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Aesthetic Perspectives on Spiritual Practices: Contemporary Reflections

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PHILOSOPHY AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Unprecedently in the entire human history, we live in a world of abundance of information, instantaneously accessible with a few clicks on our devices. What seemed to be in the past an exclusive privilege for a limited number of educated, is now taken for granted and open to everyone who has access to the Internet and programs of artificial intelligence.

Philosophy, with its quest for wisdom, fights to find its own mission in these new circumstances. Analogically speaking, our time is similar to the time of Pythagoras, the first one calling himself a philosopher – a lover of knowledge, in distinction to the sophists, holders of knowledge. The followers of Pythagoras were divided into two groups: the listeners and the learners. While the first group was interested in hearing the doctrines of the gods, death, the afterlife, moral teaching, harmony, justice, and ritual purity, the second group focused on so-called scientific knowledge, such as arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. Whether one belonged to both groups simultaneously or sequentially, or whether one's holding of knowledge was more elevated, seemed to be secondary for Pythagoras. What really mattered for him was one's aspiration to approach the highest possible knowledge, which cannot be expressed with terms adequate for the description of *physis*, broadly translated as nature. To

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have an insight into the highest possible knowledge, one must dwell on the knowledge of the soul and the divine.

To reach this kind of knowledge, *i.e.*, the ultimate goal of every lover of wisdom, one needs to go beyond the intellectual exercises rooted in reason. Access to true knowledge is a matter of spiritual engagement, transcending the principles of the natural world. No wonder why the founders of ancient Greek philosophy did not struggle to refer to philosophy as a spiritual activity, calling for examination and deeper understanding of their present understanding.

Philosophy as a spiritual activity seems to be a term at odds in contemporary academic circles, too often reducing and comprehending spirituality as something esoteric, abstruse, incomprehensible, old-fashioned, non-scientific, not worth attention, left to the field of theology. At the same time, the globalization process is profoundly shaking the Western mind and forcing us to take a critical step against any kind of one-sided, narrow solutions based on uncritically selected principles or ideologies. Daily encounters with new cultures, traditions, and religions, motivate us to rethink our self-perception, the perception of our society and of the entire universe.

One of the most urgent challenges of the contemporary mind is the question of integration, harmony, and synthesis, which will bring together what seemed to be fragmented and separated. New integration and synthesis are a primordial task for both philosophy and theology, faith and reason, spiritual and rational engagement, called to put together what seems to be in conflict. This task escapes the boundaries of a new intellectual vision. It is a matter of spiritual activity based on the practice of trust, surrender, repetition, acceptance of the path, rediscovery of the traditional solutions, already proven to be solid and deposited in the human spiritual treasury, as well as the introduction of new paths that will lead towards harmony and unity despite cultural or religious differentiations. Broadly speaking, it is a matter of new metaphysics, allowing us to rediscover the beauty of an all-including cosmological vision. The vision goes in unison with anthropology, reopening the meaning of how to be human in the context of globalization.

In addition to the globalization aspect, the invention of artificial intelligence, with its apparently limitless use of knowledge, faces philosophy

with an unprecedented new challenge: can our understanding of what it means to be human be left to a computer-run analysis based on more or less sophisticated algorithms? There is no doubt that new possibilities of AI technology with its fascinating results will shape what we believe to be coherent and correct. Will the code of human nature in its entire complexity finally be disclosed?

In its mission to search for wisdom, philosophy calls us to rediscover what seems to be neglected: the importance of being connected, human relationships, neglected or only superficial comprehension of intimacy, the existential question regarding the meaning of human life, including those aspects that too easily escape our attention: pain, suffering, and finally death. Despite the abundance of information and technological advancement, the mystery, simplicity, and beauty of human existence need to be brought to light in a refreshing view.

Following Pierre Hadot's interpretation of Plato's teaching in his book *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, all ancient philosophy believed in the "ontological value of the spoken word." The living and animated philosophical discourse is not intended only to transmit information but to produce a certain effect on the reader or listener. Ancient philosophy intended to form people and to transform souls, which is possible only through dialogues and conversations pursued for a long time. This dialogue was intended to be a spiritual exercise, understood as an exercise of authentic presence of the self to the self, and of the self to the others. By exercising philosophy and by giving attention to oneself, one was led to the Socratic maxim "know yourself." What mattered in the process was not so much the solution to a particular problem, an exact exposition of a doctrine, or transmission of encyclopedic knowledge, more or less accurately reflecting the reality of the world; all these can be done as a purely intellectual exercise or beautiful discourse, totally separated from life. The goal of philosophy as a spiritual exercise is the transformation of one's vision of the world and a metamorphosis of his/her personality, *i.e.*, a transformation of all aspects of his/her being: intellect, imagination, sensibility, and will.

Consequently, philosophy as a spiritual exercise is meant to be practical, requiring effort and training, involving one's whole way of being. Philosophy is an art of living that cures us of our illness and teaches us a new way of

life. Referring to *Phaedo* (Phaedo 67, c-d), philosophy is training for death. This training includes the purification of the soul, placing the boundaries of the body, practicing the virtues, putting oneself in order, allowing to be touched by the Good and God.

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PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY AND SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

Abstract. The resurgence of practical philosophy can be seen as a contemporary attempt to bridge the apparent gap between philosophy and spirituality. Philosophy, in its search for wisdom, misses its primary goal since the theoretical solutions do not lead to the transformation of philosophers' lives. This article offers a view of the resurgence of practical philosophy in the first chapter and, in the second, the connection of practical philosophy with spiritual exercises, presented in Pierre Hadot's writing. The underlying assumption, in both practical philosophy and in Pierre Hadot's reflection, is a desire of the philosopher to engage in something life-transforming. The authenticity of the transformation depends on one's willingness to transcend their initial subjective position. The third chapter refers to Socrates as the eminent teacher of dialogue, presented as a spiritual and intellectual journey of transformation. Socrates' dialogical method remains the inspiring paradigm, adopted by many scholars of philosophy and spirituality in search of wisdom, which has to be theoretical, practical, and spiritual.

Keywords: dialogue, Pierre Hadot, practical philosophy, spiritual exercises, Socrates, transformation

Introduction

The degree of connection and disconnection between philosophy and spirituality has come to the fore of philosophical interest in recent decades, both in academic circles and in everyday reflections. An overview of the intellectual history of philosophy and spirituality clearly shows that the disconnection between these two sciences regarding man's deepest

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perception of reality is illusory; disconnection is a phenomenon of modernity, starting with the Enlightenment, looking at spirituality as something illogical, sensual, and inferior to scientific knowledge. This phenomenon is losing traction with the steadily growing interest in spirituality in our time, calling for a more adequate understanding of what spirituality is (see Cosgrave 2017, 593-602) and, consequently, what the connection or differentiation between spirituality and philosophy looks like. To answer these questions adequately, one must also review and refresh the understanding of what the goal and mission of spirituality and philosophy is.[2]

These two concepts indicate mysterious dimensions of human existence that narrow definition of philosophy or spirituality insufficiently enlightens. The sophisticated algorithms of artificial intelligence (along with its younger siblings), cannot provide an adequate interpretation of the intriguing connection between philosophy and theology, even while linked with the abundance of knowledge that the age of information offers. Such an interpretation cannot be left to academia as the exclusive domain of well-educated scholars. The question of the connection or disconnection between philosophy and spirituality literally confronts all people, educated or not, who seek answers to life's deepest challenges. The search for these answers necessarily raises the fundamental question of every human: "Who am I?" The answer requires a reflection liberated from narrow anthropological, ethical, and even theological views on one side and, on the other, strengthens the search for something transcending. In addition, theoretical investigations remain insufficient unless they penetrate, shape, and transform the daily life of the individual or the community.

The purpose of this article is to present the search for the practical aspects of theoretical knowledge as an expression of the spiritual desire to transform our lives. This transformation, as well as a serious engagement in spiritual life, should not be a project left to the creativity of the individual in his/her existence in a self-created bubble. A profound spiritual life is an intriguing and challenging path, based on a genuine

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[2]   For example, Elie M. Adams claims that the mission of Philosophy today is to point out the errors in our cultural mind and to work for a humanistic cultural reformation (see Adams 2000, 349-364).

dialogue of the practitioner with him/herself, other people, and his/her willingness to be open to the transcendent. By following Socrates as a master of dialogue, this reflection aims at one's engagement in the process of dialogue, not confined to a simple exchange of ideas but instead to the transformation of ourselves. The primary source of this reflection is Pierre Hadot, who interpreted ancient philosophy as a way of life.

Application Turn of Western Philosophy

The perception of philosophy as an interesting but abstract knowledge without anything to do with daily practical challenges quickly leads to the conclusion that philosophy is useless. The diametrically opposed position is taken by those who perceive philosophy as a behavior that represents complex theories and literally transforms the philosopher's life in a way that reveals something great, admirable, attractive, virtuous, and maybe even something divine. The answer to the question of whether philosophy is more useless, useful, or something in between, depends on each individual and his/her personal assumptions. Undoubtedly, the search for the place of the applicability of philosophy in our age of information comes to the fore more prominently in academic circles and among ordinary people. The resurgence of practical philosophy is a recent phenomenon of the past few decades, most probably a response to dissatisfaction with the traditional teaching of academic philosophy that was not connected with people's daily lives.

In the past, general education and professional education were rooted in philosophical principles, insights, tradition, and cultural values. Ancient Greeks, in their search for wisdom, considered philosophy as the highest science. Even when Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD) called philosophy the "handmaid of theology,"[3] philosophy did not lose its prime position among scholars. Philosophers always found their place in the vicinity of kings, who were willing to listen to their philosophical counselors. Formerly indispensable philosophical knowledge seems to

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[3]   Clement of Alexandria, in his book *The Stromata*, Book I, Chapter 5, puts the title "Philosophy, the handmaid of theology".

be pushed aside nowadays as abstract, frivolous, and impractical. In Clark Glymour's words:

> "The awkwardness does not result entirely from social contrivance; it is a real and essential consequence of how well the philosophical tradition has met the demands that philosophical questions impose." (Glymour 1990, 63)

Such philosophical myopia of the last century calls for new visionaries who are to encourage us to think more philosophically, practically, and responsibly, not just expected to give us clear philosophical answers.

Ancient philosophers did not struggle too much to integrate spiritual practices into their philosophical investigation and search for common wisdom. The origins of Christian monasticism are undoubtedly grounded in this pre-Christian thinking mindset. The concept of ancient philosophy as a way of life gradually disappeared from the West when the study of philosophy became the exclusive domain of universities, becoming harder for ordinary people to access. However, the disappearance of spiritual exercises was never complete, states Matthew Sharp in his interpretation of Hadot. Eminent philosophers like Descartes, Montaigne, Rousseau, Kant, Nietzsche, and Schopenhauer, still refer to the idea that philosophy should be taken as a way of life.[4]

The rediscovery of the practicality of philosophy began in the 1980s. Let us call this the *application turn of contemporary Western philosophy*. German philosopher Gerd B. Achenbach started the world's first philosophical practice in 1981 to offer philosophical counseling or consultation services to clients who seek a philosophical understanding of their personal and social challenges and who wish to avoid medicalizing their problems. With his Dutch colleague Ad Hoogendijk, Achenbach wanted to develop an alternative approach to psychotherapeutic culture. Achenbach believed that the clients – called the visitors – should be able to face the existential questions posed by their lives with the help of philosophical therapy and counseling. Inspired by Achenbach's approach, Elliot Cohen, the president and co-founder of the *National Philosophical Counseling Association*, writes:

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[4] See Matthew Sharpe. "Pierre Hadot (1922-2010)." *IEP – Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available at <https://iep.utm.edu/hadot/#SH5a> (last time accessed on March 6, 2024).

> "In contrast [to psychological counseling], philosophical counseling applies training in philosophy (theories and philosophical way of thinking) to human problems of living. They, therefore, tend to view mental processes in terms of epistemic justification, that is, the justification of beliefs or claims to know."[5]

Unlike the practice of clinical psychology, philosophical counseling focuses less on the underlying causes of mental processes; its primary goal is to help clients examine their arguments, clarify important terms, expose and examine underlying concepts, expose conflicts, explore traditional philosophical theories, and initiate projects for the common good.

Lou Marinoff, the President and Executive Director of the *American Society for Philosophy Counseling and Psychotherapy*, in his book, *Philosophical Practice*, describes the philosophical practice as a synonym for philosophical counseling, therapy, and clinical philosophy, which should be reflected not only in theories but in the practitioner's daily life. Marinoff describes the growing interest in philosophical practice as a dynamic phenomenon that is spreading all over the world, as people continuously search for answers to everyday challenges: conflicts in interpersonal relationships, midlife crises, moral dilemmas, and coping with losses. These and similar challenges are indicative of the human condition and of life itself and not necessarily the reflection of emotional traumas of childhood that they carry with them for the rest of their lives. For this reason, the examination of one's personal intentions, volitions, desires, attachments, beliefs, and aspirations is quintessentially a philosophical task (Marinoff 2002, XIX).

The number of articles on philosophical practices, international conferences centered on this topic, and the general interest in using philosophy to find answers to life's questions proves the growing interest in philosophical practices. From the *First International Conference on Philosophical Practice* held in Canada in 1994, organized by Lou Marinoff and Ran Lahav, to the 17th International Conference in 2023 in Romania, the organizers tried to define the nature of philosophical practice in terms of problem-solving, world interpretation, philosophical care of the self, conceptual art, critical thinking, wisdom inspiration, including spiritual exercises.

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[5] See Elliot Cohen "Philosophical Practice." *NCPA,* 2022. Available at <https://npcassoc.org/philosophical-practice/> (last time accessed on March 4, 2024).

Despite the growing interest, questions regarding philosophical practice remain unanswered. What are the goals and roles of philosophical practice? What is the relationship between philosophical practice and psychological counseling? What are the methods and modes of philosophical practice? What are the entry requirements, training methods, value norms, and ethical codes for the philosophical counseling profession in view of potential misuses and abuses? (see Ding & Yu 2022, 4-7).

Following in the same vein, the question remains whether philosophical practices are also spiritual practices. The answer depends on the definitions of philosophy and its mission, as well as spirituality and its purpose.

Spiritual Exercise in Pierre Hadot's Reflection

The history of philosophy contains numerous theories and philosophical concepts elucidating the notion of the ultimate spiritual realm. Plato and Plotinus, in their reflection, talk about transcendent vision, Stoics and Epicureans about spiritual serenity, and Christians about hope and new life in terms of resurrection (cf. Platovnjak & Svetelj 2021). Modern and contemporary philosophers refer to the connection as sublime (Kant), or as sacred (Paul Ricoeur), or creating a moral community based on respect, care, and compassion. Reconnection with nature as something sacred is another way of expressing one's spirituality, becoming more and more present in contemporary philosophical thought.

One of the most eminent contemporary scholars in this field is the French Philosopher Pierre Hadot (1922-2010), who dedicated his academic career to the analysis of ancient philosophy in general, and to the concept of spiritual[6] exercises in particular. When talking about spiritual[6] exercises, Hadot refers to practices intended to modify and transform the subjects who practice them.

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[6]   Hadot uses the term *spiritual* as the most appropriate and necessary word, even though it is not so fashionable in the contemporary world. None of the other adjectives: psychic, moral, ethical, intellectual, of thought, of the soul, cover all the aspects that the term spiritual describes (see Hadot 1995, 81).

> "…the goal pursued in these exercises is self-realization and improvement. … Consumed by worries, torn by passions, he [man] does not live a genuine life, nor is he truly himself. All schools agree that man can be delivered from this state. He can accede to genuine life, improve himself, transform himself, and attain a state of perfection. It is precisely for this that spiritual exercises are intended." (Hadot 1995, 102)

A person should not live in conformity with human prejudices and social conventions but in conformity with the nature of a human, which is reason. In his dialogues, Plato taught that through philosophical and spiritual exercises, one separates from what is alien and exterior to one's soul, which includes passions and desires. Consequently, the soul should be able to return to its true nature. Stoics introduced the idea that the quality of one's life depends on focusing on things that depend on us and leaving aside the things that do not depend on us. Similarly, Epicureanism teaches us to ignore unnatural and unnecessary desires, and to focus on the satisfaction of natural and necessary desires, leading us to our original nucleus of freedom and independence. This does not happen overnight but requires ongoing effort and practice. Hadot compares spiritual exercises to physical exercises, which, through repetition, give new form and strength to the body. The final goal of spiritual exercises is self-realization, which Hadot presents with the Plotinian image of sculpturing one's own statue by taking away what is superfluous (see Hadot 1995, 102). Hadot concludes that spiritual exercises are fundamentally "a return to the self, in which the self is liberated from the state of alienation into which it has been plunged by worries, passions, and desires" (Hadot 1995, 103).

Once liberated of egoistic and passionate individuality, what comes to light is the moral person, utter lucidity, knowledge of ourselves and the world, as well as human perfection reflecting divine perfection. By definition, the state of divine perfection remains inaccessible to humans; what is accessible is an ongoing practice of *philo-sophia* as the love of progress toward wisdom. The practitioner of philosophy is constantly torn between habitual and everyday life and the domain of consciousness and lucidity, inviting a total transformation of his vision, lifestyle, and behavior (Haot 1995, 103).

