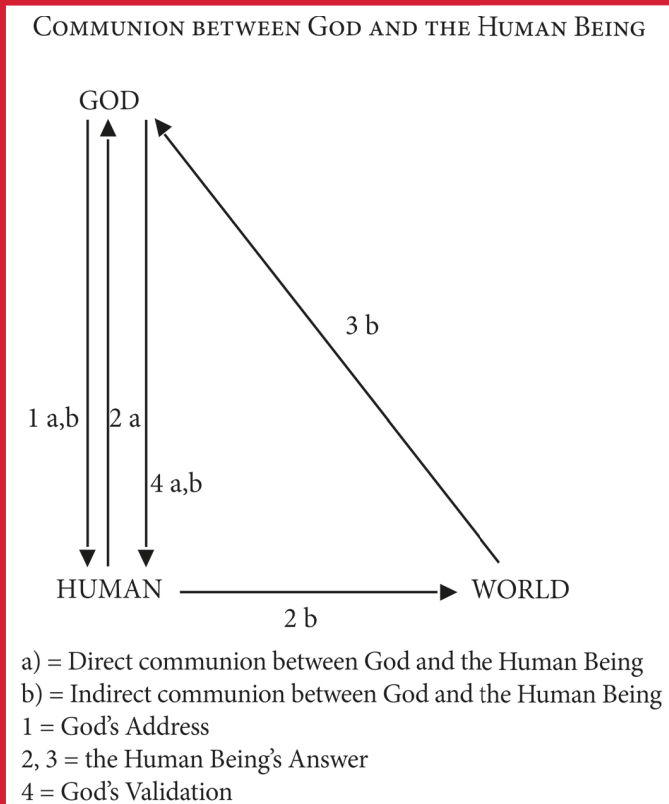


Alina Pătru (Ed.)

Meeting God in the Other

Studies in Religious Encounter and Pluralism in honour of
Dorin Oancea on the occasion of his 70th birthday



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Meeting God in the Other

Studies in Religious Encounter and Pluralism
in honour of Dorin Oancea
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edited by

Alina Pătru

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CONTENTS

Remarks on the Cover Image	11
Words of Honor and Blessing <i>Metropolitan Laurențiu Streza</i>	13
Professor Dr. Dorin Oancea zum 70. Geburtstag <i>Altbischof Christoph Klein</i>	15
Lieber Dorin <i>Philipp Harnoncourt</i>	19
The Human and Academic Profile of Dorin Oancea: Introduction <i>Alina Pătru</i>	21
Selected Bibliography of Dorin Oancea	27

THE RECEPTION OF DORIN OANCEA'S CREATIVE THINKING

Gott im Anderen begegnen. Zum Denken und Wirken von Dorin Oancea <i>Christoph Klein</i>	35
Contribuția Părintelui Prof. Dr. Dorin Oancea la dialogul teologic bilateral dintre Biserica Ortodoxă Română și Biserica Evanghelică din Germania <i>Viorel Ioniță</i>	43
Convergences in Archimandrite André Scrima's and Rev. Dorin Oancea's Thinking <i>Codin Șimonca-Oprița</i>	57
Dorin Oancea's Christocentric Personalist Pluralism A Christian Orthodox Theology of Religions <i>Alina Pătru</i>	71
Orthodox Tradition and Modern Cognitive Approaches to the Believing Process: „De Fide Orthodoxa“ of St. John Damascene Re-read with the Lenses of Credition <i>Hans Ferdinand Angel</i>	87

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS
OF ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS OPENNESS

Was verbindet uns? Anregungen zu einer theologischen „Soziologie“ <i>Michael Weinrich</i>	105
„Ne rugăm pentru unirea tuturor“ Considerații preliminare în favoarea continuării dialogului teologic cu semenii noștri de diferite confesiuni sau religii <i>Nicolae Moșoiu</i>	117
Dezvoltarea liturgică a Bisericii în secolul al IV-lea Temei istoric și liturgic al deschiderii ecumenice <i>Dan Alexandru Streza</i>	135
„Die Kirche macht sich selbst zum Dialog“ Eine Darlegung aus katholischer Sicht <i>Bernhard Körner</i>	147
The Mission of the Church in Light of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. Reflections from within the Reformed Tradition <i>Kang Phee Seng</i>	157
An Updated Ecumenical Theology <i>Martien E. Brinkman</i>	165
Christlicher Absolutheitsanspruch und Dialog der Religionen Thesen zur Gesprächseröffnung <i>Bernd Jochen Hilberath</i>	179

