
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND TRANSMODERNISM IN CHRIST'S ACTIVITY

Anton Adămuț*

*University 'Al. I. Cuza', Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences, Bd. Carol I no. 11,
Iasi 700506, Romania*

(Received 19 January 2011, revised 17 February 2011)

Abstract

The social worker is mediator, lawyer, teacher, adviser, case manager, administrator, agent of social change, all in all he is a professional, and from the point of view of the communication social worker-client, the purposes are: receiving, understanding, acceptance, reaction. When this road is completed, the reaction to the message can be of denial, of defence, of exclusion, of adaptation, and of taking over the message. If the social worker is Jesus and the client is Peter, all these attitudes are to be found in the relation between the two of them. Therefore, the social worker interferes for the increase of individual welfare and of the self determination of the individual and he must decide. Taking the decision implies identifying the problem, examining the ethical values and norms necessary for solving the problem, imagining the possible and probable courses of the action, the implications of alternatives and, finally, choosing the best course for action. The social worker interferes and helps, and the efficiency of the act thus carried on depends on the level of knowledge and of correct explanation of the phenomena and of social environments where the act is exercised. The aim over which the social worker acts is complex, the socio-human reality is always dynamic and the intervention is doomed if the social worker has not understood what is all about. We find all these conditions in Christ's activity as well.

Keywords: social worker, client, Jesus Christ, Christianity, miracle, postmodernism, transdisciplinarity, transmodernism

1. Identifying the problem

“Many social workers, when reflecting on the nature of their work, seem to have difficulties from more than one point of view. The advantage of considering the problems from multiple perspectives consists in the fact that the people, the problems and the situations seem different regarded from different angles. The world becomes a fluid space and, because of this, seems more interesting. That is why it is necessary that we take into consideration the nature of the theory. The development of a theory means the completion of a way of understanding reality [...]. Different theories allow us to approach the problems in several ways. Mentioning the theory [...] does not delight many social

* E-mail: antonadamut@yahoo.com

workers. For them, the relation between theory and practice remains at the level of mystery.” [1] Even more, “not knowing any theory and not dealing with theory are considered to be signs of ‘practical virtue’ and of ‘wisdom’, signs that the social worker has surpassed in his practice the caprices and claims of theoreticians. It is something confusing regarding those who describe themselves as ‘practical persons’ [...]. They say that talking about theories is indeed useful, but they themselves will never use theory because they are doing just fine without theory. And if they do not need theory, then no one else needs theory” [1].

This perspective is very damaging because it is being acted unidimensional in a world in motion, and the social worker must be efficient. He is efficient if he reaches at least the following two objectives: to create conditions that would allow him to establish a relation of trust and acceptance between him and the client, since it is known that in the practice of social assistance the relation social worker-client is the most important and, secondly, the social worker must have clear and precise procedures. The social worker must pass from the phase of the one who acts without thinking to the phase of that who acts and thinks. To help is not just a duty as it is also an art. For the social worker must be very clear who is he and why is he in front of the client, the client must be involved and must understand what is happening. The client who does not understand the purpose and the methods of social assistance gives up, just as it happens with the rich young man (Mark 10.17). An organized social worker and successful in his practice must answer five questions: *which is the problem?* (the social worker must recognize and identify the problem), *what is happening* (the situation must be evaluated, interpreted and explained), *what is to be done?* (in the virtue of the findings of the initial evaluation, the social worker together with the client must decide the objectives, to plan the intervention and to clarify their intentions), *what to do* (to choose the right ways of intervention for the fulfilment of the intended objectives), *has everything needed been done?*, i.e. the final evaluation of the results of the intervention [1, p. 11-12].

There is, everybody knows, a social doctrine of the Catholic Church developed especially in the nineteenth century at the meeting of the Gospel with the modern industrial society. The social doctrine of Church is a corpus that is permanently articulated as the Church itself interprets the events throughout history in the light of the word revealed by Christ. Also, Church’s social doctrine suggests principles of reflection, extracts principles of appreciation and offers directions for action. One of its fundamental principles is the following: any system according to which the social reports would be entirely determined by economic factors is contrary to the nature of the human person and its acts. It is morally unacceptable a theory of profit, the exclusive rule and the ultimate goal of the economic activity. It follows that the Church exercises a moral judgment in the economic and social aspect when this is asked by the fundamental rights of the person. As far as morality is concerned, the Church is

invested with a different mission from the mission of the political authorities without being, in the main, against authorities.

On the one hand, human work is a duty. "If some one does not want to work, nor should he eat" – 2 Thessalonians 3.10 (*Si quis non vult operari, nec manducet*). Then, work can also be redemptive, a way of holiness, because in and through work the person exercises and perfects a great part of the qualities included in his nature. Man is the author and the recipient of work, work is for man, not the man for work, and Christianity itself can be seen also from the perspective of a theology of work.