In disagreement with Hadot, John Cooper argues that Hadot's concept of spiritual exercises distorts the nature of the ancient philosophical

practice. Ancient spiritual exercises were not as central in the ancient world as Hadot believes. These exercises can be found only with certain Roman philosophers and educated people. In addition, Cooper claims that Hadot's language of spirituality seems to be too close to the modern existentialist concerns about the state of one's self, and at odds with ancient philosophers' commitment to using one's reason as the sole basis for one's way of life. Hadot seems to emphasize too much the importance of choice, self-transformation, and proper philosophical inspiration to live rationally, which damages the notion of spiritual exercises as such (see Del Nido 2018, 8-9). In his critique, Cooper states that Hadot's reflection on spiritual exercises subordinates rational inquiry, which is immanent for philosophical investigation. Intense emotional conviction can open the door to voluntaristic or even irrationalist accounts of philosophical practices. Following this logic, spiritual exercises become distractions from the cultivation of reason (see Cooper 2012).

Discussing whether Cooper's criticism of Hadot's reading of spiritual exercises is justified exceeds the purpose of this writing. Hadot seems to be aware that his interpretation of the term "spiritual exercises" may create anxieties due to the association of philosophical practices with religious devotion. Sometimes, he uses the adjectives "spiritual" and "existential" interchangeably, opening the door to an existentialist reading of his position.[7] In defense of Hadot, Daniel Del Nido argues that spiritual exercises with their imaginative, rhetorical, and cognitive techniques, as reintroduced by Hadot, are necessary for and successful at producing a way of integrating reason into human character (see Del Nido 2018, 7). With this, Del Nido refers to Hadot's claim that spiritual exercises cannot be reduced to a purely rational consideration, limited to abstract and theoretical analysis. Our pre-philosophical lives are governed by a routine that tilts us to perceive and interact with the world in ways that are familiar to us. Pleasure and pain can easily become the governing principles of our thoughts, emotions, and conduct, directing our lives away from our rational evaluation of our goals and desires (Del Nido 2018, 9). In Hadot's words:

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[7] See Matthew Sharpe. "Pierre Hadot (1922-2010)." *IEP – Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Available online at <https://iep.utm.edu/hadot/#SH5a> (last time accessed on March 6, 2024).

> "Imagination and affectivity play a capital role here: we must represent to ourselves in vivid colors the dangers of such-and-such a passion and use striking formulations of ideas in order to exhort ourselves. We must also create habits and fortify ourselves by preparing ourselves against hardships in advance." (Hadot 1995, 284)

When analyzing spiritual exercises, Hadot is aware that this term involves several meanings. By referring to Philo of Alexandria and other ancient theologians and philosophers, Hadot distinguishes two types of spiritual exercises (Hadot 1995, 84). The first type comprises daily and continuous repetition of practice, such as research (*zetesis*), thorough investigation (*skepsis*), reading (*anagnosis*), listening (*akroasis*), attention (*prosoche*), self-mastery (*enkrateia*), and indifference to indifferent things. The second type includes reading, meditations (*meletai*), therapies of the passions, remembrance of good things, self-mastery, and the accomplishment of duties. These exercises do not completely overlap but give us a fairly complete panorama of Stoico-Platonic inspired philosophical therapeutics. The study of these exercises should follow this order:

> "First attention, then meditations and 'remembrances of good things,' then the more intellectual exercises: reading, listening, research, and investigation, and finally the more active exercises: self-mastery, accomplishment of duties, and indifference to indifferent things." (Hadot 1995, 84)

All these exercises are not exclusively the result of thought; they have to include the entire psychism of the practitioner (see Hadot 1995, 82). Consequently, even though fasting and bodily exercise, which are not primarily intellectual exercises, can be spiritual as well.

> "… these exercises in fact correspond to a transformation of our vision of the world, and to a metamorphosis of our personality." (Hadot 1995, 82)

It is not surprising then, that Hadot's writing became the source of inspiration for the advocates of practical philosophy. Guided by Xaojun Ding and Feng Yu's interpretation of philosophical practice as spiritual exercises, there are three philosophical practice characteristics that guarantee the spiritual exercises are fundamentally philosophical. These characteristics are truth orientation, wisdom orientation, and virtue orientation (see Ding & Yu 2022, 10-15).

Truth-directed spiritual exercises, in tandem with reason, help promote genuine human values and evaluate things as they really are. Consequently, playing a violent video game does not count as a truth-oriented exercise because it promotes a value illusion and fails to see things as they are (see Grimm & Cohoe 2021). The truth-oriented spiritual practices arouse in us the yearning for truth and allow us to assimilate what we believe to be true. Reason or rational insight and argument alone need spiritual exercises because the motivational powers of reason are limited. Spiritual exercises do not guarantee, but they help reason to secure a life lived in accord with one's value judgments.

Wisdom is the ultimate goal of spiritual exercises, leading people to truth and knowledge and help them see the world in its reality. Arnold I. Davidson argues that the philosophical way of life requires the practice of spiritual activities as the way to self-transformation, resulting in tranquility of the soul, self-sufficiency, and cosmic consciousness (see Davidson 1990). Ran Lahav's writing presents wisdom as being open to a broader world, allowing us to see the complexity of human reality and its diversity of meanings, aspects, and perspectives. The goal of philosophical practice is to create in practitioners a desire for wisdom and move them beyond their limited and superficial self-understanding (see Lahav 2006). Whether one should emphasize more wisdom as a process, remarkably encountered in Eastern philosophy, or wisdom as a product, usually interpreted in Western philosophy, remains an open question calling for further elaboration.

> "In the pursuit of wisdom, we should be concerned with the process that leads us towards wisdom, not just with obtaining wisdom and knowing its particular nature." (Ding & Yu 2022, 364)

In addition to truth and wisdom, philosophical practices invite us to cultivate virtue as a spiritual exercise. The meaning of virtue is one of the key themes in the ancient conception of philosophy as a way of life: living well and living virtuously were two sides of the same coin. When talking about *eudaimonia* as the highest human good, Aristotle describes it as "activity of the soul in accord with virtue, and indeed with the best and most complete virtue, if there are more virtues than one" (Aristotle

1999, 9). Consequently, philosophical practice leads to a deeper understanding of virtue, enabling practitioners to better deal with their life challenges. A theoretical understanding of virtue alone is not sufficient if it does not lead to the application and transformation of the practitioner's life. In his interpretation of Plotinus, Hadot claims that there are different ways to reach the knowledge of the Good; however, "only the spiritual exercises of purification, of the practice of the virtues, of putting ourselves in order, allow us to touch the Good, to experience it" (Hadot 2005, 28). In view of virtues cultivating in our times, the advocates of practical philosophy refer to written practices as spiritual exercises. Writing and questioning allow the practitioner to grow in thoughtfulness and create new habits necessary for growth in virtue (see Bendik & Jeremy 2009). Tukiainen distinguishes between cognitive and practical virtue. Knowledge of the external world, which includes knowledge of values, feasibility, and appropriateness of all possible actions, enables one to lead a satisfying and morally acceptable life (Tukianen 2010).

Dialogical Character in Socrates
as Practical Philosophy and Spiritual Exercises

In his impressive study of ancient Greek philosophy, Hadot starts with the assumption that the primary concern of the ancient philosophers is the "living praxis from which they emanated," (Hadot 1993, 10) *i.e.*, one should learn how to live and what lifestyle to embrace, which will affect their whole existence. Construction of a coherent theoretical unity of the universe and human society within it, was not as relevant as the living praxis. The oral tradition was an essential part of their living praxis; the written work was meant only as a material support for a spoken word intended to become spoken again. Referring to Arnold Davidson, the primary intent of ancient philosophy, especially in its dialogical character, was in Hadot's interpretation, "to form more than to inform" (Hadot 1960, 341). For this reason, Hadot claims that to philosophize means to learn how to dialogue, which he extensively elaborates on in the chapter "Learning to Dialogue," published in his book *Philosophy as the Way of Life* (see Hadot 2005, 89-92).

As the master of dialogue, Socrates seems to be more concerned with who his interlocutor is, and less with the matter of discussion. Socrates does not teach. As an annoying gadfly, he poses questions, repeats his statements, and continuously invites the interlocutor to become aware of their own position by examining their own conscience. In his hesitation to proclaim the original meaning of Socrates' dictum "Know thyself," Hadot states clearly:

> "It invites us to establish a relationship of the self to the self, which constitutes the foundation of every spiritual exercise. To know oneself means, among other things, to know oneself *qua non-sage*: that is, not as a *sophos*, but as a *philo-sophos*, someone on the way toward wisdom." (Hadot 2005, 90)

This knowing oneself includes separating that which we are from that which we are not, as well as examining one's conscience.

Socrates seems to be a master of being in dialogue with himself as well. Hadot presents a list of events with Socrates in deep meditation, in focusing on his thoughts, or in conversation with himself. By referring to Porphyry's description of Plotinus' life, Hadot concludes:

> "Only he who is capable of a genuine encounter with the other is capable of an authentic encounter with himself, and the converse is equally true. Dialogue can be genuine only within the framework of presence to others and to oneself. From this perspective, every spiritual exercise is a dialogue, insofar as it is an exercise of authentic presence, to oneself and to others." (Hadot 2005, 91)

Hadot sees Platonic dialogues as ideal dialogues, presenting the itinerary between Socrates and his dialogue partner and not as transcriptions of real dialogues. These dialogues are less theoretical or dogmatic expositions of truth; their primary purpose is the guidance of the interlocutor towards a determinate mental attitude. Hadot stresses the importance of this point:

> "We must let ourselves be changed, in our point of view, attitudes, and convictions. This means we must dialogue with ourselves, and hence we must do battle with ourselves." (Hadot 2005, 91)

Thus, the efficacy of a dialogue should be measured in the persuasion of the interlocutor after discovering the contradictions of their own position

and not in exposition or demonstration of truth. With his special method of teaching, Socrates keeps his interlocutor in dialectic tension, demanding "the explicit consent of the interlocutor at every moment" (Hadot 2005, 92). What counts is the road traveled together on which the interlocutor, the student, and the reader form their own thoughts and not the solution to a problem.

Hadot finishes the chapter with a twofold conclusion that the Platonic dialogue corresponds exactly with a spiritual exercise. First, the dialogue leads the interlocutor towards conversion, assuming that the interlocutor has a real desire to discover the truth and the Good, and is willing to submit to the rational demands of the Logos. Second, every dialectical exercise, as an exercise of pure thought and subjected to the demands of the Logos, turns the soul away from the sensible world and allows it to convert itself towards the Good (see Hadot 2005, 93).

Even though Socrates was a master of dialogue, his figure remains ambiguous, troubling, oddly disconcerting, and ironic, and Hadot understands him in this light (see Hadot 2005, 148-149). Our knowledge about historical Socrates is limited, and the testimonies about him hide more than reveal him.

> "Because he was himself masked, Socrates became the prosopon, or mask, of personalities who felt the need to take shelter behind him. It was from him that they got the idea both to mask themselves, and to use Socratic irony as a mask." (See Hadot 2005, 149)

Who is hiding behind Socrates? First, the testimonies and interlocutors who were involved in person in conversation with Socrates. Following this logic, Plato is the first one to use Socrates as a mask to hide himself. In Hadot's interpretation, Plato wants his own experience of conversation with Socrates to be the experience of the student reading Plato's dialogue. So, the reader is placed in the same situation as Plato was, *i.e.*, as Socrates' interlocutor: confused, full of doubt, discouraged, almost upset, and lacking confidence. While many Greek philosophers speak in the first person, Plato systematically avoids the use of the first person and uses Socrates as his own mask. For this reason, it is hard to distinguish between Plato's and Socrates' teachings; they seem to be identical.

It remains an unanswered question why Plato used the mask of Socrates, and after Plato, why so many contemporary philosophers, like Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, publish with pseudonyms. The person hiding behind the mask of a great teacher wants to be identified with his teacher, *e.g.*, Plato with Socrates, Nietzsche with Wagner. However, this identification is ironic; Plato, Nietzsche, and others, by wearing masks and hiding behind someone else, spread their own teaching, presented as words of their teachers. Hadot claims that wearing a mask is a pedagogical necessity and also a psychological need (Hadot 2005, 151). A person wearing the mask wants to be seen shining through others because a direct confrontation with readers seems too painful.

Second, Socrates' interlocutors, or the readers exposed to Socrates, occasionally want to wear Socrates' mask as well as a refuge in moments of crisis and discouragement. When lacking courage and confidence in conversation, Socrates intervenes and takes the others' doubt and uneasiness upon himself. By transferring their personal uneasiness onto Socrates, they regain confidence in their dialectical research (see Hadot 2005, 149).

In his thought-provoking analysis of Socrates and Plato, Hadot argues that Plato's written dialogues are doubly weakened by imitating real oral dialogues with Socrates. Once written, the answers come under the author's control, which cannot be the case in oral conversations (see Hadot 2005, 153).

Whether or not Plato is authentic in his presentations of Socrates' philosophy remains a secondary question in Hadot's reflection. What matters to Hadot is the irony in Socrates' (or Plato's) teaching (see Hadot 2005, 154). Socrates seems to be split in two: Socrates, who knows in advance the result of the discussion, and Socrates, who travels with his interlocutor and demands from the interlocutor's total agreement. At the same time, the interlocutor is also split: the interlocutor prior to the conversation with Socrates, and the one who identifying with Socrates and gradually being transformed. The irony is, in fact, that Socrates wants to learn something from his interlocutor at the beginning. In the end, the interlocutor identifies entirely with Socrates, contemporarily with aporia and doubt for Socrates repeated claims that he knows nothing.

"And yet, throughout the duration of the discussion, he has experienced what true activity of the mind is. Better yet, he has been Socrates himself. And Socrates is interrogation, questioning, and stepping back to take a look at oneself; in a word, he is consciousness." (Hadot 2005, 154)

Hadot argues that Socrates' enigmatic declaration: "I only know one thing: that is, that I do not know anything" should be interpreted as Socrates did not possess any transmissible knowledge. At the same time, Socrates, through his questioning, brings the interlocutor to the point of decision whether or not "he will resolve to live according to his conscience and to reason. … The individual thus finds him/herself called into question in the most fundamental bases of his action, and he becomes aware of the living problem he himself represents for himself." (Hadot 2005, 155). A few lines later, Hadot concludes that Socrates had no system to teach. His philosophy is an invitation to a new life, active reflection, and living consciousness.

Conclusion

Philosophy, with its old-new search for and examination of wisdom, struggles to follow its own mission in our time, featured by the age of information, artificial intelligence, nuances of subjectivism, fragmentation, in pursuit of a new synthesis, rediscovery of nature, search for eternity, rapid technological development, and much more. Recently, our time seems to be simultaneously complex and intriguing, placing each human in a challenging situation. Perhaps for the first time in human history, lack of knowledge cannot be taken as a possible answer. With just a few clicks, our devices offer extensive answers in almost all areas, something unprecedented in human history.

In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle states that having and using knowledge are distinct and different from each other (Aristotle 1999, 121). Having knowledge does not implicitly include using knowledge. Neither do we live in an enlightened age, ready to follow the best possible rational answers to our challenges, as Kant hoped for in his essay "What is Enlightenment?" (Kant 1983, 44). In so many ways, our

time seems to be similar to the time of Pythagoras, the first one calling himself a philosopher, a lover of knowledge, in distinction from the sophists, holders of knowledge. With an excessive reliance on the Internet, we are similar to the sophists, *i.e.*, holders of knowledge accessible through our devices. At the same time, the same devices do not enable us to aspire to the highest possible knowledge, that complex algorithms cannot grasp. To have an insight into the highest possible knowledge, one must prevail on the knowledge of the soul and the divine. To reach this kind of knowledge, the ultimate goal of every lover of wisdom, one needs to go beyond the intellectual exercises rooted in reason. Access to true knowledge is a matter of spiritual engagement, transcending the principles of the natural world. It is no wonder, then, that the founders of ancient Greek philosophy did not struggle to refer to philosophy as a spiritual activity, calling for examination and deeper understanding of their present understanding.

The search for this kind of knowledge remains the pivotal mission of our time for both philosophers and non-philosophers. As presented in the first chapter of this article, the appearance of practical philosophy in the past decades can be interpreted as a genuine desire to reach the highest possible knowledge, on the level of individual transformation and action and not just on the theoretical level. Human life, not human words, should reveal the amazing potentiality hidden in human nature, *i.e.*, to be in touch with the divine (Platovnjak 2018, 1043-1054). As already discussed, practical philosophy seems to be a new attempt in this direction, strengthening the search for the highest possible knowledge that humans can reach and cannot be left for the exclusive domain of human reason.

It would be incorrect to conclude that practical philosophy is alone in creating a new synthesis. Practical psychology attempts to reach something similar by applying psychological principles, theories, and new scientific discoveries, especially in the field of neurosciences, to everyday life situations. Psychological knowledge and techniques can help us solve problems, improve relationships, enhance personal development and performance, promote well-being, and support behavior change, all with a view of having more fulfilling lives. Practical philosophy and psychology may belong to the field of applied sciences, the purpose of which is to apply theoretical knowledge to more practical purposes.

The intention of this reflection is to present the practicality of theoretical knowledge as an expression of the spiritual need and desire to transform our lives. This transformation, as well as a serious engagement in spiritual life, should not be a project left to the individual's creativity in their existence in a self-created bubble, as modern subjectivism claims to be the case. A profound spiritual life is an intriguing and challenging path based on a genuine dialogue of the practitioner with themselves, other people, and their willingness to be open to the transcendent. Pierre Hadot's interpretation of ancient philosophy as a way of life remains a pivotal contribution to the contemporary struggle to station philosophical wisdom, both in academia and in daily life. As stated before, our challenge seems to be to follow Socrates' example and adequately engage in the process of dialogue, and not to elaborate a new philosophical system; there are many systems already out there.

Following Hadot's interpretation of Socrates, genuine dialogue is intended to be a spiritual exercise, understood as an exercise of the authentic presence of the self to the self and of the self to the others. What matters most in the dialogical process is the process of dialogical engagement leading towards better transformation of one's vision of the world and a metamorphosis of their personality, *i.e.*, a transformation of all aspects of their being: intellect, imagination, sensibility, and will.

