



The Fear and the Sacred: The Ontology and the Phenomenology of Theophobia

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The present study aims to analyze the relationship between fear and sacred, but also the theophobic forms from a pluri-, inter- and transdisciplinary perspective. In the Introduction, are addressed the nature of fear, the distinction between fear and anxiety, metaphysical anguish, the range of manifestations related to God, sacred, religion, saints, places of worship, religious rituals, prayers, etc. The following chapters address Phenomenology of Fear, The concept of fear and anxiety at Kierkegaard , The Existential Analysis of Fear at Martin Heidegger, Theophobia, Divine Antropophobia ,The symptomatic picture of theophobia, The causes of theophobia and Metaphysical etiology of phobic behavior. In conclusion, the objective, major cause of theophobia is religious doctrines, according to which the origin of the universe is a punitive, avenging creator, etc. Strong knowledge of the ancient mythology, the history of religions, archaic theogonies, religious phenomenology, archetypal psychology, cultural anthropology, philosophy and science shelters not only the idea of a "celestial ontological dictatorship", but also the fear inspired

by such a divine spectrum , anthropomorphized.

Keywords: Fear, sacred, ontology, phemenology, God, metaphisics, anxiety, theophobia, divine antropophobia, anguish, unconscious.

1 Introduction

Fear has always kept company to humans as a second shadow. Consequently, the human being could be correctly defined as a *being-that-fears*. We are afraid of God, we are afraid of our neighbors, we are afraid of ourselves, we are afraid of the other sex, we are afraid of wild animals, we are afraid of viruses, bacteria, fungi and parasites, we are afraid of death, we are afraid of natural phenomena, and, eventually, we are afraid of our own fears (phobophobia). Our appeal to divinity, life partner, guardian angel, friends, etc. - all these are attempts to seek for a support to save us from the abyss of fear.

Fear is an emotion of universal character which helps us survive as individuals and eventually as species as it functions as a genuine alarm system.

It signals danger and makes us react instantly to danger.¹ But when fear becomes persistent, obsessive, exaggerated as related to the danger degree that the facing of a certain situation supposes, we speak about phobia and phobic behavior.

After making a distinction between fear and anguish – anguish is specific to humans, whereas fear is present in animals' behavior as well – Jean Delumeau, in his famous *La Peur en Occident (XIVe-XVIIIe siècles)*, asserts that man tried to vanquish fear fragmenting it into peculiar fears: fear of the sea, of the tempest, of famine, of sin, of the devil, of the end of the world, of death, of the inferno, of pest, of strangers, of witches, of ghosts, or the fear of own self.²

Human fear has an infinity of forms, shades, and degrees, being thus incompatible with animal fear: the fear of being devoured by other species, “while human fear, the offspring of our imagination is not a unitary, but a multiple one, not fixed, but an ever-changing one.”³

From the fear of our ancestors of wild beasts or of ghosts to the modern man's fear of the unpredictability of the economics fluctuations, fear has remained the same, even if its object is a different one.

Anguish and anxiety are intrinsic statuses of human beings, specifically of sensitive, metaphysically lucid people. They are not psychopathological statuses in themselves, of course excepting some obvious psychoses, forms of schizophrenia or anxious flutters within some organic diseases such as angina, bronchial asthma, hyperthyroidism, etc.

Besides, the serious dissertations of psychopathology make a distinction between metaphysical anguish – as it appears at Augustine, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, Jaspers, Gabriel Marcel or Emil Cioran – and other forms of anguish.⁴

Theophobia is generally defined by psychologists

as an irrational fear of religion, of God's wrath, of gods, or of sin. There is an entire range of phobic manifestations related to God, religions, sacred, saints, prayers, temples and cult objects, religious rituals: sacrophobia (fear of sacred objects), hamartanophobia (fear of sin), stavrophobia (fear of the cross sign), eschatophobia (fear of the end of the world and of the last Judgement), atherophobia (fear of being deprived of the idea of God, fear of not having God as a supreme goal in life), phasmophobia (fear of ghosts), demonophobia or satanophobia (fear of demons), espectrophobia (fear of phantoms), estigiophobia or hadephobia (fear of hell), hagiophobia (fear of saints or blessed objects), homiophobia (pathological fear of sermons), Hexakosiohexekonta-hexaphobia (fear of the number 666), hierophobia (fear of priests), mythophobia (fear of myths, false stories or false assertions), Theologicophobia (fear of theology), Theophobia (fear of God), ecclesiophobia (fear of the Church), teletophobia (fear of religious rituals), hierophobia or hagiophobia (fear of religious or holy objects), heresyphobia or heresophobia (fear of challenges to the official doctrine or fear of losing the way of own belief, the fear of heresy), sacrophobia (fear of the sacred), eternophobia (fear of eternal life), uriphobia (fear of paranormal phenomena), etc.

