
ARTICLES

BETWEEN THE ICON AND THE SYSTEM. CONSIDERATIONS ON THE WORLD ORDER. A SHORT REVIEW OF SORIN DUMITRESCU'S SHORT STUDY "THE FIGHT BETWEEN THE ICON WITH THE SYSTEM"

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ABSTRACT

The current review is about the field of sociology of the state adding the metaphysical dimension to it: the Icon. There is a tension between the power of the unseen and the power of state as an institution of force. The Icon is the symbolic component of the Iconic Act of Creation. The Icon is imprinted on wood and in everybody as the Face of God, and it is through the martyrs that we remember this. The System, as the ideal type of managing a fallen world, is not per se bad. It becomes so through idolatry.

Keywords: icons, System, freedom, faith, idolatry.

FEW WORDS ON THE WORK

Lupta icoanei cu sistemul – “The fight of the Icon with the System” is a highly condensed theory about the social and political role of the Icon by reporting it to the system, to the function of the state in society. It shows how a highly and well-constructed organization – the state, develop against the people by being against the Primordial imprint. The Primordial imprint is the Icon which is also order.

The work is, first, a reading grid, a new paradigm: it places the tension of the world between the Icon and the System.

Second, it grasps the categorical infrastructure of the argument, laying the groundwork for further discussion.

The study is structured as follows:

– “The Rumor” (*Zvonul*) – the great power of a weak instrument, the power of the spirit of the languages.

– “The System” (*Sistemul*) – an innovative description of the most abstract vehicle of human organization.

– “The Stratelates” (*Stratilații*) – about the most competent servants of the empire who demolished it through their Christian martyrdom.

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- “The Switch” (*Macazul*) – on the Great Switch – the Change. The change produced by the Stratilates saints does not refer to the expansion of Heaven, but to the appearance of another humanity, another type of man.
- “Epilogue” – on the martyrs of the communist prisons – “Do not avenge us”.
- “Some typified hagiographic” (“*Tipizate*” *hagiografice*) – short biographies of the most prominent of the Stratelates martyrs.

THE ICON

The Icon has at least two meanings: the first is about the indication of God, the hypostasis; the second is the order emanating from it.

The first meaning of The Icon. The hypostasis

The Icon is the

“dogmatic face (of a saint, event, royal holiday (...)) the icon is simultaneously a (metalinguistic) showing of the face and a (dogmatically theological) definition of the showing of the face”².

The Icon is the Prototype of The Face, the Dogmatic Face. It is made of the Name – the inscription of Jesus Christ and of “the drawing”. The drawing’s resemblance to the Prototype is of much more importance:

“If only the energy of the name is added to the sanctifying power of the painted image, an icon in which only the name remains is no longer justified as an icon”³.

The Icon as the double power of the Name and of the Dogmatic Face.

The relationship between the two is named as *calling (chemare)*. There is an order of powers: the calling of the Name by the calling of the Dogmatic Face since the last encompasses the Name. Sorin Dumitrescu denominated this type of calling “the call as invocation” (*chemarea de invocare*)⁴.

No matter the iconographer, the Face is almost the same across centuries – a remarkable proof that there is a mystic eye, and we have a mystic communication with God. **The icon master reproduces the way Jesus paints Himself in the Icon. The Icon is a heavenly way of communication between God and man. It is a hypostatical presence:**

² „Fiind *chip dogmatic* (al unui sfânt, eveniment, praznic împărătesc ...) icoana este simultan arătare (metalinguistică) a chipului și *definiție* (dogmatic teologică) a arătării chipului. Peste tot, și liturgic și ecleziologic și în învățământul bisericesc, rolul icoanei este instrumental, de interpret după chipul și asemănarea omenității Domnului – divino-umană și proniatoarea Cratimă ivită între noi și Dumnezeu.”, in Sorin Dumitrescu, *Lupta icoanei cu sistemul [The struggle of the icon with the system]*, Anastasia Foundation Publishing, The Official Monitor, 2017, p. 28.