In his publications, Hadot often refers to Saint Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, the Christian version of a Greco-Roman tradition of *askesis*, *i.e.*, the practice of spiritual exercises (Hadot 2005, 82). The relationship between the one making the spiritual exercises and their director and the importance of respect for one's freedom are the preconditions for a genuine experience of God.

In relatively detailed instructions about how to do *Spiritual Exercises*, Saint Ignatius emphasizes the specific role of the spiritual director, who accompanies the one making the spiritual exercises. Their relationship must be defined by freedom and respect for the one making the spiritual exercises.

> "Spiritual directors do not own the path that the retreatant follows, rather one must be free to choose from among the many possible alternatives available at any given moment." (Osorio 2005, 74)

Of course, a good director warns the retreatant making the spiritual exercises of possible dangers and pitfalls; however, all decisions have to be made by

them, and not by the director. The director's role is to create a comfortable working environment with sufficient warmth that may facilitate a closer encounter with God. This warmth allows the one making the spiritual exercises to be engaged with all their vital energies and capacities; warmth discloses the impasses and possible mistaken routes; warmth helps react against what does not seem to be in service, honor, and glory of God. This warmth is balanced with reserve, or the director's detachment, which protects the director from imposing their own spiritual experience on the one making the spiritual exercises, which is necessary for an authentic experience of freedom and God. Following the same line, the director is not supposed to over-explain or reflect too much on the suggested text for meditation, which might hinder the practitioner from tasting the richness of the text by themselves.

> "Giving the Exercises, then, is not, as contrary to common understanding, indoctrination, persuasion or debate of understanding and reason, rather it is creating adequate space so that the one making the Exercises may, with the help of method and order, arrive at an internal knowledge reaching a decision through some disordered affection." (Osorio 2005, 80)

The goal of making the spiritual exercises is to have a genuine and authentic experience of God. This experience is so personal and unique to the one making the spiritual exercises that his path or experience of God cannot be repeated by anybody else.

Practical philosophy, Hadot's interpretation of ancient philosophy as a way of life, and Saint Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises* seem to share one common characteristic: to experience what the individual longs for in the depths of his or her being. When theoretical explanations do not lead to action and personal transformation, they leave us empty and unfulfilled. Socrates and his disciples believed in the power of dialogue as the way to the essence of human existence. Again, the beauty of fulfillment, as well as the struggle of the unfulfillment of human existence, cannot be theoretically explained; it has to be lived and experienced. This is possible only through personal commitment and ongoing effort, understood as reflections of one's longing and desire to enter the transcendental dimensions of existence. Since freedom is the essence of human nature, the path cannot be imposed or prescribed. What remains is the invitation to embrace the

spiritual journey. Proponents of practical philosophy, Socrates as a dialog partner, or the spiritual director in the spiritual exercises, can help and accompany us, but they cannot replace personal commitment.

To sum up, philosophy as a spiritual exercise is meant to be a practical, demanding effort and training, involving one's whole way of existence, in which nothing is omitted or excluded. In the age of abundance of information, omitted or superficially explored areas of human existence are questions related to the authentic connection with other people, the entire universe, and the meaning of life, covering existential questions related to our human nature, which has to include pain, suffering, and death. Philosophy is an art of living that cures us of our illness and teaches us a new way of life. By referring to *Phaedo* (Phaedo 67, c-d), Hadot stresses the importance of our reflection on death:

> "... training to die to one's individuality and passions, in order to look at things from the perspective of universality and objectivity" (Hadot 2005, 95).

This training includes the purification of the soul, placing the boundaries of the body, practicing the virtues, putting oneself in order, and allowing to be touched by the Good and God.

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SOPHIA PHILIA AS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Abstract. Philosophy can be understood as a spiritual practice because the purpose of philosophizing is the cultivation of the spiritual in man, of what can be subject to improvement, and change through reorientation and purification through the recurring act of intervention-cultivation. The effect of the practice of philosophy is not a mere improvement of the inner life, but a radical reorientation of the intentions under which it takes place. Philosophy, as a daily replayed act, means reworking inner paths, repetitively but not in the same way.

Keywords: Sophia, philosophizing, spiritual practice

Introduction

Philo-Sophia, *Philia for Sophia*, the name for a fundamental quest of the Greek spirit, is, in fact, a syntagm that brings together an ideal and a pursuit, having essentially an emotional character, that of *tending towards*. So, the emotional movement of *tending toward*, of being in search of *Sophia*. *Sophia* belongs to God; it does not belong to man. *Sophia* is an ideal that is not known or mastered, yet it is something you move towards, certain that it is to be sought. It is the condition in which the ideal draws you towards it, the pursuit of this attraction is a reverse process, which is provoked by its infinite proximity, but which in every instance brings you closer to wisdom. So, it can only be a repetitive act, an ever-repeated

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effort. Therefore, the philosopher, in this understanding, can only have a constant exercise of seek, he daily replays his effort and emotion closer to *Sophia*. Philosophy is mainly linked to practice, to a steady emotional openness, but also to repetitiveness, to the daily routine. But this practice of the love of wisdom means no less benchmarks, which determine what is to be followed to maintain the path towards the goal.

So, philosophy can be understood as a spiritual practice, because the purpose of philosophizing is the cultivation of the spiritual in man, of what can be subject to improvement, and change through the act of reorientation and purification, *katharsis*, through the repeated act of intervention-cultivation. The essential point in this description of the philosophical act is that the effect of the practice of philosophy is not a mere improvement of the inner life, but a radical reorientation of the intentions under which it takes place. Philosophy, as a daily replayed act, means reworking inner paths, repetitively but not in the same way. Spiritual practice does not involve novelty as content. Plato's *Dialogues* exemplarily epitomize the path of investigation that involves the dialectical approach, the stake of the psychodrama proposed by the dialogue is the continuation by the reader in working with self, with what should be an inner effort to discover the truth, the truth. Such effort cannot be made once, nor can it be made linearly, as being an illuminating inner narrative. It is the challenge that *the Dialogues* leads to a repetition of the inner effort, a continual reiteration. It is, of course, each time a plus and a step forward in the resumption of the inner effort of investigation, but the starting point and the inner path are under the sign of the resumption. It constitutes the spiritual practice. This stake of the spiritual exercise, which cannot be but an inner guidance of a certain approach towards oneself, becomes increasingly important in the Platonic tradition, especially in Neoplatonism. Plotinus develops this way, which he considers privileged, namely, to put into a *symposium*, in a joint effort with a group of disciples, the search for the deeper meanings of a fragment of Plato considered essential (Remes 2008, 3). The hidden thought, what lies beyond the surface of the text, can be revealed by a joint inner effort, by an exercise in walking and orienting the mind inwards, towards the self. It is not, therefore, a way of discovering what the deeper meaning of the text might be through textual analysis, be it semantic analysis, or intertextuality,

through reference to the authors' texts as a whole or to the textual encounter between several authors. The internal resonance of the impact of certain utterances or readings is an act that must be repeated, always be repeated. This is because rereading does not result in new information but in deepening what was already understood and revealing its full meaning. This is why neither Plotinus nor the later Neoplatonists will ever aim to say anything new. They only wanted to reach higher steps of understanding what was supposed to be inspired, of what could not but be the expression of truth in the highest sense. The truth *reveals itself*, it cannot be revealed by an intellectual act, by a simple rational approach. Moreover, truth is not information. To expose oneself to the *Truth*, to be in the presence of the *Truth* means a different kind of relationship with it. *Truth* cannot be owned, you cannot have truth, in an informational form, truth does not mean specific content. The relationship with truth is a dynamic one, involving ups and downs, it is not like the intellectual mastery of the meaning of a statement but is found in terms of a relationship, a dynamic relation to something dynamic and from something that has its dynamics. Both the knower and what is to be known are dynamic entities. The dynamics of the knower are related to the existential momentum, which can be overcome both towards something more, deeper, but can also be lost, so towards something less in the power of knowing. This is why interest in formal logic is rather reduced in the Neoplatonic tradition since logical formalism does not account for this dynamism. The statements that appear in writings involving this perspective on truth cannot be seen as having informational consistency, as leading to a rationally consistent understanding, but rather as an approximation, as a testimony, a signal, of a degree of experience of the relationship with truth.

Philosophizing as Path of Trial

This way of knowing should be seen as the way of working experimentally, yet not as scientific experiment is described from the modern era onwards. This is for a few reasons. These reasons include the fact that the observer is not in a position of constant observation but fluctuates in the ability to sustain a certain level of observation (the quality of the act of observing

involves several instances). Then what could be described as observation instruments, or means by which the experiment can be made, fluctuate themselves, are the sum of the approximation of a relational distance, in constant change. An analogous situation is described in quantum physics, where the theorizations of experimental possibilities at the microphysical level have brought to light the fact that the observer has an active role in influencing the experiment, which raises reservations about the possibility of obtaining 'objective' experimental results (d'Espagnat 2021, 90). The spiritual senses, which have recently been discussed by several authors and which cannot be addressed in the same way as the bodily senses, can be invoked here. It is not possible to describe analytically how they work, for example, it is an open question whether they work individually or synergistically. Spiritual perception has not been described in the same way by those who have invoked it because this very instance is linked to an understanding of the self that is influenced by historical time and cultural areas (Gavrilyuk 2023, 34). Not least the language and cultural universe in which this possibility of experiencing truth can be expressed.

It is obvious that the act of philosophizing, as described above, is related to the need to constantly rebuild a path of trial, of putting to the test the one who follows the path, the path as well as the meaning, what the path aims at. It is perhaps the most radical meaning of the search, of a search that takes on the character of the radical testing of all three aspects involved in the act of knowledge. It is a self-testing carried out as radically as possible, repeatedly repeated, then it is a testing of the path on which this self-testing can be carried out, and no less, of the effectiveness of achieving the goal of the act of philosophizing. Philosophy done with this intention can only be within the frameworks of spiritual experience because this practice is an inner one, it is the putting into practice of what can be within the frameworks of the self. The 'spiritual' designation must indicate what implies modification, dynamics, and reorientation.

Philosophizing on Unattainable

A great philosophy opens new possibilities for thought, rather than giving it the limits within which it can operate. In this sense, Platonism is the

philosophy of the unattainable. This account should be understood not in the sense that no new things could be said in Plato's posterity, but the manner of Plato's writing does not trace a definite doctrinal outline, and the dialectical rationality of delimiting meanings by negation rather than affirmation always leaves room for further discourse. When Plato puts an idea into play, he does so because it turns out that there is a necessity of the march of thought for it to be uttered. There ought to be something at this moment of the unfolding of thought, and to this something, it is most appropriate to give this name. But this provisional state is never overcome. It is proper for man as a rational being to approach the truth about the world, but his limitation as a living being in the body will only enable him to be always on the way to this truth. In this sense the eminently practical character of Platonic philosophy can be understood, for the situation of living in the body means that the purpose of wisdom is always related to this state. The purpose of philosophy, as an act that is always limited, but which always gives an account of something concerning authentic reality, is fulfilled in the openness of a life always seeking Being. Of the highest realities, one can hardly say anything, and of the supreme reality it is more appropriate to be silent, therefore one's thoughts and utterances must always take this into account. Moreover, a proper life means only that one should always be open to the contemplation of the highest, which is what the specification of individual or community rules is for. This is why we run the risk of becoming too attached to the doctrine of Plato's *Ideas*. The formulation, always with a degree of the hypothetical, of a "place" where the true reality is to be found, never exceeds the horizon of practical necessity. Since human reason admits that we find ourselves in a degraded situation of reality, it is obvious that there should be a situation in which the Being is fully revealed. Thus, man always finds himself in the possibility of improvement. As long as he is alive, he will change his way of living and thinking, a situation that does not imply repeated self-denial, but an unceasing re-appreciation of the only authentic goal, the likeness of God, which means constant renunciation of what proves inimical to this likeness. This is how the theme of that excellence, *arete*, which Plato always posed, the philosophical approach results in finding the way to live, so that the supreme virtue, justice, is acquired. This is also the basis for the resignification of the *virtue* concept. The big

question of whether the acquisition of excellence can be the fruit of a technique has never left Plato. Although the investigation reveals the unworkability of a paradigm's application, it also reveals that the paradigm must play a role in the explanation so that the investigation will have to be resumed later. We see during the stages of Platonic meditation significant changes in the idea of virtue, and yet its essential meaning has never been set aside: that man should realize his essence as fully as possible, equivalent to the privileged ontological situation in which man achieves maximum resemblance to the Intelligible Reality (Vasiliou 2008, 12). This is why the terms of Platonic philosophy led to the exceptional situation that they were able to form the medium for latter philosophies, although these philosophies had in some cases different discourses. Perhaps the best testimony to the exceptional power of such a presentation of the concept is that when it was necessary to postulate the most difficult aspects of Christian dogma in confrontation with heresy, it was only possible to arrive at an answer by using the terms in which Plato understood to express his thinking.

Practicing Philosophy as Soteriology

Plotinus' doctrine, with its obvious soteriological character, reveals how Plato was reread, since his interpretation sought only what pertained to *religious Platonism*, giving little interest to the other topics in *Dialogues*. This is the development of Plato's paradigm, the *ascent of the soul to a lost region*, an ascent that means *a recovery* (Hutchinson 2018, 8). It turns out, however, that when morality is given an increasingly clear mystical foundation, contradictory attitudes towards the value of *arete*, a concept that had acquired a paradoxical status, will not be long in coming. Plotinus, distinguishing between political and purifying virtues, notes that God does not need either. God has no virtue. The paradox is that we try to become like, through virtue, the one who has no virtue. The same contradictory situation concerning the meaning of virtue is expressed by Philo Alexandrinus, who had set out to reconcile the vision offered by the Old Testament writings with Greek thought. The interpretations produced in this perspective often lead to paradoxes, for it is not easy to

answer the question of whether virtue prepares us to come into the action of God. Virtue comes from us and does not depend on us; it is only a free divine gift and ends by not being the antithesis of man in the divine majesty. *Virtue* grants the possibility of ascending to the *One*, but it can only be born in the soul through a first union with the *One*. Thus, virtue leads to contemplation only because it is born of contemplation. After being uplifted by a generous impulse from on high, the soul, since cannot remain in the state of contemplation, must return to the practical life and here seeks the likeness of God which is *virtue*. The point of cultivating virtues is the prospect of a return to a purely spiritual life, but only if *virtue* becomes *wisdom*, and above all *a stable state*. This is the reason for establishing two steps in virtue. There are virtues connected with the community, like justice, prudence, strength, and moderation, which give the power to master the body and to live well with others. But a higher place is given to purifying virtues, those which enable the soul to separate itself as much as possible from bodily life and to enter the contemplative state which has only one object: *One*.

Christian Meanings of Philosophy as a Spiritual Practice

The distinction between *esoterike* and *exoterike* in philosophical exercise, *i.e.* between outer and inner philosophy (Cavarnos 1968, 15). By *outer philosophy*, the ancient Greek philosophy, and the Neoplatonic philosophy of the first Christian centuries. What was of interest in the learning and exercise of the non-Christian philosophical tradition was the mind's training in accurate and truthful thinking. The focus was on *how* and not on *what*, on forming the ability to discern, since any higher spiritual experience has many dangers, especially the risk of dwindling in own imagination, as long as the rational capacities are not well shaped. Much more complex was the understanding of *inner philosophy*. It could mean, on the one hand, the Christian teaching as a body of doctrines, ideas, and methods transmitted orally or in writing. It is philosophy because in these teachings Wisdom itself is revealed, the eternal Logos, who took flesh. In another sense, was designated the lived Christian teaching. At this level, the emphasis is philosophy as practicing Christian virtues.

This experience of Christian doctrine is called 'philosophy' because the fulfillment of the commandments always has an unrepeatable character, although common in spirit. It is enough to mention the case of the pillars. Certain forms of spiritual need, especially inner peace, and inner need were designated under the name of *philosophy*. This meaning becomes increasingly important starting from the 13th century when hesychasm becomes a major spiritual and cultural theme. Philosophy also simply meant the love of God. But another meaning of the use of the term was also that of designating monastic life and principles. We see that the meanings of inner philosophy are not only complex but also always nuanced. They cannot be framed by any formal attempt at definition, and more than that, new meanings can be added at any time. The value of outer philosophy was never underestimated. From Gregory of Nyssa and Basil the Great to the last humanists of the 15th century, the propaedeutic importance of classical Greek education was always emphasized (Cavarnos 1968, 22).

The inner philosophy does not follow the Greek classic rationality: its specificity is given by what is distinctive to each person in communion with the *Logos*, with *God*. This is the reason why this part of philosophizing is beyond speech, it names the depth of the personal relation between the Creator and the creature, a relationship always unique and non-repeatable. Nevertheless, reason is not absent from this experience, but takes superior forms which cannot be simply placed in a discursive expression. But this is also the place where the paradoxicality of this expression lies: an experience that does not exceed reason, but it cannot be put into words either. This is the most practical dimension of philosophy, one that involves the entire being, and all the human capacities, and has therefore a change of man in his depth which received the name *metanoia* in the patristic works. It means a change of mind but not as in a modification of its function, a decrease or alteration of its rational capacities, but an opening of it to understanding what above Creation is, a *participation* in the uncreated. Therefore, *metanoia* also means *theosis*, the Greek name for deification: man is being deified, meaning that in some way he overcomes creation, and thus he has access to knowledge that is beyond the world frames. But the consequences of this experience are ample, they entail the whole human being. Understanding

the *person* as the ground of reality and philosophy as an existential exercise meant to prepare the personal experience of the other (God or man), constituted key elements in the novelty brought by the Christianity (Zizioulas 2006, 111).

