

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA
EVANGELICKÁ TEOLOGICKÁ FAKULTA

Bakalářská práce

Courage in Nicolae Steinhardt's Life and Theology

Camelia C. Isaic

Katedra: Ekumenický institut
Vedoucí práce: Prof. Ivana Noble, PhD.
Studijní program: Teologie
Studijní obor: Teologie křesťanských tradic

Praha 2017

Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci s názvem *Courage in Nicolae Steinhardt's Life and Theology* napsala samostatně a výhradně s použitím uvedených pramenů.

V Praze dne 16.05.2017

Camelia C. Isaic

Anotace

Tato práce se zabývá pojmem odvahy v životě a teologii Nicolae Steinhardta. Nicolae Steinhardt (1912-1989) byl intelektuál židovského původu, který konvertoval k pravoslaví jako politický vězen v komunistickém Rumunsku, aby se později stal mnichem. V úvodu představím téma, svou motivaci a strukturu této práce, která analyzuje odvahu jako zkušenost a ctnost. V první kapitole představím autora, jeho kontext, životní cestu, dílo i jeho recepci. V druhé kapitole se soustředím na téma odvahy jako ctnosti ve Steinhardtově práci a teologii, a představím ji z různé perspektivy. Poslední kapitola uzavírá tuto práci hodnocením Steinhardtova přínosu v dnešním kontextu.

Klíčová slova

Odvaha, strach, svoboda, theose, pravoslaví, ekumenika, literatura, komunismus.

Summary

This dissertation explores the topic of courage in Nicolae Steinhardt's life and theology. Nicolae Steinhardt (1912-1989) was a Jewish-born intellectual who converted to Orthodoxy as a political prisoner in Communist Romania, to then later become a monk. In the beginning I introduce the topic, motivation and structure of this dissertation, which analyses courage as experience and virtue. In the first chapter I present the author, his context, life journey, work and its reception. In the second chapter I focus on the topic of courage as a virtue in Steinhardt's work and theology and I review it from multiple perspectives. The last chapter concludes the analysis by assessing the relevance of Steinhardt's contribution to today's context.

Keywords

Courage, fear, freedom, deification, Orthodoxy, ecumenism, literature, Communism.

Obsah

Introduction	5
1. Nicolae Steinhardt's life and work	8
1.1 Family and childhood	9
1.2 European esthete	10
1.3 Converted prisoner	12
1.4 Monk-writer	15
1.5 Reception of Steinhardt's work in Romania	19
1.6 Reception of Steinhardt's work abroad	20
2. Courage in Nicolae Steinhardt's theology	23
2.1 The underlying theme of freedom	24
2.2 Steinhardt 's prison-shaped theology	28
2.3 Fear as a sin	31
2.4 Courage in life	33
2.5 Courage in faith	37
2.6 Courage in Christ	41
2.7 Courage in death	42
2.8 Courage in monasticism	46
3. Conclusion	49
Bibliography	52

Introduction

Courage is the final mystery, the one ready to die will win.¹

In this work, the topic of courage will be explored in reference to Nicolae Steinhardt's life and theology. He was a Jewish-born intellectual who converted to Orthodoxy as a political prisoner in Communist Romania, to then later become a monk. My motivation to write on courage is driven by my conviction that today's developed society and Christianity need to be brave in order to deal with the increasing aggressivity of the political discourse, surging violence and deepening divisions that we witness lately. More specifically, I believe that Orthodoxy in particular, the Church that I belong to, needs more cultivated and courageous people like Nicolae Steinhardt, who can engage from within to stimulate the Church to open and address the current issues, while at the same time defend the values of the Christian faith in an increasingly secularized world. Steinhardt's masterpiece is his autobiographical *Diary of Happiness*², so in a way his own life. When it was published in Romania not long after the fall of Communist regime, this title instantly became a national best-seller³. Although as an author he remains predominantly unknown abroad, Steinhardt gained the admiration of Pope Paul John II, who praised him when visiting Romania in

¹ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericii*, Editura Manastirii Rohia, Rohia 2005, Romania, p. 337; if not indicated otherwise, all translations from original Romanian language are my own.

² Original Romanian title: *Jurnalul Fericii*. To my knowledge, no English translation has been published yet. The book is referred to as *Diary of Happiness* in English-language academic research to date. My personal preference would be *Journal of Bliss* for two reasons: firstly, the word diary implies a chronological recording of personal events and thoughts, which Steinhardt's book is not; secondly, the word happiness implies a human psychological dimension only, not a divine component as well. In my view, the word bliss better reflects that divine-human synergy that describes Steinhardt's personal experience. However, for consistency reasons, throughout this paper I will refer to this book as *Diary of Happiness*.

³ Published in 1991 by Dacia Publishing House in Cluj, *Jurnalul Fericii* received the Best Book of the Year Award.

1999. Aware of his courage in faith, pro-ecumenic views and vast culture, the Pope referred to him as “one of the most erudite people born on Romanian land.”⁴ Steinhardt’s living example as an “exceptional faithful figure and man of culture”⁵ resonated strongly with the pontiff, who similarly to Steinhardt, experienced living under Communism and right in his first homily as a Pope stressed the importance of courage by calling on the faithful not to be afraid.⁶ In my view, this is no coincidence. Life taught both the Pope and Steinhardt of the importance of virtues and courage specifically in the contemporary world, although their approaches seem to me to be different. John Paul II promoted a shift of responsibility from externally-imposed rules to internally-cultivated virtues in Roman-Catholic theology⁷. Nicolae Steinhardt, at his turn, led by example and stressed the necessity of practicing virtues, in line with the Philokalic writings⁸. Therefore, it is important that I consider both the biographical and reflective approaches in order to fully convey Steinhardt’s perspective on the topic.

⁴ *Lumina* Newspaper, 28 March 2009, available at <http://ziarullumina.ro/nicolae-steinhardt-un-om-bland-credincios-cu-un-suflet-enorm-46399.html> (19 March 2017).

⁵ Pope John- Paul II quoted in ‘Opinions about N. Steinhardt and about the Diary of Happiness’ in Nicolae Steinhardt, *Jurnalul Fericii*, pp.436-438, here p. 438.

⁶ Pope John Paul II quoted in Catholic Vote, <https://www.catholicvote.org/john-paul-iis-first-homily-sacrifice-humility-courage/> (26 April 2017).

⁷ Early Christian theologians, such as Tomas Aquinas, as a representative of early Western Christianity has frequently written on the topic of virtues. With time however, the Western Church teachings gave prevalence to moral rules, similar to externally imposed restrictions. Following the tumultuous break-away of Protestantism and increasing sense of freedom of the modern person, Pope John Paul II stressed once again the importance of virtues, given the inner-nature. For more details, please refer to papal encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (1993), available online at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html (26 April 2017).

⁸ The Philokalic texts, through their multiple authors, refer to numerous virtues needed for leading a holy life, with a stress on ascetic virtues, while also including courage. For more details, please refer to *Philokalia*, vol. 3, compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, translated and edited by G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware, Faber & Faber, United Kingdom, 2010.

In my work, I will approach the topic of courage both as instances of life and as a virtue which can be cultivated, strived for. I will focus on the dynamics of courage and on the human-divine synergy it can develop, drawing both on Steinhardt's personal experience and his theology.

In the first chapter, I will introduce the author, while reviewing, his personal life journey, published work and its reception. I will focus on the contextual aspects, personal experiences and sources of inspiration which shaped his perspective on courage, so that he came to call it the "final mystery", as quoted in the motto of this work. I will also provide a brief review of the reception of his work both in Romania and abroad.

In the second chapter, I will delve into analyzing Steinhardt's approach to courage, by placing the topic in context of his work and theology, by breaking it down to analyze courage in life, courage in faith, courage in Christ, courage in death and courage in monasticism. This structural breakdown reflects my own understanding of the Steinhardt's perspective on courage and I believe that it can help me better navigate the reader who is not familiar with the author's work.

In the third chapter, I will summarize the findings and evaluate their relevance in the contemporary context.

I will now turn to the first chapter and introduce the author, his context and his work.

1. Nicolae Steinhardt's life and work

In this chapter, I will introduce the reader to the author's historical context, life journey and work. I will also briefly review the reception of his work, mainly from a theological point of view. It is my intention to highlight the sources of influence and the role-models that shaped Steinhardt's formation as a person, that inspired Steinhardt's literary work and theology. In this chapter I will specifically focus on his personal experience with courage, as it has greatly influenced his writings and thought.

Born just before the First World War, Nicolae Steinhardt lived both in smallest Romania⁹ and great Romania¹⁰, in a kingdom and a republic, under two dictatorships, experiencing the rule of two political extremes: far-right fascism and far-left Communism. Except for his childhood years and early youth, he was most of the time discriminated against by the regime in power. It was in this largely hostile political and historical context that Steinhardt led his life and has learned the importance of courage in practice.

Olivier Clément, in his foreword to the French translation of *Diary of Happiness*¹¹, distinguishes three phases of Nicolae Steinhardt's adult life: European esthete, converted prisoner and monk-writer. I will use this structure in the following section of my paper as well, while including an additional item referring to the family background.

⁹ After only a few months from entering the war on the side of Britain and Russia, by the end of 1916 Romania lost its southern half, including the capital city Bucharest, into enemy's hands. The entire state administration relocated to Iasi in the historical province of Moldova. The strategy of Romania in 1917 changed from taking over Transylvania, which had been under the Austro-Hungarian rule, to self-defense and statehood preservation.

¹⁰ At the end of 1918, Romania made significant territorial additions (Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia), thus reaching the largest geographical territory of the state in history to date. That state remains known in history as great Romania.

¹¹ *Jurnalul Fericitatii* was published as *Journal de la Felicité* by Arcanteres Editions, UNESCO in 1995. It was translated in French by Marily le Nir, carrying a foreword by Olivier Clément.

1.1 Family and childhood

He was born as Nicu-Aureliu Steinhardt in 1912 in Bucharest, but grew up with his family in Pantelimon, near Bucharest.¹² His father, Oscar Steinhardt, was an engineer by profession and was working as director of a furniture manufacture. He studied in Switzerland and received his professional qualification from Zurich Polytechnics. During the First World War, Oscar fought as an officer of the Romanian royal army, was wounded in battle and later on awarded a war-decoration. Steinhardt's father was the first role-model of courage that inspired the author. I even dare claim that in his case, courage was an inherited virtue, largely cultivated and supported by his father Oscar, as also depicted in *Diary of Happiness*. His mother Antoaneta, born Neuman, was a housewife and a distant relative of Sigmund Freud. Steinhardt attended one of the best high-schools in Bucharest, together with Constantin Noica¹³, Alexandru Paleologu¹⁴ and Mircea Eliade¹⁵, who later turned into life-time friends. After graduating from high-

¹² The bibliographical information presented in this chapter is as per Virgil Bulat's summary in Nicolae Steinhardt, *Jurnalul Fericii*, (pp. 424-430), Steinhardt's own autobiography in the same publication, (pp. 420-423) and as per Viorica Nicsov's chronology included in N. Steinhardt & Em. Neuman, *Eseuri despre iudaism*, Humanitas, Bucharest, Romania, 2006, (pp. 7-15).

