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*Bucharest University, Romania (E-mail: nickstanciu@gmail.com)***Spiritual quests and obstacles — an interdisciplinary approach**

In article the phenomenon low-studied in science «quest» is considered. The author of article undertakes original research of sources of a quest and finds them in antique mythology, national culture. Addressing to comparative analysis, on a material of the Serbian, Romanian, Bulgarian and English languages shows that modern the word «quest» semantic corresponds to words search, an obstacle, overcoming of obstacles, barriers. And also describes realization of a set of values of a quest, using religious myths, spiritual practice and modern psychology.

Key words: quest, spiritual quests, type of quest, paradigm, modern stories, symbol, Romanian.

Various types of quest, present in the most different genres of stories, ranging from fairy tales to Hollywood movies about the self-made-man, are founded on an ancient narrative pattern of initiation, in which the protagonist is supposed to overcome a series of obstacles that define his development as an individual. Explicitly or implicitly identified with 'the evil', the obstacles which are to be met are a mere pretext for the inner evolution of the protagonist, for his 'growing up', and for his understanding the difference between the 'true' and the 'false' values of the world. This narrative pattern is equally frequent in religious or spiritual myths all over the world, in alchemy, while modern psychology envisages it in the process of the individualization of human personality. This paper explains how obstacles contribute to the development of the protagonist in his quest for his inner reality, or identity. In all the highlighted cases, it appears that obstacles are only apparently 'evil', as overcoming difficulties is associated to accepting and integrating them, rather than fighting against them. Overcoming obstacles brings higher awareness of what is 'good' and what is 'evil', which is the ultimate aim of the protagonist's quest. Therefore, the paradigmatic purpose of all quests can be regarded as the protagonist's evolution towards a higher inner reality, attainable only if/when obstacles have been ultimately overcome. This paper also explains how obstacles, as 'the evil' are to be integrated and not fought against by the protagonist.

'The Quest' as a Paradigm in Ancient and Modern Stories

The quest is a journey towards a goal, serving as a plot device and (frequently) as a symbol. Various types of quest, present in the most different genres of stories, ranging from fairy tales to Hollywood movies about the 'self-made-man', are founded on an ancient narrative pattern of initiation, in which the protagonist is supposed to overcome a series of obstacles that define his development as an individual. Therefore, the two notions, 'quest' and 'obstacles' are inseparable. However, one can notice that the journey of the protagonist might be a sort of traveling through some geographical places, searching for a 'concrete' or symbolical goal, or it might take the shape of an inner journey, in which the goal to attain is spiritual. Whatever type the quest might be, it necessarily includes the obstacles, which the main character, as a special person, a sort of a 'hero', or 'the Elected One' overcomes. The word 'obstacles' can be easily translated into Serbian as *prepreke* (sr.), and into Romanian as *obstacole* (ro.). However, the obstacles of the quests are not mere 'obstacles', but are defined by special, old words, such as *iskušenja* (sr.), and *încercări* (ro.), which semantically include the tempting of the protagonist during his quest. It is interesting to notice that in Romanian, for example, the word *obstacole* exists, and is frequently used in common language, but the specialized word for obstacles in the various quests is *încercări*. The English closest translation for the mentioned Serbian and Romanian words might be 'being put to the test'. Therefore 'overcoming obstacles' in quests actually mean 'passing a test' and 'taking it', which might indicate that modern quest patterns are founded on mythical initiation models, which were preserved in the Balkan region, not only in the folktales, but also in the language. Moreover, the paradigmatic purpose of all quests can be regarded in terms of the protagonist's evolution, as related to his encounter with 'the evil', which he overcomes — which is a *condition sine qua non* of all mythical and spiritual quests.

The common scenario we have detected could be defined as comprehending the following stages: 1) the description of a state of 'normality' of the reality or of the world; 2) the insertion of an element, followed by the disturbance taking place in the 'normal' state of things presented at the beginning; 3) this stage is usually

accompanied by the torment of the main character or protagonist, who becomes aware that reality is different from what it seemed to be in the beginning; 4) the protagonist's quest to understand the disturbance and confront 'the evil' in order to overcome it; 5) the successful overcoming of the situation, which only apparently represents a return to the first stage, as the re-instated order in 'reality' is of a higher order, more valuable, and both the protagonist and the new 'reality' are enriched by the encounter with the difficulties (obstacles) that had taken place in the meantime, and were overcome. In this scheme, the obstacles represent the difficulties that the protagonist had to face, by confronting negative characters or situations, by confronting the Devil, or the dark side of one's own personality, etc.

