

1 The Transformation of the Self in a Secular Culture. A 2 Discussion on Pannenberg's Position

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5

6 **Abstract**

7 The topic under consideration is the change in the human self understanding in the secular
8 culture, according to Pannenberg, a contemporary thinker of great rational strength. The
9 author poses some questions which underline the ambiguities of secularization and its
10 historical causes. The result has been a new model of manAccording to Pannenberg, the
11 impact of the (17th- 18th centuries) Modern ideas over the concept of the self has been great.

12

13 **Index terms**— postmodernism, Pannenberg, emancipation, autonomous self, secularization, image of god.

14 **1 Introduction**

15 nowadays in the western world, we live in a culture in which we can confirm a range of totally unprecedented
16 dynamics that interweave a singular context with different threads. On the one hand, we face a scenario of a
17 globalized society which has been shaped by the immediacy of information streaming of new media resulting from
18 the "technological revolution". On the other hand, in contemporary culture we live in a context called "post-
19 modernity", which at the same time has assumed essential elements of what has been called the "Modernity
20 Project", but also implies a dialectical attitude toward this project. It assumes the essence of the spirit of
21 modernity -emancipation-, but at the same time, it is critical towards it.

22 The time frame of this reflection is offered by the historical process of secularization, which begins with the
23 Protestant Reformation, whose fifth centennial we commemorated lately. The topic under consideration is the
24 transformation suffered by the image of man and his relationship with God in postmodern age which begun
25 with the religious division caused by the Reformation. To avoid the risk of reducing post modernity exclusively
26 to the process of emancipation of the individual towards the promotion and preservation of freedom, or to
27 the 1 Wolfhart Pannenberg was born in Stettin (back then Germany; today, Poland) on September 2,1928.
28 At the beginning of his career he followed Karl Barth steps, his teacher. In 1956 he took up the Chair
29 of Systematic Theology at the Evangelical Faculty at Munich University until 1994. He was an outstanding
30 spokesman of contemporary ecumenical dialogue. His apology for Christianity is based on coherence and rational
31 argumentation. Pannenberg is the Protestant theologian who has studied the Catholic doctrine and theology
32 with more intensity. Since he published *Revelation as History* in 1961 he developed a monumental theological
33 project from different perspectives.

34 claim of the person's complete autonomy, I have chosen the stance of Wolfhart Pannenberg 1 , a contemporary
35 thinker of great theoretical and rational strength, whose thought is a interdisciplinarity display. Wolfhart
36 Pannenberg, talks, from the podium of theology and philosophy with the main philosophical, historical,
37 theological, anthropological and scientific movements of our time. Pannenberg integrates all fields of humanistic
38 knowledge. One of the greatest XX century authors that along with other Lutheran theologians of his
39 generation such as von Rad, Tillich, Bultmann, Barth, Moltmann, etc., devoted himself to the task of rationally
40 substantiating the Christian faith, and speaking responsibly of God and man.

41 Among the many praises written in memory of the great Pannenberg after his death on September 4, 2014,
42 just six years ago, draws attention to the conclusion of Carl E. Braaten's editorial in the International Journal
43 of Systematic Theology: "Pannenberg was the most complete theologian I have ever read or known, decidedly
44 more than even Karl Barth or Paul Tillich. When one examines the bibliography of Pannenberg's works and
45 all the books, articles and reviews written about his thought, one would be hard put to identify a single topic
46 or question of theological interest that he did not address, and always in a manner showing that he had read

2 II. AMBIGUITIES OF THE SECULARIZATION PROCESS

47 everything important published on the subject. He published three large volumes of Systematic Theology, and
48 equally huge volumes on Anthropology in Theological Perspective, Christology, Theology and the Philosophy of
49 Science, two volumes of Basic Questions in Theology, and shorter monographs on ethics and spirituality. The
50 passing of Wolfhart Pannenberg marks the end of an era, two centuries of unquestionable German superiority in
51 the production of systematic theologies that started with Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* 2 2 Carl E. BRAATEN,
52 Editorial: An Encomium: A tribute to Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928-2014), "International Journal of Systematic
53 Theology", vol.17, n.1, (2015), 5.