¹³ Constantin Noica (1909-1987) was a Romanian philosopher and a lifetime friend of N. Steinhardt. He was sentenced to jail by the communists. The lot of intellectuals condemned in 1959-60 comprised 25 members, including N. Steinhardt, Alexandru Paleologu, Vladimir Streinu, Sergiu Al George and others. Steinhardt refers to this prison experience in his autobiographical book. After being released from prison in 1964, C. Noica continued to hold private philosophy lectures in Bucharest and later in Paltinis, Sibiu. He wrote multiple essays and was a mentor to many intellectuals of contemporary Romania, such as Andrei Plesu and Gabriel Liiceanu. C. Noica is the father of Rafail Noica, one of the most renowned spiritual fathers in Romanian Orthodoxy today.

¹⁴ Alexandru Paleologu (1919- 2005) was a Romanian literary critic, writer and politician. He was imprisoned in 1960, as part of Noica's intellectual's group. He was mentioned as one of the best friends of Steinhardt. According to Wikipedia, late in his life he acknowledged to have collaborated with Securitate and publicly asked to be forgiven.

¹⁵ Mircea Eliade (1907 – 1986) was a Romanian writer, historian of religions, philosopher. As a young man he showed support to far-right organization Iron Guard. He chose the path of exile once the Communist regime took over the power in Romania.

school, Steinhardt pursued his studies as a university student, thus marking the beginning of the first phase in his adult life, that of European esthete.

1.2 European esthete

After having graduated from high-school, Steinhardt continued his studies at the Faculty of Law and Letters in Bucharest, which he attended from 1929 until 1934. During that period, the task of running great Romania¹⁶ centrally became increasingly difficult. Political instability¹⁷ and corruption, economic slowdown and the radicalization of Europe have led to strong general discontent of the population in Romania, to aggressive nationalism and rising anti-Semitism. It was in this increasingly tensed political context that Steinhardt decided for constitutional law as a doctoral specialization, degree which he acquired in 1936. In his choice of constitutional law, Olivier Clément identified the interest of young Steinhardt in protection of freedom and limitation of evil. In fact, throughout his entire life, as also reflected in his work, Steinhardt sought the path leading to human freedom in a very practical way.

¹⁶ The territorial expansion of Romania in 1918, consisting in adding the provinces of Bukovina, Bessarabia and Transylvania, came along with a significant number of ethnical minorities inhabiting those territories. The 1930 census reported that ethnic minorities represented about 28% of the country's population, out of which Jews ranked third with 4%, just after the Hungarian and German minorities. This new reality of ruling over such diverse people proved to be a difficult task for the Bucharest-based political class and not in line with the historical dream of Romania being a nation-state, a state reuniting all Romanians.

¹⁷ The royal succession after the death of king Ferdinand in 1927 was far from smooth and further divided the people. The return to the throne of unpopular king Carol II who abandoned his queen for mistress Maria Lupescu (whose father was Jew), further irritated the Romanian people. Moreover, Great Romania experienced more than 10 governments during a single decade, from 1930 – 1940. Additional information on the context available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Romania (19 March 2017).

In 1934 Steinhardt made his literary debut with the publication of *In the manner...of the young*¹⁸, an ironic critical review of his generation of writers', recalling it later as an "act of revolt"¹⁹.

As a young man, together with his cousin Emanuel Neuman, referred to as Manole in *Diary of Happiness*, Steinhardt started attending a local synagogue, seeking to enter the miracle of faith of the religion he was born into. This attempt however did not bear fruit. The two of them wrote and published in 1936 *Essay on a catholic conception of Judaism* in Bucharest and *Jewish illusions and realities* in Paris²⁰.

Until the beginning of the war, Steinhardt continued his studies abroad, mainly in Paris and England. During the war, he stayed in Romania, country which was under Antonescu's fascist government. As his family was based in Bucharest, they were not deported. Steinhardt's personal experience with state-driven anti-Semitism during the Second World War was in line with the policy adopted by Antonescu's government not to persecute the Jews living within the historical borders of the Romanian kingdom²¹. Steinhardt even expressed admiration

¹⁸ Steinhardt Nicolae, *In genul ...tinerilor*, Ed. Polirom, Iasi, Romania, 2008.

¹⁹ Steinhardt Nicolae & Pinteana Ioan, *Primejdii marturisirii*, Ed. Polirom, Iasi, Romania, 2009, p. 64.

²⁰ Originally published in French, both titles have been also translated and published in Romanian as N. Steinhardt & Em. Neuman, *Eseuri despre iudaism*.

²¹ While within the borders of Romanian state, general Antonescu opted for a "softer" anti-Semitic policy, based on forced labor, discrimination and material or financial punishments, he ordered the mass-murdering of Jews in the eastern warzone. In fact, Romanians were responsible for deportation and implementing the final solution on about 280 000 Jews in Northern Bukovina, Bessarabia and today's Ukraine, ranking second only to Germany. With the help of the state-controlled media, this sad performance was not assumed by the Romanian state and was officially acknowledged only in the Final Report International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania in 2004. As a further reading on this difficult topic I recommend Iulia Pandeanu's paper "The Holocaust in Romania: Uncovering a Dark Chapter", available at http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/pdf/IuliaPadeanu_The%20Holocaust%20in%20Romania.pdf (downloaded on 17 March 2017).

towards the Romanian government, which courageously refused to implement Hitler's orders of mass murdering the Jewish population:

“I participated in- although I could be dispensed- mandatory work and snow removal work, but in operetta conditions. However, it would be hypocrisy of me not to acknowledge that the measures taken with regard to the Jews didn't sadden me, at the same time realizing very well that the Country's government – given the circumstances- could not proceed differently and admiring the courage and generosity in refusing to execute the orders coming from abroad, which required adamantly the execution of Jewish population. My fondness towards the Romanian nation grew stronger.”²²

This statement implies that Steinhardt was not aware of the cruel reality that Romanians ranked only second to Germany in the implementation of the final solution on the Jewish population²³. Otherwise, it would be hard to believe that he would write so appreciative, as late as in 1987, towards Antonescu's regime for taking such soft measures against the Romania -based Jews, while knowing that the very same person ordered deportation, persecution and mass-murdering of so many Jews on the territories nowadays belonging to the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. Not long after the end of the Second World War, Romania's fascist military dictatorship was gradually replaced by the Communist one.

1.3 Converted prisoner

The Communists were not satisfied with taking control over the country's political mechanisms of power and its economy. They wanted to take control over people's minds, dreams, beliefs. Whoever spoke against the one party or refused to comply with its orders, or even those who were perceived as

²² Steinhardt Nicolae, “Autobiografie” in *Jurnalul Fericii*, (pp. 420-425), here p.420.

²³ Iulia Pandeanu, “The Holocaust in Romania: Uncovering a Dark Chapter”, paper available at http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/pdf/IuliaPandeanu_The%20Holocaust%20in%20Romania.pdf (17 March 2017).

suspicious or not enthusiast enough, were perceived as enemies of the republic and severely punished²⁴. The regime's secret police, known by everyone as Securitate, had its eyes and ears everywhere and no one was safe. In Romania, the Communists soon succeeded in establishing the rule of fear, making everyone feel vulnerable to be denounced, with almost no possibility to escape this increasingly paranoid closed system.²⁵ It was in this context that Steinhardt, understood that the new state order would not be able to offer the freedom he had been searching for. During this time of material, spiritual and physical hardship, he spent more and more time studying the Scriptures, patristic texts and multiple Christian authors²⁶. In his autobiography, Steinhardt recalls those times:

“In reality I was capable for baptism, I was only lacking the courage and determination to take the final step. I was hesitating, ashamed, the devil was tempting me with fear, humility, weakness [...] I was also afraid, I knew myself very impure.”²⁷

Nicolae Steinhardt's struggle against the Communist regime escalated in 1959-1960, when he defeated his fear²⁸ and refused to testify as a witness²⁹ against his

²⁴ The methods of punishment varied from civil - rights discrimination, to material or financial penalties, deportations, house-arrests, culminating with imprisonment, torture and forced labor camps.

²⁵ For the English-speaking reader interested in learning more about political prisons and prisoners in Communist Romania I recommend Alexandru Popescu's work *Petre Tutea between Sacrifice and Suicide*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd., England, 2004. For the Czech reader I recommend Jana Rokoska's work *Vězeňská literatura v Rumunsku (1944 - 1989)*, dated in 2006 and available at https://is.cuni.cz/webapps/zzp/search/?lang=cs&tab_searchas=basic (downloaded on 17 March 2017).

²⁶ The Orthodox readings and authors that Steinhardt had been studying at that time include *Philokalia*, Paisie Velicovschi, John Climacus, John Damascene, Maxim the Confessor, Gregory Palamas, Georges Duthuit's works on byzantine icons. For more details, please refer to Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericii*, p. 206.

²⁷ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericii*, p. 421.

²⁸ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericii*, p. 31.

²⁹ While Steinhardt confessed to be afraid when asked to testify in the investigations, his old father assessed the entire situation very practically. He urged him not to be afraid and not to testify against his peers, as sooner or later Securitate would put him in prison anyway. He

old-time friend Constantin Noica and other intellectual peers, who were charged for plotting against social order. A few months later, he was sentenced to prison and forced labor together with the rest of the group. Once he became a prisoner, he asked to be baptized by father Mina, an Orthodox hieromonk and fellow prisoner. This was a baptism in true ecumenical spirit, having as witnesses two Greek -Catholic priests. He experienced this mystery as profound bliss, as being born again³⁰, in spite of the cruel reality of the prison-walls around him.

When Steinhardt found himself in an overcrowded, dark and miserable prison cell, he was amazed at the solidarity and brotherly affection he came across³¹. Orthodox monks, Greek-catholic priests, protestants, sectarians, Christians belonging to all sorts of churches and confessions, non-believers, were helping each other, respecting each other, praying and engaging in liturgical service together.³²

The intellectual activity in prison was also present. At day, the prisoners were put to hard physical labor, many times punished and humiliated by the guards. At dusk however, they were also engaging in various intellectual activities, led by various inmates: philosophical debates, classes of Hinduism and history, literary reviews, poetry evenings and so on. Steinhardt himself “opened” a course of English language and also lectured on Eugene Ionesco, the Romanian playwright who became famous in exile³³.

In 1964, when about to be released from prison, Steinhardt rightly assessed his return home was not actually to be perceived as freedom. It was a totalitarian

advised him to go to jail voluntarily, even though he knew himself innocent, as there his days would be hard, but his nights peaceful and remorse-free.

³⁰ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 92 & p.213.

³¹ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 42.

³² Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 330.

