

# The philosophy of solitude

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## Summary

*Solitude may be a very positive and constructive experience, whenever it is a desirable choice of the way of life or otherwise it may be a distressing experience, inducing negative feelings, whenever it is externally imposed. In order to understand the polymorphic influence of the solitude upon the inner life of the soul it is essential to analyze all the causative factors of solitude and the personality's profile of the person who lives in solitude. For the majority of human beings the solitude is a painful experience, inducing sadness, anxiety and fear, though for others is a chance for spiritual elevation, self-knowledge, interior peace and serenity, happiness becoming also a way to the truth. The imposed solitude or isolation is always a painful condition inducing many psychological reactions. It is an unpleasant experience, demanding a strong personality profile to be sustained, without vulnerable consequences upon the psychosomatic equilibrium of the suffering person. The feeling of the psychological isolation is more depressive in metropolitan areas, where the incorporation of the person in the body of the society is practically difficult. The isolation during childhood and adolescence is a traumatic experience for the children, which is commonly caused by the incompatibility in the family, due to many contradictions, disputes and ideological differences between the family's members. Children under isolation have poor performances in the school, as a rule, due to inadequate attention, high self-insecurity and low self-esteem. The adolescents can easily distinguish the big difference among the imposed social isolation and the beneficial, instructive effects of the voluntary solitude. Phenomena of self-rejection, which occur occasionally in adolescence living in isolation, are more frequent in females than in males and are associated with psychosomatic phenomena, such as headaches, anorexia, weakness. The solitude is par-*

*ticularly painful experience in senility. It is frequently associated with the physical weakness, diseases, socio-economic decline, mental decline, emotional isolation due to widowhood, which are very serious reasons for the enforcement of the feelings of insecurity and depression. Aged persons, who are admitted in institutions for elderly people or nursing homes, feel isolated totally, living in condition of emotional starvation. The most tragic isolation happens in cases of old demented persons. That isolation has serious psychosomatic dimensions. In cases of advanced dementia the patients are imprisoned in a "timeless time", in a "vacuum space" and in a "functionless reality". This style of life causes a rapid deterioration of the mental faculties due to limited input of informations and lack of motives and exertions. The voluntary solitude may be beneficial to healthy individuals if the principal purpose is the endeavor of spiritual culture, search for the existential authenticity and search for the real way to the truth with apathy and peace. Persons who may recognize the beneficial contribution of the solitude for meditation, self-knowledge, self-control, inner peace and search of the authentic existential selfhood, feel happiness and contemplation. The real happiness occurs whenever the person achieves to have the experience of real, profound and authentic prayer in solitude.*

**Key words:** solitude, isolation, sadness, despair, self-knowledge, spiritual freedom, existential harmony.

## Introduction

The solitude exerts a very individualized influence on human psychology creating a special psychological atmosphere, especially whenever it is associated with the sense of isolation. Solitude may be very positive and constructive experience, whenever it is desirable, associated with happiness, inner searching, creativity and inner freedom, or in the contrary it may be a deficiency state, inducing negative feelings, leading to social isolation, anxiety and depression.

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Large number of authors, such as philosophers<sup>1</sup>, socialists, historians, psychologists<sup>2</sup> have attempted to study the influence of solitude upon the soul even from the antiquity to our era. In addition poets<sup>3</sup>, fictions' authors<sup>4</sup>, painters<sup>5</sup>, sculptures<sup>6</sup> composers<sup>7</sup>

described the solitude either under the tragic aspect or as a beneficial condition for the soul and as a source of creativity<sup>8</sup>.

In order to understand the polymorphic influence of the solitude upon the inner life of the soul it is essential the analytical study of the etiological background, the emotional status, the psychosomatic conditions, the circumstances, the period of the life, the age, the duration, the social environment, the education, the moral values, the principles, the perspectives and the personality's profile of the person who lives in solitude or has had the experience of the solitude in the past. For the majority of human beings the solitude is a painful experience, though for others is a state of spiritual elevation, self-knowledge, interior peace and serenity, happiness and a real way to the truth.

It is important to know the cause of the solitude. It is reasonable that there is big difference between the choice of the solitude by the free will of the person and the imposed solitude by the society, the physical or mental diseases, the emotional isolation or the economic deprivation.

