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IMAGE AND PASSION: REFLECTING ON FILM

Abstract: *The relationship between image and passion is a privileged subject of the Christian ascetic literature and the Byzantine philosophy. This paper explores the consequences of such a relationship between image and passion on the issues of the film and the film image, and from the perspective of the film theory, philosophy and the Christian theology, with an emphasis on the concepts of personality and communication.*

Key words: *image, film, personality, freedom, icon, Christianity*

The attempt to give a conceptual definition of film in the encounter or rather in the clash with the illusory spontaneity of its emergence and development, which views film primarily as a media phenomenon, contains at the very beginning several constants. Firstly, attempts to conceptually define film as a medium – meaning reflecting film, on film, and with film – occur only in its cultural and social paradigmization and contextualization, while other attempts to cognitively generalize and abstract this phenomenon at a conceptual level are primarily concerned with the search for its artistic identity or, in more fortunate cases, with the preservation-respect of its specific artistic-media, i.e. technological-expressive ambivalence, even its splitness-dividedness. If every splitness-dividedness is primarily related to the relationship between the subject and world, which threatens the division in the subject, and thus nothingness and death, every mediator in this relationship, a construct in itself, is grounded on its own relational identity, i.e. on the character of the relationship, which brings into question identity as such, and with it the possibility of speech. For how is one to speak of relationship as such, of something (of something at all?) which is relationship as such or the thing as such, how is one to speak of what is barely a cultural fact, let alone a work, an achievement, something created, hence something that enriches the world of things and with it the living world, something that is not iteration, copyism, “barren luciferianism” of duplicating what already exists and is acknowledged as existing.¹ These are some of the prevailing dilemmas of modernism, where the imperative of *novum* meets the paradox of new wine in old bottles, but is fundamentally a language problem, where film with its (once again) deceptive illusiveness and documentary nature is presented as an ideal object for mastering the new language, i.e. the new and ever new attempts to master the world.

Therefore, film appears to be passive, a victim, in search of its language so as to justify itself, not to answer, enter a dialogue, speak in general. For by what means can film speak and what about, the advocates of its mechanical-reproductive and constructionist-automatic nature will ask, by what means can film think and what about, the advocates of its mass-industrial and oppressive-manipulative nature will ask. Is film supposed to speak and think at all, the advocates of pseudo-humanistic sentimentalism will say, believing that art is emotion, and emotion, meaning spirituality, is already man as a whole, all that is needed either by him who gives, or him who receives. In short, film is denied of life, which is basically concerned with the problem of representation on film, i.e.

¹ „Art does not aspire to complete reality or parallelly create a new being (which would be barren luciferianism), it wants to present its own word, idea, contemplative likeness” (Булгаков, С. (1998) *Икона и иконопоштовање [The Icon and its Veneration]*, Београд: Источник, p. 42).

what film represents (or what is represented on film), automatically entailing the question of its ontological, and maybe even its ontic status.²

Laying the foundation of film's artistic identity, which went from emphasis on photography to emphasis on editing, was related to the shift from uncreative and tautological-reproductive automatism towards artistic generalization and abstraction, while the return to the image was related to rejecting the arbitrary nature of abstraction in favor of the necessity of being. Both were done in the name of art (creativity) and freedom, but both threatened – like everything in our age (age-century and age-aeon), all idea-ideologies and all righteous struggles, activisms and humanisms – to turn against creativity and freedom, hence against man, to turn us into slaves and dust.

If the synonym for film “motion pictures” – or more precisely and elegantly put “motion picture” or picture in motion – emerged early on, then it is understandable why the reflection on film has been dominated since the beginning by the search for the character and nature of this picture, that is for the answer to the question what does it represent, or as it is sometimes normatively said, what should it represent with regard to the authentic nature of film as film, and in relation to other arts, media and forms of human creation and actions. The agreement reached early on that film is not a mere mechanical reproduction of reality or a (magically doubled) reality as such,³ was divided at the very beginning into a pro- and an anti-mimetic modality, which viewed the nature of film image either as an “outer” or “inner” reality, separating the inner from the outer image, which had as ultimate theoretical and practical consequences exceptionally subtle insights about film viewed as thinking and as language.⁴ However, it seems as if both tendencies are basically searching the whole time for an excuse to liberate film from relying on the given reality, and therefore liberate the film image from beneath the weight of the world and matter, which only and solely documents existence, the presence of this world and nothing outside it, no other worlds – possible, virtual, transcendent.⁵ On the other

² Which, actually, in both cases, as usual when dealing with representation, has a motivation in “language”, given the two substantially different views of the language relation towards the world: the signifying and the world-revealing, following the division into the ontological (speech-revealing-signs-world) and ontic (language-communicating-designations-things) dimension, i.e. inner-worldly communication and the establishment of the world. (Жуњић. С. (2012) *Филозофија и њен језик [Philosophy and Its Language]*, Београд: Плато, р.104).

³ Although it can be found in works of Ricciotto Canudo, this thesis was more systematically and scientifically elaborated by Rudolf Arnheim: “Even the most elementary processes of observing do not produce only a mechanical registration of the outer world, but creatively organizes the raw sensory material according to the principles of simplicity, regularity and harmony, the principles that run the mechanism of reception. [...] The work of art is not mere imitation or selective duplication of reality, but a translation of the observed characteristics in the form of a specific media. [...] The work of art always explains, refines, interprets the represented object.” (Арнхајм, Р. (1962) *Филм као уметност [Film as Art]*, Београд: Народна књига, pp. 5, 121).

⁴ I have primarily in mind the influence of Vygotsky's concept of the “inner word” on Eisenstein's conception of the “montage way of thinking”, i.e. montage as the basis for the pictorial stage of thinking, as well as the widely influential distinction between the image (*образ*) and idea (*изображение*) (Виготски. Л. (1977) *Мишљење и говор [Thinking and Speech]*, Београд: Нолит, р. 42; Эйзенштейн, С. (2000) *Монтаж [Montage]*, Москва: Музей кино, р. 30).

⁵ The attempt to overcome the aporia of representation (with the idea of including virtuality and transcendence in its domain) through the so-called “energetic” anthropology and cosmology, which is completely in line with contemporary trends of synergetics and “newest scientific paradigms”, but also the circumstances for the development of new media, brings into question the concept of image as such, both within theology and Christian-oriented philosophy, which we will examine more thoroughly in the paper, and should be carefully approached, if one does not want to forget about the central concept of person in Christian anthropology, and so as to not confuse and identify the concepts of energies and hypostases (on the “energetic anthropology”: Хоружа, С. (2010) *Православна аскеза: кључ за нову визију човека [Orthodox Christian Asceticism: the Solution for the New Vision of Man]*, Београд-Карловац: Мартирија; on synergetics and/or synergism: Лесков, Ј. (2006) *Синергизм: философска парадигма XXI века [Synergism: the Philosophical Paradigm]*

hand, the arbitrariness and “spirituality” of abstraction⁶ separated from the mimetic relation with the object-historical reality, has always caused discomfort in film, which, it seemed, went beyond the modernist discomfort caused by the break with the traditional way of representing in the case of other arts. Interestingly, the need to overcome these dilemmas and discomforts in film theory and film practice was often motivated, both explicitly and implicitly, by religious or pseudo-religious reasons.