³³ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 89.

regime out there after all. And grateful for the bliss³⁴ he received while in prison, the author felt that he had to share his experience with the world, he had to speak up. His autobiographic book *Diary of Happiness* was to become later on his literary manifesto of faith where he argues against the evil of his times and testifies how courage and faith can help the human being escape a universe of incarceration and experience freedom.

1.4 Monk-writer

Nicolae Steinhardt's life after being released from prison stagnated professionally, given that he was compromised socially as a former prisoner. Nevertheless, he continued to grow spiritually and intellectually. It was during this time that he started working on *Diary of Happiness*³⁵. After his father's death in 1969, the author intensified his efforts in seeking to move in a monastery, where he wanted to spend the rest of his life. It was his good old friend Constantin Noica who directed him towards Rohia monastery in northern Romania. Since 1973 he began to frequently visit the monastery for longer and longer stays. In 1978, Steinhardt was surprisingly granted permission to travel abroad. He spent some time in Paris with friends and even held initial discussions about publishing *Diary of Happiness* in France. Steinhardt also spent about a

³⁴ According to Steinhardt, the happiness that Steinhardt repeatedly experienced as a prisoner is not just a psychological feeling, but a divine gift. He even describes one of the instances as the epiphany on mount Tabor, filling him with incommensurate joy and strength. For more details, please see Nicolae Steinhardt, *Jurnalul Fericii*, p. 103.

³⁵ *Jurnalul Fericii* had a very adventurous existence at its turn, just like its author. Steinhardt completed a first version of the book in 1972 and shared the manuscript with a few friends, seeking feedback. Unfortunately, this 570-page long manuscript was confiscated by Securitate, in December same year. This devastating loss determined the author to rewrite the book, the second version reaching the length of 750-pages. With the support of the Writer's Union, Steinhardt managed to recover the first manuscript from Securitate in 1975. In the following years, the author continued working on a final version of the book, bringing it down to 480- pages and ensured that several copies were placed safely with trusted friends. In 1984, Securitate confiscated again the manuscript. By this time however, a copy had found its way to Paris. In late 80's, excerpts of it were lectured on air on Radio Free Europe. Shortly after the fall of Communist regime, the book was finally published in Romania.

year at the Benedictine monastery Chevetogne³⁶ and in Louvain, Belgium. Steinhardt very much enjoyed his stay at Chevetogne³⁷, where he worked on translating into French fragments of *Philokalia* and *Life of Moldavian Monks*³⁸ by hieromonk Ioanichie Balan. During his stay there, he also used to “take communion one Sunday with the Catholics, the other Sunday with the Orthodox”³⁹, behavior which to this day remains unacceptable within the Orthodox Church. Steinhardt was apparently offered to remain at the Belgian monastery. However, he preferred to decline this offer⁴⁰ and return to Romania, where in August 1980 he was tonsured as a monk at Rohia monastery, with the blessing of bishop Justinian Chira of Maramures. As a monk, he was charged by his hierarchs with putting in order the monastery’s library and with writing “much more than before, to constantly write”⁴¹.

Steinhardt wrote mainly literary essays and tried to promote and encourage the talented writers of his time⁴². To his disappointment, his additional literary

³⁶ Chevetogne Abbey is a Benedictine monastery which “strives to emphasize the major charismata common to the Christian East and West”. It was founded in 1925. The monastery has been and remains dedicated to Christian unity, to ecumenism. From the very beginning the liturgical life in this monastery has been organized to allow celebrations according to both the Western and Eastern rites. For more details, please refer to the monastery’s website at <https://www.monasteredechevetogne.com/> (26 April 2017).

³⁷ Steinhardt Nicolae & Ioan Pinte, *Primejdia Marturisirii*, p. 106-107.

³⁸ This French translation was published by Chevetogne Monastery in 1986 as *Vies des Moines de Moldavie*.

³⁹ Nicolescu Costion, “Monahismul nu trebuia sa apara ca un sistem constrangator”, in *N. Steinhardt in evocari*, edited by Florian Roatis, Ed. Polirom, Iasi, 2012, (pp. 193 - 194), here p. 194.

⁴⁰ The reason for Steinhardt’s return to Romania consists in his strong feelings for the native land, nation and friends, according to his friend Virgil Bulat. Bishop Justinian Chira, his hierarch, however mentions Steinhardt’s refusal to sign a declaration of support for the monastery. For further details, please see Virgil Bulat, “Lectia Jurnalului Fericirii”, in *Jurnalul Fericirii*, (p. 439-453), here p. 451; Bishop Justinian Chira of Maramures, “In memoria parintelui Nicolae Steinhardt” in *N. Steinhardt in evocari*, edited by Florian Roatis, (pp. 71-78), here p. 72.

⁴¹ Bishop Justinian Chira of Maramures, “In memoria Parintelui Nicolae Steinhardt”, in *N. Steinhardt in evocari*, edited by Florian Roatis, (pp. 72-73), here p. 73.

⁴² Steinhardt Nicolae & Ioan Pinte, *Primejdia Marturisirii*, p. 57.

reviews and essays that were published in late 70's early 80's, turned out to be severely mutilated by censorship⁴³.

Nicolae Steinhardt died in March 1989 as father Nicolae de la Rohia⁴⁴, in a hospital in northern Romania. His last days of life are described in the testimony of Serafim Man, the abbot of Rohia Monastery. On 25th March 1989 father Nicolae received the visit of his spiritual father, hieromonk Mina, the one who baptized him in prison. The following day, 1989 he set for a trip to Bucharest, but stopped in Baia Mare on the way, as he was not feeling well.

„On the way to hospital, he knows and tells those accompanying him that he can no longer receive human help, therefore he insisted to urgently summon the abbot of the monastery, with the sin-curing medicine – the Holy Gifts. [...]. The same day when he received Holy Communion – Thursday, 30th March – he told smiling those around him: „Go and get some rest, when you return bring a flower to put on the grave.“; only Mr. Florian remained to watch, a friend and pleasant dialogue partner.[...] Waking up from a bit of sleep, as if coming back from a different land, he asked his friend by his bed if he had a candle and asked him to lit it up. Then he asked him [...] to read out loud the Prayer on the bed of death.“⁴⁵

Steinhardt's death and funeral put Securitate in state of high-alert, leading to searches in the monastery, with the aim to confiscate any dangerous writings. Fortunately, after his death, father Nicolae's work was secured by trusted friends, while Rohia monastery inherited his author rights. Together, his friends

⁴³ Nicsov Viorica, "Cronologie N. Steinhardt", included in N. Steinhardt & Em. Neuman, *Eseuri despre iudaism*, (pp. 7-15).

⁴⁴ Although Steinhardt is frequently referred to as Father, was preaching sermons and had many disciples, I was surprised to come across the information that he was not a priest: "N. Steinhardt has not been ordained as priest. He was, as he desired, a simple monk. Nevertheless, all of us were calling him and call him *Father*. Father Nicolae. [...]", Steinhardt Nicolae & Ioan Pinte, *Primejdia marturisirii*, p. 37.

⁴⁵ Man Serafim, "Ultima rugaciune: sfarsit crestinesc", published in *N. Steinhardt in evocari*, edited by Florian Roatis, p. 176.

and former monastic brothers, made considerable efforts to ensure Nicolae Steinhardt's writings would be published and popularized after his death.⁴⁶

The first title to be published was *Diary of Happiness*, which became an instant best-seller. Following this initial success and with the continued care of his friends, his other works were also gradually published. Some of Steinhardt's post-mortem books carry titles with spiritual- theological connotations, such as *The Way to Hesychasm*, *The Temptation of Reading*⁴⁷; *Through Others Towards Oneself*⁴⁸, writings which are mostly collections of literary reviews. *Words of Faith*⁴⁹, summing a collection of sermons of father Nicolae, is one of the posthumous publications with a more pronounced theological character. *The Danger of Confession*⁵⁰, which is a collection of dialogues that father Nicolae carried between '84 and '88 with Ioan Pinte, one of his disciples, is another posthumous publication with spiritually resonating title.

Nicolae Steinhardt did not live the day to see the fall of communist regime in Romania or to enjoy the overwhelming reception of his masterpiece *Diary of Happiness*. However, through his writings and multiple testimonies of those who personally knew him, he profiled himself not only as an excellent writer and theologian, but also as a brave man, joyful Christian and erudite spiritual father, as a person who truly lived what he preached. In the last section of this chapter I will now turn to review the reception of Steinhardt's work, both in Romania and abroad.

⁴⁶ Rohia Monastery and the Foundation N. Steinhardt which was set up by his friends, in cooperation with Polirom publishing house in Bucharest, have set on the challenging project of publishing the entire work of N. Steinhardt under a dedicated author collection. As of 2017, 18 books have already been published. All titles are available online at www.polirom.ro. For a more detailed bibliography I recommend Irina Ciobotaru's "Bibliografie" in *N. Steinhardt si Libertatea ca destin*, Ed. Ideea Europeana, Bucharest, Romania, 2012.

⁴⁷ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Drumul catre isihie; Ispita lecturii*, Polirom, Iasi, Romania, 2014.

⁴⁸ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Prin altii spre sine*, Polirom, Iasi, Romania, 2012.

⁴⁹ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, Humanitas, Bucharest, Romania, 2006.

⁵⁰ Steinhardt Nicolae & Ioan Pinte, *Primejdia marturisirii*.

1.5 Reception of Steinhardt's work in Romania

Nicolae Steinhardt's author work is very diverse, ranging from literary essays and reviews, to specialized treaties on law, translations of English-speaking writers, publications with spiritual and theological character, with autobiographical book *Diary of Happiness* being his masterpiece. Given this very wide diversity, it is hard to contain Steinhardt's work in a specific category, as he is a bit of everything: journalist, literary critic, translator, legal expert, theologian, spiritual father, novelist, essayist. However, it is exactly this incommensurate multi-disciplinarity which makes his writing style unique, his perspectives fresh and argumentation strong.

In Communist Romania, even though he was an awarded⁵¹ literary author, Steinhardt remained largely unknown as a writer. In March 1991, when *Diary of Happiness* was published, he emerged as the most popular selling author, with incredible success among both the intellectual elite and the general public. In the following years, the title was introduced in Romanian literature school-books, thus reaching out to the younger generation of readers in Romania. *Diary of Happiness*, with its various editions, has been issued ten times from 1991 until 2014, thus clearly profiling itself as a true masterpiece of the Romanian literature, not just a great reading for a specific period.

Most of Steinhardt's work has been gradually published in the years following the success of *Diary of Happiness*, thus offering the Romanian reader a complete view of the author.

Given the style character of his work, Steinhardt has predominantly profiled himself as a literary writer and essayist. Literary academic scholars have been very prolific on writing on Steinhardt's work. The most important academic

⁵¹ In 1980 Nicolae Steinhardt's title *Incertitudini literare* received the Literary Critics Award granted by the Writers Association.

research on the literary work of N. Steinhardt was written as a doctoral thesis by George Ardeleanu in 2008, lecturer of Romanian literature history at the University of Bucharest, Romania. His doctoral work carrying the title *N. Steinhardt and the Paradoxes of Freedom*⁵², was then published a year later by the highly-respected publishing house Humanitas in Bucharest.