The literary, philosophic discourse, the sciences of the soul, psychology and psychiatry, but also the biochemistry and biophysics of the brain provided us with a series of knowledge and data which have shaped a pretty complete image of the causes, the physiology, the semiology and the phenomenology and therapy of phobias in the last decades.

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⁵Aaron T.Back, Gary Emery with Ruth Greenberg, *Anxiety disorders and Phobias. A cognitive perspective*, Basic Books, Printed in SUA, 1985; David A.Clark, Aaron T.Back, *The anxiety and Worry Workbook. The cognitive behavioral solution*, The Guilford Press, A Division of Guilford Publications, Inc., 1954; Ronald M. Doctor, Ada P. Kahn, and Christine Adame, *The encyclopedia of phobias, fears, and anxieties*, 3rd ed., Facts On File, Inc., New York, 2008; Bernard, E., (Eds.), *Using Rationale Emotive Therapy Effectively. A Practitioner's Guide*, Plenum Press, New York, London, 1991; Bourne, E.J., *The anxiety and Phobia Workbook*, The sixth edition, New Harbinger Publications INC., Oakland, 1995; DuPont, Robert L. *Phobia: A Comprehensive Summary of Modern Treatments*. New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1982. Jampolsky, Gerald. *Love Is Letting Go of Fear*. New York: Bantam Books, 1979. Marks, Isaac M. *Living with Fear* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980; Markway, B. G., et al. *Dying of Embarrassment: Help for Social Anxiety and Phobias*. Oakland, Calif.: New Harbinger, 1992. Marshall, John R. *Social Phobia:*

¹Irena Milosevic and Randi E. McCabe, Editors, *Phobias. The Psychology of Irrational Fear*, Greenwood, An Imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC ABC-CLIO, LLC, Santa Barbara, California, 2015, Introduction, p. XIII.

²Jean Delumeau, *Frica în Occident (secolele XIV-XVIII. O cetate asediată)*, vol I, traducere, postfață și note de Modest Moarariu, Editura Meridiane, București, 1986, p.40.

³R.Caillois, *Le masques de la peur chez les insectes, în Problemes*, avril-mai, 1961, p.25, apud Jean Delumeau, op.cit., p.19.

⁴See Constantin Enăchescu, *Tratat de psihopatologie*, Ediția a III-a, revăzută și adăugită, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2006, p.332.

Ancient literature and mythology abound in descriptions of such reactions towards existence, beginning from the books of the Old Testament to the Greek and Latin writers. Also, the works of some modern and contemporary writers, philosophers, and theologians such as Shakespeare, Soren Kirkegaard, Franz Kafka, Lev Tolstoi, Virginia Woolf, Martin Heidegger, Sigmund Freud, Alphonse Daudet, Hans Urs von Balthasar, etc. have contributed to the understanding of this universal phenomenon of the soul, anticipating the systematic studies later elaborated by psychologists.

2 The Phenomenology of Fear

The list of phobias is limitless. Humans can develop phobias of, in fact, anything. All the objects, beings, laws of physics, statuses, situations, events, psychic processes, etc. can become stressful, from snakes (ofidiophobia) or spiders (arachnophobia) to food (sitiophobia), and from the moon (selenophobia) to the cell phone (nomophobia) or the infinite (aperophobia).⁶ Actually, we should all become theoretically phobophobs, that is to say to fear our many potential fears.

Man is an ontologically ill being. We are abandoned in a cosmic hospital, in whose yard we wear our clothes as pyjamas. There are tens of millions of bacteria, thousands of viruses, hundreds of fungi, helms and parasites that invade the human being. Tens of thousands of somatic diseases. Only the pathology of the human epidermis counts approxi-

mately 6000 affections, not to mention the psychic diseases. The American handbook of *Diagnosis and Statistics of Mental Disorders* (DSM) completes every edition with new mental, behavioural, psychic, psychological disorders etc.