54 " One of his most important concerns was the phenomenon of progressive privatization of religion called
55 "secularization", and contemporary atheism, which was a growing and apparently unidirectional phenomena that
56 has come to modify the vision of man and cultural awareness inspired by Christianity.

57 To begin with, I will review the ambiguities that surround the concept of secularization which have given rise
58 to a wide range of evaluations. Religious life segmentation has been a silent and progressive process, that has
59 brought to light the question of the existence of God as a questionable issue, since there are those who do not
60 recognize it, nor accept his existence. Here it is suggested that Pannenberg incurs some paradoxes, because he
61 takes for granted that the problem lies in God and in his inaccessibility, and not in man's will. Today, just as in
62 other times, the veil of God's inaccessibility is not completely uncovered, its silences continue to defy man, but
63 that does not eliminate the human effort to listen him and open ourselves to reality.

64 In the next section I will study the historical causes which gave rise to the secularization process. According
65 to Pannenberg, there is a cause-effect connection between the Protestant Reformation and the rise of the secular
66 phenomenon. In this point, he disagrees with other authors, which also come from the Lutheran school of thought.
67 Secularization brought with it a series of anthropological and social changes, whose contents are implicit in the
68 postmodern perspective and have gone diametrically away from the biblical portrait of man as the image of
69 God. At present it is often said that religions and religious feelings belong to an outpaced stage of human
70 development. We will try to show that the religious meaning is something constitutive of human essence, not a
71 stage of civilization or a philosophical movement. This argument leads to a theme studied deeply by Pannenberg-
72 that of man as the image of God, which contrasts with the modern understanding of the autonomous self. The
73 theme is, as I think, clearly very rich and, therefore, susceptible to extensive treatment, which here, as is logical,
74 has no place.

75 The concluding section proposes to overcome the jumbled and multiple comprehension of the postmodern self
76 by an approach that emphasizes in man the openness to God's gift as the essence of freedom.

77 2 II. Ambiguities of the Secularization Process

78 When addressing this issue, it is necessary to ask some questions that highlight the core of the problem I wish
79 to address: the ambiguities of the secular process and its relation to the spirit of modernity. Is the Christian
80 heritage still present as a fundamental element in the life of western postmodernity? Is Christianity found in
81 secular society as a "hidden city" or rather as a factor that makes modern life possible? As post-modern men
82 and women, can we still be Christians without suffering from double personality? Did modernity break up with
83 Christianity?

84 Undoubtedly, secularization is a peculiar phenomenon of post-modernism, which according to the founders of
85 sociology (Weber 3, Berger 4 , and Durkheim 5

86 The problem of God is a controversial issue, sometimes difficult to open space within the postmodern individual.
87 Pannenberg insists that God is a controversial fact for men because there is no historical evidence. In other words,
88 the controversial cause of God's existence is in God himself, because as lord and creator of everything, he unveils
89 himself gradually throughout history. Pannenberg's claim states that every event in this world is referred to God,
90 also that of his denial or rejection. In this way, he is providing a rational) goes hand in hand with modernity in
91 a unidirectional and irreversible process. Pannenberg disagrees with this thinking, and although it is true that
92 secularization is a product of the modernity project, he does not consider them as equivalent processes.

93 Secularization can be interpreted, on the one hand, as a world where the sacred has disappeared, but it can
94 also refer to a world that continues to be linked to its Christian roots despite its emancipation from Christianity.
95 It is an ambivalent, ambiguous concept that is not unidirectional or irreversible because postmodernity coexists
96 with a religiosity that still persists. Pannenberg realizes that in our contemporary world there are certain values,
97 ideas, attitudes of the Christian religious sphere that constitute a source of meaning and essential actions for a
98 human society. Values and ideas that give meaning to existence, but that take place more in the shadows than
99 in full light, with moments of darkness, and even complete darkness, because the segregation of religious life has
100 been a silent and progressive process in which the sense of God's inaccessibility has become increasingly intense.
101 justification for God's rejection and for secularization, elevating them to principles and taking them for granted.

