, it is more

of a mystical, spiritual experience than a self-reflective engagement.

Nevertheless, the first two conditions are still met. Inclusivism in Ramakrishna is questionable because he did not fit and assimilate other concepts (with the exception of Advaita terminology); according to what Mahendranath Gupta describes, Ramakrishna seems deeply committed to the śaktistic tradition of devotional service to the Goddess. The question is whether we can talk about exclusivism, although there are elements for that as well, because he obviously personally adheres to the worship of the Goddess, although he often uses the concept and imagination of other religions.

Ramakrishna's approach to religious experience is obviously inclusive, but his inclusivism does not imply hierarchization. It seems to me that he is not alone in such a view.

On the contrary, on the Indian subcontinent, we also find examples of non-Hindu religious phenomena that correspond more closely to Hacker's notion of tolerance. Such an example is the Mughal Prince Dārā Šukūh, the eldest son of the Great Mughal emperor Šāh Jahān. Dārā Šukūh has been attracted to Sūfi teachings since an early age when Šah Jahān took him to the Sūfi teacher and Sheikh of the Qādirīya order Mīān Mīr. In 1653, Šukūh turned from Sūfism to dialogue with Hinduism. His first such work was Majma' al-bahrayn (Meeting of Two Oceans) from 1655. The title was taken from the Quran (18:60) and was intended to suggest that the "two oceans," Islam and Hinduism, according to their monistic principles, are directed towards dialogue and merging with each other. In the introduction, Šukūh programmatically points out that there is no difference between the teachings of the Sūfis and the Indian "monotheists" except in linguistic expression. In this work, Šukūh wants to show how both traditions, Sūfi and Hindu, speak of the same ultimate goal and how both teach the path of knowing the same supreme truth. The work in which Šukūh's religious tolerance is even more pronounced is Sirr-i Akbar (1657), a translation (and paraphrase) of 50 Upaniṣads from Sanskrit into Persian. According to Šukūh, the Upaniṣads are the source of belief in the oneness of God (tauhīd) and are in accordance with the Quran, which they can even serve as a commentary (tafsīr). Šukūh started translating the Upaniṣads because he recognized in them a monistic doctrine close to Islamic monotheism, formulated in the Quran as a transcendent unity of truth, in the Sūfi interpretation as "unity of being/existence" (waḥdat al-wuǧūd). Šukūh's understanding of Upaniṣadic doctrine is therefore marked and reinterpreted by Sūfi ideas of the oneness of God (tauḥīd), its cognition (ma'refat), and the attainment of salvation (rastgāri). He showed creativity in his attempts to establish analogies between certain ideas and thought concepts in Sūfism and Hinduism. Šukūh had a deep respect for Hindu saints and often visited and discussed with them. He met the yogin Bābā Lāl Dās in Lahore in 1653; seven of their conversations, in which Dārā's interest in the problem of common mystical language is evident, were first recorded in colloquial Hindustani, and later Chandar Bhān Brahman translated a text into Persian under the title Su'āl va Javāb (Question and Answer).[15]

Šukūh was eventually executed by his brother Aurangzeb, who would become the last of the Great Mughals. The two brothers represent two tendencies in the Islam of the Indian subcontinent; Aurangzeb, prone to pietism, Šarī'a and conservative orthopraxis, and Dārā Šukūh, a poet and mystic, open to dialogue with Hindu mysticism, at least in its monistic expression of his which Dārā was fond. Dārā fulfills Hacker's two main conditions for tolerance; first is exclusivism, that is, full awareness of the distinction between Islam and Hinduism (although he did not call it that way); second is a dynamic and self-reflexive dialogue with Hinduism. In addition to the direct dialogue with Hinduism seen in the conversation between Dārā and Hindu saint Bābā Lāl Dās, the dynamic relationship between Sūfism and Hinduism is seen in the Dārā's Sūfi reinterpretation of the Upaniṣadic Vedānta concepts. Dārā never appropriates them as Ramakrishna does but reinterprets them and seeks to understand them through his own spiritual tradition, Sūfism from which he does not deviate, at least in my understanding, not an inch. Therefore, Aurangzeb's accusations of heresy (molhed) also seem to have missed the point, and Dārā Šukūh lost his life primarily for political reasons, that is because he was Aurangzeb's main contender for the throne.

Tolerance and Inclusivism

As already mentioned, tolerance was considered by Hacker as early as 1957 to be a Western concept. According to Hacker, it came from Deism and arose in the context of the emergence of the reformation and attempts to define attitudes towards it.

The literature on religious tolerance in Europe is indeed rich; we can summarize here briefly, on the basis of Perez Zagorin's[16] work, a trajectory that began with intense religious persecution in the aftermath of the reformation. Violent mutual intolerance is based on the intellectual tradition of the time, from which pluralistic tendencies will slowly and gradually develop. Reading the works of earlier thinkers from the 16th to the 18th century, Erasmus, Thomas More, John Milton, John Locke, and others, Zagorin concludes that caring for the welfare of one's own religion contributed more to the development of tolerance than secular and pragmatic reasons.

In the introduction to the book "Religious Tolerance in the Atlantic World: Early Modern and Contemporary Perspectives," Elaine Glaser (p. 1ff)[17] criticizes traditional accounts according to which thinkers such as Locke, Milton, and then Sebastian Castellio and Hugo Grotius fought for tolerance and religious pluralism in a fierce conflict with the reactionary conservatism. Progressive forces reportedly triumphed over the conservative with the Toleration Act of 1689 when religious toleration became a legal concept.

Glaser goes on to point out the latest research that shows that the relationship between tolerance and intolerance is much more complex in these early debates. Zagorin (2003: 289) makes this clear: "…idea of toleration was itself very largely inspired by religious values and was fundamentally religious in character."

John Locke and Pierre Bayle stood at the turn of the age of faith and the enlightenment, and reflections on tolerance tended toward secularization only during the enlightenment, and Christian religious inspiration for tolerance was significantly lost in the 18th century. Voltaire is most credited for the development of the concept of tolerance in the 18th century. In modern times, tolerance has become an extremely complex concept given the great historical events of the 19th and 20th centuries, the development of the idea of human rights, totalitarian movements, the development of science, technology and utilitarianism, and the weakening of religious institutions.

In terms of contemporary research, Hacker's claim that tolerance evolved in Deist circles is somewhat simplified, if not outdated, although Deism is considered a link in the chain of 18th century phenomena in which the notion of tolerance evolved by losing sight of its theological roots. In any case, here we are dealing with an originally Christian religious concept where its religious roots are today obscured by secularization. It is, therefore, not surprising that Hacker, himself unaware of the Christian theological roots of the modern concept of tolerance, sees Christianity as the only one capable of tolerance.

However, even the concept of tolerance is not without its problems. Habermas[18] points to an apparent paradox that the act of tolerance limits acceptable behaviors, thus drawing the line for what cannot be tolerated. For example, in extreme cases like totalitarian ideologies, intolerance toward them is what makes tolerance possible. The problem with intolerance of intolerance, as Habermas sees it, is that delimitation of unacceptable behavior, "drawing the line," is highly arbitrary. On the contrary, the relationship between the one who tolerates and the one who is tolerated implies a paternalistic relationship that undermines the full realization of toleration. Habermas believes that the solution to the paradox of tolerance lies in the rationality of setting a threshold by universally accepted rational consensual delimitation, while the relationship between the one who tolerates and the tolerated must be based on symmetrical dialogical relations.

Concluding Remarks

The question here is, can it be considered that by denying tolerance in Hinduism, which is actually a Western concept coming from the Christian theological sphere and a rather modern construct, Hacker is doing Hinduism any harm? I think the answer is both yes and no, provided we distinguish the concept of tolerance from the realization of toleration in the daily religious experience. Also, the concept of tolerance, no matter how much it is considered a construct, cannot be emptied of its value content and pragmatic value. In this sense, Hacker's construction could act as an apology for Christianity. But, on the contrary, Hacker is clear when he does not consider Hinduism intolerant and when he considers tolerance a Western concept by actually relativizing its value content. Also, despite inclusivism, the historical experience of the subcontinent testifies to the peaceful coexistence of different religions and social groups. Mutual toleration of different forms of religious life is present on the soil of the Indian subcontinent until modern and contemporary times when, from the 20th century onwards, we witness violent communal riots between Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus, although the context of these tensions is again politically colored. Historical and everyday experience shows that Indian inclusivism (in both its appearances: with or without hierarchization) has a strong potential for the development of peaceful coexistence and mutual tolerance of different communities and religions. Inclusive religions, unlike exclusivist ones, have not developed violent proselytism; on the contrary, in Europe, from the violent experience of religious conflicts of the 16th and 17th centuries, in the theological circles of the exclusivist Christian religion, the prevailing concept of religious toleration, "tolerance," has developed. Despite the conceptual constructs, we will conclude that both inclusive and exclusive religions carry the potential to create peaceful coexistence and friendly relations between communities "at the ground," and that's what matters.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Religious Dilemmas

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Abstract

Man as an *animal rationale et religiosum* approaches reality in two ways: rationally—using concepts, and religiously—using myths, symbols, and rituals. Ever since man was sapiens, there have been speech and dilemmas about God, which man, according to his metaphysical intuition, has always posed. Philosophical discourse on God begins with reflections on the nature and value of religion. Dilemmas are possible in religious (philosophical) speech, but they are not possible in religious (faithful) speech. The philosopher seeks the truth, the believer seeks salvation, and they differ significantly in this. It is impossible to avoid that religion encounters philosophical thought because religion, like philosophy, is a "human event" as one of the forms of human life and existence, and everything that "happens" to man is always the subject of his reflection. That is why one can and must constantly ask oneself what religion is, and especially what my religion is, which determines the form of my life.

Because of his spiritual powers (reason and will), which form the essential part of the human being, man will always think and strive for truth (be a philosopher), just as he will always strive for freedom, goodness, and salvation (be a believer). Although there will always be people who are not philosophers and who are not believers. Just as it is not possible to separate man from his rationality, so it is not possible to separate him from his religiosity. And the dilemma from the title of this symposium: "Faith in God, unites or divides" should be changed into the statement: faith in God unites, not divides.

Keywords: Dilemma, Faith, Philosophy, Religion, Religious, Salvation, Truth.

Sažetak

Čovjek kao *animal rationale et treligiosum* pristupa stvarnosti na dva načina: razumski – koristeći se pojmovima, i religiozno (vjernički) – koristeći se mitom, simbolima i obredima. Otkada je čovjek *sapiens* postoje i govor i dileme o Bogu, koje je čovjek po svojoj metafizičkoj intuiciji uvijek postavljao. Filozofski govor o Bogu započinje razmišljanjem o Božjoj naravi i vrijednosti religije. U religijskom (filozofskom) govoru moguće su dileme, njih pak nema u religioznom (vjerničkom) govoru. Filozof traži istinu, vjernik pak spasenje i u tome se bitno razlikuju. Nije moguće izbjeći da se religija ne susreće s filozofskim mišljenjem zato što je religija kao i filozofija "ljudsko događanje," kao jedna od formi ljudskoga življenja i opstojanja, a sve ono što se čovjeku "događa," uvijek je i predmet njegova promišljanja. Zato se čovjek može i mora stalno pitati što je religija, a posebno što je moja religija, koja određuje formu mojega života.

Zbog svojih duhovnih moći (razuma i volje), koje sačinjavaju bitni dio ljudskog bića, čovjek će uvijek razmišljati i težiti za istinom (biti filozof), kao što će uvijek težiti za slobodom, dobrotom i spasenjem (biti vjernik). Premda će uvijek biti ljudi koji nisu filozofi i koji nisu vjernici. Kao što nije moguće čovjeka odvojiti od njegove racionalnosti, isto tako nije ga moguće odvojiti ni od njegove religioznosti. A dilemu iz naslova ovog simpozija: "Vjera u Boga, spaja ili dijeli," valja promijeniti u tvrdnju: "Vjera u Boga spaja, a ne dijeli."

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Introduction

Ever since man has been a rational being, he has been manifesting his rationality in relation to reality in a religious and rational way, which is why man can be defined as *animal religiosum* and *animal metaphysicum*. *Homo sapiens* talks about reality in a religious way, using myth (*mythos*) and symbols (*symbolon*), and in a rational way, using concepts (*logos*). Man talks about reality in a religious way since the dawn of his existence, interpreting cosmological beginnings of the world, as well as his own, and circumstances in which he has been living. The rational approach occurs much later in ancient Greece, the cradle of philosophy, where they attempted to interpret reality by the power of the mind (logic). That is when the first attempts to rationally interpret religion and religious phenomena appeared.

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Thus the foundations of the philosophy of religion were laid and many dilemmas were brought about. It was specifically in the attempt of rationalizing religion that different religious dilemmas, as well as philosophical (rational) problems, arose, while such dilemmas simply do not exist within a religion. In other words, there are religious dilemmas, but not dilemmas (uncertainties) within religion. And ever since, religion and philosophy (metaphysics) simultaneously, yet differently, discuss the same questions. Science comes out of philosophy, which brings about the separation of philosophy (of science) and religion, and the number of religious dilemmas grows. Kantian crisis of metaphysics prompted the division of the philosophy of religion into several forms of the *science of religion*, such as the phenomenology of religion, the sociology of religion, the psychology of religion, …which in turn further produced numerous new dilemmas. The process eventually led us to organize the studies of religious sciences, along with independent interdisciplinary field within the humanistic area. Just like in other areas of human contemplation, asking questions and searching for answers, religious area too has many dilemmas, unresolved and unasked questions. The very existence of dilemmas (doubts) often encourages further reflection and seeking new solutions. Ever since religion became the subject of philosophical thought there have been many dilemmas. For the philosopher, as opposed to the believer, a dilemma is a constituent part of the methodical search for the solution.[a] The title of our symposium is formulated as a dilemma: "Faith in God, unites or divides." This article presents only a few religious dilemmas, that may be neither the most frequent nor the most important, however, we consider them paradigmatic: (1) Is man by his nature a religious being? (2) Philosophy and/or religion? (3) Should religion be discarded?

Dilemma: is Man by His Nature a Religious Being?

Religion, as man's relationship to God or the Sacred, had existed even before philosophy. Philosophy is not the creator of religion. Religion is the subject of philosophical reflection independent of man. In order for religion to be properly analyzed, it is necessary to question over and over again what man is, who God is, and what the relationship is between them. In other words, religion must be viewed in its entirety. Since it is a question of the relationship of man and God, it is important to bear in mind that the way man lives and exists is reflected, and not the way man thinks. The spiritual space of the relationship between God and man is called religion. Religious people behave in a very specific—*religious (faithful)* way, while the philosopher thinks about religion in a *religious (philosophical)* way. The term *religious (faithful)* belongs to the realm of the personal, the emotional, the cult, and the sacred, as opposed to the religious (philosophical), which refers to logical and dialectical thinking about religion. Religiosity (faithfulness) is the subjective and free attitude of the believer, as opposed to the objective, religious (philosophical) attitude of one who studies religion and religious phenomena with the power of his mind. In the religious (faithful) relationship, initiative is on God's side, and the mutual relationship between God and man (religion) is one of the essential and unavoidable ways of human existence. Starting from God, man's survival is defined as religious (faithful). With this in mind, the task of philosophy in religious analysis is not originally man but God (divine, sacred), who is the foundation of religious (faithful) existence, that is, religion. Religious speech must therefore be directed primarily toward God (divine and sacred—theodicy), and only secondarily toward man's religious behavior. The believer does not need philosophy to be a believer, the philosopher on the contrary needs faith as a subject of study, although he does not have to be a believer at the same time.

Given the importance of religion in human life, believers are convinced that religion is important for individuals and societies (nations) because it gives full and complete meaning to everything; gives answers to life's questions that philosophy and science are not capable of providing (in despair and fear, in the face of death). In addition, religion provides the individual with the assurance that he is not alone even when everyone and everything leaves him, it supports in man the hope of eternal life. Religion is important in historical terms because without it there would not be great civilizations such as: Indian, Egyptian, Roman, European, Arab... Great works of art and literature, codes of ethics … have religious inspiration.[1] Religion is a typical human characteristic or property (*proprium*), it is not found in any other being on earth. This fact was acknowledged by Feuerbach himself,[2] and long before him by Cicero, who says: "Itaque ex tot generibus nullum est animal praeter hominem quod habeat notitiam aliquam dei, ipsisque in hominibus nulla gens est neque tam mansueta neque tam fera, quae non, etiamsi ignoret qualem haberi deum deceat, tamen habendum sciat." (De leg., I, 24, 25). History, archeology, ethnology, and anthropology testify that man has been religious (faithful) since the earliest emergence in history and that all nations, regardless of culture and level of civilization, had some form of religiosity (faith) or religion.[b,3]

[a]The term "dilemma" (from the Greek δίς = twice and λῆμμα = assertion) is a two-part assumption, in which the choice of one of two or more possibilities is imposed.

[b]So Aristotle claims: "άυτες γὰρ ἄυθρωποι περὶ θεῦυ ἔχουσιυ ὑπόληψιυ" (Aristotle, *De coelo et mundo*, I, 3; 270 b 5-6). On this line in recent times, among many philosophers and phenomenologists of religion, H. Bergson makes a similar remark: "On trouve dans le passé, on trouverait même aujourd'hui des sociétés humaines qui n'ont ni science, ni art, ni philosophie. Mais il n'y a jamais eu de société sans religion" (Bergson, 1965, 105).

From the beginning, religion gave man the meaning of life, and encouraged him to explore nature and what is above it. Together with philosophy (science) and art, religion is the highest form of human creativity, the guardian of tradition, morality, and the teacher of wisdom, the key to history as Dawson claimed: "We cannot understand the inner form of a society unless we understand its religion. We cannot understand its cultural achievements unless we understand the religious beliefs that lie behind them. In all ages the first creative works of a culture are due to a religious inspiration and dedicated to a religious end. The temples of the gods are the most enduring works of man. Region stands at the threshold of all the great literatures of the world. Philosophy is its offspring and is a child which constantly returns to its parent."[4] Regardless of the fact that in modern times religion is experiencing a crisis, it is unacceptable to devalue man's religiosity (faithfulness), which belongs to his essence or humanity. Just as it can be said that man is *loquens*, *ludens*, *faber* – although some do not speak, play, or work – so man is *ens religiosum*, *a religious being*—although there are those who are not religious. Rationality and religiosity belong to human nature: to be religious is as natural as to be rational. Although not all people are religious (faithful), religiosity (faithfulness) is of course a human trait, so religion and religious topics will remain a permanent subject of interest in many sciences, especially philosophy—the philosophy of religion. We are witnessing that the thesis of the "extinction of religion" proved to be illusory. In order for that to really happen, human nature would have to change!

Important contemporary questions about religion relate to its origins and nature. In other words, the dilemma could be formulated in the question: did God make man and teach him religion, or did man perhaps create God and invent himself religion? The fact confirmed by history, cultural anthropology, and archeology has already been pointed out when they cite undoubted data from the past that prove that man, since he has become man (*homo sapiens*) is at the same time a religious (faithful) being (*homo religiosus*). However, there is no clear answer to the question why man is a religious being. Whether religion belongs to the very nature of the human being or is it just an indicator of human impotence, a cultural experiment, a sign of immaturity, which will one day disappear completely in the future. Only man (*animal rationale*) is religious – animals are not – which means that religion and religious activities should be connected with man's rational and spiritual structure or nature. It is thanks to his rationality that man establishes relationships that animals cannot establish: relationships of cognition, evaluation, assessment, calculation … In religion, man establishes relationships that are unthinkable in the animal world, and these are acts of worship, adoration, trust, and a relationship with the sacred and the divine. Religious (faithful) experience is different from all other human experiences. In it, namely, a relationship with transcendence is established! We return again to the question of the origin and purpose of religion: where does religion come from and why is man a religious being? The fact is that every human action has its own, independent object: sight—color, hearing—sound, sense of smell—smell, science—nature, desires—objects of desire … No activity: sensory, rational, or willing, creates the object to which they are directed. Does the same rule apply to religion? Does man invent the object of his religious activity (prayer, worship, sacrifice, myth,…) or is there a reality that encourages man's religious (faithful) activity? It opposes common sense (*ratio recta*) that man prays, invokes, worships, adores … his own fantasies, ambitions, and utopias... It seems unconvincing that for centuries man would pay, and continues to pay, a price for something divine that could be described as a mere illusion or a stupid utopia. It is reasonable to conclude that man is as religious (faithful) as he is reasonable, free, social, communicative (…). Religiosity is part of his nature, in modern vocabulary—religion (religiosity) is inscribed in the human genome! Man is, therefore, religious (faithful), he has a natural ability to establish a relationship with the sacred and the transcendent, which animals and other living beings do not have.

But just as it is not enough to have the natural ability to see (healthy eyes) to see a tree, for example, a tree must also exist, so too in order for man to give a religious answer to a transcendent reality, that reality has to exist. In other words, for religion to exist, it is necessary for God to exist. If there were no God, there would be neither religion nor man as a religious (faithful) being. Just as without the stars there would be no astronomy, without the plants no botany, without the animals no zoology … For a religious man, that is, a man-believer, the existence of God is an indisputable fact, without any dilemmas. God is an integral part of his life, he talks to him confidentially, he prays to him, he rebels against his commands … God is the only unshakable security for man. This is the basis of the claim that dilemmas are possible only in philosophy (religious dilemmas), but not in faith (faith-based dilemmas). Religion has no foundation other than God. It is part of elementary religious logic. Religion comes from God and religious (faith-based) consciousness has an intuitive, immediate, and direct consciousness. When *homo sapiens* subjects religion to the court of reason (dialectics), dilemmas (doubts) are very possible. Therefore, in order to prove the reasonableness of religion, it is necessary to rationally prove that God exists, which would also be a rational foundation of religion. If there is no such evidence, then religion is in danger of falling into blind fideism and empty sentimentality. After Kant's critique of metaphysics, there are fewer and fewer philosophers who metaphysically seek to establish religion, and religious scholars offer some other solutions, especially linking religion and mysticism. Philosophers are more concerned with the nature of religious expression than the foundations of religion and its nature. The content of religious experience is discussed more, emphasizing that feelings and mystical intuition are its main content. Theologians and philosophers of religion argue that religion

has its foundation more in feelings and mystical experience than in reason. However, it should not be overlooked that a person, in addition to having feelings and intuition, also has a mind with which he must verify the authenticity and truthfulness of his own intuition and feelings. Philosophy and theology do not create this rationality in a religious man, but he must presuppose it.

Dilemma: Religion And/Or Philosophy?

A man who thinks independently of everything is a philosopher, and every man is a philosopher as long as thinks independently. Philosophy is an integral part of thinking, not some acquired knowledge of philosophical questions and solutions that are transferred into books. If we understand philosophy and philosophizing in this way, we can safely conclude that it is a distinctly human activity by which man freely and with his own strength seeks to understand what he thinks about in order to reach the truth. With freedom, he must resist everything that is imposed on him from the outside as the truth, thus confirming his independence. Independent thinking is a sign of freedom, and philosophy is a clear form of human freedom.[5] Philosophical thinking must not be confined to human subjectivity, it must be an encounter and openness to the world that approaches it in a significant way, seeking answers. If we start from the metaphysical claim about the truth of being (*omne ens est verum—ontic truth*), philosophical thinking must start from the thing it thinks and to which that thought must correspond (adequacy—logical truth). Every thought (philosophical and scientific), if it wants to be true, must be focused on real(ity). If, therefore, one intends to reach the truth, one must get out of the rotation of the "thinking circle" of the thinker himself and focus on the object of thought, and that is the essence and being of things. All this is made possible by the human mind, which contemplates the essence and being of the world—and itself, and only then can we talk about philosophy. This is the essential difference between philosophy and experimental (exact) sciences. Philosophy is interested in essence and being, the truth of the being who thinks, while scientific thinking determines the facts, that something is *one way* or *another* (…), without wondering whether what is determined is also what is important. Knowledge of facts is not a philosophy, nor does it lead to it. "Im Bereich der Religion würde ein solches Denken zur Religionswissenschaft führen. Für die Religionsphilosophie wird es immer nützlih, ja unerlässlich sein, diese im Auge zu behalten. Aber Religionsphilosophie als Philosophie ist doch wieder etwas anderes."[5] The essence and Being of being are an inexhaustible source of human cognition, and therefore philosophical thought can never be completed, and this incompleteness is by no means a sign of the weakness of philosophical thought. The possibility of perfecting (growing) cognition belongs to the very essence of philosophical thinking. What has been achieved is limited, the possibilities that the Being of being opens up are unlimited.

Religion is the subject of philosophy's thinking with which it wants to explain the essence and ways of Being. Dealing with religion, philosophy wants to answer the question of what religion is, without going into its various phenomena. Approaching religion as the object of its thought, the first thing that philosophy must acknowledge is that religion exists independently of philosophy, that it existed before philosophy, that it is not philosophy, and that it is only an object given to philosophy for reflection. Religion is only one of the subjects of thought in philosophy. One can justifiably ask whether religion is dangerous and superfluous for philosophy and philosophy for religion. Many opponents of religion believe that it is a human product and that it is only the fruit of human thought. At least the religions of the Abrahamic tradition can be said to have no philosophical roots. For example, Christianity has no philosophy at its roots. Jesus was not a philosopher; his teaching was not philosophical but religious—told in parables and symbols. In addition, historically, religion originated long before philosophy. It should also be noted that it is not possible for philosophy and religion not to meet: both are an integral part of "human events," and both are ways of human life and existence. And everything that happens to a man is also the subject of his thinking (philosophy): "Macht der Mensch von seinem Selbst- und Seinsverständnis Gebrauch, dann fragt er: Was ist das, Religion?, und er geht denkend der Frage nach. Solch fragendes Denken über das Sein der Sache der Religion ist aber philosophisches Denken. Aus diesem Grunde ist philosophisches Denken über die Religion immer möglich dort, wo Religion von Menschen, in welcher Weise auch immer, verstanden wird."[5]

Religion is expressed in language and categories of thought, so it lives in the form in which human life takes place. For this reason, religion has always influenced human history and man's understanding of himself and all that is human. That is why one can and must constantly ask oneself what religion is, and especially what "my religion" is, which determines the form of life of the individual and the community. According to its structure, it is a philosophical question. The existence of religion shows that it is a real being, as a being it is the subject of metaphysical thinking about Being, and the essence of that being, and thus the subject of free human thinking, which takes its systematic form in the philosophy of religion. Therefore, the philosophy of religion is justified and grounded like other philosophical disciplines (ontology, anthropology, philosophy of cognition, theodicy, cosmology…). The existence and meaning of the philosophy of religion depend on religion as an object of thought, however, religion does not depend at all on philosophy (philosophical thinking). History testifies that religion independently shaped its life before and beyond philosophy and that its existence in no way depends on philosophy. However, the fact that in recent times there are

more and more people who are not religious, that religion is losing the power of "entelechy" in people's lives and in society, and that it is even not publicly discussed—this is why questions about the essence of religion, what it is and how to define it. If there is no God or Sacred, then what is the *differentia specifica* of religion with regard to other human "inventions." If there is no God or he is dead, religion is meaningless. However, the question of God's existence remains unresolved and unresolvable.

Although Nietzsche long ago declared that "God is dead," and Marxist Vítezslav Gardavský put it more modestly in his book *Gott ist nicht ganz tot*, this is no reason not to think about religion and God's existence. Fewer and fewer are convinced that religion will die and disappear. On the contrary, it is still present, in old and new forms, and the interest in the sacred, the mystical, and the transcendent is intensifying. Religion will continue to play an important role in human life and in the world, which is why it is necessary to intensify and reinforce thinking about the essence of religion. The importance of religions in consolidating peace in the world was pointed out by the Swiss theologian Hans Küng with his project "Weltethos."[6] Religiology and religious sciences certainly have a future. It is also justified to ask the question whether philosophy is dangerous for religion and religion for philosophy, about the relationship between philosophy and religion (science and religion). That danger depends on how philosophy deals with religion. If it seeks to truly explain the essence and being of religion, then there is no danger. Philosophy must start from the fact that religion is independent of philosophy. For philosophy, religion is only an independent object to which it directs its intellectual attention. Philosophy can only reveal but not determine the essence of religion. Religion, on the contrary, must be aware of and recognize the independence of philosophy (science), and its diversity in method and purpose. Philosophy and religion are different, but not adversaries. As collaborators, they could bring greater benefits to all of humanity.

Religion is a layered and complex phenomenon; it is easier to describe it than to define it. Philosophy seeks to define phenomena (concepts) by determining their essence, for example, that a triangle is a geometric figure with three angles and three sides. Religion is not such a simple term that is easy to determine its class and specific difference. Another difficulty is the fact that religion is a set of many different activities within the sacred and the divine, something very different from any other human activity or which can be reduced to dialectical analysis. And while other human activities have a clear object and goal, for example, medicine health, politics the common good, economics profit, philosophy truth…, religion affects the whole human being, spirit, and body, it is all-pervading and all-encompassing—as Guardini says.[c,7] With his religiosity, man responds to God and not to the reason (philosophy), which in turn means that these answers are neither subject to the laws of logic nor are they expressed by dialectical rules, but through symbols, rites, laws, and institutions... And while the goal of philosophizing is to discover the truth, religion offers salvation. The means by which they reach the goal are different: philosophy by the power of logic (comprehension, judgment, inference); religion through internal means (virtue, humility, obedience, trust, hope, surrender, love, worship…) and external (symbols, rituals, myths, legends, intuition). It is through the power of intuition that man reaches out to God, the object of his orientation.

In order to better understand the essence of religion, it must be placed in relation to philosophy (metaphysics) and to God (revelation). In addition to many significant differences, philosophy and religion have much in common. Both are interested in the same object: the sacred, the transcendent, the absolute, God. It is known in history that some people in philosophy found the way of salvation (σωτηρία), as an alternative to religion. Philosophy used to have the role that the New Age, Scientology, and other spiritual and para-religious movements play today. Philosophy and religion, however, differ significantly. Even when they deal with the same object, their approach is different. Thus, for example, God is seen in philosophy as the first cause of being, while religion sees God as a source of hope and salvation. The goal of religion is the salvation and worship of God, and the goal of philosophy is truth. In particular, they differ in the means by which they seek to achieve a goal. In religion, God has the initiative, man adheres to God with all his being, not speculatively, but through piety, cult, prayer … In philosophy, on the contrary, man has the initiative, he explores the causes and principles with the power of his mind, and only at the end of the research does he come to know the first cause, pure reality, an independent being … to what religion calls God. Philosophy comes to God rationally, religion intuitively. Philosophy expresses its knowledge in concepts, and religion in symbols. Although the object is

[c]"La realtà religiosa tocca il punto più vivo dell'uomo, il centro più sensibile del suo essere personale. Ridesta perciò affetti molto specifici che riguardano solo essa: una forma speciale di pudore, di reverenza, di timore, di desiderio, di amore, di zelo, di beatitudine, di fiducia. Essa però tocca anche il centro normativo dell'uomo: la 'coscienza morale'. Intendiamo con ciò, secondo un senso più largo, l'organo che apprende il valore. Il religioso tocca questa coscienza. Le pone le sue esigenze, e non con forza, ma attraverso il significato e il diritto. L'uomo deve: o fare o tralasciare qualcosa; orientare in un certo modo la sua vita. Egli non può contestare il diritto di questa esigenza che gli è posta, perché è evidente. Può solo respingerla, disubbidirle, eluderla (…) L'esperienza religiosa apre un 'mondo', intesa la parola in senso oggettivo e soggettivo; una coordinazione di cose e di fatti, di rapporti con gli uomini e le cose, di azioni e di opere, di esperienze e di situazioni: tutta un'altra 'esistenza" (Guardini, 1964, 244-245).

the same (Absolute, Infinite), the experience is different. Philosophy tries to classify things according to the diversity of being, to explore reasons, and to determine necessities. In such series, the uniqueness and personal dimension of the experience of the Absolute are lost. Religion, on the contrary, has a completely different approach to God. It does not approach him by thinking but by free consent and emotion. It tries to enable a straightforward and direct relationship with God. Only religion gives man an authentic relationship with God, at the same time leaving him to exist in his infinity. A religious man in the finiteness of the world seeks to recognize the images, prints, and expressions of the Infinite. Schleichermacher was among the first to bring to light a clear distinction between philosophy and religion.[8] And while he emphasizes a purely subjective level, reducing religions to feelings, Scheler believes that philosophy and religion differ on a subjective and objective level. On the subjective: "L'atto religioso accetta ciò che si rivela, ciò che *manifesta* se stesso; l'atto di conoscenza metafisica gli si pone spontaneamente di fronte in virtù di operazioni logiche. La relazione che consiste nel 'rivelarsi' è una relazione simbolica (…) Lo spirito la scorge soltanto nell'atto religioso. Da qui anche l'immensa differenza dal processo metafisico di pensiero, che guida al concetto di Ens a se, partendo indifferentemente da ogni ente contingente e relativo, mentre nella conoscenza religiosa di questa determinazione fondamentale del divino sono sempre determinatissime, uniche o almeno secondo la specie fortemente circoscritte cose concrete o avvenimenti, eventualmente anche esperienze psichiche, nella quali il divino si manifesta."[9] There are also great differences on an objective level in that philosophy (metaphysics) is capable of discovering the Being itself (*ens per se*) but gives it neither holiness nor personality, so the two essential marks that religion attaches to God (the Being itself): "La metafisica può tentare di mostrare questo concatenamento come logicamente necessario per molteplici vie di deduzione e dimostrazione (…) Qualunque cosa si concluda con la coerenza logica di tali deduzioni–è certo che la coscienza religiosa non giunge per questa strada all'idea di Dio santo. Che (poi) l'essere il quale possiede valore supremo, e lo possiede solo per sé e in sé, debba possedere anche l'esistenza–nonché' l'ente assoluto sia necessariamente anche in se valore assoluto–per la coscienza religiosa è un assioma ontico sintetico" (Scheler, 1970, 281–283). An important difference between philosophy and religion is also manifested in the fact that philosophy (metaphysics) cannot replace religion, as some philosophers from Plato to Hegel thought. A philosopher can know God better than a believer, but he does not become *homo religiosus*. On the contrary, religion has the right to oppose philosophy when it proposes theories that destroy its foundations—such as God's existence, transcendence, providence … From another point of view, philosophical knowledge of God in the light of religious experience may have new and greater importance. In conclusion, it could be said that philosophy (science) and religion are not mutually exclusive, but, while respecting mutual independence and uniqueness, complement and help each other. Therefore, in the relationship between philosophy and religion, the "either-or" formula is unacceptable and "both-and" is acceptable.