EXAMPLES FROM PAST AND PRESENT

Interreligiosität in den Samuelbüchern? <i>Walter Dietrich</i>	185
Encounter at the Well between Judaism and Samaritanism A Life Changing Experience <i>Lehel Lészai</i>	197
Der Ort der Ehe in neutestamentlichen Liebeskonzepten Eine Skizze <i>Urs von Arx</i>	209

Christianity and Jewish Mysticism in Antiquity Some Dialogical Reflections in honor of Fr. Professor Dorin Oancea <i>Doru Constantin Doroftei</i>	225
Circumcision in Ignatius of Antioch and Theophilus of Antioch <i>Daniel Buda</i>	233
Origenes als Brückenbauer <i>Adolf Martin Ritter</i>	245
Encountering the Other on the Way Egeria and Marching towards the Holy <i>Pablo Argárate</i>	265
Legile constantiniene privind statutul iudeilor din Imperiul Roman (Codex Theodosianus 16.8.1-16.8.5) <i>Dragoș Boicu</i>	283
Iubirea ca participare la taina lui Dumnezeu și la taina semenului în gândirea duhovnicească a Sfântului Ioan Scărarul <i>Ioan Mircea Ielciu</i>	297
From Persia to China, among Muslims and Mongols Research on the „Church of the East“ and its Environment <i>Dietmar W. Winkler</i>	309
Gab es ein Großes Schisma zwischen der Orthodoxen und der Römisch-Katholischen Kirche? <i>Grigorios Larentzakis</i>	327
Testimonium patrum. Die Bedeutung des Zeugnisses der Kirchenväter für die lutherischen Bekenntnisschriften <i>Hermann Pitters</i>	349
Religionsfreiheit oder Toleranz? Ökumenische und systematische Reflexionen über das Edikt von Turda 1568 <i>Tamás Juhász</i>	357
Eine christlich-orthodoxe Stellungnahme zur religiösen Vielfalt Wladimir Solowjew und die Sophiologie der monotheistischen Religionen <i>Marian Pătru</i>	367

A Glimpse into the Past or an Attempt to define Romanian Orthodoxy <i>Remus Rus</i>	379
--	-----

Fr. Ioan G. Coman and the Reception of one of his Contributions to Ecumenism <i>Radu Gârbacea</i>	395
---	-----

Die Satisfaktionslehre Anselms von Canterbury in der Theologie von Vater Dumitru Stăniloae <i>Ionuț Vasile Crișan</i>	407
---	-----

Open Sobornicity and Apophatic Anthropology. Modern Romanian Hesychasm and the Theologies of Fr Dumitru Stăniloae and Fr André Scrima <i>Ivana Noble and Tim Noble</i>	423
---	-----

Eine synodale Kirche? Reflexionen über die orthodoxe Ekklesiologie im Spannungsfeld von Theorie und Realität <i>Johannes Oeldemann</i>	437
--	-----

The Capacity for Religious Pluralism in Southeast European Nations The Paradigms of the Role of Religion in Political Constitutions and the Struggle for Religious Education in School <i>Andreas Müller</i>	455
---	-----

Perspectives for the Future of the Dialogue between Orthodox and Protestants <i>Dagmar Heller</i>	433
---	-----

PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS OF OPENNESS TO THE OTHER

Die Basiliusanaphora Ein liturgisch-ökumenisches Zeugnis ersten Ranges <i>Erich Renhart</i>	479
---	-----

Der Trishagion-Hymnus und andere ostkirchliche Gesänge als ökumenische Zeichen im Ost-West-Transfer <i>Basilus J. Groen</i>	487
---	-----

Die göttliche Liturgie. Das Streben des Menschen nach dem Ähnlichwerden mit Gott <i>Ciprian Streza</i>	497
--	-----

<i>Schalom/Friede als gemeinsamer Fluchtpunkt jüdischer und christlicher Liturgie Peter Ebenbauer</i>	515
---	-----

The Ecumenical Dimension of Education. Priorities <i>Constantin Necula</i>	529
---	-----

Epitimia ca expresie a dragostei față de penitent <i>Irimie Marga</i>	537
--	-----

FURTHER TOPICS FROM RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The Divine and the Problem of Evil <i>Vasile Chira</i>	547
---	-----