3 The Concept of Fear at Kierkegaard

Soren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) is not only a great philosopher, theologian and writer, but also a promoter of Psy sciences, as in his ample and profound works, we can find behavioral analyses as related to God, to the world and to the self.

If, at Kierkegaard, the Angst originates in the revelation of nothingness and is distinct from *the fear of something determined* (*Furcht*), at Kierkegaard, restlessness is rather preceding the original sin than it is a consequence of it, being generated by the fear of limit. Thus, Kierkegaard makes a personal interpretation of the biblical episode of the fall, underlining the ostensive character of the law.

According to Kierkegaard, anxiety as an expression of the limitlessness thirst specific to humans was the one that caused the fall of the primordial couple. The divine interdiction to eat from the Knowledge Tree of Good and Evil imposes a limit between what is and what is not permitted, limit that violates the human need of infinity, inducing a state of unrest, an anxiety of the freedom burden: “Supposing that interdiction arouses desire, than here we are a knowledge (instead of an un-knowledge), as Adam must have had knowledge of freedom, since he was willing to use it. This is why this explanation is belated, posterior. Interdiction creates anxiety because interdiction arouses the chance of freedom.”⁷

Thus, anguish becomes co-substantial to the human condition and, implicitly, to the conflict between the finite human condition and his thirst of infinity.¹³ The magnitude of being is given by the profoundness of the anxiety: Had it been an animal or an angel, the human being couldn't have been anxious.

Yet, being a synthesis, it can be anxious; the deeper the anxiety, the greater the human, but not in the sense that anxiety is usually seen by people, when it is a reaction to something exterior, outside

From Shyness to Stage Fright. New York: Basic Books, 1994. Monroe, Judy. Phobias: Everything You Wanted to Know, But Were Afraid to Ask. Springfield, N.J.: Enslow Publishers, 1996. Nardo, Don. Anxiety and Phobias. New York: Chelsea House, 1992. Uhde, T. W., M. B. Tancer, B. Black, and T. M. Brown. “Phenomenology and Neurobiology of Social Phobias: Comparison with Panic Disorder.” *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 52 (November 1991): pp. 31–40. Zane, Manuel D., and Harry Milt. *Your Phobia*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, Inc., 1984; Holdevici Irina, *Psihoterapia tulburărilor anxioase*, Editura Ceres, București, 1998; Holdevici Irina, *Psihoterapia anxietății*, Editura Dual Tech, București, 2002; Wells, A., *Cognitive Terapy of Anxiety Disorders*, John Wiley and Sons Chichester, New York, Weinheim, Brisbane, Singapore, Toronto, The 3rd ed., 1999.

⁶See Ronald M. Doctor, Ada P. Kahn, and Christine Adamec, *The encyclopedia of phobias, fears, and anxieties*, 3rd ed., Facts On File, Inc., New York, 2008; Laurenii Mitrofan, Sorina Daniela Dumitrache. *Compendiu de fobii*. Editura, SPER, 2010.

⁷Soren Kierkegaard, Scrieri I. Conceptul de anxietate, translation from Danish by Adrian Arsinevici, Editura Amarcord, Timisoara, 1998, p.80.

the human, but in the sense that anxiety is generated by the human himself.⁸

In Kierkegaard's opinion, prayer feeds from the uncertainty, risk, fear and tremor of the one that prays, for the authentic religious life supposes a permanent state of danger. There are, in his opinion, a dialectic of danger experienced by Abraham, for instance, while he was climbing the Moria mountain in order to sacrifice his son, as Yahve requested. The patriarch accepted the absurd, the divine paradox in spite of rational, human, logic, or legal evidences, suspending any ethical principle. If Abraham had had the intention to kill Isaac without any divine command, he would have obviously been a criminal of the worst kind. In the presence of the divine imperative that asked him such a sacrifice, Abraham becomes, according to Kierkegaard, the first knight of the true faith.

The Danish philosopher identifies three fundamental periods that a human goes through more or less consciously, during a lifetime: The esthetic, the ethic, and the religious, as we can find them in *Or/Or* and in *Fear and Trembling*.⁹

Besides the three stages of spiritual evolution (esthetic, ethic, and religious, to which Beauty, Good, and Truth correspond, Kierkegaard speaks of the so-called intermediary stages: irony, which makes the link between the esthetic to the ethic stages, and the humor, which connects the ethical stage with the religious one. Other attitudes and spiritual stages such as melancholy, fear, desperation, restlessness, repentance, sin, temptation, atonement, and somersault are not considered by the philosopher as intermediary stages, but they are a special importance within the economy of the existential structures, constituting, along the intermediary stages, the flats and the sharps of the existential fugue composed by Kierkegaard.