We must however take into consideration also the fact that there is a difference between work and creation. Until entering the public life Jesus works, he is, as a matter of fact, 'the carpenter's son', then He creates. Christ's miracles are His creations, just as His creations are not Heracles' works. God does not work, God creates and the result is His creation.

On the other hand, it is not the role of Church Pastors to directly interfere in political action and in the organization of social life. The laic believers take care of this issue. They animate the laic realities with Christian spirit and behave in these realities as peace and justice makers.

Thirdly, God blesses all those who help the poor ones, just as He punishes those who do not care about the poor ones: "Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you" – Matthew 5.42, just as: "freely you have received, freely give" – Matthew 10.8 (*gratis accepistis, gratis date*). The fact is that Jesus will recognize the chosen ones according to what and how much have they done for the poor ones. Again Matthew (11.5) tells us that when "the good news is preached to the poor ones", this news is the sign of Christ's presence.

No one doubts the fact that the love of Church towards the poor ones is part of its tradition, a tradition inspired from the Gospel of Beatitudes (Luke 6.20-22), from Jesus' poverty (Matthew 8.20) and Jesus' constant attention to poor ones and the ones in need (Mark 12.41-44). The poverty mentioned here is not just material, and it not first of all material, it is rather a spiritual poverty [2]. Gregory the Great said in *Liber Regulae Pastoralis*, 3.21 that if we give to the poor ones those necessarily needed, we do not make an act of personal generosity, no!, we simply give them back what is theirs. To do this is rather a duty of justice than an act of charity. Here enter the so-called 'acts of charity' (mercy) or what, in general, enters also under the social assistance domination: the acts of mercy are charitable actions by means of which we come to help the neighbour in his bodily and spiritual needs. Which are these acts? To train, to advice, to comfort, to encourage, to forgive and to patiently tolerate the others. These are spiritual acts of charity. Bodily charity or mercy means to feed the hungry ones, to shelter those without home, to dress the ragamuffins, to visit the sick ones and the imprisoned ones, to bury the dead ones. Here also enlists the alms for the poor ones, and this is one of the main confessions of brotherly love. Mercy is an act of justice that God likes and is, perhaps, the first form of manifestation of non-institutionalized 'social assistance': "make charity with

everything you have and then everything shall be pleased for you” – Luke 11.4. Poverty and weakness draw Christ’s attention and for this reason they are the object of a *preferable love* from Saviour and Church.

Let me clear one more thing: mercy is not mistaken with the alms (charity). “Mercy is a feeling, a mood or even more precise: a sanctifying mood”, “mercy is the opposite of accountancy, which is the demon’s job” [3]. Mercy is a feeling of compassion towards our neighbour fallen into spiritual and bodily needs. The consequence of mercy is charity, mercy is potency, charity is the act, mercy is a feeling, charity is the passing from feeling into act. Mercy can be felt by anyone, but not everyone can be merciful as well. Mercy turned into charity is bounty, it is the action through which mercy is poured to the compassioned one [4].

For all these to be possible, one must be a free man, just like Jesus was, free to all and to all those who opposed his mission. Jesus has been a free man because he has always been unconcerned regarding his own person (Matthew 6.34) and always interested in what the others were regarded. From this point of view, one may say that He assumed as a destiny the role of a ‘social worker’ *sui-generis* both bodily and spiritually.

In order to prepare the entrance into subject, this after we have identified the problem, there is the need for a terminological training that I shall cover in two times.

2. Terminological specifications 1: postmodernism, postmodernity, postmodern

Postmodernism, as a term, says Rorty, “was so often used that it still causes more problems than it solves” [5]. Rorty releases a typical transatlantic judgment: Philosophy must solve problems, not create them. In his report on knowledge, Lyotard considered as sign of postmodernity “the distrust in meta-stories” [6], in other words there is an uninterrupted conflict that science carries with stories. The story is also a traditional way of knowledge displayed in a narrative form. Story is knowledge in at least three ways: it presents the process of a formation (*Bildungen*), i.e. the success or failure of heroes and, therefore, it defines the criteria of competence of the society itself where the story is narrated and, under these criteria of competence, are detected the criteria of performance; secondly, the narrative form admits a plurality of forms of language; thirdly, the narrative form answers to the pragmatic rule of folk stories, because in some way it is told in a place, in other way in other place [6, p. 44-45].