In the domain of theology, Steinhardt's work only recently saw increasing interest. Given the efforts undertaken by N. Steinhardt Foundation from Rohia Monastery to further popularize the work of father Nicolae, in 2012, on the occasion of his centenary, a series of conferences and lectures took place at multiple Romanian theology faculties and at the Romanian Academy, many of which were also attended by hierarchs of the Orthodox Church. In 2011, the doctoral thesis *The Christian Dimension of N. Steinhardt's work*⁵³ of Nicolae Morar from the Orthodox Theology Faculty in Cluj-Napoca was published as a second edition. The increased interest in Steinhardt's theology is encouraging. The fact that year 2017 was dedicated by the Romanian Orthodox Church to the martyrs of the Communist prisons only came to strengthen the overall awareness of Steinhardt as a theologian and man of faith among Romanians.

1.6 Reception of Steinhardt's work abroad

Translating Steinhardt is not an easy task, his unique style can truly intimidate even the most experienced translators. To date, his work remains predominantly untranslated and consequently largely unknown abroad.

The first translation of *Diary of Happiness* appeared in France in 1995. This French translation, which unfortunately is impossible to get a hold of these days,

⁵² George Ardeleanu, *N. Steinhardt si paradoxurile libertatii*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2009.

⁵³ Morar Nicolae, *Dimensiunea crestina a operei lui N. Steinhardt*, Editura Dacia XXI, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, 2011, 253 p., second edition. First edition of was published in 2004.

carries the foreword of Olivier Clément, who praised the power of resistance of father Nicolae:

“The right and the duty to resist. Nicolae Steinhardt knew how to resist. Not by hatred, but by a creative overabundance. If the diary of this resistance opens itself to the future, it’s just because it is a Diary of Happiness.”⁵⁴

Steinhardt’s *Diary of Happiness* has also been translated and published in Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Hebrew, Greek and Hungarian. To date no English or Czech translations have been published.

If the name of Nicolae Steinhardt sounds familiar to non-Romanian speakers, it is mainly due to Romanian literature and theology scholars promoting his work abroad. In Cambridge, for instance, due to the dedication of theologian Razvan Porumb, the English-speaking academics had the opportunity to be introduced to the work and life- journey of father Nicolae. At his turn, Bogdan Tataru-Cazaban, as ambassador of Romania to the Holy See and member of the Institute for the History of Religions at the Romanian Academy, has written and lectured on Steinhardt repeatedly at multiple theological conferences in Italy and elsewhere. I would also like to mention Laura Carmen Cutitaru’s paper „From C.S. Lewis’ Joy to Nicolae Steinhardt’s Happiness”⁵⁵ as an interesting comparative analysis, successfully introducing Steinhardt’s masterpiece to the English reader familiar with C.S.Lewis’ testimony of conversion to Christianity.

To my knowledge, the only non-Romanian theologian who has researched and written on Nicolae Steinhardt’s work is Pantelis Kalaitzidis, Director of Volos

⁵⁴ Clément Olivier, “Foreword” to *Journal de la Félicité*, (pp. 7-14), here p. 14, own translation from original French text: “Le droit et le devoir de résister. Nicolae Steinhardt a su résister. Non par la haine mais par une surabondance créatrice. Si le journal de cette résistance s’ouvre sur l’avenir, c’est justement parce qu’il est un Journal de la Félicité. ”.

⁵⁵ Laura Carmen Cutitaru, Ph.D., “From C.S. Lewis’ Joy to Nicolae Steinhardt’s Happiness”, *Linguaculture*, Dec 2014, Vol. 2 (2014), p.99-103.

Academy for Theological Studies in Greece. His paper⁵⁶ on Steinhardt's work as an example of theology engaging in dialogue with literature represents an excellent analysis and reconfirms the importance of Steinhardt's theology in the context of a secularizing world.

After having introduced the author, his life, work and reception, we can now move to the next chapter and delve further into analyzing his understanding of courage.

⁵⁶ Kalaitzidis Pantelis, "Theology and Literature: The Case of Nicolae Steinhardt", manuscript accepted for publication in *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*.

2. Courage in Nicolae Steinhardt's theology

Steinhardt was a man of action. In his writings, he did not try to confine definitions to the themes he considered. In my view, Steinhardt's theological research preserves an apophatic approach, as he seemed to respect the mysterious nature that he encounters in his search. He firmly grasped the outcome of each experience, he recognized what worked and what didn't, without forcing himself into understanding how. That outcome, that fruit, became his take-away lesson and he further cultivated it.

Therefore, in this chapter, I will not provide definitions, as that would be foreign to Steinhardt's approach. I will present how while seeking for freedom he came to understand the paramount importance of courage. I will make a brief review his practical theology and place within its context the topic of courage as understood by Steinhardt, courage grown out of personal experience and cultivated as a virtue, as dynamic movement and a human-divine synergy. In my analysis, I will approach the virtue of courage from multiple perspectives: courage in life, courage in faith, courage in Christ, courage in death and courage in monasticism. As a reminder, this categorization of courage is my own, but I believe that it can serve me well in navigating the topic and in introducing Steinhardt's understanding of courage.

I will begin my remapping Steinhardt's learning curve. As already mentioned, throughout his life, Steinhardt has been searching for freedom. As a very practical person, he was interested in the real-life form of freedom, to be experienced here and now, not on elaborating an abstract philosophical concept of it. And it was during this searching process of freedom that he discovered the importance of courage.

2.1 The underlying theme of freedom

Given the predominantly hostile context that he lived in, it comes as no surprise that Steinhardt had pursued the search of freedom so ardently. In fact, human freedom, Steinhardt's lifelong search, also represents the underlying theme connecting his multi-disciplinary work, from his doctoral thesis in law, to his literary essays, *Diary of Happiness* and theological writings. As a young man, he approached the topic of freedom as liberty, having a socio-political dimension, rather than a personal one. At that time, Steinhardt attempted to explore the possibility of equilibrium allowing the political system to be optimally balanced: so that it would guarantee on one hand individual freedom as part of the civil rights, while on the other hand protecting the society from the danger of anarchy. The liberal-conservative Steinhardt wrote his thesis with a focus on the voting system, exploring if a rightly-balanced voting system could lead to sustainable liberty in the society and freedom for its citizens.

In his other early writings, this search of freedom outside the inner-self, in some sort of collective form is recurring. In his literary debut *In the manner...of the young*, Steinhardt ironized in a witty manner the various forms of political idealism tempting the young intellectual generation towards any of the extremes: socialism and capitalism.

In the two Jewish studies that Steinhardt co-authored with his cousin, in the context of increasing anti-Semitism and polarization of the society, as also highlighted in the previous chapter, the authors were not shy of challenging both parties, the Jewish community and the anti-Semites, to reform.

In my view, as Romania became a far-right military dictatorship, then followed by the other political extreme, Communism, Steinhardt's efforts to find a solution to human freedom in the form of liberty seemed to lead nowhere. The cruel reality of life, as summarized in the first chapter of my work, disillusioned him. I find it admirable that, in spite of his failure to find the secret of freedom

in the form of a systematic socio-political point of equilibrium, he did not give up his search. Nor did he lose his determination and courage to pursue this endeavor. The young Steinhardt sought a different approach: to seek freedom in the inner-self.

With time, as Steinhardt immersed himself in the lecture of patristic texts⁵⁷, he gradually grew in the conviction that freedom was to be found in the person of Jesus Christ. However, for many years this remained only an abstract conviction of Steinhardt's, which only became a reality once he found the courage to convert to Christianity. His baptism in prison was the outmost important experience that transformed him not only as a person, but also as an author. By defeating his own fears⁵⁸ and encountering Christ, Steinhardt gained a completely new perspective to human freedom. He was able to actually find what he was looking for, to personally experience inner freedom in spite of being imprisoned. In fact, he experienced much more, not just freedom, but profound happiness, true bliss.

In the light of his own experience, Steinhardt shares in *Diary of Happiness* the three practical solutions that allow the human being to escape a universe of incarceration, irrespective of the actual totalitarian form it may take. Actually, he also names a fourth solution, the one of faith, while immediately acknowledging that this one is a divine gift. The three escape solutions he analyzed though are "strictly earthly, have a pragmatic character and are accessible to anyone"⁵⁹.

⁵⁷ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericii*, p. 206.

⁵⁸ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericii*, p. 421.

⁵⁹ Steinhardt Nicolae, "Trei solutii (testament politic)" in *Jurnalul Fericii*, (pp. 13-17), here p. 13.

He calls the first one as the Solzhenitsyn⁶⁰ solution. It implies the individual's firm decision upon incarceration "as of this moment I just died"⁶¹. Such thinking and attitude changes the human being radically. S/he can no longer be blackmailed, threatened or tempted. The person remains able to preserve his/her honor and peace of mind.

The second solution proposed by Steinhardt is that of Alexander Zinoviev⁶², as assumed by the Brawler, one of the characters in his book *Yawning Heights*⁶³. This is the solution of non-adapting to the system at all. The Brawler did not have a stable home, no proper identity documentation, worked only randomly, without taking a proper job. Such person, according to Nicolae Steinhardt, is immune to any form of constraint or incarceration and remains free.

The third escape solution is the one of Winston Churchill and Vladimir Bukowski⁶⁴. When facing tyranny and injustice, both of them got filled with an immense appetite to live, fight back and not give up. The tougher the external conditions, the stronger the euphoria to strike back and show resilience.

Steinhardt acknowledges that all these escape solutions, which any human being can freely decide to assume, imply "a form of life equivalent to death, or even worse than death or implying the risk of physical death at any moment."⁶⁵ But

⁶⁰ Steinhardt's referencing is very difficult to work with, as he normally just mentions the name of the author, without additional bibliographical details. In my work, I tried to identify his references and provide additional details, where possible, but I have to mention the risk that my assumptions might not be accurate. Here, however, I think it is safe to assume that Steinhardt refers to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's work *The Gulag Archipelago*.

⁶¹ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericii*, p. 13.

⁶² Russian satirist and philosopher, a dissident who wrote and fought against Communism as a young man, to then change his views later in life. He became famous in the 70's, following the publication of his satiric novel *Yawning Heights* in Switzerland. For more details on this author and his work, please refer to <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2006/may/19/guardianobituaries.russia> (as of 4 May 2017).

⁶³ Alexander Zinoviev, *Yawning Heights*, Random, NYC, USA 1979.

⁶⁴ Born in 1942, Vladimir Bukowski was a fervent anti-Soviet Russian activist. He remains engaged in fighting for civil rights and freedom.

⁶⁵ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericii*, p. 16.

totalitarianism is a manifestation of collective death, which, paradoxically can be defeated by those who love life using the means of death. “Death, however, who was the Only one to defeat it? The One who with death on death trampled.”⁶⁶.