³ „Dacă puterii sfințitoare a chipului zugrăvit i se adaugă doar energia numelui, o icoană în care rămâne prezent doar numele nu se mai justifică ca icoană”, in Sorin Dumitrescu, *Noi și icoana [We and the Icon]*, Anastasia Publishing, 2018, p. 57.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 57.

“(...) in fact, we are dealing with the spiritual reality of a concrete hypostatic presence of the Lord, dwelling in the likeness, visually invoked by His iconic Face. It would be correct to say that the icon *manifests* Christ (...)”⁵.

The master iconographer is a human channel, the Icon is the-window-to-God-in-relation-to-Him, not just a piece of painted wood and not a picture. To mystically communicate, we must provide Christ a full place in our heart:

“By painting the Face of God, the icon painter plastically reproduces the way Christ paints Himself with his hand. (...) those imaginings do not belong to the saint, but to the Lord. The Lord has transcribed them in our terms. (...) Your fumble, iconographer, will be all the less, as Christ, in the moment preceding the iconographic act, will dwell more fully in your heart”⁶.

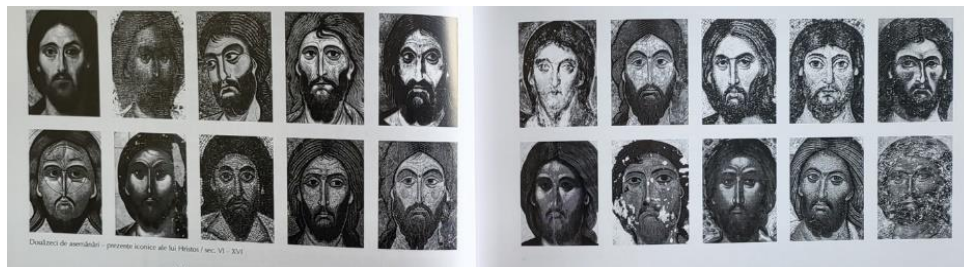


Figure 1. “20 resemblances – iconic presences of Christ” over one thousand years (6th–16th centuries) (Dumitrescu, 2018, pp. 72–73).

The second meaning of The Icon. The first order and the new order

The icon is power-in-being, God’s hypostasis-in-acting. It is a sign of the New World Order, of a new man and of a new society. Before being a New World Order, before Christ, the world itself was made as an iconic Fact. The Genesis. In between the beginning of the world as an iconic genesis and Christ lies the sin and the birth of the System. Heaven is the beginning of the world, and its nature is iconic, too. The role of the Icon is to hyphen (“*a încrățima*”) the *here* world with its divine archetype.

“Since the world is the iconic act of its Creation (...) the hidden rule of the First Creation project: *Heaven everywhere!* The expanded heaven meant systematic, paradisiacal iconicity on a planetary scale. Therefore, originally, Heaven was a World within the world, it was the predictable icon of a homogenously anthropocentric world, predilectionally and sovereignly intended for man, having the precise purpose of

⁵ „(...) de fapt, avem de-a face cu realitatea duhovnicească a unei prezențe ipostatice concrete a Domnului, sălășuind în asemănare, invocată vizual de Chipul Său iconic. Corect ar fi să spunem că icoana îl *manifestă* pe Hristos (...)”, in *Ibidem*, p. 55.

⁶ „Zugrăvind Chipul Domnului, iconarul reproduce plastic modul în care Hristos se zugrăvește pe Sine prin mâna lui. (...) respectivele închipuiri nu-i aparțin sfântului, ci Domnului. Domnul le-a transcris în termenii noștri. (...) Orbecăirea ta, iconarule, va fi cu atât mai redusă, cu cât Hristos, în momentul premergător actului iconografic, va locui mai deplin în inima ta”, in *Ibidem*, pp. 66–69.

housing his chosen creature, made by the Creator of the World and Heaven in the image and after His likeness, this time directly bearing the seal of His Face⁷.