Conclusion

The most important aspect of Christian philosophy as a spiritual practice is *betterment*, understood as the process of enhancing the human. This progress, or *betterment*, as it is termed, can be described as attaining somebody's "measure". This is because somebody's identity is not a mere configuration of psychophysiological characters, but a virtual tendency that can be more or less actualized through spiritual practice. Yet this road to betterment requires guidance, and this guidance is an act that cannot be done by following a manual, or a book, because of the concreteness and non-repeatability of a *personal mode of existence*. It was used the ancient Greek word *mystagogia* for this guidance, to indicate that there is rather an initiation than a teaching, than something related to the classical *paideia* (Golitzin 2013, 451). This formative path is the missing aspect of today's education. We need today a formative strategy that should compensate for the development of practical or theoretical abilities, this compensation being an *initiation process* as personal guidance dedicated to concrete and unique persons. This mystagogical approach can be described as the *discovery of what is non-repeatable* and, in that way can unleash the human potential, otherwise insufficiently initiated by the current educational strategies.

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SPIRITUALITY AS PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

Abstract. In this essay, I shall use Hadot's critical framework for considering the uneasy modern relationship between philosophy and the Christian spiritual tradition, rooted as it is in the ancient forms of spiritual exercise. I will begin with a brief sketch of this relationship, paying particular attention to some ways that Christian spirituality influenced philosophy in early modernity. From there, I shall turn to the work of Bernard Lonergan in order to develop a proposal for a contemporary spirituality of discernment as a philosophical practice. Lonergan, a Jesuit trained in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, built his philosophical project on the template of those exercises, inviting people to practices of self-appropriation for the purpose of exploring how discernment in a community can transform societies, reversing decline and promoting patterns of growth. Lonergan's method, I shall argue, offers a way of coming to understand the spirituality of discernment as a form of philosophical practice that heals the problems that Hadot diagnoses in modern philosophy.

Keywords: self-appropriation, discernment, spiritual exercise, first philosophy

Introduction: the Problem of Modern Philosophy

Pierre Hadot's analysis of ancient philosophy as spiritual exercise has offered to modern philosophers and historians of philosophy not only a hermeneutic by which to approach the ancient world, but also a critique of early modern and contemporary philosophical practice (Hadot 1995, 2020). Hadot described his task as attempting to grasp what Goethe called the

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Urphänomene that is philosophy[2] – the original, unadulterated, primordial phenomenon that is the discipline and practice of *philosophia* – and in so doing, to "eliminate the preconceptions the word philosophy may evoke in the modern mind" (Hadot 1995, 53). Modern philosophy, he argues, has become self-referential, "a reason grounded in itself," too often falling into the pattern of exegesis of philosophical texts. Philosophical discourse is about philosophical discourse.

The recovery of the *Urphänomene* is for Hadot about the *practice* of philosophy, as distinct from the *content* sought by exegetes. His use of the term "spiritual exercises" to describe this *Urphänomene* represents a careful attempt to get at the comprehensiveness of what philosophy was originally about, and ought still to correspond to: "a transformation of our vision of the world, and to a metamorphosis of our personality" (Hadot 1995, 82). He rejects, in turn, the terms "psychic," "moral," "ethical," "intellectual," "of thought," and "of the soul," all of which fail to get at the kind of fundamental change that true philosophy effects in the person. He writes:

> "The word 'spiritual' is quite apt to make us understand that these exercises are the result, not merely of thought, but of the individual's entire psychism." (Hadot 1995, 82)

They had as their goal "the transformation of our vision of the world, and the metamorphosis of our being. They therefore have not merely a moral, but also an existential value" (Hadot 1995, 127). He writes:

> "The philosophical act is not situated merely on the cognitive level, but on that of the self and of being. It is a progress which causes us to *be* more fully, and makes us better. It is a conversion which turns our entire life upside down, changing the life of the person who goes through it. It raises the individual from an inauthentic condition of life, darkened by unconsciousness and harassed by worry, to an authentic state of life, in which he attains self-consciousness, an exact vision of the world, inner peace, and freedom." (Hadot 1995, 83)[3]

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[2]   Hadot's invocation of Goethe is surely not accidental. Goethe's important neologism referred to his "specific epistemological mediation between idealism and empiricism and opens onto a notion of intuitive understanding" (Meixner 2022).

[3]   In this quote, Hadot is introducing the central theme of philosophy as spiritual exercise in the ancient world, specifically in the Hellenistic and Roman contexts. The quote offers an overview of the Stoic approach to philosophy in particular.

The fundamental problem of modern philosophy, he asserts, is that it has lost touch with this animating method, focusing instead on abstractions that do not foster conversion. All of philosophy is about transformation. Arnold I. Davidson parses Hadot's approach to the three parts of philosophy – logic, physics, and ethics – and observes that for Hadot, all of them (not only ethics) are implicated in spiritual exercise: "there is a practical or lived logic, a lived physics, and a lived ethics" (Davidson 1995, 24). Seeking a return to the *Urphänomene* involves, therefore, a kind of *ressourcement*, which Simone D'Agostino describes in Hadot's work as "a present-day surfacing of the original – hence implicitly first and genuine – aspect of philosophy, at the expense of a certain aspect that emerged later" (D'Agostino 2023, 6).

To be sure, Hadot held that there has been some recovery of the ancient model in figures such as Goethe, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, the young Hegelians, Marx, Thoreau, Bergson, the existentialists, Wittgenstein, and Foucault (Hadot 1995, 108). Healing modern philosophy would mean accounting for its historic missteps away from the purpose of spiritual exercise. It would re-center spirituality as a philosophical practice, understanding that its purpose is conversion to greater authenticity. This healing would regard philosophical conceptualization and abstraction not necessarily as misguided, but would emphasize that such movements of intelligence are ultimately in service to the transformation of the person and, equally importantly, the flourishing of the community of persons[4]. Ancient philosophy, Hadot writes, was fundamentally a community effort, with the aim being not only the transformation of the self, but also the transformation of society and the well-being of cities[5].

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[4]   Against the charge that philosophical practice of the Stoics and Platonists was only about the self, Hadot writes: "In my view, the feeling of belonging to a whole is an essential element: belonging, that is, both to the whole constituted by the human community, and to that constituted by the cosmic whole. Seneca sums it up in four words: *Toti se inserens mundo*, 'Plunging oneself into the totality of the world'." (Hadot 1995, 208).

[5]   "Ancient philosophy required a common effort community of research, mutual assistance, and spiritual support. Above all, philosophers – even, in the last analysis, the Epicureans – never gave up having an effect on their cities, transforming society, and serving their citizens" (Hadot 1995, 274).

In this essay, I shall use Hadot's critical framework for considering the uneasy modern relationship between philosophy and the Christian spiritual tradition, rooted as it is in the ancient forms of spiritual exercise. I will begin with a brief sketch of this relationship, paying particular attention to some ways that Christian spirituality influenced philosophy in early modernity. From there, I shall turn to the work of Bernard Lonergan in order to develop a proposal for a contemporary spirituality of discernment as a philosophical practice. Lonergan, a Jesuit trained in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, built his philosophical project on the template of those exercises, inviting people to practices of self-appropriation for the purpose of exploring how discernment in a community can transform societies, reversing decline and promoting patterns of growth (Murray 2007, Whelan 2013). Lonergan's method, I shall argue, offers a way of coming to understand the spirituality of discernment as a form of philosophical practice that heals the problems that Hadot diagnoses in modern philosophy.

Christian Spirituality and Philosophy in Modernity

To the casual observer, Christian spirituality and philosophy represent different conceptual worlds, with different vocabularies, histories, and methodologies. Philosophy, of course, has a history that one can trace without much controversy to the ancient Greek world. As a loan word from Greek, *philosophy* can be traced quite literally to ancient texts.

Spirituality, on the other hand, is an amorphous term with no such clear history. In antiquity, the word *spiritus* appears in both classical and Christian sources, but its meaning varies: it refers in some cases to wind or breath;[6] in others to pride or arrogance;[7] in still others to the presence of a god.[8] In the Vulgate, though, it appears frequently to translate either the Hebrew *ruah* or the Greek *pneuma*. In the latter case, its referent is

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[6]   As in Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* 2, 54, 136: "*aspera arteria excipiat animam eam, quae ducta sit spiritu*".

[7]   Cicero, *De Lege Agraria* 2, 34, 93: "*quem hominem! quā irā! quo spirtu!*"

[8]   Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* 2, 7, 19: "*haec fieri non possent, nisi ea uno divino et continuato spiritu continerentur*".

frequently the Holy Spirit, though there are uses (such as Mark 6:7 and Luke 8:2) that retain a more generic reference to evil spirits. Centuries later, Augustine's use of *spiritus* will retain some of these references to evil spirits (*e.g.* "those who are possessed and held by the spirits of iniquity" and "I am convinced that you are now free from these evil spirits") (Augustine 1959, 161), but more often will follow Saint Paul's use of *pneuma* and its related forms.[9]

The provenance of the English word *spirituality* is ambiguous, to say the very least. For example, in the 16th century, the word referred to the power of the Church, used in juxtaposition to the term *temporality* in reference to the state[10]. During that same period, the adjective *spiritual* was sufficiently clear in Christian literature, referring to the ways of living a Christian life[11]. According to academic consensus, the modern concept of *spirituality* (including its cognate words across Europe) as a form of practice emerged in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, in part because of the rise of laity in the post-Reformation church (Roldán-Figueroa, 2021, 497)[12]. There is, to be sure, an extensive literature about mystical and ascetical theology that dates back to the earliest centuries of the church, and commentaries on the Bible have invoked reflection on

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[9] Consider Augustine's Sermon 242, in which he comments on Paul's letter to the Galatians (chapter 5): "Not without reason have those bodies been termed 'spiritual.' They have not been called 'spiritual' because they will be spirits, not bodies. As a matter of fact, those bodies which we now possess are called 'soul-infused' bodies, yet they are not souls, but bodies. Just as our bodies are now called 'soul-infused,' yet are not souls, so those bodies are called 'spiritual' without being spirits, because they will be bodies. Why, then, is it called a spiritual body, my dearly beloved, except because it will obey the direction of the spirit? Nothing in yourself will be at variance with yourself; nothing in yourself will rebel against yourself. No longer will there be that which the Apostle laments in the passage: 'The flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh'." (Augustine 1959, 271).

[10] The Oxford English Dictionary dates the first usage of the term to 1417. A century and a half later, Stapleton (1565, 144) uses the word "Spirituality" to refer polemically to Catholic bishops, in contrast to the temporal authority of the prince. Compare Lyndesay (1602), in which he names the first two estates "Temporalitie" and "Spiritualitie."

[11] See, for example, Thomas More's use of the word 100 times in his work (More 1557).

[12] Roldán-Figueroa's article offers a detailed history of the use of the term across Europe, and makes the persuasive case that 17th century Spain is where its development impacted the modern meaning of spirituality.

pneumatology, Christian discipleship, prayer, mystagogy, ethics, and other themes related to the modern understanding of spirituality (McGinn 2004-2021). Only over the last century, though, has the term *spirituality* garnered attention in academic literature.

The ambiguity of spirituality, in contrast to philosophy, has meant that the literature about spirituality has not generally been part of the academic study of philosophy, let alone the subject of philosophical reflection. This observation is evident in the philosophical literature of recent years. Christina Gschwandtner recently observed that in the main database for articles in philosophy, only 1800 articles about spirituality (compared to 50,000 about religion) were listed, and most of those having to do with bioethics and "the benefits of spirituality in a medical setting" (Gschwandtner 2021, 421). To be sure, there is a well-established history of the Philosophy of Religion, and in recent years there has been a growing literature of the study of Spirituality[13]. The slippage in attempts to define terms, especially the overlapping categories of religion and spirituality, means that there are no agreed-on methodologies for approaching spiritual literature for the sake of discerning its contributions to the history of philosophy.

One important effect of this methodological lacuna is that common treatments of the history of philosophy tend to overlook spiritual literature, even when that literature might contribute to an understanding of the way that philosophical insights have been influenced by spirituality. For example, Christina Van Dyke demonstrates in her book *A Hidden Wisdom* that presumption about what "counts" as philosophy, together with prejudice against the writings of women, led to the exclusion of significant women writers from accounts of the development of medieval philosophy[14]. She summarizes the hermeneutical issue well:

> "Because the Christian tradition acknowledges mystical experiences and knowledge of God's hidden truths as granted by God via an act of grace, the philosophy and

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[13] See Gschwandtner (2021) for a helpful overview of some of the literature defining the study of spirituality.

[14] Van Dyke (2022) points to prominent treatments such as Stephen Boulter's *Why Medieval Philosophy Matters* (2019) and the *Oxford Handbook of Mystical Theology* (2020), both of which include not a single woman writer, even though a number were very active in the periods treated.

theology of mysticism and contemplativism can never be simply the purview of the
powerful: they are available to anyone and everyone God chooses." (Van Dyke 2022, xxi)

The literature of the medieval period, which she describes as mystical or
contemplative (favoring the latter term), is important not only as a body
of literature about self-knowledge, reason and love, God and immortality;
but also, as an expanded corpus of reflective literature that offers insights to
historians about the ways that ideas helped to shape the Medieval world
and its aftermath.

Christia Mercer echoes this insight, similarly pointing to the effect
that Medieval spirituality influenced later writers.

"Between 1250 and 1500, a form of spiritual meditation arose, which included new
accounts of the role of self-knowledge in the pursuit of knowledge of God. Not
only were many of the most prominent of these meditations written by women, they
contain philosophical insights about self-knowledge, the relation between mind
and body, and the cognitive benefits of suffering." (Mercer 2017)

Mercer takes as her example Descartes, and argues that his *Meditations* was
influenced directly by the *Interior Castle* of Teresa of Ávila, a spiritual
classic throughout Europe in the 17th century. His use of the genre of
meditation was deliberate, Mercer argues, in order to show the contours
of his spiritual journey[15]. Like so many authors before him who followed
Augustine's "return into myself" (Augustine 1991) before advancing in
knowledge of the truth, Descartes begins his meditations with an inward
turn. His method, she writes, mirrors that of Teresa:

"Each expects to lead meditators to certainty about fundamental truths, each employs
demonic deception as a strategic means to that goal, and each transforms the
common deceiving-demon trope into something with a powerful epistemological
punch." (Mercer 2017, 2548)

Van Dyke's and Mercer's essays are the tip of an iceberg. The question
that they raise is a critical one not only for understanding the history of

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[15] Compare Gaukroger (1995, 336): "The *Meditationes* read like an account of a spiritual
journey in which the truth is only to be discovered by purging, followed by a kind of
rebirth. The precedents for this seem to come from writers such as Ignatius Loyola,
and more generally from the manuals of devotional exercises at this time."

philosophy (and particularly philosophy by women); it is also a question about philosophy itself. What (who) counts?

Mercer narrates the way that the "new philosophy" that began with Descartes was really a creation of 19th and 20th century German scholars like Kuno Fischer and Ernst Cassirer, who were influenced by the ways that Hegel and Kant interpreted history (Mercer 2017, 2540)[16]. That narration, she argues, is limited by the hermeneutical perspectives shaped by attention to a rationalist *Geist*, and thus elides or ignores distinctions that emerged, in the examples above, by women whose interior lives were shaped profoundly by Christian spiritual practices. What else has the tradition failed to take seriously? What other hermeneutics might open space for careful exploration of the influence of women or men immersed in spirituality who raise properly philosophical questions and engage in philosophical practices, such as self-ordering, discernment, and love?

Spirituality as Infinite Desire

Clare Carlisle offers a way for contemporary philosophy to attend to the fruits of spiritual practice. Pushing against the tendency to view spirituality through the lens of William James' notion of "religious experience," she focuses instead on practice: what she describes as "knowledge-by-acquaintance, acquired by long practice, which is conveyed by the phrase 'an experienced practitioner', rather than what is suggested by the phrase 'a religious experience'" (Carlisle 2019, 430). She describes practice as a species of habit:

> "habit is a contraction of a person's sphere of activity and experience, while practice tends toward development and growth." (Carlisle 2019, 431)

A key element constituting habit is desire, which she describes as that which "animates" the other elements (repetition, receptivity, and resistance) (Carlisle 2010, 2014). She points to Félix Ravaisson's work *De L'habitude* (1838), in which he specifies that all habit is animated by desire for the good, and ultimately for God.

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16   Mercer cites K. Fischer 1854-1877; 1878; E. Cassirer 1932.

Practice is for Carlisle a refinement of desire, oriented toward a practitioner's perception of the outcome, even though that perception may as yet be indeterminate (Carlisle 2019, 436). She uses Talbot Brewer's description of human life as being marked by a "continuous awakening to the good, not full apprehension of it," suggesting that spiritual practice amounts to a dialectic of practicing and conceiving of the good (Carlisle 2019, 436-7)[17]. Within the Christian spiritual tradition, the goal is conceived as knowledge and love of God. Perhaps by contrast, in Buddhist tradition the goal is conceived as liberation or enlightenment, but in both cases, she writes, "practice is oriented by desire for a good that is not only an indeterminate object, but not an object at all" (437). There is a certain aphophaticism in the practice, to the extent that one cannot be sure either about the object of desire or about how one might enjoy it. The desire is infinite, open-ended, indeterminate.

