

Icon: From idolatry as a value in itself
to transcendent openness
with reference to St Theodore the Studite
& Andrei Tarkovsky

By Andreas Vitoulas*

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Among other things, a dialectic between the idol and the icon emerges from Saint Theodore the Studite's *Antirrhetic Discourses against the Iconoclasts* («Ἀντιῥήτικοι κατὰ εἰκονομάχων»). Their juxtaposition in these treatises offers fertile ground for the emergence of valuable critical terms, for the existential fact in general, different accesses to art, and even for the contemporary life filled with images.

Saint Theodore's structural distinction, which will lead to the issue of the idol/icon, is between cause and effect¹. The cause is the uncreated Triadic God, the effect is all things created by Him. Man's tragic ignorance that led him to trap himself within the condition of causes, in fact, to himself, the effect of which he is, impregnates him with his scattering in creation. Having lost the relationship with the creative source of life, man is captured in his objectified deceitful projections of the creation, which constitute polytheism's closed circuit.

The concept of this "closed circuit", essentially of the existential and naturally epistemological self-recycling, is directly derived from St Theodore's text in his reference to the incarnation. With the incarnation

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1. Theodore Studites, *Ἀντιῥήτικὸς Α' κατὰ εἰκονομάχων*, PG 99, 329C.

of the Holy Trinity's second person «γέγονε τῶν ἀμίκτων μίξις, καὶ τῶν ἀκράτων κραῖσις, ἥτοι τοῦ ἀπεριγράπτου πρὸς τὸ περιγεγραμμένον τοῦ ἀορίστου πρὸς τὸ διωρισμένον· τοῦ ἀσχηματίστου πρὸς τὸ εὐσχηματισμένον»². The Word of God's coming –(«δι' ἅκραν ἀγαθότητα εἰς ἀνθρωπείαν φύσιν»)–³ establishes the possibility of His representation through the icon.

The above description of what has been accomplished by the Son-Word's incarnation inaugurates a new way of being. In this way, the created being breaks its natural predeterminations through God's grace, assuming its recomposed God-given openness. This openness did not take place suddenly, making man the subject of an automatism that devalues his freedom. The ignorant fallen ones were chastised by the incarnate Logos in their gradual emancipation from the bondage of the manifold immanence to the created things. Thus, the argument of the iconoclasts, that God commanded and forbade the "raising of idols" («ἀναστηλοῦν ὁμοιώματα»)⁴. According to Saint Theodore, it was a matter of pedagogical walling off from the secular idols⁵. For this reason, along with the renunciation of idols, the hierophant Moses was instructed to construct elaborate Cherubim and a bronze serpent⁶.

The difference between the idolatrous poems and the poems at the command of God has to do with man's way of life conduct. In the first case, the surrounding world becomes the place (but also the way) of man's objectified projection. Distancing oneself from the Creator makes His creature susceptible to cognitive failure, resulting in the creation's idolization. This naturally includes the created man's immaterial echoes, i.e. his imaginary products. On the contrary, the treatment of the matter, coordinated with God's proposal, contributes to Israel's pedagogical reduction to the Uncreated Cause of the created⁷.

2. *Ibid.*, 332A.

3. *Ibid.*, 329D.

4. *Ibid.*, 333B.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*, 333CD.

7. *Ibid.*, 336A.

The question, therefore, concerns the cognitive consequences of man's existential direction. If he grafted his freedom into the synergy of the charitable Cause of effects, he opens up to universality, where death is unforgivable. Before the incarnation, this synergy was something of external gymnastics; afterward, it became a natural possibility by God's grace. The Old Testament simulacra are completely distinguished from their idolatrous counterparts; they interpret through icons the transcendence of the created finitude, in contrast to the latter ones, which inherently fail to refer to this openness.