THE SYSTEM

The Icon was one of the powerful opponents of the System. But not the only one. The New Power that defeated The System was, and still is, a message of a special type distributed over five dimensions: the Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension, that is the overcoming of death⁸. The message was so commanding for it shelled the System using the soft, but all-pervasive power of the language. And the power of language is the power of the Holy Spirit. Where death is more than the biological and decomposition of the body, death refers to despair – the wandering and death of the soul of a live person, the sins-in-being.

What is the System? The System appeared somewhere after The Fall from Heaven, more precisely when the paradisiac memory began to fade away, when people were becoming increasingly idolaters. It has appeared as a substitute to the primary order that was iconic. A weak substitute, though, made for the sake of power and self-projections or delusions.

“The system with a big S did not appear immediately after the Fall, but a little later, immediately after the extinction of the Golden Age and the paradisiacal memory, at the moment when entropy replaced the Maker of the World with the world of imaginary and non-iconic idols! The system arose from the ‘foam’ of the old systemic characteristic, immediately rising into the main solution to the breakdown of the fallen world of man”⁹.

Given the idolatrous character of the System, Dumitrescu’s theory states that there is one and the same System since Rome till nowadays.

The main features of the System are quite like those of the modern organization or bureaucracy described by Max Weber¹⁰. Here, we have some of them (Dumitrescu):

1. It is a paradoxical state structure: maximally conservative and maximally adaptative, “ready to fold, without changing”¹¹.

⁷ „De când lumea este actul iconic al Facerii ei (...) regula ascunsă a proiectului Facerii Dintâi: Raiul peste tot! Raiul extins însemna iconicitate sistematică, paradisiacă la scară planetară. Prin urmare, la origine, Raiul era o Lume în lume, era icoana predictibilă a unei lumi omogen antropocentrice, în mod predilect și suveran destinată omului, având menirea precisă de a-i găzdui făptura aleasă, făcută de Făcătorul Lumii și al Raiului după chipul și după asemănarea Sa, de această dată direct purtătoare a peceteii Feței Lui”, in Sorin Dumitrescu, *op. cit.*, 2017, p. 12.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

⁹ „Sistemul cu S mare n-a apărut imediat după Cădere, ci nițel mai târziu, imediat după stingerea Epocii de Aur și a memoriei paradisiace, în clipa în care entropia a substituit Făcătorului Lumii lumea idolilor închipuiți și neiconici! Sistemul a luat naștere din «spuma» vechii caracteristici sistemice, erijându-se imediat în principală soluție de avarie a lumii căzute a omului”, in *Ibidem*, p. 14.

¹⁰ Max Weber, *Economy and Society. An outline of Interpretive Sociology*, University of California Press, 1978, p. 220.

¹¹ „este o structură statală deliberat construită paradoxal, maxim conservatoare și maxim maleabilă, gata să se plieze, fără să se modifice!”, in Sorin Dumitrescu, *op. cit.*, 2017, p. 15.

2. It is built to last literally forever. The system will not bow to anything.
3. The personnel are strictly technocratic, rationalistic not prebendal (as the Ottoman Empire much later).
4. At the core of the system's bureaucracy is the military, "the generals, followed by tribunes, governors, prosecutors, judges, rhetoricians (...)"¹².
5. The highest values of the autocratic and cynic System, besides self-idolatry and idolatry of the ruler are victory, profit, and their fructification, to further enhance the system's stability, its supreme deity: "approached in conceptual terms, the ancient Roman state system, as well as the current ones, are «assemblies, compositions of parts that support each other and whose mutual definition» – a well-known contemporary definition that rhymes perfectly with the ancient one"¹³.
6. It is made of autonomous compartments, that is, if forced to leave a certain institutional territory or take some damage, it could restore itself in a short notice.
7. Even if it was rationalistic and technocratic, the System was not laic, the Roman state being at the same time founded on both sacred and militarized structures.