Steinhardt closes his argumentation on escape solutions with the above open-end question. By referring to Jesus Christ’s victory over death, Nicolae Steinhardt brings back the topic of the fourth solution, the one of faith. In fact, *Diary of Happiness* itself carries as a motto the following biblical quote on faith: “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9, 24). Personally, I take this motto as Steinhardt’s acknowledgment that it was this fourth solution of faith the one which allowed him to escape and defeat incarceration and death. At the same time, Steinhardt gives me the impression that he is very much aware that not all those who long for freedom can get to truly experience the solution of faith, as it is a divine gift. The first three solutions, in Steinhardt’s view, can be acted upon purely driven by the one-sided movement of individual free will. As for the fourth solution, the one of faith, it involves a two-sided movement of rapprochement, with the human being and God drawing closer to each other. I will resist the temptation to delve further into the fourth solution proposed by Steinhardt and largely developed in his autobiographical book, as I prefer keeping this topic for another section in this chapter. At this stage I just clearly highlight the recurrence of the search for freedom in Steinhardt’s life and work. If it was freedom the underlying theme for Steinhardt, the reader may wonder what led me to selecting the topic of courage as a subject of my work. I take now the opportunity to justify my choice:

In my view, throughout his life and writings, Steinhardt sought to approach human freedom, tried to find a way to transform it from a tempting ideal into true living experience. Here and now. In his search, the author took multiple

⁶⁶ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 17.

approaches, from constitutional law to political systems, religion (religions, actually), etc. Along his tumultuous life-journey he managed to eventually find the answer he was looking for and to truly live as a free man. He came to find his freedom as a result of the personal relationship he developed with Jesus Christ⁶⁷. Paradoxically, he came to experience and understand human freedom while being incarcerated in a prison cell. What the author does not overtly mention however, is how much courage and perseverance he had to assume at his turn in order to walk his pathway the way he did.

As I understand Steinhardt's perspective, the same condition applies to all those seeking freedom, irrespective of where they are on their life paths: they need to personally assume courage, to be brave, in order to draw nearer their goal. In faith or outside faith, the path to freedom is paved by courage. Physical courage of the individual is the building block for ensuring freedom in practice. It is the way to force freedom from the abstract and distant world of ideals down on earth, in human life. Without taking this kind of personal risk, people cannot fulfill and truly live their dreams of freedom. And although Steinhardt uses the term solution, which implies some form of finality, he does not dismiss the dynamic aspect of this searching process, which gradually unfolds during life.

Therefore, given Steinhardt's view on the paramount importance of courage in experiencing freedom, I decided to write my present work on courage.

2.2 Steinhardt 's prison-shaped theology

Considering the factual support presented in the first chapter of my dissertation, I find Nicolae Steinhardt's theology as prison-shaped. It is anchored in his experience as a political prisoner, in the mystery of baptism that he lived in prison, in his encounter with Jesus Christ⁶⁸, in the Scriptures. Being baptized at

⁶⁷ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de Credinta*, (pp.19-25).

⁶⁸ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 103.

the age of 48, Steinhardt was born into a new life⁶⁹, as he overtly confesses in *Diary of Happiness*. In this new life, however, he fully assumed the person he used to be up to that moment. His theology carries the influence of Jewish-intellectual cultural and spiritual heritage he had accumulated along his life. It is also reflective of the ecumenical experience he was part of, both while in prison or abroad. All these factors of influence create a unique combination, thus conveying Nicolae Steinhardt's theology a fresh, ecumenical and contemporary perspective, highly innovative in the context of Romanian Orthodoxy of the XXth century, a topic that I will return to in the final chapter of my work.

Steinhardt's theology focuses mainly on Christology and human salvation, while it also touches on creation, Trinity and ecclesiology. In my view, he respects the Scriptures, the dogmas, the Ecumenical Councils⁷⁰, and the patristic texts. I think that father Nicolae assumed many traditional teachings of the Orthodox church, such as deification⁷¹, the veneration of the saints and icons, the mysterious aspect of baptism. He also repeatedly refers to the various human virtues and encourages towards their cultivation⁷², while claiming that "only their balanced whole embody perfection"⁷³. In addition to the traditional Christian teachings, Steinhardt frequently also refers to modern theologians, such as: Alexey Khomiakov, Nikolay Berdyaev, Vladimir Lossky, Pavel Evdokimov, Dumitru Staniloae, Andrei Scrima, Olivier Clément, Alexander Schmemmann (Orthodox),

⁶⁹ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 92.

⁷⁰ Steinhardt does not just mention his agreement with the Ecumenical Councils and recites the Orthodox creed, but he also strongly argues against monophysitism (see. *Jurnalul Fericirii*, pp 60-63).

⁷¹ I would like to quote here father Nicolae on the Christian's situation, how he conveys the teaching of deification to the modern person: "The Christian's situation is as paradoxical as that of Don Quijote. He is a human being and is asked to be God. He was created clean and is dirty and only has to return to what he was meant to be. Said differently, he needs to fight to become what he is." Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 98.

⁷² While Steinhardt does not make direct reference to the Philokalic texts, I assume that he is drawing on those sources when referring to virtues.

⁷³ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 309.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Auguste Valensin (Roman-Catholic) and Karl Barth (Protestant).

The innovative approach of Steinhardt's theology, in my view, consists in two aspects. On one hand, he successfully brings to life traditional Orthodox teachings and values into the difficult context of Communist Romania, he makes them strongly resonate with his contemporaries, irrespective of them being Christians or not, as also highlighted in the previous chapter, presenting his life and work. On the other hand, Steinhardt boldly expands the horizons of the Orthodox perspective, by supporting its compatibility with other Christian denominations, modern art and literature⁷⁴, human culture in general. In fact, he repeatedly uses in his writings the expression "the Christian (or human being, as it is the same)", as his theology seems (from my perspective) to be all inclusive, with all mankind being called to salvation.

I refer to Steinhardt's theology as prison-shaped not only because it was in jail that he received the gift of faith and enjoyed the bliss of epiphany. But it was in that closed space where he experienced freedom as a "a form of life equivalent to death"⁷⁵, in a way gaining an eschatological perspective. It was also in prison where Steinhardt experienced the unity of all fellow prisoners gathered in prayer, Christians of multiple denominations and non-believers. Steinhardt himself highlights how prison-experience can shape the understanding of the human being, as quoted below:

"It is not necessary to stay in prison for a long time. What is the human being, what truly is the human condition, how are things with us – and that Christ is right there, just two steps away, that He sees you, that He has always seen you – you can figure out in a few minutes. The remaining years are just wasted time. Similarly to the military service though, it is an incomparable exercise of restraint."⁷⁶

⁷⁴ For a detailed analysis of how theology and literature engage in dialogue in Steinhardt's work, I strongly recommend Pantelis Kalaitzidis's article, as per reference 56 in this work.

⁷⁵ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 16.

⁷⁶ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, pp. 80 – 81.

In Steinhardt's prison-shaped theology, freedom is represented by the person of Jesus Christ, while human courage, which paves the way to freedom, represents both the first virtue and the final mystery. In order to understand his claims, I would like first to introduce the author's understanding of fear and then approach the topic of courage, while highlighting how personal experience can lead to the cultivation of the virtue of courage. The recurring experience of courage, own or observed at other people, as in Steinhardt's case, can continuously actualize and strengthen the virtue of courage as part of a dynamic movement.

2.3 Fear as a sin

When writing about fear, Steinhardt makes the distinction between the fear of an immediate and real danger, which is normal, and the fear of negative speculative scenarios, which he calls cowardice⁷⁷. In the perspective of a totalitarian regime, which is built by the rule of fear, it is exactly the manifestation of fear as cowardice that Steinhardt strongly condemns. The examples of eager and proactive people denouncing to Securitate their peers, their neighbors, their lovers, these are the instances of fear that Steinhardt strongly speaks against. He claims that not everyone is expected to be a hero or a martyr, but everyone is expected not to "help the investigation". And the outcome of the manifestation of this kind of cowardice has severe consequences, Steinhardt claims.

Furthermore, Nicolae Steinhardt comes to perceive fear as a sin, as it divides the Christian from his/her Lord, Jesus Christ⁷⁸: it divides the human being from his/her own salvation.

As usually, Steinhardt draws on multidisciplinary sources in order to support his argumentation and to highlight the gravity of fear. Most existentialist philosophers perceive fear as a true obstacle towards living an authentic

⁷⁷ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericii*, p. 225.

⁷⁸ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, p.102.

existence, as also reflected in Kierkegaard⁷⁹'s work, an author Steinhardt frequently quotes. Steinhardt also brings in literary support, by quoting Dostoyevsky: "Fear is the curse of man"⁸⁰.

Biblical support however is the most abundant in Steinhardt's argumentation against fear. He overwhelms the reader by actually summarizing on the same page the Lord's urges "Don't be afraid" with its variations, as repeated across all the Gospels⁸¹. He adds to that the similar messages against fear as included in the New Testament epistles. All these quotations come to highlight the gravity of fear for the human being. Below I quote Steinhardt himself in further supporting his understanding that fear is a sin:

"What is the main consequence of fear? Estrangement from Christ. The fragment from Luke 8,37 is completely enlightening: after He takes out the evil spirits from the demonized man and the pigs throw themselves into the lake, the people from Gadarene land is seized by great fear. The consequence follows: "Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear." [...] The causality tie is therefore clear: they ask Him to leave because they are afraid. Fear, therefore, brings along breaking away from Christ."⁸²

Steinhardt does not quote the following example, but I want to mention here another biblical example, with a similar pattern: Adam's answer towards God after having eaten the forbidden fruit (Gen 3, 10). Like in the New Testament example, we can notice here the a similar outcome driven by the manifestation of fear: Adam hid before and distanced himself from God as a result of his fear. Drawing from personal experience, Steinhardt has learned that only when he was able to defeat his own fear, he was able to reunite with Jesus Christ and his peers.

⁷⁹ See Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling; The Sickness unto Death*, Doubleday Anchor Books, Princeton University Press, 1954.

⁸⁰ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 337; the author here most probably refers to Dostoyevsky's novel *Demons*.

⁸¹ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, p.102.

⁸² Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, p. 102.

The moment he voluntarily accepted to spend the rest of his life in prison, a form of “life in death”, if I may use his own metaphor, Steinhardt also found the courage to finally decide for baptism, thus unlocking his true human potential. From my perspective, only once he defeated his own fear, Steinhardt was able to get unstuck, to take maybe the most important steps on his personal path towards deification. From that moment, fear no longer stood in between Steinhardt and Jesus Christ.

One may argue that to label fear as a sin is quite radical of Steinhardt. From my perspective, he does not condemn the emotional feeling itself, but its consequences, the results of its manifestation. As I understand his examples, if as a result of fear, one voluntarily betrays his peers or takes distance from Jesus Christ, that person finds him/herself in a sinful state, where s/he can fall deeper and deeper. The only way out of such sinful state remains to defeat one’s own fear and not allow it to create or further deepen such divisions.

