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Fear and liberation from fear in the writings of Tomislav Ivančić

Abstract

Much like philosophy and psychology, theology also deals with the phenomenon of fear, each field of study defining it in their own way. What they all share is the understanding of fear as a deeply human phenomenon, affecting man in his entirety and diminishing his abilities. This study aims to present a theological approach to understanding fear, including elements of a therapy that promises man's liberation from fear. Tomislav Ivančić classifies fear as a spiritual illness affecting both man's body and soul. This realm of the spirit is healed by a transcendental power rather than by man, and it is precisely this what makes his hagiotherapy special. The therapy seeks to heal both the source and the cause of fear and to equip man for a new life, a *life in trust* that Ivančić sets against a *life in fear*. The presented theological method is underpinned by theoretical tenets and emerges from practice. The authors point out its potential contributions in today's age of increased care for personal health. The study, which is the first of its kind to have been done in relation to this topic, used the hermeneutical approach of interpreting texts within their given context.

Keywords

Fear, the fearful, source and cause of fear, liberation from fear, faith, hagiotherapy, Tomislav Ivančić.

1. Introduction

Fear is a profoundly human phenomenon. It is so innate to man that numerous researchers investigating it define man himself as “a creature of fear”. What is more, fear affects man in his entirety. It diminishes man’s abilities. The role of fear is, however, primarily a positive one. It alerts us to the presence of life-threatening situations. It serves to mobilize the entire body in the face of imminent danger. Fear, therefore, proves to be a double-edged sword. Philosophy, psychology and theology have for long dealt with fear and the different faces of the phenomenon. The approaches they have taken vary.

Philosophy addresses fear as an essential determinant of man. For Aristotle “what is terrible is not the same for all men; but we say there are things terrible even beyond human strength. These, then, are terrible to everyone – at least to every sensible man.”¹ Kierkegaard makes a distinction between fear and anxiety (i.e. *Angst*, dread). Fear is a reaction to a specific threat, whereas anxiety has no particular object, its source is nothing, nothingness. For Jaspers, a dread of life is modern man’s “sinister companion”. Heidegger’s anxiety is a way of standing in the world, of understanding the world. Thus, “*Angst* becomes one of the central categories, it is the anxiety of the Dasein (Being) left to itself, certain of itself and determined as an anxious freedom toward death. That *in the face of* which anxiety is anxious is the very *being-in-the-world*.”² Heidegger considers the phenomenon of fear in three aspects: that before which we are afraid (what we are afraid of), fearing itself, and that about which we are afraid (I am afraid for myself). That before which we are afraid is the actual object of fear, whereas the “before which” of anxiety is nothingness. That about which fear is afraid is the Dasein, the fearful being itself. Dasein is afraid for itself. Thrown into the world, it knows not where it came from or why. It is, but it does not know its own source. It exists, but it does not know to what end. It lives, but not as a finished project. At the very ground of its being stands this Not. The Not points it towards Nothing. And, according to Heidegger, the Nothing itself noths (i.e. nothings or annihilates). Thus, from the very ground

¹ Aristotle, *Nikomahova etika* (Nicomachean Ethics), Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, Zagreb 1992, p. 54.

² *Filozofski rječnik* (Dictionary of Philosophy), 2nd revised edition, NZMH, Zagreb 1984, p. 315.

of Dasein looms the menacing figure of Nothing. It can be swallowed up by Nothing at any moment.³

The phenomenon of fear is also investigated by theology. In its very first book, the Bible addresses fear.⁴ Thus, theology offers clear indications of how man has been accompanied by fear ever since the beginning of time. According to Thomas Aquinas, this primordial fear of man always regards a future evil which surpasses the power of him that fears, so that it is irresistible:⁵ A single phenomenon with multiple approaches. The phenomenon is broader than its understanding. It cannot be fully encompassed by a single approach. Hence, it calls for interdisciplinarity. Philosophy endeavours to understand man and his place in the world. Psychology seeks to understand the human soul and provide therapy. Thus, when dealing with fear, theology could appear to be encroaching on the territory of philosophy and psychology. However, given the multiple faces of fear itself, a theological approach might also prove beneficial by revealing a different face of fear or providing new therapeutic possibilities.

Within Croatian theological literature the phenomenon of fear has been investigated by Tomislav Ivančić.⁶ Ivančić did not dedicate a single complete work to the phenomenon of fear, but he addressed it in a number of his writings. Ivančić argues that “in order for (our) patients to experience healing, it has not been enough to explain what is possible through philosophy, even Christian philosophy, rather, they have needed to be taught about Christian revelation and even more about the power of grace. (...) Philosophy, and with it all consummate human achievements, still lies on this side of human existence. It reaches the threshold of human existential transcendence, but it cannot see what is happening beyond the boundary of death, what is happening in the depths of man’s soul, what is existence itself, nor who is the author of the world or God.”⁷ While for Freud fear and mistrust begin at birth, Ivančić holds that from the very moment of conception until birth, and by birth itself, man has the opportunity to gain

³ See M. Heidegger, *Bitak i vrijeme* (Being and Time), Naprijed, Zagreb 1985, pp. 160–162.

⁴ On fear of the Lord and anxiety see: X. Leon-Dufour, *Rječnik biblijske teologije* (Dictionary of Biblical Theology), Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb 1988, No. 1271–1274, 1352–1354.

⁵ See I. Koprek, *Filozofijski aspekti o strahu* (The Philosophical Aspects of Fear), “Obnovljeni život” (Renewed Life, journal) Vol. 44 (1989) No. 3/4, pp. 233–240, here 233.

⁶ Tomislav Ivančić (1938–2017) – Croatian Catholic priest, professor at the Catholic Faculty of Theology, University of Zagreb and the founder of hagiotherapy.

⁷ T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza duše i hagioterapija* (Diagnosing the Soul and Hagiotherapy), Tevizija, Zagreb 2002, p. 26.

trust.⁸ This primordial trust can be gained neither from one's father, nor from the mother or anyone else other than God (as Christians believe), and trust is the opposite of fear. Ivančić developed a treatment method for spiritual illnesses, including fear, and named it hagiotherapy.⁹ His ideas and intentions are similar to those of the German theologian E. Biser, who argues that "in Jesus, death gains meaning and Christianity becomes the means of overcoming fear."¹⁰ This paper seeks to explore the understanding of fear within this particular theological approach and, most importantly, the principles of the therapy that promises liberation from fear. And this, in a very particular way, as the name itself suggests: by healing through that which is holy.

2. The theoretical tenets of the approach to fear

The Theological Dictionary defines *Angst* (i.e. dread, anxiety) as "a fundamental condition of man in the personal history of his salvation."¹¹ Fear is defined as follows: "Fear is a form of bondage creeping at man at every step of his way."¹² Ivančić rates it among some of the most powerful debilitating and confining forces in the world, affecting masses of people. Science identifies around a hundred different forms of fear (i.e. phobias), which can be broadly categorised into two groups: *registered i.e. complex phobias* and *simple fears* (i.e. phobias about specific things/situations around us).¹³ However, the last decade of the

⁸ See T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija – duhovna medicina* (Hagiotherapy – Spiritual Medicine), 2nd revised edition, Teovizija, Zagreb 1996, p. 10.