This pattern can be highlighted by using some examples taken from religious or spiritual myths all over the world, from yoga, alchemy and modern psychology. While analyzing, for example, the case of Prince Siddhartha and his spiritual transformation into the Buddha, the Enlightened One, one can notice that the stages of Prince Siddhartha's enlightenment, if not considered as a process pertaining to the development of somebody's psychic or spiritual life, are similar to the stages usually followed by the laic heroes of fairy tales, in which the singular protagonist has to encounter different obstacles, which he must overcome in order to prove that he is the right one, the truly 'elected one', or, at least, an exceptional person. An approximately similar pattern, no matter if labeled as a 'realistic' one, is often followed in the Hollywood movies dealing either with the 'case' of the 'self-made man', or with the protagonist's saving a whole group of people from a disaster (natural calamities, shipwreck, aliens, social injustice, etc), in which the main character is the 'embodiment' of the principle of 'good', while the obstacles he must confront might be defined as 'the evil'. Therefore, one can also assume that the 'laic' quests are backed up by a long tradition of 'spiritual' quests, aiming at encompassing the 'growing up' of the main character. On the other hand, in both 'worldly' and 'spiritual' quests, the protagonist becomes 'better' after having overcome the various obstacles, and the process of individual transformation might be regarded as the very aim of the narration.

Spiritual Quests in Time and Space

I. 1. Bernardo Bertolucci's movie *Little Buddha*

Modern reception of mythological themes and religious ideas are often subject to multidisciplinary and multimedia approach. In Bertolucci's film *Little Buddha* (1993), the quest of Prince Siddhartha (the future Buddha), although roughly following the pattern described above, is aimed at his discovering of the very roots of 'the evil' of the world and at overcoming them. The transition from the first stage of the pattern to the second is triggered by Prince Siddhartha's acquaintance with human misery, illness, death, all related to the very human condition in this world, defined as suffering. The cause of suffering Prince Siddhartha identifies is, actually, the decay of the physical body in time. Therefore, the future Buddha is engaged in a quest, aiming at his finding out the ultimate truth about the nature of existence itself, about life and death and man's possibility to transcend the misery of his physical, mortal condition, and attain immortality. Actually, his quest is backed up by the idea that mortality means the decay of the matter *in time*, and the goal of his quest is the possibility of *stepping out of time*, in order to attain immortality. Only thus can one escape suffering and death. Therefore, *immortality* is associated with the idea of *freedom*, while his quest signifies his endeavor of getting rid of the laws of matter governing over the material world, and conditioning every living being. In this respect, *Immortality/freedom* implies a sort of 'de-conditioning' oneself from the laws of matter.

It is important to underline the fact that Buddha's goal is not a mere philosophical discourse, but is based on the practical meditative and existential *experience* inherited from the yogic practice, which is to be further discussed. In order to find out the ultimate identity of the world, Siddhartha must first go deep into his own identity, and experience it practically. Putting his own existence at test, by psycho-physical practices, he will test the overall existence.

This type of quest is based on the organic view of the world, characteristic for all traditional cultures and religions, and is closely related to the idea that man's existence is but part of the overall existence. Therefore, only when finding out one's own 'true identity', one can understand the principles of omnipresent life, generally speaking. This pattern of quest is also founded on the idea that mortality and entropy are the imminent *conditions* of material/physical life in time (the cause of suffering), while the quest for immortality is necessarily related to *de-conditioning* oneself from the laws of the matter, i.e. from the different psycho-physiological functions, that tie the body to the matter, representing thus obstacles in attaining immortality. This kind of 'spiritual quest' is very difficult to be attained, as man has, by birth, a physical body, i.e. a body

conditioned by the physical laws, while immortality is viewed as banning them, while remaining still alive. The obstacles Prince Siddhartha must confront during his quest are, therefore, the obstacles of physical *conditionement*, which oppose his goal to attain *de-conditionement* from the laws of matter and decay.

I. 2. Apparent Obstacles: Antagonisms and Dichotomies Solved at a Deeper Level of Understanding Reality. *Coincidentia Oppositorum*

In his *Foreword* to the study *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, Mircea Eliade, the renowned Romanian anthropologist, philosopher and historian of religions points out:

We cannot neglect one of the most important discoveries made by India: the discovery of the witnessing of consciousness, as freed from its psycho-physiological structures and their temporal conditioning, the consciousness of 'the liberated one', i.e. of the one who has succeeded in overcoming the borders of time and enjoys the true and unimaginable freedom (Eliade 1984: 23).