Dilemma: should Religion be Discarded?

Deniers of God's existence have been a huge exception for centuries. Even in the Old Testament Psalm we read: "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God" (Psalm 53: 2). The theocentric image of the world, which interprets nature and society starting from God, is replaced in 17th and 18th century Europe by the spiritual and intellectual movement of the Enlightenment, which puts man at the center, promotes great confidence in the human mind, in its power to know and interpret nature and society. It was at that time, that a wider rejection of religion appeared as well as denial of God's existence—atheism. In the second half of the 20th century, the rejection of religion became a mass movement. The answer to this phenomenon is given by philosophy, but also by other social sciences such as psychology, sociology, political science... There are several major causes for discarding religion: ignorance, indifference, agnosticism, secularization, and atheism.

Despite all the efforts in the educational processes and the benefits of the means of communication, a great deal of religious ignorance about one's own, and especially about other people's religions, is widespread. It is easy to reject what is poorly known! Religious indifference shows indecision toward any form of religiosity. It is a state of mind that is indecisive and is shown in theory and/or practice. The indecisive do not feel any religious obligation and therefore perceive religion as useless rather than harmful. Agnosticism is a kind of intellectual laziness; it easily accepts the powerlessness of the mind in the face of transcendence. Agnostics believe that reason must be limited to earthly reality, phenomena, to what happens in time and space, while everything that transcends earthly reality is neither possible nor useful to think about. The power of the mind reduces itself to the realm of science and the negation of transcendence (God) and the realm of spirit (soul). Since agnosticism is originally a philosophical attitude, then the answer should be sought in philosophy and not in religion. We believe that agnosticism is not only harmful to religion but also to philosophy because it reduces reason to "instrumental reason," slowly leading to its destruction. The best defense against agnosticism is to prove the mind's ability to know the truth, and this is possible with Aristotle's analysis of the first principles (especially of non-contradiction), Augustine's principle *si fallor sum*, or Descartes' *cogito, ergo sum*. Secularization also does not reject religion directly and straightly but seeks to reduce its influence by changing its role in the lives of individual and society. Secularization seeks to replace the "sacred" with the "profane." And while in the field of social relations it can be positive, secularism,

nevertheless, is an unacceptable ideology. Every ideology seeks to become a politics and wants to manage the lives of the individual and society on its own. The distinction between secularization and secularism was already exemplified by the evangelical theologian Friedrich Gogarten (1887–1967) in his work *Verhängnis und Hoffnung der Neuzeit* (1953), who characterized secularism as man's maturity that makes him ready to take responsibility for his own life, and all this without denying God. He considered secularism useless and absurd because it sets secularism as the criterion of truth, the program of life, and the way of salvation—as an ideology. Secularization seeks to change the notion of the world and man and to turn their orientation toward transcendence into a horizontal and rational understanding, excluding the influence of religion and religious institutions. Secularization is an effort to narrow the space of the "sacred" as much as possible and replace it with the "profane." However, this is by no means a simple or one-way process, and the border is shifting. The cause of this mobility and instability of the border between the sacred and the profane, God and man, is man himself, who wants to be the only judge of these relations: "La persona umana è il luogo centrale, irremovibile della *lotta* tra il movimento del mondo che si scosta da Dio e quello che a Die si accosta."[10] Secularity as abandoning the theocentric and accepting the secular and anthropocentric worldview is a hallmark of modern culture. As it is well known, the causes of secularism are numerous and multiple. They began in the late Middle Ages with the disintegration of the so-called *res publica christiana* and the creation of nation-states that emerged in protracted wars, which slowly led to the secularization of state and politics. Other important sources of secularization are: the development of natural sciences, especially physics, chemistry, and biology, and Descartes and his philosophical heirs (idealism, positivism, materialism, historicism, vitalism, pansexualism, existentialism, structuralism, pragmatism, etc.). The progenitors of these systems: Hegel, Comte, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Sartre, Heiedegger, and others, sought to completely exclude transcendence, the sacred and religion, and make it not only superfluous, unnecessary but also harmful. Secularization has affected all areas of culture, politics, philosophy, history, law, morals, pedagogy, anthropology, literature, art, theater, etc. Initially, it was accepted as a methodological instrument, but later it was increasingly turned into a criterion of truth. Thus, secularization turned into secularism and atheism.

In spite of all the announcements of the prophets of secularization that religion will die and disappear, religion and the sacred have not disappeared! It is not, of course, questionable that they are going through a period of crisis, that people are losing their sense of the sacred. That loss is a consequence of modernism, which manifests itself in many forms: immanentism, rationalism, anthropocentrism, subjectivism...[11] It is not surprising that atheists are all the main representatives of the philosophical directions just listed. It is also obvious that modernism loses its power and influence, especially when post-modernism appears in the middle of the 20th century, in which religion, instead of disappearing, reverses: interest in the sacred and transcendence, and thus in religion, awakens, in which sacredness and transcendence are essential components.[12] Secularization by no means implies the end of religion. And it has already been shown that even the militant secularism perpetrated by communist countries was incapable of destroying religion. We are convinced that human religiosity will never be destroyed because human nature itself would have to change. As long as a man is a man, he will remain an unsolvable secret to himself with many unsolvable dilemmas, even about himself. As Augustine would say: "Mihi *magna* quaestio factus sum" (Conf., 4, 4, 9). The unsolvability of mystery and the allure of mysticism will never be solved by the natural sciences, and the human need for the sacred remains permanent because man is the only being who is religious by his nature.

Regardless of man's religious nature, in recent times atheism has become a mass phenomenon, and religious practice is declining to the same extent. In the early 1960s, Christian theologians even tried to develop a new theology of "without God" or the theology of "dead God" (*Gott-ist-tot-Theologie, Theothanatologie*). An encyclopedia of atheism has even been written! In the 1950s, it seemed as if people of Western European culture had turned their backs on God and religion. Apparently, the situation is changing at the beginning of the 21st century. The Austrian philosopher Coreth states: "Some signs of the times seem to herald change. In this secularization of the world, many, also new religious movements, are emerging. As much as they can be assessed pluralistically and differently, they nevertheless testify to man's following God and finding the meaning of life in faith in God. Religious faith is admittedly suppressed, but it is by no means extinct, it proves to be ineradicable and is always revived because it is rooted in the human being."[13] Atheism is becoming less and less widespread and is becoming what it has always been in the past: the attitude of a relatively small number of people. Atheism occurs in many different forms in theory and practice. Some philosophers, such as Nietzsche, Feuerbach, Marx, Freud, Sartre … explicitly deny the reality of God, and some philosophical systems such as materialism, positivism and evolutionism, vitalism, and existentialism... imply atheism. Theoretical atheism, turned into ideology and then into politics, turned into militant atheism, which tried to destroy religion by violence, while creating a kind of para-religion by imitating religious rites in profane ones, and political rhetoric was similar to religious rhetoric. We remember a slogan like the one: "We are in Tito, Tito is in all of us." Militant atheism was practiced by countries ruled by communism. Today, these regimes have largely failed and disappeared.

Among the important causes of atheism are: immanentism, rationalism, secularization, modernism, the development of science, and the growth of prosperity. Yet it seems that the

main sources of atheism should be sought in the Humanism and Renaissance of the 16th century, in the anthropological turn, shifting the center from God to man and accepting the process of secularization. At that time man slowly assumes the attributes of God (*knowledge, power, creation*, …), at the same time striving to eliminate every thought of the sacred and the divine. These attitudes will lead to the famous sentence of the father of atheism, Ludwig Feuerbach: "God did not create man, but man created God." A kind of "official" entry of atheism into European civilization, however, occurred during the French Revolution.[d,14]

Atheism convinces people that outside this world there is nothing that would transcend man, some supreme being, creator and master of nature, source of values, moral and social laws. If man is by nature a religious being (as confirmed by the atheists Feuerbach, Sartre, Bloch...), then why does someone become an atheist? Why is religion discarded? Why has the denial of God's existence become so widespread that we can speak of a time of "dead God?" The answer is neither easy nor simple because there are no generally accepted reasons that would apply to every individual. The Second Vatican Council cites a number of reasons for the emergence of atheism and religious indifference: "For while God is expressly denied by some, others believe that man can assert absolutely nothing about Him. Still others use such a method to scrutinize the question of God as to make it seem devoid of meaning. Many, unduly transgressing the limits of the positive sciences, contend that everything can be explained by this kind of scientific reasoning alone, or by contrast, they altogether disallow that there is any absolute truth" (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 19).[e] The negation of God is often fueled by an excessive elevation of dignity and faith in man. We should not ignore the distorted images of God and the strange religiosity that people have created throughout history, which can justifiably provoke resistance and protest. The denial of God has also been caused by terrible suffering and injustice in the history of mankind, especially in the 20th century – in our opinion – by almost all standards, the worst century in history! There are, however, many other arguments that atheists cite to justify their denial of God, and here we cite them only in hints. Undoubtedly, these are the great successes of science in objective cognition of the world, which at the same time excludes the mythological, religious, and metaphysical ones. There is also the existence of evil, which for many is incompatible with the concept of God as the omnibenevolent, omnipotent, and absolute being. It is worth remembering at this point the writer and philosopher A. Camus who often used the problem of evil as an argument for the negation of God. Let's just remember his work *The Plague*! For many, like Nietzsche or Bakunin, man's freedom and God's existence are incompatible. It is often cited as an argument for rejecting God and a bad example of the faithful and the church hierarchy, so examples from history are cited: the Crusades, the Inquisition, the trial of Galileo, the burning of witches and heretics, the persecution of Jews, etc. These *ad hominem* arguments are often, however, the result of ideological views or falsifications of history. Technical progress has helped man to change his relationship with nature—from a subject to a master! Nature is no longer perceived as visible traces of God but as a "construction site" of human products. Technical progress has not only destroyed forests, polluted air and water, and eradicated many plant and animal species, but has also destroyed the sense of holiness and communication with God: "Il mondo e tutto ciò che in esso esiste è ora qualcosa, possiamo dire, di naturale. È soltanto mondo, mondo secolare."[15] Economic prosperity certainly favors the spread of atheism because it gives the illusion that one can live without God, and encourages religious indifference and practical atheism. Atheism has also benefitted from numerous prejudices about God and religion, such as that science will solve all life's problems and dilemmas; and some schools of thought, for example, evolutionism, positivism, Freudian psychoanalysis, Marxism-Leninism, (…) which unjustifiably attribute a scientific character to themselves. Finally, let us mention the area of effect and passion that is often present in the denial

[d]"Le conseguenze di questo cambiamento di fede dovevano farsi sentire molto in fretta. Mentre i bagliori della Rivoluzione Francese passano fulminei attraverso il Vecchio e il Nuovo Mondo, non solo per i filosofi, i letterati, gli uomini politici ma anche per la gente comune, la religione diventa sempre più esplicitamente religione dell'uomo, religione della libertà e dell'eguaglianza, religione del progresso e del benessere, religione della bellezza, della salute e dell'efficienza. Così mentre da una parte la religione di Dio viene processata e condannata sotto varie imputazioni: illusione, alienazione, oppressione, risentimento, ignoranza, barbarie, oscurantismo, ecc.; dall'altra la religione dell'uomo raccoglie consensi sempre più vasti; e il vangelo dell'ateismo, sotto la spinta della secolarizzazione, del razionalismo, del progresso tecnico-scientifico, della pressione politica e del benessere si diffonde rapidamente ovunque, in tutti gli strati della società e in tutte le componenti e i settori della cultura, dando origine a quell'ateismo di massa di cui si è detto in precedenza" (Mondin, 2012, 87).

[e]In *Summa theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas gives two arguments that can lead reason not to acknowledge the existence of God and to advocate atheism: (1) evil: "Si ergo Deus esset, nullum malum inveniretur.", for God is good; (2) *the scientific law of simplicity*, which prescribes that preference be given to a theory that postulates a smaller number of principles. "Sed videtur quod omnia quae apparent in mundo, possunt compleri per alia principia, supposito quod Deus non sit, quia ea quae sunt naturalia, reducuntur in principium quod est natura; ea vero quae sunt a proposito, reducuntur in principium quod est ratio humana vel voluntas. Nulla igitur necessitas est ponere Deum esse" (S. th. I, q. 2, a. 3 (obj. 1. et 2.).

of God, especially in the so-called "Promethean atheism" which sees in God an opponent, competitor, rival, strict judge, undesirable observer, and inconvenient witness to their actions … In such circumstances, it is "very convenient" to exclude or deny God. Atheistic attitudes can be answered by showing the unfoundedness with which atheism seeks to justify itself.

Conclusion

Ever since there was *homo sapiens*, there has been talk of God and religion. Man, by his metaphysical intuition, asks questions to which he answers first in a mythological (pre-philosophical) way, while much later he will begin a philosophical discourse on the divine nature and value of religion. Unlike philosophy, which is interested in the essence and Being of being (even the divine), religion is more interested in God's action, which he speaks of in a mythological way, using images and symbols available to him in nature. Topics dealing with myths and religion are much more existential than ontological ones, and an attempt to replace religious (mythological) discourse on God with philosophical (rational) discourse is found in some Greek philosophers who seek to interpret polytheism monotheistically. Plato also spoke about the "supreme being," about the identification of God with one of his archetypal ideas (goodness, unity, truth, being) and the attempt to prove God's existence (*The Laws*, 886, a). Other philosophers also spoke not only of God's action, but also of God's essence and his existence. Thus, Aristotle points to an order in the world that requires a "supreme director," and to a movement that presupposes a "first unmoved mover." The Christian philosopher and theologian Augustine finds the argument for God''s existence in the truth that exists in the human mind (*De lib. arb*., 2, 13–15). In later centuries this will be discussed by great minds like Anselm, Thomas, Descartes, Kant, all the way to atheist philosophers like J.-P. Sartre and some contemporary philosophers.

Since philosophy is not limited to the field and topics of reflection, it also deals with the analysis of religion and religious phenomena. The dialectic of philosophical reasoning, because of its limitations, often ends in dilemma, aporia, and antinomy, without clear and generally accepted opinion. In thinking about religion, we first encounter the conceptual dilemma of *religious (faithful)* and *religious (philosophical)*. The term *religious (faithful)* belongs to the realm of the personal, the emotional, the cult, and the sacred, as opposed to the *religious (philosophical)*, which refers to logical and dialectical thinking about religion. A man can be religious (faithful), a believer. It is a matter of subjective and free attitude. The term *religious (philosophical)* denotes the result that is reached by objective reasoning with the power of the mind. Religious speech and behavior are about the relationship between God and man. Religious discourse is about the relationship between the cognitioner and the object of cognition. If the claim that man is by nature a *religious (faithful)* being is correct, then it is unacceptable to deny and devalue man's religiosity, just as it would be inappropriate to deny and devalue his rationality or freedom—either in theory or in practice. History shows that there was an illusory expectation of the extinction of religion. Philosophy and religion are not mutually exclusive, a believer and an atheist should not be adversaries. A philosopher can know God better than a believer without becoming a believer, just as a believer can be involved in the rational exploration of the world without renouncing its creator. Philosophy and religion differ in many ways, but they are by no means mutually exclusive. With respect for mutual independence and uniqueness, they complement and help each other, so in the dilemma of the relationship between philosophy and religion, the formula "either-or" is unacceptable and "both-and" is acceptable. In modern society, and it is obvious that this will be the case in the future, the social community will be made up of believers and non-believers. There will always be "justified" reasons for someone to be an atheist or agnostic, to theoretically and practically reject religion; as will a person who will be a believer by free choice, for emotional, mystical, and many other reasons, although he will not always be able to rationally justify the content of his belief. Philosophy is the fruit of reason and religion of free will. Just as a man without reason and will would not be a "complete man," so a human society without philosophy and religion would not be a truly human society. Therefore, we would change the dilemma from the title of this symposium: "Faith in God, unites or divides," into a personal belief that "Faith in God unites, not divides!"

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Political Scene as a Projection of Bigotism

Slobodan Prodić

Abstract

Since the last decade of the 20th century, bigotism has been presenting an easy-to-notice phenomenon on the political scene of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The reason for this is, among other things, that expressing religious belonging became an important element for political subjects in order to get and keep governance. The physical aspect of religion, which is usually not connected with the true feelings of the individual, became a part of political rituals, especially at mass events, such as the worship for "important" holidays. Some political individuals are turned into the idealization of themselves as political subjects and integrate bigotry into their campaigns. By analyzing this phenomenon, when we talk about the entity Republic of Srpska, we can make an impression that instrumentalization of faith in God is very common.

Keywords: Bigotism, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Politics, Religion, Republic of Srpska.

Sažetak

Još od posljednjeg desetljeća 20. stoljeća bigotizam je lako uočljiva pojava na političkoj sceni Bosne i Hercegovine. Razlog tome je, između ostalog, što je iskazivanje vjerske pripadnosti postalo bitan element za političke subjekte u poretku dobivanja i zadržavanja vlasti. Tjelesni aspekt vjere, koji obično nije vezan uz istinske osjećaje pojedinca, postao je dio političkog rituala, posebice na masovnim događanjima, poput bogoslužja za „važne" blagdane. Neki politički pojedinci, okrenuti idealizaciji sebe kao političkog subjekta, integriraju netrpeljivost u svoju kampanju. Analizirajući ovaj fenomen, kada je riječ o entitetu Republika Srpska, može se steći dojam da je instrumentalizacija vjere u Boga vrlo česta.

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Entry Notes

Political speeches, since the antique times, have been connected with theatre. There are many reasons for that, but one of them is definitely that speeches of politicians can be considered as skillfully planned shows with the aim of reaching more and more followers of the idea promoted by the politician. Actually, since Plato and his words about the "white lie,"[1] political activism has been a stage. It is the stage where we can constantly see various promises with the precisely directed performance of the person who is struggling to get or keep governance and the public who is supposed to accept promises given by the politician or political party. The modern political stage often promises something called a "bright future," that is, something that will come later in the future, accepting the rules made in the past and adjusting the current happenings. Being this topic bigger than this paper is supposed to be, in the entry notes, I will focus only on happenings during the 20th century. Firstly, during the 20th century, many tectonic changes in politics occurred in various states, thanks to the speeches of people who led different organizations. For example, the priest of the Russian Orthodox Church, Georgy Appolonovich Gapon (1870–1906), had an important role in starting the February Revolution in 1905. Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870–1924) was the leader of the October Revolution in 1917, Benito Mussolini (1883–1945), and Adolf Hitler (1889–1945). These people prepared societies where they lived for some changes.

The ideas from these politics also came in the area of the Balkan peninsula, precisely in the area of Yugoslavia. In this strange country, between two world wars, different political ideas were spreading with the aim to change the governance, peacefully or revolutionary.

Depending on the position on a political compass, that is to say; whether a political party is considered a "left" or "right-wing" party, we must mention that their political appearances contain the elements that are connected with religion and worship. This connection and usage of the Christian vocabulary have been used since the times of "The Old Testament." In the books that describe the events that

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affected Jewish people and people who had contact with them, we can recognize the organization of people in order to realize the idea and achieve a goal. For example, Jews organized themselves and, led by Moses, went from Egypt to the promised land (The Book of Exodus). Also, Jewish people had constantly waited for the Messiah's arrival, who would liberate them from the terrible position they had at that time, for example, under Roman governance. Something that characterized this period of Jewish history was meetings where they listened to priests, teachers, and prophets who were predicting the arrival of the Messiah and proofing their attitude of being the chosen God's people. In Christianity, preaching had its importance in popularizing, expanding, and growing the Church. Since the earliest days of its development, the eschatological dimension of Christianity has been marked with the goal which was tried to be reached-the community with God in heaven. Being focused on life after death and The God's Kingdom meant that the first generations of Christians were not interested in politics. After the year 313th, when Christianity became part of an everyday routine, the "harmony" of the Church and state government started. In the later centuries, state politics accepted some experiences from different Christian communities. This can be recognized in "preaching" as a way of spreading ideas. During the political meetings, spokespersons are telling the ideas that are usually based on creating the "perfect kingdom," not God's one, but the one here, in this world.

Bigotry and Political Parties: Retrospect in the Past

Bigotry had not been actual for >50 years on our political scene. The reason for this was that the politics of the new Yugoslavia, the country which was formed after World War II, did not have elements related to devotion and religion. In fact, the cult of personality in the Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) created a form of new-old religion. On the top, there was Josip Broz Tito, who was considered the personification of God. Then, the closest cooperators were considered apostles, like in Christianity, while other politicians on lower levels could be seen as priests, etc. Also, there were a lot of holidays with their rituals, like Youth Day, which was celebrated every 25th May for Tito's birthday. In this surrounding, Yugoslav politicians did not need bigotry in their everyday work until a couple of years after the death of Josip Broz Tito; they just needed the classical political lie.[2–5]

Bigotry became part of normal political life at the end of the 1980s, during the time of "nationalism upbringing." A classic example of this is the political scene of that time in Serbia. The appearance of a multiparty system introduced a lot of parties with different orientations. The usage of a fake identity was very common among parties from this time in Serbia. This means that parties and their leaders present themselves as they are not.[6] At the beginning of the 1990s, political organizations, such as "Serbian Renewal Movement" ("Srpski pokret obnove"), "Serbian Radical Party" ("Srpska radikalna stranka"), and "Serbian National Renewal" ("Srpska narodna obnova") were founded. The common thing of these right-wing parties was their insistence on the renewal and strengthening of Orthodox Christianity religion and devotion among their followers and, potentially, the whole society. The way to reach this was through the kind of preaching activity of their leaders and their closest partners during the meetings organized with the aim of upbringing the national identity.[a]

The dissolution of SFRY and socialistic-communist ideas from the political scene will create a greater space for nationalistic ideas and also for the (mis)use of religion for political purposes. Again, this time at the end of the 1990s, national belonging was considered the same as religious belonging, so because of all that, the catastrophe that occurred was necessary.

Bigotry in Modern Political Scene

What is the connection of bigotry with the nationalistic politicians in the area of former SFRY? Before all, the meaning of bigotry is over-expressing devotion is some occasions. The bigoted behavior is actually very rational. Actually, it is prepared before it appears in front of other people. Because of that, we can consider bigotry as part of a political show and the acting of one or more participants.

Bigotry requires expression. For this reason, the political scene is the ideal place for this kind of exhibitionism with a tinge of personality disorder. The fact that the political

[a] As an example of this, I can mention happenings from 1989 and 1990. In those years, two anniversaries were celebrated in Serbia and Vojvodina—the anniversary of the Kosovo battle (1389) and the Great Migration of the Serbs (1689/1690). A lot of things about the happenings in the Kosovo field in 1989 have been said. According to some researchers, that ceremony was the moment when Slobodan Milošević announced that Yugoslavia would enter the civil war. On the other hand, the jubilee that occurred on 22nd September 1990 in Sremski Karlovci is not spoken of so often. This ceremony was organized by the SOC, and more than 100,000 people attended it. The central part of the manifestation was the Liturgy. For that occasion, numerous newly formed leaders of political parties came to spread their idea among people. A typical example is Mirko Jović, who started his political career in the anti-communist organization "Saint Sava" and founded on 6th January 1990 "Serbian National Renewal." This party united with the party ruled by Radovan Karadzic, and after that, the new name was "Serbian democratic party of Serbian lands" in 1996. Jović is one of the pioneers in using bigotry in the Serbian politics of the 1990s. On the celebration, Sremski Karlovci came dressed in the traditional clothing of the Šumadija region (even though he and his family do not have origins from that part of Serbia) and over-expressing his devotion during the worship and at the meeting with people after the Liturgy; he tried to integrate the elements of Orthodox Christianity in his politics.

elite, especially in the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Srpska, is very often seen in media actually spreads bigoted behavior. The reason for this is that the political elite realized that mass media could transform the audience into the voters, that is to say, into the mass. The ruling with the mass is made *via* illusions, lies, and pictures that do not have a lot in common with reality and truth.[7] Consumers of messages sent *via* media from politicians think that they are also enrolled in the process referred to as political communication; that is, they want to believe that they are in the same position in the "dialogue" with the political elite. With this in their mind, politicians use worship on "important holidays" (such as Easter, Christmas, anniversaries, etc.) in and in front of churches with the aim of promoting themselves as believers and creating or increasing trust among other believers and getting "political power."[8] This can result in a new question—can politicians be honest believers/Christians? According to some researchers, they cannot because their jobs require doing a lot of things that are in contrast with Christian ethics, which is the same for the "average" person and person "in a position."[9] On the other hand, politicians absolutely normally participate in the religious life of a religious community that will give them political points. Leading with the necessities of political showing, politicians feel ready to use the situation, for example, worship for Easter, or, as he or she thinks, a lot of potential voters in a small area for him or herself.

The fact that religious happenings are very well media covered in the Republic of Srpska makes studying the bigotry easier. For example, TV reports, which are mostly shown in informative programs, consist of several template parts: entry notes of a journalist, the record from worship which always has got shoots with priests and politicians, then (but not always) a short interview with a priest, etc.[b] In some TV reports, we can see interviews with politicians who promise or report material help to the church or monastery and who talk about daily politics.[c] This leads us to the already mentioned phenomenon of a "symphony," which is the consequence of the widely spread bigotry in the politics of the Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Srpska.

The symphony between Chruch and country began during the time of Constantine the Great, had it's maximum (when we talk about the area of the Balkan peninsula) during the 15th century, and has got a "renaissance" in our modern times. The state government realized that the Church could spread political ideas among believers. On the other hand, Church from the government receives many benefits, before all, improved material status of the high-ranked priests.[10] Even though this cooperation looks positive for both sides, the Church is actually in a worse position. Accepting the role of space for exposing the politicians, the Church rarely lost its reputation among some believers, which can be seen in the previous few decades in the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC). In fact, this cooperation led to the founding of many different pseudoreligical organizations that say that the reason for their founding, except ecumenism, is dissatisfaction with the attitudes of SOC towards politics and politicians.

The situations that occurred in recent times, related to donations of politicians and their cooperators with suspicious morals, created anger among believers. Forgetting the basic rules of Christian ethics, priests have been accepting the political elite without paying attention to their unhidden bigotry. In fact, in the new-made symbiosis, we can hear the opinions that Church gets more importance in a "political ring" and that it is occupied with politics. When we talk about this, the constatation of Milovan Vukomanović is interesting: "The problem occurs when Orthodoxity with politics start to create a public and social area, while the rights of other people on their identity are being opposed in an essentialistic way."[11] No matter the constatations that the "Church's not interesting in a politic is a politic,"[12] from today's perspective, especially in the Republic of Srpska, we can not get the impression that priests do not want not to let politicians use Church's garden (place) and holidays (time), even though it is actually true if priests can follow the rules about talking about the politics. Is it done because of fear of politicians, material benefits, or something else? It is not important because it goes out of the topic of this research. In any case, it is sad, not only for believers but for any other person, to watch how politicians use the religious community as the audience for their show. They do that with the aim of getting political points. If they did it for some other reasons, their appearance in worship would have a totally different physical manifestation. For example, they would not be trying to reach the first rows in a Church but, as the Church preaches, stand in the modest and pray with tears in their eyes to forgive their sins. If someone is honestly praying for forgiving the made sins and is realizing the value of that sin, he will consider himself as "the first one among the last ones" and will try to fulfill the message that "right-hand does not know what left one is doing," especially in the meaning of taking care about close people.

Conclusion

Bigotry became a normal part of everyday politics because the need for a bigger number of followers and voters in different elections became necessary. In the areas where

b. As examples, I will mention the reports from the Radio Television of the Republic of Srpska (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eHv75gf87Bw) and TV BN (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_AFi7itdtg).

c. As an example, I will mention the TV report from the Radio Television of the Republic of Srpska from 6th February 2022 available on the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKZKQBt7fVM.

national identity is considered equal to confessional identity (e.g., Serb = Orthodox) and where ethnophyletism is widely spread, no matter the fact that it is judged as heresy, politicians skillfully use national and religious feelings of people and pretend to be devoted. Even though their life is totally opposite to the life which is supposed to be for Christians, politicians tend to use public happenings, and also religious holidays, as the time for self-promotion. Even though this behavior is often judged by average people, who usually add that the politician has never been a believer before politics (in fact, they also often say that politician was a member of the communist movement, which means he was a strong atheist), politicians have got personality traits that do not prevent them from using everything in the aim to reach their goals. The political Machiavellianism in the Republic of Serbia and, even more, in the Republic of Srpska includes the (mis)use of religion for political reasons. Numerous tragicomic situation since the 1990s has been a testimony to this. The fact that bigotry is based in some political organizations should not be accepted as a necessary evil. In fact, bigotry should be recognized and stopped by the priests. The reason for this is that they and believers will face fewer lures in upcoming times because religion for politicians is just one out of many tools for improving ratings and getting governance.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

From Freedom to Postmodern Retraditionalization; Laicism and the Fourth Political Theory as New Walls

Sanjin Šahmanović

Summary

Social liberties, social progress, then the moral zeitgeist as usually determined in the west, it is often problematic in the social context, on the one hand, the assertion about morality as biologically conditioned and morality as a philosophical-logical entity that is realized in freedom since the time of Kant, are only two polarities that reflect strength in discussions semantics, often contradictions that can often be characterized as good cognitive theoretical explanations of naturalists and their opponents vice versa of the origin of morality as social phenomena that regulate relationships in society and the world. In light of Dugin's theological statism and French laicism, we will try to show the influences of the Enlightenment through the prism of current theoretical discussions about the state, morality, international law, and postmodernist alternatives, the necessity of deciphering politics and theology throughout history and the new "excursion" of the fourth Russian political theory and the so-called of the new order which often characterized by major world events.

The problem of knowledge (hikma) as such, between social, natural and spiritual sciences is everything less important in postmodern research that has crossed a development path that is just about irreversible, in an effort to explain human development, socialization, behavior, cognition processes and new aspirations that pretend to create a "humane machine" that will lose its basic divine purpose and all that is characteristic of homo sapiens

Keywords: Political theory, freedom, moral zeitgeist, wisdom, new order.

Sažetak

Društvene slobode, društveni napredak, zatim moralni zeitgeist kako se obično determinira na zapadu često se problematizira u društvenom kontekstu, s jedne strane tvrdnje o moralu kao biološki uvjetovanom i moralu kao filozofsko-logičkom entitetu koji se ostvaruje u slobodi od vremena Kanta, samo su dva polariteta koja u raspravama odslikavaju snagu semantike, nerijetko kontradikcije koju često možemo okarakterizirati kao dobra spoznajno-teorijska objašnjenja naturalista i njihovih oponenata vice versa porijekla moralnosti kao društvene pojave kojom se reguliraju odnosi u društvu, i svijetu. U svjetlu Duginovog teološkog etatizma i francuskog laicizma nastojat ćemo prikazati uticaje prosvjetiteljstva kroz prizmu trenutnih teorijskih rasprava o državi, moralu, međunarodnom pravu, i postmodernističkim alternativama, neophodnosti dešifriranja politike i teologije kroz istoriju te novi „izlet" četvrte ruske političke teorije i tzv. novog poretka kojim se često karakteriziraju veliki svjetski događaji.

Problem spoznaje (hikme) kao takve, između društvenih, prirodnih i duhovnih znanosti sve je manje važan u postmodernim istraživanjima koja su prešla jedan razvojni put koji je gotovo nepovratan, u nastojanju da objasne ljudski razvoj, socijalizaciju, ponašanje, spoznajne procese i nove težnje koje pretendiraju kreirati „humani stroj" koji će izgubiti osnovnu božansku svrhu i sve što je svojstveno homo sapiensu.

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Free or Trapped World

Where are the limits of human freedom? How to understand them correctly, and how to live them, especially toward others. As stated in the holy books, one of the slaves is that of God, and it really stands as a form of transcendent freedom that frees us from the shackles of this world and brings us closer to one transcendent essence. However, when we leave that space, we will meet people and situations that claim our personal space, life, and rights. This is where all the freedoms often lead to fragmentation, restriction, humiliation, and ultimately to end violence.

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All of the above is the product of our feelings, passions, superficial thoughts, and personal dilemmas that are often dry generalizations.[1] Usually, what is true for a citizen, a believer, or a person with a disability, we think is also true for others. Hence, such a dry insistence on certain points of view has no basis in a one-dimensional understanding of identity and man. That this "other" is not what we think it is or cannot reduce to our limited perception. The essence is reflected in the multidimensionality of human existence and multiple identities, we can say that we are not generally determinable, so no one has the right to abstract or leads to conclusions about someone's private and socio-ecological space, which is a struggle of natural and unnatural projections about someone else.[2]

Although we are never completely free, this boundary manifests an inner feeling, an experience of oneself in some social environment.

Since the "intimate freedom" that technology and social networks are taking away from us is getting out of the "personal dust" of the transient, it also opens the question of social freedom as such. Are we living in some kind of complete evil or good for which we will find no justification or confirmation?[3]

Getting rid of yourself is a great skill and a challenge that requires effort. How, then to go from a free individual to a free society of a somewhat utopian conception?

The metaphysics of evil is always ahead of the order we are fighting for, so one who is oppressed for one reason or another will always find a reason for his own undesirable actions and the limitations for which he has woven a web. Even where God's law does not apply, it is not abstracted from the individual if he wants to adopt it but is a rehearsal for what he and others do, sometimes just to satisfy selfish desires or misunderstand the messages that individuals or groups represent.[4]

The point is lost in which religion is understood only as a polarity between the public and the private to the detriment of the "private," but its public part is the right of every individual to self-determination without restrictions. The problem arises in the lack of political organization and models of government that primarily Muslims, but also other groups allow a freeway to practice and exercise rights, and sacred messages in their own and especially in Western countries, although not necessary to achieve an eschatological purpose.