One way of reflecting upon the difficult relationship between film and reality relies on the discovery of the signifying nature of film, as superiorly observed by Yury Tynyanov,⁷ resulting in a mostly semiotic approach to art – and therefore to film – as a model, and the art process as modeling of the world.⁸ From a religious standpoint, this approach often brought the danger of dualism (expressing the inexpressible, the possibility of relationship as participating in Being and truth and, finally, the community), to what the Jansenist Bazin – by prioritizing “belief in reality” over “belief in the image” – opposed the call to unity through returning to the genuine meaning of artistic realism as the “need to express the meaning of the world”⁹. One approach offers liberation from the “world of things”, the other from language, one puts emphasis on sign (construction), the other on meaning (revealing, perception).¹⁰ Yet from a Christian (theological and philosophical) standpoint, both approaches have their truth, one points out to conventionality (shape, *morphe*) the other to iconicity (likeness, *eikon*) in the dynamics of the relationship between film and reality. Also, from the same standpoint, both approaches can be viewed as a deadlock.

For what concerns me, or you, or him/her as a Christian regarding the problem of film and film images, i.e. the problem of the world? Is it just the Saint’s wondering „what does man need signs and ideas, when he can gain knowledge directly, and why does he want miracles for proof, when he can touch upon those things himself”¹¹? However, as he also says, “what do we need preachers, when He who was revealed has answered”, and thus “all that is left is to rejoice and celebrate him”¹², and in order for us to “rejoice and celebrate” we are again in need of a word, but also an image, which was after all resolved long ago with the triumph over iconoclasm and at the Council of Chalcedon

of the 21st Century], Москва: Экономика и Безручко, Б. П. (2009) *Путь в синергетику*, Москва: ЛИБРОКОМ; on the difference between energy and hypostases, e.g. in: Пено, З. (2009) *Христос – Нова Твар: аспекти православно космологије и антропологије* [*Christ – New Substance: the Ascetics of Orthodox Christian Cosmology and Anthropology*], Фоча-Острог: Православни богословски факултет-Манастир Острог).

⁶ Already the “first film theorist” Ricciotto Canudo sees film as an abstraction and “part of the absolute spiritualization” which only as such offers a “substantial view on life” (Канудо, Р. (1978) *Film aesthetics*, in: *Теорија филма* [*Theory of Film*] (ed. Стојановић, Д.), Београд: Нолит, pp. 54-63.

⁷ For Tynyanov, the frame which was construed in accordance with the principle of motion is not the “material reproduction of movement”, but a “meaningful idea”, hence a sign of movement: “The visible world on film is not represented as such, but as a meaningful whole, otherwise film would be just living (and unliving) photography. The visible world, the visible object becomes the element of film art only when it is presented as a meaningful sign” (Тынянов, Ю. (1977) *Поэтика. История литературы. Кино* [*Poetics. The History of Literature. Cinema*], Москва: Наука, p. 329).

⁸ See more in: Коларић, В. (2010) Моделизација света у Аристотеловој поетици и у структуралној семиотици Јурија Лотмана [Modeling of the World in Aristotle’s Poetics and in the Structural Semiotics of Yuri Lotman], in: *Зборник Матице српске за славистику*, бр. 78, pp. 101-118.

⁹ Базен, А. (1967) *Шта је филм?* [*What is Film?*], Београд: Нолит, p. 9)

¹⁰ Here one should have in mind that the concept of language, and with it the language of/in art, is not unambiguous, in the sense that language “is not only a means to designate the familiar world, to represent it and ultimately control it, but it is also a means to reveal the unknown world and express it” (Жуњић, С. *Ibid*, p. 21).

¹¹ Кавасила, Н. (2003) *О животу у Христу* [*On Life in Christ*], Нови Сад: Беседа, p. 231.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 177.

which dealt with the theology of the icon grounded on incarnation.¹³ The image is therefore not controversial in itself. And, of course, nothing is controversial in itself but only in relation to a specific meaning, and even evil and death when related to a specific meaning are part of the divine economy and design, and hence a matter of His love. And how is one to oppose death and nothingness of the image, since everything created, including the (created or handmade) image has its death and its nothingness? The only uncreated image is that of Jesus Christ, the other person of the Holy Trinity, as the image (icon) of the “Invisible God” (God the Father), which as such, as an icon by nature and not by grace and as “homoousios to the Father”, is unsusceptible to evil, nothingness and death. The problem with the image, as well as the problem with the world and man, is not in their materialness or immaterialness, but in them being created or uncreated.¹⁴

No image, therefore, exists in itself and out of itself, as it owes its existence to its “original”, prototype, proto-image, ideal. Jesus Christ is thus the image (icon) of God the Father as they are identical in terms of essence (*ousia*, substance) but not in terms of hypostasis (person, self), the created icon (man) is the icon (of Christ) through grace and adoption through sonship,¹⁵ and the handmade icon has the relation of hypostatic similarity (not identity) with the proto-image. Each of these cases is not concerned with the splitness-dividedness, nor the identity of the image and likeness (likeness and proto-image), but with relation and communication, where the handmade icon (image) is the visible bond, “ecclesiastical bridge” between the invisible proto-image and man who has communion with it. That way, the visible, artificial icon enables “seeing”, the unveiling of an invisible reality and, most importantly, a relationship and communication with it. The icon is therefore a testimony (*martyria*) about the existence of an invisible world, that is “a means for a Christian to gain knowledge about the real and true existence of the ideal (original) with which he has spiritual conversation”,¹⁶ meaning that believers are not mere spectators, viewers of the image (icon), but interlocutors in the live and personal communication, the community with the represented proto-image. In this complex theory of the image based on exquisitely subtle and profound interpretations of trinity dogmas – which encompass ontology, gnoseology, religion, art, literature, ethics, all “based on the grounds of the aesthetic value of the image”¹⁷ – when talking about the possibility of representing the “invisible” the most important thing is to notice the following: the image does not “represent” some sort of nature (being, *physis*) or the essence (substance) of the painted, but only hypostasis, person, self,¹⁸ the specific mode in which what is painted exists, what the “name” of the painted refers to, the same way

¹³ The all-explaining Kontakion of the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy goes as follows: “The indefinable word of the Father made himself definable, having taken flesh of Thee, O Mother of God, and having refashioned the soiled image to its former estate, has suffused it with Divine beauty. But confessing salvation we show it forth in deed and word.” (translated by: G. E. H. Palmer and E. Kadloubovsky) (cited from: Успенски, Ј. (2000) *Теологија иконе [The Meaning of Icons]*, Света Гора Атонска: Манастир Хиландар, р. 104).