102 Pannenberg insists that the reality of God is at stake in history, and only in the final fulfillment will it be clear
103 to all 6 . Obviously, the purpose of this statement is to seek a theological justification for the fact of secularization,
104 of atheism, of the increasing disappearance of God in contemporary society 7 Some authors have noticed a certain
105 rationalism here, not without reason. For instance, Stanley Grenz . At the same time, Pannenberg affirms that
106 man is a constitutively religious being and that by opening to the infinite, -the eccentric self-transcendence he
107 calls it-, man has a certain innate idea of God.

108 Then, how it is possible that some human beings cannot recognize him? Why it is that many of them do not

109 accept him? At present, there is a kind of hearing defect regarding to God's existence. What is said about Him
110 no longer seems adequate to our mind, it even seems pre-scientific. What Pannenberg fails to see is that this
111 hearing defect does not depend only on human intelligence, that the verbs "recognize", "accept" do not belong to
112 the rational discernment but to the will. The paradox of Pannenberg is that by overvaluing knowledge nullifies in
113 man the action of the will. The notion of truth is the definitive criterion that challenges reason, rational evidence,
114 but ignores that the hearing defect, or even the deafness with respect to God, has moral causes that affect the
115 decisive perception.

116 8 states that Pannenberg approaches the faith-reason relationship in a rationalistic way, without taking into
117 account that God's revelation is in mutual relation with the freedom that we have for being his image. "Several
118 conservative critics have found aspects of his rationalist approach problematic for the relation between faith and
119 reason. For them Pannenberg has failed to see that the human problem of spiritual blindness goes deeper than
120 merely a lack of historical evidence. Rather, there is in humans a moral bias toward evil that interferes with the
121 rational process and On the one hand, the amazing scientific and technological development, as well as modern
122 world industrialization have gone hand in hand with the establishment of a secular nature of the State and the
123 public policies. Overcoming the medieval model of Church-State alliance meant the conquest of very valuable
124 achievements, which nobody would like to lose, such as the claim of person's dignity and freedom regardless
125 of their social or cultural position; the recognition of humankind rights; democratic participation in the fate of
126 society, tolerance, the discovery of a more intense form of interiority, and cultural pluralism Now let us go to the
127 last question-Did Modernity break up with Christianity? If it was so, where was the cause of that break up?

128 In the process of secularization, two dynamisms stand out, one positive and the other negative.

129 **3 12**

130 The negative dynamic consists in the conformation of a secular society model that excludes religion from the
131 political, educational, cultural and labor spheres, due to the propagation of the conviction that Christianity has
132 been the enemy of progress, and that the achievements have been possible because man's creativity has replaced
133 God's position in the act of creation . Nobody would like to return to the State sponsored religion or to the
134 confusion between the secular and the religious of the pre-modern era, apart from the fact that such a return
135 would no longer be possible.

136 **4 13**

137 In his critique of Blumenberg's Die Legimitat der Neuzeit . The peculiarity of a secular sphere in a Christian
138 cultural context no longer exists, as it did in the Renaissance and its posterity; now we have a society characterized
139 by the re-foundation of a universal human culture that leaves God aside. , Pannenberg gives a new relevance to
140 the category of secularization and he links it with the Protestant Reformation. For him it is not a controversial
141 phenomenon, as it is for Blumenberg, but an ambiguous phenomenon that is in consonance with Modernity but
142 does not follow its same destiny. During the 2020 Global Journals Volume XX Issue VI Version I 3 (C)

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144 The Transformation of the Self in a Secular Culture. A Discussion on Pannenberg's Position makes the task of
145 reading revelation in history difficult 9 . Thus, he has been accused of holding a deficient view of the fall, which
146 fails to take seriously its noetic effect 10 -spiritual blindness 11 ". God's revelation remains partially hidden and
147 allows us the freedom to open ourselves to Him or to remain closed in our self-sufficiency. God does not impose
148 himself.