The Struggle Against Religion or Dogma

This topic is far from the superficial and often-proclaimed attitude of secularism in the institutional and political sense. The foundations of understanding this issue around dogma, schism, and religion through the prism of different views in philosophy and the church, respect for authority, and daily political and national relations, usually in a scientific sense to some extent, are useless. The teachings in the church distinguished lay people, ordinary people, peasants, and workers from the church clergy, which belongs to the so-called ecclesiastical state, though with these claims would not agree with the reformers Calvin and Martin Luther, who set out from the inner sphere to change their view of the dominant social role of ecclesiastical authorities.

On the other hand, the clumsy term "Political Islam" creates confusion and uneasiness in the west, religiously and profanely including and excluding all good and bad, thus shifting the struggle from the universal to the sociopolitical struggle for supremacy and influence.

Islam does not know this polarity because life and its totality without the political are not concepts or practices of the life of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and thus the lives of ordinary people for whom politics determines the conditions and way of life in this case.[5,6]

Dr. Richard T. France (1989) of the University of Cambridge:[a] "Jesus spoke some powerful truths about the Old Testament:" Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. He goes on to say: "Some of her harshest condemnations are directed at those who have tried to evade God's clear commandments (written in the Old Testament Law) by replacing them, however honorable, with purely human traditions."

The question arises of institutional religious activity, especially in the west, and its justification. The established social institution of the church for centuries with a clear hierarchy and enormous influence, the emergence of the enlightenment lost its significance, while the French Revolution remained without influence in state and political life. An important detail in the west or predominantly Judeo-Christian tradition, which does not take religious law as something that changes, especially with Jesus himself, who does not pass any new law but only confirms the old law, which essentially becomes a completely new paradigm. This will be confirmed by the words of the Quran: "Say: We believe in Allah and in what he has revealed to us and in what has been revealed to Ibrahim, Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and grandchildren, and what is given to Musa and Jesus and the Prophets. From their Lord; we do not make any difference between them, we only sincerely obey him" (3; 84).[b]

Redefining these issues would significantly improve the position of the Muslim community precisely because of religious worship, which is no longer relevant in secular society, which phobicly defends its own identity, which is fading in the new millennium, as well as other identities.[7]

Changes in Education

Reforms and changes in education are slowly pushing religion from public and educational life to the private sphere. The dark period of the Middle Ages in Europe, in the East, was a

[a]Pat., D., & Alexander, Biblical Handbook, Small Encyclopedia, Spiritual Reality, Zagreb

[b]Names according to the Qur'anic Revelation Musa as (Moses) Isa as (Jesus)

kind of renaissance. The dogma and practice of the church fathers led to the absurdity and final breakdown of its influence, the ideas of Jean-Jaque Rosseau, Voltaire, Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau, and other French reformers.

The slight pushing of the religious and religious out of public life opens up space for the capitalist bourgeois model and perhaps for a somewhat more aggressive secular discourse that elevates state interest over individual and religious freedoms.

Laicism directly confronts such aspirations from the sphere of private and individual rights, which contains the profane-sacral mode of the human being and create intolerance and conflicts. When you include education, that is, the right to education according to your own beliefs, but not the exclusive relationship and correlation in the order of modern existence, we shape what is not a democratic principle.

Also, the institute of IDGMA (ijma) of the Muslim consensus is important in choosing a new ruler, but the question of human nature aspires, as much as we want, just rule as the ideal of the ummah, can not be realized in the sense that the democratic majority does not want justice as such.

From the linguistic point of view, it is interesting to note that the Arabic language itself does not know the word democracy, although the practice of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) speaks volumes about democratic principles such as the Hudaybiyyah agreement, the Jewish community, and the Medina Christians. Insufficient knowledge of Islam and its universal teachings passes without the dogmatic into the sphere of religious and practical life, conflicting with the basic concepts of human, and egalitarian rights that are supposedly advocated by republicans after the revolution.[8–10] Lack of self-questioning and self-reflection often leads even the smartest people to some form of alienation where reliance on "reason" is not a reference for what extends, especially in a rapidly changing world that has grown up with unfortunate events in the past.[11]

Fourth Political Theory

If we really live in a time of post-truth where we are often unable to determine what is a lie and what is true, in the world of social networks and the upcoming metaverse, does not such a world need a code to orient itself to, so to speak, and back to basic settings. The seemingly certain theological framework of postmodern existence through the return to a kind of monarchist rule embodied in the Russian leader, I think, opens the door to delusion. We are witnessing that ideology and real leaders have little in common or even nothing in common. Power and politics realize all the benefits of the economic-geopolitical cake that is offered or should be conquered, while the ideologist remains closed to his own world of interpretation of eschatological principles in a leader or state that is not.

In order to realize such potential and even the produced conflict with Western values as incompatible with traditional teachings in Christianity, the potential of that state, and the establishment of value systems in that society would be a glaring example of something that has no basis in current practice that he will not have in the future.

In this case, we see an ideologue, a leader, and a people who are more or less unable to discern what is good and what is bad if we are talking about the legal. Even the religious sphere, and the return to the nomos of Nazi Party member Carl Schmitt, to whom Dugin refers. The argument that leads from the values of tsarist Russia to Hitler's arguments is truly a postmodern twist in which the fourth theory and its unfounded political messianism "liberates" us from postmodernism, liberal thinking, postindustrial society, especially globalization based on technology, and the unipolar world.[12–16]

Conclusion

As for our country, where world geopolitical interests usually collide, one should be careful, have enough wisdom in profiling oneself according to world events and the end of history in which we do not have a special role if we do not design it ourselves, based upon completely new constitution created by all relevant structures within the country.

Images of dehumanization by Western countries have become explicit with the arrival of refugees and migrants from the Middle East and Ukraine that need no further argument.

Attempts from the East to package eschatology into a theory that corresponds to the time and space of a state or the development of social thought in liberalism point to insufficiently read characteristics and messages of sacred revelations, desecration of basic moral postulates through interpretation on a daily political level, supporting anthropomorphic picture imagination, i.e., saving man from himself by moving towards the noumenon.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Ethical Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic in Perinatal Medicine

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Abstract

Professional ethics in obstetrics is based on the ethical principles of beneficence, respect for autonomy, and justice and the professional virtues of integrity, humility, compassion, self-effacement, and self-sacrifice. The ethical principle of beneficence and the professional virtue of integrity are directly applicable tools for addressing the question posed in this paper.

The Coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic is unprecedented in our lifetime, especially in perinatology. In this publication, we will discuss important clinical ethical lessons we learned during the pandemic, including COVID-19 vaccination and physician hesitancy, ringfencing, and frameshifting.

The gold standard is to strongly recommend COVID-19 vaccinations to those trying to get pregnant, to those who are pregnant, and to those who are postpartum.

The three root causes of physician hesitancy—misapplication of therapeutic nihilism, misapplication of shared decision-making, and misapplication of respect for autonomy should not be ignored and need to be addressed.

It is important that we heed Brent's insightful recommendations. Doing nothing with respect to vaccination is not an option, whether it applies to COVID-19 vaccines or to future pandemics. Physician hesitation is not an option. When there is sufficient evidence of vaccine safety and effectiveness without documented risks, vaccine recommendations before, during, and after pregnancy should be explicitly made to prevent maternal, fetal, and neonatal morbidity and mortality.

Keywords: Coronavirus disease of 2019 vaccine, Maternal mortality, Neonatal morbidity, Neonatal mortality, Patient rights, Preterm birth, Stillbirth, Therapeutic nihilism, Vaccine counseling.

Sažetak

Profesionalna etika u opstetriciji temelji se na etičkim načelima dobročinstva, poštivanja autonomije i pravde i profesionalnih vrlina integriteta, poniznosti, suosjećanja, samozatajnosti i samopožrtvovnosti. Etičko načelo dobročinstva i stručnosti.

vrlina integriteta izravno su primjenjivi alati za rješavanje pitanja postavljenog u ovom radu.

Pandemija COVID-19 je bez presedana u našem životu, posebno u perinatologiji. U ovoj publikaciji raspravljat ćemo o važnim kliničkim etičkim lekcijama koje smo naučili tijekom pandemije, uključujući cijepljenje protiv COVID-19 i oklijevanje liječnika, izolaciju i mijenjanje okvira.

Zlatni standard je snažno preporučiti cijepljenje protiv COVID-19 onima koji pokušavaju zatrudnjeti, trudnicama i onima koje su nakon poroda.

Tri temeljna uzroka liječničkog oklijevanja: pogrešna primjena terapijskog nihilizma, pogrešna primjena zajedničkog donošenja odluka i pogrešna primjena poštovanja autonomije ne bi se smjela zanemariti i njima se treba pozabaviti.

Važno je da poslušamo pronicljive preporuke Roberta Brenta. Ne učiniti ništa u vezi s cijepljenjem nije opcija, bilo da se odnosi na cjepiva protiv COVID-19 ili na buduće pandemije. Oklijevanje liječnika nije opcija. Kada postoji dovoljno dokaza o sigurnosti i učinkovitosti cjepiva bez dokumentiranih rizika, treba izričito dati preporuke za cijepljenje prije, tijekom i nakon trudnoće kako bi se spriječio pobol i smrtnost majke, fetusa i novorođenčadi.

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Introduction

As of December 2022, there have been about 100 million COVID-19 cases in the US, with about 1.1 million deaths.[1] There have also been well over 230,000 pregnant patients infected with COVID-19 in the US, with over 500 maternal deaths from COVID-19.[2]

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Professional ethics in obstetrics is based on the ethical principles of beneficence, respect for autonomy, and justice and the professional virtues of integrity, humility, compassion, self-effacement, and self-sacrifice.[3–5] The ethical principle of beneficence and the professional virtue of integrity are directly applicable tools for addressing the question posed in this paper.

The COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented in our lifetime, especially in perinatology. In this publication, we will discuss important clinical ethical lessons we learned during the pandemic, including COVID-19 vaccination and physician hesitancy, ringfencing, and frameshifting.

How Does COVID-19 Affect Pregnancy?

Pregnancy in and by itself does not increase the likelihood of becoming infected with COVID-19. However, it should be no surprise when considering that the immune system is affected in pregnancy, that COVID-19-infected pregnant patients are sicker than nonpregnant patients and that pregnant patients are at an increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 when compared to those who are not pregnant. Those with COVID-19 infections during pregnancy are at increased risk for preterm birth (delivering the baby earlier than 37 weeks) and stillbirths and might be at increased risk for other pregnancy complications such as increased hospitalization, admission to an intensive care unit (ICU), or use of a ventilator or special equipment to breathe.[6–9] When compared to those who are vaccinated, unvaccinated pregnant patients are at increased risks for ICU admissions, maternal morbidity, deaths and pregnancy complications.[10–12]

COVID-19 Vaccines for Pregnant Patients

Infection prevention by social distancing and masking is the first step to preventing COVID-19 infection and its deadly sequelae. COVID-19 vaccines, which were introduced in the US in December 2020, have saved over 3 million lives in the US at the end of 2022.[13] COVID-19 vaccination also prevents infections and decreases the risk of morbidity and deaths in pregnant patients.[14]

Table 1 shows the risks of COVID-19 infection versus the benefits and risks of COVID-19 vaccination.

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Getting fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and even more so after receiving a booster dose, saves lives. It's safe and effective.[15] A recent review of six studies confirmed that COVID-19 vaccination prevented pregnant patients from severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 infection and COVID-19-related hospitalization. The study showed that no adverse events of COVID-19 vaccination were found on pregnant, fetal, or neonatal outcomes.[14] The benefits of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine in pregnancy far outweigh any known or potential risks of vaccination before, during, and after pregnancy. There is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines cause any fertility problems in patients or men or that the COVID-19 vaccine is harmful to either the nursing mother or the breastfed infant.[16] In fact, patients receiving a COVID-19 vaccine show antibodies and T-cells which appear in the milk after maternal vaccination and likely protect the infant against COVID-19 infection.[17]

Within 2 months after COVID-19 vaccines were first introduced, there were no "red flags," according to Fauci.[18] Although pregnant patients were not included in the initial COVID-19 vaccine trial in 2020, there were no increased serious adverse events for patients who were or became pregnant in the clinical trials of COVID-19 vaccines pregnant patients that would have warranted suspension of these trials. There was no documented theoretical risk of maternal, fetal, or neonatal harm, and there were no documented increased adverse outcomes in vaccinated

Table 1: Risk of COVID-19 infection versus benefits and risks of COVID-19 vaccination

Risk of COVID-19 infection	*Benefits of COVID-19 vaccination*	*Risk of COVID-19 vaccination*
Higher infection rate than nonpregnant	Prevents infection	Anaphylactic reaction
Higher maternal deaths	Prevents infection to others	Injection site pain, swelling
More ICU admissions	Prevents severe disease	Headache
More centilation	Prevents preterm birth	Tiredness
Longterm sequelae	Prevents fetal infection	Muscle aches, "Fever"
More preterm births	Prevents neonatal infection	Pregnant patients were not included in vaccine trials
More pregnancy loss	Antibodies in fetal and neonatal blood	
Infecting others	Antibodies in breastmilk	Other vaccines have not shown adverse pregnancy outcomes
Infecting fetal patients	Prevents longterm sequelae	
Infecting newborn		No proven theoretical fetal risks
		No proven theoretical maternal risks
		Menstrual period changes

pregnant patients. Consequently, Chervenak et al. outlined the ethical issues surrounding vaccination in pregnancy, and they concluded that COVID-19 vaccination should be strongly recommended by providers to prevent severe maternal morbidity and death.[19] Our clinically grounded, ethical justification for recommending COVID-19 vaccination to pregnant patients concluded that "physicians should recommend COVID-19 vaccination to patients who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, and breastfeeding or planning to breastfeed."[19] It took another 6 or more months for others to support that recommendation using a similar language we used 6 months previously.

We believe that early adoption of this position in 2021 would have subsequently prevented the ensuing months of physician hesitancy and, with it, many unnecessary maternal deaths and injuries in unvaccinated pregnant patients.

Why are Pregnant Patients less Vaccinated than Nonpregnant Persons?

On social media, misinformation and unfounded claims linking COVID-19 vaccines to infertility are widespread, leading to vaccine skepticism among many men and patients of reproductive age.[20]

Professional US organizations and other countries delayed recommending COVID-19 vaccinations for pregnant patients until mid to late 2021 and did not recommend it until there was clear evidence of increased maternal mortality from COVID-19 infections in late 2021. This is what's called "physician hesitancy." [21]

On 29th September 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published a health advisory recommending urgent action to increase COVID-19 vaccination among patients who are pregnant, recently pregnant (including those who are lactating), who are trying to become pregnant now, or who might become pregnant in the future.[22]

However, as of the end of 2022, the COVID vaccine acceptance rate among pregnant patients remains lower than among nonpregnant patients, and more than one out of three pregnant patients in the United States of America have not been fully vaccinated for COVID-19 before or during pregnancy, and only about 50% of non-Hispanic pregnant Blacks have been fully vaccinated.[1]

There are multiple factors influencing a woman's decision to get vaccinated, but the most common factor that influences patients to get vaccinated is a healthcare provider's recommendation.[23–29] It is, therefore, an ethical imperative that physicians and others have a strong message and make a strong recommendation to pregnant patients and those trying to conceive to get vaccinated against COVID-19.[19]

"Physician hesitancy" occurs when physicians or their professional organizations do not recommend COVID-19 vaccination. Or it occurs when, while not clearly recommending against vaccination, physicians question both the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines, therefore sowing doubt in patients and discouraging pregnant patients from accepting vaccination. Vaccine and physician hesitancy is a contributing factor to the present low vaccine acceptance rate by pregnant patients for COVID-19 and other recommended vaccines, and it is a major, unaddressed problem for the quality and safety of obstetric care.[30–33]

Disappointingly, there continues to be a proliferation of anti-vaccination proponents among physicians and other healthcare providers who actively discourage COVID-19 vaccinations (and often other vaccines). Some carry the mantle of healthcare providers, while others use the anti-vaccination movement for political purposes.

Physician hesitancy may have also been encouraged by inconsistent messaging to pregnant patients as well as the reluctance, until very recently, of physicians' professional organizations and publications not to recommend COVID-19 vaccination to pregnant patients, even though COVID-19 vaccinations to most other risk groups had already been recommended. As pregnant patients continue to become severely ill or die from COVID-19, overcoming physician hesitancy has become urgent.

And though the CDC and most United States of America states included pregnant patients as a risk group, several professional groups and societies initially said to only "offer" but not to recommend vaccination to be pregnant, therefore excluding the recommendation for COVID-19 vaccinations from pregnant patients.[34–38] That approach was further elaborated by several publications that called for "shared decision making" between a patient and her provider for offering (presenting vaccination as an option without the physician expressing a view on whether the patient should be vaccinated), but not recommending (expressing the view that the patient should be vaccinated), COVID-19 vaccination to pregnant patients.[39–43]

Well before the COVID-19 pandemic Brent called for establishing successful vaccine programs for pregnant patients as the quintessence of preventive medicine. Maternal vaccination against COVID-19 is the best way not only to protect against maternal morbidity and mortality but also to protect the soon-to-be-born child and infant.[10,44,45] As with other vaccines recommended in pregnancy, there are no known pregnancy-specific adverse effects of COVID-19 vaccines.

A recommendation by a physician or another health care professional is crucial to improve vaccine acceptance.[10,19,21]

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine, as well as the CDC, hesitated to recommend COVID-19 vaccination recommendations to pregnant patients until the end of July 2021. In fact, pregnant patients were the only group who had been specifically excluded from these recommendations. At that time, it had become evident that there was a significantly elevated maternal mortality in unvaccinated pregnant patients.

In a review of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy, there were no concerning safety signals, specifically no increase in fetal malformations,[10] and studies indicated that the administration of the messenger ribonucleic acid vaccines

resulted in a robust maternal humoral response. Although the antibody response to vaccination among pregnant patients has not been rigorously compared with the response among nonpregnant patients, there has been no reason to expect differences. Furthermore, maternal immunoglobulin G antibodies efficiently cross the placenta, resulting in relatively high titers in the fetus.[10] There are no known or theoretical risks of COVID-19 vaccination for breastfeeding patients, and there are no restrictions to the vaccination. Patients should be reassured that COVID-19 vaccines do not affect fertility, that COVID-19 vaccines cannot cause COVID-19 as none of them contains the live virus, that the COVID-19 vaccines do not interact with or alter genetic material, and that the vaccines do not contain any controversial substances.[46]

Physician Hesitancy in Not Recommending Vaccination

There are three root causes of physician hesitancy, and we identified how to reverse physician hesitancy by firmly recommending COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy.[21] Reversing the root causes of physician hesitancy remains an urgent matter of patient safety, not just during the COVID-19 pandemic but also for future outbreaks. The three root causes have their origin in clinical misapplications of important components of professionally responsible obstetric clinical judgment and practice:

- Clinical misapplication of therapeutic nihilism.
- Clinical misapplication of shared decision-making, and
- Clinical misapplication of the ethical principle of respect for autonomy.

The first root cause of physician hesitancy is the misapplication of therapeutic nihilism in the clinical management of pregnancy. Therapeutic nihilism is defined as "skepticism regarding the worth of therapeutic agents, especially in a particular disease."[47] Therapeutic nihilism is a powerful antidote to enthusiasm, the belief in clinical benefit in the absence of evidence.

The response to the clinical misapplication of therapeutic nihilism should be deliberative, beneficence-based clinical judgment. Therapeutic nihilism is justified when an intervention during pregnancy should be considered to result in significant net clinical harm. However, this did not apply to COVID-19 vaccination at the time of our 1st February 2021 publication in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology.[19] The increased risks of severe maternal illness, ICU admission, and maternal, fetal, and neonatal death were already well documented early in 2021. There were no "red flags" according to Dr Fauci[18] and no increased serious adverse events for patients who were or became pregnant in the clinical trials of COVID-19 vaccines pregnant patients that would have warranted suspension of these trials. There was no documented theoretical risk of maternal, fetal, or neonatal harm, and there were no documented increased adverse outcomes in vaccinated pregnant patients. As the harms of COVID-19 disease in pregnancy were severe and immediate, and there were no documented safety concerns, deliberative beneficence-based clinical judgment supported the conclusion that vaccination should be recommended clearly as early as January 2021.

The second root cause of physician hesitancy is the misapplication of shared decision-making (in shared decision-making, the physician should not be directive but only offer and not recommend specific management).[3] Shared decision-making has an important role in decision-making with patients when evidence is uncertain and is misapplied when it is taken to be the sole model for decision-making with patients. Shared decision-making has an important place when there are competing medically reasonable alternatives for, and therefore uncertainty about, the management of the patient's condition or diagnosis. For example, the obstetrician should offer both trials of labor and planned cesarean delivery after low transverse cesarean delivery. By contrast, shared decision-making is misplaced when making a recommendation is required, for example, when there is one medically reasonable alternative, for example, repeat cesarean delivery after classical cesarean delivery. This clinical judgment should be recommended and should be explained to the patient. She should be supported in her evaluation of it. In deliberative clinical judgment, not being vaccinated for COVID-19 was not a medically reasonable option for pregnant patients in February 2021, and it is not today.

The third root cause of physician hesitancy is the misapplication of the ethical principle of respect for autonomy. This ethical principle plays an indispensable role in decision-making with patients. It is misapplied when it is assumed that respect for autonomy requires physicians not to make recommendations and to defer to and implement patients' decisions without exception.[48] Patient autonomy is enforced by making strong recommendations empowering pregnant patients to make informed decisions about COVID-19 vaccination. Pregnant patients report that their physician's recommendations were the most important factor in their decision-making, especially as it relates to recommendations to get COVID-19 vaccines. It follows that making recommendations empowers pregnant patients to make informed decisions, belying the view that making recommendations is not compatible with respect for autonomy.

Currently, COVID-19 vaccination for pregnant patients is the standard of care and an ethical imperative. A pregnant woman's refusal of vaccination should not be simply accepted by her physician. The legal requirement of informed refusal should be satisfied and documented, supplemented by the ethical requirement of respectful persuasion.

The Risk of Doi ng Nothing

Well before the COVID-19 pandemic, Brent[49,50] wrote several articles, such as one called—"Risks and benefits of immunizing pregnant patients: the risk of doing nothing." Dr Brent laid out six beneficial points for immunizing pregnant patients or patients of reproductive age:

- To protect the mother, to protect the newborn and infant, and to prevent diseases and complications of pregnancy.
- Preparation of vaccines against infectious agents that are known to result in reproductive pathology and congenital malformation if the infection of the mother occurs during pregnancy.
- To utilize vaccines used routinely to protect the nonpregnant population for administration during pregnancy.
- Utilization of vaccines to protect patients from diseases to which they are susceptible because of pregnancy.
- Utilization of vaccines for use before or during pregnancy, primarily to protect the newborn and infant *via* maternal transplacental antibodies.
- The prevention of intrauterine infection that has been alleged to initiate premature labor.

With the advent of COVID-19, Dr Brent's points are even more important. Doing nothing was and continues to be a clinical error. Hesitating to recommend the COVID-19 vaccine in pregnancy, despite clear evidence of harm to COVID-19-infected pregnant patients who were no vaccinated, and even though there was no evidence of potential harm from vaccination likely led to fewer pregnant patients accepting vaccination and subsequently the preventable increase in maternal mortality.[51] Physicians and other health care providers should continue to strongly recommend COVID-19 and other safe indicated vaccinations to pregnant patients, those trying to get pregnant, those who breastfeed, and those who initially decline vaccination.

The Ongoing Need for Ringfencing in Perinatology

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, many hospitals worldwide have been overwhelmed by patients sickened by COVID-19. This often led to restrictions such as cancellation of family or doula visits and nonessential procedures and surgeries such as prenatal testing, prenatal visits or *in vitro* fertilization to free up hospital resources. This further added to the strain pregnant patients and their families already had to endure. Many of the restrictions were not necessarily evidence-based. Only those changes should be made that are well supported in deliberative (evidence-based, rigorous, transparent, and accountable) clinical judgment response to the COVID-19 pandemic.[52,53] We argued for "ringfencing," which has its origins in the ringfences that are built to keep farm animals in and predators out or in finance, where it serves as a virtual barrier that segregates a portion of an individual's or company's financial assets from the rest. We believe that maternity resources, both human and physical, should be ringfenced from redeployment so that the capacity of labor and delivery units is not impaired and to ensure that women and their newborns continue to receive the safest possible care. The essential of putting women and children first during the COVID-19 (and next) pandemic requires that hospitals sustain access by pregnant women and newborns to timely, effective, and safe prenatal and in-hospital care for the non-elective condition of pregnancy.

Frameshifting from Individual-patient-based Concerns to Population-based Clinical Judgement

In addition to restricting services during the height of the pandemic, some hospitals also considered or actually moved obstetric services. This was often challenged by obstetricians because of beneficence-based deliberative clinical judgment from the perspective of individual-patient-based concerns. However, we believe that in a public health emergency, a frameshift from individual-patient based to population-based deliberative clinical judgment is required to meet the needs of the entire population of patients of the hospital.[54]

An individual-patient-based, beneficence-based deliberative clinical judgment is not an adequate basis for organizational policy in response to a public health emergency.

Instead, physicians, especially those in leadership positions, must frameshift to population-based clinical ethical judgment that focuses on the reduction of mortality as much as possible in the entire population of patients served by a healthcare organization. The challenges of obstetricians certainly include stress, and we emphasize that this additional stress originates in the sudden, unexpected ethical stress of having to shift from the professional commitment to meet each obstetric patient's needs individually to meet the needs of an entire population.

Coronavirus disease of (COVID-19) is not the first and is surely not the last global pandemic. In case of overwhelmed hospitals, optimization and, if necessary, reassignment of hospital space is needed to care for all patients. When this happens, obstetricians should look beyond their perinatal patients. They should expand the concept of the professional virtue of integrity to include a population of patients at-large and not normally served by obstetrics. By moving obstetrics offsite, for example, deliberative clinical judgment focuses on the reduction of mortality as much as possible in the entire population of patients served by the hospital. This expanded concept of professional integrity should guide the response of obstetricians to future unexpected public health emergencies.[54]

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented in our lifetime, especially in perinatology. In this publication, we discussed some of the ethical lessons learned in perinatal medicine from the COVID-19 pandemic. The ethical principle of beneficence and the professional virtue of integrity is directly applicable tools for addressing the issues surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic.

The gold standard is to strongly recommend COVID-19 vaccinations to those trying to get pregnant, to those who are pregnant, and to those who are postpartum. When the benefits of vaccines far outweigh the risks, it is

unethical to disseminate wrong information and discourage patients from becoming vaccinated. COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters prevent severe diseases and adverse pregnancy and neonatal outcomes. A pregnant patient's vaccination also protects the newborn infant because maternal antibodies protect the fetus and newborn. COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters in pregnancy are safe for the pregnant patient and her fetus. The three root causes of physician hesitancy—misapplication of therapeutic nihilism, misapplication of shared decision-making, and misapplication of respect for autonomy should not be ignored and need to be addressed.

It is important that we heed Brent's insightful recommendations.[49,50] Doing nothing with respect to vaccination is not an option, whether it applies to COVID-19 vaccines or to future pandemics. Physician hesitation is not an option. When there is sufficient evidence of vaccine safety and effectiveness without documented risks, vaccine recommendations before, during, and after pregnancy should be explicitly made to prevent maternal, fetal, and neonatal morbidity and mortality.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Open Questions over the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Chosen controversial themes that arose upon declared COVID-19 pandemic are briefly discussed and reviewed herein. Given the relatively one-sided reporting on the origin and course of COVID-19 and the constant pressure for the "vaccination" against severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), scientific information and research results that show problematic aspects of the COVID-19 counteracting measures put in place are presented. These aspects are often neglected in mainstream communication channels and are underrepresented in the scientific literature. As science is not a dogma but comprises all available objective facts and angles of view, sometimes opposing each other and sometimes not fitting in one unique picture, the presented portion of information may be important for a wider discussion within the scientific community. Scientific facts may be accordingly confronted and openly discussed taking in mind that any discussion should be driven primarily by humanistic goals. The closest truth should be consequently drawn from the confrontations of arguments and facts in light of a humanistic context.

Keywords: Community, COVID-19, Pandemic, SARS-CoV-2, Scientific facts, Vaccination.

Sažetak

U ovome radu se ukratko raspravlja se o odabranim kontroverznim temama koje su se pojavile nakon proglašenja pandemije COVID-19. S obzirom na relativno jednostrano izvještavanje o nastanku i tijeku COVID-19 te stalni pritisak za 'cijepljenjem' protiv SARS-CoV-2, znanstvene informacije i rezultati istraživanja koji pokazuju problematične aspekte mjera suzbijanja COVID-19 postavljaju se brojna pitanja. Ti su aspekti često zanemareni u glavnim komunikacijskim kanalima i nedovoljno su zastupljeni u znanstvenoj literaturi. Kako znanost nije dogma već obuhvaća sve dostupne objektivne činjenice i kutove gledanja, koji su ponekad suprotstavljeni, a ponekad ne ulaze u jedinstvenu sliku, izneseni dio informacija može biti važan za širu raspravu unutar znanstvene zajednice. Znanstvene činjenice se mogu sukladno tome suočiti, otvoreno raspravljati imajući na umu da svaka rasprava treba biti vođena prvenstveno humanističkim ciljevima. Najbližu istinu stoga treba izvući iz sučeljavanja argumenata i činjenica u svjetlu humanističkog konteksta.

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In December 2019, the world public was globally and systemically being informed through the mainstream media about a potentially new strain of SARS-type coronavirus discovered in Wuhan. Very soon, in March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced a pandemic associated to a newly acknowledged RNA virus from the *Coronaviridae* family, named SARS-CoV-2, that in their words posed a challenge to almost every country worldwide in terms of potential lack of health system capacities and as an economic burden. Almost immediately, some questions arose within a part of the scientific community that remained inadequately addressed or almost not answered to date. Some of these questions were those questioning the (a) origin and the exact cause of the disease, (b) the actual infection rate among the population, (c) the diagnostic procedure of the disease, particularly the reliability of the reverse transcription-quantitative polymerase chain reaction (RT-qPCR) test for the detection of COVID-19, (d) exact differential diagnostics procedure of COVID-19, especially in relation to other pathologies with similar symptoms, (e) updated and precise mortality data, (f) variability in response to the "new infection" by the population, (g) the nature and duration of acquired immunity, (h) the usefulness of the genetic products used for vaccination against this disease, and (i) management and relevance (including the cause) of the coronavirus mutations. Some even more important questions arose later on which only adds to the quota of a largely unanswered basic questions list on this particular matter.

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The disease named COVID-19 has been, indeed, the subject of several controversies that may be called as "unknowns" due to a lack of scientific consensus. We cover below some of these questions and do not deal with the socio-humanistic aspects of the pandemics. Much of the existing controversies are indeed related to political and socioeconomic issues but have a root in unanswered medical and scientific matters related to the "pandemics" (Table 1). Our goal is to emphasize the rational scientific aspects from the biomedical field available so far that might shed more light on the "pandemics" controversies. One-sided reporting from some scientists, politicians, and above all, the central media may have probably contributed to the creation of such "controversies." Such one-sided approach or often purposely emphasized dramatic reporting on complex medical and scientific matters toward the public may have contributed to raising fear and anxiety of the population. This is being growingly acknowledged as a public health issue.[1–5] In addition, the so-called pandemic-counteracting measures were often only unilaterally justified and the imposed measures had a more psychological impact than being objectively and medically justified or showing some measurable outcomes. The purpose of this paper is to consider these issues, present them to the scientific public, and contribute in overcoming this truly huge human crisis, which seems partly unjustified by evaluating or raising scientific and professional arguments.

Table 1: Some of the controversies over COVID-19 situation management that should be openly questioned and analyzed by the scientific community

- RT-qPCR method design and usage for confirmation of COVID-19 cases
- Natural and vaccine-induced immunity—differences and efficacy
- Public health application of face masking
- COVID-19 genetic recombinant products for vaccination
- Lockdown measures and innate immunity status of population
- Early COVID-19 treatment
- Number of conformed COVID-19 deaths and absence of autopsies
- One-sided media and/or professional reporting on the medical aspects of the disease
- The SARS-CoV-2 isolation and characterization
- Clinical picture defining for a COVID-19 viral disease
- Why autopsies for COVID-19 cases confirmation are not performed
- Safety issues of the COVID-19 genetic recombinant products used for vaccination
- Premise "*Primum non nocere*" and The Hippocratic Oath in COVID-19 management

Brief Chronology of the First Year of COVID-19 Disease Onset

On 9th January 2020, the WHO suspected the possible roots of what should later become the COVID-19 pandemic, stressing that the flood of pneumonia-like cases that occurred in the Chinese city of Wuhan could stem from a new coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2. There were 59 reported cases at the time, and travel precautions were taken immediately. On 20th January 2020, the American Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that three American airports would start screening for the new coronavirus. The day after, the CDC confirms the first positive case of a Washington state resident returning from Wuhan. The RT-qPCR test developed by the so-called Drosden group[6] was chosen as the SARS-CoV-2 testing method and accordingly used to confirm these cases. On the same day, Chinese scientists confirm the transmission of the disease among humans. Later the same month, the city of Wuhan with 11 million inhabitants was put under quarantine (having at that time 300 diagnosed patients). At the end of January 2020, WHO declares a global threat and global flying restrictions came into force. On 11th March 2020, the WHO declares a pandemic. Starting from 24th March 2020, halting of clinical trials was also recommended. On 30th March 2020, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorizes the use of hydroxychloroquine in the treatment of COVID-19. Later on, two renowned medical journals provided confounding data on this treatment asking for caution in use of hydroxychloroquine. These were the *Lancet*[7] and the *New England Journal of Medicine*.[8] Both these papers added confusion in development of adequate successful protocols for early treatment of COVID-19 with hydroxychloroquine, previously prescribed for coronavirus infections treatment, and were both withdrawn after the authors said they could not guarantee the data used for paper preparation. In both studies indeed, a private database of medical records from a relatively unknown company Surgisphere was used to draw conclusions on hydroxychloroquine safety. This is not the only example of the highly problematic publishing of scientific papers during "pandemics" and data accuracy related to clinical and public health management of COVID-19. This is a serious matter as scientific data should be openly and accurately published to allow the medical and scientific community in development of adequate treatments for the disease and eventual counteracting measures. Science can have difficulty performing its societal role if it does not rely on exact and confirmed data. Further, on 30th June 2020, Antony Fauci began to openly warn the population about this new disease, and on 9th July 2020, the WHO announced that this new respiratory disease could spread through the air. A number of epidemiologic measures that were imposed afterward to the general population, such as massive contact tracking of positive asymptomatic cases followed by isolation or quarantine were mainly based on RT-qPCR-positive cases.