What is distinctive is that the desire is experienced as reciprocal. Carlisle's essay involves reflection on interviews she conducted with Christian and Buddhist monks, and this theme of reciprocity applied to both: the practitioners described their experience as "not simply as desiring, but as being-desired." Later, she elaborates:

> "And the agency at work in the religious life is understood by practitioners – if not universally, then often enough to be taken seriously – to have its source beyond themselves; the good to which their practice aspires is not envisaged simply as a not-yet-realized and not-quite-specified ideal, but as an already active power, and this allows us to see the desires grounded in this good to be reciprocal rather than unilateral, cosmic as well as individual." (Carlisle 2019, 442)

The specific spiritual practices the monks engage in are oriented toward infinity and indeterminacy, lest they devolve into finite desires, which theistic traditions describe as idolatry. These practices, she writes, offer ways of inhabiting the tension of specific, embodied practice (on the one hand) and the aspiration of infinite good (on the other). She describes these practices as dialectical: "their repetitions enact a receptivity and overcome a resistance to what is not entirely known and specifiable in advance" (442).

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[17]   She cites an unpublished essay by Talbot Brewer, "Desire and creative activity."

Carlisle closes her essay by observing the implications for philosophy of considering spirituality as infinite desire. Reading historical sources means engaging the authors' experiences, and being open to the ways that their experiences help us to re-interpret our own. I find this approach to be helpful in considering the question of how to approach spirituality as a philosophical practice. Conceiving of spirituality as involving a dialectic between immediate desire (say, for peace or belonging to a religious community) and infinite desire – an opening toward whatever else might unfold as a consequence of spiritual exercise – situates spirituality within the long tradition described by Hadot as involving personal and communal transformation. Taking spirituality seriously, in other words, means opening oneself to the possibility of navigating between immediate desire and the possibility of transformation within the self that moves in an infinite direction, a direction that a person may eventually come to thematize through appeal to the language of religious traditions.

That thematization – the appeal to traditional religious language or scripture or devotional practice – is not necessarily *a priori* a move away from dialectical philosophical method. It is possible to conceive of spirituality, even spirituality practiced within the confessions and practices of a particular tradition (Stoic, Buddhist, Orthodox Christian) – as philosophy. I will argue below that in fact a spirituality rooted in self-appropriation is a first philosophy, a heuristic structure that moves in the direction of infinite desire open to the possibility of receptivity to God.

Self-Appropriation as First Philosophy

I return to Hadot's description of the ancient form of philosophy as spiritual exercise:

> "The philosophical act is not situated merely on the cognitive level, but on that of the self and of being. It is a progress which causes us to *be* more fully, and makes us better. It is a conversion which turns our entire life upside down, changing the life of the person who goes through it. It raises the individual from an inauthentic condition of life, darkened by unconsciousness and harassed by worry, to an authentic state of life, in which he attains self-consciousness, an exact vision of the world, inner peace, and freedom." (Hadot 1995, 83)

Clare Carlisle's description of spirituality as infinite desire helps us to return to Hadot's notion, by alerting us to the danger of truncating human experience and understanding by limiting our concern to the cognitive level. If the object of philosophy is wisdom, truth, goodness, beauty, or other transcendental notions – that is, objects of understanding that lie beyond my present, synchronic capacities for apprehension, but towards which I nevertheless strive diachronically – then philosophy itself is rooted in infinite desire, a desire that opens one to ever-greater insights. Examining the way those insights unfold, then, is a starting point for further consideration of the transcendent dynamism proper to philosophy. Toward this end, I turn to Bernard Lonergan, to explore first his cognitional theory and then his methodology.

Lonergan, like Descartes, roots his philosophy in a turn to the subject; and also, like Descartes, he demonstrates a significant reliance on important elements of spiritual exercise after the manner of Ignatius of Loyola (Allen 2017). Both were formed in Ignatian pedagogy: Descartes as a student at the Collège La Flèche, Lonergan as a Jesuit priest. Jeremy Wilkins further highlights the similarities between the two thinkers: a commitment to transformative exercises of consciousness; a love of the clarity of mathematics; a desire to re-ground philosophy, and a wariness of imagination and its effect on intelligence (Wilkins 2018). But he goes on to distinguish Lonergan's approach from that of Descartes:

> "But Lonergan's turn is not to the subject as object, as intuited. It is to the subject as subject, as inquirer and lover, open to the world in fact as *potens omnia fieri* [able to do all things], open in fragile achievement, open in unmerited giftedness." (Wilkins 2018, 173)

Descartes, Wilkins says, might easily slide into solipsism, whereas Lonergan is attuned to a subject's dynamic of question and answer that fundamentally orient him toward the world and toward others (Wilkins 2018, 175).

Where Descartes' subject is a *res cogitans* who brackets the world in a kind of spiritual exercise of withdrawal, Lonergan's subject is a flesh-and-blood human being asking real-time questions about the world in the hope of healing it (Whelan 2013, 8). He establishes a cognitional theory not in the manner of a Cartesian search for clear and distinct

ideas, but rather as a way to name the process by which human beings spontaneously ask questions, seek insights, refine their questions, and unfold the intelligibility of the world. For Lonergan, the desire to know is unrestricted, echoing Carlisle's description of infinite desire. It reaches for the whole of being, and thus apprehends being heuristically, moving in the direction of greater and greater intelligence open to whatever intelligibility is to be found in the process, including God. The preface to his first magnum opus, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* indicates his purpose, and indeed illustrates the way he both borrows from and distinguishes himself from Descartes.

> "just as insight into insight yields a clear and distinct idea of clear and distinct ideas, just as it includes an apprehension of the meaning of meaning, just as it exhibits the range of the a priori synthetic components in our knowledge, just as it involves a philosophic unification of mathematics, the sciences, and common sense, just as it implies a metaphysical account of what is to be known through the various departments of human inquiry, so also insight into the various modes of the flight from understanding will explain (1) the range of really confused yet apparently clear and distinct ideas, (2) aberrant views on the meaning of meaning, (3) distortions in the a priori synthetic components in our knowledge, (4) the existence of a multiplicity of philosophies, and (5) the series of mistaken metaphysical and antimetaphysical positions." (Lonergan 1992, 6)

Later in his book, he will name his search for insight into insight a cognitional theory: "in any philosophy it is possible to distinguish between its cognitional theory and, on the other hand, its pronouncements on metaphysical, ethical, and theological issues. Let us name the cognitional theory the basis, and the other pronouncements the expansion" (Lonergan 1992, 412). Cognitional theory, for him, is a first philosophy if we approach philosophical questions as beings capable of asking questions[18]. Wilkins explains that for Lonergan, cognitional theory is fundamentally a method, a

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[18] Wilkins (2018, 144) writes: "In a 1957 paper to the American Catholic Philosophical Association, …Lonergan situated his procedure in *Insight* within the context of 'the standard Aristotelian and Thomist distinction between what is first *quoad se* and what is first *quoad nos*.' Aquinas had established knowledge on metaphysical principles, while in *Insight* Lonergan had established metaphysics on cognitional principles." He cites Lonergan 1988, 143.

set of exercises by which a person moves toward insight into insight[19]. "*Insight* is the imperfect realization of Lonergan's intention to prepare 'a set of exercises' for rational self-appropriation," on the model of John Henry Newman's *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Wilkins 2018, 133). Lonergan offers a phenomenology of inquiry.

> "For Lonergan, what is 'basic' in the basic and total horizon is the subject; and self-knowledge, self-appropriation, and transcendental method are for him explicitly 'first philosophy'." (Wilkins 2018, 142 and 149-50).

The person committed to the ongoing process of self-appropriation becomes aware of the dynamism of the desire to know. Over time, the person understands that desire as unrestricted: it desires the whole of being (Lonergan 1992, 695)[20]. It is quite the opposite of solipsism: the move to interiority is ultimately for the purpose of discerning the world anew with a capacity for wonder.

> "It is only through the long and confused twilight of philosophic initiation that one can find one's way into interiority and achieve through self-appropriation a basis, a foundation, that is distinct from common sense and theory, that acknowledges their disparateness, that accounts for both and critically grounds them both." (Lonergan 2017, 82)

Interiority, in this account, is a sophisticated and disciplined practice of ever-renewing appropriation of one's dynamism of asking and answering questions, moving toward understanding, judgment, and decisions. It moves a person beyond the unreflective habits grounded in common sense (governed, as they often are, by uncritical mimesis), in the direction of ever-greater understanding of the whole of being. A person comes to understand the world as intelligible, and that intelligibility gives rise to a desire for the good, for ethics. For that desire propels a person beyond the restrictions of common sense into a new, intellectual pattern of

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[19] "Lonergan's 'first philosophy' is not first in a hierarchy of discourses, but first in an order of methodical controls; it is not ontologically but methodologically basic and prior to particular sciences; it is first as the science of sciences in a context where sciences are defined by their methodologies rather than by their subjects" (Wilkins 2018, 132).

[20] He writes, "being is the objective of the detached, disinterested, unrestricted desire to know."

experience, which Aristotle described as the beginning of all science and philosophy (Lonergan, 2005, 86).[21] That desire is infinite, and as such it "correctly heads towards an unrestricted act of understanding, towards God" (Lonergan 1992, 711). Moreover,

> "There is to human inquiry an unrestricted demand for intelligibility. There is to human judgment a demand for the unconditioned. There is to human deliberation a criterion that criticizes every finite good. So, it is … that man can reach basic fulfilment, peace, joy, only by moving beyond the realms of common sense, theory, and interiority and into the realm in which God is known and loved." (Lonergan 2017, 81)

Self-appropriation is first philosophy because it is a reflective taking-hold of oneself, unfolding a dynamism of desire that is unrestricted, infinite. But self-appropriation itself is neither spontaneous nor instantaneous; it is rather cumulative, predicated on the spiritual exercise that is discernment, to which we now turn.

Self-Appropriation as Discernment

> Philosophy finds its proper data in intentional consciousness. Its primary function is to promote the self-appropriation that cuts to the root of philosophic differences and incomprehensions. (Lonergan 2017, 91)

Patrick Byrne points to Lonergan's notion of self-appropriation as a form of discernment, a "refined form of attention" rooted in both classical and Christian practices (Byrne 2016, 13-14 and 31-32). It involves a "double intentionality," which Byrne describes as "attentiveness to the matter at hand, but also attentiveness to one's own way of being attentive." Like ancient practices that were the subject of Hadot's research, discernment presupposes "a development or even transformation of the person engaged in discernment" (Byrne 2016, 15). It aims at what is deepest in a person and is ordered toward not only an object of understanding, but also a way of living (Byrne 2016, 16).

Byrne points to the roots of Lonergan's understanding of discernment in the work of Aristotle, Saint Paul, and Ignatius of Loyola. Aristotle highlights

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21   He cites Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.2 982b 12-18; 983a 12-18.

the careful work of dialectic; Paul reflects on the role of the Holy Spirit; and Ignatius attends to the dynamics of interiority by which a person comes to choose between directions of desire and to know the will of God. Attending to these complementary aspects of discernment will shed light on how a spirituality rooted in discernment is a form of philosophical practice.

Byrne begins with Aristotle's clarification of dialectic, which arises out of ordinary experience as a method to achieve refinement in one's thinking. In such works as *Topics*, *Sophistical Refutation*s, and *Rhetoric*, Aristotle draws from the Socratic/Platonic tradition to highlight the move from *endoxa* to *epistêmê*, from the opinions of reputable people to true knowledge. Lonergan, as we've seen, was similarly interested in the move from common sense to the intellectual pattern of experience as a way of refining one's thinking. Aristotle, though, focuses on the way that reputable people already have a potency (*dunamis*) to seek the true, which can awaken the desire for truth in others. Dialectic unfolds when interlocutors have a shared orientation toward the truth and are willing to engage in conversation (*dialegesthai*) that sharpens their mutual ability to work toward knowledge. Only in the context of *euphuia*, a disposition towards the good, can true discernment unfold. That disposition to the good may remain dormant or, worse, can lead a person to settle on lesser goods when greater goods are within reach (Byrne 2016, 17-20).

Byrne notes that like Aristotle, Saint Paul understands discernment to be the fruit of a sophisticated self-understanding (Byrne 2016, 22), and involves careful distinction between competing truth claims (Byrne 2016, 20). But the important difference is that Paul understands discernment as a gift of the Holy Spirit that enables the followers of Christ to act according to the will of God (Byrne 2016, 21, citing Romans 12:2 and 5:5). And while Ignatius of Loyola draws significantly from Paul, he nevertheless takes a position similar to that of Aristotle about human beings being susceptible to erroneous notions about what will make them happy (Byrne 2016, 24).[22] Elsewhere, Aristotle will compare human beings to "warped pieces of lumber," who must be straightened out by dragging themselves to pursue virtues which curb their vicious tendencies (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1109b2). Echoing

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[22]   He cites *Nicomachean Ethics* 1094a17-18 and 1095b15-35.

this idea, Ignatius describes his spiritual exercises as aiming at the purpose of helping persons to make decisions that are not rooted in disordered attachments or desires (Ignatius 1991, section 21).

Ignatius, like Saint Paul, develops an approach to discernment rooted in a Christian theology of sin, *hamartia* (Gupta & Goodrich, 2020)[23]. There is, of course, a long development of the doctrine of sin in the Christian theological tradition beyond the scope of this paper. I will note, however, that one important element of that tradition, the doctrine of original sin, has been described by several 20th century thinkers as an "empirically verifiable" Christian doctrine (Finstuen 2009). Human beings often desire in disordered ways that do not conduce toward their flourishing. Only God's grace can heal the effects of sin (Burns 2018), but the development of ascetical practices in the Church, and the particular form of them we find in Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, aimed at cultivating a fundamental receptivity to the work of grace, unhindered by disordered desires that might otherwise put up obstacles to grace (Muldoon 2005).

Discernment is the cultivated practice of self-appropriation. A person comes to know the contours of one's inner life in all its facets, to grasp that, in the words of Robert Doran,

> "in fact this world is intelligible, things do hold together, we can make sense of the universe and of our lives, we can overcome the fragmentation of knowledge, we can make true judgments, we can make good decisions, we can transcend ourselves to what is and to what is good." (Doran 2008; Byrne 2016, 29)

Discernment thus unfolds within the broader context of a dynamic world. Unlike the Cartesian *res cogitans* removed from the unclear and indistinct world "out there," the discerning person rooted in practices that conduce toward self-appropriation is fully immersed in the flow of experience of self, others, and environment. Such a person is open to whatever might emerge in one's consciousness of the world, from

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[23] The word *hamartia* is used 175 times in the New Testament, and Paul deploys it 48 times in the book of Romans alone (*e.g.* 5:12-13): "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—for sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law" (New Revised Standard Version).

within consciousness itself (in the form of insight, imagination, memory, desire, or other inner movements); from external stimuli mediated through the senses; or from "elsewhere" (Marion 2024; Tóth 2021). The person practicing discernment has a double intentionality toward all reality. The person exercises a refined attention to ordinary experience even as he attends to the way that attention affects him. He attends further to departures from ordinary experience and the ways those departures impact him at rational, affective, and spiritual levels. As a consequence of the practice of that refined attention, the person is therefore attuned to the possibility of unique experiences from "elsewhere," perhaps even from God.

Conclusion: Self-appropriation and Christian Community

The love of wisdom in Greek antiquity gave rise to a number of movements, or schools, comprised of friends who sought to live the good life through disciplined spiritual practice. They developed doctrines oriented to cultivating virtues, but also complex, multifaceted systems of thought which probed questions of physics, logic, epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and politics. Spiritual practice was integrated into a life dedicated to philosophy.

Many of the earliest Christian writers conceived of themselves as philosophers and their doctrines as philosophy[24]. They similarly developed spiritual practices, drawing from the traditions of *askesis* and *melete* in antiquity (Hadot 1995, 128). Their schools also developed methods of interpretation of classic texts (many of which eventually coalesced into what we call the New Testament), as well as doctrines about God, the person of Christ, the nature of the Church and its mission, and ethics.

These Greek and Christian spiritual traditions were predicated on a conviction that philosophy was oriented toward the development of

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[24] "The identification of Christianity with true philosophy inspired many aspects of the teaching of Origen, and it remained influential throughout the Origenist tradition, especially among the Cappadocian Fathers: Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzen, and Gregory of Nyssa. It is also in evidence in John Chrysostom. All these authors speak of 'our philosophy'; of the 'complete philosophy'; or of "the philosophy according to Christ" (Hadot 1995, 129).

the self and the community of persons within an intelligible order of the cosmos. I suggest, following Lonergan, that this orientation begins in self-appropriation as first philosophy, undertaken through practices of discernment. The primary exercise of discernment is reflection on infinite desire, which opens one to the ongoing construction of an authentic self, and to the possibility of God.

Lonergan, likely following Heidegger and Jaspers, names the unfolding self *Existenz* (Lonergan 1988b; Heidegger 2010; Jaspers 1971). He describes this "becoming aware" (*Besinnung*)[25] as a "heightening of one's self-appropriation," possible because all human beings have a common "ultimate point of reference which is God" (Lonergan 1988b, 222). All human beings are subjects; they have spontaneous capacities to dream, to be conscious, to engage in a process of becoming. A person is "the free and responsible subject producing the first and only edition of himself" (Lonergan 2016, 72).

But the person does not exist in isolation. While self-appropriation unfolds through a person's double intentionality, much of that process will take place as the person engages in the life of a community of persons. Community is, in Lonergan's view, an "achievement of common meaning," the result of subjects whose shared insights conduce toward ever-greater goods of order and schemes of recurrence which nourish entire populations (Lonergan 1988b, 226).

Communities can grow and thrive, but they are also subject to decline and even death. If authenticity is the fruit of self-appropriation in the individual subject, then growth is the fruit of the community of authentic subjects. Conversely, to the extent that subjects become blinded by biases and errors of judgment, they develop unauthenticity and the communities comprised by such subjects will fall into patterns of decline (Lonergan 1988b, 227). Philosophical schools and religious traditions are both marked by this process of progress and decline, meaning that participation in such communities is not in itself a sufficient condition for self-appropriation or authentic discernment.