It is this kind of inner reality we are interested in, as an issue of Prince Siddhartha's quest. The liberation Eliade points to is preceded, especially in its final stage, by a long psycho-physiological process, full of obstacles, which is rather difficult to understand from the standpoint of modern man, subject to a materialistic *Weltanschauung* (world view), although modern depth psychology, cultural anthropology, physics and other disciplines have revealed different structures and patterns of reality, as hidden beyond the surface of appearances. As an anthropologist, Mircea Eliade detects, under the apparent surface of human behavior, deeper patterns where apparently opposed attitudes are not antagonistic, but very much alike, if considered in their functional deep structure. For example, in his last interview, Mircea Eliade (Eliade 1989: 13) reveals the fact that there is no essential difference between a religious fanatic making prostrations in his temple, and an atheist paying his respects to Lenin's Mausoleum, as only the object of the two believers is different, while the inner pattern of the two individuals (the need to fervently believe in a higher goal) is similar, and appearance should not deceive us. Not that Lenin's Mausoleum is a religious symbol, but it certainly performs *the function* of a religious symbol. Both the atheist and the religious fanatic follow the same deep psychological pattern of behavior, no matter of the space and time they live in. Considered in this manner, many things, only apparently opposite, become, at a deeper scrutiny, identical as far as *their function* is considered. It is at this deeper, synchronic level where, what is usually defined as *coincidentia oppositorum*, works.

The insight in the *synchronic pattern* of things, as *opposed to their diachronic* manifestation in time and space might reveal the fact, as Mircea Eliade puts it in his study, *The Quest*^{*}, that 'a great number of dichotomies and polarities *imply each other reciprocally*, as, for example, the cosmic polarities and the sexual and religious dichotomies.' (Eliade, 1994: 269). Polarities and dichotomies are to be encountered at every pace. Among the cosmic polarities, there is the structure of space (right/left, up/down) and time (day/night, the rhythm of the seasons), the process of overall life (life/death); among ethical dichotomies, there is 'good' and 'evil', and many more... Among all types of dichotomies and polarities 'there is opposition, collision, fight, but, in certain cases the conflict is solved by a union, which gives birth to a 'third term', while in other polarities the antagonist forces paradoxically coexist in *coincidentia oppositorum*, or they are transcended, i.e. radically abolished or made unreal, incomprehensible, or meaningless. (I especially have in view certain metaphysics and 'mystical' Indian techniques).' (1994:270).

As in spiritual quests the protagonist's encounter with the obstacles is often related to the encounter with 'the evil', it might be interesting to investigate the dichotomic nature of the 'evil', the very confrontation with it and the meaningful result in terms of myth and culture.

I. 3. *Hommo Religiosus* and the Obstacles to Overcome to Attain Enlightenment

II.

The long psycho-physiological process Siddhartha undergoes in his quest, before becoming the Buddha, the Enlightened one, follows the pattern of the spiritual transformation, known as initiation, which comprehends a set of practical experiences known to all traditional societies throughout the ages, taking only different shapes and forms of expression, according to the various traditions. Whatever the methods of initiation might be, the apprentice is supposed to overcome certain 'obstacles' before attaining, or not, 'enlighten-

^{*} In the original edition: Eliade. M. (1969). *The Quest. History and Meaning in Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

ment', known in yoga rather as 'self-realization'. Being a *homo religiosus* does not necessarily imply attaining enlightenment. As defined by Eliade, *homo religiosus* is that individual, belonging to either traditional or modern societies, who is able to escape the 'terror of history': no matter what he believes in, *homo religiosus* can stand and spiritually escape the atrocities and injustice of history, or natural calamities taking place in the time of his life, as he invests historical, diachronic facts with a higher, synchronic meaning, tied to the meaning of life (existence) itself. This process of stepping out of history in order to live spiritually beyond the temporal and spatial boundaries of one's existence has been known to all civilizations throughout time. However, could Buddha or Jesus attain the goal of their spiritual quest only by escaping 'the terror of history'?