¹⁴ See in: Зизјулас, Ј. (2001) *Догматске теме*, Нови Сад: Беседа, pp. 293, 305. On the link between evil and nothingness see: Маџукас, Н. (2005) *Проблем зла [The Problem of Evil]*, Крагујевац: Каленић.

¹⁵ “Like the truth of the icon lays in the persons it represents, the truth about man lays in his proto-image. For the proto-image organizes him, approves him and shapes the material and simultaneously attracts man to itself. The archetype constitutes the ontological content of the expression ‘in the image’” (Нелас, П. (2001) *Обожење у Христу [Deification in Christ]*, Србиње-Београд-Ваљево: Хришћанска мисао, р. 32).

¹⁶ Пурић, Ј. (2010) *Људско лице Бога [Human Face of God]*, Београд: Службени гласник, р. 106.

¹⁷ Бичков, В. (2012) *Кратка историја византијске естетике [Short History of Byzantine Aesthetics]*, Београд: Службени гласник, р. 256.

¹⁸ On the theological and philosophical formation of the concepts of essence, nature, and especially hypostasis see: Зизјулас, Ј. Ibid; Јевтић, А. (2004) *Философија и теологија [Philosophy and Theology]*, Требиње-Врњачка Бања: Манастир Тврдош-Братство св. Симеона Мироточивог; Жуњић, С. (2012) *Логика и теологија [Logics and Theology]*, Београд: Отачник.

we cannot “speak” about the unspeakable essence of God. Since “everything living is given being by God, and name by man”, one may say that the handmade icon is the “iconically painted name of God”¹⁹, hence the image of the word of God, the subtle merging of words and images through the New Testament identification of the “icon of the invisible God” and “the Logos of God” (the God Logos, the Word of God) in the persona of Jesus Christ, and which is (the relation word-image) the foundation of the culture we (still?) live in. Therefore, more simply put, representation is always concerned with relationship and communication, and it is not possible for one to communicate or to be in unity with some kind of essence or nature, but only with a person, and as a person.

But what does this have to do with the image beyond its iconographic, dogmatic determination, which does not even oblige us as believers beyond its (liturgical) context of worship, let alone with film, film image, photography or contemporary art, i.e. with the contemporary approach to art as a whole?

For what threatens the film image and film, and what is threatening about the film image and film? And something must be threatening, really; otherwise there would not be so much concern, so much unacceptance, so much secret and perverse delight caused by the prophesied “end of film”, “end of image”, or the end of anything after all, what matters is that there is an end. Film is not an icon, nor is it a mere photography, but just like them it falls victim to identifying the prototype with its representation, the image with the likeness, (re)presentation with the represented: in short, films is almost unconsciously (how can it be otherwise in modernity) identified with the represented reality or the represented world, sometimes with hope and sometimes, more often in theory, with indignation. And so, once and for all, film was, like photography, accused of idolatry under the (contemporary) name of non-creative mechanical reproduction of reality, which to this day is a stigma over the entire world of visual media and media in general, and image in general, but ultimately art. But our problem with film, the film image, picture or photography, mimesis, representation, and even art perhaps points out to our problem with the world and reality, to our problem with ourselves.

But who are “we”? We – the viewers, spectators, audience, we who assess, judge, condemn, even when our mouths (and even our hands) are full of activism, action, engagement, desire to change the world, sometimes even to the extent that we leave not a stone upon a stone. For we hope that something new will emerge out of it, that the victim will become the new seed and yield fruit, that we will breathe a sigh of relief and declare the world ours, that we will finally master it, that from then on all shall be well, be settled, and that we will not have to worry if someone is worrying about us. Film is our guilty conscience.

Photography testifies, just like the icon, but it testifies to the existence of the world in its fallen condition, in its transiency, rottenness and temporality, it testifies to its outer image (likeness, *prosopona*), and to some moment of the past, while the purpose of the icon is the future moment, the eschaton.²⁰ Photography is thus a testament to mortality, death and nothingness. And how should one to speak about testifying to the existence of something that is visible only in its outness and ephemerality, in breaking the bond with the origin of its existence, for “in order for what is created to survive, to evade non-being, it needs to continuously be in the relation of unity with the uncreated”,

¹⁹ Пурић, Ј. Ibid, p. 113.

²⁰ Ђурић, Ж. (2012) On ontological differences between photography and icons in: *Теолошки погледи [Theological Perspectives]*, бр. 3, pp. 479-494.

and man is created in order to “create the unity between the created and uncreated”.²¹ And where is man in photography, if photography can be reduced to something mechanical, reproductive, to an apparatus? There are two answers to this: one from the standpoint of signification and conventionality, which insists on the signifying nature of every image, even a photographic image, where man’s participation is based on the process of signifying and selection; and the other, in the belief that photography somehow enables the world to reveal and express itself, where man has the role of a “witness” without whom there is no discovery and expression. In other words, in the first case man participated in the mode of construction, in the other in the mode of contemplation (seeing).

But just like photography is not an icon, neither is film photography. The montage nature of film is a savior of its artistic dignity and a guarantee of its artistic identity, welcomed because it further elaborated and proliferated man’s constructive powers, while the picture in motion, that is, frankly speaking, the camera in motion, is like a “temporal art for completing photographic objectivity”,²² not only enlarged man’s power of “contemplative” testimony, but also liberated the photographic image from enslavement to the past, opening it up for the dimension of the present. Man’s participation in the creation of film started to be labeled as freedom.²³

However, is this freedom, and what kind of freedom is it? Freedom from what and for what? If we only combine what we have found, we depend on what is given; hence we are in a position of necessity and not in a position of freedom, for freedom is never a mere choice among alternatives, but creation. The same way, if we believe in the capacity of reality to “speak”, we come close to dubious and uncreative essentialism and dualism, very much like the modern (“unconscious”, of course) nostalgia for ontology of the icon characteristic of the secular sphere, even of the sphere of mechanical reproduction. What would the choice, then, be? The choice is destruction of form and the choice is destruction of the image. These are modern solutions, but they do not lead anywhere. There are good only because they disturb us, shake us out of our lethargy and “automatism of perception”; otherwise, they are not and cannot be free.

But we do not want to reject film forever or to demand things from film it will never be able to fulfill, because they are against its “nature”, do we? “We” just want to answer the question can film representation enables us to “participate” in what is represented, i.e. relationship and communication with it, and can film help us to “rediscover the beauties of the world”²⁴? These are other two variants, other two options for the dichotomy between the “constructive” and “ontological” justification for film as creation and, thus, as a domain of human freedom.

Here is where the problem of passion arises. For if we seek a relationship and communication, we seek a person, and not some essence or nature to communicate with. And a person is “not a natural,

²¹ Зизјулас, J. Ibid, p. 305.

²² Базен, А. Ibid, p. 11.