„Nebunul” lui Nietzsche. Modernitatea și ideea „morții lui Dumnezeu” <i>Aurel Pavel and Dan Țăreanu</i>	563
--	-----

Philip Sherrard's Orthodox Esotericism and the Cosmological Grounding of Sacred Art <i>Ionuț Băncilă</i>	581
--	-----

Demokratie und Liberalismus aus theologischer Sicht Ein Beitrag als Erinnerung an nur scheinbar Selbstverständliches <i>Stefan Tobler</i>	595
---	-----

Părintele Ioan Glăjar, un veritabil teolog și istoric al religiilor sibian 90 de ani de la nașterea sa <i>Nicolae Chifăr</i>	605
--	-----

DANKSAGUNG	617
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ORTHODOX TRADITION AND MODERN COGNITIVE APPROACHES
TO THE BELIEVING PROCESS: “DE FIDE ORTHODOXA”
OF ST. JOHN DAMASCENE RE-READ WITH THE LENSES OF CREDITION

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“The openness of the Fathers for a comprehensive anthropological understanding of humans and their relation to God can be verified by having a closer look in their anthropology.” – Dorin Oancea

The title of this contribution might sound strange: not so much as JOHN OF DAMASCUS or JOHN OF DAMASCENE (*Joannes Damascenus*) might not be in the centre of interest for many Western theologians outside of the realm of patristics and not so much due to the term “re-read”. It belongs to the standard methods of theological thinking and reflecting to re-read important texts of earlier times. What might really sound strange is the labelling of the “lenses” by which, as here is announced, one of the most important scriptures of John of Damascene will be re-read. The lenses are called “lenses of credition” and this attribution derives from a scientific project which has been established at the Karl-Franzens University of Graz: the so called Credition Research Projects¹, which focusses on that what happens while someone is believing.

Of course, it is always of some risk to claim that a “new” interpretation, a new perspective, or a new approach to traditional debates will provide new insights. The question of novelty even is one the most precarious ones with regard of the history of thinking. In Antiquity, and much later in the (Western) Middle Ages, *studium novi*, as *interest in the new* was not a virtue by which one could expect any ennoblement. In the contrary, to claim a special knowledge about something which exceeded the traditionally proved pool of sound knowledge was even dangerous. Doing so could attract the attention of authorities. They were sensitive for disturbances which could be evoked by those who selected² some “bits of knowledge” to highlight them as “special bits” against a generally accepted mainstream of long-lasting truth. Thus, it was also something like a manifestation of virtue and braveness to select new aspects or new perspectives in order to interpret the sound traditions in a new way. But, the great theologians of the Middle Ages were champions in detecting traces of their own innovative ideas in the scriptures of the great authorities, might they be pre-

¹ <https://credition.uni-graz.at/>

² The Ancient Greek term for “selection” is αἵρεσις (haíresis) from which the modern term *heresy* is derived.

Christian philosophers or, maybe even better, might they have been acknowledged as great Fathers. And they were trained in arguing how their “modern” ideas could be embedded into a traditional *corpus scriptorum*.

The re-reading of St. John’s scripture is not of such a dramatic dimension. And it is not totally new. It is driven by the intention of figuring out how far and in which way an understanding of the fluidity of belief – namely the processes of believing (= credition) – is compatible with an understanding of “belief” which is presented by St. John of Damascus. This intention structures the chapter here presented: (1) Background of this contribution, (2) Credition – the process of believing, (3) Credition-based theological thinking?, (4) Life and work of St. John of Damascus, (5) St. John of Damascus and the theory of credition.

1. Background of this contribution

In 2011 the so called Credition Research Project was established at the Karl-Franzens University of Graz. The term credition is derived from the Latin *credere* (to believe). Credition is a neologism which was coined to label “processes of believing” (Angel 2013a). Credition is neither a theological nor a philosophical term. It is conceived as a psychological term similarly to other psychological terms like emotion (from the Latin *movere* = to move; *motus* = moved) or cognition (from the Latin *cogitare* = to think or *cognoscere* = to recognize).