Clinical and symptomatic cases are exempted from this observation as these cases were clinically confirmed. It should be also noted that airborne diseases may be spread from an infected person *via* coughing, sneezing, laughing, and close personal contact or aerosolization of the microbe, which means that a patient infected or colonized with a certain infectious agent is required for spreading of a disease.[9] Accordingly, a symptomatic person or a person with truly proven infectious potential is required for a respiratory disease spreading, requirements that were largely not met in the RT-qPCR testing of the global population where healthy people were involved as a majority of tested subject. Some major problems with usage of RT-qPCR test for confirmation of COVID-19 cases have indeed been seriously challenged by external independent expert scientists,[10] after the original paper was published by the method developer group in 2020.[6] Later on, the method was also questioned by WHO itself[11] and CDC that announced on 19th July 2021, a recommendation for clinical laboratories and testing sites that have been using the CDC 2019-nCoV RT-qPCR assay, to consider adoption of a multiplexed method that can facilitate detection and differentiation of SARS-CoV-2 and influenza viruses.[12]

The treatment options by use of existing drugs, especially after the confusion done with erroneously published hydroxychloroquine data, were put almost completely aside from the media focus and governmental policies giving large media coverage to producers of the genetic recombinant products as "vaccines" for COVID-19. Publicly released news on the effectiveness of such new "Moderna vaccine" began on 14th July 2020 when data from phase 1/2 trials of Moderna Inc.'s COVID-19 vaccine on 15 volunteers was disclosed.[13] This company was the first to enter large-scale human trials as well. On 20th July 2020, in the United States, it was announced that delays in diagnostic procedures due to COVID-19 could increase cancer incidence.[14] Followed by Moderna Inc.'s news, on 21st July 2020, the optimistic results of vaccination trials were released by AstraZeneca and CanSino Biologics as well,[15,16] and on 22nd July 2020, the contract for the distribution of Pfizer BioNTech vaccines was announced in the United States.[17] It should be noted that these products aimed for COVID-19 vaccination were based on genetic constructs for the production of the coronavirus spike protein in the cells of human recipients. This technology, with the purpose of vaccination, was new to human applications and the sequences for spike proteins in these products were bioinformatically deduced and constructed, in some cases chemically modified, meaning that the final effects in a human body were mainly unknown. These effects include, for example, potential for integration in the human genome or other effects interfering with cellular biological pathways. At the end of August 2020, remdesivir, as one of the firstly pushed antiviral cure for COVID-19, was declared ineffective.[18] It was announced, however, that steroids reduced mortality in severe cases of COVID-19,[19] Europe also reported an increase in the number of cases, and on 23rd September 2020, a new variant emerged. On 29th September 2020, Regeneron reported on its website positive results from a monoclonal antibody treatment.[20] It became obvious that a race to find a COVID-19 treatment was reaching a mature point. Indeed, many scientific and clinical groups reported on various possible treatments for COVID-19 patients.[21] Despite criticism toward the heavily pushed use of remdesivir, the FDA at that time gives permission for remdesivir. This remains almost unexplainable from a scientific point of view, especially due to poor clinical utility in COVID-19 treatment and considering the serious adverse effects of this drug reported in the literature.[22,23]

Public announcements on dilemmas about COVID-19 vaccine products on the utility to induce true immunity against coronavirus expectedly began already on 5th November 2020 before a mass vaccination campaign against COVID-19 started. A number of renewed scientists emphasized that immunity against a coronavirus was not achieved in previous studies on animals by this type of genetic product (i.e., mRNA-based products) and will accordingly not be easy to achieve in a human population with these new products as well. Previous studies might have been thus at least considered by regulatory agencies for cautious applications of recombinant medical products for "vaccination" purposes in massive public health decisions.[24–26] These recombinant genetic products, aimed to be used as vaccines against COVID-19, have paved their way sequentially to the public during 2020 and got the emergency use authorization by FDA firstly for Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine[27] and conditional marketing authorization by European Medicines Agency (EMA).[28] The documentation supplied to regulatory agencies by the producers stated only a relative efficacy of the genetic recombinant products after a rather short period of observation of the subject "vaccine" products. This was shown later to be a crucial point as massive vaccination did not prove useful for control of COVID-19 spreading, particularly to emerging virus mutants, or for disease control.[29–31] In parallel to emergency use clearance of these genetic recombinant products for COVID-19 "vaccination," treatment options were continuously tested and developed. This was, however, not in the major spotlight of COVID-19 disease control decisions in spite of good results for some products obtained in clinical practice.[21,32] It should also be noted that some sophisticated and successful treatment options such as monoclonal antibodies, that is, bamlanivimab later on showed to be subject to coronavirus mutations escape as well.[33] In the chronology of the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic and besides the pharmacological treatment options for COVID-19 patients, two additional important categories were seemingly intentionally omitted from publicly released information. These are (a) exact incidence and (b) confirmed mortality cases from the COVID-19 disease.

The reason for this is in the objective lack of scientifically precise information on these two points. Incidence of the disease was counted indeed as RT-qPCR-positive cases, which cannot, in any case, be linearly assessed without other clinical data and exact diagnostics. Mortality data were also partially erroneously counted for all RT-qPCR test positive cases and death-confirmation autopsies were almost halted. Still, even with this highly overestimated number of COVID-19 death cases, the mortality may be comparable with previous years' seasonal flu data. Unfortunately, realistic data for these two categories will accordingly never be obtained. As just one example for the highly controversial management of public health decisions related to either vaccination or other lockdown measures, the rather robust UK statistics data may be used through the publicly available online service.[34] According to the last released document on COVID-19 deaths from 1st January 2021 to 31st October 2021, the number of deaths in unvaccinated persons was in total 35,578 and in vaccinated categories was in total 35,416. In addition, COVID-19 mass vaccination started in December 2020 with the expectation to decrease the excess death rates measured in 2020 since the pandemic's start. Still, according to the public statistics (stated as statistics for England and Wales), cumulative excess deaths for the 5-year average was constantly increasing until 2nd July 2021, particularly for the age-group 65 years and higher, which raises some additional questions on the health status of the population following COVID-19 measures, including mass vaccinations.

RT-qPCR Test for COVID-19 Cases Identification

Mass testing of the population with the RT-qPCR test since the proclamation of the COVID-19 pandemic comprised a large portion of healthy people and was done by modified RT-qPCR method based on the bioinformatics premise of the newly published SARS-CoV-2 viral genetic sequence. Among other things, such massive testing contributed largely to the emergence of the so-called "test-pandemic." Indeed, RT-qPCR detection of SARS-CoV-2 RNA does not necessarily mean that a viable virus is present in the tested sample and a final diagnostic decision should be guided by the clinical signs and the patient's epidemiologic history. Problematic aspects of the RT-qPCR method, including problems with contamination, false positive or negative results, are also described in the literature.[30,35–40] Asymptomatic individuals should not be tested by this method and the CDC recently acknowledged that the spread of COVID-19 disease has not yet been proven for asymptomatic cases. This also seriously challenges any strict lockdown decision or testing measures for healthy people. For example, a study from 2020 was conducted on more than 10 million Wuhan inhabitants that were screened for asymptomatic positive cases in the post-lockdown period. The study showed no evidence that the identified asymptomatic COVID-19-positive cases were infectious.[41] Similarly, a more recent study presents a case of an asymptomatic COVID-19 patient and the clinical characteristics of its 455 contacts, with the aim to evaluate the potential infectivity of asymptomatic carriers. The computed tomography images of the contacts showed no sign of COVID-19 infection and they all tested negative for SARS-CoV-2 by nucleic acid test.[42] Moreover, a recent paper by Lee et al. pointed out flaws in both RT-qPCR assay design and handling of the "bulk" material in the first test lot of the 2019-nCoV real-time RT-qPCR diagnostic panel.[43] RT-qPCR test is generally a highly specific molecular method. In other words, if someone does not have an infection, there is a high probability that the person in question will be negative. The test is also extremely sensitive. Despite the high specificity, there is a chance that someone who does not have the infection will be positive (false positive reaction). Some reasons for false positive results are laboratory errors and off-target reactions. The latter means that the test cross-reacting with something that is not SARS-CoV-2 may occur. Among the laboratory errors, the most common are handling errors, testing of the wrong sample, cross-contamination, and problems with chemicals, enzymes, and dyes. False positive can also include a recovered patient from the disease so that fragments of nucleic acid that cannot cause the disease remain present in the sample. Most importantly, RT-qPCR method used to count COVID-19 positive cases has been used without a validated and fixed number of PCR cycles (Ct) under 30 leading to an incredibly high number of positive cases. Moreover, the PCR products of this method have not been validated at a molecular level which means the method becomes useless as a highly-specific diagnostic tool to identify the SARS-CoV-2 virus. An open question also remains in the whole COVID-19 diagnostic procedure by molecular testing as majority of clinical centers and test centers did not perform a differential procedure of testing for other common respiratory viruses as well (i.e., influenza).

Face Masking as a Public Health Measure

Face masking mandates in community settings, often outdoors, during the COVID-19 pandemic management has been a matter of major controversy, especially in applications for children. We will not discuss herein the mask-wearing mandate in clinical environments and clinical institutions or in specific situations as this is a separate matter to be discussed within the medical community according to professional standards and facts. We will focus on in-community setting mandates as these have major health, psychological, and environmental consequences that seem to outweigh the envisioned benefits of such measures. Accordingly, we will start with the premise of "targeted masking" instead of mandating universal face masking to the public. Indeed, a case for mandating masks in community settings such as outdoor spaces and uncrowded environments where normal distancing and ventilation are possible does not exist rationally. Particularly,

society should have enough information of true benefits as well as potential problems arising from mask-wearing before any measure related to mask-wearing is suggested widely to the population. Scientific studies dealing with the research on efficiency of mask-wearing in control of disease spreading or as part of work safety control were conducted in specific, limited conditions and for assessing types of risks other than COVID-19. Currently, there is no scientific basis to justify the community settings mandate as no clear benefits were assessed in previously published studies[44–48] as well as during the COVID-19 pandemic course.[49–53] The long mask-wearing may pose a number of other health risks and the precautionary principle that stays for preventing researchers and policymakers from neglecting potentially-harmful side effects of interventions has been completely neglected in the COVID-19 pandemic. The risks include, for example, a false sense of security of the mask wearer, exhalation of the air into the eyes, hampered breathing and oxygenation, contamination of masks with diverse microbes, etc.[54] Continuous mask-wearing may be especially dangerous for children as they block the normal oxygen flow which may have serious consequences for brain injuries or brain development of children and adolescents. A recent German study, even if preliminary,[55] found health consequences in 68% of masked children that were forced to wear a face covering for an average of 4.5 hours per day. The study comprised 17,854 health complaints that were submitted by parents as well. The health issues found in the study include increased headaches (53%), difficulty concentrating (50%), drowsiness or fatigue (37%), malaise (42%), and sleep issues in a third of children. Moreover, 29.7% of children reported shortness of breath, 26.4% reported dizziness, and many children experienced accelerated respiration, tightness in chest, weakness, and short-term impairment of consciousness. The psychological effects of massive mask-wearing mandates are also serious.

The precautionary analysis of unwanted side effects in everyday use of face masks and potential dangers remains vital and has not been performed so far. This is at a best odd and merits further evaluation. Many countries have indeed mandated mask-wearing in public places to combat SARS-CoV-2 without proper risk analysis or follow-up risk-benefit evaluation. In a recent paper, for example,[56] the authors tested, evaluated, and compiled scientifically proven related side effects of wearing masks. Forty-four mostly experimental studies were referenced for quantitative assessment, and 65 publications were found for content assessment. The literature revealed the relevant detrimental effects of masks including mental and physical deterioration, as well as several symptoms described due to their consistent, repetitive, and uniform presentation from different disciplines such as mask exhaustion syndrome. The authors objectified the findings with evidence of changes in respiratory physiology of mask wearers with a significant correlation of O_2 decline and fatigue, group co-occurrence of respiratory damage and O_2 decline (67%) and CO_2 increase, headache, respiratory damage and fever, but also temperature and humidity masks. Prolonged wearing of masks by the general population could accordingly lead to a variety of unwanted health problems.

Recombinant Genetic Products Used for COVID-19 Vaccination

Recombinant genetic products used for COVID-19 "vaccination" have been heavily pushed on the global population and are accompanied from one side by excitement, and on the other side by numerous controversies and resistance. The relevant question in this matter is how much do the media, the Internet, and social networks contributed to information or misinformation circulating about these products and the so-called COVID-19 "vaccination" mass campaigns. One of the reasons for confusion and hesitancy may be in a more relaxed procedure of "vaccines" approval for marketing in comparison with drugs. The FDA or EMA approval for the recombinant genetic products used for COVID-19 "vaccination" was primarily based on supplied manufacturer's data which was explained in more detail in a recent article in the *British Medical Journal*.[57] The emergency use in the USA or conditional marketing authorization in the EU has been granted accordingly. The central media, that played a central role in shaping public opinion on this group of products, played a somewhat negative role from a scientific point of view as facts were neglected from the public communication and propaganda was installed instead of a critical approach toward the "unknown." The enforcing of this "vaccination" measure with an experimental product by use of methods of psychological pressure was witnessed in the public communication and political space. Regulatory agencies that granted permission for these products are often co-owners of patents or have disclosed or undisclosed conflicts of interest with producers. For example, private fees and payments, including those from pharmaceutical industry, support around 86% of the budget of the EMA agency while public financing accounts for only 15% of the total funding.[58] How can these agencies' decisions on any product, especially a new recombinant genetic product aimed for COVID-19 "vaccination," be mandated to the population or used for restrictions on human rights? Many media covered this topic but were not allowed to reach a wide audience (just an example is given in Ref. 59). The warnings and criticism of independent scientists and/or experts without conflict of interests were not respected and were heavily censored or put in shameful spotlight by media. Who decides on which scientist is right and which is not? Science operates through confrontation of facts and opinions. These cannot especially be done by mass media or social media as the consequences for science and the whole society may be detrimental.[60] Some physicians and medical doctors promoted "vaccination" due to lack of molecular knowledge or simply ignored the problem of using an experimental medical product due to fear or pressure. At the same time, a high number of physicians and medical doctors oppose this procedure pointing that a medical justification to

use an experimental, potentially harmful product for a disease whose mortality rate is almost equal to the flu does not merit such attention (a careful statistic is done, for example, in the UK[61]). Some doctors have recently refused to vaccinate patients possibly due to the increase in so-called sudden deaths or severe reactions. The papers bringing criticisms on this matter do not make it through the peer review process or are retracted (e.g., Ref. 62). Many scientific papers report on severe cardiovascular and neurological effects and here it should be noted that this is not anyhow a "normal outcome" of vaccination. Adverse events of special interest for COVID-19 vaccines—background incidences vary by sex, age, and time period and are affected by the pandemic.[63–65] One of the main explanations for pushing the mass "vaccination" with recombinant genetic products used as "vaccines" against COVID-19 toward the public is the alleged pressure to the health system due to the spread of the COVID-19 infection. This is often publicly communicated as one of the main justifications for unprecedented restrictions of human rights and freedoms. This is witnessed through introduction of the so-called COVID-19 certificates and in its true essence almost mandatory vaccinations. For those who are faced with losing jobs, education rights, freedom of movement, etc. this is indeed a mandatory request. For example, Croatian experts and physicians clearly stated that the health system overload has not been reached in any period from the proclamation of the COVID-19 pandemics because most COVID-19 patients do not need hospital treatment at all. A similar picture may be seen in other EU countries. Then, what the restrictions are about? Why such strong unilateral support of the main media is necessary to push such impositions in the medical field? If a medical product works fine and has a medical justification, no propaganda is necessary to spread the good information. The case is obviously different. When it comes to mRNA or adenoviral vectors-based recombinant genetic products containing genetically engineered and/or chemically modified nucleic acid sequences for production of the spike protein within the host human cell, consequences may be grave and have been described so far in the scientific and medical literature (Table 2). Some consequences include the following side effects of such medical procedure: Guillain–Barré syndrome, acute disseminated encephalomyelitis, encephalitis/myelitis/encephalomyelitis/meningoencephalitis/meningitis/encephalopathy, convulsions/seizures, stroke, anaplasia, narcolepsy and narcolepsy, myocarditis/pericarditis, autoimmune disease, impact on pregnancy outcome and childbirth, non-anaphylactic allergic reactions, thrombocytopenia, disseminated intravascular coagulation, venous thromboembolism, arthritis and arthralgia/joint pain, Kawasaki disease, so-called multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children, exacerbation of the disease caused by this so-called vaccine, and death. Quite enough for serious concern. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, such list of unwanted effects for any tested medical product would immediately lead to halting of the clinical testing and further product development. Now, this is not the case. Why is this list so large and why are the reports in pharmacovigilance bases so high? After injection of the recombinant genetic products aimed for COVID-19 "vaccination," in an ideal scenario, human cells use the instructions either in the form of DNA or mRNA to make copies of the viral spike protein. This protein is afterward presented to immunological system on the cell surface and is recognized as a foreign antigen that triggers an immune response in the form of antibody production. This process allows a fragment of the particular viral strain spike protein to form. Accordingly, these products can only trigger a rather specific but in a long-term weak or ineffective protective immune response that will not be efficient toward mutated forms, which is highly relevant for the mutating coronaviruses. Moreover, these genetic constructs may enter the nucleus and be either integrated in the human genome or impair other vital biological processes such as V(D)J recombination and DNA repair (Table 2). These risks are so high for the future health of the recipients that a massive application may lead to a massive increase in malignant diseases and other public health conditions. This is why the coronavirus-directed vaccines in general have not been developed successfully so far. A number of biological and health problems were observed with similar products in the preclinical stages of development, especially in terms of effectiveness and safety.[25,66,67] Rushing into massive programs of injecting recombinant genetic products used for COVID-19 vaccination without a clear safety frame and especially in light of failure in protecting the population in the spreading of COVID-19 and hospitalizations, is at best irresponsible, and at worst dangerous for the whole population. So far, the majority of people successfully acquired the most valuable natural immunity against the virus. Particularly, each person should decide alone whether to receive or not an experimental medical product for an experimental medical procedure as it is done for any other product or procedure. At last, we conclude this section with the list of recorded adverse events after injection of the recombinant genetic products used for COVID-19 "vaccination" publicly disclosed in many pharmacovigilance databases such as VAERS and EudraVigilance. These bases are known to report for only a few percent of really occurring adverse effects. For example, it has been found that serious adverse events post-vaccination are underreported in the VAERS system by a factor of 8.3,[68] the reported number of unwanted effects for recombinant genetic products used for COVID-19 vaccination are already so high that mass injection of these products should be immediately halted and reevaluated by the scientific and medical community. These numbers include 20,622 deaths, 108,572 hospitalized, 107,860 urgent care, 153,971 doctor office visits, 8590 anaphylaxis, 12,317 Bell's palsy, 3365 miscarriages, 10,429 heart attacks, 201,560 myocarditis/pericarditis, 34,615 permanently disabled, 4907 thrombocytopenia and low platelet, 23,405 life-threatening reactions, 35,997 severe allergic reactions, and 11,292 shingles.[69]

Table 2: Recombinant genetic products used for COVID-19 vaccination, biological consequences, adverse or unwanted effects reports from the scientific literature

Explanation	*Source*
Potential integration of the genetic construct into human genome	Domazet-Lošo[78]
Potential integration of the genetic construct into human genome	Cohen[79]
Antibody-dependent enhancement (ADE)	Yahi et al.[30]
Vaccine risk reduction manipulations	Olliaro et al.[80]
Side effects	Merrill et al.[81]
COVID–19 vaccine did not fulfill its main purpose—to prevent disease	Subramanian and Kumar[82]
Consequences of mRNA vaccine against COVID-19 worse than the disease	Seneff and Nigh[83]
Hospital epidemic caused by SARS-CoV-2 Delta variant in double vaccinated population	Shitrit et al.[84]
Reactivation of hepatitis C virus and death after vaccination against COVID-19—a case report	Lensen et al.[85]
Transmission of COVID-19 by vaccinated people	Singanayagam et al.[86]
Questionable vaccination of previously infected	Goldberg et al.[87]
Questionable second dose of vaccination in persons previously infected with SARS-CoV 2	Lazano-Ojalvo et al.[88]
Waning immunity after the BNT162b2 vaccine in Israel	Goldberg et al.[87]
Extensive research has revealed consistent pathophysiological changes following vaccination with COVID-19 vaccines.	Liu et al.[89]
Pathophysiological alterations after vaccination with COVID-19 vaccines	Liu et al.[89]
Scientists point to major data integrity issues in Pfizer vaccine testing	BMJ Investigation Covid-19[57]
SARS-CoV-2 spike interferes with DNA damage repair and inhibits in vitro recombination	Jiang and Mei[90]
Multisystem inflammation and organ dysfunction after BNT162b2 Messenger RNA COVID-19 vaccination	Kahn et al.[91]
Vaccinated patients die from COVID due to weakened immunity	Roberts[92]
Acute allergic reactions to mRNA COVID-19 vaccines	Blumenthal et al.[93]
A study on the durability of an mRNA-1273 vaccine designed against SARS-CoV-2 variants indicates the need for new revaccination	Pegu et al.[94]
COVID-19 vaccination: a red flag for vaccine-induced cerebral venous thrombosis	Garcia-Azorin et al.[95]
Psychiatric disorders reported after vaccination against COVID-19	Yesilkaya et al.[96] World Health Organization's global drug database of adverse drug events, VigiBase (VigiAccess) 2021[97]
Genital necrosis with cutaneous thrombosis after mRNA vaccination against COVID-19	Kuzumi et al.[98]
COVID-19 vaccines increase heart attack risk	Gundry[99]
Vaccine mandates are unethical, unscientific, and extremely expensive.	Great Barrington Declaration[100]
SARS-CoV-2 spike impairs DNA damage repair and inhibits V(D)J recombination in vitro	Jiang and Mei[90]
COVID-19 RNA–based vaccines and the risk of prion disease	Classen[101]
Acute pancreatitis as a possible side effect of COVID-19 vaccine	Parkash et al.[102]
Neurological side effects of SARS-CoV-2 vaccines	Finsterer and Scorza[103]

Conclusion

In light of the scientific literature and facts showing poor effects for undertaken measures aimed to counteract COVID-19 spreading and infections, it seems that the major controversy stays in acquired immunity from disease as data speak in favor of natural immunity as superior to vaccine-induced immunity. Given that the field of immunology is extremely extensive and requires extensive elaboration, we will close this paper by pointing to a number of scientific papers on the topic of natural immunity in COVID-19 published since the beginning of the pandemic. The immunity of vaccinated persons has also been closely monitored.

These studies generally show a significantly better state of immunity in unvaccinated individuals with a wide range of immune functions and parameters being investigated (a compilation of scientific studies is given on the Brownstone website[70]). Indeed, a number of study show persistence of SARS-CoV-2 immunity in majority of COVID-19 convalescents and show that vaccination status does not prevent SARS-CoV-2 infections in the long-term.[71–73] Consequently, a growing body of literature provides evidence on natural immunity after SARS-CoV-2 infection that not only confers robust, durable, and high-level protection against COVID-19, but is also superior to vaccine-induced immunity.[73–77]

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REVIEW ARTICLE

COVID-19: Cardiovascular Disorders

Emir Fazlibegović

Abstract

The coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) infection has spread all over the world and caused a global health and economic crisis, so we will talk about the "time before COVID" and probably the "time after COVID." Although the virus most often attacks the respiratory system, respiratory diseases, especially severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), are the main cause of mortality in patients with COVID-19 infection, followed by damage to the myocardium and complete cardiovascular system, which is a common finding in patients. The association between COVID-19 and acute myocardial infarction (AMI) is interpreted as impaired immunity with enhanced inflammatory response and development of endothelium with procoagulant disorders such as thrombosis and thromboembolism with sequelae on the heart, brain, pulmonary and peripheral arteries. Endothelial dysfunction develops with myocardial damage with the instability of atherosclerotic plaque, its fissure and rupture, and AMI. Comorbid conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, hyperlipidemia, and kidney disease further exacerbate the severity and outcome of the disease. Air pollution also significantly contributes to the clinical picture of the disease and complicates COVID-19 infection with the development of cardiovascular complications of the AMI, with cardiac decompensation, malignant cardiac arrhythmias, myocarditis, and pericarditis that contribute to clinical severity and mortality. There was a lower influx of patients to cardiology departments and coronary units, and emergency services during the epidemic wave by 30–48% depending on the region-country in the world, but also an increase in the severity of the clinical picture and higher mortality from cardiovascular disease (CVD). The reasons for this phenomenon are mostly unknown. It is assumed that it is a matter of fear, "lockdown," self-isolation, and delay in attending the doctor, which prolongs the time of ischemia and loses the "golden hour" to reperfusion of AMI patients, which is also contributed by antiepidemic measures with percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) testing and personal protection measures. Staff in cat laboratories prolong the door-balloon time and thus cause more serious heart damage.

Keywords: Acute myocardial infarction, Cardiovascular disorders, Comorbidities, Coronavirus disease 2019.

Sažetak

Zaraza COVID-19 proširila se po cijelom svijetu i izazvala globalnu zdravstvenu i ekonomsku krizu, pa ćemo govoriti o "vremenu prije covida" i vjerojatno "vremenu nakon covida." Iako virus najčešće napada dišni sustav, respiratorne bolesti, posebice SARS-CoV-2, glavni su uzrok smrtnosti oboljelih od infekcije COVID-19, a zatim slijede oštećenja miokarda i kompletnog kardiovaskularnog sustava, što je čest nalaz kod oboljelih. Povezanost između COVID-19 i akutnog infarkta miokarda (AIM) tumači se kao oslabljen imunitet s pojačanim upalnim odgovorom i razvojem endotela s prokoagulacijskim poremećajima kao što su troboza i tromboembolija s posljedicama na srcu, mozgu, plućnim i perifernim arterijama. Endotelna disfunkcija nastaje kod oštećenja miokarda s nestabilnošću aterosklerotskog plaka, njegovom fisurom i rupturom te AIM. Komorbidna stanja poput hipertenzije, dijabetesa, hiperlipidemije i bolesti bubrega dodatno pogoršavaju težinu i ishod bolesti. Zagađenje zraka također značajno pridonosi kliničkoj slici bolesti i komplicira infekciju COVID-19 razvojem kardiovaskularnih komplikacija AIM, sa srčanom dekompenzacijom, malignim srčanim aritmijama, miokarditisom i perikarditisom koji doprinose kliničkoj težini i mortalitetu. Zabilježen je manji priljev pacijenata na kardiološke odjele i koronarne jedinice te hitne službe tijekom epidemijskog vala za 30-48% ovisno o regiji-zemlji u svijetu, ali i povećanje težine kliničke slike i većeg mortaliteta od kardiovaskularnih bolesti. Razlozi ove pojave uglavnom su nepoznati. Pretpostavlja se da je riječ o strahu, "lockdownu," samoizolaciji i kašnjenju liječnika, čime se produljuje vrijeme ishemije i gubi "zlatni sat" za reperfuziju bolesnika s AIM-om, čemu pridonose i anti -epidemijske mjere uz PCI testiranje i mjere osobne zaštite. osoblja u kat- laboratorijima što produljuje vrijeme vrata-balona (DB) i time ozbiljnija oštećenja srca.

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Introduction

Coronovirus disease of 2019 infection first appeared in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. It quickly spread around the world as a pandemic, declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11th March 2020, affecting over

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124 million people with 2.7 million deaths (data from 22nd March 2021). The pandemic has caused major disruptions not only in the health systems of all countries but also in numerous social and economic disruptions. Antiepidemic measures and vaccinations have not been implemented to the expected extent, which has led to the development of anti-vaccination movements and conspiracy theories, which as such complicate the problem even more. COVID-19 infection has the characteristics of a systemic disease with a significant impact on the cardiovascular system.[1]

The World Heart Federation (WHF) has launched a study to investigate the effects of COVID-19 infection on the cardiovascular system in hospitalized patients with COVID-19 and the effects of cardiovascular risk factors on the course of CVD. The study register included 48,271 patients from all continents (mostly from Europe 52.1% and North America 39.9%), including Bosnia and Herzegovina. Preliminary data from a study from February 2021 on over 2,400 patients published at our International Scientific Symposium on 7th April 2021 in Mostar dedicated to COVID-19, which includes 4% of patients from Bosnia and Herzegovina, shows that the patients are dominated by younger men with comorbid conditions: hypertension in 45%, diabetes in 35%, CVD in 15%, cerebrovascular disease in 15%, noncardiovascular comorbidity in about 20%, and total mortality of 17.7%, of which 38% is sudden death.[2]

To date, there are some specifics of CVD caused by corona infection associated with myocardial damage with arrhythmias, heart failure (HF), endothelial dysfunction, and thromboembolic disease.[1]

Pathophysiology

Pathophysiological explanations for the increased mortality of patients with COVID-19 infection are mainly related to the direct effects of the virus on heart muscle followed by myocyte damage due to the interaction of S-protein of the virus with ACE-2 receptor myocytes resulting in systemic inflammation and cytokine storm oxygen due to pulmonary inflammation on the one hand and myocyte damage on the other, plaque rupture and coronary thrombosis affecting shear endothelial inflammation and creating prothrombotic milieu with additional effects of various drugs (hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin that give proarrhythmic effects, as well as lopinavir and remdesivir as virostatics) given to patients and electrolyte imbalance as a result of a number of factors. All these factors, in addition to existing comorbid conditions, age, and the presence of other risk factors, contribute to higher mortality, which in the presence of hypertension is 2× higher (6%), 2× higher in diabetics (7%), and 3× higher in those with coronary artery disease. Cerebrovascular disease (10%).

COVID-19 infection is known to cause the most common respiratory disorders, with SARS-CoV-2 leading to interstitial edema and respiratory failure indicating oxygen and respiratory therapy.