²³ For exceptional insights about the relationship between film and freedom, from the standpoint of structural semiotics, see: Лотман, Ю., Цивьян Ю. (1994) *Диалог с экраном* [*Dialogue with the Screen*], Таллинн: Александра, с. 22-23. For example: “Everything that is hindered in nature and has no alternative, and thus carries no information, is transformed [in film] in the result of free artistic choice, freed from hindrance and rich with meaning. [...] What is dully called *information* in the langue of science, has another name in art – freedom. The goal of art is to come to know life, to bring freedom to it, freeing its elements from inertia and placing them in new positions and relations.”

²⁴ Кардамакис, М. (1996) *Православна духовност* [*Orthodox Christian Spirituality*], Света Гора Атонска: Манастир Хиландар, p. 11.

or logical, category, but the question of truth”²⁵, and as such it is both a “relational and communicational reality”²⁶, for truth as such “is not the question of objective rational ideas, but of the attitude and relationship (personal) between God, man and the world”²⁷. God and truth are not revealed by necessity, but freely and for all of us, for you, for me, for him or her, as persons. In that sense, a person is “identity emerging from the relationship and communication”,²⁸ and not out of necessity or something given – and as such can be found only in freedom. And what is in the way of this personal relationship if not passion, and what is passion but a “noise”, an obstacle, a stain in the relationship and communication process, not only is it a “blurred mirror” of our created nature, but a splotch, stain, remaining as an indication of our ill-used freedom, that is our rejection of freedom, to the point of crackness-splitness-dissolution, of death and nothingness, to the point of returning to non-being. For who guaranteed to us that we will not and cannot return to non-being? The image and photograph which “convince” us that we exist – and that the world exists – surely did not.

Since the beginning the problem of the image was not concerned with representation (for representation is, and can be, relationship and communication), just like the problem with the world was not that it was created (for it is a matter of God’s design and God’s love), but its identification, as well as the identification of the world, with passion. Passion is in this view a sin capable of subduing man, while sin is the expression of our sinfulness as the “focus of attention and desire towards what is outside, emerging with the original sin of our original parents and which became common”.²⁹ Here, the world is not viewed as the product of God’s creation, made in love and freedom, with natural beauty as a mark of God’s creation³⁰ and which therefore bears witness to God’s presence – something which is certainly not denied – but rather as a “totality of passion”, “a symbol of passion and sin”, which as we have mentioned became common in the fallen condition. Thus, world is not substance (matter) – for substance is not evil nor is substantiality sinful, and its problem does not lie in materiality or in the fact of its createdness – but it is the common fallen state, and passion is the common state of the fallen world. Therefore, the image of the fallen world is none other than the image of passion. Orientation towards the “outer” to which we are compelled by passion “moves” us from ourselves, but not to God (knowledge of God) and to the openness of uncreated divine energies of the Holy Spirit, but to the fallenness of the world, to death and nothingness, to denial of responsibility for the world and our human designation. In a state of passion, and in our relationship with the world, we are just spectators and destroyers, and by no means participators and fellows, by no means personalities. In that sense, the image of the world as the image of passion could not have played its anagogical role, that of „elevating the human spirit through image to the Truth and Archetype“³¹, which had implications from the start for the theological and thus the artistic treatment of passion, primarily having in mind how “the Early Christian ethos of faith was entirely oriented towards being and only protected itself from non-being, without dealing with it. This remained the permanent orientation of Christian thought, which is why studies of passion were marginalized. There were always more discussions and lectures about preventing sin in order to achieve virtue, than studious pondering over the secrets of non-being, because the very act would mean shifting the

²⁵ Јевремовић, П. (2007) *Тело, фантазам, симбол* [Body, Phantasm, Symbol], Београд: Службени гласник, р. 36.

²⁶ Јевтић, А. Ibid, р. 196.

²⁷ Зизјулас, Ј. Ibid, р. 19.

²⁸ Ibid, р. 188.

²⁹ Гурјев, Н. (2005) *Страсти и њихова пројава кроз соматске и нервно-психичке болести* [Passions and their Manifestation Through Somatic and Neuropsychological Illnesses], Сремски Карловци: Дуга, р. 30.

³⁰ Бичков, В. Ibid, 59.

³¹ Ibid, р. 111.

creative potentials of being to the opposite direction”.³² Consequently, the artist can be viewed as the “preacher of the wonderful”, who “brings joy to his flock”, and the only goal of art can be said to be “spiritual communication” which results in the “discovery of the Image of the God-man Christ”.³³ In this view, very little is needed – when one does not realize the difference between the image and the proto-image, nature and hypostases and God’s essence and God’s energies – to declare every image (especially the image of the “outer”, “sensual” world) inadequate from for the true human designation and thus God’s design of the world, i.e. his love. And what about film, whose image confines us to the world, through its illusiveness, reproductiveness, seductiveness and aggression, its ability to show everything, even that which we never thought we would see, or wanted to see? In a genuine, active relationship with the world it supposedly makes us numb, makes us passive,³⁴ while activating our passion. Film will never be forgiven for this.

But it is not just the “outer” image, as the image of the outer world, that is associated and identified with passion, but also the “inner” image, either as imagination or as a representation of the “inner” world. The ascetic practice found that visual representations during prayer can lead to ‘prelest’, spiritual delusion, having the most severe consequences for the prayer, with the possibility of “demons taking on symbolic forms which carry the illusion of light and what is adequate to man’s spiritual being”³⁵. The ascetic in prayer therefore exchanges truth for illusion, and accepts the “fantastic demonic forms” as a substitute for contemplative prayer (*theoria*), where phantasy (the inner visual representation, idea) is presented according to Saint Gregory of Sinai as the “matrix through which thoughts are inserted into man’s mind.”³⁶ Inner visual representations thus become “structural adequacies” to our passions, and as such they become the “agents of influence” of demonic forces on our personality (as a psychosomatic unity) as a whole and on our freedom. In that sense, there is no principal difference between the inner and outer images of passion: both are fundamentally a threat to our orientation towards relationship and communication, the “relational and communicational” aspect of our personality, without which there is no such thing as a personality. Passion, the triumph of passion in the form of an image, in that way attacks personality and the community, the foundations of our being: “Man-centered imagination and separation from God, according to the monastic-ascetic view, results in ‘prelest’ of phantasy, which was understood as individual experience, individual fancy, monads alienated from God, in bondage to passions of non-being.”³⁷ Images that become walls in our relationship with God, with people, and with ourselves – our prison.

Something similar is said by Saint Isaac the Syrian, the great pre-Palamas³⁸ theologian-ascetic, one of the most important figures for understanding the relationship between passion and image, when

³² Лазић, М. (2008) *Српска естетика аскетизма* [*Serbian Aesthetic of Asceticism*], Света Гора Атонска: Манастир Хиландар, p. 553.

³³ Ibid, p. 611.