The imposed solitude or isolation is always a painful or at least unpleasant condition inducing many psychological reactions. For many persons it is really painful experience, demanding a strong personality profile to be sustained, without vulnerable consequences upon the psychosomatic equilibrium and harmony of the person.

### The desire for solitude and the imposed isolation

In some periods of the human life the person may desire the solitude and search for it, with his or her free will, in an attempt to proceed to self-concentration, self-control, self-evaluation, inner peace and serenity and mainly to a deep knowledge of himself.

The children desire the solitude rarely in contrast to adolescents who frequently isolate themselves during their functional time<sup>9</sup> in order to regain the emotional stability, in the moments of the strong emotional fluctuations, contradictions and despair.

8. Long C R, Averill JR. Solitude: An Exploration of Benefits of Being Alone Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour 2003; 33 (1): 21-44.

9. Larson RW. The Emergence of Solitude as a Constructive Domain of Experience in Early Adolescence. Child Development 1997; 68 (1): 80-93.

1. See Nietzsche F: Thus Spoke Zarathustra, translated by Graham Parkes, Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2005 and Schutt O: The solitude of Nietzsche's Zarathustra. Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry, 1980-1981; 17(2-3): 209-222.

2. According to Perlman and Peplau "Loneliness is a painful warning signal that a person's social relations are deficient in some important way...and loneliness occurs when there is a mismatch between a person's actual social relations and the person's needs or desires for social contact". In LA Peplau and S Goldston (Eds.), Preventing the harmful consequences of severe and loneliness (pp. 13-46). U.S. Government Printing Office, 1984. DDH Publication No. (ADM) 84-1312. See also Gerson AC, and Perlman D. Loneliness and expressive communication. J Abnorm. Psychol. 1979; 88(3):258-261 and Peplau L A, Perlman, D. (1982). Perspectives on loneliness. In L A. Peplau and D. Perlman (Eds.), Loneliness: A sourcebook of current theory, research, and therapy (pp. 1-20). New York, Wiley.

3. O Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792 - 1822), describes the solitude as a terrible experience (man becomes the living sepulcher of himself and what yet survives is the mere husk of what once he was) See Shelley "On Love" (1818) In «The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley in Verse and Prose» H. Buxton Forman. Also Alexander Pope 1688-1744, in a very early of his productions, the "Ode on Solitude" written at the age twelve stated "Thus let me live, unseen, unknown; Thus unlamented let me die; Steal from the world, and not a stone Tell where I lye". See also Horace, Epode 2: Beatus ille.

4. Rainer Maria Rilke wrote "Therefore, dear Sir, love your solitude and try to sing out with the pain it causes you. For those who are near you are far away... and this shows that the space around you is beginning to grow vast.....» In Letters to a Young Poet by Rainer Maria Rilke Edited by Ray Souard Jr. translated by Stephen Mitchell, Burning Man Books 2001. See also Albert Camus Le mythe de Sisyphe, Calimard Paris 1966. The rejection of the solitude is obvious in the following verses by W. Cowper (Francis T. Palgrave, ed. (1824-1897). The Golden Treasury. 1875).

O Solitude! where are the charms  
That sages have seen in thy face?  
Better dwell in the midst of alarms,  
Than reign in this horrible place.

5. Edward Hopper (an American painter born in New York, in 1882) shaped the solitude, the loneliness, the isolation, the emptiness and the stagnation of town life in our era. In addition Manouchehr Motabar (born in Shiraz, Iran, in 1936) tried to shape solitude and isolation using dark and dull colors, in all periods of his career.

6. See "The Solitude of the Soul" 1914, by Lorado Taft (1860-1936).

7. The vocal composition "O, Solitude," (1617) by the English composer Henry Purcell (1659-1695) based on the poem "La Solitude" by Marc-Antoine Girard de Saint-Amant's is an example of the influence that solitude exercised in composers.

In the initial stages of the adolescence, when the person endeavors the self-identification<sup>10</sup> the solitude may be a "driving" force<sup>11</sup>, facilitating greatly the interior dialogue and the search for values and motivations, which would contribute in a deeper understanding of the real meaning of life and in plotting a harmonious personality's profile.