‘OTheir character cannot function as a symbol; it does not contribute to -or favor- participation. It fixes man in an external relation of conquering use. The ignorant idolater attempts to «ὁμοιοῦν τὸ Θεῖον» (“resembling the Divine”) through created things⁸. This authoritarian demand for the assimilation of the Divine to creation constitutes a complete reversal of man's existential specifications in God's image. God's coercive “descent” within the limits of things created withers the «συμβολικῶς ἀνάγεσθαι»⁹ into the tragedy of subordination. It is a matter of subordination to the multifaceted myth of falsehood¹⁰. At this point, that openness is further clarified by the assistance of the already commented upon God's creature diffusion and scattering. The withering of the effect's reference to the Cause, the reduction of the openness to the point of its elimination, fragments the truth and man's existential navigation within it in the narrow narthexes of opinionated self-centering – hence polytheism. On the contrary, the word of truth is monospecific «καὶ ἀκράδαντος τὴν φύσιν»¹¹, untouched by opinionated divisions. This is because, as the *Pedalion* (*Rudder* = a compilation of Canon Law) states in the prolegomena of the Seventh Ecumenical Council: «Τὸ γὰρ εἶδωλον διαφέρει ἀπὸ τὴν εἰκόνα, καθ' ὃ ἡ μὲν εἰκὼν ἀληθοῦς πράγματος καὶ πρωτοτύπου εἶναι ὁμοιότης, τὸ δὲ εἶδωλον, ψευδοῦς καὶ ἀνυπάρχου πράγματος, καὶ πρωτοτύπου ὁμοιότης ἐστὶ [...]»¹².

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

10. Theodore Studites, Ἀντιρρητικός Β' κατὰ εἰκονομάχων, PG 99, 351C.

11. *Ibid.*

12. St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, Πηδάλιον, τῆς νοητῆς νηὸς τῆς Μιᾶς Ἀγίας Καθολικῆς

The important thing that emerges from this specific reference in the *Rudder/Πηδάλιον* is that the idol is also similar to an original. The key differentiation between it and its icon counterpart is that the idol resembles a non-existent thing. Thus, it follows from this that there is a resemblance to the multi-faceted sameness and a resemblance to the uniqueness of the (actually) existent. In other words, the idol is the likeness or semblance of non-existence, the “hypostatization” of the non-existent. This tragic failure and deviation denote the existential involvement of the creature in the image of the Word in the recycling of nothingness. Idolized and idolizing, man wanders in the voluted spiral of the autonomous created being. This movement anchors itself in death’s immanence as the wanderer remains untethered in his enclosed and godless conduct.

The basic feature of the openness to which the image refers, in contrast to the insubstantial idolatrous artifact, is communion. Every icon «σφραγίς τίς ἐστι καὶ ἐκτύπωσις ἐν ἑαυτῇ φέρουσα τὸ κύριον εἶδος τοῦθ’ ὅπερ καὶ λέγεται»¹³. But nature, as a species possessing a universal reason, is inaccessible¹⁴ and therefore cannot be depicted¹⁵. The name is produced «δι’ ἐκτυπώματος ἐξομοίωσιν τοῦ ἀρχετύπου»¹⁶. It is the likeness of the created nature to its original and its complete difference in essence from that which gives it its homonymy¹⁷. Given that «παντὸς εἰκονιζομένου, οὐχ ἡ φύσις, ἀλλ’ ἡ ὑπόστασις εἰκονίζεται»¹⁸, it would not be inappropriate to relate the terms image-name-substance («εἰκόνα-ὄνομα-ὑπόστασις») to each other in the perspective of society. A further clarification of the concept of the name would help in this respect.

καὶ Ἀποστολικῆς τῶν Ὁρθοδόξων Ἐκκλησίας, ἦτοι ἅπαντες οἱ ἱεροὶ καὶ θεῖοι κανόνες, Vas. Rigopoulos Publications, Thessaloniki 1998, p. 314.

13. Theodore Studites, *Ἀντιρόρητικὸς Α'*, *ibid.*, 337C.

14. *Op.cit.*, *Ἀντιρόρητικὸς Γ'*, 405CD.

15. *Ibid.*, 405AB.

16. *Op.cit.*, *Ἀντιρόρητικὸς Α'*, 341C.

17. *Ibid.*: «Ἔστι γὰρ τυχὸν ξύλον, ἡ χρῶμα, ἡ χρυσός, ἡ ἄργυρος, ἡ τι τῶν διαφορῶν ὧν ὁ καὶ λέγεται [...]. Ἀλλὰ Χριστὸν μὲν κατὰ τὸ ὁμώνυμον· Χριστοῦ δὲ κατὰ τὸ πρὸς τι». See also Theodore Studites, *Ἀντιρόρητικὸς Γ'*, *ibid.*, 431A: «τοῦτο γὰρ φύσις εἰκόνας, ταυτίζεσθαι μὲν κατὰ τὴν ὁμοίωσιν τοῦ πρωτοτύπου, διαφορεῖσθαι δὲ κατὰ τὸν τῆς οὐσίας λόγον, ἐφ’ ᾧ καὶ ἡ ὁμωνυμία».