To conclude, when considering all this support, including Steinhardt’s personal experience, fear is convincingly depicted by Steinhardt as a true obstacle on the path of human being towards deification. If fear is such a grave sin in his theology, then it should come as no surprise the fact that he highly values the virtue of courage. Courage, in his view, is the first virtue⁸³ and the final mystery⁸⁴. In the following sections of this chapter I would like to present and analyze Steinhardt’s argumentation in support of his views.

2.4 Courage in life

With the passage of time, Steinhardt grew in his conviction that the virtue of courage is essential. He declared that in one of the dialogues he held with Ioan

⁸³ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, p. 99.

⁸⁴ See reference 1.

Pintea in during the years before his death⁸⁵. At the same time, father Nicolae acknowledges that the extensive discussions he held with Sergiu Al-George, his Indianist friend and fellow prisoner, strongly influenced his view on the primacy of courage:

“It is useless having beautiful, great qualities; if we miss courage, all of them are corrupt, all of them are spoilt. It is an essential virtue, in the absence of which all is lost. It is an absolutely necessary condition – not sufficient, like in mathematics, no – it is however necessary for the human being, and lack of courage gives catastrophic results.”⁸⁶

Below is another version of the same definition of courage:

“This is the working’s core! It is futile to be just, cultivated, kind, gentle, full of goodwill, endowed with numerous beautiful attributes and distinguished qualities. The good fairies can offer all the virtues; if the bad fairy comes and takes away courage, all benedictions of the others instantly shatter away. You were able to ascertain up to now, during the last few months; you will see the same in the years to come: the salt of earth is courage. Unostentative, undeclarative, not crowded and reckless, but stiff and calm, assimilated inside the human being, settled into uncounscienness.”⁸⁷

This comes to justify why Steinhardt perceived courage as the first virtue: because in its absence, all other virtues cannot become manifest. Without courage, other human virtues risk to remain just feelings or thoughts, without turning into deeds. Also, it is important to stress that the form of courage which is praised here is not to be confused with battle-filed heroism. It is firm, stiff, calm, stubborn, resilient, anchored in the inner self.

In his work, Steinhardt gives multiple examples of role-models of courage in line with the characteristics mentioned above. He draws on examples from own life, from history and from the Bible, in order to illustrate how on the basis of

⁸⁵ Steinhardt Nicolae and Ioan Pintea, *Primejdia marturisirii*, pp.72-73.

⁸⁶ Spiridon Cassian Maria, *Fericirile monahului de la Rohia*, Ed. Doxologia, Iasi, Romania, 2014, p. 133.

⁸⁷ Spiridon Cassian Maria, *Fericirile monahului de la Rohia*, p. 137.

experience, the underlying virtue of courage becomes manifest and uncovers its dynamic risk-taking approach.

He admires the simple men and women in the train who gave food and swept in banknotes into the pockets of the newly-released political prisoners from Communist jails⁸⁸. He is impressed by a former classmate, Rafael Cristescu, who openly voted against king Carol II's royal constitution and later died in war⁸⁹. He loves the courage of his old father, eager to dispense himself of his son's care, the only one left for his old days, than know him close, but dishonored⁹⁰.

In addition to admiring the courage of the simple people, not surprisingly, Steinhardt shows profound admiration for the martyrs, as quoted below:

“Alive are only those who turn their ideas into deeds, give reality to the spoken words, bring into the world of existence the concepts and dreams of the world of ideas – and are determined to pay, if needed, the price which cannot be bargained, the maximum price, the only one which never deceives: life.

Therefore, my favorite heroes are the martyrs: Don Quijote (he entered the lion's cage!), T. E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia), Monseigneur Affre (archbishop of Paris), Ludendorff in München 1923 on the bridge, communard Delescluze, Peguy, Jan Palach.”⁹¹

I highlight the fact that father Nicolae used the word martyrs when naming his favorite heroes. However, none of these names is recognized as a martyr in the Orthodox church, to which at the time of writing, the author already belonged. This list of martyrs is a very diverse mix of fictional and real characters, Christians (none of them Orthodox, in fact) and atheists, people of the not so distant past. Steinhardt, in his prison-shaped theology, included all these people of courage in the revered group of martyrs, because he recognized the testimony of true life through courage in them. And as already mentioned, Steinhardt perceives the words “human being” and “Christian” as interchangeable anyway.

⁸⁸ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 96.

⁸⁹ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 192.

⁹⁰ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, pp. 31-32.

⁹¹ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 278.

Steinhardt genuinely admires the people who dare stand up for their beliefs and convictions, who fight the fight of the quotidian life:

“Victory is not mandatory. The fight is. Don’t give up from the first moment, like German social-democrats in July 1932.”⁹²

Here we can see how Steinhardt’s call for the virtue of courage is linked with the repeated experience of it, practical application which allows the virtue to be continuously cultivated. With each manifestation of courage, this virtue seems to grow stronger. The human being who has once defeated his/ her own fear, allowing the virtue of courage to manifest and to take the shape of a concrete deed, will only become more experienced and confident when dealing with fear again.

To conclude, Steinhardt is convinced that without courage, people cannot manifest other virtues and this is the reason why he considers it the first virtue. He understands courage as a stiff, stubborn, persistent resistance in front of fear rather than a heroism. And it is this kind of courage that the human being can cultivate as a virtue, allowing them to live a life of courage. The recurring experience, the strive to be stronger than one’s fear, the desire to move forward, all these are characteristics reflecting on the dynamic nature of courage.

Faith, particularly faith in Jesus Christ as per Steinhardt’s own experience, can immensely help the human being in defeating own fears and showing courage. But faith is an act of courage⁹³ and a divine gift⁹⁴ at the same time. In the next section I will review Steinhardt’s understanding of courage in faith, drawing mainly from his own experience and his interpretation of the Scriptures.

⁹² Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 248.

⁹³ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 215.

⁹⁴ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 13.

2.5 Courage in faith

Going back to the political solutions to escape from a universe of incarceration and summarized in the opening section of this chapter, Steinhardt mentioned faith as the fourth one. All solutions he mentioned imply courage as a prerequisite, some sort of forward movement out of ones' self, outside from the trap of fear. However, only the first three solutions were mentioned to be accessible to anyone, while faith, he acknowledged, was a divine gift⁹⁵.

It is my understanding that, the first three alternatives seem to challenge the human being to step out of oneself, with no indication for the sense of direction. In the case of faith however, this forward movement has a direction and a finality, represented by the person of Jesus Christ. If the first three solutions for freedom involve an outbound movement towards a form of unknown freedom, the solution of faith implies a liberating personal relationship. It seems to me that faith acts as a catalysator in the dynamics of freedom searching, as God, embodying freedom, also moves forward to meet the one who sets on this path, in a way bringing the ultimate goal within human reach. The human courage to opt for the path of faith is thus plentifully rewarded by divine fast-forward.

Steinhardt's own experience with faith is highly illustrative. As already mentioned, Steinhardt defeated his own fear and decided for baptism in prison. This act of courage in faith worked as a catalysator for Steinhardt. What apparently seemed one step towards Christ on his side became a leap forward, as he found not only the answer to his search for freedom, but also enjoyed the divine bliss.

Steinhardt speaks of faith as a leap into the abyss,⁹⁶ as a risk assumed in spite of a predominantly negative state of the world:

⁹⁵ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 13.

⁹⁶ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 215.

“What is faith? Trust in the Lord, although the people are mean, in spite of injustice, despite villainy, even though negative signs come from everywhere.”⁹⁷

Steinhardt finds many courage in faith role-models among the Biblical figures. He praises the courage of the Cananean woman, who boldly engaged into dialogue with Jesus Christ, asking Him to help her daughter⁹⁸. He admires the courage in faith of Abraham, who obeyed the divine order, asking him to leave his native land⁹⁹. Steinhardt also refers in highly positive terms to the man who asked Jesus Christ to help his child, by making the brave and paradoxical statement “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.” (Mark 9, 24)¹⁰⁰.

To summarize, all these examples above illustrate the dynamics of courage in faith, as well as the human-divine synergy of it: the human being takes a leap outside of oneself towards God and God answers. Faith grows stronger as the human being puts more time and effort into this divine relationship.

Courage in faith however is not present only in the direct relationship with God, but also in the community of the faithful. Steinhardt experienced this form of courage in faith as well, as the manifest ecumenism he encountered in prison broke both the fear imposed by the Communist regime and by the anti-ecumenical Orthodox Church restrictions.

As a first example of collective courage in faith I mention the experience of Steinhardt’s baptism. The Orthodox hieromonk and Greek-Catholic witnesses involved in organizing and supporting the clandestine baptism assumed a double risk: the one of being punished by the guards for engaging in religious service and the one of deciding for an ecumenical character of the service, thus risking retaliation from their hierarchs. Moreover, the priests involved took such risks

⁹⁷ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 110.

⁹⁸ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, p. 27.

⁹⁹ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, p. 103.

¹⁰⁰ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 215.

for the sake of someone they hardly knew, but they were open to trust and treat as a brother.

The other ecumenical and at the same clandestine liturgical services that Steinhardt attended while in prison, as described in the previous chapter of this work, also represent examples of collective courage in faith.

Looking back at Steinhardt's life journey, as presented in the previous chapter, Steinhardt's early experiences of collective courage in faith have nurtured and strengthened his faith to such extent, that he repeatedly manifested similar courage after his release from prison both as an Orthodox believer and later as a monk¹⁰¹.

This experience of courage in faith is also reflected in Steinhardt's theology. In *Diary of Happiness*, Steinhardt agrees with Sergei Bulgakov¹⁰²'s view that the filioque difference lacks any dogmatic reason:

“There is no dogma on the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Son and consequently the opinions on this point are not heresies, but pure theological hypothesis transformed into heresies by the all-doubting schismatic mentality nested in churches.”¹⁰³

In the context where the predominant Orthodox position perceived and still perceives the filioque problem as an impediment to the reunited communion with the Catholic Church, Steinhardt not only showed courage in faith by challenging this divisive position, but he also repeatedly put it in practice, thus allowing this kind of courage to become manifest.

¹⁰¹ Steinhardt repeatedly made brave pro-ecumenical statements, by speaking highly of Catholic saints and Protestant martyrs in his sermons, by praying with and for many non-Orthodox Christians.

¹⁰² Sergei Bulgakov (1871- 1944) was a Russian Orthodox theologian who emigrated to France after the Bolshevik revolution. According to Andrew Louth, in *Modern Orthodox Thinkers*, Bulgakov's work “represents a distinctive moment in an engagement between Russian Orthodoxy and the West”. He was perceived as pro-ecumenical and was among the first Orthodox to claim that the filioque problem should not be perceived as an impediment to communion among Catholics and Orthodox. Steinhardt does not provide the reference in relation to Bulgakov's quote.