⁹ Hagiotherapy – Gr. *hagios* (holy, sacred) and *therapeuo* (I heal): healing through that which is holy. In giving this name to his method he was inspired by the Biblical revelation of the Old and New Testament, where God is referred to as Holy. And it is only Him in his holiness who is able to heal man's soul. There are also certain areas of man's personality that are holy, such as: conscience, virtue, relationship to God, religiosity. In fact, man as a person is dignified and, in that sense, holy.

¹⁰ T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza* (Diagnosing the Soul), p. 44.

¹¹ K. Rahner and H. Vorgrimler, *Teološki rječnik* (Theological Dictionary), Đakovo 1992, p. 555.

¹² T. Ivančić, *Tako je malo potrebno* (It Takes so Little), 3rd edition, Teovizija, Zagreb 1999, p. 69.

¹³ See T. Ivančić, *Tako je malo potrebno*, pp. 69–72. Ivančić gives examples of certain registered phobias: agoraphobia – the fear of open spaces etc., and among simple fears he lists: fear of the dark, fear of death, fear of illness etc.

last century brought increased concerns and fear over some often contradictory and dangerous sects, which Ivančić recognises as the reason for the Church's defensive stance instead of a practice of openness towards ecumenism and dialogue.¹⁴ This has resulted in a broader field of fear and mistrust. Mistrust and fear belong to the human spirit. Since they are negatively marked, they are sicknesses of the spirit. As spiritual sicknesses, they affect both the human body and the soul, causing a number of illnesses such as heart attacks, embolism, malaise and a sense of powerlessness.¹⁵ "It used to be thought that the heart was the centre of fear and anxiety. Later on, it was discovered that abnormal heart rhythms are actually a consequence of fear and anxiety rather than their source. From the point of view of anatomy, the source of anxiety is associated with the thalamus, the hypothalamus and the brain stem (...) The centres that regulate vegetative and instinctive life functions such as hunger, thirst, breathing, heartbeat and digestion are located within the brain stem, also known as the primitive (old) brain. All of these functions are susceptible to the influence of fear and anxiety. The centres in the limbic system are connected with the areas of the cerebral cortex (neocortex) that regulate higher cognitive functions, will and memory. This connection of the brain stem and the cerebrum through the limbic system explains how intense fear and anxiety can affect our thinking, as well as how they can be caused and induced by certain thoughts and fantasies. In this regard, it can be stated that the responsibility for some types of fears does not only lie with the brain stem, but also with the cerebral cortex."¹⁶

Ivančić points out that fear kills more people than work does, because people worry much more than they work.¹⁷ It is evidently a bad human companion. It robs man of his strengths, causes illnesses, sadness and self-pity. It makes humans low, vile and miserable. It arises where man is not ready to lose something. It threatens to take away a certain good man has been clinging on to, another person whom man has begun to consider the purpose and meaning of life, or certain successes and places in society one believes represent the meaning

¹⁴ See T. Ivančić, *Otkriće duhovne terapije* (The Discovery of Spiritual Therapy), 2nd edition, Teovizija, Zagreb 1998, p. 19.

¹⁵ See T. Ivančić, *Otkriće duhovne terapije*, p. 39.

¹⁶ M. Nikić, *Psihologija straha* (Psychology of Fear), p. 44.

¹⁷ See T. Ivančić, *Tako je malo potrebno*, pp. 69–72. Ivančić continues by quoting Robert Frost: "The reason why worry kills more people than work is that more people worry than work."

of his/her life. “Fear threatens to make us meaningless.”¹⁸ Ivančić, referring to V. Frankl, the founder of logotherapy, sees the meaningfulness of human existence and the remedy against fear of one’s existence precisely in the meaning by which a person directs himself towards that which is above him, and which transcends his death.¹⁹

A special area of interest for Ivančić is the exploration of the human existential and spiritual dimension, where he discovers models of modern evangelisation and the necessity of developing spiritual medicine. In addition to somatic medicine and psychiatry, spiritual medicine is imperative in the holistic treatment of a person, and especially in the treatment of spiritual illnesses and addictions. With this in mind, he developed the method of hagiotherapy and, in 1990, founded the Centre for Spiritual Help in Zagreb, of which he was Head.²⁰ He received an impetus to establish the Centre from studying liturgical texts, texts by the Church Fathers, Biblical revelations and the principles of pastoral theology in the Church, especially the *Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults*. His research was particularly inspired by the Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*. In addition to offering counselling, the Centre provides help through prayer and the power of the Sacred Scripture. Hagiotherapy helps believers through the power of Christian faith, and non-Christians by using the laws and principles of the human spirit. “Hagiotherapy is the fruit of practice,” says Ivančić, adding that it is “an originally Croatian model of research and treatment of the pathology of the spiritual soul.”²¹

Four vital areas that needed to be thoroughly studied and in which the Centre’s workers needed training were: the human spiritual dimension, moral suffering, the diagnostics of spiritual pain and treatment possibilities.²² According to Ivančić, what is special about the nature of hagiotherapy is the fact that “theological, professional knowledge and practical skills by themselves are not sufficient, but rather the hagiotherapist himself must have an experience of the spirit

¹⁸ T. Ivančić, *Odvažnost u predanju* (Courage in Commitment), Teovizija, Zagreb 2001, p. 130.

¹⁹ See T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 85.; V. Frankl, *Bog podsvijesti* (The Unconscious God), Oko tri ujutro, Zagreb 1980, p. 22.

²⁰ See <https://hagio.hr/tomislav-ivancic/> (20.05.2021).

²¹ T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija – model terapijske antropologije* (Hagiotherapy – a Model of Therapeutic Anthropology), “Nova prisutnost” Vol. 5 (2007) No. 1, pp. 7–19, here p. 7.

²² See T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 16; T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija – model terapijske antropologije*, p. 7.

or the experience of receiving the sacraments.”²³ Theological study, the spiritual experience of prayer, professional training and knowledge of the general concepts of medicine, psychology and psychiatry are all vital in hagiotherapy. In revealing the structure of the human spiritual dimension, he relies on the teachings of scholastic and existential philosophy. The actual work is primarily done by lay people with the support of clerical spiritual assistants appointed by the bishop according to the document of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, *The Priest in Lay Associations*. Ivančić’s hagiotherapy seeks to point out “the existence of pain of a spiritual nature, that this pain is deeper and stronger than psycho-physical illness and that it is primarily the Church which is called in this area, as it has been from the very beginnings of the development of science, to take the first steps.”²⁴

Hagiotherapy heals the realm of the spirit, and the spirit is “man’s faculty of intellectual and ethical transcendence, his ability to self-reflect, and a part of human personality, the realm of human values.”²⁵ Conscience, intellect and heart are transcendent values that surpass the psychophysical level of a man’s being. This is why a certain level of caution is necessary in addressing the three components of man: body, soul and spirit. Although it is important to make a distinction between them, they are in fact inseparable and only together constitute man in his entirety. Therefore, what is required for the normal functioning of a person is a harmony of spirit, soul and body. Love, faith and life fall within the realm of the spirit. Or rather, all of them constitute the spirit. Therefore, any kind of mistrust, hatred and fear are spiritual illnesses and require to be treated through spiritual medicine. Ivančić does not rule out the contribution of psychiatry (which treats the realm of the psyche) and somatic medicine (which treats the human body) but does set a clear boundary between their area of treatment and hagiotherapy. The most important difference lies in the fact that the realm of the spirit can only be healed by a transcendental power and not by man. For Christians, this power is personified in God. All other alternative forms of healing are human and do not reach the primordial. Hagiotherapy “is not a form of treatment that would merely provide assistance to medicine and psychiatry but is original and unique in that it heals what no other science heals. It is autonomous.”²⁶

²³ T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 18.