### The isolation in childhood and adolescence

The isolation during childhood and adolescence is a traumatic experience for the children, which is commonly imposed by the incompatibility in the family, due to many contradictions, disputes and ideological differences between the family's members. In addition, the separation or the divorce of the parents and the isolation of the children from their tutors and classmates in the school induce strong feelings of insecurity, anxiety and despair, which have negative consequences upon the behavior and the performance in the school<sup>12</sup>, the family and in the social structures<sup>13</sup> motivating them sometimes to seek various ways of alleviation.

Children, being under the imposed isolation, don't socialize with their peers, avoiding group games, feeling that they are not acceptable. Several times they invent individual games or are attached to their parents and elder siblings continuously, begging for their friendship and protection.

Children under isolation have poor performances in the school, as a rule, due to inadequate attention, high self-insecurity and low self-esteem. In cases that the incompatibility in the family is associated with the incompatibility in the school environment, the children become indifferent for the education and

the knowledge and they don't like to participate in educational activities and the functional life of the class<sup>14</sup>. The poor records in learning and in athletics decrease their self-esteem tremendously and increase furthermore the distance between them and their peers. The phenomena of self-rejection, which occur occasionally in adolescence, are more frequent in females than in males and are associated with psychosomatic phenomena, such as headaches, anorexia, weakness, resulting in over-use of medical services, associated with depression, despair and obvious social insecurity<sup>15</sup>.

The traumatic experience of the imposed social isolation during childhood and adolescence exercises a strong influence on the later life. The majority of people retain fear for the society, feeling insecurity, and seeking the solitude as a real rescue, whenever they face the climax of anxiety and interior turbulences<sup>16</sup>. The fear, the depression, the anxiety, the insecurity, the emotional isolation lead to entrenchment and defensive behavior eventually and increase the psychological distance between the individual and the society<sup>17</sup>.

In general, the emotional atmosphere of the school environment is of critical importance in shaping the emotional background of the child and the adolescent. The harmonious atmosphere, characterized by respect, friendship, gentleness, mutual understanding, lack of discriminations, care for the others, compassion, tranquility and peace is beneficial for the formation and amelioration of the personality's profile of the pupils and colleagues.

In the contrary a school atmosphere, characterized by contradictions, disharmony, discriminations, irony, hard competition, hostility and social isolation of the individuals induce aggressiveness, instability,

10. See SJ Baloyannis: *Psychiatry and Pastoral Psychiatry*. Purnaras Pub. Thessaloniki 1986 and of the same author *Psihologie Pastoraleă. Iași* 2015.

11. Sullivan H S. *The interpersonal theory of psychiatry*. New York: Norton 1953.

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13. Gazelle H. Class Climate Moderates Peer Relations and Emotional Adjustment in Children with an Early History of Anxious Solitude: A Child Environment Model. *Developmental Psychology* Copyright 2006 by the American Psychological Association 2006; 42(6):1179–1192.

14. Chen X, Rubin K H, Li B. Social and school adjustment of shy and aggressive children in China. *Development and Psychopathology*, 1995; 7: 337–349.

15. Hankin B L, Abramson L Y, Moffitt T E, Silva P A, McGee R, Angell K E. Development of depression from preadolescence to young adulthood: Emerging gender differences in a 10-year longitudinal study. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 1998; 107, 128–140.

16. Coplan R J, Rubin K H, Fox N A, Calkins S D, Stewart S L. Being alone, playing alone, and acting alone: Distinguishing among reticence and passive and active solitude in young children. *Child Development*, 1994; 65: 129–137.

17. Gazelle H, Ladd G W. Anxious solitude and peer exclusion: A diathesis-stress model of internalizing trajectories in childhood. *Child Development*, 2003; 74: 257–278.

insecurity, sadness, anxiety and fear and may result in psychosomatic phenomena and final escape from the school<sup>18</sup>.

The adolescents can easily distinguish the big difference among the imposed social isolation<sup>19</sup> and the beneficial, instructive, voluntary solitude<sup>20</sup>. The elder are the adolescents the better realize the importance of the solitude for the self-knowledge, self-understanding and self-determination. Usually, they live in solitude by their free will, avoiding frequent communication with others, relatives, siblings and fiends, trying to keep themselves in anonymity, having a discrete and conservative behavior, they read books<sup>21</sup>, listen music for many hours, write poems, diaries describing any detail of their everyday life and their own emotions<sup>22</sup>. In the third period of the adolescence the solitude becomes a source of happiness and inner fulfilment<sup>23</sup> and it is described no rarely as a very beneficial experience<sup>24</sup>.