The term as such – postmodernism – obeys, of course, to a temporal archaeology. It was used for the first time by the English painter John Watkins Chapman in year 1870 and he meant by ‘postmodernism’ the plastic European phenomenon developed outside Impressionistic French painting (the sense is of ‘postimpressionism’). It is then used by Rudolf Pannwitz (*Die Krisis der europäischen Kultur*, Nürnberg, 1917) and he understands by this term the

orientation towards the philosophical of culture. The term reappears in two anthologies of poetry (1934, 1942), it is recorded after 1947 through D.C. Somerwell, Toynbe and receives a privileged place in years 1960-1970 through Ihab Hassan, Vatimo, Lyotard, Linda Hutcheon.

The concept is vague enough to lend itself to all sorts of interpretations, confusion abounds. I can say, in essence, to also make the difference between terms, that *postmodernism* encourages the fracture, the multiple, the plurality, *postmodernity* takes into account the phenomena that come after modernity, and the adjective *postmodern* describes the answer to postmodernity. Ihab Hassan makes the history of these terms in the essay *From Postmodernism to Postmodernity: the Local/Global Context* [7]. All in all, the Seminar of Cultural Studies from Stuttgart in 1991 declares the end of postmodernism [8, 9]. The great reproach that can be brought to postmodernism is the de-ontologization of language and reality. With transdisciplinarity this failure is forgotten.

3. Terminological specifications 2: from transdisciplinarity to transmodernism

Pluridisciplinarity, writes Basarab Nicolescu, “refers to the study of an object from one and the same discipline by means of several disciplines at the same time”; *interdisciplinarity* “refers to the transfer of methods from one discipline to another”, while *transdisciplinarity* “refers to what *is* at the same time *between* disciplines, and *in* different disciplines, and *beyond* any discipline. Its finality is *the understanding of present world*” [10]. We have, therefore, the strong and constant term, that of *discipline* and its triple location: *between*, *in* and *beyond* disciplines. From the point of view of classic thinking, in the space between disciplines there is nothing and, therefore, the concept itself of transdisciplinarity lacks content, does not have an object. Transdisciplinarity does not refer in the same terms to classic thinking and it reproaches only the limitation of the field of investigation and of applications. In order to be able to function, transdisciplinarity uses several levels of reality, case in which the space between disciplines is no longer empty, but full, and in this *full* one may work with *between*, *in* and *beyond*. The quantum vacuum is a full vacuum, “at quantum scale, the vacuum is full” [11], it is full of vibrations and contains, at least potentially, the entire reality with all its levels.

What should we understand by level of reality? The phrase covers “an ensemble of systems invariant to the action of a number of general laws; for example, quantum entities that obey the quantum laws, which in their turn are in a radical opposition with the laws of the world of macrophysics. We shall say that two levels of Reality are *different* if, passing from one to the other, there is opposition of laws and opposition of the fundamental concepts” [10, p. 28]. And reality is “what *resists* to our mathematical experiences, images or formalizations” [11, p. 102], the same way *real* is ‘what it is’, hidden, unlike reality that is perfectly accessible for knowledge. In other words, ‘real God’ is the Real, ‘true man’ is Christ’s reality or divine nature (trans-subjective) unlike

His human nature (inter-subjective). Therefore, we have in the natural systems three levels of reality: macrophysics, microphysics and cyber-space-time (plus a fourth one announced by the author, upon which I will not insist). The three levels correspond to classic Physics, Quantum physics and to biological and psychological phenomena, the third one corresponds to the religious, philosophical, artistic experiences.

The premise from which it is started is that in virtue of which we give the notion of reality the ontological dimension, because reality is not the same with nature, reality is species, nature is kind. Moreover, right inside reality we do not stake only on an intersubjective construction, but also on a transsubjective one. We have, therefore, several levels of reality with a discontinuous structure. In this case, the research of disciplinary type always refers to one and the same level of reality, while the type of transdisciplinary research takes into account “the dynamic caused by the simultaneous action of several levels of Reality” [10, p. 54] and, just as our own body has, at the same time, a macrophysics structure and a quantum one so that the two levels coexist, the same way transdisciplinarity is not antagonistic for discontinuity but complementary. Transdisciplinarity is not a new discipline, or a super-discipline and even less a transdiscipline and, just like any discipline, it has a personal research methodology, of course, of transdisciplinary type, whose instruments are: *levels of reality, the logic of the included third and complexity*. We saw what we understand by Levels of Reality. Let’s define ‘the other two pillars of transdisciplinarity’.

Aristotelian logic works based on three principles: identity, non-contradiction and the excluded third. The last one tells us that any sentence that is in a relation of opposition with another sentence is either true or false. The third option (*tertius*) is excluded. This principle works exclusively in a bivalent logic, i.e. in only one level of reality. Ștefan Lupașcu introduces a third value of truth (T) that could be both *A* and *non-A*. The excluded third considers the terms succedent, the included third considers them coincident and this fact is possible only if we accept the levels of reality. When we say about Christ that He is ‘true God’ and ‘true person’ we work in the logic of the included third and Nicolescu points out: “The existence of different levels of Reality was stated by different traditions and civilizations, but this statement was based either on religious dogmas or on the exploration of the inner universe” [10, p. 29]. The included third means living the contradiction, not avoiding it.