Although European thought has insisted upon social and historical factors as the only 'obstacles' for man to attain freedom, Eliade reveals (in the *Foreward* to his *Yoga...* 1984: 19–20) the fact that Indian thought has also envisaged other, additional 'binds' by which man is tied to the material world he lives in, such as physiologic, geographic, social, biographic, cultural, etc. factors, which condition his existence and reduce his existential freedom. If being a *homo religiosus* means being able to detach oneself from history by investing events with a *meta-historical meaning*, it appears that, in order to attain enlightenment, man must be able to do more than that, namely to de-condition himself from many more things that define human existence. This is the kind of quest Siddharta takes up. But de-conditioning from the material life, i.e. from all the factors that bind man to physical existence, practically means death. Paradoxically, that is what initiation is about. In many of the cultures of the world of all times, initiation follows the same scheme: suffering, death, resurrection. (Eliade 1974: 33). As a symbol for resurrection, the wheat grain is often cited, which is buried into earth in order to sprout again, giving thus birth to a new life. The ritual process of initiation into a spiritual, magical, soteriological doctrine, largely present in traditional societies, which use different methods, is always secret. However, the aim of initiation is always the same: the apprentice is supposed to be spiritually 'reborn' into a new life, after having overcome a whole set of, often painful, obstacles.

In the process of initiation, which involves the three stages (suffering, death and resurrection), and which is to be found in most civilizations worldwide, one can envisage the fact that suffering and death, as *the obstacles to be overcome*, are the symbolic expression of the difficult process of de-conditioning from the material world. This is the meaning of fasting, abstinences of all kinds, and other renunciations, for example. The ultimate goal of all beliefs is encompassed in the very word 'religion', which comes from the Latin *re ligare*, which illustrates the *re-union* of the individual with the Total Reality he is encompassed in. Notions such as 'self-realization' or 'enlightenment' are different ways of putting into words practical human psycho-physical experiences, attained only after overcoming indescribable obstacles, by great spiritual masters, saints or initiates.

I. 4. The Illusions of the Ego as Obstacles in the Spiritual Quest

Obstacles, as practical experiences, representing the different stages in the quest for 'enlightenment', can be only approximately put into wording. Maybe, this is the reason why religions and spiritual teachings often make use of parables and quest stories. The circulation of these stories used to be so intense that, for example, the story of Buddha came over even to the Balkans, intermediated by the Byzantine culture, and taking the shape of a Christian story, known in Romanian as the folk novel of *Varlaam and Ioasaf*. The same story has got Arab, Georgian, Greek, Latin, French, English and German variants, the study of which might be an interesting subject for further analysis, which is not intended in this case. (Wikipedia: 04.04.2013)

In other cases, making use of the ancient terminology, referring to the spiritual obstacles and the practical techniques to be used for overcoming them, the Indians have got Sanskrit specialized terminology. In a text, belonging to the yoga school of practice Eliade attended while in Rishikesh, India, known today as The Bihar School of Yoga (whose main yogic master has been and is still regarded nowadays Swami Shivananda, whom Eliade met in person), the yogic spiritual development takes place while one's awareness rises from one's physical body and successively passes through all its five energetic *koshas* or sheaths which surround the body (*annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijñanamaya, anandamaya*), and full enlightenment is attained in *anandamaya kosha*. (Satyasangananda Saraswati 2007: 2 — 3) The process is described as extremely difficult as the illusions of one's ego, as obstacles during the process, are so strong, that they appear as very «real» and lure the disciple to renounce his spiritual quest, while the individual who aspires to enlightenment must be decided and fearless as well as striving to understand that everything that he encounters, his visions, his psycho-physical experiences and troubles, no matter how hard they might be, cannot harm him, as they

are only a reiteration of his own past impressions, or of the past of the human species that inevitably come to the surface in the process of yogic meditation:

(a) «All of these experiences /of man's evolution throughout time/ are stored in the *vijnanamaja kosha*. In order to step into the arena of spiritual ecstasy, you have to go through this zone and face what is stored there eye to eye. /.../ In modern psychology, the causal body or *karana sharira* is known as the realm of unconsciousness. You may even term it the psyche of man. It is the mythical Pandora's Box, virtually the skeleton in the closet. You cannot know what is stored there until there is awakening in the *vijnanamaya kosha*.» (Satyasangananda Saraswati 2007: 8)

