

# Consciousness in the Philosophy of Gabriel Kostelnyk Oleh Hirnyk (Lviv, Ukraine)

## Introduction

Gabriel Kostelnyk was born on June 15, 1886 in the village of Ruski Krstur in Bačka (Voivodina). He went to a high school in Vinkovci and Zagreb. In the year 1906 he enrolled in the first year of studies on Catholic Faculty of Theology in Zagreb as a candidate for priesthood of the diocese of Križevci. Still in his high school years he started writing poetry. Encouraged and supported by Franjo Marković, he published a first compilation of poems in Croatian in 1907 called “Romances and Ballads” (“Romance i balade”). In the same year he transferred to Lviv (the capital of Galizien/Halyčyna province in the western Ukraine) where he continued his studies in philosophy and theology. Between 1911-1913 he studied philosophy at the catholic university of Fribourg (Switzerland) where he obtained Ph.D. with the thesis “De principiis cognitionis fundamentalibus”. After marriage to Eleonora Ritter von Zarycki he was ordained for a priest of byzantine-ukrainian ritual of the Lviv diocese. He spent his life in Lviv where he taught philosophy and wrote numerous philosophical works (mainly in Ukrainian). He had a special interest for problems of consciousness and different parapsychological phenomena (stigmatization, spiritism). In the year 1948 he died in the assassination which was carried out by NKVD agents.

## 1. Epistemological Problems

Advancement of natural and exact sciences and the crisis in religious world-view are according to Kostelnyk the main motives of the modern society.(1) Psychological motives, which

have created adequate conditions for formation of the so called realistic and physicalistic mentality, are responsible for the crises of the religious consciousness:

a) Disharmony in the development of sciences is the main psychological motive. “Exact and natural sciences have discovered unlimited and unbelievably complex material world. And the science about the soul has not advanced beyond the level on which it has been since the time of antic Greek philosophy.” (2) Realistic mentality has suppressed the sense for mystic reality in a human soul. Under that influence are also clergy, who were brought up on the same naturalistic and rationalistic principles as other layman intellectuals.

The development of science has progressed in the atmosphere of antagonism towards theology, for which it was thought that it is not a science. Contemporary science differs from theology mostly by goals and methods: its research is focused on natural world only, and the method is experimental and mathematically oriented. Physics has become a main model for science which also dictates its laws to humanistic disciplines. “Mentality of philosophers and psychologists is entrapped into the experimental-mathematical method of physics; therefore they have observed spiritual phenomena through the glasses of the same method”, thinks Kostelnyk. (3) Psychology neither succeeded in constructing its own method, nor in developing an independent teaching about phenomena of spiritual character and so has become “*ancilla physicae*”. (4)

b) “The one who becomes an expert in a certain area of science; becomes transformed into a disproportionately developed handicapped man”, thinks Kostelnyk. (5) Every expert, whether physicist, biologist, doctor or theologian, forms his own mentality under the influence of his line of work and he creates his own

world-view. That is why a scientist, who remains in his field, often unintentionally, misinterprets reality, trying to adapt reality to his narrow world-view. Kostelnyk did not limit himself only to philosophy; he was also interested in physics, biology, psychology and physiology. In the year 1943 he finished writing a first volume of “Logic”, which he wanted to adapt to the newest discoveries in natural sciences. In the book chapters dealing with metaphysics and anthropology, he has mentioned on several occasions his experiences in research of para-psychological phenomena. “Division into scientific disciplines has only methodological value. All disciplines are interconnected as are organs in one organism”, thinks father Gabriel. (6)

c) “*Quotidiana vilescunt*” (Everything that is daily, fades) – that is how Kostelnyk defines the third problem. A philosopher, whose consciousness is full of abstract notions, loses sense for complex phenomena. That kind of consciousness becomes “rigid” with time and reacts only to surface phenomena, thinking of it only as of something positive, to which attention should be devoted. “The more human kind deals with science, the more it loses taste for reason – that is to say, rational intuition, holy and gentle, which is given to us by our nature. That is how human intellect becomes insensitive for higher truths of being, reaching only routine truths of the lower order”, writes Kostelnyk in his work *Svit yak vichna shkola* (The World as Eternal School). (7) As a mean against routine mentioned father Gabriel recommends the so called “hygiene of consciousness”: on one side specialization is necessary because without it is impossible to achieve a deeper understanding of certain phenomenon, and on the other hand it is necessary to avoid blindness and narrowing the horizon of cognition, which is unavoidably brought up by specialization.