Thus, any attempt to understand credition will be set in the realm of psychology and its different strands like neuropsychology, psychology of emotions, cognitive psychology, psychology of learning, psychology of perception, differential psychology, social psychology, psychology of religion, and so on. In this respect, all acknowledgements as well as all critics directed towards psychology and psychological thinking can also be applied to the term “credition”. This must be mentioned as it is a strong position of epistemology, the so called *eliminativism*, that denounces many psychological concepts as mere “folk psychology”. The concept which is probably most attacked by eliminativism is “belief”. Famous is Stephen Stich’s publication which is entitled: *From Folk Psychology to Cognitive Science. The Case against Belief* (Stich 1996). The eliminativistic perspective is very common in the actual mindset of epistemological thinkers. Therefore, when talking about belief – and in consequence about processes of believing – it is definitively needed to take account of both, the actual epistemological debates (Visala & Angel 2017) and the long-lasting tradition of theological thinking. And the question will remain: Is there any chance to bridge the gap between these meanwhile distant fields of reflecting?

Additionally, theology is not a monolithic discipline. Since the early times of Christianity different traditions flourished. Unfortunately, the communication and the exchange of theologians trickled partly away by historically influential

events. One can recall the division of the Roman Empire in two administrative units which was executed in 359 after the death of emperor THEODOSIOS I (347 – 395). One can mention the sometimes so called “*Great Schism*” of 1054 which contributed to the separation of the Church of the East and West and was followed by mental and practical alienation. After the schism the Eastern Church has experienced even more painful events like the devastations of large regions during the crusades and especially the sacking of Constantinople in 1204.

It is one of the fruits of the last century that Pope *Paul VI* (1897 – 1978), as Patriarch of Rome and successor of St. Peter, and the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople *Athenagoras* (1886 – 1972), as successor of St. Andrew, met in Jerusalem (4th January 1964) to open a new chapter of brotherhood and reconciliation (FitzGerald 2014).

This new pathway fortunately has been supported by manifold efforts of ecumenical cooperation in the *Conciliar Process*. Nevertheless, the deplorable history after World War II practically separated the countries of the Eastern Church(es) from those of the Western Church(es).

After the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, the ecumenical cooperation was reinforced by a deepened cooperation between Eastern and Western faculties of theology. Three Ecumenical Assemblies in Basel 1989 (Kobia 2009), in Graz 1997 (Arnold 1997), and in Sibiu/Hermannstadt 2007 (Ecumenical Patriarchate 2007) stimulated the real encounter of Christians so far separated from each other. In preparation of the second Ecumenical Assembly in Graz, the so-called *Graz Process* (Larentzakis 1994, Ionita 2010, Tudor 2010) was established. It was dedicated to an intensification of the cooperation of Christian faculties of all denominations. “Träger des Grazer Prozesses ist die Konferenz Europäischer Kirchen (KEK) in Verbindung mit dem Organisationsbüro der Katholisch-Theologischen Fakultät der Karl-Franzens Universität Graz” (Liagre & Angel 2014, 7). The Graz Process flourished for more than twenty years. In this period four official *Consultations*³ were held⁴. In the year 1989 the first official cooperation between the Catholic-Theological Faculty of the Karl-Franzens University Graz and the Andrei Saguna Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the Lucian-Blaga University of Sibiu was signed⁵.

These manifold interactions between Graz and Sibiu must be highlighted as they are the background for this article. They provided the fruitful soil on which the integration of the Orthodox faculty of Sibiu into the network of the Credition Research Project could be managed.

³ Dorin Oancea was continuously participant of the consultation and belonged for some time to the steering committee of the Graz Process.

⁴ They are documented in: Ökumenisches Forum Jg. 2009 – 2013.

⁵ It was one of the big pleasures of my deanship to meet Dorin Oancea during the festivities of this anniversary in Sibiu.

In 2017, the first results from the “Structure of Credition Conferences” were published in book: “Processes of Believing: The Acquisition, Maintenance, and Change in Creditions (Angel et al 2017). Among contributors from neuroscience, biology, pharmacology, psychology, philosophy, economy, law, and so on, three theologians also contributed to this book: Lluís Oviedo from the Pontifical University Antonianum/Rome (Oviedo 2017), Oliver Davies from King’s College/London (Davies 2017), and Dorin Oancea from the Lucian Blaga University/Sibiu. The title of Oancea’s chapter is: Soul and Body according to „De Fide Orthodoxa” of St. John of Damascene.

2. Credition – the process of believing

When talking about the matter of belief, it is quite common in theology and in philosophy, especially also in epistemology, to use the noun “belief”⁶. The use of the noun can be observed in many scientific texts.

It is the noun “*fides*” which became famous throughout the history of theology in many basic positions: *Fides quaerens intellectum* (Anselm of Canterbury), *fides caritate formata* (Thomas Aquinas), *sola fide* (Martin Luther).