18. *Op.cit.*, *Ἀντιρόρητικὸς Γ'*, 405AB.

The name is indicative of otherness. The man Paul, according to the example of the author of the *Antirrhetic Discourses*, «καθὸ μὲν κοινωνεῖ τοῖς ὁμοειδέσιν ἀτόμοις, ἄνθρωπος· καθὸ δὲ διαφέρει τῇ ὑποστάσει, Παῦλος»¹⁹. The same is true of the name *Christ*, «τὸ χωρίζον αὐτὸν τοῖς ὑποστατικοῖς ιδιώμασιν ἀπὸ τῶν λοιπῶν ἀνθρώπων»²⁰. Thus, the name constitutes the mark of personal otherness. Things alike are characterized by the unity of their substance and their hypostatic distinction²¹. while hypostasis itself is the person²². Thus, as Theodore the Studite concludes, each particular existence substitutes the universals; if the particulars do not exist, then the universals are negated²³.

At this point, the idol's non-communion character is visible. Each effect is a natural image of its cause since they are consubstantial. Thus, the created artifact is a self-assertion of its creator, an idol, since it is the product of self-centered homogeneity²⁴. the created consubstantiality has no self-existence; therefore, freedom is not for it a natural given but a received gift. A perhaps aesthetically perfect dead-end futility, yet actually falsified by the uncontainable created things' insurmountable predeterminations. On this point, St. Nicodemus's prolegomena to the Seventh Ecumenical Council one again are proved to be extremely illuminating. Thus, the commentator states: «Ὁ λόγος δὲ καὶ ἡ αἰτία,

19. *Op.cit.*, *Ἀντιρόρητικὸς Γ'*, 397C.

20. *Ibid.*, 397D.

21. *Ibid.*, 400B.

22. *Ibid.*, 397B.

23. *Ibid.*, 396D: «τὰ γὰρ καθόλου ἐν τοῖς ἐν τοῖς ἀτόμοις τὴν ὕπαρξιν ἔχει· οἷον ἡ ἀνθρωπότης ἐν Πέτρῳ καὶ Παύλῳ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς ὁμοειδέσι. Μὴ ὄντων δὲ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα, ἀνῆρηται ὁ καθόλου ἄνθρωπος».

24. This statement of course refers to the created consubstantiality and not to the Triadic God's uncreated one, since the former means the necessary for the existence participation in the being, while the latter constitutes the being in the way that every inter-embraced consubstantial Essence is the fullness of the being and does not participate in it as something prior to it. Cf. St. Gregory Palamas, *Ἐπεὶ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων*, 3, 2, 12, P. Christou (ed.), *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ, Συγγράμματα*, vol. A', Thessaloniki 1962, p. 666: «οὐ γὰρ ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας ὁ ὢν, ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ ὄντος ἡ οὐσία· αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ ὢν ὅλον ἐν ἑαυτῷ συνείληφε τὸ εἶναι». See also Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), *Γράμματα στὴ Ρωσία*, Holy Monastery of Timios Prodromos, Essex 2018, Essex GB, 2018, p. 239: "[...] the true theory of the Divine Being, where each person is the bearer of the Being, i.e. where nature and the Person constitute an absolute and simple unity [...]".

διὰ τὴν ὁποίαν τὰ ἀγάλματα δὲν προσκυνοῦνται (ἔξω ἀπὸ τὴν νομικὴν παρατήρησιν καὶ τὴν συνήθειαν) ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ νὰ ᾔναι, διατὶ αὐτὰ ψηλαφώμενα, καὶ ὅλον τὸ σῶμα τοῦ εἰκονιζομένου περιέχοντα καὶ τὰ μέλη, δὲν φαίνονται πλέον νὰ ᾔναι καὶ νὰ λέγωνται εἰκόνες, ἀλλὰ νὰ ᾔναι αὐτὰ τὰ πρωτότυπα πράγματα. [...] Τὰ γὰρ εἶδωλα ὁλόγλυπτα ἀγάλματα ἦσαν, πανταχόθεν ψηλαφώμενα»²⁵. If we combine this passage with another one, coming from Theodore's Antirrhetic Discourses, according to which «Οἷς μὲν τὰ καθόλου ὁράται, νοῦς καὶ διάνοια· οἷς δὲ τὰ καθ' ἕκαστα, ὀφθαλμοί, οἱ τὰ αἰσθητὰ βλέποντες»²⁶, then it is clear that the image is characterized as such because it preserves an apophatic approach and knowledge of the original. On the contrary, in terms of the senses' perception, the idol's resemblance to the original is more accurate; thus, it anchors the senses to the individual perceived through the vision, decisively mitigating the reduction to the universals.