²⁴ T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 19.

²⁵ T. Ivančić, *Otkriće duh. terapije*, p. 35.

²⁶ T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija*, p. 13.

3. Fear as a spiritual illness

3.1. The sources and causes of fear

Fear is defined as a spiritual illness. The human spirit is not constrained by space and time. It transcends them. The spirit is immortal and eternal. In line with the tenets of classical theology, Ivančić understands eternity as the “eternal now” and the eternal limitlessness of space. “If man leaves the spiritual dimension or neglects it, then he feels confined by space and time, in desperate straits, and as a result, phobias are formed. Man is faced with a conflict between the limitations of psychical experiences and the limitlessness of the spirit. A cure for such human suffering and pain is found in returning to the spiritual dimension and thus breaking the bonds of space and time. In this way fear in the face of illness, death and old age disappears, and freedom from being confined to a place, a hospital room, to captivity, a workplace or to duties towards other people is born.”²⁷ There are three sources of spiritual pain: man himself, other people and the condition of the world. The causes of spiritual illnesses are: evil, lust and insults, and the symptoms of spiritual illnesses are: guilt, addiction and suffering. Conscious or subconscious guilt is experienced and manifested as anxiety, distress and fear. However, addictions also bring fear, qualms, a sense of spiritual death, aggression, etc.²⁸

According to Ivančić, basic spiritual illnesses²⁹ can be divided into *existential* and *transcendental* illnesses. What is meant by *existential* spiritual illnesses are the sufferings of the spiritual soul because of the sinful state of the world, or because of sin in the world. In existential philosophy this human condition is described as meaningless, as “sick unto death.”³⁰ Ivančić argues that such existential spiritual illnesses are present in every man by his very existence in this world and are in fact a reflection of man’s ignorance about his own foundations. It is from this ignorance that fear is born. Existential fear causes man to feel unprotected; exposed to death. As death appears to be stronger than anything man

²⁷ T. Ivančić, *Otkriće duh. terapije*, p. 36.

²⁸ See T. Ivančić, *Otkriće duh. terapije*, p. 51.

²⁹ What Ivančić understands under the term *basic spiritual illnesses* are spiritual sufferings which arise because of the limitations of man’s existence and because of the inversion of virtue into vice.

³⁰ T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 115.

can do to protect himself from it, he feels endangered by death, frightened by it and therefore existentially threatened.³¹ Under the term *transcendental* spiritual illnesses Ivančić understands injury of the spiritual soul caused by man's immoral actions, by which unity, goodness, beauty, truth, virtues and excellences are turned into their opposite, i.e. disunity, evil, ugliness, lies and vice. "The destruction of values leads to guilt and guilt gives birth to fear."³² When a person does evil, he/she opens himself up to evil, which then begins to dwell in him, making him an addict and prompting him to further evil. This evil, in turn, creates new pangs of conscience which produce fear.³³

Basic spiritual illnesses are moral sufferings caused by a lack or destruction of the so-called basic trust. They occur in the period between conception and the third year of a child's life. Situations such as a child which is unloved, unwanted or conceived in the same womb as a previously aborted child, a difficult pregnancy, the mother's illness, the parents' openly expressed discontent with the pregnancy or plans of aborting the child can all create a feeling of rejection, fear and anxiety inside a child.³⁴ Such feelings are stored inside a man's unconscious or subconscious self and are all the more dangerous the less man is aware of the true source of his suffering and anxiety. Not being aware of them or their source, does not make such fears and anxieties disappear, because at every moment of our lives, whether aware of it or not, we carry all of ourselves with us. We carry all of our wounds inside ourselves all the time.³⁵ Certain events in the postnatal phase also pose a grave danger in terms of trust failing to develop and being replaced by fear: a child's experience of a difficult labour, the parents' disappointment or strictness, a lack of tenderness, the mother's detachment or rejection; if a child was entrusted to the care of a person other than its parents (grandmother, aunt...), if the mother was not able to breastfeed. Arguments or divorce in the family, a lack of tender expressions of love by the parents, prolonged hospital stays, separation from the parents, early childcare (i.e. nursery), overworked parents, a traumatised mother – all of these provide

³¹ See T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 116.

³² T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 117.

³³ See T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 117.

³⁴ See T. Ivančić, *Otkriće duh. terapije*, p. 51; see also T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 118; T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija – model terapijske antropologije*, p. 14.

³⁵ See T. Ivančić, *Korijeni hagioterapije* (The Roots of Hagiotherapy), 3rd edition, Teovizija, Zagreb 2000, p. 26.

fertile ground for the development of fear and anxieties. “It is enough for our parents not to have known how to shield us from the attacks of others to cause us to feel afraid and unprotected.”³⁶ As Ivančić states, numerous studies have shown that this period is crucial for man’s spiritual structure, and gaining trust is an indispensable element. Trust is formed precisely during this period. It is the experience of a safe foothold. Trust is a power by which everything else can be conquered, and the opposite of trust is fear. Trust overcomes fear. Trust means relying on God and on one’s fellow man. As the very being of man is created out of faith as trust, any violation of trust injures man and makes him spiritually ill. Based on signs indicating that a person’s life was in danger inside the womb or after birth, it is possible to accurately predict their future behaviour and conduct. The experience of a lack of parental love regularly leads to a person’s withdrawal into oneself, to depression, guilt, self-aggression and aggression.³⁷

We could say that childhood is a condition rather than a passing phase of man’s existence. A man grows and changes but always remains identical to himself. The more one learns to be a child, the more trust grows inside him. This state of childhood is what Jesus puts forth before his followers as the foundation of faith: “(...) unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” (Matthew, 18:4). Childhood is the image and the beginning of all that will follow. Philosophers such as Seneca, Descartes, Montaigne had childhood fears which they attempted to forget or suppress. Suppression, however, increases the existential fear that turns into aggression. As long as man is open to childhood, he is existentially open to hope. And in this expectation of absolute help, fear is diminished and aggression is lost. In addition to parents or other people with whom the child had immediate contact, the field of fear could also develop as a result of different situations the child was exposed to. So, if a person was attacked by an animal as a child or if he/she experienced a fear of water or heights, he/she will continue to be afraid of this animal, water

³⁶ T. Ivančić, *Korijeni hagioterapije*, p. 20.