The object of fear is nothingness. Even so, fear is intimately connected with spirit. In Kierkegaard's opinion, the human cannot overcome his human condition, he cannot reach transcendence but by accepting what he does not want to be.¹⁰

⁸See Vasile Chira, *Prelegeri de filosofie*, Editura Universității "Lucian Blaga", Sibiu, p.147-157.

⁹Soren Kierkegaard, *Scrieri I. Conceptul de anxietate*, op.cit., p.203.

¹⁰See Grigore Popa, *Existența și adevăr la Sören Kierkegaard*, with a preface by Achim Mihu, Editura Dacia, Cluj, 1998, p.114-117.

4 The Existential Analytics of Fear at Martin Heidegger

The Heideggerian distinction between existence (*Existens*) and subsistence (*Vorhandensein*) was able to radically change the metabolism of European thinking, as for the German philosopher, such a thinking that uses categories should rather address to subsistence and by no means to *Dasein*, which systematically avoids categorial thinking due to the ec-static character of the privileged being. This ontological difference imposes another form of analytics than that of categories, inherited from Kant, namely an analytic of existential character.¹¹

Unlike subsistent beings which could be the object of *categories* (as Kant presents them in his famous table), the *Dasein* cannot be subjected to the categorial, it can be interrogated in an existential manner only, that is to say through *existentials*. Being is not revealed in concepts and theoretic *categories*, but in *affective arrangements*, similarly to a tool which is not revealed when it is looked upon and theoretically analyzed, but when it is used.

As a correlative and complementary term of categories, the existentials have in view the relation with nothingness, with death, and with the world (*Angst, Sein zum Tode* and *Sorge*).

But there is the danger that various existentials that articulate the structures of being of *Dasein* to disintegrate the *Dasein* as a whole. In this case, a major, integrative existential is needed, which should at the same time be "the basis of the co-originary structures of the *Dasein*."¹² This modality of supreme openness of the *Dasein* is *anguish* (*Angst*) as an essential affective disposition, through which the *Dasein* openness to its own self occurs as *caring*. *Care* (*Sorge*) is for Heidegger the primary and integrative existential.

Care is much more than a simple concern that things, affairs, domestic situation "work well". It is about a metaphysical caring which puts the *Dasein* face to face with its "possible", with the perspective of "being no longer", of death. At an ontic, existential level, this caring is expressed by "concern" (*Besorgen*), "caring for another" (*Fürsorge*), mutual

¹¹Vasile Chira, *Dominantele gândirii cioraniene*, Editura Universității "Lucian Blaga", Sibiu, 2006, p. 105.

¹²See G. Liiceanu, *Excurs asupra câtorva termeni heideggereni*, Anexe la *Ființa și timp*, trad. G. Liiceanu și Cătălin Cioabă, Humanitas, 2012, p. 609.

help and dedication, etc. The state of fall (Verfallen) makes the Dasein to be being as an impersonal 'it', which in relation with its own itselfness, is a closure. The falling of the Dasein into the every day turmoil is nothing else than a perpetual running from the encounter with one's own self.

The inauthenticity of the *Dasein*, its fall into the everyday routine is a poor temporality, an intratemporality in which *Dasein* is enslaved to vulgar temporality, it loses its primary quality to produce time to time itself.¹³ *Dasein* cannot be stopped from this unconscious running from itself except for the moment when anguish occurs. In anguish, the world appears to be devoid of meaning, it reveals as "nothingness", setting us in front of the fact of being in the world. Anguish instantly detaches us from the herd, individualizing us, bringing us back into genuineness.¹⁴

5 Teophobia

Divine mystery inspires a feeling of awe, which is a part of fear. Many ritual gestures express obedience, compliance, humbleness: eyes closed, head bowed, and hands together in prayer, kneeling, silence. Sacrifices, offerings of food, animals, and even humans are common for religions as well. The aberrant logic of the Aztec Indians according to which the Sun wouldn't rise and move through the sky without a daily sacrifice is a famous illustration of the fact.