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[25] Cf. Heidegger 2012, §16, describing *Besinnung* as knowledge that does not seek to be useful and arises from reflection or mindfulness.

What is necessary is engagement in the spiritual practices of a community not only in substance, but also as self-transcending subject. Lonergan describes the substance of Christian practice as being in Christ Jesus: being in love with God without an awareness of being in love with God. But as subject, the Christian becomes aware of being in relationship with God (Lonergan 1988b, 230-1).[26] What might begin as an openness to a revelation "from elsewhere" is now experienced as the entelechy of one's process of self-appropriation. Even in the context of a community's decline, self-transcending subjects can discern anew the meaning and mission of the imitation of Christ: Saint Francis of Assisi can rebuild the Church, or a Teresa of Ávila can reform her religious community.

Self-appropriation thus emerges not only as the recipe for authenticity, but also the prerequisite for healing the community of practice and perhaps the larger human community (Dunne 1985). Lonergan writes,

> "As human authenticity promotes progress and human unauthenticity generates decline, so Christian authenticity – which is a love of others that does not shrink from self-sacrifice and suffering – is the sovereign means for overcoming evil." (Lonergan 2017, 272)

Christian authenticity, and Christian community, are built on spiritual practices oriented toward love of others. Their specific form, according to Lonergan, are in the cultivation of a "dialectical attitude," a willingness to return good in the face of evil (Lonergan 1992, 721)[27]. Such an attitude is hardly spontaneous, if the biases and violence which characterize so much of human history are taken seriously. Rather, the dialectical attitude emerges either through uncritical imitation – as is the case of those who engage in the mimetic behavior proper to sustained practice within religious community – or through self-appropriation and discernment of desires that lead a person to follow Christ in a critical, sustained way[28].

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[26] Distinguishing being in Christ as subject, he writes, "But inasmuch as being in Christ Jesus is the being of subject, the hand of the Lord ceases to be hidden."

[27] Lonergan often draws from Romans 12:21 throughout his works: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (New Revised Standard Version).

[28] I have in mind in the latter case Saint Ignatius of Loyola, in whose Autobiography is the story of the movement from uncritical mimesis of Medieval knight-errant stories to critical imitation of Christ. The movement toward critical mimesis forms the heart

The latter case is, I argue, a form of philosophical practice, oriented both toward the transformation of the self, but also the transformation of society and the well-being of cities.

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SELF-KNOWLEDGE AS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:
ONTOLOGICAL SELF BETWEEN PLOTINUS AND GREGORY PALAMAS

Abstract. In this paper, I aim to evaluate the meaning of Gregory Palamas' *ontology of the self* in the context of the semantic itinerancy between Plotinus, the first one to propose the ontological dimension of the *self,* and the patristic horizon. I will survey the semantic re-semanticization of terms that can be found from Plotinus to the fourteenth century, the time of Gregory Palamas' anthropological perspective. The corresponding concepts in modern languages have accumulated connotations linked to the horizon of modernity, resulting in semantic alterations or alienations. This confusing interpretative approach is linked, no less, to paradigms of modern sources, as in the case of understanding the Neoplatonic *self* on the scheme of Cartesian dualism.

Keywords: Self, Self-knowledge, Ontology, Spiritual Practice

Introduction

Research on the nature of *the self* in Plotinian or Palamite frameworks is currently undergoing international debate, the implication of this perspective of understanding has consequences for the rediscussing of an ideational and doctrinal trajectory that marks European cultural identity, or, as in the case of Palamite texts, of cultural frameworks specific to the European East. Yet, not a few otherwise valuable works have created perspectives that ignored or hijacked the meaning and stakes of the articulation of the paradigm *of the ontology of the self*. This was because there were implied interpretive paradigms of modern sources, as in the case of understanding

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the Neoplatonic self on the scheme of Cartesian dualism. But valuable contributions from recent exegesis, through their pursuit of the constitution and reunification of the paradigm of the *ontological self*, and their engagement with pertinent hermeneutical tools, provided important landmarks for this research.

There are key aspects when discussing the meaning *of the ontology of the self* in Gregory Palamas. First, how the paradigm of the self was resemnified in late Neoplatonism, and what influence did this perspective have on the thought environment in which the doctrines of the patristic period were formulated? Second, what are the reasons Gregory Palamas uses language involving elements of Plotinian syntagms on the ontological dimension of the self, in a situation where it is polemical with the assertions of Neoplatonism and humanism? Palamite anthropological doctrine is articulated in the context of the affirmation of the self in the ontological description as justification of the rostrums of spiritual experience.

Mediated Ascent of the Self in Late Neoplatonism: Iamblichus *vs.* Porphyry

Neoplatonism departs from the philosophical ideal of Plotinus: philosophy, as a purely theoretical exercise, is no longer capable of bringing the soul to knowledge and union with the divine: for this, recourse must be had to external means, prescribed by the gods themselves and transmitted in the sacred texts. The need arises for a practice appropriate to this worldview, through which union with the gods becomes effective. This practice will be *theurgy* (Vlad 2006, 13). It is an important paradigm shift in the understanding of how it is possible to experience the self and the ascending path of mediation so that the semantics of the terms involved in this type of discourse will provide the discursive ground for the formulations and perspective shift of the patristic age. Iamblichus remarked that if the best part of us were perfect, then what would prevent us from being happy, if the highest part of us always enjoys intelligence and is always turned to the gods? If *νοῦς* is this highest part, this has, however, nothing to do with ψυχὴ. If it is a part of ψυχὴ, then the rest must also be following this state. To bring *αὐτὸ* and *νοῦς* together

means that the whole νοῦς descends, with none of the levels remaining above. Iamblichus' soteriology as *theurgy* brings new elements to bear on the soteriology of his predecessors, for θεουργία promises the liberation of ψυχὴ without relieving it of its self-alienation: that which is above to be accessible to the alienated individual and to operate with goodwill towards it. As Gregory Shaw remarks, in his excellent book on *Theurgy and the Soul. The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, although it was Porphyry who specifies the necessity of mediation through θεουργία, it was Iamblichus who indicated its deeper significance. For Porphyry, θεουργία functioned as a mere *preparatio* for the philosophical life, but Iamblichus regarded θεουργία as fundamental not only in the life of the philosopher but also for anyone with a spiritual practice. At issue was *the divinity of the world*, and for Iamblichus the most effective means of acknowledging this was by stipulating the performance of rites. For Porphyry, however, Platonism was limited to an intellectual elite. Articulated as *theurgy*, Iamblichus' Platonism indicates the existence of gradations and steps of spiritual experience, corresponding to different levels of the cosmos and society (Shaw 1995, 14). Through θεουργία, Iamblichus offered a soteriology indicating that, theoretically, any ψυχὴ could attain σωτηρία, from the most matter-bound ψυχὴ *to the* most spiritualized ψυχὴ (Iamblichus 2002, 32). With such an elaborate metaphysical doctrine, Iamblichus structured Plato's teachings in a way that preserved the mystical elements of Plotinus' soteriology but emphasized the importance of the ψυχὴ's connections to the physical cosmos or other people (Shaw 1995, 14). Grace, not the effort to raise αὐτὸ (the self) to its higher intellectual life, prevailed, the ψυχὴ's access to the divine having to come ἔξωθεν (*from without*), which was a rationale for the practice of rituals. With Iamblichus and his followers, the soul's ascent is not possible due to the *division of the self and an inner (circular) movement of the self*. Rather, an involvement of an outer dimension/activity of the self is possible and necessary in σωτηρία.

Patristic Contours of the *Self*: Augustine and Maximus the Confessor

The Church Fathers brought a novel perspective on wo/man, but their anthropological doctrines meant to be, in the first place, a response to

the controversies of their time. Augustine formulating on the *free will* in the fifth century AD, and Maximus on the *two wills* in Christ in the seventh century AD, had to express a Christian understanding of the nature of the self.

Augustine states that the *mens*, mind, always knows itself because it is always present in itself and is, therefore, better known than anything else. As W.J. Hankey notes, the relationship with God and all else *is contained* in true self-knowledge for Augustine. We must subtract what we have added wrongly by our immersion in the lower sensual mind. When the confusion resulting from these obstructive additions is overcome, the mind will be left with the knowledge of its nature or substance. When it comes to *true self-knowledge*, however, the mind reaches God. (Hankey 1999, 564). There the human mind encounters that which is superior to it. Moreover, self-knowledge, as self-reflection, is the medium in which the relationship with all other realities takes place (Augustine 2012, 8.6.9). In its relationship with sense and imagination, the mind is receptive to the sensible, bringing into unity, organizing, and creatively reconstructing the sensible beneath it. The temporal and the sensible are lower realities which, by their mutability, hardly exist. The human mind, which is changeable but reaches the immutable above it, stands about all hierarchically graded forms of being. For Augustine, *ratio* characterizes the human, and this, or *mens* (mind), is the best part of the soul. *It has as its direction and purpose through self-knowledge and knowledge of God, which are inevitably intertwined including knowledge of all other realities*. Participation in divine wisdom according to the essential inwardness of reason makes wo/man so close to God that *he becomes* His image. Nothing comes between God and the rational soul. Nothing is closer to the divine, nor better between creatures. Boethius and the medieval Augustinians, such as Eriugena and Bonaventure, would develop this Augustinian teaching to reconcile the human with the universe and to describe the milestones in guiding the soul through the hierarchical levels of reality towards God (Hankey 1999, 564).

In the understanding of wo/man as ψυχὴ embodied in σῶμα, Maximus the Confessor, unlike the Origenists, who affirmed the initial and now lost perfection of rational beings, describes perfection as an end *already achieved*, but only in potentiality. A fundamental change in the

description of the ontology and functions of ψυχὴ in wo/man is expressed. The understanding of ψυχὴ is no longer that of a *distinct and separate entity* with autonomous activity since it can only be understood together with σῶμα, with which, however, it is neither mixed nor confused. Wo/Man's being in the body is no longer regarded as a sign of the fall and imperfection, for these were given to him to cross the διάστασις (distance) and διάστημα (interval) which separate wo/man from the goal of his earthly life (Larchet 1996, 193). The ascent towards one's cause, or movement towards the goal of life, that is, towards God, is inherent in human nature. Maximus takes an optimistic view of human nature, while not ignoring the role of grace, which sustains this movement of rational creatures toward God, towards the fulfillment in Him of their λόγος. Maximus puts θέλημα (will) as the key aspect, as "rational propensity", in describing the human as having ψυχὴ. The emphasis on the rational dimension of ψυχὴ has as its implication the distinction between the *natural will* and the *gnomic will*. If the natural will is in human nature, in what characterizes the human way of being, the gnomic will is proper to the person, about the concrete dimension of ὑπόστασις. Through the gnomic will, the person manifests his disposition toward good or evil, in agreement/disagreement with his/hers λόγος. The fundamental reference in Maximian anthropological doctrine is based on the concept of *mediation*, wo/man being a mediator by his very nature, since he has ψυχὴ and σῶμα. Wo/Man's task is to unify the whole of created reality and to unify it with its Creator. This mission can be fulfilled by overcoming and unifying several polarities between created and uncreated nature, sentient and intelligible beings, earth and heaven, Paradise and the inhabited world, or man and woman. It is a unifying act that takes place at distinct levels of reality, which implies an important correspondence with the Neoplatonic description of reality by ὑπόστασις, a perspective that includes certain degrees of reality. With the justification of this anthropological view comes the Maximian claim that wo/man is not only made up of ψυχὴ and σῶμα, but also of various distinct 'parts' and powers or faculties of ψυχὴ, which in the state of fallen human nature are at odds with each other, but which can be restored to their unity and order. Though ambivalent, the function and use of these faculties must be considered for the mission that wo/man

has to fulfill. In addition, the aspect of human consent to the process of restoration and mediation must also be considered (Thunberg 2005, 190).

Maximus formulates an anthropological paradigm with a higher degree of complexity than what had been formulated before about human. The Maximian view of $\psi v \chi \grave{\eta}$, stipulates that $\psi v \chi \grave{\eta}$ does not have an independent reality and function, as it was in classical Greek philosophy or Neoplatonism, since $\psi v \chi \grave{\eta}$ is always part of a couple that cannot be radically distinguished from $\sigma \tilde{\omega} \mu \alpha$. Wo/Man cannot be essentially understood and described by $\psi v \chi \grave{\eta}$, which is no longer the highest and truly the essential part, but part of a complex process of mediation with consequences on the nature of the compound $\psi v \chi \grave{\eta}$-$\sigma \tilde{\omega} \mu \alpha$. In the act of mediation, this compound $\psi v \chi \grave{\eta}$-$\sigma \tilde{\omega} \mu \alpha$, is called upon to grasp what is deeper, being the rational seed in the various aspects and levels of reality, what Maxim calls $\lambda \acute{o} \gamma o \iota$. In place of the Platonic doctrine of the eternal mind, Maxim elaborates a theory of providential $\lambda \acute{o} \gamma o \iota$, formulating not only the paradigm of a $\Lambda \acute{o} \gamma o \varsigma$ of nature, but especially of a $\lambda \acute{o} \gamma o \varsigma$ of each particular rational being (Benevich 2009, 137). The status and role that $\psi v \chi \grave{\eta}$ has in the human psycho-somatic hypostasis are even more precisely expressed when Maxim indicates what is the $\tau \acute{e} \lambda o \varsigma$ of the mediating activity performed by wo/man in creation. The goal and final state of the human mediating act, between contraries, is *rest in motion*, of moving rest which presupposes a kind of $\delta \iota \acute{a} \sigma \tau \eta \mu \alpha$ (extension) beyond $\chi \rho \acute{o} v o \varsigma$ (time) and yet lacking God's timelessness: a *temporal timelessness, a motion in stillness* (Plass 1984, 177). Wo/Man enjoys "eternal moving rest" as a finite being open to infinity, who knows an "eternal motionless motion", for the finality of finite man is infinite and beyond limitation (Christou 1982, 261).

There is a simultaneity of transcendence and immanence in creatures that have reached the end of their movement and transcended their physical level. The final repose, in the Maximian description, is not simply the opposite of movement, but its elevation to a higher level. For Maxim, deification is the $\sigma \kappa o \pi \acute{o} \varsigma$ of the whole $\kappa \acute{o} \sigma \mu o \varsigma$. It is more than salvation, it is the orientation towards the attainment of a destiny originally seeded with the help of pre-existing reasons, $\lambda \acute{o} \gamma o \iota$. The Maximian view of human evolution is given by the state of $\theta \acute{e} \omega \sigma \iota \varsigma$, a doctrine that is a summary of his entire anthropology. The ultimate goal, $\sigma \kappa o \pi \acute{o} \varsigma$, of spiritual evolution is conceptualized by $\theta \acute{e} \omega \sigma \iota \varsigma$, a notion which, despite its ambivalent connotation, refers to the totality of the person (Blowers 1992, 164-166).

Maximus the Confessor brings a broad change of perspective in the understanding of human, with emphasis on the *rational propensity* as his essential dynamic, which also means a dynamic of mediation between the spiritual and the bodily, with the new outline of understanding the *person* as an integral entity. In this new register of understanding of human data, the *ontology of the self* is no longer one that can be assigned to the spiritual dimension of man, whatever it may be, but must be put in the perspective of the inseparable soul-body composite.

Gregory Palamas' Comprehension of *Νοῦς* and the Intellectual Context of the Byzantine Fourteenth Century

Gregory Palamas' involvement of an ontological perspective of the *self* appears as a necessity, on the one hand, to justify the meaning and the coordinates of the spiritual practice, and on the other hand to formulate answers to the criticisms coming from his opponents in the controversies related to the possibility of knowledge obtained through experience, through the spiritual perception. To be intelligible to his opponents, but also to those who supported his statements, Gregory Palamas' doctrinal formulations could only be expressed in the conceptual universe of the fourteenth century. This conceptual universe presented that "stratification" of epochs and perspectives which brought into play a common philosophical and theological vocabulary. This extraordinary semantic accumulation of Greek philosophical and theological terms, beyond the common ground of discourse, posed just as much difficulty and paradox when they were brought into play in another intention and a distinct conceptual/doctrinal context. This is what Palamas does when he puts special and new semantics into play in the key terms of his doctrinal formulations. Palamas will formulate a vision of the human with a degree of complexity that goes beyond anything that existed in the Byzantine tradition until then.