³⁷ See T. Ivančić, *Kako se osloboditi straha I. dio* (How to free oneself from fear, Part I) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amH1dMmCoNo> (20.05.2021); T. Ivančić, *Kako se osloboditi straha II. dio*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uIxbyx8sevg> (13.06.2021); T. Ivančić, *Kako se osloboditi straha III. dio*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmcKlq6VgZY> (13.06.2021); T. Ivančić, *Kako se osloboditi straha IV. dio*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w1PRLE6KOOI> (13.06.2021); T. Ivančić, *Kako se boriti protiv straha*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRz3PZ_3Sk (20.05.2021); T. Ivančić, *Predavanje o strahu* (A lecture on fear), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUdUIQfGoO8> (20.05.2021).

or heights as an adult. If a person witnessed a car accident as a child, this could evolve into a fear of all vehicles or if he/she watched a massacre or a terrorist attack on television, he/she might be afraid to leave the house. If a person was frail in health and delicate as a child, he/she might grow up to be afraid of life's struggle and the ruthless go-getter lifestyle and tend to withdraw and be sick rather than to engage in what he/she does not feel capable of.³⁸

Man himself can be the source of his own fear. Hypocrisy in a man gives birth to fear. Man does not even realize how many of his small and seemingly irrelevant qualities cause fear. On the outside, he presents himself differently than he really is, and this causes fear inside him: what if he is exposed?³⁹ Man becomes addicted to things and begins to fear other people⁴⁰ Insecurity, uncertainty, unclarity, confusion, animosity against others, slander, hatred, violence, tension, fear and other similar notions are born inside him because he has failed to achieve harmony with his own self.⁴¹

According to Ivančić, *organic spiritual illnesses* are those that affect man's spiritual organs, i.e. one's personality, life, conscience, intellect, heart, free will, character, religiosity, culture, sexuality, virtues and morals, faith, hope, love, "spiritual eyes", "spiritual ears", "spiritual arms", "spiritual legs". The personality is man's "I", his basic dignity, and when this dignity is injured man suffers humiliation, causing anger and anxiety to build up inside him.

Life, as defined by Ivančić, is "the faculty granted to man to exist as a living thing within being. Vegetative, physical and spiritual life are three levels of the same life which man is enabled to live through his spirit. (...) If man fails to take care of all the three levels of life, and especially if he fails to observe the hierarchy of these three levels in which the spiritual and moral life is clearly supreme over the other two, then he injures and extinguishes his own life. The result of this are fears and anxiety."⁴² The conscience is the criterium by which we differentiate good from evil and any conflict within the conscience represents an injury to one's own spiritual organism. A guilty conscience leads to fear, and "guilt

³⁸ See T. Ivančić, *Korijeni hagioterapije*, p. 25.

³⁹ See T. Ivančić, *Još se možeš vratiti* (You Can Still Return), Novi koraci, Zagreb 1994, p. 117.

⁴⁰ See T. Ivančić, *Otkriće duh. terapije*, p. 37.

⁴¹ See L. Gjergji, *Ljubav nije ljubljena* (Love is Not Loved), Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb 1995, p. 11.

⁴² T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, pp. 120–121.

is the fear of accountability”.⁴³ Intellect is the organ of man’s spiritual recognition and demands man to seek, speak, act and live the truth. “If man accepts lies, he injures the intellect as a spiritual organ and this is what man experiences as phobias, fear and persecution.”⁴⁴ Ivančić uses the word heart in the biblical sense, as the *centre of man’s* personality. It is the meeting place of the intellect and the conscience, of creativity, affective phenomena, decisions and values. But it is also the place where all symptoms of spiritual illnesses appear. It gathers all the levels of man’s love so he experiences vulnerability, disappointment, fear, anxieties etc. within it.⁴⁵

Trust i.e. faith can be natural and supernatural. In other words, it can relate to people or to God. When referring to trust, Ivančić argues that it does not occur on its own in the human consciousness as understood by idealist philosophy, nor merely in human existence as maintained by existentialist philosophy, or even as a result of a negative relationship to our fellow man, as held by Sartre. What man needs is a genuine personal “thou”, as demonstrated by Martin Buber. Man does not need only an “it”, not only another thing or another person merely as not the self. On the contrary, he needs a “thou”, another self, capable of freedom, loyalty, goodness, understanding. A “thou” that accepts trust and bestows it. But trust cannot be learned. Theoretical discussion of trust does not create trust. It is gained only through the personal experience of trust bestowed upon us in our very childhood. The trust that man has of one’s own person is bestowed and is the main condition of any other form of trust. Trust has the power to transform a man. However, people can always deceive and fail us, and this most often breeds fear,⁴⁶ which is why an unconditional “Thou” is necessary for man to build any other trust upon. In other words, God is necessary for our life and existence.⁴⁷ Ivančić associates fear with a lack of love. Citing John the Apostle (1 John 4:18), he says: “There is no fear in love.”⁴⁸

Physical illnesses also draw man into a separate world in which he begins to fear. A sick man feels miserable, powerless, dependent on others. All this

⁴³ T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija*, p. 21.

⁴⁴ T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 94.

⁴⁵ See T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 123.

⁴⁶ See T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 131.

⁴⁷ See T. Ivančić, *Predavanje o strahu* (Lecture on fear), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUdUlQfGoO8> (20.05.2021).

⁴⁸ T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija*, p. 11.

creates a feeling of insecurity and fear, fear of the future that it will only get worse.⁴⁹ The evils that threaten man and instil fear in him are boredom and loneliness.⁵⁰ This fear either makes him act in haste or completely paralyzes his action. Man fears he will be left alone or rejected. There are many things in this world that man feels threatened by or anxious about. Wars, food shortages, distrust, fighting, failures, threats, new diseases, sudden deaths, unemployment, hatred, ideological and religious wars, alienation in drugs and alcohol, futile quests for pleasure, wandering in search of meaning – all of these provide a fertile ground for fear.⁵¹ When man's spiritual structure is injured, fear is born.

3.2. What is fear afraid about?

“The *about which [Worum]* fear is afraid is the fearful being itself, Dasein. Only a being which is concerned in its being about that being can be afraid.”⁵² Man is afraid for himself. Only a person who cares about himself can be afraid. And man is such that the being he cares about most is his own self. He fights and fears for his life. “A man has only one life. If someone puts that life in danger, he is left with nothing. Life is, in fact, the precondition for anything else that man can have in life. Therefore, any kind of (perceived) life threat produces existential, fundamental, basic fear.”⁵³ In addition to fearing for oneself, for one's own wellbeing and success, man can also fear for others. Heidegger's view of such fear is twofold: positive and negative. Negative, because this fear for the other doesn't take away the other's fear from him. On the contrary, it can increase the other's fear or even create it if the other was not even afraid on his part. However, fearing along with one another – compassion is positive and not only positive, but also essential in Christianity. And it is precisely out of compassion for a man in need that Ivančić's hagiotherapy was created.

⁴⁹ See T. Ivančić, *Duhovno pomoći čovjeku* (Helping People Spiritually), 4th edition, Teovizija, Zagreb 2001, p. 12.

⁵⁰ See T. Ivančić, *Oče...* (Father...), Instructions and models for Christian meditation, Koraci, Zagreb 1982, p. 79.

⁵¹ See T. Ivančić, *33 meditacije – na putu do smisla* (33 Meditations – On the Way to Meaning), Koraci, Zagreb 1983, No. 27.

⁵² M. Heidegger, *Bitak i vrijeme*, p. 161.

⁵³ T. Ivančić, *Povratak nade: duhovne misli s telefona 9822* (The Return of Hope: Spiritual Thoughts from the 9822 Automated Hotline Service), Nakladni zavod Znanje, Zagreb 1993, p. 83.