On the other hand, we must acknowledge the fact that the act of prayer as a dialogue between a human and a paternal almighty entity, be it real or imaginary, transcendental to the seen world - has a cathartic function, working as an anxiety reducer. This thing takes place at a conscious level, yet at an unconscious level, the fear induced to the child through the religious imperatives and the idea of punishment do not disappear, but they will continue to affect the mental sanity of the future adult.¹⁵

¹³Otto Pöggeler, *Drumul gândirii lui Heidegger*, trad. de Cătălin Cioabă, Humanitas, București, 1998, p. 52.

¹⁴Vasile Chira, *Liber miscellaneus*, Editura ASTRA Museum, Sibiu, 2015, p.173.

¹⁵For the fear of God / theophobie see Ronald M. Doctor, Ada P. Kahn, and Christine Adamec, *The encyclopedia of phobias, fears, and anxieties*, 3rd ed., Facts On File, Inc., New York, 2008 p.253-254; vezi de asemenea Goldstein, Joel, *The Infinite Way*, San Gabriel, CA: Willing, 1947; Hill, Douglas and Pat Williams, *The Supernatural*, New York: Hawthorne, 1965, pp. 2868; Sandmel, Samuel, A

The idea of a punitive, vengeful divinity appears at the same time with the first religious doctrines and was reinforced throughout history by the tragic episodes that mankind experienced: wars, calamities, diseases, famine, etc. This dimension of divinity is closely connected with one of its moral attributes: justice, so often invoked by the prophets of the Old Testament.

Theophobia can take several forms, from an exaggerated fear of the gods' revenge for the sins committed, to repulsion, avoidance, disgust to God, saints, religious rituals, cult objects or prayers, etc. This form of positive phobia related to Divinity is extremely frequent among the religious adepts and practitioners. The theophobic type of believer cannot live a single moment without being in an intimate, dialogical, ritual relation with God.

On the other hand, the term theophobia is not a very proper one, as phobia in general supposes an avoidance of the anxiogenic object or phenomenon, whereas in the case of theophobia, we speak of acceptance and love of God, fear being only induced by its manifestations. In other words, in the case of fear of sin and of the divine punishment we could speak of a positive theophobia, whereas in the case of the atheist, who develops a fear of the name of God and of any symbolic, iconographic, representation, manifesting antipathy, disgust of anything which could suggest Divinity and the guilt related to it, of a negative theophobia. There could also be the possibility of the use of the concept of theophobia only for the fear of everything related to God, while for the fear of sin and of God's punishment such words as hamartanophobia (fear of sin) and theocrinophobia (fear of judgement) could be used.

Symmetrically, there could also be ktiseophobia (God's fear of His own creation), cosmophobia (God's fear of the world created), hyophobia (God's fear of His own sons). The level of decay that the world has reached, organized crime, drugs, fratricidal wars, pan-terrorism, biological weapons, fatal diseases, exacerbated sexuality, the human genome manipulation, trans-humanism, technological singularity are enough reasons to trigger such an attitude from a personal Divinity which is good, loving, and just, as

Little Book on Religion (For People Who Are Not Religious), Chambersburg, PA: Wilson Books, 1975., pp. 4654; Spinks, G. Stephens, *Psychology and Religion*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1963, pp. 113, 3146, 117146; Thomas, Keith, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Scribner, 1971), pp. 51112.

most of the religions consider It. Traces of divine regret for having brought humans into being are to be found even in the first part of the Bible: “The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. 6 The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.” 7 So the Lord said, “I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created—and with them the animals, the birds and the creatures that move along the ground—for I regret that I have made them.” (Genesis 6, 5-7)

6 Divine Antropophobia

Theophobia is mediated on one hand by our relation with other humans, and on the other hand by our relation with Divinity, for our existence is an associative one.