As Giorgios Mantzaridis remarks in his excellent book, *The Deification of Man. St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition*, the great Byzantine sees what is "after likeness" as primarily in the *νοῦς*, which is also the highest aspect of human nature: what is after image resides not in *σῶμα*, but in *νοῦς*, which is the highest aspect of human nature. Like God, also

in the case of wo/man's *νοῦς*, created after likeness, Palamas distinguishes between *essence* and *energy*. *Νοῦς'* energy, realized as thought and intuition, cannot be identified with the *intellectual nature* from which it originates; neither can it be viewed as altogether different from it. Although the *νοῦς* energy is distinct from its nature, it is nevertheless related to and united with the *intellectual nature*, being its expression (Mantzaridis 1984, 17). Adopting the tripartite division of the *ψυχὴ* introduced by Plato, in *λογῖστῖκόν, ἐπιθυμητικόν, and θυμός*, Palamas emphasizes the natural function of intelligence, which consists in governing and directing the other two parts of the *ψυχὴ*. The *ἐπιθυμητικόν and θυμός*, being the passionate parts of the *ψυχὴ*, should obey the *λογῖστῖκόν*. When this does not happen, a spiritual anomaly arises, and passions take birth. This tripartite distinction of *ψυχὴ* does not mean a division of *ψυχὴ* into three parts, for *ψυχὴ* is one, but with many levels. When any one of the powers of *ψυχὴ* is affected, *ψυχὴ* is affected in its entirety. For it to be permanently cured, there must first occur an elevation of its lowest part, *θυμός* (Palamas, 1120C). Like God, who is Tri-Unity, wo/man is *νοῦς, λόγος and πνεῦμα*, being made in his image, a conjunction of *νοῦς, λόγος* and *πνεῦμα*. On this trinitarian model, wo/man's *νοῦς* is like God, as the *νοῦς* loves the *πνεῦμα*. This relationship of *ψυχὴ* with *σῶμα*, which is "after likeness", is dynamically present in the whole human, without, however, being a composite of physical and spiritual elements (Mantzaridis 1984, 17). As John Zizioulas Notes, wo/man's dynamism was described in the Byzantine tradition as *personhood but* should not be understood in terms of 'personality', as a complex of natural, psychological, or moral qualities which are in some sense 'possessed' by or 'contained' in the human *individuum*. Being a person is different from being an individual or 'personality' in that the person cannot be conceived as a static entity, but only as it *relates* to. Thus, personhood implies the *ἔκ-στασις* of being, a movement towards communion that leads to a transcendence of the boundaries of the self (Zizioulas 2006, 212). The combination of the notion of *ἔκστασις* with that of *ὑπόστασις* in the idea of the person reveals that personhood is directly related to ontology, not as an added quality to beings, something that beings 'have' or 'have not', but it is *constitutive* of what can be ultimately called a 'being' (Zizioulas 2006, 213).

Gregory Palamas affirms the participation of the body, *σῶμα*, in the communion of uncreated grace; he argues, however, that during this

mystical experience, it is the νοῦς that first participates in the radiance and through the νοῦς, the σῶμα connected with it becomes more divine (Palamas 1959, 444). The recognition of participation σῶμα in the union of wo/man with uncreated indwelling grace is a fundamental aspect of the Palamite doctrine, implying human experience of this union as αἴσθησῖς, sensation. But it is also called νόησις (intellectual), taking place in the νοῦς. Yet, intellect does not receive divine illumination by its power, but only to the extent that the grace of the Holy Spirit enables it to do so.

Ἔκ-στασις: Ek-static Union of *Νοῦς* in Palamas

Palamas view that νοῦς can rise above itself and on this basis affirms the possibility of a mystical union with God. We can see here the use of the Neoplatonic perspective on the self, adopted via Dionysius Areopagite's writings. If νοῦς were not incapable of rising above itself, it could not unite with the divine light at a level above αἴσθησῖς and νοῦς; but, having this ability, it achieves an *effective* ecstatic union with God. In this way, Palamas regards as illusory the incorporeal ecstasy of the νοῦς whereby he has intellectual visions. The ecstasy of which Gregory speaks is not to be regarded as the *νοῦς' exit from σῶμα, but as the transcendence of human powers alone, which presupposes the self-concentration of the νοῦς*, achieved by the presence of divine illumination. When νοῦς is concentrated in its energy, inducing self-conversion and self-observation, it transcends and communicates with God. Such ἔκ-στασις implies a God-inspired love in wo/man. Thus, through God's descending ecstasy and w o / man's transcendent ecstasy, a mystical encounter and union is achieved: receiving the deifying grace of the Spirit, *νοῦς is deified and communicates this grace to σῶμα*, so that the whole of wo/man partakes to θέωσις (Mantzaridis 1984, 102).

But when Palamas incorporates elements of the Neoplatonic tradition, he does not omit the basic principles of patristic anthropology but invariably emphasizes the participation of the whole person in the Holy Spirit's gift. Wo/Man's true knowledge of God is the fruit of θέωσις coming from God. This true knowledge is not acquired through his/her mental capacities but is the gift bestowed on those who live in the Holy Spirit.

Wo/Man can express with certainty only when he or she has experienced a supernatural union with uncreated energies that can only be known through experience (Palamas 1959, 453).

Palamite Ontology of the *Self as Returning towards the Self*

Palamas *voῦς* in the center of his psychophysical being, in the *heart, and towards him/herself*. This orientation of the *voῦς towards the self* is possible because the *voῦς* is not only essence but also energy, which moves not only in one direction, linearly but cyclically, always returning to its primordial cause. After all, according to the tradition of patristic anthropology, there is a common psychosomatic energy. Palamas does not hesitate to speak of a return of the *σῶμα to itself* (Mantzaridis 1984, 84). So, Gregory does not hesitate to involve the Platonist interpretive tradition along the lines of Evagrius and the one of Gregory of Nyssa. He is convinced that the compatibility of the two traditions is not only possible but necessary. Macarius' view that *voῦς and wo/man's thoughts are situated in the heart*, and Gregory of Nyssa's view that *voῦς, being incorporeal, is not to be limited to σῶμα*, can be reconciled, according to Palamas, as to provide a comprehensive anthropological interpretation (Meyendorff 2010, 137-138). Just as the claim that God, being incorporeal, is not limited to any place, does not imply any contradiction in terms of the truth of the incarnation, like Gregory of Nyssa's doctrine of the incorporeal intellect, which does not conflict with Macarius' doctrine of the heart as the place of intelligence. Even if the *voῦς*, as incorporeal, is not enclosed within the *σῶμα*, it is not found outside it either, since it is bound to it and uses the heart as its main organ. Concentrated within itself, within the heart, in a position of sovereignty, the *voῦς* governs through each of the *ψυχὴ* capacities. Self-control is cultivated by controlling both the content of sensory perception and its orientation. Wo/Man concentrates all powers to suspend passionate attachment to the external world, overcoming the fragmentation of *voῦς* and attaining spiritual equilibrium. Thus, "wholly entered into him/herself" becomes *self-conscious* and awaits *within him/herself* the coming of God and *θέωσις*, the divine transformation (Palamas 2002, 394).

Conclusion

So, it is justified to argue that Palamas implies the Neoplatonic view that *νοῦς* can rise above itself and on this basis sustain the possibility of mystical union with God. If *νοῦς* would be incapable of rising above itself, it could not unite with the Divine Light on a level above *αἴσθησῐς*; but, having this ability, it achieves an effective ecstatic union with God. However, Palamas regards as illusory the incorporeal ecstasy of the *νοῦς* whereby has intellectual visions. The ecstasy of which Palamas speaks is not to be regarded as the *νοῦς'* exit from *σῶμα*, but as the transcendence of human powers, which presupposes the *νοῦς'* self-concentration, which is achieved by the presence of divine illumination. Such *ἔκ-στασις* implies a God-inspired love in wo/man. However, when Palamas incorporates elements of the Neoplatonic tradition, he does it by implying the fundamental principles of patristic anthropology, emphasizing the participation of the whole wo/man in the Holy Spirit's deifying gift.

So, the Palamite description of the ontological self is a core aspect of this doctrine, since it describes the effective and dynamic transformations that happen in wo/man by the means of the Hesychast practice. This is a crucial aspect in understanding the stakes of spiritual practice since has not merely psychological or physiological effects or outcomes, but it changes the entire human being, and this at an ontological level. This way we can better understand the exceptional value of Palamas' understanding of the Hesychast practice's scope as a defining hallmark for the Christian East until today.

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THE BEAUTY – FIRST WAY OF KNOWING:
SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE ROLE OF THE AESTHETIC IN ACCURATE COGNITION AND IN THE PRACTICE OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Abstract. Human cognition functions best when it traces a path across the three Socratic transcendentals in the unfolding sequence of Beauty, then Goodness, then Truth. I therefore describe the ideal approach to knowledge as "Beauty-First." By analogizing the epistemological progression underlying the classical Trivium, the Eastern Orthodox *Philokalia,* and the method that made science truly modern, and then noting that this structure seems to be corroborated by the neuroscience of Iain McGilchrist, we seem to confirm the hypothesis that Beauty, Goodness, and Truth must be appropriated in this sequence in a concentric unfolding of human attention.

Keywords: Trivium, beauty, beauty-first, *Philokalia*, epistemology, Iain McGilchrist, brain hemispheres, natural philosophy, science and beauty

Coherent human knowing requires an unfolding sequence of operations; this sequence can be meaningfully characterized as "the Beauty-First Way"[2]. That is, our investigations of the world and our attempts to come to grips with reality will attain the most complete comprehension, and will prove themselves most salutary for human flourishing, when they trace an arc which philosophers will recognize as an unfolding of attention on

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[2] For my book-length exploration of the hypothesis that cognition is a "Beauty-First" enterprise, see my *The Ethics of Beauty* (Missouri: St. Nicholas Press, 2019).

Beauty, Goodness, and Truth, in that specific order. Or, to cast the matter in the negative, I am arguing that if we do *not* honor the threefold order of Beauty, Goodness, and Truth in our attempts to understand the world, then we will find ourselves out of sync with the basic operations of knowing as they have been passed down for thousands of years.

It is important right up front to stress that this sequential progression across the Socratic transcendentals involves a concentric flowering rather than a pure "succeeding." The path to understanding can be more completely described as an attention to Beauty; then, an attentive practice of the Goodness found within that Beauty; and finally, a patient fidelity to Beautiful Goodness until it ramifies into an acquisition of Truth. At each stage, our attention is building upon its prior operations.

The Beauty-First Way, in other words, is a threefold path. Once we've seen this path for what it is, we will quickly find that, in some form or another, it is clearly visible within the classical approach to education, within science since the Age of Reason, and within the approach to mystical knowing described by eastern monasticism in its central collection of texts, *The Philokalia.* Moreover, this threefold path of attention seems to have been clearly confirmed by the study of hemispheric brain function formulated in our own day by Ian McGilchrist.

Although in my own writings, I sometimes emphasize the importance of the Beauty-First Way by contrasting it with what I term "truth-first" approaches to rationality, in fact, I nowhere call for a denigration of truth, nor for the privileging of feeling over logic. Rather, what I claim to discern is that whenever human beings accurately comprehend the world, they perform the unfolding of a continuum of cognition whereby reality *is* apprehended accurately at each stage (and is therefore "truthful"), but nevertheless according to different modes. The Beauty-First way is concerned with Truth in the sense of "faithful attention to reality" from the very start, in other words. But given the concentric unfolding of human cognition, it would be just as accurate to say that the Beauty-First way is concerned with Beauty in the sense of the harmonious wholeness of things, to the very end. And because this concentric flowering of intellection appears to be a kind of fractal, with the threefold progression operating within each of its distinct steps as well as between them, it is best termed as a "Beauty-First" way, since the non-linear shape of knowing begins with an openness to a world understood as Beautiful.

It is in this way that Beauty inspires our phenomenological discovery, interpretation, and understanding of reality; Beauty is literally the "gateway" – in practice and, I argue, unavoidably – for a coherent connection to reality. In particular, as we shall see, Beauty inspires each step of the classical Trivium as well as each of its analogies, by powering the eros that helps the human person to begin to know that which is not the self.

A Definition of Beauty

In general, I try to avoid defining "Beauty" at the outset, trusting instead that its fuller shape will emerge more clearly through a discussion of the role it plays in a number of examples across analogous structures of knowing. However, the classical consensus that "the Beautiful is the radiance of the Good" speaks to Beauty's generous character of abundance and is useful and accurate. For me, synonyms for Beauty are concepts like theophany, surprise, and information. Beauty is that which evokes in us a sense of wonder or awakens eros within us. Indeed, anything that excites wonder in us will, in my system, function as the Beautiful, at least in part.

The *Trivium* as a Threefold Path

In classical education the threefold Beauty-First path was known as the Trivium of Grammar, Dialectic (sometimes, "Logic," although strictly speaking Dialectic was understood to be a combination of Logic and Argument), and Rhetoric. I hope that general familiarity with the Trivium among readers will therefore help me to illustrate what I mean by a path to a knowledge in the three modes of, Beauty, Goodness, and Truth.[3]

At the outset of classical education, the young thinker studies Grammar in order to learn to appreciate the quirky givenness of the world across such realms as language, history, the arts, the sciences, and so on. The

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[3] See Dorothy Sayers, "The Lost Tools of Learning" (1948), for a short but pithy summation of what sort of rationality the young brain is capable of and drawn to across the early lifespan. In general, my remarks in this section are tied to her own insights.

student at this stage is to become acutely sensitive to pattern, and to learn to delight in the way that patterns repeat, diverge, surprise, multiply, and either confirm or frustrate our expectations of their behavior. This attention to pattern renders the student a disciple of reality in a very fundamental sense; what is, deserves to be known in the precise way *that* it is. Moreover, when the instructor has a pure heart, the student of Grammar unconsciously comes to see the beauty of pattern as an invitation to accept that the "given" world around him is in fact an actual Gift.

Beauty reigns at this first level of education, for the *Grammar* which the student is trained to appreciate must, if the education is to count, strike the learner as surprising, elegant, deeply ordered, and, in its way, altogether deeply comely. Students at this stage fall in love with the world, and understand that their at-homeness in the world is inseparable from the act of appreciation of the world; where the things of God are concerned, this appreciation should, of course, be trained to rise to the level of adoration.

As Grammar then unfolds into Dialectic, the student ascends from the level of appreciation and/or discernment, to the level of logic and argument. A different kind of criticism is learned here, as the student progresses from the status of visionary to the vocation of engineer. Whereas the student of Grammar could critique the world according to its obedience to Law, and to delight in both the obedience to and the seeming defiance of various kinds of Law, at the stage of Dialectic, the student learns to critique function. By learning to construct a line of reasoning and then to pit this construct against other chains of rational unfolding, whether they have been constructed by others or himself, the student becomes a kind of referee in the great struggle to make sense.

It is important to see that Dialectic, despite its heavy reliance on Logic, does not in itself attain to the end stage of what is possible in Truth. Rather, Dialectic forms a kind of ante-chamber to Truth, in that Dialectic's proper concern is not so much accuracy (this was handled at the Grammar stage) or honesty (the concern of Rhetoric) but efficacy and objectivity. The logical constructions we formulate, as well as the arguments or explanations we attempt, require us to assemble a durable, effective architecture of reasoning: How does the argument or explanation "hold up" to the pressure of facts and/or counterarguments? To what extent does the account or proof account for the fullness of what has been observed

at the Grammar stage? In this sense, Dialectic concerns Goodness and not Truth in its ultimate expression. What we ask of this stage of reasoning is Utility: How good a job does the explanation do of accounting for the facts? How effectively can it withstand the attacks of other arguments and explanations?

Grammar and Dialectic are followed by Rhetoric, because the journey across the Transcendentals signifies that the student's engagement with the world is progressing from the individual to the communal. That is to say, the love for the Beautiful can be intensely idiosyncratic, even if rapture with Beauty takes us radically outside ourselves. The love for the Good involves a practice of empathy as we take the risk of formulating our reasons in ways that others can evaluate or even reject, but still it can be done to some measure "in private".

But it is in this final next stage where our grasp of the truth becomes ineluctably interpersonal, social, and human. And in fact, present also at this Rhetorical stage is a renewed openness to God. Rhetoric, in other words, is a stage at which we grapple towards the Truth *together* – together with each other, with past and future generations, and with God. For example, at the first apostolic council in Acts, the Twelve reasoned according to Dialectic, but aimed for a conclusion at the level of Rhetoric: "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us…" (Acts 15:28).

That is, the love for Truth will bring us to a higher level of community. At the Rhetorical stage the student learns to take the fruits of Dialectic into a conversation whose breadth cannot easily be limited. Rhetoric itself is an inherently interpersonal art, and so at this stage of education the student actively seeks a range of interlocutors and discussion partners. Moreover, in order for Rhetoric to *earn* its equivalence to Truth, those discussion partners will have to be sought in both the future and the past, as well as in the present.

Other kinds of breadth are also practiced at the Rhetorical stage of the Trivium. First, we express the fruits of logic and argumentation in ways that allow others to test our underlying assumptions; this can be painful and requires a depth of humility. Second, as we ascend to the Rhetorical stage, we discover either that, a) the most stringent logic must still come to grips with aspects of reality in which the simpler binaries, such as the law of noncontradiction, at least temporarily and at least for

all practical purposes, are transcended; and b) that so much of what we are called to reason about involves matters which cannot be known with certainty, such as the future outcome of collective action in the light of the unfolding of natural processes or counter actions by others.

In other words, after Dialectic, the fruits of our consideration must be taken into a sharp conversation and checked against the long experience of the human race, against common sense, and against the specifically human requirements of the soul. Conversation with others often reveals levels of assumption or bias of which we were previously unaware. Moreover, as Aristotle himself pointed out in his *On Rhetoric,* at this stage of reasoning we must learn to handle outcomes which can only be discerned in advance through probabilistic inference.

Finally, at the stage of Rhetoric, we add to the task of discerning reality the even more fraught task of *making* reality; our words will inspire collective action that can overcome probabilities and uncertainties, and create new grounds for reflection, new realities. And in this sense, also, Rhetorical work provides a more faithful correspondence to reality than Dialectic can.

Modern Science

The explosion of scientific prowess in Western Europe after the sixteenth century came only once scientists had learned to adhere scrupulously to the same threefold path of unfolding cognition that we just traced within the Trivium. Careful observation at a scale never before attempted in recorded human history followed both the mapping of far flung continents and the steady improvement of technical means of measurement. The Grammar of the world, in other words, was discernible in a more thorough way than ever before. Meanwhile, the Enlightenment's growing faith in the intelligibility of the universe accompanied a passion for getting to the bottom of things. The art of Dialectic, in other words, flowered brilliantly.