149 Reformation, the secularization of the Church's goods and the secularization of the clergy took place. In
150 continuity with the principles of the Reformation there was a secularization in a broader sense understood as
151 the suspension of the privileges of the clergy in favor of the laity. From this point of view, secularization would
152 be the coming of age of lay Christians, who were considered as a lower class within the ranks of the Church.
153 This highlights a feature of Modernityemancipation, whose tendency was to combat all kinds of authority, both
154 religious and political.

155 It was a process, rather, of "de-clericalization" or secular asceticism within the world, where the role of the laity
156 became relevant. Luther deprived the profane works (the ordinary work of the ordinary layperson) of the religious
157 sense they initially had, thus ending up favoring secularization, as Brad Gregory has shown in his work "The
158 Unintended Reformation" 16

159 **5 III. Historical Causes of Secularization Process**

160 . With the words of a Protestant preacher Sebastian Frank "the real meaning of the Reformation is that all men
161 have become monks", in the sense that having eliminated the ecclesial mediation of the priests, the rejection of
162 monasticism reaffirmed the secular life as a privileged status in God's design. Eliminated the distinction between
163 the sacred and the profane, the road to secularization was drawn.

164 The origin of the secularized order of society and the secularization of public culture goes back to the late
165 seventeenth century in what we call the Modernity Project. It represents an important shift in the development
166 of the European culture. It is not that the modern thinkers were rebellious towards the Christian idea of God;
167 moreover, they were very interested in connecting the proof of God's existence with the new scientific and rational

168 way of seeing the world. Pannenberg thinks that the historical roots of the birth of modernity should be sought
169 in other sources. The religious fragmentation that caused the Reformation in Christianity and the religious wars
170 that were unleashed created such unease at European level, that the religious foundations of Europe and, with it,
171 its metaphysical foundations, began to be questioned. The different religious authorities began to lose credibility
172 and a boredom spread in society that led to seek another common authority, which was not religious. Pannenberg
173 thinks, against Blumemberg's 17 opinion, that the next step was to make explicit the dissatisfaction, labeling the
174 Middle Ages, in an unfair and comprehensive way, as the "Dark Ages". The last step was to put Christianity on
175 trial.

176 According to Barth and Blumenberg, this break God. They think that Modern age emerged from an act of
177 self-affirmation against theological absolutism 18

178 It was the Protestant Reformation that caused the loss of social peace. Christendom, already fragmented
179 in various religious denominations, could do little to recover credibility. The bloody repression of the religious
180 division marked a deep rift in the course of European history. Outbreaks of religious intolerance caused the
181 death of thousands of people. "The flames desolated Europe and the blood of many millions bathed her," wrote
182 John Locke . For Blumenberg, the emancipation phenomenon of the enlightened reason was a reaction to the
183 theological absolutism of the pre-modern era against faith and tradition. Man affirmed his self-sufficiency in front
184 of the transcendent instance and concentrated on himself as a self-referential and individualistic self.