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X-ray changes in the lungs, ECG changes, and an increase in cardiac biomarkers greatly help us assess the degree of damage to the cardiovascular system (CVS). Highly sensitive cardiac troponins (hsTrI/T), NT proBNP, d-dimers, and nonspecific inflammatory factors such as C-reactive protein (CRP), leukocytes - Ly, platelets, prothrombin-prothrombin time, cytokines, and others are especially important.[3]

COVID-induced Myocardial Damage

The most common types of myocardial damage are myocardial infarction (MI)—ST-elevated myocardial infarction (STEMI) and non-ST elevated myocardial infarction (NSTEMI), namely:

- Type 1 is probably caused by the systemic inflammatory response with plaque rupture and coronary thrombus, and myocardial necrosis and dysfunction, and "cytokine storm" leads to T-helper lymphocyte imbalance (TH1/TH2) corresponds to the consequent development of disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC) and consequent multiorgan failure;
- Type 2 IM occurs due to an imbalance of myocardial oxygen demand (O_2) due to septic hypoxemia and vasoconstriction;
- Venous thromboembolism due to hypercoagulability, which, among other factors such as active inflammation, DIC, prolonged rest, oxidative stress, endothelial dysfunction, increased platelet activity, mechanical ventilation, liver dysfunction, central venous catheter, nutritional deficiency in such patients worsening of cardiac ischemia in patients with coronary heart disease (CAD) with an increase in D-dimer, fibrinogen, PE, deep vein thrombosis, and in-hospital mortality;
- Acute myocarditis, directly caused by a virus that binds to ACE2 receptors of myocytes or indirectly through the cascade of immune response and cytokine release, causes myocardial degeneration and necrosis similar to STEMI;
- Stress cardiomyopathy caused by infection with catecholamine induced by myocardial stunning or macro/microvascular spasm with Tako-tsubo syndrome.[4,5–7]

Heart Failure

All the mentioned pathophysiological mechanisms in patients with COVID-19 (increased need for O_2, myocarditis, stress cardiomyopathy, ischemic infarction, cytokine syndrome, increased pulmonary pressure, and venous thromboembolism) lead to the development or worsening of existing HF with clinical signs of impaired ejection fraction (EF) of left ventricle.[8]

Survival of patients with HF and COVID-19 infection is significantly worse. This also applies to all forms of HF [left ventricular EF (LVEF), midrange EF, and reduced EF].[9,10]

Today, in the conditions of the COVID pandemic, it is recommended to use modern information technologies and telemedicine in monitoring patients with HF. Virtual visits can be organized with medical consultations, giving practical advice, measuring blood pressure, pulse, jugular pulse status, edema, determining electrolytes, international normalized ratio, and renal function, monitoring pulmonary arterial pressure, COVID-19 testing, with the assessment of necessary procedures (cardiac testing, echocardiography, ergometry, catheterization, and coronary angiography), the need for more intensive care, nutrition, phlebotomy, home medication, the need for intensive and palliative care, the installation of implantable cardioverter defibrillator and cardiac resynchronization therapy devices.[8]

Cardiac Arrest

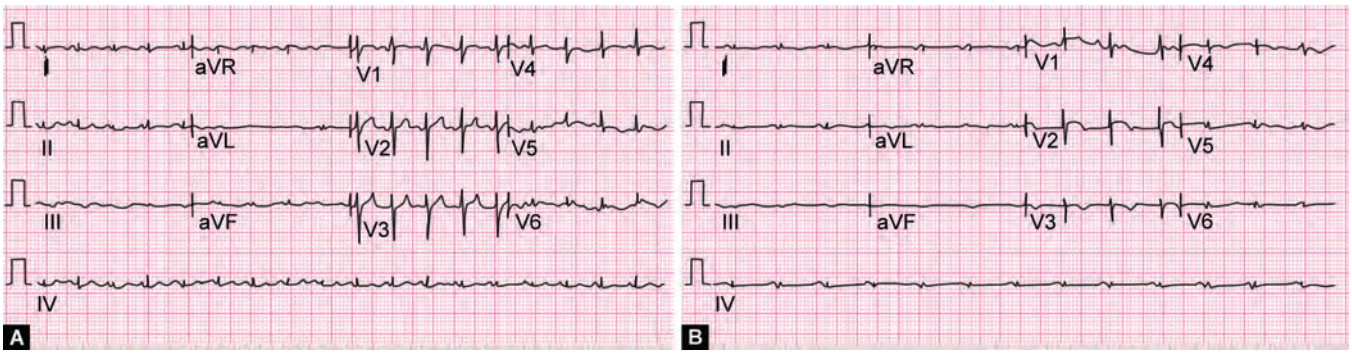
Preliminary results of the COVID-19 and CVD WHF studies show a high percentage (38%) of sudden death, suggesting a number of causes that can cause cardiac arrest in COVID-19 patients. Acute myocarditis and Takotsubo cardiomyopathy, acute coronary syndrome (ACS), hypoxemia, high systemic inflammation, coagulation disorders (PE, coronary thrombosis, ND stroke), cardiac tamponade, tamponade, electrolyte imbalance, arrhythmogenesis (drugs inducted nondiagnostic canalopathies or direct effects of COVID-19) and genetic predisposition.[3]

ACS

The most dramatic event that can occur during COVID-19 infection is STEMI/NSTEMI, which has a specific clinical picture as in the case report that follows. In the first days of COVID-19, the infection most often affects the lung parenchyma with the rapid development of dyspnea, cough, and the appearance of specific infiltrates on the lungs seen as ground glass opacities on X-rays with the appearance of specific nodular changes that melt over the next 10 days and lead to pulmonary edema with the need for oxygen therapy and connection to a respirator (Figs 1A to C).[11]

Electrocardiogram changes are initially nonspecific at hospital admission, and already on the 14th day of stay, the newly formed ST elevation and T-wave inversion (Figs 2A and B)[11] are registered, which indicates a coronary lesion, which indicates due to threatening cardiogenic shock coronarography with antiepidemic a measure to spread the infection and protect medical staff from infection (protective suits, masks, gloves, disinfection) which prolongs the intervention time significantly. During coronary angiography, the patient is diagnosed with multidirectional CAD (Figs 3A to C)[11] and PCI intervention with drug-coated stent implantation in left anterior descending, right coronary

Figs 1A to C: Chest X-ray images. Chest X-ray on: (A) day of admission, (B) day 6, (C) day 14 of hospitalization. Peribronchial ground glass opacities and nodular opacities in both lung fields were deteriorated[7]



Figs 2A and B: Interval changes of ECG. ECG on: (A) day of admission and (B) day 14 of hospitalization. New onset ST-segment elevation in V1-V2 leads and T wave inversion in V3-V6 leads were observed. aVR, augmented vector right; aVL, augmented vector left; aVF, augmented vector foot; ECG, electrocardiogram[7]

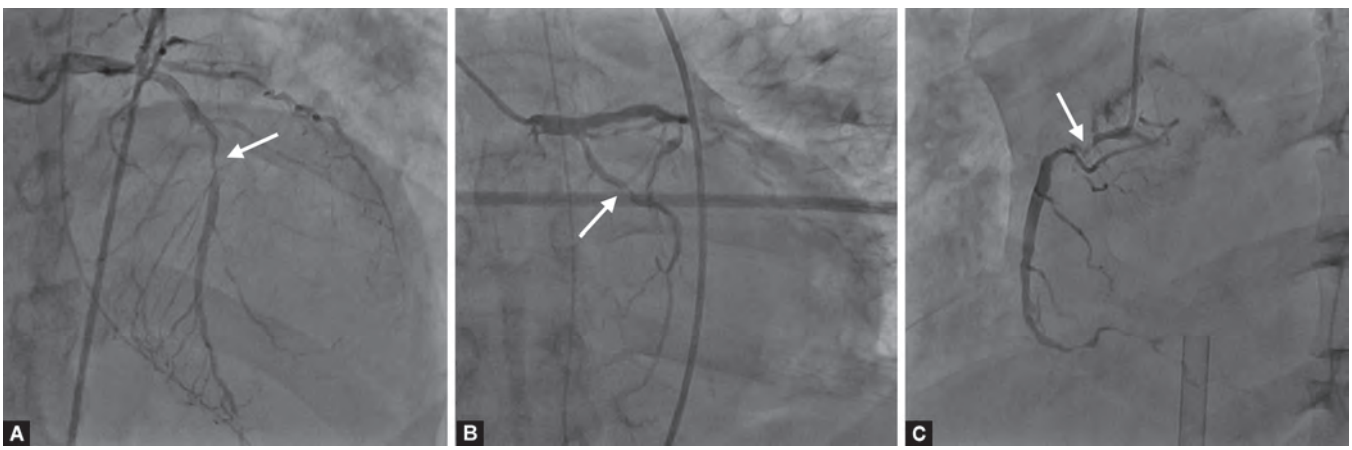
artery (RCA), and left circumflex artery is performed, and successful reperfusion is achieved (Figs 4A to C). Further, the patient's condition worsens with the development of cardiogenic shock and death.[11]

Comparative studies were performed with meta-analysis of data showing that in all countries affected by COVID-19 infection, a significant prolongation of time from the onset of the first symptoms to the arrival of a doctor was registered, which differs in certain periods-COVID-19 waves.[12,13]

It was also noted that the hospital admission of patients with ACS and COVID-19 infection at the time of the "lockdown" was significantly lower. Explanations can be found in the workload of health workers during a pandemic with increased stress, anxiety, the priority of COVID patients, lockdown measures with isolation, loneliness, lifestyle modifications, increased depression, prolongation of ischemia, difficulty consulting a doctor with existing comorbid conditions such as are hypertension, diabetes, obesity, air pollution with dust particles-smoke, nitric dioxide, other pollutants, which with the use of cardiovascular therapy (angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, angiotensin II blockers, and drugs for COVID with their side effects, toxicity, interactions with cardiovascular drugs, etc.) with age and direct effects of SARS-CoV-2 on the body with inflammation and production of interleukin-6, prothrombotic effects with hypercoagulability, cardiac damage recorded by cardiac biomarkers (NT pro-BNP, troponin), immune response with cytokine response and unbalanced consumption/need for O_2 leads to a poor outcome.[4,12,13]

The European Society of Cardiology (ESC) has included COVID-19 in its CVD Prevention Guidelines 2021 as a possible cause of CVD.

According to WHO records, Bosnia and Herzegovina are one of the countries with a high risk of cardiovascular mortality.[14] Therefore, prevention and the fight to reduce risk factors for CVD is a priority, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 ESC Congress promoted that a 1-year dose of PCSK9 siRNA significantly reduced the lifetime risk for CV events,[15] and influenza vaccination should



Figs 3A to C: Baseline coronary angiogram. (A) Coronary angiogram showed severe stenosis in mid portion of left descending coronary artery, (B) proximal portion of left circumflex coronary artery, and (C) proximal portion of RCA. White arrows indicate coronary lesions in each vessel[7]

Figs 4A to C: Final coronary angiogram after PCI. (A) Drug eluting stents were implanted in mid portion of left descending coronary artery and (C) proximal portion of RCA. (B) Ballon angioplasty was done in proximal portion of left circumflex coronary artery[7]

be considered part of inpatient treatment after MI due to its beneficial effect on treatment outcomes and reduced mortality.[16]

Air Pollution and Climate Change in COVID-19

According to the reports of the ESC Congress in 2020, about 790,000 people die in Europe as a direct result of air pollution, of which ischemic heart disease accounts for 40%, stroke 8%, 32% for other noncommunicable diseases, while only 7% for pneumonia, 7% on lung cancers, and 6% on chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. A close link has been established between climate change, air pollution, and the covid pandemic and their detrimental effects on cardiovascular health. Decarbonization of the world with the abolition of fossil fuels in energy production and the transition to "healthy-green" sources through solar and wind power has become a goal of the UN and WHO, WHF, and ESC because it is also a fight for heart health. This was confirmed by the ESC Congress 2021. The effects of air pollution and SARS-CoV-2 infection can be triggers of acute cardiovascular events through the inflammatory response with increasing levels of CRP, fibrinogen, and cytokines with pronounced systemic inflammation and cytokine storm in COVID-19 infection. Then the autonomic nervous system is involved with a change in heart rate (higher/lower) due to pollution with COVID-19 myocardial damage with increased troponin, binding of COVID-19 to ACE2 receptors, antiviral drugs, corticosteroids, and others, with pollution-facilitated thrombosis/coagulability with inhibition of fibrinolytic capacity because the COVID-19 infection causes hypercoagulability with prothrombotic risk. Oxidative stress with myocyte telomere damage in pollution is presented in COVID-19 infection with higher body needs for O_2, and the increase in cardiometabolic requirements due to systemic infection caused by respiratory weakness leads to pollution caused by vasoconstriction via endothelin with COVID-induced arrhythmia. Air pollution leads to the progression of atherosclerosis with increasing plaque vulnerability and the possibility of its rupture, which is emphasized by COVID-19. Decreased O_2 saturation due to air pollution in COVID-19 potentiates endothelial dysfunction and oxidative stress that affect the clinical course of patients and their prognosis.[4,17,18]

Diagnostic Algorithm in COVID-19 Caused by Acute Heart Damage

The ESC published the 2020 Guidelines to the diagnosis and treatment of patients with COVID-19 infection and CVD, in which it highlighted the most significant steps in the treatment of such patients. The algorithm is shown in Figure 5.[4]

In addition to cardiac biomarkers that indicate damage to the heart and blood vessels in COVID patients, the role of echocardiography is important.

In a Mostar study of 119 patients with COVID-19 infection and 96 patients without COVID, an echocardiographic assessment was performed, and LV dilatation, decreased EFLV, pseudoedema, focal changes, diffuse changes, elevated telediastolic pressure, mitral and tricuspid regurgitation, PE, thromboembolism in the heart, which indicates all the complexity of COVID infection and its systemic effects.[19]

Angiographic findings in STEMI patients before and during the COVID pandemic show statistically significant differences in time:

- from symptoms onset to hospital admission ($p < 0.001$);
- from hospital admission to reperfusion; ($p = 0.001$);
- from symptoms onset to reperfusion ($p < 0.001$);

which is certainly caused by additional antiepidemic measures and protection of medical staff from infection.[5,20]

Clinical presentation and angiographic findings in STEMI patients before and during the COVID pandemic show a statistically significant increase in the degree of stenosis and multivessel CAD ($p < 0.001$). A larger number of patients with ventricular arrhythmias and congestive HF with an increase in in-hospital mortality.

Delay or failure to treat patients with ACS during a COVID pandemic causes:

- Early complications such as sudden death due to cardiac arrest, acute HF, cardiac tamponade, cardiogenic shock, ventricular septal defect, acute functional mitral regurgitation, intravascular thrombosis, and acute pulmonary embolism (PE);
- Late complications such as chronic HF, new abnormalities in LV motility, severe valvular heart disease, and pulmonary hypertension caused by right ventricular ischemia (RV), new STEMI, ventricular arrhythmias, and atrial fibrillation;
- Organizational needs such as long-term intensive treatment with frequent mechanical ventilation, frequent and long-term examinations and an increase in indications for stress testing, an extension of the waiting list, and long-term waiting for examination.

All this requires better organization of transfers from home to the health institution, introduction of new diagnostic and treatment protocols, and compliance with antiepidemic measures to protect healthcare staff and patients with the use of modern technologies and telemedicine in monitoring patients.[20]

We can find that the number of hospitalizations during the COVID pandemic is significantly lower (–47%), and the number of deaths due to AMI is significantly higher (+12.5%), which shows a significant difference ($p = 0.03$) and this applies to both STEMI and for NSTEMI. Complications after AMI during the pandemic were also 11.3% higher ($p = 0.02$). Cardiac biomarkers during the COVID pandemic in AMI are higher, creatinine kinase-MB ($p = 0.05$), CK ($p = 0.04$), and NTproBNP ($p = 0.03$) with a decrease in EFLV ($p = 0.01$).[5]

In 2020, the American Society of Cardiology published recommendations as part of a strategy for the maximum safety of medical personnel and the appropriate use of personal protective equipment:

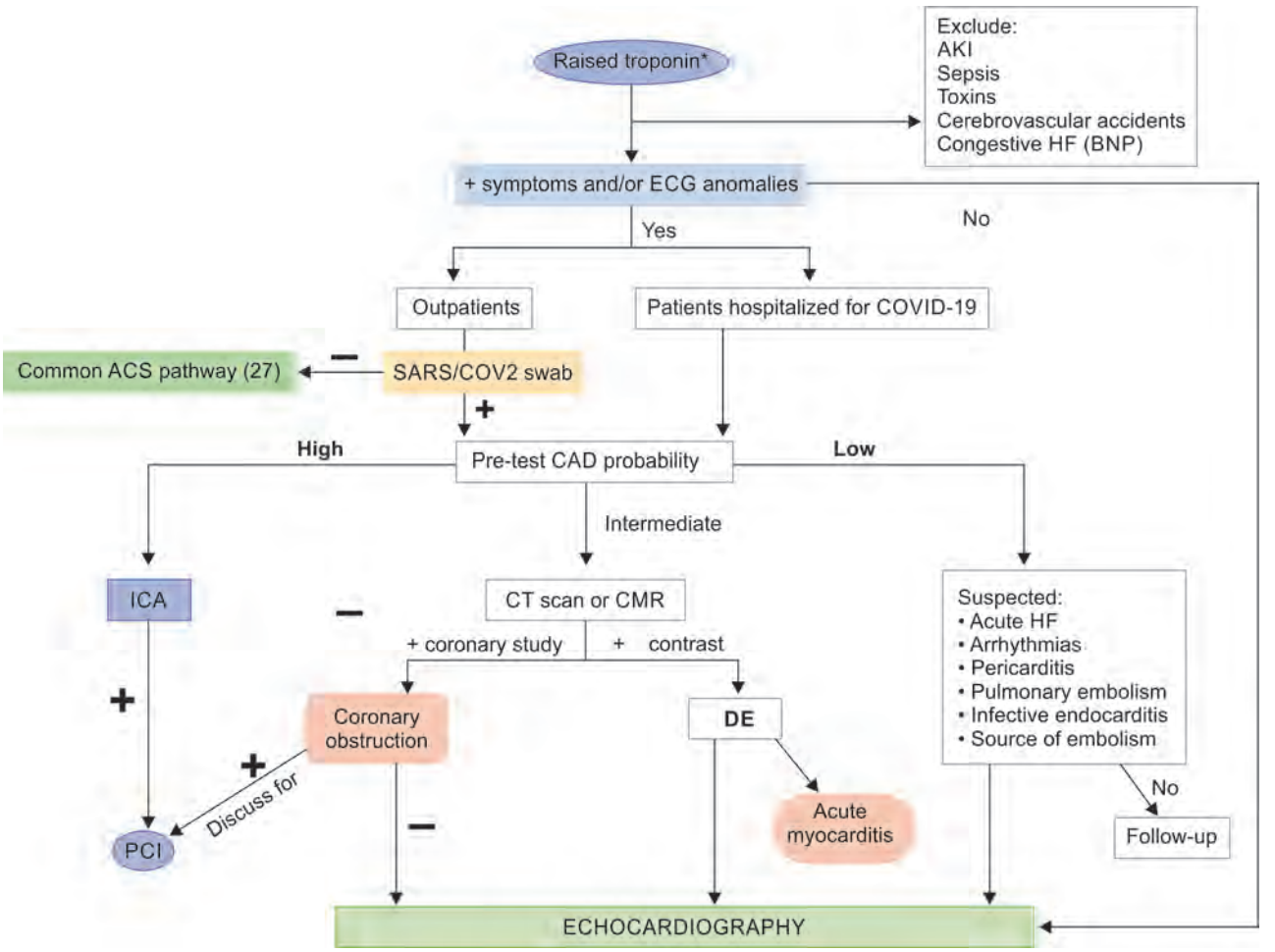


Fig. 5: Algorithm for the diagnosis of COVID-induced acute myocardial injury optimizing the available imaging techniques. *hs-cTn > 99th percentile of its upper normal lipit, or >5 times the upper normal limit in COVID patients. ACS, acute coronary syndromes; AKI, acute kidney injury; BNP, brain natriuretic peptide; CMR, cardiac magnetic resonance; CT, cardiac tomography; DE, delayed enhancement; HF, heart failure; ICA, invasive coronary angiography; PCI, percutaneous coronary intervention[4]

- The US FDA has approved two on-site tests for COVID for rapid diagnosis, and the tests are widely available and routinely provided to all patients with STEMI in order to better diagnose and risk patients and optimize treatment plans and hospitalization. Laboratory and postcoronary treatment.
- Appropriate protective equipment is needed by all health workers in emergency services, hospitals, emergency PCI departments, and the most critical floor laboratory team. A cap coat, gloves, full face mask, and N95 respirator mask are recommended for all floor laboratory staff during PCI and for all AMI patients during the COVID pandemic.
- Primary PCI is the standard of care for patients with AMI who report within 90 minutes of the first medical contact.
- This should be the standard for all STEMI patients during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a warning that depending on available staff and protective equipment and additional testing and determination of floor laboratory use with mandatory terminal cleaning after each procedure.
- In the absence of these resources should be considered the first approach to fibrinolysis.
- Additional time may be given to diagnose AMI with echocardiography to assess wall motility and COVID-19 status with potential respiratory-assisted treatment, further extending door-to-balloon time.
- It is not recommended to transport the patient directly to the cat-laboratory due to logistical problems, time delay, and diagnosis of STEMI with COVID-19 infection, but it is recommended to go to the emergency room until complete diagnosis and treatment plan with consultation with an interventional cardiologist who then mobilizes the cardiology team. and a floor cat-laboratory for intervention.
- It is emphasized that not all patients with COVID-19 and STEMI, with or without coronary occlusion, will benefit from any reperfusion strategy or mechanical support. Those with COVID-19 and severe pulmonary decompensation (acute respiratory distress-ARDS) or pneumonia and who have been intubated in the intensive care unit and who are considered to have excessive mortality are eligible for enhanced medical care.
- Patients with NSTEMI and positive for COVID-19 should be treated with medication and taken for emergency

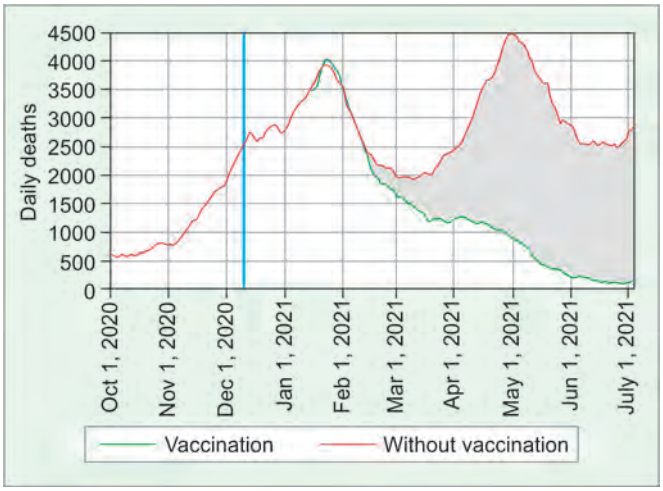


Fig. 6: Estimated U.S. seven-day rolling average of daily deaths with and without vaccination[17]

coronary angiography and possible PCI only in case of high risk (GRACE score > 140) or in case of hemodynamic instability.

- Adapt these recommendations individually to each PCI center in the health care system, STEMI referral hospitals, and emergency services, and to all cardiologists and emergency specialists in each hospital. The health system must recognize the competitive principles of timely reperfusion, safe regional transport, and treatment of potentially high-risk patients while emphasizing the protection and safety of all health personnel.[21]

Vaccination

Vaccination against COVID-19, along with other antiepidemic measures, remains the only real preventive measure to prevent the occurrence and complications of damage to the heart and blood vessels. This is proven by the analysis of vaccinated and unvaccinated people and their mortality (Fig. 6).[22]

Therefore, a complete system of education, information, and work with patients and the population should be developed in order to get acquainted with the effects of human viruses, vaccination purposes, and the need to introduce not only two doses for successful vaccination but also booster doses to reduce the risk of reinfection and major disease consequences, and lowering mortality.

The entire population should be involved in the education program, as well as all health resources, medical and educational workers, the media, as well as patients who have survived the human disease, to promote vaccination as the only successful one in preventing the disease.[23]

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Olfactory and Gustatory Dysfunction in Patients with COVID-19

Osman Sinanović

Abstract

Introduction: Infection with the new coronavirus [severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)] was first registered in December 2019 in China and then later spread rapidly to the rest of the world. On 31st December 2019, the World Health Organization on 11th March 2020 declared a pandemic with this virus. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the first infected person was registered on 5th March 2020 in Banja Luka.

Aim: To present some aspects of the olfactory and gustatory dysfunction in patients with the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19).

Methods: The article has an analytical character and review of the literature.

Results and Discussion: Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) has a high similarity with SARS-CoV-1 and uses the same receptors to enter the human body [angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2)].[2] COVID-19 is a respiratory infection that is primarily transmitted *via* respiratory droplets. In the first year of the pandemic, the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus has mutated several times, resulting in genetically different variants. The variants are named by using letters of the Greek alphabet. The Alpha variant (Wuhan, China), Beta variant (first outbreak in South Africa), the Gamma variant (first outbreak in Brazil), and the Delta variants (first outbreak in India and Omicron variant) have caused an increase in cases worldwide. Typical symptoms of COVID-19 infection can be very moderate to very severe, with severe respiratory symptoms and fatal outcomes. COVID-19 is primarily a disease of the respiratory system, but SARS-CoV-2 also penetrates the central nervous system (CNS) and apparently could be responsible for fatal outcomes in some cases. The entry of the virus into the brain can lead to different neurological and psychiatric manifestations, including headache, loss of smell (anosmia) and the loss of taste (ageusia), encephalopathy, encephalitis, paresthesia, myalgia, Guillain-Barre syndrome, and cerebrovascular diseases.

Conclusion: The coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) is primarily a disease of the respiratory system, but SARS-CoV-2 also penetrates the CNS, leading to serious neurological disorders, and apparently, it is also responsible for mortality. The frequency of anosmia and ageusia in patients with COVID-19 varies widely, from 10 to 65%, being the primary symptom in about 12% of patients. Most of the analyzed subjects reported olfactory recovery. However, anosmia and ageusia can last several months or even longer. For now, the etiopathogenesis of anosmia and ageusia in SARS-CoV-2 infection is still unknown. Nasal or systemic corticosteroids were recommended in the acute phase as well as olfactory training (sniffing the smell of rose, lemon, and cloves) in the acute and chronic phases, and many other drugs as potential therapeutics.

Keywords: COVID-19, Etiopathogenesis, Gustatory dysfunction, Olfactory dysfunction, Treatment.

Sažetak

Uvod: Infekcija novim korona virusom (SARS-CoV-2) prvi put je registrirana u prosincu 2019. u Kini, a potom se brzo proširila na ostatak svijeta. 31. prosinca 2019. Svjetska zdravstvena organizacija (WHO) 11. ožujka 2020. proglasila je pandemiju s ovim virusom. U Bosni i Hercegovini prva zaražena zaražena osoba registrirana je 5.3.2020.godine u Banja Luci.

Cilj: Predstaviti neke od aspekata olfaktorne i gustatorne disfunkcije u bolesnika s COVID-19.

Metode: Članak ima analitički karakter i pregled literature.

Rezultati i rasprava: SARS-CoV-2 ima veliku sličnost sa SARS-CoV-1 i koristi iste receptore za ulazak u ljudsko tijelo (angiotenzin-konvertirajući enzim 2/ACE2).[2] COVID-19 je respiratorna infekcija koja se primarno prenosi kapljičnim putem. U prvoj godini pandemije, SARS-CoV-2 koronavirus je mutirao nekoliko puta što je rezultiralo genetski različitim varijantama. Varijante su imenovane slovima grčkog alfabeta. Alpha varijanta (Wuhan, Kina), Beta varijante (prva epidemija u Južnoj Africi), Gamma varijante (prva epidemija u Brazilu), Delta varijante (prva epidemija u Indiji i Omicron varijanta) uzrokovale su povećanje broja slučajeva širom svijeta. Tipični simptomi infekcije COVID-19 mogu biti vrlo umjereni do vrlo teški, s teškim respiratornim simptomima i smrtnim ishodom. COVID-19 je primarno bolest dišnog sustava, ali SARS-CoV-2 prodire i u središnji živčani sustav (SŽS), te bi izgleda mogao biti odgovoran za smrtni ishod u nekim slučajevima. Ulazak virusa u mozak može dovesti do različitih neuroloških i psihijatrijskih manifestacija, uključujući glavobolju, gubitak njuha (anozmija) i gubitak okusa (ageuzija), encefalopatiju, encefalitis, paresteziju, mijalgiju, Guillain-Barreov sindrom, cerebrovaskularne bolesti.

Zaključak: COVID-19 je prvenstveno bolest dišnog sustava, ali SARS-CoV-2, prodire i u CNS, dovodeći do ozbiljnih neuroloških poremećaja, a očito je odgovoran i za smrtnost. Učestalost anosmije i ageuzije u bolesnika s COVID-19 varira uvelike, od 10 do 65%, a primarni su simptom u oko 12% bolesnika. Većina analiziranih subjekata izvijestila je o olfaktornom oporavku. Međutim, anosmija i ageuzija mogu trajati nekoliko mjeseci ili čak i duže. Za sada je etiopatogeneza ansomije i ageuzije kod SARS-CoV-2 infekcije još nepoznata. Preporučeni su nazalni ili sistemski kortikosteroidi u akutnoj fazi, olfaktorni trening (njušenje mirisa ruže, limuna i klinčića) u akutnoj i kroničnoj fazi te mnogi drugi lijekovi kao potencijalni terapeutici.

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Introduction

So far, seven types of coronaviruses have been identified, two of which, called SARS-CoV and one called Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), caused large epidemics with a significant percentage of severe clinical pictures and fatal outcomes, while the remaining four caused mild symptoms of upper respiratory tract infection. Apparently, SARS-CoV-2, like other similar viruses, is of animal origin, but it is not yet clear which animal is the primary source and how the virus was transmitted to humans. SARS-CoV-2, which leads to COVID-19, is genetically distinct from SARS-CoV-1 and MERS-CoV, which were previously the cause of two epidemics in the world.[1,2]

The coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory infection that is primarily transmitted *via* respiratory droplets, and the primary route of transmission is close contact with a person who has the virus, especially during coughing, sneezing, and different medical interventions in the respiratory tract.[3] SARS-CoV-2 has a high level of sequential similarities to SARS-CoV-1 and uses the same receptors when it enters the human body (ACE2).[4] COVID-19 is a respiratory infection that is primarily transmitted *via* respiratory droplets. In the first year of the pandemic, the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus has mutated several times, resulting in genetically different variants. The variants are named by using letters of the Greek alphabet. The Alpha variant (Wuhan, China), Beta variant (first outbreak in South Africa), the Gamma variant (first outbreak in Brazil), the Delta variant (first outbreak in India, and the Omicron variant) have caused an increase in cases worldwide.[1,4,5]

Typical symptoms of COVID-19 infection can be very moderate to very severe, with severe respiratory symptoms (bilateral severe pneumonia) and fatal outcomes. COVID-19 is primarily a disease of the respiratory system, but SARS-CoV-2 also penetrates the CNS and apparently could be responsible for fatal outcomes in some cases.[4–8]

Experiments on animals have demonstrated that SARS-CoV probably enters the brain *via* the olfactory bulb (OB) and then spreads to other specific parts of the brain, such as the thalamus and brainstem, through the olfactory nerves. Furthermore, there is evidence that coronaviruses attack peripheral nerve endings and reach the CNS *via* nerve synapses.[6] The entry of the virus into the brain can lead to different neurological and psychiatric manifestations, including headache, loss of smell (anosmia) and the loss of taste (ageusia), encephalopathy, encephalitis, paresthesia, myalgia, Guillain-Barre syndrome, and cerebrovascular diseases.[1,6,9]

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COVID-19 and Olfactory and Gustatory Dysfunction

Olfactory dysfunction associated with a viral infection of the upper respiratory tract is not only related to infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus. It has long been known that postviral olfactory dysfunction (PVOD) is the main cause of clinically significant loss of smell and that it accounts for about 40% of the total incidence of olfactory dysfunction.[10,11]

Smell disorders encompass a wide range of disorders of the sense of smell and can be classified in different ways. Quantitatively, there is a difference between hyposmia (reduced ability to detect smells) and anosmia (complete inability). Qualitative changes in the sense of smell are called dysosmia. They are divided into parosmia (altered perception of smell when an olfactory stimulus is present) and phantosmia (perception of smell without the presence of an actual stimulus). Smell disorders are often accompanied by impaired taste impairment, such as ageusia or dysgeusia, and it is believed that the main component of the sense of taste is the olfactory dysfunction itself, which prevents

the development of the subjective sense of taste.[11,12] Viral infections of the upper respiratory tract are accompanied by olfactory dysfunction in 17–36% of respondents in specialist consultations.[11,13] Therefore, smell dysfunction in the course of upper respiratory tract infections is considered a widespread symptom. The intensity and duration of PVOD are highly variable depending on the speed of regeneration of the neuroepithelium.[11]

The intensity and duration of this dysfunction, termed PVOD, are highly variable depending on the capacity and rate of regeneration of the neuroepithelium.[11] PVOD is more common in women and people over 50 years of age. It can last from 1 week to 1 or 2 years. If PVOD lasts longer and if the severity is greater, the recovery of olfactory function is very limited.[11–17] A third of patients notice symptoms of recovery after a few months and usually make a full recovery after 13 months.[15,16]

At the beginning of the pandemic, the acute loss of smell and taste was not considered an important symptom of COVID-19, although olfactory dysfunction after SARS-CoV-2 infection was also previously recorded in SARS from 2002.[18,19]

The first report that mentions anosmia and ageusia, and the first about neurological symptoms in general, in patients with COVID-19, is a report from Wuhan by Mao et al.,[20] who stated that in the 214 patients they analyzed, 5.1% had hyposmia, and 5.6% hypogeusia. Following the initial reports on smell and taste disturbances in patients with COVID-19, the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, British Association of Otorhinolaryngology (ENT UK), and the British Rhinological Society independently published guidance that includes hyposmia and dysgeusia as screening symptoms for further testing for COVID-19.[21]

There is a large number of papers on different frequencies of disorders of the sense of smell and taste in different countries of the world. According to a survey from Doha, Qatar, within a primary care health center, this is 24.82% (141 respondents). The largest number of patients were aged >30 years (73.76%). All subjects had normalization of anosmia or ageusia with an average duration of the disorder of 6.89 days.[22] A multicenter study conducted in several countries in Europe was published on 6th April 2020. Patients with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 infection were recruited from 12 European hospitals. A total of 417 mild-to-moderate COVID-19 patients completed the study (263 females/154 males), and 85.6% of patients reported olfactory and 88.0% gustatory dysfunctions. There was a significant association between both disorders ($p < 0.001$). Olfactory dysfunction appeared before the other symptoms in 11.8% of cases. The early olfactory recovery rate was 44.0%. Females were significantly more affected by olfactory and gustatory dysfunctions than males ($p = 0.001$).[23]

According to a study conducted in South Korea, which was based on a telephone interview of 3,191 patients, it was determined that 15.3% of patients had acute anosmia or ageusia in the early stages of the disease, and 15.7% were present in those who were asymptomatic (and positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus) or with a moderate clinical picture of the disease. The frequency was significantly higher in women ($p = 0.01$) and younger people ($p < 0.001$). Most patients recovered within three weeks (median 7 days for both symptoms). In a meta-analysis performed in August 2020, which included publications (24 in total) published until 31.5.2020 in the databases MEDLINE, EMBASE, and MedRxiv, a total of 8438 patients from 13 countries, there were 41% (from 28.5 to 53.9%) with olfactory dysfunction, and 38.2% with gustatory dysfunction (from 24 to 53.6%). Older age was associated with a lower prevalence of both olfactory and gustatory dysfunction.[24]

In one study from India, out of 167 patients (tertiary care hospital), 105 patients had an altered sense of smell (62.87%), and 98 had an altered sense of taste (58.68%). The majority of patients in our study were less than 29 years of age (61/167), attributing to 36.53%. After 14 days, there was a 74% improvement in the sense of smell when compared to smell during the disease period. There was a 45.26% decrease in the sense of taste during the disease among all the patients when compared to before the disease. After 14 days, there was a 63.21% improvement in the sense of taste when compared to taste during the disease period.[25] According to one study from Turkey (155 subjects from a "pandemic hospital" were included in the period from 25.3. to 25.4. 2020, age 18–72 years, average 36.3 ± 8.1 years), 35.4% of the subjects had anosmia and 16.1% ageusia. There were 58.7% women and 42.2% men.[26] In another study from Turkey that included 101 subjects (54 men and 47 women), 71 had anosmia and/or ageusia, 55 had both disorders, and 11 had only anosmia). So, here the frequency is more frequent than in the previous announcement.[27]

In a meta-analysis published in October 2021, the prevalence of post-COVID-19 symptoms in patients recovered from COVID-19 was analyzed using MEDLINE, CINAHL, PubMed, EMBASE, and Web of Science databases, as well as medRxiv and bioRxiv preprint servers up to 15th March 2021. From 15,577 studies identified, 29 peer-reviewed studies and four preprints met inclusion criteria (15,244 hospitalized and 9,011 nonhospitalized patients). The results showed that 63.2, 71.9, and 45.9% of the sample exhibited ≥1 post-COVID-19 symptom at 30, 60, or ≥90 days after onset/hospitalization. Fatigue and dyspnea were the most prevalent symptoms, with a pooled prevalence ranging from 35 to 60%, and anosmia was present in 10–20%, ageusia in 15–20% of analyzed patients.[28]

It is known that children usually have milder respiratory symptoms than adults or are often asymptomatic, and the loss of the sense of smell and taste is not rare. According to one systematic review that included publications from the period from 1st December 2019 to 30th April 2021, only nine articles were singled out, with a total of 316 cases with confirmed COVID-19, of which 156 had olfactory dysfunction. Most of the analyzed subjects reported olfactory recovery. By reviewing the literature, it can be concluded that the rate of olfactory dysfunction is 49% among children and adolescents

suffering from COVID-19. Furthermore, the persistence of olfactory dysfunction was reported in 7.1% of patients.[29] In one study from Italy, it was demonstrated that about 30% of children affected by COVID-19 presented with taste and smell disorders. Anosmia seems to be more frequent than ageusia, and both occur mainly during the first phase of the disease. About 5% of children would continue to complain of the persistence of these symptoms even after healing.[30]

Thus, reports on the frequency of anosmia and ageusia in patients in patients with COVID-19 vary widely, and most often, it is about high percentages (about 60% and more) being the primary symptom in about 12% of patients.[24,31]

Etiopathogenesis of Anosmia and Ageusia

The olfactory system is very complex and is organized from different structural and functional cellular components. Briefly, odorants must reach the olfactory epithelium and bind to odorant-binding proteins. Then, after activating the olfactory receptor neurons (ORNs), they transmit the signal to the OB. The sum of these signals is then further transmitted to higher cortical and central areas, where olfactory processing becomes even more complex. A viral attack on any of these structures can potentially lead to olfactory dysfunction. Magnetic resonance imaging in patients with SARS-CoV-2-associated anosmia shows normal OB volume.[23]

For now, it is more or less possible to only speculate on the mechanism of anosmia in patients with SARS-CoV-2 infection, and we may have some understanding of pathogenesis from other viral infections, including coronaviruses. Anosmia can be broadly divided into conductive and sensorineural loss of smell. Conductive loss occurs when we have impaired airflow through the nose, and this disorder is usually reversible after the nasal obstruction stops.[10]

There are several possible mechanisms that could be behind SARS-CoV-2 anosmia that can lead to anosmia in isolation or in combination with other symptoms. According to one theory, the virus binds to ACE receptors in the nasal epithelium and causes degeneration of the nasal mucosa and then inflammation and damage to the nerve receptors responsible for the smell. Another hypothesis, currently the most widely accepted, suggests a direct effect of the virus on the CNS.[32,33]

In one comprehensive paper, which is a systematic review focused on explaining the pathophysiology of viral olfactory dysfunction and which included seven human studies and 38 animal studies, published in September 2020, it is concluded that the pathophysiological mechanism of olfactory dysfunction in COVID-19 is virus-dependent and very complex. The clinical manifestations of olfactory disorders can be explained by a combination of direct damage to ORNs, damage to olfactory neuronal regeneration and the inflammatory response, cytokine action, and greater damage to the cortex.[34] On the other hand, long-term or permanent impairment of smell after the end of viral infection and cellular regeneration very likely involves additional mechanisms in the olfactory system.