The same noun-related use can be observed in epistemology. A strand which is labelled “foundationalism” for instance distinguishes between *basic belief* and *non-basic belief* (Schwitzgebel 2015).

In psychology and cognitive science one can find expressions like formation of beliefs (Langdon & Coltheart 2000, McGarty et al 2002), dynamics of belief (Forrest 1986), erosion of beliefs (Beck & Miller 1999), or even evolution of misbelief (McKay & Dennet 2009).

All these expressions seem to follow (at least implicitly) a concept of belief as a “stable” entity.

In contrast, the research on creditions conceptualizes beliefs as something “fluent”. But it is not an easy way “from the question of belief to question of believing” (Angel 2017). From a perspective which conceives belief as fluid it is possible to interpret stable beliefs as momentary snapshots of fluid beliefs. Stable beliefs indicate the actual end of processes which are preliminary to such a stability. Additionally, actual seemingly stable snapshots of beliefs may undergo a further change (Paloutzian & Mukai 2017). The development of attitudes is supported by stabilized beliefs. But there is no guarantee that seemingly stable beliefs will remain stable. Besides, on a theological level this raises the question of the relationship between belief and doubt.

⁶ In English one has to distinguish between faith and belief. The question of the relation of these two nouns is an issue which is debated in English written publications on philosophy of religion (cf. Swinburne 1983).

According to the paradigm-shift which doesn't focus any more on "belief/faith" (expressed as noun) but on the processes of believing, the use of the verb should be favored. When the fluidity of beliefs comes into mind it is more adequate to talk about "to believe". In this sense "*credition*" is the process which takes place in the moments "*while one is believing*". Such a concept of a fluid and processual believing brings up totally novel questions as for instance: when exactly is the starting point of a process of believing? Or, when exactly is the endpoint of a process of believing? There does not exist any reliable data to answer such kind of questions.

What can be stated is the fact that such processes take place in humans. They are part of their ordinary and normal capacities. Creditions are fundamental brain functions (Seitz & Angel 2012, Sugiura et al 2015, Angel & Seitz 2016, Angel & Seitz 2017) which are relevant for many other processes which can be described from psychological and neurophysiological perspectives (Seitz et al 2017; Han et al 2017, Seitz et al 2018a; Seitz et al 2018b). Some of these functions can be found in other vertebrates, although though the processes of believing in humans have species-unique properties due to our possession of symbolic language.

To stress that these believing processes are "normal" is needed to contrast opinions which favor an understanding of beliefs as intrinsically pathological. Neuropsychiatry obviously has many insights in pathological expressions of beliefs like neuroticism or delusion (Langdon & Coltheart 2000, Connors & Halligan 2017). Hence, even the idea of a possible "God Delusion" (Dawkins 2017) was highlighted. But, to label every kind of belief as pathological is unreasonable. It would be analogous to saying that all learning is pathological. Attributes of pathology result from a noun- related conceptualization of belief. Note, the process of believing (*credition*) is a normal process which nevertheless can shift to pathology. But this is not a peculiarity of the believing processes. It is due to their embodiment and their functionality that all inner processes might they be related to the body or the soul can proceed in a normal or in pathological mode. A theory of normal believing processes may help to bridge the gap between epistemological and theological thinking which are, as mentioned above, meanwhile distant fields of reflecting

It is not possible to describe here more detailed the results of the ongoing basic research on those inner processes which are called *credition*. This research brought into play many highly complex aspects of the believing process. As they are embedded and imbodyed they can be analyzed on different levels like cells, neurons, molecules, and so on. Neurophysiological aspects like the role of dopamine (Seitz et al 2018b) or oxytocin (Meissner 2017) can come into the focus. Additionally, biochemical aspects like the relevance of the brain-gut-axis (Holzer 2017) or the influence of the biome (Berg & Sensen 2017) can be highlighted. It can be observed that *creditions* generally are combined with emotional processes of valuation. Therefore, by definition, there are no

creditions without emotions. This drives the attention to emotional aspects of the Christian belief that has an impact on theological thinking. It is inadequate to emphasize only dogmatic and content related aspects of belief

The theoretical background of the believing processes is a matter of basic research. In our applied research we have developed also a theoretical model of credition. To understand this model no detailed knowledge about the theoretical issues are required, it easily can be applied to any communicational setting. It even can be used to support practically all efforts of catechesis or faith related talking, for instance in preaching or in public media.