The System survived until nowadays, being plagued by the same tension between its practical philosophy and the general moral commandments¹⁴.

THE BATTLE

Since the System's maturation is inevitably leaning toward idolatry, there was a question of time when it will collide with the Face, the Original Order. And the resurrection of the original time involves the Icon. The Icon is one of the essential aspects of the battle. The icon indicates the point of origin (the Heaven) and, simultaneously, to the model of suffering, the Sacrifice to regain the original freedom.

It is of utmost importance to notice that the Icon was erupting from the very core of the System: the military, exactly, the Stratelates. Highly trained and competent, deeply ingrained in the logic of the System, the Stratelates imploded the very structure they served when it became unbearable idolatrous: when it began imposing the cult of the emperor as the supreme God and denying the private right to keep Christ as the only God. Since increasing parts of the Empire was silently Christianized already, the Roman military included, this turned out to be the de facto detonation of the pagan Roman order.

"Today, it is well known that the much-commented subversive destination of the hypogean catacomb spaces was certainly not intended to hide Christians but, on the

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 16.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 17.

contrary, to distinguish their faith as clearly as possible from the swarm of pagan beliefs and imagined deities. However, a harsh conflict existed, which could not be avoided, now when the Roman state, in its desire to ‘centralize’ the gods of all faiths in a single pagan pantheon ‘of wide use’ (!) hit the spot, and still strong, by the categorical refusal of the Christians, opposed to the placement of their God in the society of the other gods. Some of them, especially the Christians within the high society, did not hesitate to qualify the gods of the System, and implicitly the deity of Caesar, as idolatrous, imagined entities. From the perspective of the Empire, the iconic resistance of the Christian community was not, however, considered a reproach to the official and idolatrous polytheism, but rather an anti-imperial gesture of lèse-majesté and, implicitly, an attack on the security of the state. Even in such challenging situations, the martyrs and their martyrdoms still failed to disturb the discretionary and imagined power of the Caesars, much less to challenge the imposingly stable structure of the System’s institutions¹⁵.

The situation changed when martyrdom became the norm in the Empire’s relation to Christians, especially against those best placed in the logic of the System.

What defeated the system?

First, the iconic character of the battle itself. Not only the battle was fought by Christians with the help of the Icon, but the character of the battle was also imposed by the Icon, by the very Prototypic Image of the Father Jesus Christ. That is, every martyred Christian became a multiplied image of the Passion. The System multiplied its own enemy.

Sorin Dumitrescu reviews the process:

- First, the generalized rumor of the apparition of an all-out Christian resistance movement at the end of the 2nd century when the horrific reprisals began en-masse.
- Actively antagonizing the bearers of systematic iconicity – the Stratelates: “The crumbling of this unsurpassable idolatrous and state structure seems to have been worked with weapons totally unknown to the imposing Roman state. The authors of this systemic cataclysm, which definitively ruined the most effective System and the most stable ancient state, and, moreover, whose collapse paved the way for the effectiveness of the systematic iconicity of the Byzantine Bicephaly, are only a handful

¹⁵ „Astăzi se știe bine că mult comentata destinație subversivă a spațiilor hipogee catacombale nu a avut nicidecum menirea de a ascunde creștini ci, invers, de a le distinge cât mai clar credința de roiul credințelor păgâne și a zeităților închipuite. Totuși un conflict dur a existat, fără a putea fi evitat, în clipa în care statul roman, în dorința de a „centraliza” zeii tuturor credințelor într-un unic panteon păgân „de largă folosință” (!) s-a izbit pe loc, și încă tare de tot, de refuzul categoric al creștinilor, potrivnici plasării Dumnezeului lor în societatea celorlalți zei. Unii dintre aceștia, mai cu seamă creștinii cu situații suspuse, n-au ezitat să califice zeii Sistemului și implicit înzeirea Cezarului, ca fiind entități idolești, închipuite. Din prisma Imperiului, rezistența iconică a comunității creștine n-a fost totuși socotită drept un blam adresat politeismului oficial și idolatru, ci mai curând un gest antiimperial de Ies majestate și, implicit, un atac la siguranța statului. Chiar și în asemenea situații provocatoare, martirii și martiriile lor n-au reușit totuși să îngrijoreze puterea discreționară și închipuită a Cezarilor și cu atât mai puțin să pună în criză structura impunător stabilă a instituțiilor Sistemului”, in *Ibidem*, p. 9.