The current phenomenon of the isolation of the young generation in the "miraculous world of the computers and the Internet" signifies the desire to escaping from a traumatic social reality and to rescuing in the anonymous horizon of the electronic world.

The feeling of the psychological isolation is more depressive in metropolitan areas, where the incorporation of the person in the body of the society is practically difficult. However some persons like the anonymity of the big cities<sup>25</sup> and avoid the limited environments of the towns and villages, where they are easily exposed to criticism and comments of the others.

The feelings of the insecurity and fear which are created during childhood either due to incompatible environment of the family or due to multifactorial discrimination in the school accompany the individual during the course of his life, playing considerable role in the modulation of his social behavior. The individual becomes, as a rule, very conservative, introverted, hesitant, very formal, dogmatic, anxious, defensive, excusive, friendless, lacking in assertiveness and self-actualization, having low self-esteem and being psychological isolated<sup>26</sup> from his colleagues and fellows, in order to avoid any social risk-taking, conflict and psychosocial distress<sup>27</sup>.

In general the loneness and the isolation are confronted differently by men, according to the character, the principles, the ethics, the age, the socioeconomic state and the philosophy of each one of them. In a parallel way the influence of the loneness, solitude and isolation is differentiated from person to person greatly, according to his own multifactorial psychological and social background<sup>28</sup>.

For some persons the solitude is beneficial, improving the quality of life, inducing the inner harmony and peace, the tranquility, the emotional balance and the self-knowledge. For others, the solitude is a factor of sadness, anxiety, insecurity and they could sustain it hardly.

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18. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research Network. Social functioning in first grade: Associations with earlier home and child care predictors and with current classroom experiences. *Child Development*, 2003; 74: 1639–1662.

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22. Wang JM, Rubin KH, Laursen B, Booth-LaForce C, Rose-Krasnor L. Preference-for-solitude and Adjustment Difficulties in Early and Late Adolescence. *J Clin Child Adolesc Psychol*. 2013; 42(6): 834-842.

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24. Goossens L, Marcoen A. Adolescent loneliness, self-reflection, and identity: From individual differences to developmental processes. In: Rotenberg KJ, Hymel S. (editors). *Loneliness in childhood and adolescence*. New York, Cambridge University Press 1999, pp. 225-243.

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25. Arendt H. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Cleveland, Ohio: Meridian Books 1962.

26. Coplan RJ, Armer MA. "Multitude" of Solitude: A Closer Look at Social Withdrawal and Nonsocial Play in Early Childhood *Child Development Perspectives* 2007; 1 (1): 26–32.

27. Cacioppo JT, Ernst JM, Burleson MH, McClintock MK, Malarkey WB, Hawley LC, et al. Lonely traits and concomitant physiological processes: The MacArthur social neuroscience studies. *International Journal of Psychophysiology*, 2000; 35: 143-154.

28. Burger JM. Individual Differences in Preference for Solitude *Journal of Research in Personality* 1995; 29 (1): 85–108.

## The solitude in ageing

Ageing is one of the most important period of the human life. It is the period of maturity, experience, wisdom, of fluffiness of most of the expectations and perspectives, of the existential identification and of the expectation of the eternity. Through the centuries all the civilized societies used to pay respect, estimation, kindness, love, thanksgiving and caregiving to elderly people<sup>29</sup>.

In our era the medical, social, legal and economical care and support to senility have a substantial importance in the political and social programming, in most of the European countries. However the caregiving to senility is offered outside the plenty of kindness and compassion environment of the family. The majority of the elderly people, in advanced age, are admitted to nursing homes, institutions or charitable establishments, where the old persons live in solitude and has the bitter experience of the social isolation.