4. How to liberate oneself from fear?

Ivančić finds the remedy against fear primarily in faith. For both believers and nonbelievers, to overcome fear of failure or a fear of illness, “it is necessary, instead of looking at fear and ruin, to turn your gaze to salvation, success, health and peace.”⁵⁴ Although the *Centre for Spiritual Help* is visited by people with different spiritual ailments, at the root of most of them lies fear. Ivančić says that every illness is accompanied by fear because they all involve a threat to life,⁵⁵ which is why the treatment at the Centre is “based on this basic elimination of anxiety and fear.”⁵⁶ “Fear is a symptom of a man’s lack of faith. To have faith primarily means to have trust. A child cannot survive without trust in its parents. Faith is the foundation of our existence and our life. Our existence is made of faith, which means that the most important area of treatment is precisely the realm of faith. Unfortunately, faith is considered to be something that belongs only to religion, thereby confusing these two essentially different notions. When speaking about religion, we refer to the domain of mysticism, to something that belongs to the religious world. Christianity is primarily a faith, and not a religion. A faith that enables man to survive.”⁵⁷ Ivančić goes on to say that the spirit is a realm in which we cannot rely on knowledge or science. Science can’t provide us the certainty that after going to bed and falling asleep we will wake up alive and well the next morning, nor can it guarantee a successful marriage to someone just entering the wedlock. The person concerned merely has faith and hopes for the best.

As Ivančić repeatedly points out, this does not mean that only Christians can be healed from fear through faith, but on the contrary, also atheists and non-Christians.⁵⁸ In treating them, one does not have to speak about God, Jesus Christ, the Church, but merely about faith as the only foothold; about faith as trust in life and in the people around them. An atheist can be reminded of and

⁵⁴ T. Ivančić, *Tako je malo potrebno*, p. 71.

⁵⁵ See T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 281.

⁵⁶ T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija*, p. 11.

⁵⁷ T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija*, pp. 42–43.

⁵⁸ In his work *Hagioterapija* (Hagiotherapy) Ivančić cites Frankl who says that if a person is consciously an atheist, he is subconsciously a believer. He adds that such suppressed faith in a person is suppressed love which results in a man’s inability to experience primordial faith and primordial love, thus threatening his very life. And a threat to life gives birth to existential fear.

directed towards all those natural laws that deliver him from spiritual illness, such as: how hatred kills and fornication weighs on one's conscience. There are objective spiritual laws that represent general human values and these are the laws of faith, Ivančić says. An atheist cannot be directed towards Jesus Christ like a Christian, but he can be directed towards "good".⁵⁹ It is enough for them to choose values over vice and they will already be open to spiritual healing. The transcendentals of being are that it is one, true, good and beautiful. Thus, by choosing these transcendentals, any man is connected with the Creator or the absolute Being and experiences conversion. In the same way, man also experiences the liberation from fear that was caused by a "sinful" life. Ivančić points out that it is important for such patients (either atheists or non-Christians, i.e. members of other religions) to understand that their non-religious or religious beliefs will in no way be offended or violated.⁶⁰ "It is important that hagiotherapy be applicable to everyone without offending freedom of conscience, just as Mother Theresa did good among the Hindus without demanding that they become Christians. That is to say, just as the Church serves believers, non-Christians and atheists with charity (i.e. *caritas*), so hagiotherapy seeks to serve all in the strength of the Church's mission. In hagiotherapy a patient is restored to the wholeness of his spiritual organism."⁶¹ Hagiotherapy first seeks to eliminate the sources of a spiritual illness and then its causes (basic and immediate). Only then can the illness itself be treated and, eventually, its symptoms eliminated. Such a procedure is also applied in the treatment of fear. When symptoms of mental instability are observed, the patient should be asked to submit psychiatric findings. This is the rule of spiritual therapy that Ivančić puts first. Only then can the treatment be started.⁶²

4.1. Treating the source and cause of fear

The treatment of a man consumed with fear first seeks to reveal the *source* and *cause* of fear. Although there are different fears and phobias, what "all fears have in common is that at some point a person's life was seriously threatened and the

⁵⁹ See T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija*, pp. 42–43.

⁶⁰ See T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 176.

⁶¹ T. Ivavnčić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 195.

⁶² See T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija*, p. 53.

sense of threat or danger still remains.”⁶³ As already mentioned, situations like these mostly involve a previous trauma, shock or an old childhood fear. In such cases, Ivančić puts Jesus before this person and invites the person to follow Him to the time of his/her own conception, because even then Christ was by his/her side.⁶⁴ Childhood wounds are to be healed by using classical prayer therapy. Jesus needs to be invoked to sever any negative influence of ancestors, any inherited negativity.⁶⁵ Prayer takes away fear from people and can take away any anxiety or human concern. It is essential to introduce Jesus into the space of fear and illness, by saying the words: *In the name of Jesus Christ, may the force of illness, anguish, fear depart from us*, or the words: *In your name, Jesus, may fear depart from this person* (the fearful)!⁶⁶ Then *the fearful* should be asked about how he/she experiences fear, what he/she is afraid of, whether there is a particular person or object that he/she is afraid of. If the source of fear is a particular person it is by all means important for the *fearful* to forgive that person, to ask Jesus to put his hand on that pain, and if possible, to bless the person that represents the source of fear. It is vital for the *fearful* to once again – or perhaps for the first time – feel safe and protected, and this is achieved by looking at one’s soul in the arms of the Mother of God.⁶⁷

The solutions Ivančić offers also depend on the type of fear concerned. Fear should by all means be tackled. Sometimes the solution is giving up one’s small plans and turning your focus elsewhere. For example, if someone is not able to study what they want or do the work they want, it is important to do at least what they can do, but also with all their heart, with complete dedication. If they are not able to achieve the goals they have set for themselves, e.g. in sports, politics, business, fear will depart once such goals are abandoned. If someone wants to travel by plane, and they are afraid that the plane might crash, they need to be ready to lose their life. If they are afraid of being criticized or mocked by people for telling them the truth, it is good to accept the possibility of losing friends in those people. If one fears that a project one wants to invest in will cost too much, one should give up any possible profit. “Giving thanks for fear” is also

⁶³ T. Ivančić, *Hagoterapija*, p. 53.

⁶⁴ See T. Ivančić, *Molitva koja liječi* (Healing Prayer), 3rd edition, Teovizija, Zagreb 1996, pp. 41–45.

⁶⁵ See T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija*, p. 53.

⁶⁶ See T. Ivančić, *Korijeni hagioterapije*, p. 126.

