

FAITH IN HAGIOTHERAPY

Marina Čavar

Faculty of Philosophy, Society of Jesus, Zagreb, Croatia

SUMMARY

Background: *If vegetative life carries a vegetative soul, and rational life a rational soul, what does spiritual life carry? What are the differences between a spiritual and rational soul? Can a spiritual soul somehow touch and see, can it be subjected to scientific experiments? What is hagiotherapy? Why is lack of faith a defect in spiritual terms? What happens in people who believe? The aim of this paper is to answer these questions and also explain spiritual abilities or power - faith in terms of hagiotherapy, how it affects a person's life and work, and also society.*

Cases and methods: *We will be relying on the most important and recently published scientific books from the founder of hagiotherapy, Tomislav Ivančić, PhD, titled Hagiotherapy Encountering Man, Man's Total Woundedness, Hagiotherapeutic Anthropology, but also an older booklet titled "Spiritual Life in the Prayer and Word Community".*

Results: *We will discover the meaning of hagiotherapy in this paper - therapy for that part of a person which has not been previously therapeutically investigated and which poses a challenge to the contemporary world. We have found that the spiritual soul, specifically a person's specificity, carries in it a mechanism affecting the brain's functioning, and also a person's complete psychophysical existence. The investigation reveals that a person who has faith, where faith is a power or ability of the spiritual soul in terms of hagiotherapy, acquires an amazing perspective, develops entirely and expects goodness, creates projects for the future and is directed with great reverence to creating a spiritual reality in the psychophysical world. Not believing means being broken, void of strength and will power, tied to the "now", and depressed.*

Conclusion: *Based on this research, it seems that hagiotherapy offers new perspectives in resolving the difficulties of human existence, on a personal and global level. The person who believes, always moves forward, discovers new worlds, is ahead of their time and a leader of their generation. Hagiotherapy evidently wants to be a return to a person's true values and a proven path towards a good future.*

Key words: *hagiotherapy essence - person/man - spiritual soul - faith*

* * * * *

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, increasingly frequent questions began to appear as to how a person's spiritual reality affects their psychosomatic existence. How does one describe this spiritual reality and where is it found in a person? Austrian neuropsychiatrist Frankl (1993) spoke of the "transcendental commander", a medicine that has an excellent effect on patients who complained of insufficient existential meaning and boredom. He asserts that when a person discovers the meaning of life, a specific task, and if they fathom that as something given from a higher personality, a transcendental commander, their psychological condition improves.

This line of thought also appears in a discovery by Tomislav Ivančić, former head of the Department of Fundamental Theology at the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Zagreb, former dean of the Catholic Faculty of Theology (1998-2001), and former chancellor of the University of Zagreb. It involves hagiotherapy, situated between theology and religiology on the one hand, psychology and psychotherapy, on the other hand (Ivančić 2005). In addressing this point in a scientific and investigative manner, Ivančić wanted to practically examine certain theoretical cognitive findings. An effort will be made, further in the text, to answer a number of questions. Why did Ivančić even begin researching human suffering as something deep and existentially attributable

only to man, and seeking an adequate solution for it? Where are the roots of hagiotherapy? How can faith, viewed as power and ability of the human spiritual soul, open man's spiritual health, and accordingly facilitate acceptance of psychosomatic difficulties, and in some cases even improve them, heal them, and what results in the future should be subjected to a higher critical and perhaps experimental analysis? Though these indicators are visible at a spiritual level, consequences can seldom be measured externally, because man acts as an entity – spirit, soul and body (Ivančić 2005, 2009, 2011).

Faith or lack of faith – does something change if deciding on one or other? Let's take a look at the text below for some explanations.

Insufficient investigation into suffering and therapy of the spiritual soul

Ivančić (2015) was convinced that an intensive spiritual life and healing prayer does not resolve the question of incurable but also curable illnesses. This same author believes that there must exist an unrevealed and undiscovered area of a person's being. If vegetative life carries a vegetative soul, rational life a rational soul, what carries a spiritual life? Where and what is a spiritual soul? Can it somehow be felt, seen, subjected to a scientific experiment? Where is it found in man? How does it function?