The solitude is particularly painful experience in senility. It is frequently associated with the physical weakness and inability, various diseases, socio-economic decline, mental decline, emotional isolation due to widowhood, divorce or separation from family and friends. All of them are very serious reasons for the enforcement of the feelings of insecurity and depression. Therefore, the isolation and loneliness in advanced age is reasonably a very crucial problem with serious consequences for the individual and the society<sup>30</sup>. Aged persons, who are admitted in institutions for elderly people or nursing homes, feel isolated totally, in a condition of emotional starvation, far from their children, relatives and friends, and are declining gradually to a stage of institutionalization<sup>31</sup>, without any motivation, any purpose, any duty, any responsibility, any meaning and any rudimental role in the society<sup>32</sup>. They participate in the same typical monotonous program of everyday activities, repeating always the same identical patterns of behavior,

without any further expectation. Such a way of life is a source of saddens and despair, a real precursor of death for the majority of elderly people<sup>33</sup>.

The most tragic isolation occurs in cases of old persons who suffer from dementia. That isolation has serious psychosomatic dimensions. In cases of advanced dementia the patients are imprisoned in a "timeless time", in a "vacuum space" and in a "functionless reality". The majority of the patients live in a complete social isolation, communicating only with caregivers and few relatives<sup>34</sup>. This style of life causes a rapid deterioration of the mental faculties due to limited input of informations, motives and exertions, affecting the neuronal plasticity and leading to a further global aggravation of the mental capacities<sup>35</sup> and to serious alteration of the personality and social identity<sup>36</sup>, without any perspective due to irreversible course of the disease.

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33. In the recent years, in an attempt for amelioration of the quality of life of elderly people, some western countries decided to organize small communities, with private homes, replacing the large institutions and nursing homes. In those communities the elderly people may lead a parallel way of life with the broader society. Following that system in Finland the total number of beds of nursing homes was reduced from 27,231 in 1981 to 23,234 in 1991 (Aro et al. 1997: 139), and to 16,080 in 2010 (Suomen Virallinen Tilasto 2011: 31). The Finnish ministry of health reported that the results of that model are very encouraging (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2003: 101).

34. Senso-sensorial perception, analysis, evaluation and registration is an essential activity of the brain for the communication of the person with the environment and the society and the prompt and rational interaction with the external conditions. Visual stimuli are very important factor for the cognitive function and the inner life. See also Steven Priker: Visual cognition. An introduction. Cognition 1984; 18:66.

35. See also Donald Hebb: The Organization of Behavior (1949) and Eric Kandel: Cellular Basis of Behavior. San Francisco, WH. Freeman. 1976.

36. According to Kierkegaard the real identification of the person occurs inside the society, since the person is really embedded in the social and suffers interacting with the others and wishing to retain his existential freedom. Kierkegaard conceptualized that the person in the society has the experience of anxiety and despair during his self-identification. See Kierkegaard SA. The Concept of Anxiety, Kierkegaard's Writings 8, Princeton, New Jersey 1980. See also. Matthis. "The Social in Kierkegaard's Concept of the Individual" Philosophy today 1979; 23 (1), 74-83. According to Parmenides the continuous becoming is the highest expression of the continuous process of identification of the person as being in the society and the world. Parmenides stated also that Being is the Truth and truth is therefore an absolute and unaltered eternal value. See Baloyannis S.J. A message from Parmenides of Elea to the universal man. Encephalos 2004; 41 (2):1-12.

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29. See also Baloyannis S.J. The ageing through centuries. Encephalos 2007; 44 (3) 1-20.

30. Savishinsky J.S. Breaking the Watch: The Meanings of Retirement in America. (Ithaca): Cornell University Press. 2000.

31. Delisle M-A. What does Solitude Mean to the Aged? Canadian Journal on Aging / La Revue canadienne du vieillissement. 1988; 7 (4): 358-371.

32. Cumming E, Henry W. Growing Old: The Process of Disengagement. New York: Basic Books 1961.

The functional isolation of the patient has serious consequences on the senso-sensorial perception which are obvious in art<sup>37</sup>.

In the pictures of the painters who suffer from dementia the limitation of the sensorial perception and analysis is prominent. It is expressed by an oversimplification of the shapes and colors<sup>38</sup> and an impressive transformation of the human faces, which look motionless, rigid, without feelings, sentiments and allegory<sup>39</sup>. However, even by the very simple paintings and drawings the patients still try to express their inner life and their response to unpleasant conditions of their stagnant life<sup>40</sup>. On the basis that art may be beneficial for the interior life of the patients, art therapy is used today for the amelioration of the behavior of people who suffer from dementia and the reduction of the neuropsychiatric

phenomena of the disease<sup>41</sup>.