⁶⁷ See T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija*, p. 52.

beneficial.⁶⁸ We can only liberate ourselves from fear by accepting the loss of all that the enemy threatens to take away from us.⁶⁹ Ivančić points out that this does not mean giving up easily, but rather signifies the necessary absence of any excessive attachment to earthly goods. If what one fears is an illness or death, one should learn how to accept it. Because when a man is afraid, or pities or accuses himself, he renounces the possibility of becoming alive again, of healing and being happy. Failure, disappointment, punishment, darkness – all of these can be sources of man's fear. Jitters before performing or speaking in public, fear before an exam or meeting a person are all fears of failure and disappointment.⁷⁰ "Darkness, however, is scary and there is no use pretending or putting on a brave face in the darkness. We can only fight darkness by turning on the light. It is then that darkness and fear disappear, and we emerge as winners. In the darkness it is important that you are never alone. If you have a person whom you hold dear by your side, or a person who can protect you, you are no longer afraid of anything. And we always have that one almighty Person by our side who can safely walk us through any darkness or anxiety."⁷¹

For Ivančić, the emergence of fear is closely associated with sin. "Fear paralyzes man's actions. Fear destroys the psyche. Fear, however, is a natural outcome of man's sinful condition."⁷² Every sin distances man from God. It creates a feeling of being threatened and unprotected because he cannot expect God's protection in a sinful act. As long as man is with God, he is not afraid.⁷³ Sin instills in a person a fear of other people, of law enforcement, of one's own conscience, of punishment and of God. However, one man's sin wounds another man, and vice versa. "At the same time, sins push us into fear."⁷⁴

It is precisely through his spiritual ability that man can communicate with God. God gives him His words and commandments, and if he lives accordingly man is true and is in harmony with nature, his fellow men, and God. If he goes

⁶⁸ See T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 262.

⁶⁹ See T. Ivančić, *Odvažnost u predanju*, pp. 131–132. All of these are examples Ivančić lists on these pages. It can be noted that Ivančić uses Frankl's "paradoxical intention".

⁷⁰ See T. Ivančić, *Još se možeš vratiti*, p. 95.

⁷¹ T. Ivančić, *Još se možeš vratiti*, p. 136.

⁷² T. Ivančić, *33 meditacije...*, No. 27.; T. Ivančić, *Oče...*, p. 49; T. Ivančić, *Korijeni hagioterapije*, p. 12.

⁷³ See T. Ivančić, *Povratak nade*, p. 83.

⁷⁴ T. Ivančić, *Otkriće duh. terapije*, p. 84.

against God's commandments, he is in conflict both with his Creator and with himself. His fate is doomed and "this breeds depression or aggression inside him, existential fear, anxiety and a sense of meaninglessness. Man withdraws into himself, feels split inside, at odds with the voice of his own conscience. He has a profound sense of his life being destroyed and disappearing forever. Guilt is his spiritual illness."⁷⁵ In order to establish a covenant with God, a "change of heart" is necessary, a change from hatred to love, from inhumanity to humanity, a complete transformation. Such a transformation occurs when man is able to control his own will and listen to his own conscience. It is only then that man is released from the confines of his inner self and is able to liberate himself from fears, tensions and the futile search for meaning in things that are beneath him, concludes Ivančić.⁷⁶ As "God is the master of man's conscience, the spirit of a man in friendship with God is not afraid of guilt and responsibility, because God is above our faults. Such a man is not afraid of death, because God is above death, He is life. Such a man is not afraid of people, because God is stronger than all men. Man is then not afraid of human judgement or human history, because only God is the final judge."⁷⁷ Before God, the primordial existential fear inside the man disappears, argues Ivančić, because man feels that he has conquered illness, death, guilt and fear. Man's spirit is no longer afraid of sin, because he experiences God's merciful forgiveness. God is almighty and good, and can release man from all fear. What is essential is to recognize one's fear, sins and guilt, to confess them to God and to say sorry. This could slowly fill one's inner man with peace and remove fear. Man should, however, persevere on this path until God has freed him from the last sign of fear. One needs to pray from the heart.⁷⁸ Ivančić recommends several meditations, prayers, and passages from Scripture, particularly the Psalms,⁷⁹ that fill the patient with security and trust. "Jesus has come to heal broken hearts. Fear breaks people's hearts. Jesus shall heal you."⁸⁰

⁷⁵ T. Ivančić, *Otkriće duh. terapije*, p. 38.

⁷⁶ See T. Ivančić, *Otkriće duh. terapije*, p. 40.

⁷⁷ T. Ivančić, *Otkriće duh. terapije*, pp. 115–116.

⁷⁸ See T. Ivančić, *Povratak nade*, p. 84.

⁷⁹ In his books *Hagioterapija* (Hagiotherapy) and *Dijagnoza* (Diagnosing the Soul), Ivančić lists psalms and text of the Sacred Scripture which the hagiotherapist can apply: Psalms 91, 27, 103, 37, 34, 42, 23, 85, 81, 88 and Isaiah 53, 43, 49. The patient should be told to read these texts as frequently as possible during the day. Ivančić also often refers to some of his previous works, most notably *Susret sa živim Bogom* (Encountering the Living God).

⁸⁰ T. Ivančić, *Povratak nade*, p. 84.

Ivančić notes that it is only from the perspective of death that one can properly evaluate the whole life and every life's event, even illness itself.⁸¹ However, the fear of death is greater than all other fears. It is also the cause of many other fears. This point is addressed in the *Documents of the Vatican Council*, and theologian Andrija Bilokapić elaborates on it as follows: "Man is a being of hope. Fear is the negation of hope. Man fears the future and doubts the value of life. It is out of fear of being extinguished for all eternity that every other fear sprouts."⁸² Ivančić, nevertheless, underlines that death should not be feared. It is not scary, nor is it a parting from all our loved ones. It is neither our final place, nor the end of all our paths. Death is merely the last messenger on our earthly journey, showing us the way to eternal life. Ivančić even refers to death as man's friend because it finally exposes all Earthly things as nothing more than *vanity of all vanities*. And it is by death that Jesus himself conquered sin, the devil and even death itself.⁸³

Ivančić sets the existential philosophy of Sartre against the Christian existentialism of Gabriel Marcel. "Heidegger, in analysing concrete human existence and its structure, observed man's trepidation in the face of the questionability of his existence, his being thrown to death, the impossibility of being, and concluded that man is 'Sein zum Tod' – 'being to death'. Everything within man strives to transform that being into 'being to life', and this happens when a person freely decides to exist from within himself."⁸⁴ Ivančić argues that in existential philosophy existence is researched by direct experience and that during such research negative phenomena such as time-limitation and contingency, fear and anxiety (Kierkegaard, Heidegger), failure (Jaspers) and "being to death" (Heidegger) arise in cognition. Kierkegaard, for example, spoke of man's experience of powerlessness, weakness, guilt and fear.⁸⁵ "In Sartre's existentialism, analysis leads to nothingness and meaninglessness of existence. Man is wandering in the dark,

⁸¹ See T. Ivančić, *Duhovno pomoći čovjeku*, p. 142.

⁸² A. Bilokapić, *Blažena nada*, "Živo vrelo" Vol. 18 (2001) No. 12, p. 23, see also: Documents of the Second Vatican Council, constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 18.

⁸³ See T. Ivančić, *Oče...*, p. 108.

⁸⁴ T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 83–84; M. Heidegger, *Was ist Metaphysik*, Frankfurt 1975, p. 38.

