

NEUROTHEOLOGY – THE ULTIMATE HERMENEUTICS OF THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Gabriela PETRESCU*

Abstract. The term „neurotheology” was used in the beginning in a more speculative meaning than in a true scientific one. Then the same term, was employed by some of the researchers in cognitive psychology or by the behaviorists, to explain more accurately the metaphysical feelings the need of supernatural, in general and the opening toward the phantastic realm. In this sense, an example is constituted by the ubiquity of the myths and symbols in relating the human being to the sacred.

Keywords: neurotheology, the sacred, „homo religiousus”, behaviorism

The sentence given by Gerhard Tersteegen – „*a God, once understood, is no longer God*” – is the doctrinaire foundation of the most recent hermeneutics of the religious experience of man, as one of the most powerful arguments to found a new border discipline – similar to the psychology of the archetypes, to transpersonalist psychology, tanathology, etc. – namely *neurotheology*, which confirms the new unified religious era, because it is an union among the psychology of the states of modified consciousness – studied on the scientific bases of neurotheology – and religious experiences of the ecstasy of a shamanic type.

The religious experience, from the archaic times to the modern and contemporary era, constituted a nucleus of the life of man, accompanying it and giving it meaning. In a life time, man experiments a multitude of ceremonials, more or less rendered sacred or laic, remaking certain models from archaic times, even if only symbolically. Even the „a-religious man”, how Mircea Eliade names it, has a religious behavior, although it is not fully conscious that a ceremonial state exists. The initiation rituals, the rituals of renewal, find their expression in the behavior of the modern man, in his daily existence. Human existence is full of trials, and obstacles, often accompanied by sufferance that man overcomes to gain even more force and to grow, each of these as an equivalent of a symbolic „deaths” and „resurrections”, that is, a process of initiation.

Mircea Eliade reminds us, among others, and of psychoanalysis as integrated in the initiation scenarios of the modern man: „Even if certain techniques specific to the modern times, for instance psychoanalysis, which still maintains the initiation scheme. The patient is required to go deep into his being, to relive his

* Assistant Researcher at the Institute of Philosophy and Psychology of the Romanian Academy.