In the Greek society the respect, the love and the gratitude to parents, grandparents and senile persons is still an important task. Elderly people remain in their homes living with their children and enjoying the pleasure of quotidian communication with grandchildren, relatives and friends and being held in affection and respect. In a parallel way patients who suffer from dementia remain at home, surrounded by their children who are also their caregivers, a condition which is very beneficial for the emotional stability and the psychosomatic homeostasis of the patients, contributing also in slowing the course of the disease.

### The beneficial solitude

For the individuals who wishes the solitude and seek for the solitude<sup>41</sup> the mode of life in solitude is very important as well as the good account of the time in solitude<sup>43</sup>. The proper utilization of the time in solitude protects from the sadness and the tediousness which may occur in the initial period of solitude.

In the solitude, the serenity and the inner harmony are the initial feelings for persons who seek for them. Later on they start feeling sadness, partial insecurity, questioning their decision to live in solitude<sup>44</sup>. If they realize the beneficial contribution of the solitude for meditation, self-knowledge, self-control, inner peace and searching of the authentic exist-

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37. See also the analysis of the paintings of Carolus Horn (1921-1992) by Maurer K and Prvulovic D J. Paintings of an artist with Alzheimer's disease: visuo-structural deficits during dementia. *Neural Transm.* 2004; 111(3):235-245. See also Bogousslavsky J, Boller F (eds): *Neurological Disorders in Famous Artists*. Front Neurol Neurosci. Basel, Karger, 2005; 19: 101-111. See also the paintings of William Utermohlen, who suffered from Alzheimer's disease and continued to paint to the end of his life. See also Baloyannis SJ. *Neurology in pictorial arts*. *Encephalos* 2007;44: 7-25.

38. William Utermohlen, Carolus Horn, Danae Chambers, Hilda Gorenstein, and Willem de Kooning are artists who painted continuously in the course of Alzheimer's disease. The study and the evaluation of their paintings are very valuable for a further understanding of the inner dimension of dementia. See also Espinel C H. de Kooning's late colors and forms: dementia, creativity, and the healing power of art *Lancet* 1996; 347:1096-1098 and Campion EW. When a mind dies. *N Engl. J Med* 1996; 334: 791-792.

39. Art is an international language or a mystic science searching for the truth inside the soul of the artist.

40. According to Hegel human personality is modulated by social conditions, historical circumstances and mostly by the cultural and spiritual atmosphere of the era of the active life of the person. In the contrary, according to Kierkegaard human personality is modulated by the voluntary and conscientious choices of the person, concerning worths, values and principles of life, which may overpass the social circumstances. The choice of normative ethics is motivated, while the choice of metaethics is non cognitive. Despair (Fortvivlelse) is an expected feeling whenever the individual is pressed to shape his life on conditions outside his free will and conscious choice. According to Kierkegaard the main purpose of the life consists of the existential elevation to authentic self-identity. Kierkegaard S. (1845). *Stages on Life's Way*. Translated by Walter Lowrie. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1940. See also Carlisle C. *Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Becoming: Movements and Positions*, Albany, State University of New York Press 2005, Taylor C. *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989 and Baloyannis SJ. *Kierkegaard's melancholy in his life and philosophy*. Gregorius Palamas 1988; 81:303-351.

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41. Mimica N, Dubravka K. Art therapy may be beneficial for reducing stress-related behaviors in people with dementia. *Psychiatr. Danub.* 2011; 23: 125-128.

42. Michel de Montaigne: On Solitude claims "The wise person will flee the crowd, endure it if necessary but given the choice, choose solitude. We are not sufficiently rid of vices to have to be contending with those of others" Quotations adapted from Montaigne's *Complete Essays*, translated by Donald M. Frame. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958.