3. Credition based theological thinking?

Is it possible to use a fluid understanding of belief as base for theological thinking? The question has not been asked and the issue has not been addressed so far. Therefore, no easy answer can be given.

At any rate, one precondition must be addressed before one can try to approach the above question. It has first to be clarified whether belief can be understood as a theological term. Without going into detail, it can be observed that two different options seem to be possible. The famous and influential Protestant theologian Karl Barth (1886 - 1968) denied that belief itself is a theological term though it is the unavoidable precondition of understanding belief and theology [„*conditio sine qua non, nicht aber (...) der Gegenstand und also das Thema der theologischen Wissenschaft*“] (Barth 1962, 80). In his „Kirchliche Dogmatik“ he stresses that belief is narrowly intertwined with trust – the so called “Fiducialglaube” [„*Vertrauen ist der Akt, in dem ein Mensch sich verlassen darf auf die Treue eines anderen, dass dessen Zusage gilt*“] (Barth 1957,18).

One the other side the Catholic theologian Max Seckler (* 1927) claimed that theology might be understood as “*Glaubenswissenschaft*” (Seckler 1988, Seckler 2013), a term which can be translated as “knowledge of belief”.

The implications of this question cannot be discussed in this article. It may suffice to recall that belief is not the same as believing process (see above no. 2). In fact, it is a specific issue to define the relationship between faith/belief and the believing process (Seitz et al 2018a).

The pathway which leads finally to credition as processual phenomenon can be compared with slalom. The starting point was a core problem of any religious education and religious development, namely the question: what is meant by “religious” and even more: what is the religious of the religious? Tackling this problem led to a new question: is the term religious related to religion or to religiosity? And then the next question came into focus: What is meant by the term religiosity? What became clear was that religiosity is much less of

scientific interest than religion (Angel 2013b) and that in English it might be offensive to characterize someone with the term religiosity.

It was proposed that any understanding of religiosity needs to first understand the processes of believing. But, at the same time it became clear that creditions cannot be reduced to the religious sphere alone. Creditions are unavoidable processes in all areas of secular human life.

Oancea⁷ sees very clear that there might be obstacles in approaching the concept of credition:

“One could argue that the Christian and particularly the Orthodox understanding of belief is a matter of the soul and not of the body. If one follows this argument, there is no observable benefit from any progress in studying the bodily life of man. At least, the understanding of body seems to have little relevance for his/her communion with God. Consequently, the binomial “creditions – neuronal processes” would have no significance at all for an Orthodox anthropology, one and the same at all times” (p. 321).

It is imaginable that such a position might be held by many religious thinkers. And, it is evident that positions of this type may not be easily to be disproved. Oancea suggests that it is worth listening to the Fathers and to check what their approach to anthropology was. Regarding the quoted position he argues:

“But, that seems to me to be a reductionist outlook which is quite far from the much broader perspective of the Fathers. The openness of the Fathers for a comprehensive anthropological understanding of humans and their relation to God can be verified by having a closer look in their anthropology” (p. 321).

Of course, Oancea’s training in systematic theological thinking makes him aware of methodological traps.

“It will be necessary to carefully separate different methodological approaches and not to confuse incompatible terms and research interests” (p. 320).

Oancea stresses one important aspect of credition which allows us to bridge – at least in a general way – the distance of different historical epochs.

“The connection between creditions as processes of belief and neuronal processes allows an understanding of belief as embodied. This has a major implication for understanding religious cognition <...>.” (p. 320).

It is worth mentioning that the model of credition also can be used for different theological issues as for instance as tool for the ecumenical process or for interreligious dialogue (Angel & Seitz 2016). The model of credition might also be a helpful instrument to support catechetical interests. Recently at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki a project intends to see the assets of the use of the credition model in the practical work with pupils and students (Mitropoulou 2018). The good results have encouraged the university to open a *Centre of Credition-Based Life-long Learning* with a planned opening in Fall

⁷ Whenever this contribution in honor of Dorin Oancea quotes passages from this chapter they are put in italic.

2019. It was a prospective and clear-sighted view that Oancea also opened the door to relate credition and catechetical interests.

“Additionally, it helps to better formulate a central intention of Christian catechesis: it is not possible to pass over Christian Faith like an object. It has to be overtaken by those who are interested in understanding the meaning of the Christian dogma. Contents of belief and dogmatic concepts are not “alive” without “embodiment” in individual humans and in consequence in Christian communities. This leads to the conclusion that in order to understand Christian belief and the “growing in Christ” one should keep in mind at least the bodily processes complementary to creditions” (p. 320f.).