The third ‘pillar of transdisciplinarity’, I said, is *complexity* and the three of them, is Nicolescu convinced, will “give the final blow to the classic vision on world” [10, p. 41]. The problem of complexity answers, after all, the question: how does the Universe work? The reality is plural, is complex, so that it seems that Edgar Morin was right: at first there was complexity! The unity of Universe is not static, the unity is diverse and diversity is unitary.

Ihab Hassan does not believe that there could be anything else important to say about postmodernism. The world is for him a miracle, just as, the same way, Malcom Bradbury renounces postmodernism and the modernity supporter

of all the dead ones and the ends (God's death, man's death, the end of history, the end of ideologies). Definitely, history must be recovered. How? By means of a new paradigm that can be called, why not?, transmodernism [9, p. 140-141].

Shortly, to be both without contradiction traditional and modern, therefore to be in the logic of the included third, means to be transmodern. Tradition is recovered in a new form of modernity. In this case, Christianity is essentially a transmodernist religion.

4. Christianity and transmodernism

Ecumenism is a distinctive sign of transmodernism and it is to be noticed in John Paul II, including Benedict XVI. I may say that the encyclical *Fides et Ratio* of John Paul II is a real transmodern manifesto. The Pope says there: "one of the most relevant details of our actual condition consists of 'the moral crisis'. The points of view about life and about world are so numerous that, in fact, we witness the affirmation of the phenomenon of the break of knowledge. Precisely this makes it difficult and sometimes useless the research of a sense." [12] The solution? The revelation of God's wisdom, in other words "transmodernism opens the way of special knowledge, through revelation" [9, p. 165], in fact a re-opening through tradition and modernity, i.e. through faith and reason, both of them also under the sign of complexity and the included third. And things are well connected when we speak of three types of the included third: Lupașcu's third, the ontological third and secretly included third which is "the guardian of our irreducible mystery, the only possible foundation of tolerance and human dignity. Without this third everything is ash" [11, p. 212]. To the three thirds correspond three natures: the objective nature, the subjective nature, and trans-nature that "refers to the field of sacred" [10, p. 76]. And here are the characteristics of the transdisciplinary attitude, we could say transmodernist without confusing the terms: *strictness*, *open* and *tolerance*, *all Christly attitudes*. Transmodernism is, at limit, the manifestation of a total culture (*Integral Culture*, according to Paul H. Ray [13]) and of a generalized dialogue.

In order to simplify things, I will present some couples from the so-called 'Hassan's list', pairs of antinomic terms that are to be found in the afterword of Hassan's text from 1982: *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature*. I make a significant selection. Here is a part of the list [8, p. 47-48] (Table 1). I have selected from the 33 pairs of antinomic terms (as Christ's age) 13 pairs (as the number of apostles).

Another list, of accidental transmodernists, offers the table of differences modernity-postmodernity on the one hand, transmodernism, on the other hand. Here is how the list looks like, again selectively [9, p. 185] (Table 2).

I do not comment the lists, I find however the antinomic pairs very significant.

Table 1. Hassan’s list (selectively).

MODERNISM	POSTMODERNISM
form	anti-form
purpose	game
model	accident
hierarchy	anarchy
perfection	exhaustion
synthesis	antithesis
presence	absence
metaphor	metonymy
depth	surface
signified	signifier
metaphysics	irony
determination	indetermination
transcendence	immanence

Table 2. The list of differences (selectively).

MODERN/POSTMODERN VALUES	TRANSMODERN VALUES
perception	conception
to determine	to deliberate
instinct	intuition
religion	spirituality
power	authority
fact	truth
science	wisdom
environment	ecology
universal	global
individuality	global
morality	ethics
Jesus of Nazareth	Christ

5. Jesus’ attitude towards the others – charity (elements of social assistance in Christ’s activity)

Of course, raising the problem *ad litteram* whether Jesus was or not a social worker, be Him transmodern, is from start doomed. I do not raise the issue like that, I do not transfer the definition of social worker and his intervention towards Christ, but, as a whole, this is the idea that I follow. Christianity is a religion of charity and charity is also a social value. In order to see Jesus’ attitude towards the others, I shall analyze His attitude towards Himself as a person and towards the temple as institution. Then we will see the relation with the others, all this shortly.