43. Nietzsche's concept of solitude is identical to isolation, beyond any outside distractions having as main target the spiritual recovery and the liberation of the Ego from the exterior impulses. Nietzsche stated "I need solitude, which is to say, recovery, return to myself, the breath of a free, light, playful air". Nietzsche F. *The Portable Nietzsche*. New York: Penguin Books, 1954. See also Hutter H, Friedland E. *Nietzsche's Therapeutic Teaching For Individuals and Culture*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013 and Walter Kaufmann: *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, New York: Modern Library, 1968.

tential selfhood<sup>45</sup>, they start again feeling happiness and contemplation. The real happiness occurs whenever the person achieves to have the experience of real, profound and authentic prayer<sup>46,47</sup>.

The solitude may have as principal purpose the spiritual culture, the fight against the passions<sup>48</sup> and the negative thoughts<sup>49</sup>, the search for the existential authenticity and the search for the real way to the truth<sup>50</sup> with apathy and peace<sup>51</sup> and the mystical

experience of the truth<sup>52</sup>. That experience is granted in peace, self-control, discretion, simplicity, real love and compassion for the humanity, in humble spirit<sup>53</sup> and ceaseless prayer. As much as the man knows his soul and culture the values and the virtues the more he feels compassion, mercy and genuine love for the others<sup>54</sup> and the more he participates in the pain and suffering of the humanity<sup>55</sup>.

At the time that the solitude gives the first spiritual flowers, the person may play a very positive and beneficial role involved in the society actually<sup>56</sup>. He may also return later on in the solitude<sup>57</sup> for further spiritual exercise, meditation and practice of the virtues, in the spirit of self-knowledge and inner peace<sup>58</sup>.

Sometimes the solitude is a painful experience if the person realizes the inner darkness and the feeling of the existential insufficiency<sup>59</sup>. He needs to practice the continuous prayer and to submit himself to God entirely in order to overcome the feeling of the despair and the agony of the soul. The peaceful adaptation of the solitude is efficient if the person desires to discover his real existential identity and to fulfil the Will of God in his personal life. Then he

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45. Heidegger M. *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. Translated by William McNeill and Nicholas Walker. Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1995.

46. Perschbacher Melia S: Solitude and Prayer in the Late Lives of Elder Catholic Women Religious: Activity, Withdrawal, or Transcendence? *Journal of Religious Gerontology* 2002; 13 (1) 47-63.

47. See also Luke Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus*, Oxford Theological Monographs 2005 and Sophrony Sakharov, 'The Jesus Prayer: Method', in *His Life is Mine* 1977, 112-120.

48. See LSO Vööbus A, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient: A Contribution to the History of Culture in the Near East*, vols. 1-3, CSCO 1958-1988.

49. Evagrius Ponticus was one of the most prominent authors on negative thoughts (λογισμοί), which may be generated by the intellectual activity. He wrote "Do you, desire to embrace this life of solitude, and to seek out the blessings of stillness? Then, abandon the cares of the world, and the principalities and powers that lie behind them; free yourself from attachment to material things, from domination by passions and desires, so that as a stranger to all this you may attain true stillness. For only by raising himself above these things can a man achieve the life of stillness. See also Casiday A, *Evagrius Ponticus. The Early Church Fathers*, 2006.

50. Russell N. *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, Oxford Early Christian Studies 2004. and Archimandrite Sophrony, *Ascetic practice and theory*, Essex, England 1996. also Saint Silouan the Athonite, translated by Rosemary Edmonds Tolleshunt Knights, Essex, Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 1991 and also Pavel Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, translated by Boris Jakim (Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1997.

51. Saint Isaak the Syrian wrote "Do not approach the mysterious words in the scriptures without prayer and without asking help from God, saying: Lord, grant me to perceive the power that is in them. Deem prayer as the key to the insight of truth in scripture" and also. "Do not reckon as a truly wise man that one whose mind is subject to fear on account of temporal" and "Blessed is the man who knows his weakness. This knowledge becomes for him the foundation and the beginning of his coming unto all good and beautiful things" See Saint Isaac the Syrian *Ascetical Homilies* Hardcover – 2011 revised 2nd Edition Translated from the Greek and Syriac by the Holy Transfiguration Monastery. Boston, Massachusetts, 1984.