When Oancea titles his chapter in the book “Soul and Body according to ‘De Fide Orthodoxa’ of St. John of Damascene” he appears to be driven by a double intention. The first one is to justify the theory of credition as relevant for theological thinking. The second is to detect in the “theological architecture” of St. John of Damascus’ “bricks” that might be labelled as “compatible with the theory of credition”. For his contribution, Oancea focused on the relation between the soul and body. The relation of body and soul might be understood as a dominant topic of theory of mind (ToM), even if the highly Platonic soaked term ‘soul’ with some good reasons is avoided in modern debates.

Nevertheless, ancient thinkers ascribed to the soul a variety of capacities. John of Damascene follows this tradition and addresses many of those issues⁸. Thus, we can find topics like “Memory” [*Περὶ τοῦ μνημονευτικοῦ* (chap. 34 / II.20)], “Sensation” or maybe better “perception” [*Περὶ αἰσθήσεως* (chap. 32 / II.18)], “Thinking/Thought” [*Περὶ τοῦ διανοητικοῦ* (chap. 33 / II.19)]. Additionally, issues regarding emotions and feelings are brought on the floor and the Damascene provides reflections like *Περὶ λύπης* [Concerning Pain (or Sorrow); chap. 28 / II.14], *Περὶ φόβου* [Concerning Fear; chap. 29 / II.15] or *Περὶ θυμοῦ* [Concerning Anger chap. 30 / II.16)]. All these topics are central for an understanding of credition.

Oancea’s contribution to the book “Processes of Believing” is the first article to pave a way from modern cognitive approaches to understand the believing processes to the conceptional world of a medieval thinker. Thus, a first role-model exists, which shows an inchoative way to translate similar-meaning concepts of different epochs. His contribution is a most innovative way to relate texts of the Fathers with the theory of credition.

⁸ The first number of chapters indicates the chapters following the original row of 100 chapter; the second one refers to the medieval edition which influenced by the Four Books of Sentences of Petrus Lombardus divided *De Fide Orthodoxa* also in four “books” (cf. later section 4). This version was used by Dorin Oancea.

4. St. John of Damascus

Biographical data

There is no comprehensive account of John's life. What we have are some *vitae* (biographies), two of which are anonymous and of questionable authenticity and authority (Rhodes 2009,15f.). What we know about his life stems mainly from a *vita* in Arabic, translated by *John V* who was patriarch of Jerusalem from at least 706 until 735. Even if the work raises questions of authenticity, it is the most reliable source⁹ known. The most common view is that St. John of Damascus – or in Latin *Joannes Damascenus* – was born in 675 or 676 in Damascus where he spent his youth. This was only forty years after the conquest of Damascus by the Muslim conquerors. Damascus was the first mayor city of the Eastern part of the Roman Empire which was taken over into a Caliphate (Kennedy 2006). Though it is under discussion whether John had an education in Arabic prior to his Greek education or not (Rhodes 2009,16) it is obvious that his work and interests were also influenced by this novel situation as he argued theologically with the "Heresy of the Ishmaelites" (Sahas 1972).

As a monk he lived in a monastery not far from Jerusalem (Holy Lavra of Saint Sabbas, also known as *Mar Saba*) where he died in 749.

Bibliographical data of *De Fide Orthodoxa*

"De fide orthodoxa" which in terms of modern historical research often is named "expositio fidei" belongs to the most reputed writings of John of Damascene. The title of most of the traditional versions is *"Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβῆς τῆς ὀρθοδόξου πίστεως"* (*an Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*). The text was announced earlier in another of St. John's scriptures with the title *Πηγὴ γνώσεως* (*source of knowledge*). It comprises one hundred chapters, according to a tradition which used to structure a text in a hundred chapters. There exist two versions of the numeration because we have two different traditions, which differ in the way how they present the chapters. The "ordinary" row of the chapters is called in science "*expositio ordinata*". Another strand of the written tradition which is called "*expositio inversa*" presents a different order of the chapters. The text that follows is the more common "*expositio ordinata*".