¹⁰³ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericii*, p.337.

In relation to the difference of styles, Steinhardt perceived it as richness for Christianity. He openly praises the merits of Catholic monasticism, which allows the manifestation of faith in multiple ways. Such view goes against the predominant Orthodox position which, through many of its representatives, still claims style monopoly in Christianity:

“The great merit of monastic orders in Catholicism – each of them with a focus on a different activity or form of displaying love – consists in having recognized the plurality of styles. Everyone manifests one’s faith according to one’s personality. There is no obligatory style.”¹⁰⁴

Moreover, in *Danger of Confession* father Nicolae is supportive of P. Evdokimov’s ¹⁰⁵ view, that the Trinitarian unity of God could be also fulfilled in ecclesiology, wondering if Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism don’t actually represent “three hypostasis of the same faith?”¹⁰⁶. He goes further to even see in ecumenism a return to the initial Christianity. *Danger of Confession*, as a reminder, is a collection of interviews held with father Nicolae in late 80’s, just a few years before his death.

In my view, both through statements and through his actions, Steinhardt strongly challenges to this day the restrictive anti-ecumenism present in Orthodoxy. By adopting an openly pro-ecumenical perspective, he faithfully fought his battles against fear and lived his faith with courage, both as an individual and as a member of the Church.

To conclude, courage is absolutely necessary in faith, the two of them gradually nurture each other and grow stronger. And courage in faith is not just a matter of individual relationship with God, but at the same time an act of solidarity with the other people. The dynamic process of courage in faith remains at the same

¹⁰⁴ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 198.

¹⁰⁵ Pavel (or Paul) Evdokimov (1901-1970) was another representative figure of the Russian Orthodoxy living in Paris. He was also known for his pro-ecumenical views. Faithful to his habit, Steinhardt does not provide the full source reference on P. Evdokimov either.

¹⁰⁶ Spiridon Maria Cassian, *Fericirile Monahului de la Rohia*, p. 117.

time an example of human-divine synergy, where the human efforts are actively supported by God, who willingly engages with the human being along this path. Father Nicolae has learnt about courage in faith not only from the Scriptures, and his own life experience, but also from Jesus Christ, whom he repeatedly described as a nobleman and a knight¹⁰⁷.

2.6 Courage in Christ

In a very practical way, in *Diary of Happiness*, Steinhardt introduces the person of Jesus Christ such as he got to know Him through personal encounter while in prison, as a divine presence available here and now, not just as king of an apparently distant eschaton. At the same time, Steinhardt testifies to the freedom-seeker that what s/he is looking for, is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ. And once the direct encounter, or rapprochement, takes place, the human being receives much more than hoped for, not just freedom. Because, according to Steinhardt, Jesus Christ is a gentleman and a knight¹⁰⁸. And the attributes of such noblemen are courage, generosity and trust, as illustrated below:

“Christ as a gentleman and knight. With devil-accountant there is no room for the smallest erasure; Christ, all of a sudden, erases an entire registry of sins. Christ, the nobleman, forgives everything. Knowing to forgive, to give, to forget. Christ not only forgives, but also forgets. Once forgiven, you are no longer the slave of sin and son of servant; you are *free and friend* of the Lord.”¹⁰⁹

According to Steinhardt, the freedom given by Christ is an upgrade to the highest rank, the one of aristocracy. This metaphor might seem a bit problematic at first sight. In my view, Steinhardt uses it in order to illustrate the total transformation that freedom in Christ involves, as well as to highlight that the new status also requires the adoption of the above-mentioned characteristics: courage,

¹⁰⁷ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 109.

¹⁰⁸ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 109.

¹⁰⁹ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 134.

generosity and trust. Christ doesn't stop at freeing the human being from the slavery of sin, if I am to use Steinhardt's metaphor. "whenever He gives, He gives, abundantly, more than properly, grandly."¹¹⁰ The freedom granted by Christ implies offering Himself as a friend.

Steinhardt, at his turn, has lived in practice this upgrade. Once he became a Christian and "was able to establish a personal relationship"¹¹¹ with Jesus Christ, he felt ashamed of falling into sin again. Steinhardt felt obliged by the newly gained status of friend of Jesus Christ to also behave in a worthy manner. Through a theology grown from experience, the Scriptures and the church teachings, Steinhardt came to understand that Jesus Christ wants people to first die to sin and live truly, to than be ready to give up their lives, by defeating the fear of death¹¹².

Steinhardt does not praise Jesus Christ only for his courage in life and faith. He greatly admires his courage in the face of death: the courage to assume the painful and humiliating death on the cross.¹¹³ In the next section I will focus on this kind of courage.

2.7 Courage in death

Steinhardt sees courage as the first virtue but, at the same time, as the final mystery, as quoted in the motto of this dissertation. Physical courage in the face of death is the manifestation that the human being needs to show in order to win. It is this courage in face of death the one that Steinhardt mentions as the precondition for reaching human freedom. It is the kind of courage manifested by people such as saint Jan Nepomucky, by archbishop of Paris Affre, by priest

¹¹⁰ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericii*, p. 110.

¹¹¹ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, p. 21.

¹¹² Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, p. 22.

¹¹³ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericii*, p. 71.

Maximilian Kolbe.¹¹⁴ It is the same physical courage reflected in the original motto of the French revolution, which, Steinhardt recalls in its complete form “liberty, equality, fraternity or death”¹¹⁵. Physical courage in face of death is, according to Steinhardt, the only guarantee of freedom in society, the essence of constitutional law.

“Courage is the final mystery, the one ready to die will win. The party known and seen as not ready to face death is, right from the beginning and surely, as if already defeated. History belongs to those who knew how to die or not to be afraid – physically – of its perspective. (I reckon this is the true meaning of the saying – Asian mainly – that death is the door of life.)”¹¹⁶

This understanding of Steinhardt as courage being the final mystery is shaped by his prison-experience, by his decision to live a life similar to death. I find it interesting that he does not attempt to elaborate any universally valid definition and preserves the mysterious character surrounding the moment of death. However, he singles out again the virtue of courage as the one which matters at the moment of death, as the one which can ensure victory in the face of death. Physical courage in face of death was also required for the Church to come into existence. It required the courage of its founder, Lord Jesus Christ. It needed the courage of his disciples in order to last. The Church was founded on the faith and martyrdom of the first believers, on the courage they showed when facing death.¹¹⁷

Steinhardt also repeatedly refers to the Apocalypse 21,8, where the fearful are mentioned first among other categories of sinners “consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur”¹¹⁸. He argues that those who show courage will be saved and enter the kingdom of God. This argument also comes to reinforce Steinhardt’s

¹¹⁴ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, p. 292 & 298.

¹¹⁵ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 115.

¹¹⁶ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, p. 337.

¹¹⁷ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, p. 99.

¹¹⁸ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, p. 104.

previously presented understanding of fear as a sin, given the Biblical reference above in relation to the fate of the fearful.

On the topic of the last judgement I want to stress that fear of this moment has been cultivated by the Church along its history, as Paul Tillich also mentions in his book *Courage to Be*¹¹⁹. In the context of the Orthodox Church, fear of the last judgment and its judge, Jesus Christ, is being cultivated to this day by the Church, through many liturgical texts and prayers. Apparently, father Nicolae does not share the same views. In his sermon, “The Frightening Judgment” included in *Words of Faith*¹²⁰ volume, father Nicolae expands on the topic of facing death by addressing the topic of the last judgement. He attempts to relate this eschatological moment with everyday human experience, to remove the sentiment of fear of unknown by setting the last judgement in a simplistic, familiar setting:

“Christ will judge in the manner of any random mortal, hard to get drunk with cold water, as a housewife with many chores and little time for non-sense, as an individual hit by fate, who has passed through the filter and bumpiness of material life, foreign to any theological, philosophical, metaphysical, ascetic speculations and to the requirements of discourse.”¹²¹

In my view, while Steinhardt does not diminish in any way the importance of this eschatological moment, he attempts to set the expectations of the believer in a familiar environment, where actually Jesus Christ is not depicted as an intimidating judge, but as a random human being, knowledgeable of the hardships of life and difficult to fool with any advanced discourse. He is depicted as any of the outcast people that we pass by in life, who will rightly acknowledge

¹¹⁹ Tillich Paul, *Courage to Be*, Yale University Press, New York, USA, 1980. See pages 40-78.

¹²⁰ Steinhardt Nicolae, “Infricosatoarea judecata” in *Cuvinte de credinta*, (pp. 70-75).

¹²¹ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, p. 73.

the brave ones who have made good deeds and sentence those who did not put courage and faith in practice ¹²².

It is my understanding that Steinhardt attempts to remove the fear of the person of Jesus Christ. That fear, if at all, should rather be understood as fear of ourselves, of the people in our lives. People who, if we truly love and behave towards them accordingly (and this up to each of us), shouldn't inspire fear.

I could not conclude this part on "Courage in death" without referring to Steinhardt's own experience of it, as presented in the previous chapter. Abbot Serafim Man's testimony comes to demonstrate how calm, peaceful and brave father Nicolae was on his death bed, grateful for having had the chance for a last confession and Holy Communion, very much aware of what needed to be done and what will follow, ready to face his physical death and last judgement.

In order to complete the image of Steinhardt facing his own death, I quote below how father Nicolae envisaged his judgment in front of Jesus Christ, as recorded by his disciple Ioan Pinte:

„You should know, Ioane, that, although I had many, heavy and very ugly sins, at the Judgement I will defend myself with sternness in front of the Just Judge.. I will not give up easily... I will fight for my salvation! I will speak to the Lord from one Jew to another Jew.“¹²³

From my perspective, Steinhardt approaches his own death and last judgment in line with his teaching, courageously as a free man. He seems to me ready to put in practice in an eschatological dimension the lessons of firm and stiff courage he had learned along his life.

To summarize, courage represents for Steinhardt both the "first virtue" and the "final mystery", a pre-requirement for freedom and at the same time an integral

¹²² "Just like at Crucifixion, at the Judgement a terrible and wonderful kenosis take place: the Lord transposes Himself in and identifies Himself with His most outcast creatures. He finds Himself in the shoes of the thirsty, the hungry, the imprisoned..." Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, p. 75.

¹²³ Pinte Ioan, "Pagini de jurnal", published in *N. Steinhardt in evocari*, (pp. 207-213), here p. 213.

part of Christian life. He perceives courage as dynamic, it represents the defeat of fear whenever the person is faced with danger, risk or death. As a monk himself, Steinhardt has also been interested in the role of courage in monastic life, which he compared to the military service¹²⁴. In the last section of this chapter I will review the role of courage in monasticism.