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52. *Philokalia*. Trans. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware. 3 vol. London: Faber and Faber, 1979 and also Brainard F S. *Defining 'Mystical Experience*. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 1996; 64 (2): 359-393 and Lossky Vladimir, "Essai sur la theologie mystique de l' Eglise d' Orient" Le Cerf coll. Foi Vivante, 1990

53. Saint Silouan the Athonite used to say : "Evil thoughts afflict the pride soul, and until she humbles herself she knows no rest from them... Fight the enemy with the weapon of humility" and "Humility is the light in which we may behold the light which is God -- in the words of the psalmist: 'In thy light shall we see light.' See Sakharov Sophrony. *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, translated by Rosemary Edmonds Tolleshunt Knights, Essex, Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 1991.

54. Berdyaev, Nicolas. *The Destiny of Man*. New York: Harper Troch books, 1960

55. See Sakharov, Archimandrite Sophrony. *We Shall See Him As He Is*. Translated from Russian by Rosemary Edmonds. Essex: Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 2004

56. The following words of Socrates are relevant « If you wish to contribute positively and beneficially to your city you must be a paradigm of virtue for the citizens» (Plato, Alciviades 134 b-c)

57. Werner C M, Haggard L M. *Avoiding Intrusions at the Office: Privacy Regulation on Typical and High Solitude Days*. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*. 1992, 13(2), 181-193.

58. *The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian*, translated by the Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, Massachusetts, 1984. Vivian, Tim, "The spiritual world of Isaac the Syrian", in *Anglican Theological Review*, 83 (2001), 4, pp. 908-910.

59. W. Stinissen, *Natten är mitt ljus*, 1990.

would feel a genuine and pure love for the humanity, including his enemies<sup>61</sup>, having deep compassion for every human being who suffers<sup>62</sup> irradiating also the light and the inner peace from his soul<sup>63</sup>.

The solitude as a way of life beyond the turbulence of the society, the contradictions, the hard competitions, the hostility, the materialistic eudemonism<sup>64</sup>, the politics, the social dispute under the various theories and dominant tendencies, the economic discrepancies and distress has been the choice of many thinkers for centuries, who wished to run an existentially genuine life in peace, plenty of spiritual and intellectual contemplation<sup>65</sup>.

In the peaceful solitude, in the silence, in the spiritual exercise, in the pure simplicity and humility the man may understand the immense merciful and sacrificial love of God and His beneficial sanctifying Will<sup>66</sup>, feeling the unique exultation of having the cordial experience of His presence<sup>67</sup>. The love of God may penetrate all his existence<sup>68</sup> and transfigure in light and harmony all his entity<sup>69</sup>.

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66. "The most precious thing on earth is to know God and at least in part understand His will. The soul that has felt God must submit to his will in everything and live before Him in fear and love. In love, because the Lord is love" and "How do you know whether you are living according to the will of God? Here is a sign: if you long for something, then you have not submitted to the will of God, even though you may think that you live according to His will. Whoever lives according to the will of God does not concern himself with anything. And if he needs something, then he submits himself and that thing to God; and if he does not receive it, then he remains content as though he had received it. The soul which has submitted to the will of God, fears nothing: neither storm nor bandits; nothing. And whatever should happen, it says, "It is God's will." If the body is ill, the soul thinks, "Then I am in need of this illness, otherwise God would not have given it to me." And so the body and the soul remain at peace". Sakharov Sophrony. Saint Silouan the Athonite, translated by Rosemary Edmonds Tolleshunt Knights, Essex, Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 1991.

67. "And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" (Luke 24, 32).

68. «Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord». Rom8, 35-39.

69. « If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him. That he who loveth God love his brother also» (1 John.4, 21).

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61. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?" (Matth.5, 43-46)

62. Powys JC. A Philosophy of Solitude, Simon and Schuster, 1933

63. The Ascetical Homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian, translated by the Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, Massachusetts, 1984.

64. Baloyannis SJ The role of economy in the philosophy of the society. *Encephalos* 2014; 51 (3): 38-46.

65. See Palladius. The Lausiaca History, in *Ancient Christian Writers Series*. Ed., Trans. Robert T. Meyer. Westminster, The Newman Press, 1965. And also *The Pachomian Koinonia*. Vol. 1, "The Life of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples." Trans. Armand Veilleux. Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1980. See also « Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me» (Matth.19, 21).



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