Clearly said, Jesus has a life style that shocks, he is a character that cannot be classified [14]. He is not a Jewish priest, He is not a Sadducee, nor a Pharisee, nor a rabbi, nor a zealot and neither a Essenian monk. He is nothing of all these, and yet He is free.

How does He behave regarding the Law? He submits it to a crisis by placing Himself instead of it. He causes through this a scandal, because He is against the Law, He is insolent. The old law is tyranny for man, it depersonalizes him, it reduces him to norms and transforms him into a thing. It is enough to fulfil the command just because it was ordered. Jesus does not want the respecting of Law, he wants *participation* in Law. It is the Letter of the Law that Christ confronts, not the Law. He liberates from the domination of the letter, initiating the reign of spirit. He puts in front of Moses' law his own message: "You heard that it was said [...]. I however tell you [...]" (Matthew 5.21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43). Frequently He then says: "Truly I say to you". He does not need a mediator. This means that Jesus places against the Law the Grace and Grace makes the utopia suggested by Jesus possible. His encounter with the rich young man is here instructive: that young man fulfilled the Law but, however, something was missing. What was it? To leave everything behind in order to follow Christ, i.e. to replace the Law with love. In this young man Jesus has a lost client, he does not receive, understand, accept, react. If he does it, he does it in negative. The old law is a minimum and has a relative function. Jesus is a maximum and has an absolute function. That is why the social worker is for client a maximum. Not by chance Jesus sets God as model, that God who assists Adam from beginning till the end.

As far as Jesus' attitude towards the Temple is regarded, therefore towards some sort of bureaucratic machine which is more against than helping the activity of social assistance, Jesus faces the Temple (local authorities that are there to help, not to obstruct). The new Temple lives for and among people. "Here is someone greater than the Temple" (Matthew 12.6), and Christ's attitude is profoundly eschatological. Destroying the Temple is equal to helping all and the neighbour is anyone. We do not worship God *here* and *there*, we worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4.19-21). The Temple is not a place, the Temple is a mood and the mood is there where the neighbour is (client) with his suffering and happiness. The Temple is in a person, not in a building, just as the social worker is man person rather than an institution. And the person, both of the social worker, as well as of the client, asks for commitment, effort and dedication, mutual serving.

The essence of the text here takes into consideration Jesus' attitude in respect to the others, the peers, i.e. precisely His social attitude. He has received reproaches for his habit of being in the company of some doubtful persons (publicans and sinners), disregarded by society, and to have dinner with them was already something outrageous. He talks to women of a doubtful morality, is well received by Samaritans, moreover, a Samaritan is even merciful (Luke 10.29-37) and considers the non-Jewish as not being inferior to the Jewish. He has rich and influent friends (Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea), He felt

good around the wealthy ones and was not ashamed with the miserable ones whose company never bothered Him, moreover, He searched for it. Everywhere in these situations Christ took into account the physical and spiritual needs of His peers and it did not matter for Him if He had broken the conventions when He satisfied the desires of the companions. Jesus has a constant relation with marginalized persons, even shows a predilection towards them. He gets close to ‘those who are badly seen’, He frequented the publicans, was around prostitutes, Samaritans, lepers, widows, was seen together with illiterates and pagans. Any marginalized was a potential companion (client) of Christ. This attitude that enrols in the sphere of social assistance is really transmodern and, therefore, it shocks and does not inspire respect. Especially the sinners and the poor ones are part of the circle of marginalized frequented by Christ. He was often reproached with this thing (Mark 2.16; Luke 15.1, 2, 7, 37, 39; John 7.49). For those times, *sinner* was synonym with *marginalized*, the same with *poor*. *Sinners* were those with ‘immoral’ professions (shepherd, publicans, gamblers), *the poor ones* were the sad ones, (the rich young man was, from this point of view, very *poor!*), uneducated (the apostles, for example), the sick, the hungry. Christ adopts them when, according to the Law, it would have been normal to avoid them.