It is possible that the simultaneous presence of olfactory dysfunction negatively affects the ability to perceive taste in patients with COVID-19 due to the close connection between olfactory and gustatory functions. However, various pathways have also been suggested, including direct damage to taste buds and salivary glands, binding to sialic acid receptors, and inflammation.[35] Furthermore, it has been suggested that ACE2 inhibitors inactivate the G protein-coupled proteins and sodium-ion channels located in the taste receptors. Similarly, it is possible that SARS-CoV-2-induced down-regulation of ACE2 and the consequent impairment of the renin-angiotensin-aldosterone system may be associated with taste dysfunction in patients with COVID-19.[36]

Possibility of Treatment

The treatment strategy of POVD, based on the natural clinical course of the disorder, can be aimed at the acute phase, and on the other hand, at the chronic phase. Probably the best form of intervention is to prevent the initial entry of the virus, which could be relevant to COVID-19. For a virus that causes inflammation, topical or systemic corticosteroids may prove beneficial in the acute phase of PVOD.[10]

The presence of olfactory dysfunction, in addition to cell damage, also includes damage to synaptic plasticity. Related to this hypothesis, it has previously been shown that influenza A can cause long-lasting changes in synaptic plasticity in the hippocampus even after virus clearance, possibly through cytokines, activated microglia, and altered gene expression.[34,37] It is similar in the case of respiratory syncytial virus infection, where damage to synaptic plasticity was found, which leads such people to cognitive impairment. The characteristic of neurotropic viruses to damage synaptic plasticity has also been demonstrated in diseases caused by the Borna virus, which leads to impaired recycling of synaptic vesicles.[38,39]

Nasal corticosteroids are recommended, for treatment, although a randomized controlled study did not demonstrate statistically significant evidence that they are better than olfactory training. Namely, in the study, the first group of patients was treated with a corticosteroid nasal spray (mometasone fluorate) for 3 weeks, and the second had only olfactory training (sniffing the scent of rose, lemon, and clove for 20 seconds twice a day for 3 weeks). Both groups had 50 patients each. In the first group, 62% of respondents, at the end of the third week, had a complete recovery of the sense of smell, and in the second group, 52%. Differences between groups were not statistically significant. Furthermore, a statistically significant recovery of the sense of smell was found in both groups at the end of the third week of treatment.[40,41] Why olfactory training is an effective therapy for PVOD can be explained by the fact that the main characteristic of synaptic plasticity is its ability to learn and modify.[42–44]

There are several drugs that are considered potential therapeutics.[35] According to Khani et al.,[35] the summary of

Table 1: Categorization of the proposed medications for COVID-19 smell and taste loss

Medication	*Mechanism of action*	*Outcomes (study design)*	*Class of recommendation/ Level of evidence*	*References*
Pentoxifylline	Phosphodiesterase (PDE) inhibitor	Promising results in smell loss (postmarketing surveillance study), No beneficial effects in patients with posttraumatic anosmia (case series)	IIb/B-NR	45,46
Caffeine	PDE inhibitor, adenosine receptors antagonist	Direct correlation between coffee consumption and smell scores in patients with Parkinson's disease (retrospective cohort), 65 mg of caffeine showed no beneficial effects in patients with hyposmia related to upper respiratory tract infection or sinus node dysfunction [randomized controlled clinical trials (RCT)]	IIb/B-R	47,48
Theophylline	PDE inhibitor	Improved the smell and taste dysfunction caused by various diseases (two non-RCT)	IIb/B-NR	49,50
Intranasal insulin	Neuroprotective	Beneficial effects in olfactory dysfunction caused by infection (non-RCT), COVID-19 (non-RCT), and other diseases (RCT)	IIa/B-R	51–53
Statins	Neuroprotective, anti-inflammatory	Improved anosmia in mice models (two animal studies)	IIb/C-EO	54,55
Minocycline	Neuroprotective	Inhibit apoptosis of olfactory sensory neurons (OSNs) in rat models (histological analysis)	IIb/C-EO	56
Zinc	Trace element, growth factor	Reports of anosmia with intranasal zinc gluconate, No beneficial effects of zinc sulfate in chemotherapy-induced taste and smell loss (RCT)	III/B-R	57,58
Intranasal vitamin A	Anti-neurodegenerative	Beneficial effects in postinfectious smell dysfunction (retrospective cohort study)	IIb/C-LD	59
Omega-3	Neuroprotective	Beneficial effects in olfactory loss caused by tumors (RCT)	IIb/B-R	60
Intranasal mometasone	Anti-inflammatory	No beneficial effects in COVID-19 smell loss (RCT)	III/B-R	40
Intranasal fluticasone	Anti-inflammatory	Beneficial effects in COVID-19 smell loss (non-RCT)	IIa/B-NR	61
Oral triamcinolone paste	Anti-inflammatory	Beneficial effects in COVID-19 dysgeusia (non-RCT)	IIa/B-NR	61
Melatonin	Neuroprotective, anti-inflammatory	Inhibit apoptosis of OSNs in rat models (animal study)	IIb/C-EO	62

A, high-quality randomized clinical trials; B-NR, moderate-quality non-randomized clinical trial; B-R, moderate-quality randomized clinical trial; C-EO, expert opinion; C-LD, limited data; I, strong; Iia, moderate; Iib, weak; III, moderately no benefit or strongly harmful

the promising agents against COVID-19-related smell and/or taste loss is shown in Table 1.

Given the large scale of the COVID-19 pandemic and the high transmissibility of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, evidence that already exists of this virus' association with the CNS (including disorders of smell and taste), there is concern among experts about the potential long-term effects of SARS-CoV-2 virus infection on the CNS. Namely, it is considered that patients

who survive COVID-19 are at high risk for the further development of neurological diseases, especially Alzheimer's disease. Namely, it seems that in the survivors of COVID-19, in the following period, the systemic inflammatory process or the inflammatory process of the brain could trigger mechanisms that could lead to an increase in the frequency of neurological and neurodegenerative disorders.[9,63]

Conclusion

The coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) is primarily a disease of the respiratory system, but the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes the disease, also penetrates the CNS in a number of patients and leads to serious neurological disorders. The frequency of anosmia and ageusia in patients in patients with COVID-19 vary widely, and most often, it is about high percentages (about 60% and more) being the primary symptom in about 12% of patients. For now, it is more or less possible to only speculate on the mechanism of olfactory and gustatory dysfunction in patients with SARS-CoV-2 infection. Nasal or systemic corticosteroids were recommended in the acute phase as well as olfactory training (sniffing the smell of rose, lemon, and cloves) in the acute and chronic phases, and many other drugs as potential therapeutics.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

The Unborn and Its Rights

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Abstract

One of the most controversial topics in modern bioethics, science, and philosophy is the beginning of individual human life and the legal rights of fetus. In the seemingly endless debate, strongly stimulated by recent technologic advances in human reproduction, a synthesis between scientific data and hypothesis, philosophical thought, and issues of humanities has become a necessity to deal with ethical, juridical, and social problems.

Modern bioethics and science are strongly concerned for the respect of human life at both ends of its existence (birth and death), but other sciences (e.g., philosophy, technology, psychology, sociology, law, and politics) consider the beginning of human life according to different points of view. However, bioethical topics like this one cannot be treated from only one perspective (e.g., biological, philosophical, or religious) because conclusions might be not good enough or reductive. This reality should be regarded in all its richness: an embryo gives a biologist and a geneticist substance for consideration, but because we are talking about the beginning of human life, it requires philosophical–anthropological consideration and confrontation with theology; in its protection, we have to include ethics and law. In experiencing and investigating social behavior, other disciplines, such as the history of medicine and sociology, have to be included.

Keywords: Fetal rights, Scientific and legal controversies, Unborn baby.

Sažetak

Brojne su kontroverze o pravnom statusu nerođenog čeda. O tome imaju šta reći mnoge ljudske djelatnosti poput znanosti, etike, morala, prava, povijesti i sociologije. Sve te važne djelatnosti imaju i uvijek će imati različite poglede na početak ljudskog života. Polemike započinju s nedovršenim raspravama kada počinje ljudski život. Još je manje pojašnjeno pravno pitanje kada počinju *prava* fetusa i koja *prava* treba dati nerođenom čedu. Teško je, gotovo nemoguće, sistematizirati podatke iz literature jer su oni ili nastali u različitim drutvenim sistemima ili nedovoljo precizno definiraju ono što suvremene medicinske spoznaje znaju o nerođenom djetetu. Zato je ovo područje jedno od najkontroverznijih područja u suvremenoj bioetici. Svi se međutim slažu da treba poštovati svetost života i da treba život zaštititi od njegovog početka ali da on može ponekad imati sekundarnu važnost kada se ocijeni da postoje medicinski razlozi za prekid trudnoće.

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The first records of the mutual relations between medicine and law are found in the Hammurabi Code, the first written book of laws in human history. From those first beginnings to our days, law ensures social impact on medical sciences and medical practice. To make this impact comprehensive and socially beneficial, legal sciences accompany modern medical achievements by helping and encouraging their explosive development. Such harmonious cooperation has made a significant contribution to the problem of euthanasia in the recent past, and the works produced in recent years also encourage the field of teratotanasia, the murder of a poorly damaged fetus. In this extremely delicate area of human reproduction, much is unclear, starting from the unknown etiology of most malformations to the prognosis for the future development of a human being damaged during the gametogenesis or furrowing of germ leaves. These unwelcome experiments of nature bring numerous ethical, moral, and legal problems for which we only partially

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have ready answers. The phenomenon cannot be prevented because in about 70% of cases the cause is unknown, so the only rational approach is early and reliable detection and termination of such pregnancy. And while medicine took giant steps forward in discovering and curing the aberrations of yet unborn offspring, legal sciences lagged behind and remain behind in defining the legal status of the fetus and its right to life and right to death. Significant contributions to the world knowledge fund in this complex problem were also made by our society through the works of Kurjak and Zergollern-Čupak,[1] Zergollern-Čupak and Kurjak,[2,3] Šeparović,[4] and Uremović.[5]

Discussion

By reviewing the not particularly abundant literature in the field of the legal status of the fetus, we find quite controversial views. They begin with unfinished discussions about when life begins. Even less clarified is the question of when fetal rights begin and what rights should be given to the unborn child. Unfortunately, it is impossible to systematize data from the literature because they were either created in different social systems or insufficiently accurately define what contemporary medical knowledge knows about the unborn child. Therefore, we will directly list the most important data of both domestic authors and foreign researchers.

From Croatian doctors, data on medical–legal problems of the fetus were systematically provided by Zergollern-Čupak, Kurjak, Uremović, and Breyer.[1–8] Kurjak believes that life does not begin with conception because both sperm and egg cells are parts of everything living. Likewise, life does not start in every new individual, but renews itself and becomes genuine when it becomes meaningful, autonomous, and autoreproductive. Another question is when is it possible to consider a life begun like that of a being or a person? He thinks science should provide an answer to that. If the criterion for ending a life is the cessation of brain activity, then the criterion for the beginning of life could be the beginning of brain activity. Modern appliances have revealed that this activity starts at 12 weeks of pregnancy. According to Kurjak, the fetus is a potential individual and will become a true individual through the act of birth. His life, however, should be protected from the beginning, but it may have secondary importance when it is judged that there are medical reasons for the termination of pregnancy. Zergollern-Čupak also addressed this important issue, and in a recent paper she discusses it in more detail:

> "If we accept the idea of the rights of the offspring, it is only a small step to accepting its legal rights. It is certain that a great difficulty, in some ways even an impossibility, is the acceptance of the moment when life begins. Is the embryo already a person with legal rights, is it a fetus or a newborn child? Attitudes are different in different societies. According to rulings by some courts, it appears that a live fetus after 26 weeks of pregnancy already has legal rights. Therefore, the introduction of prenatal diagnosis in the case of genetic diseases into the routine practice of obstetricians and clinical geneticists also carries a multitude of dangers. Failure due to omission or ignorance of the provisions may put the doctor in a position to be responsible for the birth of a malformed child. A parent who is not informed about his risk because they're a carrier of the disease, a woman who is not informed about the importance of age and about the nature of a sexually related disease in pregnancy, may, in the event of a repeated reproductive accident, seek legal satisfaction both for herself and her unborn or born child. Although many, including our courts, have legally addressed the problem of offspring, society has only just begun to make its debut through its legislators and pass laws, severely behind current events in society. It is therefore high time for the community to be actively involved in the prevention of congenital malformations. However, neither the legislature nor the court will ever be able to answer all the questions and moral and ethical dilemmas brought by the abrupt advancement of medical genetics, especially prenatal diagnosis. Is conception, implantation, the onset of fetal heartbeat or visible encephalographic activity the onset when the fetus is able to resume life outside the womb? It is impossible to find an answer that will satisfy both those who believe that life begins at conception, and those who understand life as a value of reason."[1]

In the conclusions of the habilitation paper, Uremović[5] also discusses the legal status of the fetus.

"A special issue is the interpretation of the provisions of the Law on Termination of Pregnancy and the Regulation on the Procedure for Termination of Pregnancy. While the issue of termination of pregnancy in the first trimester does not create any particular problems and there are no significant differences of understanding, the termination of pregnancy after 3 months, and following the approval by the competent commission, may lead to a divergence of opinion. It can happen, and does happen, that upon approval of the commission, the termination of pregnancy is performed in women whose fetus weighs close to 1000 grams, or even more. Therefore, by terminating such an advanced pregnancy it is possible to obtain a live fetus which with appropriate care has a certain chance of staying alive. Such a case is considered an abortion by lawyers and appropriate sanctions are applied, even though it is actually a childbirth of an preterm child. It is questionable whether this is really an abortion or whether the ethics of permissible abortion masks the destruction of an offspring that has a certain chance of life. Sometimes a difficult and almost unacceptable situation arises for the doctor who was ordered to terminate

the pregnancy, which also means the destruction of the offspring. We must not, on the other hand, dismiss the fact that the doctor is obliged, in accordance with his ethical principles, to keep this offspring alive.

What happens is that the Pregnancy Termination Commission makes a decision to terminate an advanced pregnancy impressed by the social momentum of the pregnant woman, neglecting other moments, primarily medical ones. Often, such social indications are covered by far-fetched own indications, which according to the letter of the law are necessary for the termination of such a pregnancy. In the end, the doctor assumes all responsibility, although, according to him, it is not an abortion, but a violent premature birth which causes serious bodily harm to a healthy woman.

Our law and its abortion regulations are not precise enough when it comes to terminating an advanced pregnancy, so it is necessary to regulate this issue and formulate it accurately. This would undoubtedly make it much easier for the commissions and gynecologists most affected by the lack of precision of the law.

Our medical practice indicates that it is necessary for both the Criminal Code and the regulations on permissible abortion to clearly formulate and delineate the question of the time when the offspring becomes fit to live. It is also necessary to formulate in this regard within criminal-law all unauthorized interventions that result in termination of pregnancy or violent and premature birth. Legislative provisions on allowed premature births should be adequately specified, as these are two significantly different procedures."[5]

Among Croatian jurists, Šeparović has published more papers on the issue.[4] He points out that in law, man is protected as a living being born to a woman.

Both the end and the beginning of life seem to be an issue. Criminal law protects a man's life from conception: future life is protected from destruction by unlawfully terminating a pregnancy, whether it is protected from termination of pregnancy "without the consent of the pregnant woman," or whoever "contrary to the regulations on termination of pregnancy performs, begins to perform, or helps the pregnant woman with her consent, to perform a termination of pregnancy." It protects the fetus, a live fertilized egg in all stages of development. However, man is protected as a living being, from the moment when that life is autonomous, autoregulatory, and autoreproductive, and that is from birth. The distinction between the term "offspring" and "man" is not natural, but a value or legal judgment. Man's "offspring" is what is in the body of a woman from conception to childbirth, and only from childbirth is it a "child," that is, a man. Before that is the future man, the potential. Distinguishing this is very important for many reasons. The social consequences for man are calculated from birth, the position of the "offspring," the fetus, the future man – although today almost completely at the mercy of the pregnant woman in the first place – is not without any protection. However, while the life of a man is protected from involuntary cause of death, it is not the same case if the destruction of the offspring occurs through negligence (except that the physical integrity of the pregnant woman will be protected from involuntary causes, but only severe bodily injuries, which must certainly include termination of pregnancy).[1]

Conclusion

All the abovementioned data from the literature clearly indicate that both our and the international medical public successfully detect and treat malformed fetuses. While the results achieved represent epochal discoveries, the law still does not have precise criteria on the rights of the fetus, adequate protection of doctors, and the right to error, which we give only to the mother or parents. Our own experience in legal counseling, although 5 years old, is only preliminary. Working with future mothers who carry damaged children is an exceptional challenge because for them, the deformity of their child is the most common and the most severe stage of the disease.

We tried to systematically examine these individual understandable psychological stresses and to offer legal protection to the fetus, mother, doctor, and society as a whole through the changed legislative regulations. The presented results are only an incentive for further work and the only pretense to their preliminary presentation in this paper is to inform fellow doctors about the first attempts of our environment to give its own contribution to this complex, but above all humane cooperation of doctors and lawyers.

The place and significance of legal counseling in prenatal fetal protection have opened several areas where neither law nor deontology has provided clear answers. The question of the rights of the fetus arises:

- Right to quality of life.
- Right to death.
- Right to be born and wanted.
- Right to adequate medical care.

This profound human and humane question is not just theoretical thinking, but a daily practice in which interdisciplinary elements of science are intertwined with the constant presence of possible abuse.

In an elegant review by Abdulmajid,[9] published in our book on Controversies on the Beginning of Human Life,[10] many useful descriptions are made for the legal status of fetus worldwide.

Legal Status of the Fetus by Western Laws

Indeed, it is a universal rule of law that no legal rights are accorded to the fetus, of its own, until the moment it is delivered and is separated from its mother. Until such separation takes place, the fetus is legally regarded as part of its mother. A fetus in not *sui juris per se*; it does not possess the legal capacity of a person that enables it to sue or be sued to acquire legal rights or incur legal liabilities. Under UK Law, this has been

established in the cases of *Paton V. British Pregnancy Advisory Services*,[11] whereunder it was decided that a child acquires no right of its own as a legal person until it is born alive. Also, under the Congenital Disabilities (Civil Liability Act 1976), a neonate must survive for at least 48 hours before being able to recover damages in negligence in its own name. Accordingly, no suit for wrongful fetal life of a congenitally disabled child is recognizable in UK, although civil liability may be established for negligent injury to the fetus, but the right of compensation in such a case will accrue to the parents and not the fetus, and provided that the parent was owed a "duty of care" by the tortfeaser, for example, the child's right of action is derivative from that of either parent. A common example for such negligence would be failure in genetic counseling or failure to warn parents that exposure to rubella might have affected the child, so that in either case parents may decide to terminate pregnancy.

As regards the protection afforded to the fetus under criminal law, the first and fundamental law is embodied in sections 55, 58, and 59 of the Offenses Against the Person Act 1861 which specifically prohibits the procurement of miscarriage by a third party, self-induced miscarriage, and supplying of a means to do it. It is important to note here that the title of the Act indicates that miscarriage is an offense directed against a "person," that is, the fetus or embryo, regardless of the stage of development it reaches. In 1929, the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929 was enacted to provide further protection to the fetus, by making it an offense to manipulate with natural delivery in a manner to cause the death of the fetus, a matter which was not covered by the 1861 Act. However, the 1929 Act also provided for the first relief from liability in cases of therapeutic miscarriage for "preserving the life of the mother." This seems to be the first time the interest of pregnant women has been considered under English Law. However, the Abortion Act 1967 has virtually settled the dispute in favor of the pregnant woman. The Act, which represents the existing law in England and Wales, legalizes abortion if two registered medical practitioners believe, in good faith, that the continuance of pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant lady or injury to her physical or mental health or to her existing children, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated, or that there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormality as to be seriously handicapped[12] and determining the magnitude of the risks of injury to the pregnant woman, "account may be taken of such woman's actual or reasonably foreseeable environment."[13]

So, the 1967 Act represents a sharp drift in the direction of recognizing a woman's autonomy and her right to control her reproductive faculties, regardless of the consequences of such control over the helpless little creature. So, under the Act it may no longer be accurate to claim that the fetus is entitled to protection *vis-à-vis* the pregnant woman.

The position in the United States is somewhat different. The rule in *Roe v. Wade*[14] still represents the law. However, endeavors are still being made and campaigns are still being launched, more particularly in the south of the United States, by pro-lifers against this rule, but it is still holding, though still a standing item in the electoral agenda of the majority of candidates in US Presidential elections, a constitutional and political issue rather than an ethical or philosophical one, as it is the case in UK, and for this particular reason the pregnant women won it in US, the pregnant woman being an existing person with vested rights much more than any fetus can claim.

However, in the 1980s United States, and as a setback from *Roe v. Wade*, a trend was identifiable toward the recognition of some fetal rights, particularly as technological advances in ultrasonography made it possible to regard the fetus as a patient independent of the mother.

So, because of improvements in fetal monitoring, obstetricians increasingly recommend cesarean section. However, pregnant women often do not consent to cesarean section for a variety of reasons ranging from fear of anesthesia and normal surgical complications, surgical scars to sincere cultural or religious beliefs.[15] In many instances, the pregnant woman's refusal to undergo cesarean section may endanger the life or well-being of the fetus.

This situation has created a legal dilemma; should a pregnant woman be forced to undergo section or other surgery in the interest of the life or health of the fetus?

In the 1980s, a number of cases arose in the United States in which health care providers sought to issue court orders to obligate women to give birth by cesarean section. In the vast majority of those cases, court orders were issued requiring pregnant women to undergo cesarean section. In *Jefferson V. Griffin Spalding County Hospital Authority*,[16] in 1981, the *Georgia* Supreme court held that a pregnant woman in her last weeks of pregnancy did not have the right to refuse surgery or other medical intervention if the life of the unborn child was at stake. However, this trend was later overturned and subsequent court decisions recognized the pregnant women's right to refuse medical interventions required for the interest and well-being of the fetus. In a tragic case, in 1990, in re *A.C.*[17] the District of Columbia Court of Appeal decided that a physician must honor the wishes of a competent pregnant woman with regard to a cesarean section. However, the court's judgment was delivered after the woman involved in the case died with her fetus pursuant to a cesarean section forced by a lower court. Also in *Doe v. Doe*[18] (Illinois), a cesarean section was indicated for a pregnant woman whose fetus was not receiving enough oxygen, but she refused the procedure on the basis of her religious beliefs. The Illinois Appellate Court decided in favor of the woman's refusal, stating that a physician must recognize a woman's right to refuse a cesarean section since no statutory rule or a decided case supported the State Attorney's petition for a court order to require the woman to undergo the procedure. In this case, the court also noted with approval the position of the

American Medical Association which reminded physicians that their duty is to ensure that the pregnant woman is provided with the necessary and appropriate information to enable her to make an informed decision regarding her fetus, not to attempt influencing her decision or forcing the recommended procedure upon her.

The new types of fetal treatments which involve fetal surgery and interventions, which are made possible by the recent advances in medical science and technology will give rise to new ethical questions similar to those raised by caesarian section, however, at present, the overwhelming trend which, it is expected, will endure for years to come, is that the respect for the autonomy of the pregnant woman prevails over the interest of her fetus in the event of a conflict.

Fetus and Humanitarian Law in Europe

Attempts were made in Europe to mitigate the rigor of the rule that no legal rights may accrue to an unborn human until it is born alive by seeking refuge in the European Convention for the protection of Human Rights[19] (ECHR) particularly Article 2 of the Convention, which provides that:

> "Everyone's right to life shall be protected by law. No one shall be deprived of this life intentionally save in the execution of a sentence of a court following his conviction of a crime for which this penalty is provided be law."

Several cases were brought before the European Court of Human rights in Strassburg seeking a judgment that acts leading to the death of fetuses as unintentional homicide (manslaughter), such acts included fetal death due to improper removal of contraceptive coil,[20] causing car accidents leading to fetal death,[21] strangulation by the umbilical cord due to negligence of midwife.[22] The Court refused to treat acts of third parties in these cases as unintentional homicide (manslaughter). The Court recognized the controversy surrounding the legal status of the unborn human within Europe and the difference in approaches toward its recognition as a human from one country to another and the need to avoid making a ruling on the long-standing conflict between the right of the conceived child to life and the right of the pregnant woman to autonomy and, consequently, to procure a legal abortion. Therefore the Court decided that fetal protection lies within the realm of the domestic law of each European country and may be dealt with by the national legislation of each country. The term "everyone" is not defined in the Convention, and therefore it may be defined by legislation or by court decision in each country individually. Therefore the European Commission of Human Rights, in one case, decided that Article 2 of the Convention provides no protection for the fetal right to life.[23]

Among all the above cases referred to, one case is worth special attention, that is, *Vo v. France*.[20] This case was brought by the Centre for Reproductive Rights in France seeking conviction under unintentional homicide charge of a doctor who negligently ruptured the amniotic sac of a lady, Vo, who was then 5 months pregnant, mistaking her for another woman who was seeking the removal of a contraceptive coil, and thereby causing Vo an emergency abortion and loss of her fetus.

The French Court of Cassation, the highest judicial authority in France, ruled that the doctor could not be charged with unintentional homicide, simply because the fetus was not considered a person entitled to protection under France's Criminal Code. Vo then took the case to the European Court of human rights arguing that the ECHR guarantees all persons the right to life and that this guarantee applies to fetuses.

The European Court refused to extend the right of life to unborn fetuses. Its reasoning was that "firstly, that the issue of such protection has not been resolved within the majority of the Contracting States themselves … and, secondly, that there is no European consensus on the scientific and legal definition on the beginning of life." The court further noted that "the life of the fetus was intimately connected with that of the mother and could be protected through her." Had the Court gone the other way, abortion law in 39 European countries across Europe would have been rendered invalid.

UK as an Example

In the United Kingdom, the Human Rights Act 1998 has been enacted with the intent to incorporate into UK law the substantive rights set out in the ECHR, and has come into force since 2nd October 2000. While the human rights situation in the United States is secured by a written constitution which contains principles that led the issuance of such rules as those pronounced in *Roe v. Wade*, in the English common law "there is an innate conservation that does not allow for such clarity of human rights based decision making."[24] The Human Rights Act 1998 provided an opportunity for a legislative intervention that formally recognizes the rights of the parties to the abortion process in a humanitarian setting. This opportunity has not been taken. The rights and freedoms provided for in the ECHR, which are incorporated in Schedule 1 to the 1998 Act contain no particular reference to patient rights, but are applicable to individuals at large. The Medical Ethics Committee of the British Medical Association has issued a guidance paper discussing the likely impact of the 1998 Act on medical decision-making.[25] The guidance stated that:

> "In many ways the true impact will not be known until a body of a case-law has developed to illustrate how UK Courts interpret the Convention rights. What is clear, however, is that the introduction of the Human Rights Act does not represent a major change in practice for health professionals."

because,

> "The requirements of the Human Rights Act reflect, very closely, existing good practice. Decisions taken by doctors on the basis of current ethical standards are likely to be compliant with the Act"

and with regard to abortion, the guidance noted that the most relevant provision in the Act is Article 2^1 which is identical to Article 2^1 of the Convention (ECHR) quoted earlier. However, the guidance interpreted the provisions of Article 2^1 as only concerned with the end of life issues such as the legality of assisted suicide and treatments intended to prolong life. Soon after its coming into force, the effect of Article 2 was considered by the House of Lords in the widely publicized case of *Diane Pretty,*[26] which decided that this Article did not confer on the individual the right to assisted suicide. The effect of Article 2 on abortion has not yet been judicially considered and is likely to be considered in the future, since the proponents of the sanctity of life doctrine believe that it is intended to protect the rights of the unborn children to life. However, although Article 2 of both the ECHR and the Act does not specify at what stage of human development the right should start to accrue, yet it was welcomed by pro-lifers. Leaders of the Roman Catholic Church in England urged to use the 1998 Act to protect the unborn from the moment of conception. The Cardinal of Westminster made his appeal in "C*ounsel*," the official barristers' magazine, calling lawyers to use the human rights legislation and the ECHR to "build-up a genuine human rights culture through case law which recognizes the rights of the unborn."[27]

However, it is submitted that nothing in Article 2, nor in any subsequent case law, indicates that it is intended to change the current status of English law, which does not recognize any legal right for the unborn child.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

The Role of Stress Electrocardiography in Modern Cardiology

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Abstract

Aim: To point out the importance of stress electrocardiography and to present the indications, contraindications, as well as reasons for test termination with reference to the interpretation of the findings.

Background: Despite the development of modern cardiology and the availability of methods for the visualization of coronary artery disease (CAD), stress electrocardiography still has a role in clinical practice.

Review results: It is a safe, affordable, and cheap test for the evaluation of CAD, with clear indications, contraindications, and a clearly defined population for which it is intended.

Conclusion: It is imperative to correlate findings of stress electrocardiography with clinical symptoms, comorbidities, positive family history, and life habits, as well as pharmacological therapy of the patient.

Clinical significance: Stress electrocardiography should be a part of the daily work of cardiologists.

Keywords: Electrocardiography, Heart, Ischemia, Prevention.

Sažetak

Cilj: Ukazati na važnost stres elektrokardiografije te prikazati indikacije, kontraindikacije, kao i razloge prekida pretrage s osvrtom na interpretaciju nalaza.

Pozadina: Usprkos razvoju moderne kardiologije i dostupnosti metoda za vizualizaciju koronarne arterijske bolesti, stres elektrokardiografija još uvijek ima ulogu u kliničkoj praksi.

Rezultati pregleda: To je siguran, pristupačan i jeftin test za procjenu koronarne arterijske bolesti, s jasnim indikacijama i kontraindikacijama i jasno definiranom populacijom kojoj je namijenjen.

Zaključak: Neophodno je povezati nalaz stres elektrokardiografije s kliničkim simptomima, komorbiditetima, pozitivnom obiteljskom anamnezom i životnim navikama, kao i farmakološkom terapijom bolesnika.