If humans have fear of God, symmetrically, there is a fear that Divinity has of humans, but also there is God’s fear of His own ipseity (theoautophobia), of His condition of *actus purus*, by which He could generate other layers of existence - angelic, eonic, human. But the greatest fear of God of His own sineity is connected with His own omnipotence within which He could create other Gods, beings which are His equals, or even superior. In this case, as Lucian Blaga suggests influenced by cosmogonic myths, an ontological anarchy could be reached. The war for supremacy between these equal gods would become inevitable, theomachia would be an unescapable possibility. From profound ontological reasons, to save the centralism of existence, The Great Anonymous (Marele Anonim) decides to self- censure His creative powers at maximum.¹⁶

But getting back to the divine anthropophobia which we could name hyophobia (fear of the son), God has a fear of unpredictable, reprobable deeds that His creatures could do by virtue of the freedom that He endowed them with.¹⁷ Such deeds, should - logically speaking- surprise Him, because if He had known them in advance, this would annihilate any trace of freedom. Of course, theologians and philoso-

phers which want to save at any rate the elective freedom of humans, would say that our immanent temporal categories do not apply to God, that His omniscience does not take place in time, but outside of temporality. Such an objection seems legitimate at first sight, but we shouldn’t forget that His eternity includes also the moments of our existence. We cannot be in His exteriority, as such an ontological autonomy would limit His infinity, but we cannot be in His interior either, because our evanescence would, this way, deny the absolute regime. Most probably, God includes us in His infinite pouch as something simultaneously interior and exterior.

The basic question is this: How does God relate with our fear? If we think about the fact that any knowledge supposes sufferance, it is obvious that God’s knowing of our anguishes implies a dose of theopathy. Knowing our fears, God has also fears at the same time with us, suffering along with us, as the two subjectivities, God and human cannot meet in an exterior term. God feels in His subjectivity our subjectivity. In other words, any phobia, beginning with ofidophobia to thanatophobia is assumed by the divine consciousness as well. Why did He create such a frightful, vulnerable being, that he be constrained to suffer with it? Here is one of the questions that neither theology, nor philosophy or sciences could satisfactorily answer.

7 Symptoms of Theophobia

If the symptoms of theophobia are present at some subjects all the time, at other theophobes, the symptoms are only triggered by certain stimuli: a worship place, ethical dilemmas, conversations about religious themes, etc.

We may either speak of theophobic forms which imply the acceptance, the acknowledgement of divinity and the exaggerated fear of it, or we may speak of God’s refusal and the phobic relation to any idea, thing, symbol, theory, cult, ritual, gesture, name which refers to such a transcendental entity, the symptoms are the same. Besides, any of the 6000 phobias described by psycho-pathologists develop a symptomatic picture which includes physiological disorders (cardiac rhythm increase, accelerated breathing, tremor, sweating, muscle weakness, feeling sick, nausea, suffocation, intense anxiety, panic attack, dizziness, palpitations, vomiting, dry mouth, momentary inability to speak, crying accesses, fre-

¹⁶See Vasile Chira , *Studii de Inter-, Pluri- și Transdisciplinaritate*, Editura ASTRA Museum, Sibiu, 2012, p.129.

¹⁷In the parable of the *Prodigal Son* ,the Father is not only concerned not to see His son’s material and spiritual failure, but also with his (not) coming back.

quent urination), of a subjective nature (personal experiences, thoughts which the patient feels in the moment of confrontation with the phobogene object, statuses that differ from a subject to another), of a behavioral nature (lack of proper reactions, stupor, stillness, avoidance, escape, panic, nervous arousal, rage).

8 Causes of Theophobia

The research of the latest decades have managed to identify the major causes of phobia. The adepts of behavioral theory, for instance, assert that, irrespective of typology (social, specific, or agoraphobia), phobias are frequently caused by learning: conditional learning, vicarious learning, and passing of fear-provoking information (Rachman, 1990). Other researchers think that phobia is triggered by a combination of factors: behavioral influences, environmental influences, biological and genetic predispositions. Also, the dysfunctions of the nervous system can constitute a favourable medium for the development of a phobic behavior.¹⁸

Similarly to other types of phobia, theophobia has its origins in the unconscious. Certain anguishing experiences from the childhood, the inoculation of fear of sin and the idea of divine punitiveness in childhood, the death of a relative or of a friend, lover, failures, watching some movies, reading, the news in the media, etc. can become catalysts for certain forms of theophobia. Even if the causes of phobia are not sufficiently known yet, psychologists and psychiatrists think that certain traumatic events are triggers for this disorder, which add to some hereditary, genetic predispositions.

9 The Metaphysical etiology of the Phobic Behavior

The causes of phobia essentially remain unknown. The technologies of the abyssal itselfness the mechanisms of protection of the subconscious, the biologic inheritance, the learning of the phobic behavior, relating of some moments of intense fear with one object, being, or situation, etc. are a few of the theories that try to explain this phenomenon.