All these terrible experiences, although seemingly coming from the outside, are, in fact, part of the individual's own psyche, in which, to put it into terms of psychology, the subconscious and the unconscious are lying. What we called at the beginning as 'obstacle (s)', appears to be a constitutive part of the human psyche in Buddha's case and in the case of the yogic practice. In the movie *Little Buddha* by Bertolucci, for example, like in the Buddhist scripts, Siddhartha goes successively through the different experiences of de-conditioning, and after fasting and renunciation, when he finds the famous 'middle path,' his experiences can also be described in terms of the yoga practices as follows:

(b) «So one can say that *vijnanamaja* is the doorway to *anandamaya*. The experiences of *vijnanamaya* provide you with glimpses of what is in store for you as your awareness begins to experience pure bliss, but the experience again drops due to the appearance and disappearance of distractions and the one-pointedness of mind. All siddhas and saints must have passed through this stage before they attained enlightenment. The tales about Buddha, point out that prior to nirvana he encountered the demons and bewitching damsels, as the forty days and forty nights when Christ encountered temptation before he experienced God. When there is awakening in the *vijnanamaya kosha* /.../ the practitioner becomes clairvoyant and telepathic; he begins to know many things about people and events before they happen, which come to him in the form of dreams, thoughts or visions. /.../ He develops the power to read other people's thoughts and also to change them. Or else he may develop healing powers. /.../ In some exceptional cases, depending on the extent of his advent into the level of the *vijnanamaya kosha*, he may be even able to resurrect life, or enter another person's body.» (Satyasangananda Saraswati 2007: 6–7).

(c) «The most important thing you have to know is that *vijnanamaya kosha* is the realm of your unconscious mind or psyche. It is a world of signs and symbols, colours and lights. And your unconscious is part of the collective unconscious. It is directly linked to the collective unconsciousness or *hiranyagarbha*, the golden womb, which holds everything that has ever come into existence or is waiting to come into existence. It is the cosmic storehouse to which the unconscious mind of each and every individual is linked. That is why, when you experience *vijnanamaya kosha* you become intuitive, because you begin to perceive things which belong to the four dimensions of time: past, present, future, and, beyond those, to eternity.» (Satyasangananda Saraswati 2007: 15).

In the story of Buddha, whose spiritual techniques are related to the yogic practices, as in the 20th century film *Little Buddha*, the quotations (a) and (b) are illustrative for Siddhartha's experiencing successively de-conditioning first from simple things, as thirst and sexual desire, but his experience goes deeper into the history of the evolution of mankind, and he experiences floods and wars, as well as «the five bewitching damsels», representing: Pride, Greed, Fear, Desire, and Ignorance. As he does not give in, in the process of his encounter with the 'evil', as we have put it, Siddhartha becomes, under the famous banyan tree, the Buddha, or the Enlightened One. It appears that in Buddha's case, 'the obstacles' reside in one's own ego. In the final scene under the tree, after having succeeded in going beyond forms and beyond time, Buddha's own image appears as a mirror image from the pond, taking him by his hand, dragging him downwards into the water, and saying: 'You live in me, I am your house'. But, having got rid of the five symbolical bewitching damsels that we have named before, Buddha is able to discern: 'Lord of my ego, you are pure illusion'. The Lord of Buddha's ego is god Mara, the god of death, which means that in order to attain enlightenment, or 'nirvana', or immortality (here synonymous terms), one has to renounce his ego, which is viewed also as an illusion, and which (so deeply rooted/conditioned in the material world) is the main obstacle in attaining enlightenment. With Buddha, it is man's ego that can be identified as the 'obstacle' in the spiritual quest for inner reality.

II. Jesus Christ's Obstacles

If we consider the situation of Jesus Christ, things look similar, although one can notice some differences. Here no physical or psychological practices are mentioned as such. Still his initiation, which is his

being baptized, is described in *The Bible** in the same terms of being tempted. In order for Jesus to become the Christ (or the Messiah), he had to confront another type of 'obstacles', which are presented as NOT being inside himself, as in Buddha's case, but outside, in the shape of Satan. After his baptism, Jesus went to the desert, where he stayed for forty days and forty nights during which, when Jesus got hungry, Satan, the tempter, appeared and tempted him three times: 1) 'If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.' But he answered and said, 'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' 2) 'If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down /from the pinnacle of the temple/, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone'. Jesus said unto him: 'It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' 3) 'Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; And saith unto him: 'All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.' Then saith Jesus unto him, 'Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written: Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' (*The New Testament, The Gospel According to St. Matthew* 4: 3–10). After Jesus didn't give in while tempted by Satan, as Buddha didn't give in while lured by god Mara, Satan disappeared, as god Mara did also in Buddha's case.