In man we differentiate the biological, psychological, spiritual and religious life. The essence of a plant is that it possesses vegetative life, animals have a sensitive life, an angel is spirit, but what about man? The essence of man is his spiritual life. Man's spirituality must not be misplaced as a religious and faith-based spiritual life. A faith-based spiritual life is the life of the Holy Spirit in man, who accordingly becomes saved (Ivančić 2015). However, research into man's pneumatological dimensions (Mišić 2000, Ivanić 2015) requires placing his spirituality and spiritual soul into man's centre being, in order to uncover how every man is a spiritual being with a spiritual soul. Accordingly, he differs from the angels, animals and plants. Tomislav Ivančić (2015) is convinced his essence is a spiritual dimension which the spiritual soul brings everything to life.

The scientific basis upon which hagiotherapy rests is information obtained from researching the laws of man's spiritual soul and those relating to the spirit. Just as there are physical laws, so too there are spiritual ones. Like medicine and psychiatry, so too hagiotherapy should be available to all people, regardless of differences in world views, religion and faith. All people possess a spiritual dimension, all suffer because of their weaknesses, wounds and illnesses (Ivančić 2015). Hence, discussions taking place on this subject are altogether understandable.

DISCUSSIONS

In the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s, the neurosciences uncovered the necessity of researching and developing sciences of man's spirit, points out Nobel Prize Winner, Erich Kandel (Ivančić 2011, 2015). This call was accepted by the biological sciences, and especially philosophical sciences.

The ability to identify illnesses in man's spiritual soul and administer successful therapy was also revealed in the theology of the Orthodox Christian tradition (Ivančić 2011, 2015).

In researching the spiritual soul, Tomislav Ivančić encountered various philosophical anthropologies. Therefore, the subject of the spiritual soul has been researched. However, the woundedness of the spiritual soul and therapeutic possibilities for it remain inadequately investigated. John Paul II pointed out in the encyclical *Salvifici Doloris* that "Man suffers in various ways which medicine often does not reach even when utilising its most developed specialisations... It involves pain of a spiritual nature, and not only a psychological dimension of pain" (Ivančić 2009, 2015). Benedict XVI stated that "People see that existence, when God is not there, becomes sick and man cannot survive" (Ivančić 2015). Ivančić decided to investigate moral suffering and understood the necessity to move forward from philosophical anthropology. It became necessary to more specifically fathom man's spiritual soul, its woundedness, and how it

can be helped. Here, certain problems appeared. Instead of speaking about the spirit and spiritual soul in psychiatry and psychotherapy, Ivančić discovered man's subconsciousness and unawareness. How can man be subconscious and unaware, he asked himself. Viktor Frankl believes that "In man's subconsciousness there is actually the spirit" (Ivančić 2015). Furthermore, according to Freud, suppressed content exists in the subconsciousness, which should be cautiously made aware so that the psychiatric patient is prevented from becoming even more ill, and the healthy person becoming ill (Ivančić 2015).

How then can man be helped to liberate himself of such suppressed content? Frankl asserts that God is in the subconsciousness (Ivančić 2015). This means not only is negative content there, but also strong positive ones which can be excellent for patient therapy. Is hagiotherapy a good answer to such ways of thinking?

The concept and origin of hagiotherapy

Hagiotherapy is a novelty in terms of therapy and science. Some view it as the Church's pastoral work. Others see it as one of numerous psychotherapeutic methods (Ivančić 2015). The term *hagiotherapy* means healing with holy (in Greek *hagio* is holy, *therapeuo* to heal) (Ivančić 2011). What is the difference between man, animal and plant? Man is all holy; however, his spiritual dimension which, based on the Book of Genesis and Catechism of the Catholic Church, stems directly from the Creator who is the only holy, represents in a special way, a kind of holy place in man (Croatian Bishops' Conference 1994, Ivančić 2015). The Creator made man, forming his body from earth – a psychosomatic dimension created from material already in existence since Creation, and then he exhaled into his face the breath of life (Rebić et al. 2004). Hence, the spiritual dimension differs from the rational and vegetative life of plants and sensitive life of animals. Body and soul "are created by parents", whereas God creates each spiritual soul directly and consequently it is immortal. This universal cognitive discovery and presence of the Creator is the greatest power for spiritual health, thought Ivančić (2015). This enables us to position hagiotherapy. It explores the spiritual soul, its pain and health, and is therefore the reason it is called therapy, but it is strictly separate from psychotherapy and, like somatic medicine, is fully autonomous in its action, Ivančić (2015) confidently asserted. Psychology belongs to the medical-sociological scientific area, whereas investigating the soul or anthropological pneumatology (Klajić 1986), as Ivančić (2015) called it, in the humanistic-scientific area such as philosophy, history and theology. The subject of exploring hagiotherapy is man's wounded spiritual soul (Ivančić 2015). Therefore, various subjects, goals and means lead to the goal of psychotherapy and pastoral work as opposed to hagiotherapy.