Frankly speaking, Christ Himself belonged to the group of marginalized. He is born in a stable, He is ‘the carpenter’s son’ (a ‘poor’ job), has no place to lay His head (Matthew 8.20), dies outside the city (punishment for the excluded ones – Hebrews 13.12), and, moreover, on a cross (punishment for robbers), a death of slave, of villain. There is no doubt: Jesus’ life style is one typical for a marginalized, for an assisted (client) with claims of a social worker! Except that, marginalization did not mean for Jesus personal fault. Poverty is no in itself a good, just as wealth is not in itself something bad. Here Christ scandalizes again, especially when He demands the same attitude from His followers. To invite to dinner the poor ones was already a work that announced the Kingdom. The love for the wealthy one does not have a value in itself as it has the love for the poor one, even if both the poor one, as well as the rich one are equal in front of God. Facts are being judged, and when Jesus demands love for enemies (Matthew 5.43) He does it not because if they are our enemies we must necessarily consider them as being also God’s enemies. Christ’s parables, with the lost sheep, with the lost drachma, with the prodigal son, are parables by contrast: the joy is bigger for those who are found than for those that did not get lost. But the peers do not understand! (just as, often, the client of the social worker does not understand, and not necessarily because of the latter one). It seems that the bad ones are winners! And Jesus must show that God is good to everyone, especially with the poor ones, why?, because they need it most. The need of the neighbour is the only criterion of the social worker and he is for the client God’s kindness. Moreover, the marginalized one, when it comes to salvation (and I do not consider here the term strictly in its theological dimension, social assistance is the profane form of salvation), has priority (just as priority has anything marginalized at the act of social assistance). In the same way priority has the sick one, bodily or spiritually, not the healthy one. The

healthy one is strong and this power corrupts him; the sick one needs to be served and this service makes man better, both the one who gives it (the social worker), as well as the one who receives it (the client). Jesus however did not come to be served, He came to serve (Mark 10.45). And what He says: "Among you let it not be different" (Luke 22.26). And if Christ's mission is to serve, the same way is our mission as well. Jesus is always 'the man for others', His only care is the one in need and the form of manifestation of care is love.

To conclude: Christ was a strange man and His strangeness interpellates us [14, p. 49]. The constant message of love is the sign of transmodernism, even if the statement sounds strange, or maybe precisely because of that!

6. Miracles as specific form of social assistance of Christly type

The particular fact of being of Jesus is not just that of speaking, but also that of acting. He has a mission: He expresses it through words and experiments it through facts. A specific form of word that passed in front is the miracle, and miracles appear as prove for the fact that God's Kingdom has already arrived to us (Luke 11.20). The Gospels keep about 62 presentations of miracles, and this if we exclude from this register the knowledge of thoughts (as in Matthew 9.4; John 2.24; 4.17-19, 29; 6.61, 64, 71) or the escape from enemies' hands (Luke 4, 28-30).

The miracle is not the same with the wonder, despite the Latin etymon. *Miraculum*, derived from *mirari*, means 'to wonder', 'to be astonished'. Miracle is a sensitive fact where God's power manifests and this sensitive fact transcends both the human experience, as well as the natural law. In the Old Testament, the miracle shows God's liberating power; in the New Testament, the miracle is a sign that helps the believer to get to know Christ deeper. In summary, miracles are saving and revealing signs of God [15].

One specification now: miracle is something completely different from wonder. When it rains in desert after 100 years, what is it?, miracle or wonder? It is wonder, which means that the wonder still belongs to in the order of nature, not against it. The miracle is not in the order of nature, but it is not against it either; miracle is something added to nature, it is an *auxilium* (the successful social worker does not work miracles, he does wonders). There is no contradiction between miracle and the natural order. By means of His *power*, God works miracles and no miracle lacks significance. The aspects of God's activity are *miracle*, *power* and *significance*, and all these are present not just in God's special actions (miracles as such), but in the entire created order (Romans 1.20). No matter how we find the word 'miracle' translated in Testament writings, three aspects are always to be found: God's action is *wonderful*, *amazing* and *significant* [16]. We are interested less here in the fact that miracles appear in Gospels as 'signs', 'great deeds' or 'powers'. What we are interested in is the fact that miracles are not against the natural order precisely because the natural order is not a closed system (therefore a miracle accesses a certain level of reality without contradicting the other). The miracle does not

change for good a system, i.e. the created world, because the world is not an inertial system precisely because God is alive and personal. And if the world is ordinary, i.e. common, God can only be extraordinary and the way in which He manifests this attribute is the miracle. It always comes together with revelation and does not certify God. It is God's *work*. Miracle is sign (*semeion*), is creation (*erga*), it is great creation (*dynamesis*) and is, as such, miracle (*terata*). The miracle confirms God's *presence, authority, power and glory*, and the suspension of the laws of Physics in the act of miracle is nothing else but the placement in a level of reality different from the one that we disciplinarily analyze. Transdisciplinarity from Christ's point of view is nothing else but *trans-mutation* from a level of Reality to another one without contradiction, based on the included third. This does not mean that Jesus worked miracles because He was suitable and either because He wanted through them to prove His deity. Miracles are the supreme prove of the one who desired to show that being human is extremely difficult. If He has made a miracle, He did it in order to help, not to punish and never in His own advantage. The miracle works in the soul and prepares man for receiving the Eucharistic sacrament. It seems little for the healthy man, it is everything for the man who is sick bodily and spiritually. For them came Christ with His unacknowledged license of social worker *sui-generis*. Everything He wants, He does and all those He does He also wants.