II. The Spiritual Experience (s) of Jesus and Buddha — a Parallel

In one way or another, the testing of Jesus during his encounter with 'the obstacle' (Satan) also comprises elements defining one's ego, such as greed, ignorance, desire, pride and fear, as in Buddha's case. So the encounter with 'the inner shadow' of the two protagonists, after initiation, and before attaining enlightenment is similar. Both Jesus and Siddhartha met 'the obstacles' while retiring from the world in their endeavor to de-condition themselves from the material world, and fight 'the obstacles', in the solitude of their retreat, within an inner reality. It appears that the only difference is the fact that Buddha, following the yogic conception, confronts his own ego, in the shape of the god of death Mara, while Jesus has to face Satan, following the main obstacle present in his own spiritual practice or belief — within his inner reality. Moreover, the yogic quotations given above as (b), (c), and partially (a), also match some of the facts related to Jesus in *The New Testament*. Such are, for example, the power of healing, the resurrecting of Lazarus from the dead, appearing without one's physical body in several places, the perception of different temporal dimensions, and all sorts of miracles described as the deeds of the enlightened people, attained psychical powers, as being the side effects of enlightenment in all cases. The main difference in the case of the two protagonists is the conception of sin. While for a yogi 'sin' is ignorance, according to the Christian belief, sin is viewed as not paying heed to the holy texts, to what has been written. Buddha is, allegedly, the beginner of a new spiritual path, although his yogic gurus are known (Mircea Eliade even states that Buddhism is not essentially different from yoga), while Jesus performs many deeds just in order to follow what has been written (in *The Old Testament*), and thus prove that he is the expected Messiah, i.e. 'the Chosen One', the Son of God.

III. Individual Spiritual Quest

However, the convergence between Buddhism and Christianity, which might not be apparent in the film *Little Buddha* is the viewing of Nirvana, respectively of God's Kingdom (in *The New Testament*), after the initiation has taken place. As Mircea Eliade states (Eliade 1982. Vol. 2: 91), Buddha would never answer the question where *nirvana* is, whether it is outside the individual perception or outside it, or on the state of the holy man in *nirvana*. According to Eliade, Buddha refuses to answer such a question, as the answer would distract the aspirant to enlightenment from his own, individual quest, as he would again follow a new doctrine, while nirvana or self-realization goes beyond the level of the mental, and represents an issue of total experience, in which the self, as inner reality, unites to the cosmos. The very aim of the spiritual quest is to envisage that both inner and outer reality belongs to a unique, to one and the same reality, which is overall existence. Buddha says that a man hit by a poisonous arrow, should not waste his time in discovering who shot it (a *kshatriya* or a Brahman... to what family he belongs, whether he is tall, short or of a medium height; from what village or city he comes), what kind of poison he used, whether the arrow has got feathers or not, if it has a metal end or not, but must hurry up to take it out of his body as soon as possible and in the most efficient way. 'The man died without knowing these things, /.../, just like the one who would refuse to

* We used King James's version of *The Bible* for illustration.

follow the way of holiness before solving one or another philosophical problem' (Eliade 1982. Vol. 2: 92–93). In the *New Testament*, there is also confusion as to what *The Good News* is, and whether it is a synonym for *the kingdom of God*, or *the kingdom of heaven* (*Mark*, 1: 15, *Matthew*, 4:17). Moreover, in *Luke* 17: 21, Jesus says: 'the kingdom of God is within you,' and, in other places (*Mark*, 4: 26; 30, and *Matthew*, 13: 28), the Kingdom (nirvana, in the case of Buddha) is compared with the development of the mustard seed that grows alone, or with the yeast that makes the dough grow. But unlike Buddha, Jesus had to fight two kinds of 'obstacles': the one in the shape of Satan, after his baptism, and a historical 'obstacle.' He seems to have succeeded in overcoming only Satan; the historical 'obstacles' might be regarded as part of a new 'initiation ritual,' of dying and being resurrected, reiterating once again, by his Christian followers, the symbol (ritual) of a corn of wheat, which is buried in order to make possible a new life.