How did hagiotherapy originate? What are its roots? The following section will endeavour to answer these questions.

The roots of hagiotherapy

The roots of hagiotherapy go back to the early Christian catechumenate which Ivančić (2015) used in creating a practical model of a new contemporary evangelisation. In the third part of the model, the person is led through cleaning and enlightenment on their journey into the Church. After a time, Ivančić applied the third part of the catechumenate model as a special way of helping people from their problems, illnesses, crises and despair.

To help professionally those in pain and spiritual suffering and as best as possible, Ivančić (2009, 2015) decided in 1990 to establish the Centre for Spiritual Help in Zagreb. After a number of years of practical work, the need arose to investigate and scientifically support that work. Soon after, a school for educating workers at the hagiotherapy centres were organised in Croatia and abroad. Besides holding public forums for medical doctors, priests and teachers on the principles of hagiotherapy, in 2006 the first scientific Symposium on Hagiotherapy was held in Zagreb. The new hagiotherapy approach has its origins in scientific research into the spiritual dimension, especially the brain and man's consciousness, researching genes and their content, recollections and memory, researching man's belief system (Ivančić 2009, 2015).

Ivančić was convinced that without healing man's spiritual dimension, we cannot count on renewing society and preventing corruption, not just individually but also at a global level (Ivančić 2015). Further in the text, we will focus on experts in hagiotherapy, persons responsible and actual charisma. Are there any differences between hagiotherapy and especially psychology and psychotherapy?

Disciplined spiritual life in the Prayer and Word Community

Hagiotherapy is a trademark and should not be used privately for public work (Ivančić 2016). Tomislav Ivančić is the founder of the Prayer and Word Community (P&WC) which is today the organisation for hagiotherapy content and development. Hagiocoassistants are professionals who practice hagiotherapy. In line with founder's Rule (Ivančić 2016), they are obliged to be members of the P&WC. It is a Catholic faithful lay organisation (Ivančić 2009, 2016).

The thing that Ivančić always encouraged members of the P&WC is a disciplined spiritual life based on defined rules. Without discipline, practicing hagiotherapy becomes a contraindication, and for this there are sanctions. In particular, each member is obliged to attend at least three new evangelisation seminars and pass all the necessary exams set by the Rule. Moreover, those wanting to work as hagiocoassistants must experience the so called Lightning (Ivančić 2016), conveyed by those persons who have experienced the strength and

power of the Holy Spirit, adhering to instructions which Ivančić conveyed on a daily basis throughout the entire year to selected members of the Prayer and Word Community (P&WC). All of these approaches are important for building a personal identity as a member of the P&WC. The best results in hagiotherapy are achieved where the hagiocoassistant has been reborn, entering the law of spirit – beauty, truth, goodness and love. When referring to charisms in the P&WC, it can be best understood as a historical origin (Ivančić 2009, 2015). When returning from studies in Rome in 1972, Ivančić began catechesis classes for students. In the summer of 1975, Ivančić along with twenty other students travelled to Davor, his place of birth, where they intensively read the Holy Scriptures, prayed, discusses the faith and celebrated the Eucharist. After three weeks had passed, they had an authentic faith experience, as well as the presence of the Holy Spirit, similar to the “power from above” (Ivančić 2009, 2015).