## 2. The Role of Consciousness, Sub-consciousness and Intuition in the Process of Cognition

In the work *Try rozpravy pro piznannia* (The Three Discussions about Cognition) G. Kostelnyk discussed problems of cognition. It begins with a very broad chapter “Conscious and Unconscious in Cognition”. Consciousness according to Kostelnyk has a several degrees: full unconsciousness, sub-consciousness, half-consciousness, and full-consciousness. (8) Only in the state of full consciousness “the right process of cognition” is happening. “Sub-conscious and unconscious states of the soul have in common the lack of consciousness (in the everyday sense of the word). And with the conscious state the process of cognition (thought) is connected”, points out Kostelnyk. (9) He points to the growth of general cognitive capabilities which occur in sub-conscious state like hypnosis or “spiritistic trans”. (10) Kostelnyk thinks that consciousness limits our cognition; it is like a fire in which “most subtle abilities of our soul” disappear. Or other way around when the process of cognition is happening without the involvement of consciousness, and psychic powers are then liberated, which would otherwise be absorbed by consciousness. Father Gabriel in a symbolic manner explains his thoughts as follows: “In conscious state “lighthouse” of our cognition is directed towards the world, shining on it weakly. But in unconscious state “lighthouse” is directed towards a soul and it shines on “his abode” incomparably stronger.” (11)

But also in conscious state, through analogy, it is possible to reach religious truths where all finally ends in Gods consciousness: “There are different facts which bid us to accept that it is possible to reduce the whole world to some higher level of unity, in which unlimited space and time seem to come together in a single “point”. (...) Our consciousness condenses our whole life, our whole organism and our whole cognitive world in a

single “point”, without disrupting the relation being-life. On the basis of this analogy we are able to conclude that the world is united by God consciousness, e.g. the spiritual world where God and pure spirits dwell.” (12) It should also be pointed out the problem of intuition about which Kostelnyk discusses within his teaching about consciousness. Already in the introduction to *Try rozpravy pro piznannia* Kostelnyk writes: “The only remedy for the wounds inflicted to us by modern culture is coming back to nature, coming back to the higher intuitions given to us by nature.” (13) He thinks that the essence of intuition is in “viewing” that what has “been brought into consciousness by sub-consciousness”. In other words intuition is “the sign of the activity of sub-consciousness.” (14) Intuitive cognition – is the founding of the human cognition and creative force of all concepts. (15) In the history of philosophy Descartes and Locke are particularly responsible for the “annulment” of the role of intuition. But they have also, according to Kostelnyk, taken the wrong attitude: “Basically intuition and intellect are not two different but mutually supplementary powers and intuition can not give us “cognition of the essence of things” as says Bergson; nor does intuition include evidence for that what it presents, as claimed by Scheller – at least concerning the cognition of God.” (16) The truth is only that “intuition comprehends things more correctly than critical consciousness.” (17)

### 3. Altered States of Consciousness

In accordance with the balance of the soul, and through his nature Kostelnyk was open for accepting different supernatural phenomena. In his work he often relies on his personal experiences. In *Try rozpravy pro piznannia* father Kostelnyk tells how he was shocked when his mother has, with the help of hers allegoric dreams, retold the details of his life in Zagreb. That

experience had led Kostelnyk to the thought that “in unconscious state cognition abilities of the sub consciousness grow. (18)