³⁴ Prejudice about the “passivity” of the film spectator was permanently refuted by Henri Agel (Ажел, А. (1970) Активност и пасивност филмског гледаоца [Activity and Passivity of the Film Spectator], у: *Филмске свеске*, бр. 1). See also: Коларић, В. (2008) Религија и филм: од Анрија Ажела ка могућности заснивања једне хришћанске естетике филма [Religion and Film: From Henri Agel to the Possibility of Grounding Christian Film Aesthetics], in: *Зборник Матице српске за сценске уметности и музику*, no. 39, p. 96.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 565.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 562.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 621.

³⁸ Of course, we have in mind Saint Gregory Palamas (14th century). For Serbian authors on Palamas, see: Радовић, А. (2006) *Тајна Свете Тројице по Светом Григорију Палами* [*The Secret of Holy Trinity According to Saint Gregory*

he defines passion as the “throng of earthly things which prompt the body to satisfy its redundant needs”, and which “will not cease as long as the earth exists”,³⁹ and the “word world” as a “collective name, embracing so-called passions”.⁴⁰ Passions are, thus, according to Saint Isaac, “like some solid essence; they are somewhere between light and contemplation and get in the way of distinguishing between the manifold of things during contemplation”.⁴¹ Passions, further, “excite either particular images, or feelings without images and recollections without passionate movement and thought”⁴², and all this represents a problem primarily because “the mind, what he looks at, also accepts images. When he looks at the world, then according to the modification of the images on which he is worn, in the same number takes from them images and similarities, which, in the measure of their diversity and the difference in their change, stir up thoughts in him, when the thoughts are excited, they are imprinted in the mind.”⁴³ This should not be taken easily for, as the Saint warns us, “let us not be fooled by those who claim that there is no harm to us from hearing and seeing something, for we seem to be the same in our thoughts in the desert, in the world, in the cell, and outside it, and do not change in our meekness, and we do not accept a bad change, and when we meet with persons and things we do not feel the alarm of passion”.⁴⁴ In the least, contemplation of matters (substance), “however delightful, is only a shadow of knowledge”,⁴⁵ and given that true knowledge (*gnosis*) is the “sense of immortal life”⁴⁶, our task is “contemplation of the new world by the spirit of revelation, by which the mind is spiritually delighted” [translated by Vladimir Djambov], that is “spiritual contemplation” as the “feeling of delight with the other life” which “renders many thoughts insignificant”.⁴⁷ One gains spiritual knowledge from faith, i.e. it is “born from faith”, which “presents before us the reality of perfection, so that through faith we grasps the unknowing, and not through research and the force of [natural] knowledge”.⁴⁸ Therefore, faith also has its image, and spiritual knowledge has its image, and every image, as we have already said, points out to something, to the original image, the original likeness. Here it clearly points out to the “reality of perfection”, hence the Kingdom of God as the Kingdom of the Future Age (Aeon), and “spiritual contemplation” would then be the Vision of God: “If you do not know God, it is impossible for love to be awakened in you for Him. You cannot love God if you do not see Him. And seeing God comes from knowing Him, for seeing God does not precede knowledge of Him.”⁴⁹

Several things are of interest to us regarding the complicated issue of the Vision of God. Basically, the grace of God which operates “in the purity within us”⁵⁰, helps us to see the world of substance (world of things) as a symbol (or symbols) of the invisible world, which have a cognitive-anagogical role on our journey to the Vision of God, while teaching us not to be distrustful towards symbols (images, visual representation) as they are phenomena of our inner world, our individual

Palamas], Манастир Острог; Кнежевић, М. (2012) *Григорије Палама (1296-1357): библиографија* [*Gregory Palamas (1296-1357): A Bibliography*], Београд: Православни богословски факултет.

³⁹ Исак Сиријски, Св. (2006) *Подвижничка слова (Spiritual Alphabet)*, Београд: Образ светачки, р. 164.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, р. 19. (translated by Vladimir Djambov)

⁴¹ *Ibid*, р. 184.

⁴² *Ibid*, р. 193.

⁴³ *Ibid*, р. 256. (translated by Vladimir Djambov)

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, р. 120. (translated by Vladimir Djambov)

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, р. 263.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, р. 164.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, р. 216.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, р. 127.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, р. 353.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, р. 257.

imagination, with origins either carnal, or in passions, or demonic. Thus, we have the specific combination of realism and symbolism in the Christian approach to art, but also to mysticism (Asceticism). What is at play here is a specific, already mentioned demand in relation to the theology of the icon, that every image must have its likeness, original likeness, original ideal, prototype, i.e. it must refer to something and by “referring” it must testify to its existence. Contemplation of the natural world is thus meaningful only if it refers to the Future Kingdom, that is if it testifies to God’s presence which has its origin in the Eschaton. The “inner image” must also have its original image, otherwise – and this is the criteria for distinguishing the Vision of God from false visions – it is spiritual delusion, prelest, which results in deception and perishment. The images of passion – whether as an inability to see in the created world the effects of divine energies (grace) of the Holy Spirit, i.e. the eternal effects of God’s love on the creation, or as believing false visions to be genuine images of the future and the invisible – are basically an obstacle to our genuine relationship and communication with God, the invisible world and people, but also with ourselves, for “the one who knows oneself is given the knowledge of everything, for the knowledge of self is the fullness of knowledge of all things”.⁵¹

But nonetheless, Saint Isaac says, “as much as man perfects himself in the eyes of God, he nevertheless walks after Him; while in the truthful [future] age God will reveal his face, and not what He is. As much as man is in contemplation of Him, the righteous see His image as in a mirror, while over there they will see His true manifestation”.⁵² This is so because man is “only” God through grace and the son of God by adoption to sonship, and not by nature. And there is no room here for dualism, or dividedness, or silence as a break of communication (on the contrary, silence as “silence in prayer” is the most perfect way of communicating with God in this age as well as in future ages), there is no room for despair and Abandonment by God, for blindness or any negation of God-given human abilities, whether divine or natural gifts. God appears and reveals “his face” to those who “look” in virtue and love, hence both virtue and love have their “images”. Not all images are “images of passion”. These are images that are “purified” by grace, which removed passion (not substance) as something bad – just like the sinner is “purified” by God’s grace through the Seal of Confession. So, what is this image of “confession”, this image of love and virtue, and what is it an image of?

Contrary to “man-centric imagination”, a true creator who is also a true ascetic has “in *illumination*, by communicating with the Archetype, renewed the image (likeness) of God within himself, and only then, through imagination and mystical ecstasy, raised above phantasy and sinful separation from God, and – in a higher mystical reality of participation in the uncreated Light [divine energies of the Holy Spirit] – reached gnosis, knowledge of a higher reality. The transformed mystic, the creator in the Likeness of God, became, through synergy with God, the highest reality of the created world, and hence a creator with characteristic of God’s imagination.”⁵³ Thus the purpose of true art was to “represents *virtues* and the *beauty* of the Saint, and all of its instruments served the cause of spiritual contemplation which through sensual and perceptual artistic means revealed metaphysical beauty.”⁵⁴ Also, “beauty is revealed only to the one who *knows how to look*”,⁵⁵ thus

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 354.