Towards the end of this life, Ivančić pointed out that hagiotherapy was in fact “born” from the start of the P&WC and the power of the Holy Spirit, stemming from suffering and searching (Ivančić 2009). What is faith in hagiotherapy? Why is lack of faith a defect in spiritual terms? What happens in man who believes? Perhaps we will discover the answer in the next chapter.

Faith in hagiotherapy

Faith is a project of the spirit for creation in a material world, says Ivančić (2016). This means possessing something at the spirit level and achieving the task in the world of matter. Man believes he will reach his destination, believes that his friend will help him, that he will succeed, be healed. At the same time, it is having and not having, possessing and not possessing, depending on what level the reality of faith occurs (Ivančić 2016).

Man is a spiritual and material being, and that is why faith is a natural event in him. When referring to faith in the Creator, it is a level above, absolute, whereas man is limited, relative (Ivančić 2016). Much distrust from the surroundings has entered man through genetic agents, meaning that man has entered a more serious level of distrust and helplessness in relying on the Creator, and then often on people. Atheism wipes man's ability of self-achievement in relation to the Creator. Man remains pinned down in helplessness, hopelessness, frustration, despair, a fatamorganic dying in body and in the world. Faith must provide arguments, otherwise reason refuses to accept it. Faith experience is the strongest argument, because it is achieving what we believe in (Ivančić 2016). Vesna Žarko, a member of P&WC says, “As an ability in hagiotherapy, faith is leading me in life – to build trust in achieving life goals”. Mario Tokić, another member of P&WC testifies, “For me, faith is the ability to function normally in all segments of my life. When my faith is healthy, my thoughts are more serene and meaningful. Even my body is more relaxed. Then I

don't feel anxiety, and my every step becomes deeper, more important, because it becomes part of one big entity which I control and part of the centre in my being in which I am able to be present or withdraw from." Faith is trust in the person who has communicated something to us or taught us or sent us on the path of healing, as well as trusting in the result of such trust, e.g., receiving healing from woundedness and insult. When we believe, we move forward and quickly enter an area of experience. If you believe, you will have everything. If you do not believe, you will not have experience nor be healed. Faith is looking at what the eyes of the body do not see. The person who believes, receives a miraculous perspective, sees far and with great reverence travels in a direction achieving a spiritual reality in a psychophysical world. Believing means expecting only good, understanding that man is loved and create projects for the future. The person who believes, experiences all-encompassing development, and is what he should be, not what he is currently (Ivančić 2016). Consequently, man also becomes recognisable in society, because he becomes interested in people around him, more productive, more open and more communicative.

The person who does not believe, becomes broken, lacking strength and will, fixed to the "now" and depressed. The person who believes, always moves on, discovers new worlds, becomes a great artist, top scientist, ahead of this time. Faith is looking at the target at which the body should also arrive, concluded Tomislav Ivančić (2016).

RESULTS

Spiritual sciences reveal to us spiritual realities such as thoughts, values, sense, desires, purpose, the Creator, the secret of man, life and death. Natural sciences are revealed by natural means, spiritual by spiritual means. These are two different competencies and must not be confused. (Ivančić 2015, Frankl 1993).

The psychological area is sensitive, perceptive, emotive and mental, like a connection between bodily and spiritual areas. The spiritual area is personal, moral, religious, cultural and intellectual (Ivančić 2015).

The body and soul create a single new reality, and this means that the living brain is an altogether different reality from a dead brain and separated spiritual soul. Hagiotherapy aims to act at a contemporary didactic, scientific and critical level (Ivančić 2009 2015)

A decision for something good heals not only the spirit but also the body. Conversely, every negative word or decision destroys brain cells as is evident in neuroscientific studies (Ivančić 2011, 2015). Doing evil never pays off, because evil is the cause of illness, wounds and trauma in the spiritual soul. The person inflicting evil on someone else, is firstly destroying themselves, making life impossible for themselves, and

then wounding someone else's life. Hence, lack of faith and doubt is man's illness, developed from numerous transmitted wounds as well as those received in one's own life. Evil destroys faith-based relationships and prevents achieving in matter what is achieved in spirit (Ivančić 2011, 2015, 2016).