185 6 19

186 The need to live together in a multi-confessional Europe led to the conviction that one had to retreat to a neutral
187 ground and look for another basis of unity that offered a secure foundation apart from religion. Without the
188 confidence that there is a God who sustains the moral order of the world, man began to search for a common
189 ground that could offer a reliable foundation different from religion . 20 . In the XVII century this common
190 basis was the natural law; afterwards came the centuries ??1 The constitutive role of morality in the secular
191 consciousness was still valid during the XIX century. The idea that this core morality was binding upon all
192 human beings was intelligible because the notion of God was a strong source for this moral legislation. Nobody
193 doubted that moral norms were obligatory because they were part of human nature, until the arrival of Nietzsche
194 who, .Until that moment tolerance was applied to quench the ardor of the different Christian confessions, but in
195 the s. XIX two new phenomena appeared: the renaissance of militant and fundamentalist Islam and its attempt
196 to spread in the West, and the phenomenon of atheism. With atheism, religion ceases to be a constitutive
197 element of social configuration. Little by little, religion loses relevance in the existence of the individual and
198 becomes a matter of private preference, such as art or literature. The Transformation of the Self in a Secular
199 Culture. A Discussion on Pannenberg's Position of epochs was determined by human emancipation with together
200 with Psychoanalysis, started the demolition of establishment of human rights in the 18 th and 19 th traditional
201 morality. Nietzsche's criticism impact was so deep that moral rules seemed to be external impositions alien to
202 human nature. They were mere values that society had invented, had inculcated in individuals and, therefore,
203 could be extinguished and changed.

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205 The confluence of these cultural phenomena left the human being deprived of ethical criteria and significant
206 references to confront the ups and downs of his own life and the challenges imposed by industrialization of
207 modern society. The amazing industrial development of the XX century, which coincided with the expansion of
208 secular culture, led some European thinkers such as Blumemberg 24 , development ran along with the secular
209 process; furthermore, made them believe that they are two roads that require one another. "Since Enlightenment
210 -Berger points out-intellectuals of all orientations have considered that the decline of religion is an inevitable
211 consequence of modernity 27 . development. Certainly, many elements of ancient religions have been lost,
212 likewise medical practice of Hippocrates time. Religion and religious piety have lost their meaning, because its
213 symbols are considered a convention without any ontological meaning. However, those who talk of the end of
214 religion in general indicate a high degree of prejudices and lay themselves open to the suspicion that they have
215 lost sight of the central mystery of human life.

216 It is true that the religious meaning of natural and social phenomena that once recalled God's presence in the
217 world has changed. However, the religious meaning that determines the significance of being and life, as well as
218 of history and social changes has not changed. It has been a human feature since the origins of man, as well as,
219 for example, his ability to create tools and use fire. Religion offers man a definite instance with which to guide
220 his life. Ignoring this phenomenon or treating it as a minor issue represents a serious philosophical prejudice. No
221 serious attempt to illustrate one of the most defining human traits can exclude or set aside religious experience.

222 Religion provides man the guide for his life and a meaningful horizon, without which, man would be avid of
223 eternity and perfection, but always frustrated. The experience of human frailty with its diseases and limitations
224 speaks of a man harmed by the wound of time, who struggles to make his way to eternity. It does not make
225 sense to affirm, as Feuerbach did, that man makes his gods rich and perfect at the expense of the idea that
226 he has of himself, as a self-alienation. Nietzsche referred to Feuerbach's point of view, but he went further:
227 "man has diminished and humiliated himself, because he has not dared to assume the powerful and remarkable

228 qualities that he sees in God. Man considered that all his strength is superhuman and strange to himself 28 ." 229 Man belittled himself. This is not the case, says Pannenberg, because it is only in the light of divine power that 230 man discovers the richness of his own destiny ??9 Only the religious experience can attest to the depths of the 231 human person and make him discover his interiority, enriching it in an incomparably deeper way than is possible 232 in other areas of the human spirit. Human religiousness dives in man's inner life, it helps The disappearance of 233 a teleological concept that could justify and order various moral rules has led to rationally interminable moral 234 disputes. Without a shared view of our ultimate purpose we often cannot agree about how to decide between 235 rival claims ??2 . Without such a foundation, moral beliefs lack any plausible claim to objectivity, and morality 236 becomes the site of rationally unstable conflicts. The vacant place of religion has been replaced in the 20 th and 237 beginnings of the 21 th century by "human rights", declared solemnly by the United Nations and assumed in the 238 West like an unappealable common instance. Unlike the rights of the XVIII and XIX century, they are empty 239 rights, without any support in human nature nor claim to objectivity, in which there is no disagreement for not 240 considering them moral rules; they are invested with a quasi-religious invulnerability 23 .