of Christian martyrs from within, and at the head of the System – exceptional generals, tribunes, and consuls, mostly intimates of the dominion (!?) – scattered at the command and helm of the System, over more than 150 years. Their incredible sacrifice, assisted by a new Power, of iconic origin and completely ignored by contemporaries, is the one that, for the first time in the world, laid Christian foundations for political power. The system was knocked down and ended up in the stocks by the ICON”¹⁶.

- The martyr became a living icon. The process of excruciatingly torture transformed the person into a *view* (“privești”), into an exemplary.
- The Empire’s most exemplary tool for ordeal – the crucifixion, transformed the obeying and confused masses into Christians-to-be. That is, it produced a bigger lot of future martyrs, and multiplied icons of the Crucifixion of Christ. “There was a key moment, when the executive power of the System, of the terrible repressive gear of the Roman state, was totally overcome by the increase in the rate of martyrdom to levels impossible to imagine and stop, from mass executions, usually under the charge of the System, to the wave of solitary, group, or even legions of martyrs (!) all practiced joyfully and frantically, as if beheading and giving up life in the extremis from now on had become an ancient fashion!”¹⁷.

- The System stubbornly insists to slowly put to death, to increase the torment of the martyr and to terrify the watching public. Instead of terrifying, the process led to a widespread presence of a new Power that boycotts the torment of an impossible-to-comprehend joyful victim, which terrify the executioners. The torment is very often accompanied by miraculous healings. All these lead to widespread Christianization.

“It was not long before their sacrificial ‘performance’ introduced a veritable scale of martyrdom (...) in secret Christ himself or His angels heal them in a single night of mortal wounds, ordinarily absolutely incurable. The horror of the sufferings endured, and the healings are absolutely inexplicable to any sane person, Christianize en masse! The Authority, the system insists on killing them slowly, through infernal torments and at great length, but all the hagiographies describe the meddling of a Power that boycotts the organized torment of torture. Instead of dying, the young victims endure them calmly, sometimes even jovially (!), totally incomprehensible

¹⁶ „La surparea acestei structuri idolești și statale de nesurpat pare să se fi lucrat cu arme total necunoscute împunătorului stat roman. Autorii acestui cataclism sistemic, care a ruinat definitiv cel mai eficace Sistem și cel mai stabil stat antic și, în plus, a cărui prăbușire a deschis calea înspre eficacitatea iconicității sistematice a Bicefaliei Bizantine, sunt doar o mână de martiri creștini dinăuntru și din fruntea Sistemului – generali, tribuni și consuli de excepție, în majoritate intimi ai stăpânirii (!?) – presărați la comanda și cârma Sistemului, de-a lungul a peste 150 de ani. Jertfa lor incredibilă, asistată de o Putere – p. 18 nouă, de sorginte iconică și absolut ignorată de contemporani, este cea care, pentru prima oară în lume a pus baze creștine puterii politice. Sistemul a fost doborât și pus pe butuci de ICOANĂ”, in *Ibidem*, pp. 17–18, author’s underline.

¹⁷ „A existat un moment – cheie, când puterea executivă a Sistemului, a teribilului angrenaj represiv al statului roman au fost total depășite de creșterea ratei martiriului la cote imposibil de imaginat și de oprit, de la execuțiile în masă, aflate de obicei în sarcina Sistemului, la valul de martirii solitare, de grup sau de-a dreptul de trupe de legiuni (!) toate practicate voios și frenetic, ca și cum decapitarea și renunțarea în extremis la viața de-acum, ar fi devenit o modă antică!”, in *Ibidem*, p. 18.

fact, which first amuses the executioners, then terrifies them, until they are forbidden and powerless to make them suffer. (...) For fear of the assembled crowd, the System is forced to behead them urgently”¹⁸.