If the realm of the spiritual soul is spiritual and autonomous, then it can be healed by spiritual means, not psychiatric or medical means, thought Tomislav Ivančić (2015). Man in his spirit, directly – meaning intuitively (Klaić 1986), bypassing the brain or through the amygdala (Turkalj 2015), cognitively discovers the being (Mišić 2000), as the primordial "you" of his person, as a voice of his conscience. Accordingly, the being participates directly in healing man's spiritual soul (Ivančić 2009, 2015).

Ivančić (2015) points out that in his many years of working with hagiopatiens, he discovered how the subconscious God, whom Frankl mentions, is the fundamental therapy for patients experiencing depression, addictions and suicidal tendencies. If a hagiopatient is exposed to unconditional love, healing quickly happens.

CONCLUSION

Based on what has been said, the reality of the man's spiritual dimension is evident in investigating hagiotherapy. New perspectives are offered in observing man as a unique being on this Earth.

What can be said is that the richness of the spiritual mechanism can open in man previously closed spaces of development, work and new opportunities. Along with medicine and psychiatry, it seems as though the spiritual healing of man becomes something of an ultimatum in the twenty-first century. It becomes evident that faith is a powerful driver in man, releasing from hopelessness, despair, transforming into a man of hope. It is obvious that the future will show the applicability of the hagiotherapy discipline.

Hagiotherapy in contemporary times is a challenge and call for good, when a lot around us is surrounded by evil and suffering, a call to truth in surroundings of false promises, call to life, rather than meaninglessness and lifelessness. Most certainly, there is a need for further research and development in the field of hagiotherapy, as well as further advancement and cognitive discoveries.

Acknowledgements:

Thesis mentor: Mijo Nikić DI, PhD, providing assistance, recommendations and proposals for the final draft.

Hagiotherapy mentors: Silva Vrdoljak, Ana Perišić, Lana Poljak Branisavljević providing assistance, recommendations and proposals for the final draft.

Conflict of interest: None to declare.

References

1. Bekavac Bašić I et al: *Latinsko-hrvatski i hrvatsko-latinski školski rječnik. S kratkom gramatikom*, Zagreb, 1995
2. Frankl V: *Liječnik i duša. Temelji logoterapije i egzistencijske analize*, Zagreb, 1993
3. Gelineau J: *Pastoralna teologija liturgijskih slavlja*, Zagreb, 1973
4. Hrvatska biskupska konferencija: *Katekizam katoličke Crkve (11. X. 1992.)*, Zagreb, 1994
5. Ivančić T: *Dijagnoza duše i hagioterapija*, Zagreb, 2009
6. Ivančić T: *Duhovni život u zajednici Molitva i Riječ*, Zagreb, 2009
7. Ivančić T: *Hagioterapijska antropologija. Antropologija u kontekstu patologije i terapije duhovne duše*, Zagreb, 2011
8. Ivančić T: *Hagioterapija u susretu s čovjekom*, Zagreb, 2015
9. Ivančić T: *Put do slobodnog čovjeka u Hrvatskoj i u Europi*, Zagreb, 2015
10. Ivančić T: *Svestrana izranjenost čovjeka. Hagioterapija izranjenosti*, Zagreb, 2016a
11. Ivančić T: *Antropologija, patologija, terapija. Osnovni obvezatni priručnik za hagioasistente*, Zagreb, 2016b
12. Ivančić T: *Pravilo Zajednice Molitva i Riječ*, Zagreb, 2016c
13. Rebić A et al: *Jeruzalemska Biblija. Stari i Novi Zavjet s uvodima i bilješkama iz „La Bible de Jerusalem“*, Zagreb, 2004
14. Klajić B: *Rječnik stranih riječi. Tuđice i posuđenice*, Zagreb, 1986
15. Kušar S: *Filozofija o Bogu*, Zagreb, 2001
16. Mišić A: *Rječnik filozofskih pojmova*, Split, 2000
17. Turkalj L: *Amigdala i strah*, in: http://gyrus.hiim.hr/images/gyrus7/Gyrus%20hq_Part9.pdf (14.IV.2019.)

Correspondence:

Marina Čavar, Master of religious studies
Faculty of Philosophy, Society Of Jesus
Horvatova 37 j, 10 010 Zagreb, Croatia
E-mail: masha.zg@gmail.com