In *Svit yak vichna shkola* (The World as Eternal School) Kostelnyk describes his mystical experience: “When I tried to breach into “that world” through the holes of this world, and when I had managed to catch a few rays of the “eternal day” source, I had realized that the wisest words about the source are those which are written in the holy books: “That which the eye has not seen, which the ear has not heard, which is unreachable for the mind””. (19) Thinking about the phenomenon of human consciousness, Kostelnyk points out to the so called “neutral consciousness” which he compares to “white light of the day”. In this case Kostelnyk also relies on his personal experience as a poet: “I have noticed that fact during my student years and I have described it in one of my Croatian poems. I have experienced (what in fact every poet should experience) that in a moment of poetic inspiration my consciousness is different than usual. “Poetic inspiration” is like a breach in a light of consciousness: regular light of the day is divided and becomes like a heavenly rainbow. Thanks to the experience of this contrast I was able to distinguish the normal state of consciousness; I have reached its neutrality.” (20) To this notion of normal state of consciousness, that is to the “normal consciousness”, Kostelnyk opposes the notion of “weakened consciousness”. “In weakened consciousness the mind becomes like a woken sensation, in which amazement and fear, and nobility, respect towards life, our at the same time greatness and nothingness, stand out.” (21)

In *Sprvazhniy svit* (The Real World) father Gabriel admits that he has, as a future student of philosophy, asked God to grant him to be a witness of “miraculous phenomena”. (22)

With the approach of the WWII Kostelnyk interest in various paranormal phenomena grows. Subject of his researches becomes a stigmatic person Nastia Voloshyn, who was placed into a psychiatric institution for experiments by the Polish administration. In 1935 Kostelnyk has freed Nastya from the hospital and placed her in a monastery with the sisters of order of st. Basilius (23). In 1937 father Gabriel met a stigmatic person Eustahia Bohniak, who similar to Teresa Neumann lived only of the Holy Communion. On the same day he met Eustahia, he also met a Jewish mystic Max Schlosser, who came to Kostelnyk, because Eustahia “attracted him with her spirit to testify about the truthfulness of hers stigmas” (24)

Max had a peculiar gift: during the collective prayers, especially during the procession on Epiphany, he would fell into trans, like the prophets of the Old Testament and “discovered the secret intensions of human hearts”. Because of problems he created for citizens of Lviv, they called him “mišigene Max” (Mad Max) in the town. (25) Later having the premonition of his near death, Max asked Kostelnyk to baptize him. During the German occupation of Halychyna Schlosser was imprisoned in a concentration camp. From the camp Max has sent a few letters to Kostelnyk in which he wrote that he is not afraid of death and that he gladly waits for it. (26)

The experience of observing persons with stigmas and the Jewish mystic lead Kostelnyk to an unbelievable conclusions: “I had an opportunity to experience without a doubt how the soul of a stigmatic can leave his/her body and appear somewhere else in a different forms (in its own appearance, in the form of a child, man, bird, etc.) This soul, liberated from the body, can enter into a body of another stigmatic person and take over its soul: for a limited period of time it can talk, walk, eat, and work (during that stigmatic’s consciousness, knowledge and psychic nature remain

completely preserved, even to her it seems that is in its own body). By that is shown the way that spirits can enter into a human body.” (27) Kostelnik's way of thinking often reminds on some kind of esotery: “Today we can accept for certain, although it sounds unbelievable, that the soul of every human encloses the whole Earth and is united with different world (like distant stars which unite with us with the help of their rays). As energies exit the body (gravitation, magnetism, electricity, light) they enable those parts of a body to act on a distance. Same, also psychological, techniques enable souls to act on great distances (telepathy, fortunetelling, suggestions, etc.). Every thought which is at one time thought remains forever. The blessing of some object becomes something real, added to the object, and seers, especially stigmatic persons can easily recognize blessed objects. Every object preserves on itself a certain “film”, therefore seers can read an object's history from of it (so called psychometric)” (28) It is amazing that father Gabriel talks about this in a work whose title is “Logic” (1943) Being aware of that he does not hesitate with an answer: “Life-being is a lot more mysterious than it appears to everyday experience. Somebody might wonder that I have dared to write about those unbelievable things in a book like Logic. Conscious of a scientist bids me to mention those unbelievable parapsychological discoveries, which are for me doubtless (I had an opportunity to confirm that opinion on our stigmata in many cases).”(29)