Klinički značaj: Stres elektrokardiografija bi trebala biti dio svakodnevnog rada kardiologa.

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Background

Stress electrocardiography (ergometry) is a safe and affordable test for evaluating CAD.[1] The treadmill is the most commonly used device for stress electrocardiography, according to the already defined protocol.[1–3] The Bruce protocol is most commonly in use (others are protocols according to Balke, Astrand, and Naughton).[1,2] The advantage of the treadmill over other types of ergometers is that normal daily physical activities are simulated, which enables the actual presentation of oxygen consumption.[2]

The degree of load lasts for 3 minutes with a gradual increase in inclination and treadmill movement speed [initial treadmill inclination in the first stage of exercise is 10% at a speed of 1.7 m/hour or 2.7 km/hour (Table 1)]. Arterial pressure is measured every 2 minutes, and the electrocardiogram (ECG) is monitored by the physician (the ECG paper moves at a speed of 25 mm/second, with a

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deviation of 10 mm/1 mV). According to the Bruce protocol, the aim is to achieve submaximal or maximum load of the patient.[4–7] The unit of measurement that makes it easier to compare the load achieved during the test with the load in everyday life is one metabolic equivalent (MET) unit. One MET is the consumption of 3.5 mL of oxygen/kg/minute and is equal to resting metabolism.[5–7]

The recommendation is that the test should be performed until the submaximal heart rate is achieved (85% of the maximum heart rate for age and sex), or until the presentation of clinical symptoms.[6,7]

A bicycle ergometer is a stationary bicycle, and the load is created through the resistance and speed of the pedals (protocols according to James, McMaster, and Godfrey, Wingate anaerobic test, and force velocity test). There are also modifications of stress testing with step load tests (step ergometer), which include the Master step test, the Harvard step test, the Nagle progressive continuous step test, the Tennessee progressive continuous step test, and the progressive intermittent step test.

Arm stress electrocardiography is used in populations with physical disabilities of the lower extremities.

Review Results

Indications and Contraindications for Stress Electrocardiography

It is very important to optimally select patients for this test. Patients with moderate risk for CAD represent the best candidates, with the exception of females during their reproductive period when a high incidence of false positive results has been reported.[7–9] The sensitivity (true positive rate) of the test is 45–50%, and the specificity (true negative rate) is 85–90%, indicating that the use test for the exclusion of CAD is probably better than confirmation of the diagnosis of CAD.[8–16] The test is not recommended for use in patients with low (<15%) or high (>85%) pretest probability of CAD (Tables 2 and 3).[8,16] If the patient has a high probability of having CAD, stress electrocardiography should be combined with other methods of visualization of coronary arteries, or cardiac catheterization should be performed.[10] Indications for treadmill testing are shown in Table 4 and contraindications in Table 5.

Stress testing can be done in the first 7 days after an acute myocardial infarction but with a low-level of load.

Table 1: Bruce protocol[4,5]

Degree of load	*Load duration (minutes)*	*Speed (km/hour)*	*Grade (%)*	*The METs of task*
I	3	2.7	10	2–4
II	3	4.0	12	5–7
III	3	5.5	14	8–10
IV	3	6.7	16	11–12
V	3	8.0	18	13–15
VI	3	8.8	20	16–18
VII	3	9.6	22	19–21

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A full exercise test should be delayed for 4–6 weeks after myocardial infarction.[1]

Complications of stress electrocardiography are rare. Serious complications (myocardial infarction, sustained ventricular arrhythmia, and death) occur in one out of 10,000 patients.[10,11]

Methodology of Stress Electrocardiography

It is best to perform stress electrocardiography in the morning or before noon. The optimum room temperature

Table 2: Clinical pretest probabilities in patients with stable chest pain symptoms—male population[16]

Age	*Typical angina*	*Atypical angina*	*Nonanginal pain*
30–39	59%	29%	18%
40–49	69%	38%	25%
50–59	77%	49%	34%
60–69	84%	59%	44%
70–79	89%	69%	54%
>80	93%	78%	65%

Table 3: Clinical pretest probabilities in patients with stable chest pain symptoms—female population[16]

Age	*Typical angina*	*Atypical angina*	*Nonanginal pain*
30–39	28%	10%	5%
40–49	37%	14%	8%
50–59	47%	20%	12%
60–69	58%	28%	17%
70–79	68%	37%	24%
>80	76%	47%	32%

Table 4: Indications for stress electrocardiography[1]

Symptoms that may be associated with myocardial ischemia
Chest pain in patients for which acute coronary syndrome has not been verified
Recent acute coronary syndrome that is treated without coronary angiography or involves incomplete revascularization
Already existing CAD with worsening symptoms
Previous coronary revascularization (patients 5 years or longer after coronary artery bypass grafting or 2 years or less after percutaneous coronary intervention)
Valvular heart disease (for the purpose of evaluating the need for surgery)
Previous arrhythmia
Newly diagnosed heart failure or cardiomyopathy

should be between 18° and 22°, while air humidity should be >80%. The test room should be equipped with a defibrillator, bag valve (ambu) mask, tracheobronchial intubation kit and intravenous infusion set, and first aid and resuscitation medications.[15]

The electrodes have to be placed on the chest and connected to an ECG machine, which is usually connected to a computer that monitors the electrical activity of the heart. Before starting the test, the physician has to interpret the ECG at rest, record the heart rate, and measure arterial blood pressure (Fig. 1).

Table 5: Contraindications for stress electrocardiography[1]

Absolute
Acute myocardial infarction within 2–3 days
Unstable angina pectoris (refractory to therapy)
Cardiac arrhythmias, with clear symptoms or effects on the hemodynamic system
Symptomatic severe aortic stenosis
Symptomatic heart failure
Acute pulmonary thromboembolism
Severe pulmonary hypertension
Acute myocarditis or pericarditis, or endocarditis
Acute aortic dissection
Relative
Left main stenosis
High-grade atrioventricular block
Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy and other forms of outflow tract obstruction
Electrolyte imbalance
Severe hypertension (systolic blood pressure >200 mm Hg, diastolic blood pressure >110 mm Hg, or both)
Extreme obesity
Physical/mental impairment

The examiner is required to ask the patient about the possible use of pharmacological agents [β-blockers, calcium channel blockers, digoxin, and antiarrhythmic medications (it is recommended not to take them at least the day before the test)]. Older literature states that digoxin should be discontinued up to 3 weeks before the test in order to eliminate the effect of digitalis.[15] Nitroglycerin should not be taken 1 hour before the test. Patients should be instructed not to eat, drink, or smoke for at least 3 hours before the examination, as this can affect maximum exercise capacity. The night before the test, the patient should sleep well and be rested. Intense physical activity during the previous day due to muscle inflammation or residual hypertonia may result in decreased exercise tolerance. It is also useful to determine angina severity according to the Canadian Cardiovascular Society (Table 6).[16]

It is very important that the patient on the test is calm, as feelings of fear or anxiety can lead to emotionally conditioned tachycardia. Furthermore, drinking tea or coffee before the

Table 6: Classification of angina severity according to the Canadian Cardiovascular Society[16]

Class I	Daily activities do not create chest pain, angina occurs during prolonged physical activity.
Class II	Slight limitation of daily activities, Angina after walking over 200 m or stairs higher than the first floor.
Class III	Chest pain is present during daily physical activities, angina after walking up to 200 m or stairs to the first floor.
Class IV	Impossibility to perform even the smallest activities without chest pain, chest pain also occurs at rest.

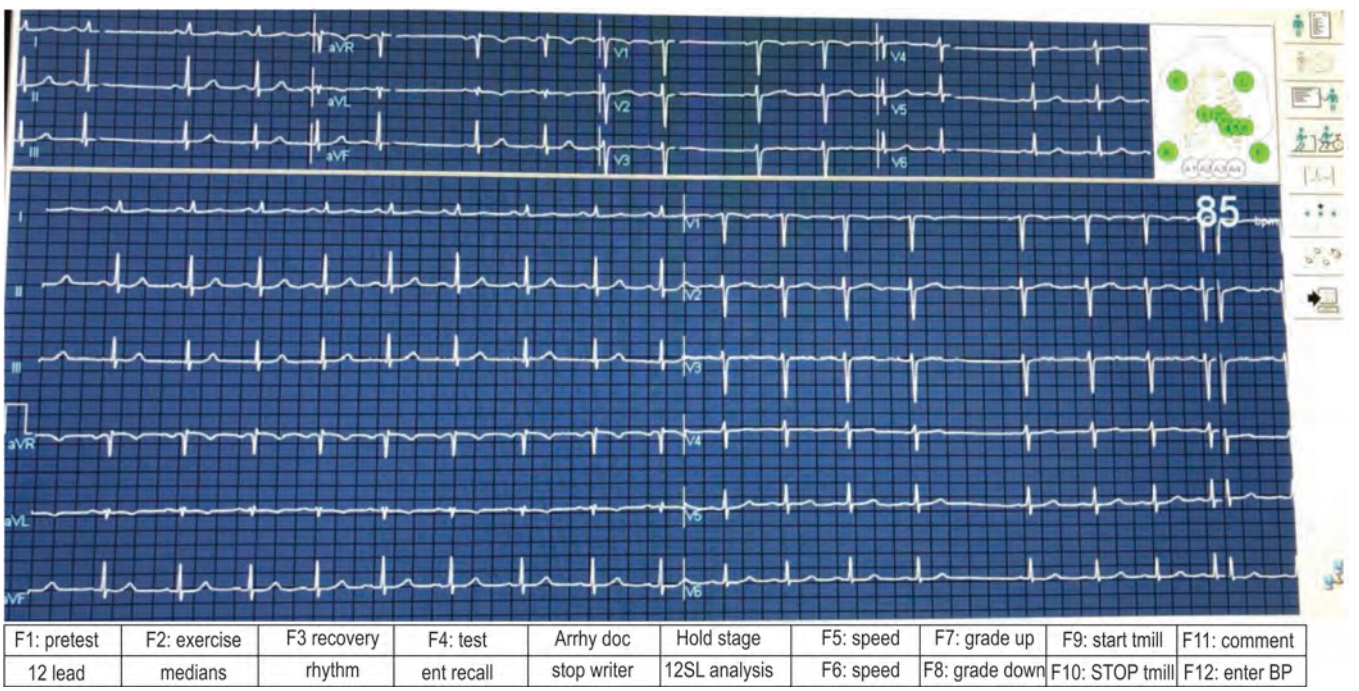

Fig. 1: ECG at rest, picture on the monitor

test can have a direct negative hyperexcitability effect on the heart. The patient should bring comfortable exercise clothing and walking shoes to the testing facility. Also, the examiner must present to patients any complications that may arise during testing. Auscultation of the heart before the test is recommended. It is necessary to calculate the maximum predicted heart rate (MPHR), taking into account the patient's height and weight. Angina or significant ST depression (>2 mm) before completing stage II according to Bruce protocol, and ST depressions that persist for >5 minutes into recovery, suggest severe ischemia and high-risk for coronary events.[15] Tests are considered positive for ischemia if there is a 2 mm or more rapidly upsloping ST depression (when the slope is >1 mV/second) and 1.5 mm or more slowly upsloping ST depression (when the slope is <1 mV/second), or a 1 mm or more horizontal or downsloping ST depression.[12–15] During the test, both the objective and the subjective status of the patient, are monitored.[15] After the load phase, the recovery phase requires ECG monitoring, and data on heart rate and blood pressure are recorded.

The formation of the right bundle branch block (RBBB) or left bundle branch block (LBBB) during exercise is not a specific sign, but if it is accompanied by chest pain, it indicates ischemia. The use of nitro preparation due to chest pain in the recovery phase may mask the signs of myocardial ischemia.[15] Subjective reasons for discontinuation of the stress test include a feeling of fatigue (general or local in the form of leg pain), shortness of breath (usually occurs in patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and cardiovascular patients), dizziness and fainting, headache (most often in hypertensive reactions), palpitations, chest pain, and lack of motivation.[15]

Discussion

Indications for Discontinuation of the Test

The presence of LBBB, left ventricular hypertrophy, digoxin use, and RBBB marked ST abnormalities at baseline with ST depression >1 mm in at least two leads, paced ventricular rhythm and preexcitation syndrome (Wolff-Parkinson-White). They may interfere with the interpretation of the test. Indications for discontinuation of the test are shown in Table 7.

The test is considered inadequate if 85% of the MPHR is not reached. Initially, if there is LBBB, RBBB, paced rhythm, left anterior fascicular block (sensitivity of stress electrocardiography is below 39% in patients with left anterior fascicular block, exercise-induced can be a sign of severe myocardial ischemia, hypertrophy of left ventricle with repolarization changes, or digoxin therapy; therefore, the test is considered not to be adequate to evaluate ischemic heart disease).[15–20]

Also, the existence of mitral or aortic valve dysfunction or mitral valve prolapse, pulmonary hypertension, pericardial constriction, hypokalemia, glucose ingestion prior to the test, and treatment with endogenous estrogen (it has a digoxin-like effect) interfere with test interpretation.[15–18]

Stress Electrocardiography in the Pediatric Population

The first indication for pediatric stress electrocardiography is the evaluation of congenital heart defects (CHDs) (Table 8).

Patients with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy may be tested to assess the risk of sudden cardiac death.[21] A hypertensive or hypotensive response may be a sign of hemodynamic instability.[21]

After Kawasaki disease, especially if the patient had a coronary aneurysm, stress electrocardiography should be used during the examination.[21] Stress electrocardiography can be used for the detection of congenital long QT syndrome and Brugada syndrome.[21] It also presents a test to confirm catecholaminergic polymorphic ventricular tachycardia.[21] Exercise-provoked arrhythmias may develop in arrhythmogenic right ventricular dysplasia (typical is the occurrence of monomorphic ventricular tachycardia with an LBBB pattern).[21] Stress electrocardiography may distinguish resting bradycardia and chronotropic response from sinus node dysfunction.[21] Also, indications for the use

Table 7: Indications for discontinuation of the test[1,14,15]

Hypotension with systolic blood pressure drop >20 mm Hg (high-risk criteria) or systolic blood pressure drop >10 mm Hg.
Malignant disorders of rhythm, ventricular or supraventricular origin.
Severe hypertension, systolic blood pressure >250 mm Hg or diastolic blood pressure >120 mm Hg.
ST elevation (>1 mm in leads without Q waves).
Angina with ST segment changes.
ST depression >2 mm horizontal or down sloping.
Pallor or cyanosis as signs of hypoperfusion.
The maximum predicted frequency is reached.
>2 mm ST depression in multiple leads, ST elevation or change of ST segment or T wave in the recovery phase.

Table 8: Indications for pediatric stress electrocardiography[21–25]

Closed atrial or ventricular septal defect with persisting pulmonary hypertension.
Myocardial dysfunction, symptomatic tachyarrhythmias, or significant heart block.
Moderate aortic stenosis; untreated mild coarctation of the aorta or repaired aortic coarctation, even with good results.
Atrial or arterial switch operation for transposition of the great arteries.
Congenitally corrected transposition of the great arteries.
Repaired tetralogy of fallot and other repaired cyanotic CHD, including Fontan and total cavopulmonary connections.
Ebstein anomaly.
Repaired congenital coronary artery anomalies.

are detection of myocardial ischemia, assessment of ability to work, trying to find contraindications for sports activities, evaluation of drug treatment results and prognosis, chest pain, and assistance in evaluation of hypertension and transient loss of consciousness.[21,25]

Conclusion

Although the increasing availability of radionuclide myocardial perfusion imaging (single-photon emission computed tomography or positron emission tomography), multislice scanner coronary angiography, stress echocardiography, hybrid imaging, and invasive coronarography, stress electrocardiography still has its place in clinical practice. It is imperative to correlate findings of stress electrocardiography with clinical symptoms, comorbidities, positive family history, and life habits, as well as pharmacological therapy of the patient.

Clinical Significance

Stress electrocardiography should be part of the daily work of cardiologists.

Author's Contribution

Each author made substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work and to the acquisition, analysis, and interpretation of data for the work. Each author had a role in drafting the work and revising it critically for important intellectual content. Each author gave the final approval of the version to be published, and they agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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From The Edge of the World

Branko Franceschi

Science, Art and Religion (2022): 10.5005/jp-journals-11005-0020

Name of Artist: Zlatan Vehabović
Curated by Branko Franceschi
Venue: Art Pavillion, Zagreb, Croatia

National Museum of Modern Art, Zagreb, Croatia
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If there were such a thing as a hodograph according to which it was possible to plan a successful artistic career in Croatia, then the case of the painter Zlatan Vehabović could serve as a perfect template. A decade after his degree at the Zagreb Academy of Fine Arts, in which he is today an assistant lecturer in the Painting Department, his career curriculum consists of all the necessary stops of solo and collective exhibitions, cumulatively supplemented with awards, all in a gradual development up to his individual exhibition in the Art Pavilion, one of the peaks in the career of any visual artist in the Croatian cultural setting. Since this still young artist enjoys the unanimous support of both the professionals and the general public and is highly rated on the rather mysterious "now you see it, now you don't" Croatian art market, as well as on the more concrete international market, it seems well founded to say that Zlatan Vehabović is a representative artist of the generation that came to maturity in posttransition Croatia. Now that the phrase has been written, since this, a social context that we tend to link experientially with a whole spectrum of negative values, painful occurrences, and discouraging existential and sociological phenomena, practically the absolute pits, this kind of status sounds neither good nor laudable. What is it like to be the most successful young artist in this kind of social and political context? What is it going to sound like, trusting the idea of the immortality of the work of art from a distance of 100 or more years? What is it apart from great talent, knowledge, spiritual and mental openness, industry and dedicated work, professionalism, and decent manners that are concealed behind the success of the (for these times) uncommonly congenial, cultivated and, to use a current idiom generally cool personality of Zlatan Vehabović? How in this kind of society, from a complex constellation of existence, was such a positive, gentle, and mindful person formed? Putting aside the personal quality and family background, of which I have no knowledge anyway. Notwithstanding the social environment, the character and work of Zlatan Vehabović give hope that for us, there is still hope. I don't doubt that Vehabović literally shudders at this kind of observation, opining that a preface to an exhibition should be oriented to the work and not the persona of the artist. But the status of the artist being discussed, whose exhibition is being heralded, brings with it a degree of needful public appearance and puts him into the situation of becoming, even if unwillingly, part of the prism with which we constitute a picture of the time in which we live.

In consideration of the context of Croatian visual art in which Zlatan Vehabović operates, it is worth pointing out the global trends to which, in spite of the developing self-isolation, we have never been indifferent as a cultural milieu, not even today. Since Vehabović is by vocation a painter with that traditionally defined skill set and puts into practice his option for narrative figuration as a conceptual subject in the technique of oil or acrylic on canvas, he has fitted comprehensively into the global trend bringing this kind of conception of painting back into the focus of interest of the curatorial and art-critical professions, and accordingly, of gallery and museum program orientations. Of course, here we are referring to the previously dominant interest in media art and derivates of the painting of high modernism, that is, the postmodernist return to the picture. Various theoretical positions proclaiming the so-called death of painting, which start off from the premise that painting is exhausted as an artistic discipline and medium for the representation of reality, have ignored elementary facts that will turn out to be crucial for the endorsement of the irreplaceable status of the picture in the area of culture in general. The public has never ceased being interested in painting; the best testimony to this is the results of the art market, in which the prices of the works of painting stars are smashing record after record. It is also incontestable that painting has, from the very beginning of civilization, been the most effective and most intimate manner of visual expression and, what is more, independent of any preconditioned exhibition space that only an institutional system of the presentation

can provide. Most important, none of the theorists of the death of painting have ever asked artists for their opinion. Artists, however, have never in history had a wider selection of opportunities for expression. This relates not only to the available media and technology but also to the conceptual points of departure for pondering on and finding out their own versions of the presentation of the targeted contents that have been bestowed on them by the legacy of the iconoclastic avant-garde movements. In fact, it is the coupling of these factors—with the weariness and saturation that media art, and any art founded on technology, has reached primarily because of its dependence on gallery conditions of presentation, and abstract and postconceptual art because of the attendant hermeticism that requires the curator's explanations—that has resulted in need of the artists to address figurative narrative painting as a self-intelligible form of expression. What uncritical encomiasts who see today's narrative figuration as a kind of backward-looking tribute to the painting metier forget is the fact that the new generations of practitioners of artistic figuration in the creation of their visual vocabulary are more inspired by the documentary potential of media art and visual culture that the mass media have generated than by the rich history of painting. A generation that was to be trained in the middle of the first decades of this millennium, mainly at the Zagreb Academy of Fine Arts, with respect to the conception of and the methods of working out their visual aspirations to a great extent modeled itself on European painting stars like Luc Tuymans, Peter Doig, and Daniel Richter. With all due respect for their creative differences, all these artists, in the most important segment of figurative narrative painting, which is the visual narrative itself, draw on images that, in both the analog and the digital aspects of their activity, are mediated and archived by the global media machinery. These visual contents, with or without accompanying narration, have become the raw material handled by the creative personality of the artist. Employing the available arsenal of expressive possibilities, they fix them into the new reality of the painted composition, one that has a much more powerful iconic charge than that emanated by the originals. Although the escalation of charge is most obvious in painting cycles dedicated to concrete political references, the impressions that this painting has formulated represent current reality in dystopian visions, with an inner, often restrained drama, with feelings of unease, melancholy, and loss. Although among Croatian artists, there has always been a certain interest in the painting of figuration, in the second half of the last decade, a generationally uncommonly powerful production appeared one that kept up excellently with the trends on the international scene. This wave of figurative painters did not receive its confirmation of being an artistic phenomenon of cultural importance until 2013, and then thanks to the exhibition project of Feđa Gavrilović, an art historian close to them in terms of generation. The curatorially dubiously conceived exhibition, with its title New Croatian Realism,[1] and Gavrilović's advocating of the return to painting, perfectly worked out in marketing terms and almost ludic in intention, fitted on the one hand into the trend that in 2011, by insistence on the craft determination, was inaugurated by the Croatian Association of Visual Artists project Painting Biennial and on the other hand, alas, in the overall tide of regressive social trends that became a characteristic of the social quotidian.

Although artists are apt to disapprove when their work, always subjective, is subsumed into wider social phenomena or else is used to illustrate them, this is naturally unavoidable within the evaluation of individual oeuvres and wider general tendencies. At Gavrilović's exhibition, in reports in the media, Vehabović figured as the most known among the painters of his generation. His painting Leviathan, done in the year of the exhibition, with its monumental composition and impeccable execution combining universal theme and exotic motif with semantic complexity and a powerful feeling of lethargy, vividly confirmed this status. Vehabović had, until then, particularly in works that joined textual narration with painted composition, previously attracted the attention and recognition of critics who were not necessarily positively inclined to figuration. This interest was helped by his currently inactive blog weakersoldier.blogspot.com, which presented him as a painter with literary potential, a person who had something to say, and who was able to mediate traditional visual art and narration with the multimedia modes of communication of the digital era. Still more intriguing to critics and curators was his interest in subjects and motifs that went beyond local experiences and the themes of his generation, for in content, his repertoire is paradoxically escapist, with respect to the local social content, and yet critical and activist with respect to global discourse. The cycles seem to have been inspired by situations at the edges of the world, areas in which the destructive consequences of human interference in the natural equilibrium were already apparent. The cycles Cursed Crew of 2014 and Foundations in Mud, 2015, do not present local life experiences. These are fictional narratives that are developed through a series of motifs from distant climes that are known to us thanks to the global media structure. The compositions are simple, rationally focused on the central motif, and painted drily, with an even, somber tone and subtle colorist transitions. Vehabović's total control of the medium contributes to the same suppressed drama that the cycles are shot through with, and with them, he achieved in craft and narrative terms that balance of pleasure of eye and displeasure of spirit that had elevated his European exemplars and colleagues among the artistic stars. This painting then functioned equally well in the Lauba Gallery and in the Museum of Contemporary Art, and in New York, where, working with the Marc Strauss Gallery, Vehabović regularly exhibits.

Vehabović's imagination, which confronts us with exotic locations, emanates a feeling of natural and immense spaces, the dimensions and forces of which are far superior to man

and his constructions. This feeling makes him close to the landscape painting of the period of Romanticism more than to the modern version of the landscape. Still, while the Romantics showed nature as unknown, lush, exciting, and inexhaustible, in the expectation that it would be conquered by the predestined call of the human urge to subdue and exploit, Vehabović two centuries later faces us with the end of the process. The wilderness has been trampled down, if not absolutely defeated. The most distant stations of human dreams of the conquest of the unknown have already been abandoned, and from the distant points of the planet, the irrevocable answer of nature has set off, threatening the very heart of the anthropocentric world, the survival of the human species whose disappearance will drag narcissistically with it into the abyss of time the larger part of the animal and plant world. Ultimately nature is going to come back in triumph in some new form, indifferent to the conviction of the human species that it is its master and not just a maladjusted offshoot condemned at the outset to disaster. If we agree that this is the current Vehabović narrative groundwork and if we are aware of its topicality in the pre-apocalyptic reality of the expectation that nature will strike back, one has to point out that his compositions do not represent fantastic but real situations that, thanks to the global media network have become part of the collective awareness, and that, in consequence of apparent climatic changes, are rapidly approaching our physical world.

The previous Vehabović cycles were created on the basis of the interpretation of other people's experiences transmitted into text and photographs. The exhibition Dark White Earth, conceived for the Zagreb Art Pavilion, was created pursuant to personal experience and photographic material that he took himself, thanks to his artistic residence in The Arctic Circle, the American-Dutch NGO, with its seat in Brooklyn. Artistic residences have become, in the last few decades, a mass movement that enables artists to have grant-assisted experience and exchange of ideas with colleagues from all parts of the world in a more or less organized setting, formed according to the capacities and visions of the founders. The Arctic Circle, as its very name says, enables a group of artists, the experience a controlled adventure cruising in the Arctic Circle as potential but not obligatory inspiration for artistic work. The utmost end of the journey is the Svalbard islands, which because of their peripheral geographical position, are, as to the members of the expedition, unfamiliar to us, would become an ideal subject for Vehabović's dystopian vision of the world. In the Svalbard archipelago they are dominated by the austere natural surroundings, the equally obvious traces of global warming and failed and current human efforts to create conditions for existence, the regulation of complex political and economic interests directed at the Arctic area, and the establishment of some kind of cohabitation with nature. Vehabović's compositions thus consistently oppose the human figure or its objects and constructions with the magnificent environment that, in the objective absence of habitual natural beauty, enchants with the savagery of the rock, the bare ground, the ice, the empty sky, and the sea. Vehabović used his own visual documentation to develop in the space of the Art Pavilion a kind of environmental narration that, as compared to the cycles produced earlier, conceived as groups of individual paintings similar in theme, technique, and dimensions, shows his ambition to create a complex spatially specific exhibition project. Having well estimated the spatial aspects of the pavilion, and particularly the feature that from the point of entry into its center, practically the whole of the exhibition can be taken in, Vehabović determined the development of a cycle and narration through a dynamic interrelation of pictures. The formats of the pictures are uneven in range, from monumental to relatively small dimensions in line with the inherent hierarchy of motifs, and their placement on the wall is defined in advance in precisely determined positions and heights, giving different angles of vision. For the production of this carefully prepared conception, Vehabović made a model that, on a reduced scale, simulated every segment of the exhibition. This method of preparation of an exhibition that, even before the actual process of the painting, determined the content and dimensions of every picture, its order, and position in the space, shows not only the rationality of the approach but also Vehabović's ambition to communicate the contents of the exhibition to the public in as an attractive and functional a manner as possible. Successful 21st-century painting is not reducible to the studio, to the easel, brush, and palette. Nor can it be brought down a firm conceptual framework that will define its contents and formal aspects. Equal importance is assigned to the external production elements, and in this exhibition, Vehabović has placed emphasis on a sophisticated attitude to the spectacular space that has been confided to him for the exhibition. Thus, Vehabović has applied the kind of procedure to a painting exhibition that we have become primarily accustomed to when it is a matter of a multimedia exhibition and, in general, the program of environmental set-ups that Radovan Vuković featured during his term of office in the Art Pavilion at the same time as a project that under the title of Monumenta was being organized in Paris in line with the production conditions and the majestic architecture of the Grand Palais.

With respect to the painterly language, Dark White Earth brings into Vehabović's regularly high-quality painting paradigm a formal new departure. It seems that the artist is himself fatigued with the one-way path of figurative narration, and in line with the dystopian character of motifs and theme and the freedom of disposition of visual templates, he decided on a procedure of collaging that puts into the construction of a realistic figurative composition an unexpected turn that is there to reinforce the semantic level of the work and the feeling of existential threat. The painted collage brings in dynamics and heterogeneity that excitingly develop the space of the painting, unlike the proverbial visual and mental monotonality of mimetic art. The lesson

Fig. 1: Baldwin & Crouch, 2017. oil on canvas 183 x 290 cm sign. on the back: ZLATAN VEHABOVIĆ BALDWIN & CROUCH TAMNO BIJELA ZEMLJA 2017

Fig. 2: Galena Sarkofagen, 2017. oil on canvas 155 x 270 cm sign. on the back: ZLATAN VEHABOVIĆ GALENA SARKOFAGEN TAMNO BIJELA ZEMLJA DARK WHITE EARTH

of the collage that we clearly have to recall every 100 years again is that painting, however much it might be realistic, is, in essence, a mental construct, totally abstract, and that the artist is a thinking subject who constructs his own vision of reality, conditioned by the talent to recognize for us, and faster than us, reality. Collaging visual originals has enabled Vehabović to take a turn toward surreal situations in which, for example, the motif of the landscape is materialized in the architecture of the colonizers of this unconquerable world, abandoned for decades, that thus at a symbolic level, brings back its dominance at a cost.

Dark White Earth presents us with Zlatan Vehabović as a mature artist who has completely mastered not only his selected discipline but all the conceptual, productive, logistical, and communicational aspects of artistic creativity

Fig. 3: The Last Great Cadmium Red, 2018 oil on canvas 140 x 210 cm sign. on the back: ZLATAN VEHABOVIĆ POSLJEDNJA VELIKA KADIMIJ CRVENA - TAMNO BIJELA ZEMLJA 2018

Fig. 4: Lene, 2018. oil on canvas 280 x 200 cm sign. on the back: ZLATAN VEHABOVIĆ LENE - TAMNO BIJELA ZEMLJA 2018

that regulate and position an artist's status in the current structure of the cultural context. Croatia has thus gained one more artist with whom we can compare ourselves with the great cultural powers. Visual art, thanks to them, is still one of our few successful export products. Hence this kind of exhibition, at the moment when the Law on Artistic Creativity is being drafted, should serve as one more incentive that in the synergy of all the stakeholders, the Ministry of Culture, artists, artistic associations, and public cultural institutions, in spite of the absence of private galleries and art managers, we can work on better conditions for visual creativity (Figs 1 to 4).

One Fly and Two Strokes

Julijana Matanović

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One Fly and Two Strokes[a]

My late mother liked telling stories. Even now, as I am approaching middle age myself, I can remember how every evening, only moments after I had bid her goodnight, she would carefully sit down on the edge of my bed and start to turn the departing day into sentences. She began doing this from the moment my father left us. She was 43 at that time, and I had just turned 13. I was too young to understand the real reasons behind my mother's need to approach the depth of each night with a story.

Now, I see it much more clearly. Late in the evening, each daily occurrence had to be given its because. I didn't enter the county math contest because I would maybe, get into a road accident on the way to the city where the state contest was to be held; true, my final grade of 4[b] in Croatian would prevent me from enrolling in the high school I aimed at, but in the other one, I would surely meet the girl who would make me happy. In the beginning, I used to smile at her causal constructs; I would interrupt her and pretend that I was tired and sleepy. But she was persistent. For a year, 2, and 5. Up until I was of age. Her sentences were mild. And she never skipped our ritual. When she had a hard day, she would omit elaborate stories. Instead, she would mention folk wisdom or a saying. She wanted us to discuss it briefly. It was, I guess, her way of preparing me for what is called life. When I asked her about the source of all those bits of wisdom, she had no answer. "Don't know, I remember, hear things, see things," she would murmur. I believed her.

I have a clear memory of one night when she, entering my room, noticed a fly sitting on the curtain. It landed there after circling around my nose for some 15 minutes. My mother stepped close to the window, spread the palm of her right hand, turned it sideways, and touched the fabric. Her palm started gliding toward the fly. It was as sleepy as me. The action was successful. The fly was trapped. Mother opened the door to the balcony, stuck out her arm, and set the captive free. She had freed me from the unpleasant buzzing, at the same time getting an incentive for her narration. "two flies at a stroke" was the introduction to the story to conclude that day.

"Two flies at a stroke" was the sentence that first came to my mind when the alarm rang the following morning, and I decided to pretend to have a sore throat. "I'll stay home, watch the Oscars ceremony rerun on TV, and skip the math test." I thought, one stroke, two wins.

Mom and I moved out of our apartment in the city center 2 weeks after my father decided to marry his pregnant mistress, a trainee lawyer at his law firm. It was the end of November. Some 10 years younger than my mother, the long-legged, red-haired lawyer strolled into our apartment, out of which, only 5 hours before, my mother and I had removed our clothes and books. Father had bought us a one-room apartment in Trešnjevka, close to the football ground. I had to use the tram to get to school. I did not want anything to do with my father ever again. I asked my mother to change my family name to her maiden name. I missed my room, my view of the cathedral, and my father's plans for our future. The emptiness was relieved by my mother's stories. They were warm and gentle but still could not strengthen my weakening concentration. Swans[c] began to populate my page in the class grade book, where, besides my father's crossed-out name, my new name stood written.

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[a] In Croatian, "two flies at a stroke" is a folk saying that corresponds to the one in English about killing two birds with one stone.

[b] In the Croatian grading system, 5 is the highest and 1 is the lowest (fail) grade.

[c] Grade 2, shaped like a swan, is the lowest passing grade.