If 'the obstacles' remain confined within the borders of the individual's ego in Buddha's case, in the case of the Christians, it is *imago Christi*, which means identification with Jesus Christ's suffering and martyrdom in history, that defines the meta-historical meaning that provides Christians with an example for stepping out of history, by following Jesus Christ's model. Jesus himself after his resurrection points out to his followers 'the signs' or criteria for identifying those who will be redeemed: 'he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' He further delineates the tasks of his followers, the Apostles: 'In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.' (*Mark*, 16: 16–18) — which all seem to point back to quotations (a), (b), and (c) present in the yogic texts.

This might lead to the conclusion that, in the case of the spiritual quest, after 'the obstacles' are defeated, the enlightened person makes immediately contact with a higher inner/outer reality that has also a feedback impact on his psycho-physical state, enabling him to handle in a new manner the laws of time, space and causality, as we normally accept them, and which, in the case of an enlightened person, appear as different. As the description of these experiences is unsayable in terms of logical discourse, they can become obvious only in terms of symbols, colours and lights, or parabolae, as it appears in the yogic text (c) quoted above.

Ta Twam Asi (That Is You)

The perception of Nirvana or God's kingdom as inhabiting ourselves is dealt with by various Romanian writers and philosophers.

The Journey towards the Center and the Labirinth.

Mihai Eminescu, the great Romanian writer, whose poem *Ta Twam Asi (That Is You)* defines that view, as well as in Mircea Eliade's early essay *The Journey towards the Centre (Drumul spre centru)*, to which, among other Romanian philosophers and writers belonging to the existentialist (rom. *trăirist*) period between the two world wars, we can also mention Cioran, the skeptic, who seems to have made the effort towards de-conditioning himself from the material world, and 'nullified' the value of the mere intellectual, logical discourse, but who seemed unable to connect with the cosmos, as the enlightened people are said to do. For Cioran, the encounter with the 'obstacles' of history and with himself represented the main event in 20th century Existentialism.

V. Integration of 'Good' and 'Evil' and Spiritual Self-Realization as the Goal of the Quest in Ancient and Modern Times

A possible encounter with spiritual obstacles does not necessarily take place only with exceptional people, in their quest and practice to attain enlightenment. The psychologist Carl Gustav Jung harbours the idea that people's psychological crises are founded on their impossibility to accept a side of their existence or life experience, which they deeply consider as unjust, or evil, or as 'a shadow,' as we may call it. Jung supports his argument on the Biblical character of Job, in *An Answer for Job / Un răspuns la Iov*. (Jung 1997: 220 et sq.), who was mistreated by God at the suggestion of Satan, only in order to make sure his belief was genuine. After the faithful Job, lost everything, not only what he owned, but his family as well, and while keeping silent about the kindness of God, he succeeded in accepting God as he is and still believed in him. In Jung's opinion, Job succeeded in putting his belief beyond what is good or bad, or, in psychological terms, he succeeded in integrating 'good' and 'evil' in his belief, and thus experienced a successful process of individuation. This is a process, usually referred to by the Christians as 'Thy will be done' (in *the Lord's Prayer*), that can also be regarded as an encounter with the 'obstacle', the 'shadow', as well as a psychical integration with

it, by the act of the mere witnessing of ‘the evil’, with no psychological, individual involvement — as is the case of the film *Little Buddha*.

This integration of ‘good’ and ‘evil,’ regarded by both Jung and Eliade as an example of *coincidentia oppositorum* (Jung — Eliade: 26–28), coincides with the process in alchemy by which *opus magnum* is obtained. Eliade notices that if the Christians wanted to save man, the alchemists intended to save the whole Creation: their aim was *apokatastasis*, or cosmic salvation. Their goal was not the study of the matter, but the way to liberate the soul from the matter, which matches the process of initiation and its different approaches, as described above. In alchemy, the process ranges from the stage of *nigredo* (darkness/devil/shadow) to the stage of *albedo*. This process goes necessarily through a state of *rubedo*. However, in order for *albedo* to take place (or, let us say enlightenment, in the cases described before), and in order for *rubedo* to be sustainable, blood/*rubedo* (the red of life) was necessary. It was only in this case that *nigredo*/the shadow/the obstacle was integrated. Therefore, in all the described cases (Buddha, Christ, Job, alchemy and depth psychology), an encounter with the ‘obstacle’ and a sacrifice on the part of the individual is needed to make the final process of integration possible. (In Eliade 1989: 12, Eliade also points to the fact that, although he and Jung were both interested in yoga, alchemy and shamanism, their ‘paths’ were parallel. Eliade had been dealing with the issue of alchemy since high school, and published his first book on Indian alchemy before Jung published anything in that field. Besides that, ‘for Jung alchemy is a model for the process he named individuation. After my stay in India, alchemy was for me a spiritual technique, a technique for spiritual self-realization’).