What is, however, a miracle? Simply said, a miracle is an event as unusual as possible and, therefore, significant, an event that implies the creation of a supernatural agent, not anti-natural, an event made with a certain purpose: that to certify either the message, or the messenger, in our case both of them. The purpose is always beneficial, the message is always the following: he who wants to make good, if he does not have time, he makes time. Jesus makes time for everyone else, rarely has time for self. The same for the social worker. It sometimes seems to mistake the levels of reality, it only seems. If He mistaken or neglected them, the miracle itself would be against revelation. This observation does not aim at God's omnipotence. It must be placed in connection with our way of perceiving things. Why do I say this? Because Jesus does not boast, does not work miracles out of courtesy, the miracles do not have a temporal structure, although they take place in time. If He has cured a devilish, He did not do it *then*. For Christ and for all those who follow Him, *then* is always *now*. The miracle is not a fracture, but a continuum. Which is why Christ *has not worked* miracles, Christ *works* miracles.

This is why I am not reluctant to add, from a laic perspective, to Christ's titles also that of 'social worker' *avant la lettre*, a transmodern one, with all derailments or misunderstandings of this term. If only one man continues to help disinterestedly his peer, Christ still walks among us disguised as a social worker. If not, then the first and last social worker will have died for the satisfaction of postmodernism, and this strange current can take it from the beginning with all its unfulfilled deaths.

The 'miracles' of the social worker with acknowledged definition are related to the relation that he has with the client. As 'social worker' without definition, Christ used to solve the problem on the spot, He is both intersubjective and transsubjective. The social worker, I hope I am not mistaking, at least not for good!, has access less frequently (really?) at the transsubjective aspect, the one by means of which the miracle is produced and occurs. Finally, the issue is that of the miracles regarding Jesus. Are they a problem for Him? No! The miracle is a problem for science, not for faith. Once, the miracle was surprising; today is disturbing.

Miracles are, indeed, for most of us a problem. In Mark 1.34 Jesus heals *a lot* of sick persons, in Matthew 8.16 He heals them *all*. In Mark 4.23 Jairus' daughter is dying, in Matthew 9.18 she was already dead, in John 6 those who ate were 5000 and the baskets left 12, in Matthew 15.37-38 and Mark 8.8-9 there are 4000 and 7 baskets left. But is this a real problem? I do not think so. There are miracles as projections of some experiences from Easter (resurrection, the multiplication of breads, the wonderful fishing) and which have nothing to do with the remove of demons and neither with healings as such. The expression of the first types of miracles is a theological one, the intention is theological. Healings do not have in centre the theological part, although this is implicit. The intention of the miracles that regards healings is a social one, 'medical' and with an immediate therapeutic purpose and, frankly speaking, even against the old law, because Jesus heals on Saturday as well (neither the social worker takes a break because it is a holiday!). What unites the miracles beyond the particular aspects is the liberating event in the centre of which we find the person of Christ. The miracle cannot face science, this would mean to violate the elementary rule of comparison, the miracle has an entirely different meaning than the scientific one, the same way as the social worker's purpose is different from that of the healing doctor. We know this starting from Basil the Great, the one who, as the first one, founded the first institutionalized centres of social assistance.

The therapeutic action of Christ takes into account, in what the text here is interested, healings and exorcisms. Not by chance, out of Jesus' 62 miracles, 41 are healings/exorcisms. They are: the exorcizing of a possessed: Mark 1.23-28, Luke 4.33-37, the healing of Peter's mother-in-law: Mark 1.29, 31; Matthew 8.14-15; Luke 4.38-39; the healing of a leper: Mark 1.40-45; Matthew 8.24; Luke 5.12-14; the healing of the son or of the slave of a centurion: Matthew 8.5-13; Luke 7.1-10; John 4.46-54; the healing of the paralyzed man: Mark 2.1-12; Matthew 9.2-8; Luke 5.18-26; John 5.1-15; the healing of the withered hand: Mark 3.1-5; Matthew 12.9-13; Luke 6.6-10; the healing of the demoniac from Gadara: Mark 5.1-20; Matthew 8.28-34; Luke 8.26-29; the healing of the woman with the issue of blood: Mark 5.21-43; Matthew 9.18-26; Luke 8.40-56; the healing of the two blind men: Matthew 9.27-31; the possessed mute: Matthew 9.32-34; Luke 11.14-15; the healing of a blind and mute man: Mark 7.31-37; the healing of the blind man from Bethsaida: Mark 8.22-26; the healing of the blind man from birth: John 9.1-8; the healing of the epileptic: Mark 9.14-

27; Matthew 17.14-18; Luke 9.38-43; the healing of the humpbacked woman: Luke 13.10-17; the healing of the man sick of dropsy: Luke 9.14, 1-6; the healing of the ten lepers: Luke 17.12-19; the healing of the blind men from Jericho: Mark 10.46-52; Matthew 20.29-43; Luke 18.35-43; the healing of the bishop's slave from the garden of Gethsemane: Luke 22.50-51. Interesting is also the distribution of miracles throughout Gospels: 12 in Matthew, 11 in Mark, 15 in Luke and 3 in John. As a matter of fact explainable, Luke was a doctor, John was interested in the miracles from Easter, not in those of healing.