⁸⁵ Kierkegaard concludes that man is "sick unto death". It is for this reason that he continues to seek solid ground in order to extract himself from his existential mortal illness. This is why a Christian does not only need to think and cognize the truth, but rather needs to act, to simply be a Christian. See S. Kierkegaard, *Gesammelte Werke*, 1963, p. 104.

going nowhere and ending in nothing. Christian existentialism, on the other hand, speaks of meaning as personality, of hope and confidence (G. Marcel).⁸⁶

Man's existence was bestowed to him, much like freedom and power of choice, but some things are out of his hands. He has come out of the unknown and is headed into the unknown. Just as he could not decide "to exist", so too can he not decide to "move into nothingness". His cognition is limited, and he fears the unknown.⁸⁷ While existential philosophy explores existence through direct experience, Ivančić points out that man cannot directly meet the Creator of his own existence. He also says that existential illnesses primarily require therapy that occurs through proclamation in evangelisation seminars. "Man should be given the first basic proclamation, shown that he is saved from 'being unto death' by the work of Jesus Christ,"⁸⁸ and helped to believe that his "being is not intended for death, but life (...) and that it is possible to cross the chasm of death into life."⁸⁹

Ivančić sees man as divided between caring for himself and caring for others, between health and illness, between the demands placed upon him and the powerlessness to fulfil them. Every man is tormented by fear of death, weapons, people, war, loss of livelihood, disappearance. Questions such as: who do we belong to and who stands behind us, is there anyone who likes us enough to protect us? Why all the suffering, why all the diseases? All of these questions stand and resonate loudly in the depths of every man. Ivančić finds no rational or human way to answer them, or to heal man's wounds. Despite everything man has achieved, he sees him as "a prisoner of his own existence."⁹⁰ He sees the only way out of this condition of captivity in acknowledging God as one's own beginning and ultimate goal.⁹¹ In this light, "the Church is invited to shed all other concerns and anxieties, all fears, and to rely all on God entirely, to be there for humanity."⁹²

⁸⁶ T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, pp. 83–84.

⁸⁷ T. Ivančić, *Otkriće duh. terapije*, p. 12.

⁸⁸ T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 245.

⁸⁹ T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 207.

⁹⁰ See T. Ivančić, *Otkriće duh. terapije*, p. 13.

⁹¹ Ivančić refers to the Documents of the Second Vatican Council, in particular the constitution *Gaudium et spes* (GS).

⁹² T. Ivančić, *Budni budite i molite* (Watch and Pray), Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb 1986, pp. 25–26.

4.2. Healing fear through hagiotherapy

Ivančić proposes four types of spiritual remedies: the word (human speech or God's Word), prayer, metanoia and the sacraments. Each of these remedies can be used equally by both believers and non-believers, by Christians and non-Christians, in healing fear. "When an atheist uses his knowledge and free will to accept the laws of the world and man's being, when he submits to the demands of conscience and humanity, when he is prepared to reject vice and embrace values and virtues, then he makes contact with the Creator and in doing so receives God's creative word, submits to it and becomes a friend of God. Thus, he corrects the dysfunction of his spiritual organism and allows God's strength to heal his wounds and remove his spiritual pain."⁹³ Similarly, through metanoia, the patient (either a believer or an atheist) is brought to recognise that he has turned from the right path and inspired to return to the right path: the path of renunciation of evil and commitment to good. When speaking about the sacraments, Ivančić similarly highlights that nature is the sign of God's presence and that God has not just created the world, but also sustains it. "His spirit holds the material world together, preventing it from collapsing and keeping it functioning in harmony. So even atheists can draw from what is harmonious, beautiful, truthful and good in nature and experience the signs of God's presence and action in interpersonal relationships. In accepting justice, love and trust, they receive God's presence and strength through these signs (...) By submitting to the demands of conscience and virtues, respecting life and the personhood of each man, and growing in trustfulness, they somehow receive sacramentally in these signs strength to sustain their spiritual being."⁹⁴ In a similar manner, *the fearful* can also be liberated from fear.

When it comes to forms of spiritual therapy, Ivančić distinguishes between the following three: cognitive, axiological and anthropological. In his earlier works, he referred to the third one as theological-anthropological, whereas in his most recent book he mentions the fourth form of spiritual therapy: religious.⁹⁵ Cognitive therapy imparts to the patient the (cognitive) understanding

⁹³ T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 198.

⁹⁴ T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 202.

⁹⁵ See T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija – model terapijske antropologije*, 15–16; see also T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza duše i hagioterapija*, Teovizija, Zagreb 2009. On the effectiveness of hagiotherapy see: B. Matijašević, T. Maglica, *Samoprocjena osoba s problemima u ponašanju o učinkovitosti hagioterapije* (Self-Assessment of Persons with Behavioral Problems about the Effectiveness of Hagiotherapy), *Crkva u svijetu* Vol. 56 (2021) No. 2, pp. 214–232.

of the functioning of his spiritual soul. It reveals any deviations, trauma or spiritual illnesses that have hindered or thwarted the functioning of the patient's spiritual organs i.e. spiritual soul. "These can include wrong attitudes regarding the moral and ethical dimension of man. They can also involve misconceptions about evil, sin, values and virtues, or a lack of understanding of notions such as integrity, honour, fairness, love, trust and character. It is often the case that correct cognition already initiates the healing of a particular trauma or deviation."⁹⁶

Axiological therapy imparts the understanding of the role of morals and ethics in man's life, with the purpose of motivating and enabling the patient's conversion from a negative to a positive life attitude. Immoral conduct destroys the brain, while moral behaviour builds and heals it. "If moral behaviour, according to logotherapy, is man's purpose and meaning, then immoral conduct fills him with a sense of meaninglessness. Acting contrary to goodness, truth, beauty and unity deprives man of existence. Existential fear and anxiety creep into man, resulting even in suicidal thoughts."⁹⁷ Ivančić goes on to explain that evil, as understood by philosophy, means a lack of good. And good is identical to being. Hence, evil means the loss of being. Therefore, he recognizes axiological spiritual illness as transcendental, as one that wounds or destroys the transcendentals in man's being. Since evil also makes a man guilty, he needs to right any wrongdoing. That is why Ivančić considers this therapy not only medical, but also juridical. "Man must repent all his evil actions, to right any wrongdoings, but also to heal the wounds caused by the evil he has thought, spoken and done. Evil primarily wounds the one who does evil or agrees to evil, and only then those that evil is inflicted on."⁹⁸ What is essential in this form of therapy is this practical step of repentance and decision to choose truth and virtue, which Ivančić refers to as *metanoia*

⁹⁶ T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija – model terapijske antropologije*, 16. As a special form of help, Ivančić offers believers God's word, i.e. thoughts of the Sacred Scripture: *For I am with you, to save you and rescue you* (see Jeremiah 15), or what Jesus says to his disciples: *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom* (see Luke 12), or: *Fear not, only believe, your faith has saved you*. Or: *But take courage, I have conquered the world* (see John 16). According to Ivančić, reading and understanding God's words will assure the patient of Christ's willingness and power to release him from *existential anxiety*. See T. Ivančić, *Dijagnoza*, p. 206.

⁹⁷ T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija – model terapijske antropologije*, 16.