Obstacles Beyond the Moral Categories

It appears that in all the described situations, the individual is able to spiritually evolve not necessarily by opposing ‘the obstacles,’ by fighting with them, but by confronting them in the sense of *being aware* that ‘the obstacles’ exist as part of one’s life experience, and lie at the very roots of human existence. The ‘obstacles’ are necessary as, for example, an earthquake is necessary for the earth to restore its balance after an inner tension, which is beyond of what man usually regards as ‘good’ or ‘evil’. In this respect, obstacles are also beyond man’s moral categories of ‘good’ and ‘evil’. If in modern psychology successive encounters with ‘the shadow’ and integrations with it might take place, in the traditional cultures, or in different religions, the process is described as essential and is linked to man’s understanding of the meaning and aim of physical existence itself, and life, generally speaking. Therefore, the obstacles present in the narrative pattern exposed at the beginning of this work should not be considered only in the segment of man’s confronting ‘the evil’, but within the context of the overall model of the evolution of the protagonist facing the obstacles.

The quest for inner reality, which is in all cases necessarily followed by ‘obstacles’ is a reiteration of the ancient process of initiation, which takes the protagonist from a lower to a higher level of perception and understanding reality. It is hard to establish if man’s quest for ‘a higher reality’ became symbolic, or if human experience itself was illustrated in myths, symbols and parables in order to provide examples of human behavior and wisdom, able to stand the passage of time, space, and different kinds of *Weltanschauung*, which can be equally followed in fairy tales, films, and modern science alike.

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Н.Станчу

«Spiritual quests»: пәнаралық тұрғыдан зерттеу

Мақалада ғылымда аз зерттелген «квест» феномені қарастырылды. Мақала авторы «квест»-тің шығу тарихын зерттеп, оның қайнар көздерін ежелгі мифология мен халық мәдениетінен табады. Салыстырмалы әдісті қолдана отырып, серб, румын, болгар және ағылшын тілдерінің материалы негізінде «квест» сөзі қазіргі кезде семантикалық жағынан «ізденіс», «кедергі», «кедергілер мен қиындықтарды жеңу» сияқты ұғымдарды беретінін анықтайды. Сондай-ақ квесттің барлық мағыналарын діни мифтер, рухани іс-тәжірибе мен қазіргі психология арқылы көрсетті.

Н.Станчу

Междисциплинарный подход в изучении «Spiritual quests»

В статье рассмотрен малоизученный в науке феномен «квест». Автором исследованы истоки квеста и связь их в античной мифологии, народной культуре. Обращаясь к сравнительному анализу, автор на материале сербского, румынского, болгарского и английского языков показал, что современное слово «квест» семантически соотносится со словами «поиск», «препятствие», «преодоление препятствий, барьеров» и множество значений слова «квест» реализовано с использованием религиозных мифов, духовной практики и современной психологии.

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*Университет им. Я.А.Коменского, Братислава, Словакия (E-mail: matejko@fphil.uniba.sk)***Образ России в Словакии: стереотипы и современная политическая метафора в СМИ**

Статья посвящена образу России и русского в сознании словаков. Авторами рассмотрена динамика отношений к русским как на историческом, так и на современном языковом материале, представленном в средствах массовой информации. Сделан вывод о закономерных трансформациях образа русского (русский — брат, русский — враг) и связи их с историческими и политическими событиями XIX–XXI веков.

Ключевые слова: образ, образ России, словаки, русофильство, средства массовой информации.

Идея о России как надежном друге и оплоте славян возникает еще в поэме Яна Коллара «Дочь Славы», воспевавшего образ России как мощного дуба, а также в трактате Людовита Штура «Славянство и мир будущего»¹, в котором внушительно развивается образ могучего брата-защитника: хотя эти образы возникли в разное время, их объединяет общее убеждение, что Россия представляет надежный оплот славян во времена их национального угнетения.

¹ Работа, написанная на немецком, опубликована впервые в русском переводе в 1867 г., немецкое издание «Das Slawenthum und die Welt der Zukunft» вышло в 1931 г. В словацком переводе текст появился только в 1993 г. [ЭР]. Режим доступа: http://zlatyfond.sme.sk/dielo/359/Stur_Slovanstvo-a-svet-buducnosti/1