⁵² Ibid, p. 385.

⁵³ Лазић, М. Ibid, p. 621.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 624.

⁵⁵ Бичков, В. Ibid, p. 107.

“reaching” it is both a personal and communicative effort of the whole of human being⁵⁶, as a psychophysical and God-man unity.

Here is what Saint Isaac says about the constant struggle against passion and for virtue, and for achieving the life-saving “art of looking”: “Love is the dwelling-place of the spiritual and settles in the purity of the soul. When the mind finds itself in the domain of love, then grace operates, and the mind accepts spiritual contemplation and observes what is hidden.”⁵⁷ And: “It is better to struggle against passion by the recollection of virtues than by resistance, for passions, once they leave their domain and arise for battle imprint on the mind their images and idols. The struggle overtakes the mind, violently disturbing it and throwing thoughts into confusion.”⁵⁸ Finally: “May Thy love separate me from the world and its communication. Imprint on my mind only the invisible likeness, so as to beat the urge for any delightful recollection of the temporary and visible world.”⁵⁹

But this “escape” from the world is not “against the world”, a rejection of the world, but an attempt to overcome the fallen condition, its transformation, “directing” the glance from the passionate aspect of the world to its createdness, from passion as a consequence of rejecting (God’s) love to regaining His love as the cause and “means” for creating the world.⁶⁰ And this “escape” is not purposeless and pathless, it is not grounded on individual visions of some “other world”, on phantasies and arbitrariness, but on the revelation of God and His physical manifestation in the world and history. For what is the “likeness” one strives to, the “invisible likeness”, if not the Likeness of the God-man Jesus Christ, the Logos of God (God Logos), Icon of the Invisible God (God the Father), what is known (seen) as the Holy Spirit. The aim of such (religious, functional) art is, thus, “revealing the Likeness of the God-man Christ”, based on the “Orthodox Christological model of beauty formed on the basis of God’s material incarnation.”⁶¹ In the words of Saint Isaac, “a true vision of Jesus Christ, our Lord, consists in comprehending the force of His economy in relation to us and in being intoxicated by love for Him, owing to the comprehension of many wonderful things associated with that vision.”⁶² The secret of this “vision” is thus the secret of the Church and the secret of the Eucharist: the secret of the “vision” of Jesus Christ is, according to basic dogmatic assumptions, the secret of our life in Christ, while the Christian life (as life in Christ) is a “continuous dynamic and continuous movement from the old to the new man,”⁶³ i.e. continuous movement (motion, leap, lift, up-lift) toward Likeness. This very life is “community in Christ: the Eternal God and His children invited to eternal life, which God out of love equates through His Spirit in Christ with Himself”.⁶⁴ Christ has, therefore, as Likeness (Icon, Image) of the Invisible God, “revealed to us the human face and character and ethos of God, but at the same time He revealed in Himself the character and form and true ethos of man.”⁶⁵ In this logos-iconic-eucharistic perspective there is no room for dualism, for an abasement of man, nor for his deification, because the value of man “cannot be found in him the way he is, but in the way he is supposed to become and be. Man’s existence as the son of God is in

⁵⁶ See in: Јевтић, А. *Ibid*, 35.

⁵⁷ Исаак Сиријски, Св. *Ibid*, р. 263.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, р. 300.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, р. 421.

⁶⁰ “Spiritual life is not an escape from the world but its transformation. It is not a change of place, but a change of the way one is and lives.” (Нелас, П. *Ibid*, р. 147).

⁶¹ Лазић, М. *Ibid*, рр. 611, 624.

⁶² Исаак Сиријски, Св. *Ibid*, р. 436.

⁶³ Јевтић, А. (1989) *Трагање за Христом [The Search for Christ]*, Београд: Храст, р. 83.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, р. 174.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, р. 195.

terms of grace identified with his constant growth and deification in Christ.”⁶⁶ In other words, “the greatness of man lies in his (pre)designation, in his specified purpose,” and “Christ, as man’s greatest realization, is naturally the goal of man’s ascension, the beginning and, also, the end of history.”⁶⁷ In the Secret of Eucharist as the Secret of the Church which is the Body of Christ is where past, present and future meet, and thus the time of the Eucharist “expresses eternity and activates it in the present, in the midst of everyday life. The *place* of the Eucharist is the place of the Kingdom, the true Christian homeland.”⁶⁸ Christ’s presence in the Eucharist is twofold: “Christ is present in the Eucharist because the Eucharist Bread is His Body. In the Eucharist he resides with us just like he resided with the Apostles during the Last Supper, except now instead of His presence with them he resides in Eucharist gifts”.⁶⁹ As so the Church is the Kingdom of the Future Age, eschatology is not only a distant future, but “in the Church the present includes the future, and the past. ‘The Day of the Lord’ will come, but it constantly comes in the Church, for the Lord comes to ‘His Own’. The Eucharist is the Lord’s table Who comes to Church in the Spirit”.⁷⁰ Because the arrival of Christ in the Eucharist, which “represents not only the gathering, but also the Lord’s table”, is completed in the Spirit, Christ “will come because he is celebrated as God and rules in the Church in the Spirit. He will come, because he already comes to the Church, when believers gather at the Lord’s table”, and since the “Spirit is already operating”, the Kingdom “will not only come, but has already come, since the Spirit is the pledge of that Kingdom.”⁷¹

Therefore, the Eucharist, liturgy, is not an image, but the real presence of the live God, and to “see” means to transform one’s “corporal” sight and see through “spiritual eyes”, which are capable of seeing the effects of God, i.e. the divine energies of the Holy Spirit in the world, in other people, and ourselves. And this “seeing” does not turn us into passive observers, but participators in the divine effects of the Holy Spirit, which we accept as persons and in freedom. It is prayer in contemplation (looking, seeing), “freedom and riddance from everything here, a heart that completely directed its gaze towards craving for what it hopes for in the future.”⁷² But how is one to see “things of the future age”, especially given that, according to Saint Isaac, “precise names are given to present objects while there is no real and true name for future matters: there is only shattered knowledge about them which is above any naming and any complex principle, shape, color, description, and all made-up names”⁷³? However, one should have in mind the following: although, according to Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, “it is impossible to see God’s essence with corporal eyes”, “it is quite possible based on the deeds of the divine being to rise in contemplation of his omnipotence”, with God “being revealed to every man who carefully explores and comes to know the creation; the more your heart explores, the more it knows God”.⁷⁴ Therefore, “it is impossible to explore the nature of God, but one can celebrate Him in prayer because of His invisible deeds”,⁷⁵ in other words, “since we cannot look at Him as He really is by nature, He became what we are, so we would please to look at him.”⁷⁶ One should distinguish

⁶⁶ Томасовић, М. (2007) *Бог Логос [God Logos]*, Београд-Фоча: Православни богословски факултет СПЦ у Фочи, р. 254.