In an attempt to explain mystical phenomena scientifically, Kostelnik reached out for physics. He admits that the new explanation of matter, which is established by “new physics”, is so attractive for him that he was tempted, “to accept energy as autonomic substance, as did German physicist and chemist W. Oswald.” (30) It appears that he was not able to resist mentioned temptation because he says: “Being familiar with today's understanding of a built of the matter we have to accept that life

is some special kind of energy.” (31) The new explanation of energy helps father Gabriel in understanding of the problems of interconnectivity between the soul and the body: “New understanding of the way of cooperation between the soul and the body does not pose a problem to us anymore, because we know about energies which act as a media between the soul and the body, and we consider soul as a higher level of energy.” (32) That kind of thinking and Kostelnyk’s interest for supernatural phenomenons have attracted strong reactions and criticism foremost from his colleagues priests. To his rivals father Gabriel responds: “The time when it was possible to talk of that kind of phenomena as deceits and things imagined has passed. Today are generally available serious and broad researches about those problems. And he who casts all that aside he is imbued by rationalism and materialism, or he is ignorant of what is the case here. (...) If physicists had knowledge about those mystical realities, which we have mentioned, a lot sooner and a lot easier they would realize that energies can even pass through empty space, and that energy of the light can even act independently from the body.” (33)

#### 4. G. Kostelnyk in a Contemporary Context of the Studying of Consciousness

Under the influence of the eastern world-view, especially under the influence of certain movements such as the theosophical society of Jelene Blawatsky and the anthroposophy of Rudolf Steiner interest for different kinds of parapsychological phenomenons and spiritism grows in the western mind. A well known Indian philosopher Shri Aurobindo wrote without hiding his pleasure: “Today different movements have sprung, whose ideas establish themselves in the thought and life of the western society. Philosophical thought has started to abandon materialistic rationalism with its absolute truths and dogmas. On one hand the

search for new views had led to establishment of Hindu monism in many minds (although in strange forms). (...) They have begun to break down the boundaries between scientific researches; interest for research of psyche and also for new achievements in the area of physiology, even for spiritualism and occultism has increased; that interest is constantly increasing in spite of constant anathema by the orthodox religion and science. Influence of theosophy and her mixing of ancient and modern world-views, with intention towards intuitive knowledge, is noticed everywhere even beyond its official supporters.” (34)

As far as it is known father Gabriel was neither interested in eastern monism, nor for theosophical ideas, although the author of the only available scientific monography about Kostelnyk tries to make some parallels between Kostelnyk and Tagore. (35) The Eastern world-view and esoteric-occult ideas have entered into his world-view in a “refined” form. In “Logic” Kostelnyk quotes a French writer, mystic existentialist Ernest Hello: “When our connection would discover to us some of its secrets we would fall silently under the impression. (...) We influence each other constantly without knowing it. (...) We have no clue what kind of consequences of life and death our souls carry with them overcoming time and space till the end of the world. Countless souls, with whom we are not at first glance connected, live of our victories or suffer because of our defeats.”(36)

Kostelnyk also praises French biologist, Nobel prize winner and the author of a book “Man – unknown entity (1935) Alexis Carrel: “For Carrel a refined universal view on reality is characteristic. Although still on a level of positivism and tied by naturalistic world-view, his way of expressing is brand new: he points out that science has up till today only superficially and in a simplified manner solved problems of human spirit and life; he admits the reality of mystic phenomenons and miracles;

especially he says that science can no longer ignore those phenomena. Carrel observes life-being as it really is in its amazing fullness, and not as a philosopher who the reality observes through his narrow, twisted and poor abstractions.” (37)