¹⁸See Irena Milosevic and Randi E. McCabe, Editors, op.cit., p.289-293.

It is true, we cannot minimize the role that biology, neuro transmitters, genetic predispositions, family history, learning, unconscious associations have, but, in our opinion, some more profound causes of phobia should be looked for in much more profound zones.

The postmodern human cannot ignore his own history, his own biologic and spiritual genetics, the real reality, the archetypal reality, the symbolic reality, the levels of conscience that he went through.

One of the major causes of phobia is connected with the fear of the indeterminacy of the ultimate meaning, indeterminacy filled with religious, revelational, cultic contents throughout history. All religions feed the mental of the child with an imaginary mythical flux, miraculous, with a perfect, magic world, lost by our ancestors due to the infringement of the divine imperative against the background of an alleged conflict between two opposed transcendental forces. The discrepancy between the fairy imaginary world and the phenomenal world subject to cangrene, dissolution, violence, maculation, disease, and death creates an inner conflict, a diffuse anxiety, against which all the types of phobia are grafted, from nictophobia (fear of darkness), to astraphobia (fear of lightning) or algophobia (fear of pain). Such a theory might be reproached a lack of justification of phobias at newborn in desacralized backgrounds, in atheistic families, which were not the victims of such indoctrination. This counterargument does not work as long as there is a quantic genetics, an invisible genome, endowed with all the accumulations of the species from the primitive period up to the present. On the contrary, once the ontological, archetypal source is lost (be it real or imaginary), there is a transfer of authority at an unconscious level, a reversed respect, a fear that gradually takes the shape of a phobia. In fact, all the phobias, compulsions send us to a background which is radically different from the object, being, status, concrete situation which triggers the fear. The same abyssal mechanisms that are connected with the physiology of the unconsciousness are present in the case of addiction.¹⁹

Another cause of phobias is connected with our precarious ontological condition, with the absurd and the ultimate nonsense of life. In other words, not the human is phobic, but nature, being, diseases,

¹⁹See Vasile Chira, *The metaphysics of addiction*, European Journal of Science and Theology, February 2013, Vol.9, Supplement 1, 22-25.

death are anxiogenic by their own status. The consciousness of the fact of being, the inconsistency of beings and of things, the thanatotic horizon, the uncertainties connected with the metaphysical apparition and finality of life, the condition of a mammal with consciousness, the hostility of nature, of cosmic phenomena, thousands of diseases, the suffering, the lack of a metaphysical identity of humans, the violence of our fellows, the market of religions and gods, the antagonism of the tens of thousands of religious offers, the axiological and ethical relativism are the ones that turn the hypersensitive individual, with a minimum of operative and emotional intelligence into a sensor of the ontological evil, into a victim of phobias.

10 Conclusions

The objective major cause of theophobia is the religious doctrine according to which, at the origin of the universe, there is a personal, punitive, vengeful, etc. creator.

In the context of the existence of more than 30.000 religions (confessions, sects, denominations, orders, fractions, and factions) and each of them claim to be the only one that holds the truth, we can no longer speak but of a religious phenomenon, not of a particular religion. We cannot speak but of revelational models, cosmological religious models (cosmogonies, theogonies, and anthropogonies), soteriological models, theodicea models, religious ethics models, eschatological models, anastaseological models, etc. In other words we can do nothing but an archetypal comparative theology. In fact, this is the real theology, a scientific, objective, common sense theology.

An honest intellectual cannot deny an ultimate intelligent reality, which is responsible for the cosmic project. We cannot speak of a form of atheism related to a possible transcendent intelligent agent, that generated reality. It is true, this agent can be of a quantic nature, can be an energetic field, can be an ultimate particle. From this perspective, all the religious activities, from hymns to dogmatic and ethical systems, from rites to rituals, are rather connected to poetry, to creation, to cultural identity. In the case of religions, we cannot speak of an objective knowledge, but about a naive mythical-symbolic discourse, culturally and aesthetically interesting, but metaphysically less relevant.

A thorough knowledge of ancient mythology, of the history of religions, of the archaic theogonies, of religious phenomenology, of the archetypal psychology, of cultural anthropology, of philosophy and of science keeps us safe from the idea of a celestial ontological dictatorship, and also from the fear that such a divine anthropomorphized spectre inspires.

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