241 (5-2008), pp. 15-23,

242 8 IV. Anthropological Contents of

243 Human Religiosity in the Secular Postmodern Culture

244 At present it is often said that religions and religious feelings belong to an outpaced stage of human him 245 discover his last comprehension, his radical orientation and his complete fulfillment. Man has reflected in its gods 246 the perfections and powers that he wishes to fulfill. Anthropomorphic images of divine express this. When man 247 places himself in front of the sacred, he feels surpassed and overwhelmed. Such a mode of representation by no 248 means presupposes a primitive, uncultivated mind, a symbol of an immature conscience, as some contemporary 249 atheists have declared such as Feuerbach or Nietzsche 30 . On the contrary, it indicates a high degree of 250 discernment and culture for men to perceive a face of a human kind in the depth of the manifestations of divine 251 powers. The mysterious divine power which decides the success or failure of a human life lies in a supernatural 252 basis. The supernatural implies a modality to which man aspires, which he would never have suspected and in 253 which man knows himself in a natural order sustained by the gratuitous love of God, both in terms of his origin, 254 and in the attainment of his end ??1 Christ is a single person because he has one identity, while in God it is 255 possible to distinguish three persons because each of them has its own features and personality . This solidarity 256 cannot be understood if God's experience is reduced to a mystification of the human conscience or to a subjective 257 projection of the need of security and self-pity. Man, only meets and understands himself when he looks in that 258 mirror in which God has wanted to reflect. To be God's image is man's greatness, and any divine icon and 259 anthropomorphic symbol reflects that essence.

260 If we look in the modern language for a translation of the phrase "image of God", we would probably not find 261 any better than the Greco-Latin concept of "person". This coincidence may seem amazing, considering that there 262 is no trace in the Bible of the notion of "person", not even a semantic equivalent. It was in the context of the 263 Christological and Trinitarian discussions of the first centuries when Christianity was obliged to specify through 264 philosophical-theological categories the two main mysteries of the Christian faith: Jesus Christ and the Trinity, 265 using a concept that delineated the peculiar, distinctive and singular of each being. . The culmination of this long 266 and complicated process of elaboration of the philosophical concept occurred in the VI century, when the Roman 267 Boethius, minister of the Ostrogothic king Theodoric, substantiality with rationality. Reason or participation in 268 the logos is what distinguishes man from animals, and logos is a spark of divinity, it is the attribute par excellence 269 of the gods 34 V. Enhancement of the Autonomous Self Through the Dynamic Concept of God's Image

270 . In conclusion, both traditions present a steady framework that emphasizes the dignity of the human person.

271 While in the classical tradition, the dignity of the human being is based on being the image of God and being a 272 person, for post-modernism, dignity is expressed in autonomy as the supreme act of freedom. In the post-modern 273 scheme the only center of gravity of the "self" is its own subjectivity. Only an "autonomous self" is capable of 274 claiming the freedom and selfsufficiency of which it has been deprived in a theocentric perspective.

275 The understanding of subjectivity as autonomy affects the way of understanding reason and freedom, and the 276 approach of society. The autonomous self considers itself as the total origin of its acts, the exclusive source of its 277 action guidelines and its fullness is found through its own self-referential unfolding through history ??5 . The crisis 278 of the self-referential self, seen as an autonomous and emancipated individual, has led to a situation of cultural 279 pessimism that abandons all pretensions of absolute, to settle for At the same time, man has let himself slide down 280 the slope of relativism, of fragmentation, of the God's removal from the human horizon and the cut off of any 281 religious link with culture, at first brought freedom and introduced a phase of cultural flourishing. However, this 282 flowering of the XVIII and XIX centuries, was fueled both by the ancient and the Judeo-Christian perspective, 283 which has shaped so much of modern culture and was the reason of its existence. In the postmodern secular 284 society, the presence of these elements has vanished from culture. This lack of essential understanding of life has 285 intensified the feeling of uprooting and of social anonymity, running the risk of configuring a new religiosity based 286 on the emotional inclinations of the irrational world, regardless of the truth. ??3 BOECIO, Liber de persona et 287 duabus naturis contra Eutychen et Nestorium, PL 64, 1343 D. ??4 Cfr. ??olhart PANNENBERG, Faith and 288 reality, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia 1977, p. 44. 35 Cfr. Luis ROMERA, Finitud y trascendencia. La 289 existencia ante la religión humana, "Cuadernos de Anuario Filosófico", Departamento de Filosofía, Universidad