In the other half of the 20 century interest for phenomena of a mystical character, i.e. “altered states of consciousness“ becomes an ordinary thing. In the last twenty-five years the studies of mind and consciousness are the result of the so called cognition science, which outgrows traditional context of biology, physiology and epistemology. (38) In the boundaries of cognition science the school of “neurophenomenology” appeared, to which the name was given by F. Varela who was one of its leaders. “Neurophenomenology is an approach to the studies of consciousness which connects interrogation of the conscious experience with the analysis of matching neurological patterns and processes. Neurophenomenologists research different areas of experience and try to understand how they originate out of the complex activities of neurons.” (39) Capra, a well known physicist, finds a lot in common between neurophenomenology and envisioned cognitional sciences; he thinks that neurophenomenologists have achieved “the first step towards formulating the true science of experience” about which the founder of phenomenology Edmund Husserl and his followers had dreamed of. (40) By using the method of introspection, which had W. James considered a basic one in psychology, neuronphenomenologists also use the rich material of mystic traditions of different religions and philosophical approaches, especially tradition of meditation in Buddhism. (41) Kostelnyk also mentions William James as a philosopher who was “fashionable” at the end of 19 century, and who thought that religion is a part of a product of irrational side of humans. William James was the first who tried to explain the development of religion with the help of the so called “sublimated ego” (that is

“ego” which is located at the threshold of our consciousness). Kostelnyk was also amazed: “Sublimated ego” i.e. the source of secret, mystical powers and one owns feelings. (...) The path for explaining religious ecstasy has been found, according through mystical togetherness with God, prophecies and miracles.” (42) Sub-consciousness was thought of as a main source of religion also by the so called “modernists” in catholic theology (Loisy, especially Tyrell and Prezzolini), who were condemned in 1907 by the papal encyclical letter *Pascendi dominici gregis*. (43) That is why Kostelnyk right away warns that he does not agree with their teaching, but at the same time he points out: “Still we have to admit, that the source of religion is really hidden in sub-consciousness; although it is not the only one, it is not complete.” (44) Kostelnyk has also used the method of introspection for analysis of his own mystical phenomenons as well as parapsychological phenomena of persons studied.

It is interesting to notice that an interest for mystical phenomenons is also shown by scientists who declare themselves as materialists. Russian scientists Jershoffa and Chernosvitoff in the book *Nauka i religia: novyi simbioz?* (The Science and Religion: A New Symbiosis) think that the scientists have for a “long time dwelled in shackles of pseudoscientific arrogance” thinking that they known all about religion. (45) At the same time they have explicitly pointed out that their approach to research is “deeply materialistic” and that they rely on the teachings of Darwin and Heckel and on the dialectic by Hegel. (46) They tried to give an answer to the question: how and why do mystical phenomena become the subject of science? They pointed out that it is hard to find scientific literature on the mentioned problem, because the research scientists often surrender to emotions, and in the end scientific research is transformed into some kind of esoteric-occult interpretation. (47) (That by, the way, can be seen in the Kostelnyk’s example.) They wonder how is possible that

names like Gurdjieff or a "skillful mysticator" like Carlos Castaneda have become almost sacral. (48)

To the mentioned sacralisation have contributed the main representatives of so called transpersonal psychology Maikoff and Kozloff whose opinion is almost identical to Kostelnyk's when the problems of modern science are in question: "History of the contemporary science has shown that the conception of the material world, based on Newton's mechanics, has been completely overcome in biology, medicine, psychology, psychiatry and other sciences. (...) If Universe is in essence material, and physics is the science which deals with matter, then that means that physicists are absolute authority in questions about essence of all things. Discoveries of other sciences are not allowed to contradict the basic postulates of physics. Strict application of that type of logic has triggered systematic rejection of everything in many disciplines, which is not in accordance with the materialistic world-view. (...) That is why psychological postulates have to be based not on physical theories, but on the observation of psychological processes. (50) How much are the representatives of transpersonal psychology consistent in that shows the example of an American psychiatrist Stanislav Grof. As a representative of the direction mentioned he studies the growth of abilities of cognition in the so called "altered states of consciousness", which has Kostelnyk also noticed based on his personal experience. In an attempt to make those states subjected to control (that is to put them under laws of mechanics) Grof asks neither for means nor for methods. That is how he came to the idea to organize LSD séances for successful physicists to expand the horizon of their scientific cognition. "That project, explains he, will enable most prominent physicists to experience psychodelic states, so their theoretical inspiration and the ability to solve problems can be stimulated." (51)