The Saints of the prisons

The battle of the Icon with the Roman System is a prototype. Another war surged in the 50s in Romania, during the forced communization of the country, when hundreds of thousands of the most prominent elites were imprisoned and beaten and starved to death. The result of the one-sided violent encounter was another mass of martyrs, well-known today as the Saints of the prisons (*sfinții închisorilor*). The issue seems the same: the satanic impregnated System, this time oriented toward “the new-imbecile-diabolic idolization of the State Party”¹⁹.

The paradigm of martyrdom in communist prisons was under the dictum of “don’t avenge us” – Mircea Vulcănescu. It has three meanings: warning, forgiveness, and interdiction.

Warning says do not retaliate to the System. The war, to be won, is to stay unseen:

“in man’s power is only to defend himself as much as he can, sometimes even to resist [to the System] a little, but in no case to want to fight alone. (...) Only Christ, the Logos incarnate in history, the Only Person who inspires satan with fearful, indescribable fear, far greater and more definitive than death, can win! In this first version, ‘Do not avenge us’! sends a warning!”²⁰.

Forgiveness means not to be like the executioners: Christianity is different from the law of vengeance. And not to forgive means exactly the law of vengeance, not Christianity.

Interdiction is related to the Cain’s sign upon the killers. It reads as follows:

¹⁸ „N-a trecut mult și «performanța» lor jertfelnică a introdus o veritabilă scală a martiriului (...) într-ascuns, Hristos însuși sau îngerii Săi îi vindecă într-o singură noapte de plăgi letale, în mod obișnuit absolut nevindecabile. Grozăvia supliciilor îndurate și tămăduirile absolut inexplicabile oricărei persoane întregi la minte, încreștinează în masă! Autoritatea, Sistemul ține morțiș să-I omoare lent, prin chinuri infernale și cu prisosință îndelungi, însă toate hagiografiile descriu amestecul unei Puteri care boicotează chinul organizat al torturii. În loc să-și dea duhul, tinerele victime le îndură senin, uneori chiar jovial (!), fapt total de neînțeles, care mai întâi asmută călăii, apoi îi înspăimântă, până rămân interziși și neputincioși să-i facă să sufere. (...) De teama mulțimii adunate, Sistemul este forțat să-i decapiteze urgent”, in *Ibidem*, p. 29, p. 31.

¹⁹ Sorin Dumitrescu, *op. cit.*, 2017, p. 38.

²⁰ „În consecință – iată o mostră de înțelepciune paradisiacă – a te răzbuna pe Sistem și pe oamenii lui demonizați care-l servesc și-l fac posibil, devine cel puțin o gafă metafizică! Fiindcă în ce privește desfășurătorul războiului nevăzut, în puterea omului este doar să se apere pe cât poate, uneori chiar să-i reziste nițel, dar în nici un caz să vrea să biruie singur. Pentru el ar fi sinucidere sigură! Victoria o poate doar Hristos, Logosul întrupat în istorie, Singura Persoană care-i inspiră satanei o teamă înfricoșată, de nedescris, mult mai mare și mai definitivă ca moartea! În această primă versiune, «Să nu ne răzbunați!» transmite o avertizare!”, in *Ibidem*, p. 39.

“let no one kill our executioners, so that they may remain free as long as they live, ‘disturbed and fugitives on the earth’, creeping fearfully and alone through the world, just like Cain”²¹.

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²¹ „(...) pe călăii noștri – par să ne fi cerut Sfinții închisorilor – nimeni să nu-i omoare, ca să rămână cât vor trăi liberi, «zbuciumați și fugari pe pământ», strecurându-se înfricoșați și singuri prin lume, întocmai lui Cain”, in *Ibidem*, p. 40.