290 de ??avarra, 2004, n. 167. 36 meaninglessness of life. The important thing now is the *carpe diem!* enjoy the
291 moment. Life is a journey that we have to live with intensity no matter where you go. This fragmentary journey
292 leads to a life full of contradictions, languid, where there are no definitive commitments, no lasting engagements,
293 no long-lasting efforts.

294 Post-modern consciousness of the finitude is very strong, and the diversity of proposals of his own identity
295 is a mosaic whose color palette varies from intense and dark colors to pale and degraded colors. On the one
296 hand, we have the autonomous individual condemned to fragmentation and to the emptiness of the meaning
297 of his existence, while on the other, there are proposals for an understanding of man from the interpersonal
298 relationship and openness to the gift of the other. In some way, the latter offers some indications to face the
299 understanding of his true identity in the third millennium.

300 In this sense, Nietzsche's denunciation is valid-we are or we are not. We change the civilization and transmute
301 the values giving light to what we really want, or we live seriously the values of the West, but the languid
302 hypocrisy is not valid. Nietzsche has unmasked us because the most comfortable and easy posture is to throw
303 oneself at the irrational, create emotive substitutes of a sacred or spiritual type, depending on the subjective
304 inclinations. But, where is that being in which God has wanted to reflect? Where is the being whose dignity lies
305 in having been created in the image of God?

306 The post-modern approach of man as autonomy must be enhanced by an approach that emphasizes openness
307 to God's gift as the essence of freedom. Great has been the gift with which man has been called into existence.
308 God has blown his breath of life into man making him in his own image, but that image is not exhausted by
309 the fact of having autonomy, nor in that of being able to distinguish and affirm one's self in front of others. Nor
310 does someone stop being a person when its self-consciousness has not yet manifested or will never manifest. It is
311 not selfconsciousness or reason, nor autonomy that establishes personality, but the iconic relationship with God
312 open to an eternal destiny.

313 Therefore, the absolute value of the person must be taken seriously and not be assessed only for what he or
314 she contributes to society. In our sociocultural context, what makes someone valuable? Is not it true that is the
315 success that he is capable of achieving and the opinion that others have of him? People tend to appreciate the
316 curriculum of achievements, their successes or failures, as if the world were a company of personnel selection. This
317 pressure to succeed is stronger now than in other times because of forgetfulness and absence of God. Society's
318 attention is more focused on what one does or is able to do, and on what one possesses, than on what one is. This
319 measure of appraising is alienating and dehumanizing, especially in the current scenario where unemployment
320 overshadows the lives of many people and families. The scope of the person is given by the value that is in it:
321 the divine image, and whoever ignores it is unaware of the most radical truth of man.

322 Opposite to the uncertainty caused by overvaluation of success in the present world, we have to discover the
323 real freedom coming from opening to God's gift. Post-modern human beings would have greater confidence if
324 they knew that God loves them for free. They would not need to justify their worth in front of others according
325 to their benefits and work. Furthermore, they would not be afraid of being set apart or abandoned. God's love
326 is definitive and that gives great freedom.