Philosophical background and Relevance of St John's work

The fame of St. John is not so much based on the originality of his thinking. As usual in his time he followed the principle which was highlighted for instance in the Proverbs 1,22: *"Μη μεταίρει ὅρια αἰώνια α ἔστησαν οἱ πατέρες"* [Do not remove the everlasting boundaries] (cf. Kotter 1973, XXVII f.). But he shows a highly developed skill to summarize texts from different authors, to organize their ideas and to harmonize inconsistencies. Thus, St. John is

⁹ Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 94, 484B; cf. Kotter 1973,XXVI.

unavoidably dependent from the philosophical background of his sources, which mostly are based on Platonic, Aristotelian and Neoplatonic thinking.

The “*expositio fidei*” was known not only in the Eastern but also in the Western church. In 1153/1154 a complete translation into Latin was provided by Burgundio Pisanus (1110 - 1193). He intitled the Latin text “*De fide orthodoxa*”. Under this title the text was known throughout the Middle Ages. Petrus Lombardus (1095/1100 - 1160) used this Burgundio’s version when writing his famous “Four books of sentences” (*Liber sententiarum Quatuor*) and also Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274) used it extensively. John of Damascene belongs to the most quoted father in his *Summa Theologica*.

Hence, Oancea’s approach to the position of St. John of Damascus with the concept of credition can also be understood as a first attempt to see whether “bits” of modern cognitive theories can be detected in the traditions of platonic and neo-platonic reflections. Needless to state, that would be a tremendous work of interdisciplinary cooperation to filter these traditions to find out triggers for relating them with the theory of credition.

5. St. John of Damascus and the theory of credition¹⁰

“St. John Damascene deals with faith in Book IV, especially in chapters 9, 10 and 11. Important references can be found in Chapter 13 and 15” (p. 322). Two chapters are explicitly dedicated to faith. The chapter 83 is captured “Concerning Faith” (*Περὶ πίστεως*). Here he stresses the twofold character of faith.

First – and here he follows the trace of St. Paul (Romans 10,17) – faith comes by hearing (*Ἔστι γὰρ πίστις ἐξ ἀκοῆς*). Second, in the tradition of the letter to the Hebrews (11,1) he *presents faith as the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen* (*πίστις ἐλπιζομένων ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων*). The strictly theological understanding makes it conceivable that the 83rd (= III,9) chapter is preceded by a chapter (= III,8) which is entitled “Concerning Faith and Baptism” (*Περὶ πίστεως καὶ βαπτίσματος*). This strict theological approach might give the impression that the position of John of Damascus might not be compatible with an understanding that stresses the fluidity of beliefs as the believing process. But this conclusion would be premature.

It is worth to see how Oancea figures out the bridge between credition and the understanding of faith which is held by St. John. Oancea captures the 2nd section of his book chapter “*The Universal Character of Faith – Structures/Creditions*” (p. 322) which indicates that he transfers the debate into the field of anthropology.

¹⁰ Here I follow mainly the line which was exposed by Dorin Oancea 2017.

“To start with I quote an important assertion St John makes on faith in IV,11: „ ... without faith it is impossible to be saved. For it is by faith that all things, both human and spiritual, are sustained. For without faith neither the farmer does cut his furrow nor does the merchant commit his life to the raging waves of the sea on a small piece of wood, nor are marriages contracted nor any other step in life taken”. Hence Oancea concludes: “With regard to creditions, the first <i.e element by which St. John and the credition theory mate> would be the universal character of faith” (p. 322).

I will come to my conclusions. Oancea bridges in a novel and so far not undertaken way first results of the credition research project and the fundamental question of Christian faith. “*Cognitive processes on the basis of previous experiences, hope and action, these are constitutive elements of his faith.*” (p 323).

The way that Oancea combines traditional positions of the Fathers with new cognitive approaches to understand the believing processes is remarkable. That's the case not only because results are promising for future research. Oancea's way of thinking is also remarkable because he avoids the trap of a pure fascination which sometimes accompanies interdisciplinary approaches. Quite often one can find very far reaching conclusions which neglect the inchoative character in novel fields of research. Oancea is aware of possible restrictions:

“It needs of course deeper theological and anthropological research to clarify more substantially the relation of the concept of credition with traditional theological concepts regarding the role of belief for any understanding of Christian faith” (p. 321).

May this sentence be comprised as challenge which inspires many younger theologians to follow the traces which have been paved into the Credition Research Project by the hereby honoured fellow Dorin Oancea.

Ziua de naștere fericită.

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¹¹ I mainly follow this English version, but sometimes I added some different interpretations of the Greek terms.