In this way, the icon's referential character is suspended – a feature of the idol's self-efficiency. The ascent towards the original takes place «ὑπεξαίρουμένων τῶν ὕλων διὰ τῆς τοῦ νοῦ ἐπὶ Θεὸν ἀνανήξεως»²⁷. The derivative's presence in the original is indicated by the term «σχέσις»²⁸ or else «τὸ πρωτότυπον, καὶ ἡ εἰκών, τῶν πρὸς τί ἐστι»²⁹. It is obvious, therefore, that the difference between the image/icon and the idol constitutes primarily a feature of the communion. It is the one that offers knowledge of the relationship's unfinished character (apophaticism) in complete contrast to the signified's exhaustive objective certainty of the idolatrous self-referential and enclosed completeness.

25. St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, *Πηδάλιον...*, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

26. Theodore Studites, *Ἀντιρόρητικὸς Γ'*, *op. cit.*, 397A.

27. *Op. cit.*, *Ἀντιρόρητικὸς Α'*, 344D.

28. *Op. cit.*, *Ἀντιρόρητικὸς Γ'*, 424D.

29. *Ibid.*, 429B.

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In the context outlined above, we could trace transparent criteria of confrontation with art as a language of referential annotation of the universals or as self-centered immanence on the particulars. The person and work of the Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky is this distinction's exemplary marker. However, in the following comments, our guide will be his theoretical statements on art and not his cinematic testimony, the richness of which requires special study. Both his spiritual autobiography, *Sculpting Time*, and his diary entrances published under the title of *Martyrdom* are full of references and comments, which are admirably consistent with what has been drawn above from St. Theodore of Studite's treatises on icons but also with the entire relevant ecclesiastical tradition.

In a heartbreaking prayerful confession to God, Tarkovsky concludes: "The picture is an illustration of the truth that the Lord has allowed us to see with our blind eyes"³⁰. Here the director, without specifying the icon's nature, identifies the latter's function: the revelation of truth. He even acknowledges the inadequate role of the senses in its perception. Elsewhere in his diary, specifically referring to cinema, Tarkovsky notes that it is not in his interests to make a "an emotional narrative report, colored by simple, elementary sensations, while at the same time posing certain philosophical and ethical questions about the meaning of life"³¹.

The director's references to art's basic characteristic –the revelation of the meaning of existence–³², are the thread that runs through and holds together all of his relevant statements. The simple sensational cinematic narratives, interspersed with moral-philosophical questions, leave him indifferent because he dislikes the "superficial attraction

30. A. Tarkovsky, *Μαρτυρολόγιο, ήμερολόγια 1970-1986*, Indiktos Publications, Athens 2006, p. 209.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 144.

32. A. Tarkovsky, *Σμιλεύοντας το χρόνο*, Greek transl. S. Velentzas, Nefeli Publications, Athens 1987, pp. 49. And with a variety of verbal odds: pp. 52; 54; 61; 226; 229; 295; 309; 312.

of an explanation with ‘pictures’”³³. The temptation of an exhaustive understanding and indisputable certainty, and the reduction of spirituality to moralistic didacticism disorient art and its servant from the search for the universal/truth and degenerate into entertainment³⁴. Tarkovsky fully distinguishes between objective scientific truth –even more positivist practicality– and artistic searching, which in every particular case reveals a different image of the world³⁵. “The image offers a knowledge of the infinite: the eternal within the finite, the spirit within matter, the infinite with a specific form”³⁶.