327 However, because it is historical, man is not complete as God's image since its origin but has a history to
328 develop to achieve his destiny. Pannenberg proposes to overcome the closed concept of divine image, for an image
329 of God in process. What is natural and specific to the historical human being is its own project to be carried
330 out, a telos; but the fact that the end transcends him implies that he cannot limit himself to being a "copy" of
331 the original, but that he must radiate the splendor of the image-model (Jesus Christ). In order to carry it out,
332 it is endowed with the capacity for alterity, response, transcendence, freedom and love. God does not want only
333 what the person "already is", but he calls it to a complete realization of his being. Man does not stop being a
334 task for himself. The unfolding of the divine image in man has not reached its full meaning until he discovers
335 the divine project, the task he has been given.

336 Man has received a gift with the being *imago Dei*, which gives him an inestimable value; there must already be
337 a "disposition" in him for the development of that gift 37 . The intrinsic relationship between the image of God
338 and its telos allows to conceive the human person not only as God's creature, which would be already a lot, but as
339 a being whose only explanation consists in being-for-God (*esse ad Deum*) 38 37 Cfr. Wolfhart PANNENBERG,
340 Teología sistemática II, UPCO, Madrid1996, p. 245.

341 . The idea of the autonomous self comes into crisis when it is not linked to any concept of reason but is
342 connected to a full and unlimited understanding of the egocentric self, whose limits lie only in the demands of
343 social life. Only by rising to the religious subject is when freedom gets its full meaning, ethics reaches its pure
344 content, and interpersonal relationships become stronger.

345 © 2020 Global Journals The Transformation of the Self in a Secular Culture. A Discussion on Pannenberg's
346 Position "In history, God and man are always manifested together, but man is so in the light of his experience
347 of God. And where feeling for the divine mystery disappears, a distortion or at least a trivialization of the idea

[Note: 8 Stanley GRENZ, "The Appraisal of Pannenberg: a Survey of the Literature" in C. E. BRAATE, Ph. CLAYTON (eds), *The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg: Twelve American Critiques, with an Autobiographical Essay and Response*, Augsburg, Minneapolis (MN) 1988, p. 23. 9 Robert ROSS, "Historical Knowledge as a Basis for Faith", *Zygon* 13(Spring 1978), 209-224.]

Figure 1: 6

Figure 2:

348 of man is to be expected. Consequently, the religious theme cannot simply be brushed aside when man is in
349 question" 39 . ^{1 2 3 4 5}

¹Cfr. Max WEBER, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Cambridge UP, London 1977. 4 Cfr. Peter BERGER, *Secularizzazione, la falsa profezia*, "Vita e Pensiero" (5-2008), pp. 15-23.

²Cfr. Wolfhart PANNENBERG, *Christianity in a Secularized World*, SCM Press Ltd, London 1988, p. 10. 19 John LOCKE, *Two Tracks on Government*, ed. P.Abrams, Cambridge 1967, p. 160. 20 Cfr. Wolfhart PANNENBERG, *Problemgeschichte der neuen evangelischen Theologie in Deutschland. Von Schleiermacher bis zu Barth un Tillich, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht*, Gottingen 1977, pp. 24. 21 Wolfhart PANNENBERG, *Christianity in a Secularized World*, cit., p.39.

³Cfr. Wolfhart PANNENBERG, *Christianity in a Secularized World*, cit., p. 17. 24 Hans BLUMEMBERG, *The Legitimacy of Modernity*, Verlag O. Lombeck, Frankfurt 1966. 25 & Brigitte BERGER, *The Homeless Mind, Modernization and Consciousness*, Harper, New York 1973. 26 Max WEBER, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Cambridge UP, London 1977. 27 Peter BERGER, *Secularizzazione, la falsa profezia*, "Vita e Pensiero"

⁴This significant situation is pointed out also by Charles LARMORE, *Patterns of Moral Complexity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1987, p. 24. See also -Cecilia ECHEVERRÍA FALLA, *The Structure of Practical Reason according to Ch. Larmore*, Università della Santa Croce, Rome 1997, p. 89.

⁵Cfr. Luis ROMERA, *Finitud y trascendencia. La existencia ante la religión humana*, "Cuadernos de Anuario Filosófico", Departamento de Filosofía, Universidad de Navarra, 2004, n. 167.