All in all, a miracle is an extraordinary event and which causes wonder; the sick person who does not want to live dies. It takes however a miracle for the one who wants to die to live. Christ made miracles: miracles on nature, on men and on Himself.

7. Conclusions

The social problems generate social needs that impose the organization of social services inside a community. Who are those that benefit from these services? The persons or families that are in difficulty or risk, the groups that are in difficulty or risk, marginalized or excluded socially, the community that faces situations of difficulty or risk. The identification is a gradual one, from person to family, from group to community. In front of these situations, the social worker is mediator, lawyer, teacher, adviser, case manager, administrator, agent of social change, all in all he is a professional, and from the point of view of the communication social worker-client, the purposes are: receiving, understanding, acceptance, reaction. When this road is completed, the reaction to the message can be of denial, of defense, of exclusion, of adaptation, and of taking over the message. If the social worker is Jesus and the client is Peter, all these attitudes are to be found in the relation between the two of them. Therefore, the social worker interferes for the increase of individual welfare and of the self determination of the individual. The social worker faces the need to take moral decisions and this fact gives birth to the ethical dilemma when he must decide in case of a conflictual alternative (for example, he has to choose between personal values and institutional or professional values). Taking the decision implies identifying the problem, examining the ethical values and norms necessary for solving the problem, imagining the possible and probable courses of the action, the implications of alternatives and, finally, choosing the best course for action [17]. One can see, theory is necessary and it grafts on the practice of social assistance. The social worker interferes and helps, and the efficiency of the act thus carried on is function of the level of knowledge and of correct explanation of the phenomena and of social environments where the act is exercised. The aim over which the social worker acts is complex, the socio-human reality is dynamic and the intervention is doomed if the social worker has not understood what is all about. "Social assistance is not just an *activity* and a *science*, but also an *art*" [18].

References

- [1] D. Howe, *Introduction in the Theory of Social Assistance. The Importance of Applying Theory in Practice*, MarLink, Bucharest, 2001, 7.
- [2] ***, *The Catechism of Catholic Church*, Arhiepiscopia Romano-Catolică, Bucharest, 1993, art. 2420-2444.
- [3] N. Steinhardt, *Give and You Shall Recive*, Episcopia Română a Maramureşului și Sătmăruului, Baia-Mare, 1992, 124, 127.
- [4] I. Mircea, *Dictionary of the New Testament*, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al BOR, Bucharest, 1995, 314.
- [5] R. Rorty, *Pragmatism and Post-Nietzschean Philosophy*, vol. II, Univers, Bucharest, 2000, 10.
- [6] J.F. Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition*, Babel, Bucharest, 1993, 15.
- [7] I. Hassan, *Philosophy and Literature*, **25(1)** (2001) 1.
- [8] D. Corbu, *Postmodernism for All*, Princeps, Iași, 2004, 10.
- [9] T. Codreanu, *Transmodernism*, Junimea, Iași, 2005, 138.
- [10] B. Nicolescu, *Transdisciplinarity*, Polirom, Iași, 1999, 51.
- [11] B. Nicolescu, *We, the Particle and the World*, Polirom, Iași, 2002, 32.
- [12] John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio. Encyclical Letter Regarding the Reports between Faith and Reason*, Presa Bună, Iași, 1999, 60.
- [13] P.H. Ray and S.R. Anderson, *The Cultural Creatives: How 50 Million People Are Changing the World*, Harmony Books, New York, 2000.
- [14] ***, *Course of Christology*, The Roman-Catholic Theological Institute, Iasi, 1994, 24.
- [15] I. Tamas, *Small Christian Catholic Dictionary*, Sapientia, Iasi, 2001, 161.
- [16] ***, *Biblical Dictionary*, Cartea Creștină, Oradea, 1995, 846.
- [17] S. Witte and P.E. Mihăescu, *Ethical Problems – Ethical Dilemmas*, in *The program of formation in the practice of social assistance*, Ministry of Work, Social Solidarity and Family, Bucharest, 2005, 57.
- [18] V. Miftode, *Theory and Method in Social Assistance*, Fundația Axis, Iași, 1995, 16.