2.8 Courage in monasticism

In Steinhardt's understanding, life in Christ implies the presence of courage. The courage to defeat one's fear whenever the Christian needs to face such moments, when s/he is put to the test. The monk, according to the Orthodox tradition, by choosing to live his/her Christian faith in monastery, away from this world, triggers increased activity of the devil, exposing him/herself to an increased number of temptations. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Steinhardt sees monasticism as serving in the army, the monk as a soldier of the Church who needs to be constantly prepared for battle, always in state of high-alert. "A monastery, unlike a regiment, lives only under alert; here being under siege is the rule, not the exception"¹²⁵, father Nicolae explains. In such state of continuous open conflict, the virtue of courage, naturally, needs to be put in practice more frequently. In monasticism, all forms of courage presented earlier in this work, should become permanent characteristics, not just occasional attributes.

In addition, in his sermon "By giving you shall receive", Steinhardt highlights one other important aspect of life in monasticism, also related to courage:

"The secret of monastic life unveils itself to be: daring to give what temporarily you lack. This is the Christian paradox in all its fullness, splendor and virtue. But here is the amazing promise as well: by giving what you don't have, you gain what you knew

¹²⁴ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, p. 343.

¹²⁵ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, p. 343.

you were giving from the emptiness of your being. The supranatural gift reflects back on you, returns to you like a boomerang, like a ray of light projected on a mirror – it enriches you, it fulfills you, it overwhelms you.”¹²⁶

According to Steinhardt, the monk who occasionally lacks faith, love, virtue, who at times feels overwhelmed and weak, has the paradoxical duty to give the people seeking his guidance and advice what they expect from him¹²⁷. Irrespective of his temporary status of emptiness. The monk needs to help those seeking to find hope, faith and love, even though he personally lacks them. Such sense of duty requires plenty of courage. I highlight that this secret of life in monasticism according to Steinhardt is not a teaching that he has learned from his hierarchs or from the patristic texts. This is a lesson of monastic life that he has learned from one of the poems of Henri Michaux¹²⁸, a Belgian poet and painter contemporary with Steinhardt, an artist who was and remains hardly known in Romania.

Steinhardt wrote extensively on his understanding of life in monasticism. He sees life in monasticism as a paradox, a state of anti-matter, a world opposed to the one we know, where people focus on gathering wealth, seeking fame and being in charge¹²⁹. Although a very interesting topic, life in monasticism according to Steinhardt, would represent the topic for another work.

¹²⁶ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, p. 305.

¹²⁷ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, p. 305.

¹²⁸ Henri Michaux, in his poetry and paintings “examined the inner world revealed by dreams, fantasies, and hallucinogenic drugs”, as described by Encyclopedia Britannica. His writings, both poetry and prose, carry an esoteric style. His poetry has been also reviewed by Andre Gide. For more details, please refer to <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Henri-Michaux> (as of 4 May 2017).

¹²⁹ Steinhardt Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, pp. 48 – 54.

Therefore, I conclude here my discussion on courage in monasticism. In the case of monks, courage needs to manifest itself as a permanent state of being, even at times when they feel fragile.

I will now turn to the final chapter to summarize the findings of my research and draw the conclusions.

3. Conclusion

In this work, it was my intention to explore courage according to Nicolae Steinhardt's life and theology. In the introduction, I defined the topic of my work and explained my motivation for it, given its relevance in today's world. At the same time, I presented the structure of my work and my research approach.

In the first chapter, I introduced Steinhardt's life and work, while highlighting his personal experiences of courage and sources of inspiration, which have shaped his theology and understanding of courage. I also analyzed the reception of Steinhardt's work, both in Romania and abroad.

In the second chapter, I placed the topics of human freedom and courage in Steinhardt's prison-shaped theology. In my work, I continued by presenting Steinhardt's perception of fear as a sin, to then illustrate courage in life, a virtue without which, all other human qualities cannot become manifest. I showed that, for Steinhardt, courage does not necessarily imply heroism, but rather a stiff and stubborn resistance in the face of fear. I continued the discussion by presenting courage in faith, both from an individual and collective perspective. In the section carrying the title "Courage in Christ" I illustrated Steinhardt's unusual portrait of Jesus Christ as a gentleman and a knight. I continued my review by examining Steinhardt's understanding of physical courage in the face of death. Lastly, I reviewed the special case of courage in monasticism, where all the previously presented aspects of courage receive a permanent character.

Going back to my motivation for this works, I mentioned the relevance of the topic of courage in today's world. So how relevant are these findings for the present context? Is the virtue of courage still essential given that the political context has changed, that Communism in how history? How about the specific situation of Orthodoxy?

In my view, courage remains highly relevant today, irrespective of the fall of Communism regime. In a society where the tyranny of fear is replaced by the dominance of anxiety¹³⁰, where discourse on the freedom of speech replaced factual engagement in seeking human freedom, where almost everyone has rights but very few people dare also fully assume responsibility in face of aggressivity and extreme political correctness, in such context the virtue of courage, as Steinhardt understood it, remains of paramount importance. Today's people need to go out of themselves and dare seek the freedom which makes them who they truly are. This crucial task cannot be outsourced to any government, enterprise or non-profit organization.

From my perspective, Steinhardt's potential contribution for Orthodoxy consist in three aspects. Firstly, in the context where the Church predominantly cultivates the feeling of fear at liturgical, ecclesiological and eschatological levels, father Nicolae's discourse on freedom and courage proposes an alternative, positive and pro-active way of living this faith. Secondly, his ecumenical views and personal example could support the recent initiatives assumed by some of the Church hierarchs to further engage it into inter-confessional dialogue. The third important contribution of Steinhardt for Orthodoxy consists in engaging theology and literature in dialogue, as Pantelis Kalaitizidis rightly noticed. By daring convey Orthodox teachings, such as deification, using the example of fiction character Don Quixote, by mentioning poet Henri Michaux as an inspiration on understanding the secret of life in monasticism, father Nicolae challenges both sides to engage in dialogue.

What have I personally learned from Steinhardt? Overall, he encouraged me. As a member of the Orthodox church, living in an ecumenical family in a highly-secularized country, I have encountered multiple times divergent points of view

and attitudes. Father Nicolae is a true inspiration for me personally, as he bravely lived and practiced Orthodoxy according to his own understanding, without abusively imposing his perspective on anyone else, while at the same time knowing how to defend his Christian faith, both within his own Church and outside of it. Moreover, he became a role-model, as he successfully tested his way of Christianity in practice in a predominantly hostile environment, under various forms of extreme contextual situations. His testimony that freedom in Christ actually also includes profound happiness, bliss, that courage is the first virtue and the final mystery, all these teachings I personally find inspiring.

Given the results of my research, I conclude that Steinhardt successfully reinstated courage at its proper rank as a virtue in the context of the contemporary world. His prison-shaped theology anchored in real-life allowed him to convincingly illustrate how the virtue of courage can be cultivated based on the recurring experience of courage, how this dynamic process can grow into a mysterious human-divine synergy. Courage is the common pre-requisite for all of Steinhardt's proposed escape solutions, solutions which nevertheless do not imply a finality, but rather a path.

I close my work on courage in Steinhardt's life and theology by quoting Henri Michaux's verses, which unveiled to father Nicolae the secret of monasticism:

“The newcomer: How will I do it, I, who I cannot help myself, I,
who am waiting for the light myself?
The abbot: By giving it, you will have it. By searching for it for
someone else. You must help the brother next to you with what
you don't have.”¹³¹

¹³¹ The scene refers to a novice interested in becoming a monk. Michaux Henri, *Chemins Perdus, Chemins Cherches, Transgressions*, p. 127; own translation from original French, text available in *Henri Michaux: "l'homme-bombe": L'oeuvre du corps, teorie et pratique* by Claude Fintz, Universite Stendhal, Grenoble, France, 2004, p. 84.

Bibliography

1. Steinhardt Nicolae, *Jurnalul Fericirii*, Ed. Manastirii Rohia, Rohia, Romania, 2005.
2. Steinhardt Nicolae, *Journal de la Felicite*, translation by Marily le Nir, Arcanteres Editions, UNESCO, France, 1995.
3. Steinhardt Nicolae & Neuman Emanuel, *Eseuri despre iudaism*, Humanitas, Bucharest, Romania, 2006.
4. Steinhart Nicolae, *Cuvinte de credinta*, Humanitas, Bucharest, Romania, 2006.
5. Steinhardt Nicolae, *Monologul polifonic*, Polirom, Iasi, Romania 2012.
6. Steinhardt Nicolae, *Drumul catre isihie; Ispita lecturii*, Polirom, Iasi, Romania 2014.
7. Steinhardt Nicolae & Pinteia Ioan, *Primejdia marturisirii; Convorbirile de la Rohia*, Polirom, Iasi, Romania 2009.
8. Spiridon, Cassian Maria, *Fericirile monahului de la Rohia*, Ed. Doxologia, Iasi, Romania, 2014.
9. Roatis Florian (editor), *N. Steinhardt in evocari*, Polirom, Iasi, Romania 2012.
10. Roatis Florian (editor), *N. Steinhardt in interviuri*, Ed. Aius, Craiova, Romania 2014.
11. Popescu Alexandru, *Petre Tutea between Sacrifice and Suicide*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd., England, 2004.
12. Tillich Paul, *The Courage to Be*, Yale University Press, NY, USA 1980.
13. Kalaitzidis Pantelis, "Theology and Literature: The Case of Nicolae Steinhardt", manuscript accepted for publication in *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*.

14. Pandeanu Iulia, “The Holocaust in Romania: Uncovering a Dark Chapter”, paper available at <http://www.bc.edu>.
15. Rokoska Jana, *Vězeňská literatura v Rumunsku (1944 - 1989)*, published at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic, 2006 and available at <https://is.cuni.cz>.
16. Laura Carmen Cutitaru, Ph.D., “From C.S. Lewis’ Joy to Nicolae Steinhardt’s Happiness”, *Linguaculture*, Dec 2014, Vol. 2 (2014), pp.99-103.
17. Kierkegaard Soren, *Fear and Trembling; The Sickness unto Death*, Doubleday Anchor Books, Princeton University Press, USA, 1954.
18. Andrew Louth, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers, From the Philokalia to the present*, SPCK, United Kingdom, 2015.
19. Fintz Claude, *Henri Michaux: “l’homme-bombe”: L’oeuvre du corps, teorie et pratique*, Universite Stendhal, Grenoble, France, 2004.
20. *Lumina* Newspaper, www.ziarullumina.ro.
21. *Catholic Vote* Newspaper, www.catholicvote.org.
22. Encyclopedia Britannica, britannica.com
23. St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, *Philokalia*, vol. III, translated and edited by G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware, Faber & Faber, United Kingdom, 2010.
24. Monastery Chevetogne website, www.monasteredechevetogne.com/.
25. Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (1993), online at vatican.va.
26. Irina Ciobotaru, *N. Steinhardt si Libertatea ca destin*, Ed. Ideea Europeana, Bucharest, Romania, 2012.
27. George Ardeleanu, *N. Steinhardt si paradoxurile libertatii*, Humanitas, Bucharest, Romania, 2009.
28. Morar Nicolae, *Dimensiunea crestina a operei lui N. Steinhardt*, Editura Dacia XXI, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, 2011, second edition.