⁶⁷ Нелас, П. *Ibid*, р. 34.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, р. 129.

⁶⁹ Афанасјевић, Н. (2008) *Трпеза Господња [The Lord’s Table]*, Краљево: Епархија Жичка, р. 21.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, р. 22.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, р. 6.

⁷² Исак Сиријски, С. *Ibid*, 206.

⁷³ *Ibid*, р. 70.

⁷⁴ Кирило Јерусалимски, Св. (2001) *Катехезе [Catecheses]*, Београд-Ваљево-Србиње: Хришћанска мисао, р. 98.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, р. 98.

⁷⁶ *ibid*, р. 136.

corporal from spiritual “looking”, as well as the created world from the world of passions: “The world should not attract and be completely alluring, although man should not completely avoid the outer world and his body, as if they were evil. The entire sensual world, says Saint Gregory [Palamas], is the mirror of what is above the world, and the Creator made it so as to arrive through spiritual contemplation, as if it is some peculiar cliff, to what is above the world; therefore, if we used our senses properly we would come to know the invisibility of God and see it in His creations.”⁷⁷ On these ground Saint Isaac distinguishes spiritual pleasure from spiritual contemplation, where the former is based on the possibility to get the “pre-taste” of the future age while here, in history and time, with spiritual pleasure “is not the use of things that are independently outside the soul of those who receive. Otherwise, said: *The kingdom of God is within you* (Luke 17:21) and *Thy kingdom come* (Matthew 6:10), will already mean that we have received within us the substance of something sensible as a pledge of this enjoyment. For it is necessary that the most acquisition be like a pledge, and the whole is a part. And what was said *through a glass* (1 Corinthians 13:12), although it does not indicate an independent one, but it means the acquisition of similarity [the Image of God]. And if the true testimony of those who interpreted the Scriptures, that the very sensation [pre-taste] is the intelligent action of the Holy Spirit, than it is already a part of that whole”.⁷⁸ The turmoil of this world, in fact the turmoil of passions and images of passions, is overcome by focusing prayer to “the beauty of Logos”⁷⁹ and since “the Holy Spirit never summons persons to itself but to the Son”⁸⁰ the Christocentric⁸¹ orientation of praying is once again emphasized, as well as our entire effort to “win over the Kingship of God” i.e. salvation. That way the contemplated condition of the future age is seen as the “union of substance with the Uncreated, i.e. their permeation” and in “this miraculous union of substance with the non-substance man grasps the God-man nature of the Church,” which brings to the prayer-ascetic “knowledge of the supernatural, graceful state of the world”.⁸² The reality of Christ’s presence in the Church is what paves the way to the Kingdom and even to “seeing” him from the standpoint of “this age” because since “Christ already rules through the Church and in the Church, his rule is the announcement (= pre-taste) of the Kingdom of God”,⁸³ and the “seeing” and “knowing” are never a result of our individual and arbitrary (willful) search for something we ourselves have proclaimed to be true, but a matter of relationship, communication, and the community: “We do not have each, individually, access to God, not we in ourselves nor through a mediator, but only through Christ, when we are within His Body, into which we were baptized through the Spirit”,⁸⁴ while repeating that God reveals himself to all of us, personally, as persons and in freedom, and not to some depersonalized collective entity and in necessity, in compulsion, in the slave-like certainty of truth imposed from outside, but – yes – also an image imposed from outside.

⁷⁷ Епископ Алексије (1999) *Византијски црквени мистици 14. века* [Byzantine Mystical Theologians of the 14th Century], Србиње-Београд-Ваљево-Минхен: Хришћанска мисао, р. 40.

⁷⁸ Исак Сиријски, Св. Ibid, р. 15. (translated by Vladimir Djambov)

⁷⁹ Лазић, М. Ibid, р. 186.

⁸⁰ Мајендорф, Ј. (2006) *Византијско наслеђе у Православној Цркви* [Byzantine Heritage in the Orthodox Christian Church], Краљево: Епархија Жичка, р. 178.

⁸¹ It is implied that “Christology cannot be separated from Pneumatology and Trinitology”, hence this “Christocentrism” does not exclude the complex economy of relationships between persons within the Holy Trinity, nor the fact that grace is “threefold” (see in: Маројевић, Н. (2013) Христологија и тријадологија у учењу Светог Јована Дамаскина [Christology and Trinitology in the Teachings of Saint John of Damascus], у: *Мисао*, бр. 3, рр. 13-17).

⁸² Ракићевић, Т. (2010) Свети Сава Студенички и суд над монахом [Saint Sava of Studenica and the Judgement Over the Monk], in: *Православље*, бр. 1008.

⁸³ Афанасјев, Н. Ibid, р. 22.

⁸⁴ Ibid, р. 127.

And how is film not to become the name for the image imposed from “outside”, for the turmoil of the images of passion, which lock us in the prison of the world? Whether through the “slave-like” reproductivity of the givenness of the world or through manipulative “montage” constructionism. The search for “spiritual” possibilities of montage and (optical) manipulation of the film image, as well as the search for the “miracle” of the emergence of “invisible” reality with the help of the gnoseologically neutral movie camera, could easily be deemed a deadlock. It seems that neither the “belief in reality” nor “the belief in the image” are the solution. Nor is the solution to impose on film, as art or media, the criteria of icon painting, nor its didactic-homilistic usage in terms of story, nor the dualistic rejection of mimicking the visible world in the name of “abstraction” and phantasmagoria. For (even) the believer knows that art leads only to “the door of the temple” and that it cannot be a substitute for prayer, let alone the Eucharist. Besides, he does not reject the (co)creative power and designation of man and does not have a problem with pseudo-Zealot and pseudo-ascetic rejection of the (secular) art and human creation as such, and ultimately culture as such. Man lives in countless worlds and lives turned towards the future and towards overall resurrection (in the body) and should not be engaged with trivialities and small misdeeds. After all, it is a question of spiritual, and even psychological health, and art, as something very valuable for man, often detects disturbance and delusions in this respect. If we do not know what man is and what the world is, what we are, then we are far too often prepared to sacrifice art, to reject it or deify it, as something which testifies in a specific way in respect to the world, man, and ourselves. Testify, if it is true, at first glance without our will, while evading our wallowing in violence and intrigues, our constraints and dishonesty. Our unwillingness to accept the freedom of the other, genuine dialogue, encounter of souls, mutual transformation. Why do we live, then? To rule, to oppress? Why did Christ, then, come to earth, among us, as he did? And why does he keep coming, as the Holy Spirit, if we are still the same, closed, not ready to change, why do we reject the other and his creations, his love, even if he himself is not aware of it?