From what has been mentioned so far, it is not difficult to ascertain art’s reductive openness as an icon, which apophatically makes tangible the existential fact, as in other circumstances and with a different occasion, Theodore’s *Antirrhetic Discourses* outline the same. According to Tarkovsky, art in general, but more specifically cinema’s elemental form (the image) refuses to identify the signified with the signifier. It aims to activate the human being existentially and not only autonomously the senses. He calls this way “poetic musing”, which calls the spectator to engage in the whole process more actively³⁷. We’ve detected the same approach in St Theodore’s speeches; it functions evocatively, as a gate of communion and participation. Besides, Tarkovsky moves away from spiritualist subjectivisms, which captures people in non-rational but equally individualistic immersions. He characteristically states that freedom is approached from the understanding that inner experience

33. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 26: «Όταν για ένα θέμα δεν έχουν ειπωθεί τὰ πάντα, ἔχεις περιθώριο νὰ σκεφτεῖς κι ἄλλο». Also p. 52: «Ἡ τέχνη [...] θὰ συνταράξει καὶ θὰ γίνει ἀποδεκτὴ, θὰ κερδίσει ἀνθρώπους, ὅχι μὲ ἀδιάσειστα λογικὰ ἐπιχειρήματα [...]»; p. 61: «Ἡ ἰδιαίτερη λειτουργία τῆς τέχνης δὲν εἶναι, ὅπως διατείνονται συχνά, νὰ διαδίδει ιδέες, νὰ μεταδίδει σκέψεις, νὰ χρησιμεύει γιὰ παράδειγμα. Σκοπὸς τῆς τέχνης εἶναι νὰ ἐτοιμάσει τὸν ἄνθρωπο γιὰ τὸ θάνατο [...]»; p. 228: «Ὁ καλλιτέχνης δὲν εἶναι δυνατό νὰ θέτει στόχο του τὸ νὰ εἶναι κατανοητὸς – θὰ ἦταν παράλογο ὅσο καὶ τὸ ἀντίθετό του: νὰ προσπαθεῖ νὰ εἶναι ἀκατανόητος»; p. 232: «Όταν φροντίζει κανεὶς νὰ ἱκανοποιήσῃ τὸ κοινό, τότε πιά μιλοῦμε γιὰ βιομηχανία διασκέδασης».

35. *Ibid.*, p. 51.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

“has *social* significance”³⁸. In this perspective, the poet is not describing the world but “participates in its creation”. It is something that the aesthetic perception of the familiar (e.g., naturalism)³⁹ rejects decisively. This creative call equally concerns the viewer. The purpose of the artistic work is not the passive and uninvolved appropriation of a structured given by the viewer, but the formation of an image for the whole. It is significant that this co-creation, which allows personal otherness to participate through re-structuring, is left to the director’s choice: “the less one shows, the more the viewer is forced to think”⁴⁰. As for the concept of thought, Tarkovsky leaves no room for its identification or parallelism with the mental process of objective understanding⁴¹.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 305. The word has been underlined by the author. F. Pavel Florensky refers to the social-vocational character of art, and more specifically to that of painting in its Orthodox ecclesiastical version, with important insights on the specific issue of perspective, which may well summarize the central theme of the present paper: See P. Florensky, *Ἡ ἀντίστροφη προοπτική – Τὸ εἰκονοστάσι*, transl. Sotiris Gounelas, Indiktos Publications, Athens 2002, pp. 99-100: «Θὰ ἀναγνωρίσουμε ἄσκοπα σ’ ἓναν τέτοιο προοπτικὸ ζωγράφον τὴν προσωποποίηση τῆς παθητικῆς καὶ καταδικασμένης σὲ πλήρη παθητικότητα σκέψης, ποὺ κατασκοπεύει τὸν κόσμον, στιγμιαία, στὴ ζούλα, σὰν κλέφτης, μέσα ἀπὸ τὴ χαραμάδα τῶν ὑποκειμενικῶν πλευρῶν μιᾶς νεκρῆς παγωμένης σκέψης, ἀνίκανης νὰ συλλάβει τὴν κίνηση, μὰ ποὺ ἀπαιτεῖ παρ’ ὅλα αὐτὰ γιὰ τὴν ἴδια καὶ γιὰ τὸ στιγμιαῖο τῆς βλέμμα μιὰ θέση θείου ἀπολύτου. Ὁ παρατηρητὴς αὐτὸς δὲν προσάγει τίποτα δικό του στὸν κόσμο [...]». and in p. 170: «Τὰ καλλιτεχνικὰ σύμβολα πρέπει νὰ εἶναι προοπτικὰ ἐπειδὴ ἔτσι πετυχαίνει ἡ ἐνοποίηση τῶν ἀναπαραστάσεων τοῦ κόσμου, ὁ κόσμος κατανοεῖται ὡς ἓνα ἐνιαῖο, ἀφθαρτο καὶ ἀδιαπέραστο δίκτυο εὐχλειδοκαντιανῶν σχέσεων, ποὺ συγκλίνουν μέσα στὸ ἐγὼ ἐκείνου ποὺ παρατηρεῖ τὸν κόσμο, κατὰ τέτοιον τρόπο ποὺ αὐτὸ τὸ ἐγὼ νὰ διατηρεῖται σὲ ἀδράνεια [...]». The style of perspective secures the ideal conditions for the passivity and the individual ego to flourish unhindered – elements that are diametrically opposed to those activated by the apophatic reductive openness of the image, as it has been highlighted by both St. Theodore the Studite’s treatises and Andrei Tarkovsky’s films.

39. Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), *Γράμματα*, *op.cit.*, p. 220: “But they transformed this human frame [i.e. two-dimensional painting], never allowing themselves to descend into ‘naturalism’, something that the Western painters could not avoid during the Renaissance”.

40. A. Tarkovsky, *Μαρτυρολόγιο...*, *op.cit.*, p. 95.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 206: “We don’t need any knowledge. We need to love and believe. Faith offers knowledge through love”. See also, A. Tarkovsky, *Σμιλεύοντας...*, *op. cit.*, p. 226: “[...] Art affects a man’s emotions, not his reason. Its function, so to speak, is to turn neatly and smooth the human soul, making it receptive to good”.

Thus, art is conceived as a meta-language residing at the opposite poles of practical utilitarianism and pragmatism⁴². Its purpose is not teaching, narration, moral formation, metaphysical contemplation, elitist initiation, ideological propaganda, suggestion, or objective representation. On the contrary, it is the interpretation, signification, and participatory-synergetic contribution to the fact of being, in which the icon in art and art as icon act as an initiation process both in the St. Theodore's and the Russian director's testimonies. In short, "art is a confession of love- the realization of our dependence on the other. Confession of faith. An unconscious act that nevertheless reflected the true meaning of life - love and sacrifice"⁴³. One of Tarkovsky's assessments in his first diary entry is that religion, philosophy, and art are man's way of giving form to the infinite⁴⁴. On this basis, and given the Russian artist's existential priorities⁴⁵, it is implied that the achievement of all three of these spiritual magnitude's rests on the search for truth - a truth, though, that remains unconquerable from the forced objectivity, which insulates the subject with its "complete" certainty, making it impervious to the vocal-social reduction of the subject beyond the familiar. It is this non-self-sufficient iconological truth that Tarkovsky implies when he considers that the theatre of the absurd creates the "impression of authenticity, of complete truth!"⁴⁶ but also when he confesses that "I don't generally trust those who know everything. I admit faith, not knowledge"⁴⁷. These existential and epistemological principles led him to conclude that contemporary art deviates from its purpose; it does not seek the meaning of existence but is enshrined in validating the individual's self-worth⁴⁸.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 54 and p. 290.

43. A. Tarkovsky, *Σμιλεύοντας...*, *op.cit.*, p. 309.

44. A. Tarkovsky, *Μαρτυρολόγιο...*, *op.cit.*, p. 33.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 40. "Praise be to all those who refute selfishness and atheism". See also p. 210: "It is a great happiness to feel the presence of God".

46. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 335.

48. A. Tarkovsky, *Σμιλεύοντας...*, *op.cit.*, p. 52.

Therefore, it turns out that the concluding statement of his spiritual legacy, according to which creativity is perhaps the proof of man's creation *in his image and likeness*, is not accidental and superficial⁴⁹. This sentiment encapsulates most clearly the criteria of an existential substructure grafted onto the antipodes of a sweeping and idolized positivism that dramatically deprives the sanctity of existence. Being's mystery is approached not with the conquering utilitarianism of overweening positivism, but with gentleness and discretion, crafted by the unfinished likeness depicting the Cause of the effect.

The call to openness, beyond the self-centered egotistic immanence, the reduction to the Cause's original instead of the idolatrous submission to the effect's self-worth, the access to truth as a fact of communion instead of the demand for its utilitarian understanding are detected as common existential markings in both St. Theodore the Studite and Andrei Tarkovsky. These coordinates may constitute a suggestion of a trustworthy navigator in the idolatrous chatter of the contemporary storm of endless pictures, which, according with above iconological criteria, are ultimately iconoclastic. Over time, Theodore the Studite's theological articulation and Tarkovsky's artistic idiom have already given us a valuable language of known precision and existential nobility.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 312.