My teachers were surprised. The young physics teacher showed the most surprise. He could not understand how a boy who had shown great interest in areas, weights, and masses at the beginning of the seventh grade could not being examined in front of the class, calculate the square footage of the apartment drawn on the board. The apartment had three rooms, two balconies, an irregularly-shaped dining room, a bathroom, and several narrow halls, and it was identical to the one out of which I had recently had to move. The teacher could not have known about any of that. I stood before him, sweating, moving my body through the door outlined in chalk, through the passage to my room, opening my window, and listening to the church bells at noon. I was only returned to reality as I was asked to try the calculation of a more modest footage. The teacher outlined a one-room apartment. The same thing happened. Instead of the bells, I heard the fans' cries and the signal to resume the match. "That's a fail; I'm sorry," said the teacher.

I improved my grade just before the end of the school year. It was not the same teacher. The one who had, unknowingly, deepened the wound in my biography by his drawings left our school a month after he had put the failing grade, the number one, which pierced its box both north and south, on my page in the class grade book. I didn't care where he had gone. I just wished he could somehow know that the new teacher had given me a final grade of five. Because the outline of the new apartment he had drawn on the board did not have any details, which reminded me of the one my mother and I had had to leave. The following year I won the school physics contest. By then, I had already decided what I would study at university. Said, done. After graduating from high school, I found myself enrolled in the university, with physics as a major.

I only ever saw my father in the media. He appeared in the company of dodgy characters, always in the first minutes of the daily news. He defended thieves and frauds, criminals and rapists, both the guilty and the innocent. Always successful and with a smile. My mother, after her putting me to sleep came to an end, replaced her storytelling with silence. She only talked if I asked her advice. And I did that often. Because I have to admit, I started to miss her stories. I didn't know at that time that illness had moved into my mother's body and that it was the illness that was stealing her words.

One evening, after I had started the course on teaching methodology in physics, I asked her if I should tell my professor that I was the student whom he failed at the beginning of his teaching career because he was not able to calculate the square footage of neither the large nor the small apartment. "Don't do it as yet; you'll have your chance. Silence means patience and safety," she replied.

I did as she told me. I waited.

In the exam, after he entered a 5 into my grade records, he told me that in his first workplace, at an elementary school–while he was waiting for an assistant position at the university, there was a boy in his class, exceptionally talented in physics, who bore the same name as me and even looked like me. He also said that he was sorry he didn't know where that boy was now. He remembered he had failed the boy, and he still regretted it. Only after leaving the school, he learned that the boy had been going through a hard period.

He talked and talked. Faster and faster. I stopped listening. Is it the right moment? I kept thinking. I heard my mother say safety lies in silence.

And I did not tell him that the boy was sitting before him.

I did as she told me. I waited.

"There is a time for everything," my mother said when I announced that it was me they had chosen to deliver the valedictory speech at graduation. She was lying in her hospital room in the Oncology Department. Her doctor did not mention months anymore. Instead, he talked about days. "I insist, no, I'm ordering it, the Dean said," I explained to my mother.

"And it's him, your first physics teacher," she was quick to see.

I knew that she and I were thinking the same. Her talking me into being patient had proven justified.

"I'll mention the square footage in my speech," I told her.

"I know," she answered.

"Together with the reasons why I wasn't able to do the calculation," I went on.

"I know," she repeated.

"But…" I tried.

"I know," she agreed.

"What do you know?" I asked.

"You want to invite your father," she said.

"How did you know?" I asked.

"For the story to make sense," she replied.

"Is that ok with you?" I pleaded.

"It is." She was not acting.

It was she who broke the uncomfortable silence. "I won't be there anyway," she said calmly. Consoling me. And then, at the same moment, we both said: "two flies at a stroke." And laughed. Mother pointed her fingers at the window. A whole family of flies was sitting in the sun there. "Just don't let them buzz; I'm sleepy."

The following day, on hearing the doctor's voice, the first thing I felt was anger at the flies. If they had buzzed, maybe they would have woken my mother from her sleep.

The valediction was greeted with a big applause. Starting with my personal story, I took up the language of a preacher, not expected of a scientist, and mentioned defiance, perseverance, and obstacles on the way to one's final goal. Just like her, who had taught me to tell stories and to listen, I found causal relationships in everything. At one point, my diploma fell from the Dean's hands. It was easy to calculate the speed of the fall. A second later, a man from the audience started to cry loudly. He did not take notice of all the women who turned their eyes to him in surprise. To them, he looked just like the respected and successful attorney who, only a month before, proved the innocence of one of the newly rich dodgy businessmen.

The camera had caught them smiling triumphantly in front of the entrance to a house whose footage, irrespective of one's grade in physics, would be hard to calculate.

(Children at a Distance, Zagreb, 2021)

The Writer's Brilliance

On the first Monday in June, at about 10 o'clock in the morning, without knocking, Vanja Šurmin entered the Personnel Department of the university she had been employed for the past 19 years, 4 months, and 3 days. In her employment records, pleasant moments tinged with the support of the older professors alternated with long months seasoned with challenges from colleagues of the same generation. A special section was devoted to the benevolent conversations in which she was forced to defend a very personal approach to literary history, considered unusual by the majority. Nevertheless, from the perspective of an ordinary observer of middle-class biographies, the 40-year-old professor of comparative literature, who confessed to the students in her seminars that she had serious difficulties with determining the main character of a novel, had every reason to be satisfied. She was editor of the most important literary theory series in the country, headed juries for renowned literary prizes, and gave guest lectures at European universities. She was well aware that year after year, her coworkers' envy of her blameless career was growing and that they would snigger and scoff at the long line of students, which would, starting at the door of her study every 1st workday of the week, be winding along the dimly lit passage on the ground floor. She addressed her students by their first names, told them about her awkwardness in the company of writers, and selected texts and literary periods which best corresponded to the comprehension of love by the young. In short, she knew how to point to the right title at the exact moment when it was needed to perform its therapeutic function on the targeted patient. She spent hours trying to convince us that no situation in life could be so wretched as to make it impossible for us if we could just turn it into a narrative to emerge as winners. At the student café, she used to have up to 100 coffees in a month, trying to reassure the 20-year-old girls by telling them that after the first unsuccessful romance, there would come another first one and that the following relationships would again be the first ones until the real one happened. And that one would again be the first. She illustrated her thoughts with snippets from her own biography. She was not afraid of disclosures. She would repeatedly stress that honesty was the only true sanctuary for both writer and the passionate reader. She was surprised at critics who were unable to understand this. She studied her ancestors' family tree and searched for the reasons for the name she bore. She talked about everything that was happening to her, about what she feared and what she wished for. We were convinced that Varja had hoped that one day there would be an ornate coach waiting at the university entrance for her, too, and sitting inside would be the writer whose contemporary stories evoked the prose of the early last century. We wished for the day when she would be presented with a novel whose happy ending would involve a woman just like her. Honestly, we were rooting for her.

Today, looking at Varjas photo, printed on the last but one page of the largest European book fair catalog, it is clear to me that I never have before or after meeting a person who saw interconnections in everything, who remembered dates in a wondrous way, who would unashamedly stop before a city façade imagining the faces of the inhabitants hidden behind the walls. I try to have my coffee the way she usually did. A short one, espresso. Before I bring it to my lips, I gaze into the middle of the cup. I take a sip, check the taste, wait for a few seconds, and then finish the coffee. Looking into Varja's eyes, I can see why she reminded us of a little girl writing a letter to Santa at the end of October, who, suddenly overcome by fear for Santa's health and the health of his reindeers, forgets to mention her wishes. I would like to see her again and visit the hall where the most media-celebrated title of the Frankfurt fair is to be promoted. I fear that after 2 and a half years, she will not recognize me.

On her less good days, which she informed us about in the first sentences of her lectures, she used to say that she felt like an ailing person pouring our energy into her body and rejuvenating her exhausted cells. We felt that someone like her must also be writing something that would not find its place on the pages of scientific journals. Around 6 months before she entered the Personnel Department, and without any prior announcement, she brought the manuscript of her unfinished novel to our tutorial. "You are half my age; I'd like it if you could read this and give me your honest opinion. To see if there's any sense in finishing it," she said timidly.

"The other girls are also half her age," I thought. I was flattered that she had chosen me for the reading. That day, I flew through the city in boots stolen from the story by a beloved children's author.

It was a novel written from a man's perspective. Its subject was a disappointed writer who travels around the world. Staying in the most famous historical places, he seduces waitresses, local nightclub singers, hairdressers' assistants, shop assistants selling sweets, florists who make grave flower arrangements, seamstresses from modest boutiques, and early-morning suburban-line tram drivers. None of the stories, none of the women get closure. As soon as he promises to see them again, he falls for another. Everything that happens to him, he records in his diary. He goes through life as a collector of narrative material. And those he holds in his embrace, listening to their stories, cannot see that above their heads, texts are being created that they will never have the chance to read. His wanderings and thefts from the lives of others only come to an end when he meets a female writer and truly falls in love, not noticing, in his pubescent fascination, that a reversal of roles has occurred. When she suddenly, taking her notes with her, moves to another city and changes her phone number, the writer burns his diary.

Varja's thesis about the need for a story to be earned was clearly recognizable in the manuscript. Her analysis of literary texts was based on it. The imperative "a story has to be earned!" was the most recurring sentence in all her lectures. But Varja was convinced that her theory was not loud enough and that despite her repeating it over and over again, it did not succeed in reaching her colleagues.

I liked the manuscript, which covered 97 pages. However, I was not sure that I had managed, reading it, to free the sentences of the color of Varja's voice. The following Monday, she was not ready to talk about her unfinished novel. "We'll do it next time; thank you for finishing it so fast," she said and showed me a novel that I should read. "The writer is coming to Zagreb after 15 years to promote his new book," she added. "At the Magis bookstore, in the main square, on Friday evening; if you have nothing more interesting planned, I'd be glad to see you there. I'll tell the others, too."

Her following lecture, on Thursday afternoon, was devoted to the subject of "literature, exile, involvement, success." The writer to whose new novel I had been alerted the day before was central to the lecture.

At the beginning of the most recent war, he had left his country, distanced himself from national politics, and presented his well-paid assessments on shared guilt to foreign journalists. "Did he also pack his two state literary prize medals and copies of his five novels published in the most popular literary series to take away in his suitcase? That question will be answered in the future by his biographers," Varja said and started on the female author who had chosen the same path in the early 90s. Parts of his interviews got published in our daily papers. And supplemented by editors' notes. His Musilesque novels were only rarely reviewed. Their final assessments were far more reserved than various analysis which openly insisted on the brilliance of his style and intriguing narrative techniques which defied the conventional manners of developing a story. "His characters dream up the end at the very beginning" was a recurring assessment in the reviews of his prose published by the most esteemed Berlin publisher.

The day of the writer's return to the city in which he had made his first steps and published his first stories was noted only by a local television station, founded with the capital obtained from the sale of a former communist committee headquarters. The audience at the promotion included the author's sister, two former neighbors escorted by their spouses, the leader of the main opposition party, and a few of us students led by Varja. Following the faltering introduction by a critic who was convinced that the audience was not acquainted with the author's writings and that the author had largely forgotten his mother tongue in the 10 or so years of his life "up there," Varja raised her arm and asked to speak. Stressing that she felt she had to add something to the young colleague's interpretation, it took her just a few minutes to single out the recurring themes in the author's narrative opus, describe the latest novel's structure, elucidates its rootedness in the middle-European tradition, and disclose the writer's poetic parents, while he was looking at her with growing admiration. The writer got up and kissed her hand. He did that even before; by voicing the last vowel of her ending word, she gave the audience a sense that her contribution to the improvement of the presentational atmosphere was about to be concluded. "There is no greater betrayal than the betrayal of literature," was the sentence she uttered as she approached us a few moments later. She was blushing; she seemed to be justifying herself for breaking the prescribed presentational protocol. Or was she reminded of a pupil who wanted to impress her strict teacher with her readiness and prove herself better than the others? Or was she just embarrassed before us for not repeating her invitation for the promised coffee at the nearby café?

We nodded to her in support, wished her a happy holiday, and went out into the main square. Night was falling, and the city was redolent with the scent of Advent. Under the high fir tree decorated with traditional Licitar hearts, something magical happened before our eyes. A copper coach appeared with Varja's name in place of the registration plate. In my hand, I was holding the novel with the author's dedication. In some places, the letters of my name, written in ink, were touching the lower surface of a female proper noun in the dative case, which was followed by an exclamation mark.

After reading the novel, which had two parallel storylines, one following the love stories of a middle-aged man, a respectable dentist, and his wife, and the other portraying a writer whose name would be found in all relevant encyclopedias and his mistress, I wondered which of the two women had deserved to be mentioned in the printed dedication. Numerous sentences reminded me of the thoughts Varja used to convey to us. I still believe that Varja met the author for the first time at that promotion. Anyway, if things were different, Varja would surely has told us.

And when 6 months later, a notice appeared on the door of her study announcing that after June 15th, Varja's exams would be taken over by a professor from another department, we felt her sudden departure to be a kind of betrayal. At the student café, her seminar students would share a farewell coffee with her and then let their favorite professor become a thing of the past. We will confess our anger to each other and show different levels of surprise. In the following 2 months, I will leaf through Varja's lectures every day, preventing myself from letting the fire have them; in the same way, the hero of her novel donated his diary to the flames. I will also feel the wish to burn the copy of her unfinished manuscript, which she had never wanted to talk about. I did not find out if she had finished it.

There was a rumor among the students that she was seriously ill and that she was getting treatment abroad; the department secretary just shook her head at our inquiries, and the head of the department did not show readiness to talk about his younger colleague. I kept vainly hoping that she would contact me; by picture postcard, text message,

or by e-mail. I wished she would choose me again. I felt she had boarded the coach that Advent night, but I feared what had become of the coach around midnight.

It was not before autumn that a yellow-hued weekly brought a picture of the national author celebrated in the German literary market. The image of the smiling man was enriched by the information about his romance with Varja Šurmin, who had abandoned her position at the oldest university for him and devoted herself to the editing of his Berlin novels. Maybe she has become a heroine earned of her story; I said to my colleagues as we had our first coffee at the beginning of the new semester. "She'll turn up as suddenly as she had left," added one of Varja's former student. But before that, I came to her.

Around 2 and a half years after the notice about Varja's departure, I traveled to Frankfurt to visit my sister. I wanted to go through the literature which would help me to produce my graduation paper on "Possibilities for an objective assessment of a literary work." I arrived just at the time of the fair.

About 10 minutes before the book presentation was scheduled to start, I entered the packed hall and sat down in the only free chair, the first one in the fourth row, next to the literary critic whose handsome face I used to see every week next to his column in a high-circulation weekly. Varja passed my seat and approached the presenters' table. Several moments later, the Magis author and his editor came in. I was puzzled by the editor's introductory address and his "short summary of the basic storylines." For a moment, it seemed to me that I couldn't understand the language which I used to speak with my father's mother anymore, that something had happened to me when I saw Varja and that I found myself back in our university's passages at the time when Varja would speak about the earning of stories. I listened to the content of the great novel titled "The Balkan Gate." A writer drifting through capital cities, making love to hairdressers, tram drivers, and cloakroom attendants, stealing from other lives to secure material for his text. The moment he meets a female author of the same persuasion, he becomes the victim. It all leads to the burning of his diary, but the diary continues to live in the female writer's prose. His characters, together with him, the one who established them, have joined the characters of "her" text. When the editor ended his account, I got up. Just to draw Varja's attention to myself. She looked at me and waved her hand. Then she took the critic's role. "The way this woman speaks," I heard a voice behind me. "As if she was speaking about her own life," the young photographer replied and pressed the button of his camera. And Varja, at the Frankfurt Fair, was lecturing her students. The author thanked her, kissed her hand the same way he had done on that evening in Zagreb, and said just one sentence: "I know this is a great novel."

The journalists approached him quickly, cameras clicked, and female admirers brought their books to be signed. On the third page of "The Balkan Gate" stood Varja's name in the dative case.

When I approached and flooded her with the words, "But you know that I have a copy of your manuscript. I can't understand you. Isn't it a betrayal," she was leaning against the wall. She hugged me. "My dear, you all have to forgive me. Do you think it was easy for me to do that? I thought that I, too, was entitled to a place in a fairytale coach; it is a betrayal of myself, I admit it, but you always have to look above; this is not a betrayal of literature, which is much more important to me, you know very well that nobody was listening to me when I was walking along our passage, infallibly knowing which text was drawn from life itself, and which was just a product of untalented, burdensome career ladder climbing," she said in a breath, without pausing.

"Then why didn't you publish the novel yourself rather than letting him have it?" I went on, disappointed, and turned toward the writer, who was still surrounded by critics and readers. "He was undergoing a crisis, and I was aware that my concept about earning would be sure to reach the public under his name rather than mine. If I had come out with this text, it would be considered just a mediocre text by a literary scholar who'd have done better not to publish it. This way, you must understand."

Of course, I understood. I also knew that it was she who had finished the novel. The transfer of characters fitted into her theory about the impossibility of determining the main characters. I told her about how we felt after she left, how we had a farewell coffee and promised to forget.

Acquaintances started to approach her. "She'd rather be with me," I thought and whispered: "Professor, I have to go." She handed me her card, a small piece of cardboard with something written in pencil. Varja's sentence, "I'm coming to Zagreb for Christmas," was uttered with a goodbye kiss in German.

The next day, while browsing through scientific articles on objective literary histories, I suddenly felt doubt. Had I really understood Varja's sentence? What did she say, "I'm coming" or "I'm returning"? I was only sure it would be for Christmas. Glass will be bursting in the piercing cold. The square will again be fragrant with the scent of Advent, and it will be there that the author of the thought that "No situation in life can be so wretched as to make it impossible for us if we can just turn it into a narrative, to emerge as winners" will appear in Cinderella's dress. And the Kaptol bells will be chiming at midnight.

(Book of women, men, cities, and goodbyes, Zagreb, 2009)

You Only Love Once

You won't find anything about my neighbor, Mrs C, in encyclopedia entries or history textbooks, not even in memorial volumes on amateur choirs or local folk-dance groups. In this day, her uneventful biography would interest neither psychotherapists nor writers of romances. For Mrs C faced the sad moments in her life with quiet acceptance and did not search for their roots in her childhood or determine traumatic

points caused by some actions of her immediate or long-ago ancestors. Those who used to talk about her while she was among them have already forgotten her. She died 8 years ago, taking with her the title of the oldest citizen of our small flatland town. Toward the end of her life, she was angered by whoever asked her, looking at her face unfurrowed by wrinkles, in which long-ago year she had been born and what the long-ago year of her first marriage had been. She considered the adjective long-ago, as she used to explain to me, simply rude.

"I won't regret leaving this earthly life," she said to me a few months before the news reached me about her death. She lived alone. The only real company she had were her memories. She used to air them before me with a passion that could be envied even by contemporary female writers celebrated beyond the borders of our lovely and small homeland. When the detested socialist brotherhood state was finally entered into the register of deaths, she joyfully said that she could finally die a peaceful death now. She could not forgive Yuga for the misery brought upon both of her husbands by the country's lawlessness: bloody feet earned on the Way of the Cross for the first one and a damp cell of the most severe political prison for the second one. The priest based his funeral address on the concepts of faithfulness and goodness, and the first to throw a lump of clay and red rose petals onto the coffin was my mother, the deceased's most loyal friend. Almost all the citizens wanted to witness Mrs C's departure. She whose beauty and the proud walk was admired by men 4, 5, and 6 decades ago was leaving them, she who elicited the jealousy of women her age for the way her only gray hairs appeared in a single streak, reminding their husbands of the brave Indira Gandhi. She used to cut sewing fabric and knit according to patterns of her own rather than taking them from magazines such as Wool, Practical Woman, or the German Burda. She was a regular theater-goer; she tended flower gardens and baked cakes from recipes of Budapest pastry shops.

She came to the town in the 50s of the last century. She had just turned 30. She used to walk in the park on the arm of her first husband. The tall, slightly stooped, a fair-haired man turned the heads of girls and their mothers. Mrs C was aware of all that and confessed to herself that she rather enjoyed being in the company of a man who attracted the attention of other women. She believed in his loyalty. She told me that in the voice of a lovestruck teenager, repeating the same story year by year. The second husband, whom she married only a few months after the fair-haired one left her for the embrace of his pregnant mistress, was seldom mentioned. When she did talk about him, her words became calmer. She did not accuse the first one. She only dreamed about him. Him and the 5 years they had spent together. She hid her dreams from the second one, with whom she spent 4 decades. And he, drawing lines on hammer paper designing a bridge to link what God had naturally set apart, imagined her elegantly walking along the railing, and stopping halfway to admire the power of the green-blue river flowing through the land of their great-grandfathers. He used to get up at dawn to design while his body still felt rested and his thoughts were entirely clear. After 2 hours, he would make coffee. He served it in two thin porcelain cups. Both are white but very different. Hers was more rounded and much larger. At the bottom, it was decorated with a flower of forget-me-not and a number guaranteeing the quality of the product. Every Saturday morning, he would polish the copper coffee pot, bought in the Sarajevo Čaršija, and the small silver tray. Mrs C never mentioned her ex in his hearing. Her untold story could be read from the walls of her whitewashed room. To him, it was the clearest in the mornings, flooded by silence. His wife wouldn't utter a single sound. She would merely spill coffee onto her nightdress, add more sugar than usual, break her fingernail, catch on a chair, and upset a vase with flowers. All this would happen when she had dreamed of the first one. The day would be overshadowed by the nightmare. She once confided to me that she used to worry she would hurt the second one, a good and reliable man, by calling him by the first one's name. She was convinced that she was successful in hiding her secret from the designer of the bridges. And that, during their summer vacations in Opatija, he didn't recognize what lay behind her wish to go for a drink in the garden of the hotel Kvarner every single evening and listen to her favorite singer Ivo Robić. The song "You Only Love Once" was a regular part of the night's art program. The Second one was hurt by the verses endorsed by Mrs C as the only truth. He saw it all, but he kept up the hope that time, which eases a woman's wounds, would bring him into her heart.

In short, Mrs C believed in the architect's blindness. Until the winter morning when the morning coffee arrived, served with a special addition, a neat cutout from a newspaper page. Maybe the size of a sixteenth of the page. Before she took the first sip, Mrs C took the cutout, put on her glasses, and went pale. It was the death notice for the fair-haired one. He passed unexpectedly, as stated by the inconsolable lawful wife and only son. The black-and-white photo showed the first one smiling as if he was reassuring someone. The only question was, which of the two of them? "I knew it all from the very beginning. I was naïve to hope," said the second one, passing his loved C a handkerchief. "I couldn't bring down your bridge to him, and I wasn't able to build my bridge to you," he added.

They didn't have their coffee that morning. The next day, the second one did not even make it. Neither did he make coffee the morning after. Nor in the following 10 years. Mrs C stopped having coffee entirely. In our last conversation, she confessed that she had taken it up again only after she laid the builder of bridges to his final rest. And that she wasn't even sure if she could recognize the real taste again or if she was merely sipping the memory of him. And that maybe she was adding sin to the memory.

I listened attentively, staring at the tarnished silver tray. Ever since that day, I haven't stopped asking myself about how much truth there is in the verses of Robić's oldie and whether all my loves after, especially those that started with an invitation for a coffee, have really been just an illusion.

(In the beginning and in the end there was coffee, Zagreb, 2014).

The Poverty of the Spirit

Srgjan Kerim

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The digital age, as it is defined today, is dominated by information and communication technologies that produce information on a fantastic scale. This unprecedented technological progress has, among other things, created the so-called social networks. It has also become the main generator of globalization.

In the sea of information at its disposal, incredible superficiality, inertia, and improvisation have surfaced, grinding the human spirit and destroying its basic essence, which is human thought.

We are talking about the death of literature. What nonsense and decadence. What will feed future generations with brains? Certainly not robots.

The higher the level of development of communication technologies and networks, the lower the culture of communication. Defamation, insults, libel, and slander have become commonplace and are tolerated regardless of their consequences.

There used to be controversies at the highest intellectual level, and they were an integral part of social life, even in societies that are said to be close-minded today. But today, even though we live in a democracy, it no longer exists. Spin doctors and other types of schemes are at work instead as part of political campaigns.

Philosophy, which has always been the driving force of human thought and progress, sinks into oblivion and is pushed to the periphery of human activities.

Please name a contemporary prominent philosophical view in the ranks of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Lao Tzu, Ibn Khaldun, Giordano Bruno, Galileo, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Marx Elijah, and Max Weber. Thinkers at the level of Hesse, Jean-Paul Sartre, Bertrand Russell, and Karl Popper, to name a few. They simply don't exist.

Astrophysicists who amaze me with their discoveries in the cosmos, like Stephen Hawking, are hardly recognized, not to mention that they are barely visible in the media. They do not burn them as they did Galileo, but they certainly ignore them.

Instead, they are dominated by mediocre characters from a political world dominated by populism, nationalism, exclusivity, religious intolerance, and racism.

Social networks are their miles, food, and generators, and vice versa. Look at the profiles of most of the so-called influencers. It is populism, extremism, right-wing savagery, and conspiracy theories.

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What Primitivism?

In a word, the poverty of the spirit is growing due to superficiality and improvizations that suppress true knowledge based on the development of thoughts.

It is a pure illusion that the myriad of information that information and communication technologies offer us is a substitute for that. The human brain will never be able to be replaced by any computer.

That is the biggest misconception of this time.

Take the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic, for example. Instead of allowing medical science, biochemists, and microbiologists to do their job and engage globally, we have heard of all possible amateurish anti-vaccine appearances and political manipulations.

As scientists, we have a duty to defend the primacy of science and to expose all these "fake" ideas, platforms, and conspiracy theories that are the fruit of the superficiality and improvisation that I am talking about.

Politics, and to a large extent, the media, are full of these and feed on it. And with them, they bring a large following of ordinary people.

It is not the amount of information that raises the quality of knowledge but the analytical ability to direct and use it for the right purposes. And this can only be achieved by developing thoughts.

Education, science, and the arts are neglected in every way. This is reflected in their material status.

Today everything is measured by this in a world ruled by, as Slavoj Žižek said, "the lumpen bourgeoisie."

To conclude, we have a duty to put all our intellectual energy and knowledge into the function of resolutely opposing it.

On Occasion of the International Scientific Symposium with Title "What Have We Learned about the Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic," Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Osman Sinanović[1], Izet Pajević[2], Mevludin Hasanović[3], Miro Jakovljević[4], Asim Kurjak[5]

Science, Art and Religion (2022): 10.5005/jp-journals-11005-0040

International scientific symposium with the title "What have we learned about the consequences of the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic" organized by the International Academy of Science and Arts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with University Clinical Center Tuzla and the Association of Psychiatrists of Tuzla Canton, under the patronage of Government and Ministry for Health of Tuzla Canton, and Medical Chamber of Tuzla Canton on 22–23rd October 2021 in Tuzla. The reason for this title of the symposium is the fact that there are experiences and scientific evidence about the significant consequences of the pandemic on the health of the population, and its end is not even close yet.[1,2] The authors of the presentations at the conference came from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, the United States of America, and Great Britain. A more extensive presentation of the lectures from this symposium has already been published in Psychiatria Danubina.[3]

The meeting was organized in a hybrid form and tried to answer the question posed in the title itself through 22 lectures and discussions that were conducted accordingly. The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and adults were highlighted together with the health consequences of employees engaged in health care during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as on the religious life of believers and religious communities.

In the first part of the meeting, there was talk about the various health somatic consequences of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) infection on the health of children and adults, and in the second part, about the consequences on the mental health and religious life of the community.

Plenary lectures were held as follows. The President of International Academy of Science and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina (IANUBiH), academician Asim Kurjak, Master of medicine (MD), Doctor of philosophy (PhD) (Zagreb/Sarajevo, Croatia/Bosnia and Herzegovina), had an introductory lecture titled—"Is the COVID-19 pandemic the end of happy globalization–what was the scientific response?." Professor Ognjen Gajić, MD, PhD, from Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota, USA, spoke on "International critical care collaboration during COVID-19 pandemics." Professor Semira

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Galijašević, MD, PhD (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina) discussed the "Role of oxidative stress in SARS-CoV-2 and possible mechanism." Professor Jasmina Smajić, MD, PhD (Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina), in her lecture "COVID-19: respiratory disorders," outlined the most important aspects of respiratory disorders in COVID-19 patients.

Professor Milan Stanojević, MD, PhD (Zagreb, Croatia) had a very interesting lecture titled "Mother and newborn during the COVID-19 pandemic: between Scilla and Charybdis." Academician Senka Mesihović-Dinarević, MD, PhD (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina), in the lecture titled "Postcovid-19 in children–evaluation of immunological and coronary artery status," presented the results of research conducted on a group of children from Sarajevo with positive post-COVID history.[4]

Professor Petar Kes, MD, PhD (Zagreb, Croatia) spoke on acute kidney injury in patients with COVID-19 in a lecture titled—"COVID-19: nephrological disorders." "The laparoscopic surgery: technique, ergonomic and specifies in the time of COVID-19 pandemic" was the lecture title of Professor Šefik Hasukić, MD, PhD (Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina). Assistant professor Emir Fazlibegović, MD, PhD (Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina), in his lecture titled "COVID-19: cardiologic disorders," presented the most important cardiological disorders in patients with COVID-19. Gastrointestinal complications in COVID-19 patients ("COVID-19—gastrointestinal tract") were presented by Professor Milenko Bevanda, MD, PhD (Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Several lectures were devoted to neurological disorders. Professor Vanja Bašić Kes, MD, PhD (Zagreb, Croatia) talked about COVID-19 in neurology ("COVID-19: Neurological disorders").

Professor Slobodan Apostolski, MD, PhD and Slađana Knežević-Apostolski, MD (Beograd, Serbia) shared their experiences with patients with myasthenia gravis during the COVID-19 pandemic ("COVID-19 and Myasthenia gravis"). Academician Osman Sinanović, MD, PhD (Tuzla/Sarajevo) spoke on "Association of sense of smell and taste disorders with SARS-CoV-2 infection." "COVID-19 and Parkinson's disease" was the title of the lecture delivered by Professor Zlatko Trkanjec, MD, PhD (Zagreb, Croatia). Professor Mirsad Muftić, MD, PhD (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina) spoke on "Rehabilitation during the COVID-19 pandemic."

In the World Health Organization definition of health, we know that health is not only the absence of disease but also the overall mental but also spiritual well-being.[5–7]

With this fact in mind, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health is certainly related to people's religious feelings as well.[8] In this context, there were several lectures devoted to mental health and the spiritual life of the individual and the community.

President of the World Psychiatric Association), Professor Afzal Javed, MD, PhD (London, Great Britain), spoke on "Mental health challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic." Professor Miroslava Jašović-Gašić, MD, PhD and Assistant Professor Tijana Cvetić, Doctor of psychology (Belgrade, Serbia), in their lecture entitled "Mental health challenges during COVID-19 pandemic," gave an overview of the impact of COVID–19 inflections on mental health. "Health consequences of employees engaged in healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic" was the title of a lecture given by Professor Mevludin Hasanović, MD, PhD and Professor Izet Pajević, MD, PhD (Tuzla, Bosnia, and Herzegovina). They pointed out—"Some findings identified the following risk factors for COVID-19-related health impact." Academician Miro Jakovljević, MD, PhD (Zagreb, Croatia) spoke about "Promotion of the mental health and fighting against COVID-19 pandemic and infodemic."

One of the sessions was dedicated to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the religious life of believers in BH with views from the Islamic, Catholic, and Orthodox perspectives.

Sead Seljubac, Doctorate in Regulatory Science (Tuzla, Bosnia, and Herzegovina) had a very interesting and intriguing title of his lecture, "COVID-19 pandemics: a test or punishment—Islamic perspective," which essentially hints at its content. Academician Mijo Nikić, PhD (Zagreb, Croatia), Catholic priest and Professor at the Catholic theological faculty in Zagreb, spoke about the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of Catholic theology ("The COVID-19 pandemic–call to conversion and return to God: a view from the perspective of Catholic theology"). Through his lecture entitled "COVID-19 pandemic–shepherd challenges for Orthodox Church," Srđan Radmanović (Bijeljina, Bosnia and Herzegovina), Orthodox priest, presented his views on the pandemic from an Orthodox perspective.

At the end of the symposium, the book "Norman Sartorius-Talks, Thoughts, and Works" (Medicinska naklada—Zagreb, 2021) by Vlado Jukić and Miro Jakovljević was presented. Norman Sartorius is a well-known world expert in the field of mental health and one of the previous presidents of the World Psychiatry Association. The presentation of the book was moderated by academician Osman Sinanović, and speakers were Professor Afzal Javed (online/London), academician Miro Jakovljević and Professor Norman Sartorius (online/Geneve).

The general assessment of the International Scientific Symposium in terms of organization and realization of the lecturers, online (371 participants) and *in situ* participants (40), organizers, and several media that followed the symposium is that the meeting was very successful.

The conclusion that could be drawn after the presented lectures and discussion was that we have more knowledge about the SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19, which is obviously a multiorgan disease, and we also know more about the overall health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the effects of SARS-CoV-2 on the nervous system remain

unclear, there is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic is bad for many aspects of human life, including religious life and mental health, and the economy as well as the usual way of education in general, especially in areas where practical work is necessary.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a cruel lesson for the future of humankind and all aspects of medicine because it represents very complex events in its origin, its spread, its effects, and its consequences at multiple levels and fields on people's health in general and mental health.

The response of science to the challenges of this pandemic is the relatively rapid definition of safe and effective vaccines, as well as the dedicated work to define an effective cure. The scientific community must continue to be mobilized at full capacity in order to overcome this planetary predicament as soon as possible.[3]

Contribution of Individual Authors

Osman Sinanović: Concept and design of the article, literature searches, writing manuscript, and approval of the final version.

Izet Pajević, Mevludin Hasanović, Miro Jakovljević, Asim Kurjak: Comments on the concept of the article, literature searches, writing some parts of the manuscript, approval of the final version.

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