If we want film and representation on film to be a relationship and communication, then we obviously must ground it on a person (hypostasis, self) as an identity which emerges from relationship and communication. Also, every revelation (disclosure) which we seek (expect) from film must be grounded on a person, and not on the “world”, whatever we mean by it, nor on the apparatus and media, since every revelation is always of personal (of a person) character, and the very “knowledge of a person is some kind of revelation,”⁸⁵ precisely because, as we have said, “God is not revealed nor does he want to be revealed in necessity,” but “wants to exist for us, for me,”⁸⁶ in freedom, and as a person. This sort of culture of representation implies the representation of that which has a “name”, which is not some shapeless “world” (or reality), nor energy, nor nature or essence, but a hypostasis, as the “basis of a particular reality and identity”, that is a “true, specific and individual being”, as “the most specific existence in itself”.⁸⁷ In this view, and according to Saint John of Damascus, “although every essence [*ousia*] is the same for all hypostases it encompasses, there is no separate and personal nature [*physis*] and essence”, but they exist “only through the hypostasis”, meaning that “first, one must start from a particular person, and the rest follows on the grounds of his existence – hypostasis. In that sense, the species/person enables essence, and thus essence, in order to exist, must go through ‘hypostatization’”.⁸⁸ Therefore, that which is represented, that which has a “name” and which is the basis for existence is always some “hypostatized unity”, and not the “generality of some essence or

⁸⁵ Зизјулас, Ј. Ibid, p. 66.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 68.

⁸⁷ Жуњић, С. (2012) *Логика и теологија [Logics and Theology]*, Београд: Отачник, p. 147.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 147.

same isolated essence,” given that “essence is always the essence of something existing”.⁸⁹ The “realistic” and reproductive nature of the film image and film representation is not and cannot be an obstacle in this matter, given that in the theology of the icon a standpoint was clarified that “given that at the ontological level the icon is absolutely separated from the prototype of the person it describes”, the icon and its “object” do not share the “same essence”, but “only share the same outer shape”, and so the “outer forms of the person expressed by the icon becomes part of the prototype”.⁹⁰ Thus “painting is not describing but only pointing out to the Hypostasis,” hence the icon “points out to the person and does not describe his essence”.⁹¹ That way, the artist does not “describe the nature of the object he has painted” nor is he “responsible for shaping abstract content”, but is “focused on the hypostasis as a specific mode of existence”; he “does not create the icon as being”, but reproduces the outer shape which is the set of someone’s personal traits,” which is why art “becomes less creative in the domain of shapes and moves its orientation to the domain of communication,” meaning it becomes focused on “the search for technical tools for achieving a better and more realistic relationship between the spectator of the image and the world depicted by the image.”⁹² This understanding of communication is grounded on the fact of God’s revelation, that is faith or the dogmatic assumption that “God arrives in glory and creates a communion between man and God [in the Eucharist]” and because “God comes to man” there is a “move from transcendental reality towards earthly reality”; “God comes to our time”, he arrives “in the present”, “breaks” into man’s reality and “reveals the truth in concepts [and images] understandable to humanity”.⁹³ The true goal, hopefully not only of religious art, is, thus, “to bring the described matters to the present and to invite the spectator to escape to another reality,” and this sort of realism (Eucharistic, iconographic or comforting realism, according to Jorgos Kordis) “comforts people not by encouraging their escape from reality but through enriching their lives with the Kingdom of God”.⁹⁴

All this seems like an invitation to attempt to view film in the most similar (to this) possible sense, because we believe, or only suspect, that film is capable of achieve some of this, that it must be capable. But is this too much to expect from film, or is it just inappropriate? Not necessarily so. It has more to do with changing our approach, even the common Christianity-oriented approach to film, which would tend to put emphasis on the communication aspect of film experience, where the unity of film communication would be built on the concept of person, not in the sense of “auteurship”, but in the sense of a personal (relational and communicational) nature and motivation of both film creation and reception. It would also leave room for perceiving film “characters” as “hypostatic unities”, or more precisely for “pointing out” to certain “hypostatic unities”, as that “which can be named”, which “has a name” and which as such emerges, at least in the strictly receptive and relational sense, as a participator in the process of communication.⁹⁵ The search for a true cinematic experience can thus

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 155.

⁹⁰ Кордис, Ј. (2011) Icon and its place in the Orthodox Christian religious life, in: *Теологија иконе и црквено стваралаштво* [*Theology of the Icon and Art of the Church*] (ed., Миловић, Н.), Крагујевац: Каленић, p. 49.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 51.

⁹² Ibid, p. 52.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 58.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 61.

⁹⁵ The possibility of shifting focus from the “iconicity” to “communication” in the case of Christian films, for example the film *Island* by Pavel Lungin, was first observed by the author of this work in: Коларић, В. (2007) Са тигром у кавезу [With a Tiger in a Cage], у: *Руски алманах*, бр. 12, pp. 188-190. I believe that, by focusing the purpose of film to communication, and by accepting that film as art “models the world”, we may speak about film “characters” as “hypostatic unities”, or more precisely by pointing out to a certain “hypostatic unity” as “that which can be named”. This problem demands further elaboration, maybe even criticism. This unity can be founded in the purely aesthetical, i.e. receptive sense

be seen as the search for the true (in truth) relationship between a person and community, and therefore between man, God, and the created world – in other words, man’s true responsibility towards the world and others, towards himself, but within the framework of film as art and media, having in mind its development, even its “threatening” merging into new media marked by simultaneity, multiperspectivity, and interaction. Our understanding of film and its limitations, i.e. cognitive or expressive possibilities, would not therefore necessarily rest on aporias and controversies of the image, especially photographic and “reproductive” images, which until now have caused so much discomfort and confusion and, one may even say, deeply anthropologically rooted – fear.

What is at test here is film itself, as well as our understanding of film, its role in our culture and lives. Here, we are challenged, as wholesome persons, as well as our creative abilities, our dedication to the “life of the world”. If film is the “art of the present” – emancipated from photography, and literature as well, but also from ideology and any kind of terror, even the terror of the “golden calf”, synthetic and multilayered to the degree that it resembles life itself – then it should be capable of this sort of testimony, for its own “judgment of the world” in the sense of testifying about the true and immediate, permanent and real, in any moment of our existence, breakthrough of the divine into our lives, our world and our reality. The breakthrough which shapes us, makes us persons in love and in freedom, persons in the ontological and not in the psychological sense, and which are, only in that way, as persons, capable of testifying about anything, even about their own experience of the “highest matters”. Film is therefore – if it is film and wants to be a film, i.e. if that is what we want from it, and we suspect we do – communication as the loving relationship with people, as our shared effort to rise “from the world to the world, from reality to reality”, despite our petty lives, despite intrigues, malice and death, despite ourselves, the way we sometimes believe we are. Film perspectives, just like art perspectives, are thus perspectives of man, regardless of technology, “cyborgization” and genetic manipulation, regardless of digitalization and virtuality. If we deceive ourselves and allow ourselves to be intimidated, that is our problem, and it does not have to be that way. Let film (as well) testify to this, solely our own, human and “personal” freedom to be otherwise.

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