⁹⁸ T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija – model terapijske antropologije*, 16.

or conversion. It involves a crucial turning from the past to the future, from evil to good, from fear to faith and trust.⁹⁹

Anthropological therapy is used in healing existential, basic and actual trauma and illnesses, and includes five different forms of therapy. *Agape-therapy* is the mediation of God's unconditional love for man through prayer and texts of the Sacred Scripture which reassure the patient of God's love, faithfulness, tenderness and forgiveness. By becoming aware of being loved, wanted and surrounded by love, the patient is relieved from all kinds of wounds including fear and depression.¹⁰⁰ *Pistis-therapy* liberates from fear and mistrust. "Fear is knowing that someone hates us and that our life is in danger. Healing "by faith" fills man with the confidence to trust God and his fellow men."¹⁰¹ Ivančić points out that once *the fearful* enters faith, he is released from fear. That is, fear is released from him.¹⁰² Man is imparted the confidence of being good, loved and appreciated by people. *Eirene-therapy* brings the patient to reconciliation with himself, God and others around him. *Dynamis-therapy* liberates man from addiction. Such liberation is achieved in different ways, but all of them involve an awareness that "only the Creator, the source of man's spirit, can liberate that spirit from addiction to any kind of ideology or evil and negative spiritual forces. *Pneuma-therapy* teaches man to exercise and practice virtues, to reject vice and pray to God for the gifts of man's fundamental values."¹⁰³

⁹⁹ On religious upbringing see: J. Garmaz, *Neka pitanja o odgoju vjere u (poslije)koncilskim Dokumentima* (Certain Questions on Religious Upbringing in Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents) in the proceedings *Obljetnica svečanog otvaranja i početka Drugog vatikanskog koncila* (50th Anniversary of the Opening Ceremony and the Beginning of the Second Vatican Council), T. Matulić, M. Cifrak, R. Razum, N. Malović, A. Filić (Eds.), Glas Koncila, Zagreb 2015. pp. 445–457; J. Garmaz, M. Scharer, *Učenje vjere. Kako osmisliti i voditi proces učenja vjere? Komunikativnoteološka koncepcija* (Learning Faith. How to Design and Lead the Faith Learning Process? A Communicative-Theological Concept), Glas Koncila, Zagreb 2014.

¹⁰⁰ Ivančić refers to his own book *Susret sa živim Bogom* (Encountering the Living God) which offers many forms of prayer that mediate trust in God's love, faithfulness and goodness.

¹⁰¹ T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija – model terapijske antropologije*, 16.

¹⁰² See T. Ivančić: Predavanje o strahu (Lecture on fear), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUdUIQfGoO8> (20.05.2021).

¹⁰³ T. Ivančić, *Hagioterapija – model terapijske antropologije*, 16. See also the paper by S. Radić, *Hagioterapija i vrline. O nekim vidovima uloge vrlina u hagioterapiji* (Hagioterapy and virtues. On some aspects of the role of virtues in Hagioterapy) in the proceedings *Teologijom svjedočiti i naviještati. Zbornik radova u čast profesoru emeritusu Tomislavu Ivančiću*, Eds. Ž. Tanjić, T. Kovačić, B. Murić, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb 2010, pp. 273–300.

In his more recent book, *Kršćanska vjera spašava i liječi* (The Christian Faith Saves and Heals),¹⁰⁴ Ivančić addresses the distinction between hagiotherapy and religious medicine. Both are directed towards man's spiritual soul, but do not occur on the same level of man. Anthropological medicine and hagiotherapy deal with the third, anthropological level of man, while religious medicine belongs to the fourth, theological level of man. Thus, anthropological medicine and hagiotherapy are philosophical therapy forms, while religious medicine is Christian and purely faith-based i.e. religious. Since hagiotherapists are required to have a good knowledge and experience of man's spiritual dimension and of divine grace, Ivančić warns that one could be tempted to demand from the patient the practice of Christian spirituality and prayers to achieve the anthropological health of the spiritual soul. However, without a clear and thorough distinction between the competences of these different levels, it will be possible to help neither those seeking health of the spiritual soul nor those interested in healing the religious dimension.

5. Conclusion

As we have seen, the phenomenon of fear is studied by philosophy, psychology and theology alike, with each of them defining it in their own way. What they all share is the understanding of fear as a deeply human phenomenon, affecting man in his entirety. This study aimed to present a theological approach to understanding fear, including elements of a therapy that promises man's liberation from fear. Tomislav Ivančić classifies fear as a spiritual illness affecting both man's body and soul. According to Ivančić, the spiritual dimension is healed by a transcendental power rather than by man, and precisely this is what makes his hagiotherapy special. The therapy seeks to heal both the source and the cause of fear and to equip man for a new life, a *life in trust* that Ivančić sets against a *life in fear*. The loss of trust or acquired fears are largely a result of childhood trauma. Situations experienced in childhood, persons to whose care a child was entrusted, or the child itself – all of these can be the sources of fear. There are also numerous causes of fear, but the most fundamental are evil and sin. The fear of death is greater than all other fears. However, Ivančić confronts it with Jesus Christ who conquered death itself, and therefore any fear of it as well, by his

¹⁰⁴ T. Ivančić, *Kršćanska vjera spašava i liječi*, Teovizija, Zagreb 2015.

own death. Man fears for himself, for his life but also for others. In Christian terms, we could call this compassion. In this light, we can also speak about the positive aspects of fear.

Ivančić often highlights that hagiotherapy is open to all people: atheists and believers, non-Christians and Christians, which is by all means positive. Spiritual remedies, according to Ivančić, include: the word (human speech or God's Word), prayer, metanoia and the sacraments. It is evident that word, either human or divine, can help both believers and atheists. However, prayer – which he defines as man's *conscious search for communication with God* – metanoia (conversion) – which represents *a return to the company of God and people* – and sacraments – which are visible *signs of God's presence and work* – all seem reserved for believers. In other words, they make us wonder how we could be able to help non-believers without violating their non-religious beliefs? Does this mean that the only way to help non-believers would be conversion? If this were true, then hagiotherapy would not primarily be considered a therapy, but rather conversion with therapeutic effects. Ivančić himself points out that hagiotherapy is incomprehensible without God because God's work is recognized in it, and it is only in His presence and through His power that man's spiritual traumas can be revealed and treated. How is it possible, then, to help an atheist through hagiotherapy without offending his belief *that there is no God*? Simply by telling him about the laws of the human spirit, about human values, virtues, and about the *good*. Because inside every man dwells indestructible *Good*. By relying on this *Good*, man is able to understand others, to forgive them and work together with them, he is able to gain trust and liberate himself from fear. A member of any other religion can, in turn, be told about the God he knows. He can be instructed to invoke his own God for help and to rely on Him. And a Christian should, on the other hand, be directed towards the God who is our gentle Father, towards Jesus our Saviour, and towards the Holy Spirit, our Defender. All this leads us to God, God the Creator of all, God who heals in hagiotherapy and in the *Centre for Spiritual Help*. The hagiotherapist himself must fulfil certain requirements associated with belonging to Christianity. Ivančić emphasizes that hagiotherapy can be seen as the work of the Church for the world, like *caritas*, and that this work does not aspire to develop (into) some kind of third medicine, i.e. so-called spiritual medicine, although it was him who initially referred to it as spiritual medicine, only later calling it anthropological medicine and distinguishing it from religious medicine. Such a development was probably a result of new insights which he gained through more recent research. He confirms this himself

in a way when saying that hagiotherapy first developed as a therapy of grace and then as a philosophical-theological discipline.

The forms of spiritual therapy Ivančić applies are: cognitive, axiological and anthropological (agape-, pistis-, eirene-, dynamis- and pneuma-therapy). Although only the theoretical tenets of hagiotherapy have been presented in this paper, it is by no means only theoretical, but rather a practical method of therapy. It is the fruit of religious experience and a theological method that demonstrates how theology itself has cut to the very core of the phenomenon of fear and that it does have quite a number of relevant insights to offer on the matter.

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