## Conclusion

All the difficulties with which a modern scientist is faced with when studying consciousness are visible in Kostelnyk's teaching. He criticizes modern science, especially physics, which has forced its experimental-mathematical method to the psychology and has triggered the crises of the religious world-view. That is why in his teaching about consciousness with the help of introspection he first depends on the analysis of his own consciousness, and then on parapsychological phenomena (that is on altered states of consciousness) of stigmatic persons and mystics, gathering information "first hand". But often in those researches he leaves the area of science and resorts to esoteric-occult ways of explaining, which he tries to hide behind the new notion of matter and energy, brought up by quantum theory. In an attempt to adapt philosophy to the new discoveries of natural and exact sciences, especially in his definition of a soul as "a higher level of energy", a strong influence of modernistic movements is felt, which has appeared in catholic theology in the other half of the 19 century. A question can be raised: how much is Kostelnyk consistent in his critique of contemporary science, especially physics, having in mind that in an attempt to explain certain supernatural phenomena he tries to find help right from modern physics.

## Notes

1. Kostelnyk, Havryil, *Upadok relihii*, Lviv, 1940, p. 1. (The manuscript has never been published, and it is kept in a private archive in Lviv).
2. *Upadok relihii*, p. 119.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

6. Kostelnyk, Havryil, Logika, Lviv, 1943, p. XV. (The manuscript has never been published, and the passage is cited according to a copy kept in a private archive Mom. Kristina Poljak in Zagreb)
7. Kostelnyk, Havryil, Svit yak vichna shkola, Lviv, 1931, p. 21.
8. Kostelnyk, Havryil, Try rozpravy pro piznannia, Lviv, 1925, p. 28.
9. Ibid., p.30.
10. Ibid., pp. 30-31.
11. Ibid., p. 31.
- 12 Logika, pp. 292-293.
13. Try rozpravy pro piznannia, pp. 8-9.
14. Ibid., p. 59.
- 15 Ibid., pp. 62-63.
- 16 Ibid., pp. 75-76.
17. Ibid., p. 76.
18. Ibid., p. 33.
19. Svit yak vichna shkola, Lviv, 1931, p. 18.
20. Ibid., p. 36.
21. Ibid., p. 44.
22. Kostelnyk, Havryil, Spravzhniy svit, 1946(?), p. 9. (In a private archive in Lviv only a fragment of this work is being kept. The passage is cited according to a mentioned fragment).
23. Ibid., p. 11.
24. Ibid., p. 11.
25. Kostelnyk, Havryil, Materializm, Lviv, 1945, p. 72. (The work has not been published the manuscript is being kept at Kristina Poljak. The passage is cited according to a mentioned manuscript).
26. Ibid., p. 72.
27. Logika, p. 102.
28. Logika, p. 293.
29. Ibid., p. 102.

30. Kostelnyk, Havryil, *Materia i duh. (Vidchyt)*, Lviv, 1934, p. 10
31. *Materija i duh*, p. 11.
32. *Upadok religii*, p. 52.
33. *Materializm*, p. 77.
34. Cited according to Russian edition: Shri Aurobindo, *Osnovy indijskoi kultury*, Sankt-Petersburg, 1998, p. 18.
35. Tamaš, Julijan, *Havryil Kostelnyk: medzi doktrinu i prirodu*, Novi Sad, 1986, pp.295-296.
36. *Logika*, p. 263.
37. *Upadok religii*, p. 125.
38. Capra, Fritjof, *Skrivene veze (The Hidden Connections)*, Zagreb, 2004, p. 47.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
42. *Try rozpravy pro piznannia*, p. 86.
43. O'Collons, Gerard i Farrugia, Edward, *Zwięzły słownik teologiczny*, Kraków, 1993, pp. 144-145.
44. *Try rozpravy pro piznannia*, p. 86.
45. Jershoffa G. G., Chernosvitoff P. Y., *Nauka i religia: novyi simbioz?*, Sankt-Petersburg, 2003, p. 7.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 15.-17.
49. See: Maikoff, Vladimir i Kozloff, Vladimir, *Transpersonalnaya psihologia. Istoki, istoria, sovremennoye sostoyanie*, Moskva, 2004.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174.
51. Cited according to: Lacroix, Michel, *Ideologija New agea*, in: *Europski glasnik*, br. 7, Zagreb, 2002, p. 44.