But despite the importance of these growths in appreciation of Beautiful pattern and in exercise of Good (effective) analysis, the crucial advantage of the new science lay rather in the Rhetorical, or Truth, phase. A new approach to transcending Dialectic and reaching a truly

Rhetorical level of cognition only came as early modern scientists discovered at last how best to take their formulations into a deeper conversation with other scientists and with the very natural world they studied. The gates to Rhetoric were flung open for natural philosophy, that is to say, through the ritualized employment of that pivotal concept, the falsifiable hypothesis.

Requiring that the fruits of Dialectic be formulated in a way that is falsifiable signifies the stepping forth of the scientist from his lonely laboratory into the wider community of scientists – and, more importantly, the wider community of Being itself. The "conversation" called for at the Rhetorical stage of Science takes two forms; first, verification by other researchers and second, verification by reality itself. By insisting on formulating the fruits of Dialectic in the form of the falsifiable hypothesis, modern science insisted that logic and argument, even when formulated by the greatest or most venerable minds, could no longer be mistaken for the Truth; no, we now understand the fruits of Dialectic to have been merely the best we could do at the stage of Goodness, or utility.

If we are to arrive at Truth, we must engage in Rhetoric – in a wide-ranging conversation, that is, with the messy, the probabilistic, the chaotic, the surprising, and the non-linear. All these factors and elements must be allowed to have their say if we are to attain a truly comprehensive account of reality.

By forcing Logic and Argument to express even their most sound and powerful proofs in ways open to falsification, the Enlightenment placed Truth in its proper position as an analogue not to Logic and Argument, but to Rhetoric. It was finally understood that the experimental data gained in the light of the falsifiable hypothesis must be allowed to enter the conversation on an equal basis. For example, in the history of science, Einstein's special and general theories of relativity are unsurpassed in their logical coherence. And yet, with the invention of high-speed jet travel and atomic clocks, scientists immediately looked to test and if possible falsify his predictions; as we know, Einstein's prediction that the flow of time is slowed by velocity was verified. Still, the hypothesis had to be tested.

That is, natural philosophy now knows that Truth is to be looked for at the Rhetorical, rather than at the Dialectical, stage of cognition.

Spiritual Knowing in the *Philokalia*

As the Age of Reason generated – and of course was generated by – a science newly committed to the final step of the Beauty-First Way, the monastics of the Orthodox Christian world marshaled their own writings in a new compendium[4]. *The Philokalia* laid out a tradition tracing back to the second century A.D., within which the Trivium of Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric had come to be represented by the concepts of Purification, Illumination, and Deification.

While the labels were different, the threefold path to knowing was analogous, although of course adapted to the realm of mystical experience. *Purification* denoted the cleansing of the heart from gluttony, malice, and pride; since the heart was thought to be an organ of apprehension, cleansing from these passions would result in a more refined capacity for cognition of the Beautiful and the Grammar of the spiritual world. This is thus the first stage of cognition. *Illumination* meant the practice of empathy through a rigorous training of the reason and the will, which would thus lead to an integrated apprehension of the Good through actual practice. The logic and argument at the Illumination stage concern the structures of action and praxis entailed in the vision of the Beautiful. Finally, *Deification* signified the Rhetorical stage, where the actions and thoughts of the spiritual striver would enter into a deeper conversation with the communion of saints and with the Holy Spirit. Here, even more clearly than in the other analogues, knowledge of the Truth would be inseparable from a being known by Truth.

Thus, we have the following chart of those analogues whereby the threefold path, or Beauty-First Way, is now known to us:

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[4]   I owe to Fr. Maximos Constas the insight that the timing of *The Philokalia,* with that collection's emphasis on spiritual and uncreated light, was a deliberate response to the powerful draw of the Enlightenment. The monastic fathers of Mount Athos and the Aegean could see how the new science had become a force drawing the anti-religious away from the higher illumination offered by Christ, and countered with their older and more important path to empirical knowledge. See Fr. Maximos's "St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain and the Palamite Revival of the Eighteenth Century," soon to be published as a chapter in Andrew Louth, *The Oxford Handbook of Orthodox Theology,* but available now via academia.edu.

Beauty	Grammar	Observation	Purification
Goodness	Logic	Theory	Illumination
Truth	Rhetoric	Confirmed Hypothesis	Deification

Brain Hemispheres

It is helpful to note very briefly the extent to which this threefold path resembles the most up to date account of human brain function. While a more in-depth description is impossible here, the work of neuroscientist Iain McGilchrist describes a similar three-fold progression of attention (see McGilchrist 2019). Cognition begins when the right hemisphere establishes patterns and context; the left hemisphere then performs an analytical dissection of elements found within that context; and finally, the right hemisphere again operates, taking up the results of analytical reasoning into a new and trans-rationalist generation of wholeness and contextual awareness.

Clearly enough, what the ancients operationalized in the Trivium, what the moderns formulated in the scientific method, and what the mystics of *The Philokalia* framed in mystical practice, are the entailments of structures encoded in the biology of the brain itself. This accounts for the success and the persistence of those three enduring approaches to the task of knowing – the Trivium; *The Philokalia*; and modern science – for they trained the human person to follow the natural function of the human brain itself.

But let us return to the philosophical and theological entailments of the threefold way, leaving the discussion of its biological substratum to a later article.

Christianity and Love

Meditation on *The Philokalia* and on the Orthodox Christian tradition which is its setting, has led me to the conclusion that for Christians, the Beauty, Goodness, Truth sequence is meant to be understood as an invitation to a trivium of love.

The first love, *eros* for Beauty, offers an awakening from diseased forms of self-love. Here, we must discuss the unique power of wonder in the face of the Beautiful to start the journey of engagement with the world.

The second love, *agape* for the Good and for Goodness, equates to a quickening of our love for other persons. Finally, the third love, *philia*, which is attained through endurance within the ups and downs encountered in expressing the first two loves, offers the quiet confirmation of a friendship with the person or thing or phenomenon studied. The attainment of *philia* coincides with a new integration, and moreover with a becoming beautiful by the knower. This festival of loves, inseparable from a symphony of sacrifice shaped first as fasting, then as almsgiving, and finally as prayer, demarcates the seasons of our life and the ritual character of the Christian's existence.

And so, in arguing that the three transcendentals must be approached according to a sacred order, I am also arguing for the goodness of philosophy, which is itself born in wonder, pursued in analysis, and which through friendship finds the strength to return again to wholeness, to delight, and thus to attain unto Truth.

Conclusions

Today, philosophy is once again asked to contribute to the guidance not only of the individual, but of the larger social whole, and to lead a desperately sought renewal and repentance at every scale of human existence, including also the family, the neighborhood, and the global community. Calls from across the political spectrum insist that philosophy should lead to justice, however, justice might be conceived.

In this atmosphere of heightened importance for the philosophic enterprise, it is important to be reminded that philosophy will forever be bound up with the trivium of loves, which is a kind of festival of love and a symphony of sacrifice, for only by this symphonic sacrificial program does reality discloses itself to the human knower.

If we are unfortunate enough to consider ourselves nihilists, let us have the common sense to hold our tongue, and instead to hold the floor for those who have not yet given up hope. If we are theists, even more

so might we consider the limitations placed on the utility of speech in the face of mystery. But if we are true philosophers, then let us join both the followers and the teachers of the threefold Beauty-First Way across the span of European and Middle Eastern history since the classical period.

It is sometimes said, even by philosophers themselves, that philosophy is no longer true to its name, that it is no longer a path followed by lovers of wisdom. But this is not true. It is just that so many of us have lost the cultural memory of what wisdom looks like and feels like. Wisdom comes through the threefold Beauty-First Way, which confides not only the memory of the past, but the memory of a common human structure of beautiful, effective, and life-giving cognition.

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THE SELF-AWARENESS OF "SPIRITUAL" IMAGISTIC PHILOSOPHY

Abstract. Drawing on a variety of philosophers from Plato to Ricoeur, the authors suggest that philosophy based on poetry or image can be intellectually valuable in the following ways: They show how an intentional approach to imagistic, spiritual philosophy can promote consideration of beauty, engage the productive imagination, and ultimately alter one's engagement with the human predicament. This spiritual mode of philosophy does not stop in an aesthetic (the appetites) frame, but works through it productively.

Keywords: Plato, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, Ricoeur, myth, imagery, imaginary, imagination

Introduction

To be human is to be in a predicament. Born into a world not of our own making and with knowledge that we will all someday die, we nevertheless strive to live lives of meaning. Furthermore, we each develop conceptions/ images of this predicament that then indelibly shape our experiences. Political theorist William Connolly puts it this way: "An image of the human predicament informs affect-imbued judgment before it becomes an object of reflection" (Connolly 2011, 97). The term affect-imbued judgment effectively means something similar to the phrase "hermeneutics goes all the way down:" we do not experience the world neutrally and then

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imbue meaning on it through reflection. Rather, our very experiences are always inundated with meaning garnered from our images of the human predicament. Our image-making faculties cannot be turned-off or bracketed away any more than, once I have learned to read, I can choose not to interpret these symbols as meaningful words. Spiritual practices offer training at the level of these directive images.

Spirituality is notoriously difficult to define, because any definition seems at once too broad and too specific.[3] By spiritual we need not make recourse to the supernatural. For this paper, we will simply suggest that spiritual practice is any intentional, repeated practice of reflection and mental construction that involves yet exceeds the bounds of rational argument. Words will only take us so far. Myths, parables, sacred poems, and proverbs all generate images which become contemporaneous with experience. Plato's Cave, the burning bush, Picasso's *Guernica*, and many other enduring images of all sorts are rightly said to "capture" our imaginations. To be captured is to, in some way, be subject to the power of the image. What if philosophy as a spiritual practice can, at the very least, make us more cognizant of our captors?

Plato's Self-aware Soul-Leading

For specific examples of philosophy as a spiritual practice that benefits from its self-awareness with regard to imagery, we turn to the exemplary Plato. Plato's attempts to lead souls to the highest forms of knowledge makes heavy use of imagery in the form of similes, allegories, and especially myths. Even writing itself is a kind of image-making. But unlike many of his contemporaries and predecessors, Plato was such a thoughtful practitioner of soul-leading that his work laid out the criteria for its own critique – sets of standards for others who followed in his footsteps.[4] By examining an example of self-aware and self-critical Platonic imagery, we can get a sense of both the limits and potential for

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[3]   We have in mind the work of sociologist Nancy Ammerman, whose methods of observing 'everyday' religion allow her to consider spiritual practices as anything which connects one to a deeper, unseen level of reality (see Ammerman 2014).

[4]   Much of this section of the paper is based on sections of Forte 2016, 5-12, 79-81, 212-221.

image-laden philosophical writing that attempts to lead readers to higher forms of knowledge, including truths that we can confidently describe as spiritual in the sense explained above.

In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates implies that psychagogy (soul-leading rhetoric) only leads souls to what is good if its practitioner employs philosophy, and specifically dialectic. Socrates states that the rhetor or psychagogue leads his subjects "incrementally through similarities away from that which is on each occasion contrariwise" (262b6-7),[5] and without truly knowing what *is* the case, this endeavor would fail[6] (262b). Socrates explicitly identifies this knowledge needed for psychagogy as dialectic (*dialektikous*, 266c1) or philosophy (*philosophaysay*, 261a4)[7]. Above, it is clear that this dialectical process leads the subject away from what *is*, but why not lead the subject *toward* what *is*? Here, psychagogy seems to be a *reversal* of the dialectical truth-seeking process by a practitioner who has knowledge of what really *is*. Socrates even adds that *he* may have been inspired by the Muses to "toy with his audience and mislead them" (262d1-2).

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[5] Socrates also uses the word "psychagogy" (*psuchagogia*) to indicate the leading or directing of souls by means of speech at 271c10. Marina McCoy understands psychagogy as "the leading of souls toward the forms." My explanation of psychagogy is in line with her view (see McCoy 2011, 167). Michel Foucault's understanding of psychagogy involves modifying the mode of Being of a subject. Though our interpretation of the Divided Line and the Allegory of the Cave elsewhere supports this view, we will not devote much attention to this aspect of psychagogy here (see Foucault 2005, 407). Other ancient Greeks also referred to this word as amusement or gratification, and some used it in the same sense Plato does, as the winning or leading of souls. *Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., s.v. "ψυχαγωγία," by H.G. Liddell and R. Scott. Elizabeth Asmis provides some helpful additional context, explaining that Aristophanes (*Birds* 1555) speaks of *psuchagogia* as Socrates conjuring souls – meaning both alluring and beguiling them. Isocrates (*Evagoras* 10) talks about it as a charm effect (in line with one sense of the dictionary definition above). In the *Laws* (909b), Plato uses the word in a sense very similar to that of Aristophanes above, as beguiling the living. In the *Timaeus* (71a), Plato uses the word as "beguilement of the desiring part of the soul by means of images" (see Asmis 1986, 156). This last sense, from the *Timaeus*, could complement the meaning of psychagogy for which we are arguing (leading to the true by way of the false) quite well, if Asmis' assessment is correct.

[6] All translations of Plato's *Phaedrus* are by Alexander Nehemas and Paul Woodruff, taken from Cooper, unless otherwise noted (see Plato 1997).

[7] All Greek references to the *Phaedrus* are to Burnet's edition (see Burnet 1901/1967).

Is psychagogy, in Plato's account, simply a tool for deception, given this reverse practice of dialectic, or is Plato perhaps here describing a negative side of psychagogy that ultimately has a positive outcome? The context of the above remarks lends credibility to the latter suggestion because the *Phaedrus* contains several examples of ways in which we might be more successful at reaching the truth as a result of first pursuing that which is false in comparison:

(1) Socrates recants his first speech (237a-241d) in elaborate fashion (242b-244a, 257a-b), resulting in the second speech (244a-257b), which Phaedrus considers to be superior to the first (257c).

(2) The description of the charioteer's erotic experience of the boy proceeds quickly from its detailed depiction of the temptations of sex to recollection of the real. (253e-254b)

(3) The lover's erotic temptation, when overcome successfully, leads to a life of philosophy. (255e-256a)

Perhaps being toyed with and misled in this way can lead one to the truth, whereas other forms of misleading psychagogy, possibly those that are less artful or philosophical, do not yield this positive outcome. Perhaps Plato is suggesting that the one who is skillfully directed away from what *is* ultimately finds what *is* for himself.

Some clarification may lie in Socrates' description of a sort of shortcut to artful soul leading. He explains that anyone who wants to direct souls need to know how many kinds of souls exist as well as all of the kinds of speeches that best convince each type of soul (271d-272a). He and Phaedrus agree on the obvious, that it is quite arduous to practice psychagogy correctly (272b), after which Socrates says:

> "And that's why we must turn all our arguments every which way and try to find some easier and shorter route to the art: we don't want to follow a long, rough path for no good reason when we can choose a short smooth one instead" (272b7-c2).

This short smooth path, which he introduces as "the wolf's side of the story" (272c10-11), involves pursuing what is "likely" (*eikos*, 272e1). "The whole art consists in cleaving to that throughout your speech," says Socrates (272e5-273a1). He and Phaedrus agree that the likely is "what is accepted by the crowd" (273a7-b1). Socrates then gives an example of the way in

which this technique may result in a ridiculous outcome in a court of law, where a weak, tenacious man beats up and robs a strong man. The strong one will not admit to cowardice, and so, he invents a lie, in response to which the weak man can simply ask how a small man like him could beat up someone so big (273b-c). Clearly, the weak, guilty man would go free because of the way in which both men were unwilling to challenge the expectations of the many. This outcome undermines the very purpose of a court of law and makes a mockery of it. Socrates follows this by pointing out that a sensible man will make the laborious effort needed in order to speak and act in a way that pleases the gods, "his masters" (*despotais*, 274a1), rather than in a way that pleases his "fellow slaves" (*homodoulois*, 273e9). In summary, Socrates points out a shortcut, which involves essentially leading one's audience by using the false as a guide, in the form of the likely or crowd-pleasing, and then Socrates immediately recants that shortcut because he reduces it to absurdity with his court of law example. This shortcut to effective psychagogy results in an absurd outcome because its touchstone or standard is lies and deception, not because it initially leads its audience to the false. This shortcut is a world away from leading one's audience away from what *is*, or toying with them, while having knowledge of the truth and using the truth as a guide.[8]

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[8] Hadot's work comparing and contrasting the psychagogy or "*Seelenleitung*" of the sophists with that of Plato and Socrates bears out the aforementioned understanding of Platonic psychagogy (see Hadot 1969). Hadot explains that the sophists (especially Gorgias, followed by Isocrates) relied on public opinion as their touchstone for truth, while Plato and Socrates, highly critical of this, demanded an alternate test for truth (22). Plato's particular brand of soul-leading has an elaborate metaphysical foundation. Platonic psychagogy is well-grounded for leading its subjects to the truth of self-knowledge and knowledge about reality. Hadot also accounts for the force and effectiveness of Platonic psychagogy by examining its roots. Referring to fables of the sort we first find in Hesiod, Hadot explains that fantasy disguises moral principles in such a way that they penetrate verses and sentences in layers of consciousness much deeper than those that typify daily life. In this way, adds Hadot, these fables operate not only on reason, but also evoke emotion. (16) Hadot points out that the simultaneous engagement of emotions and reason lies at the foundation of *Seelenleitung*. Regarding the tools used for these purposes, Hadot mentions three in particular: "imitation, suggestion, (and) sympathy," which modern as well as ancient psychagogues have employed (20). All translations from German are our own, unless otherwise noted. Commenting specifically on Platonic psychagogy, Hadot explains that in wandering about the many inner

Imagery, or the contemplation of imagery, provides a fruitful third option that is neither deceitful nor impotent. Socrates frames his second speech in the *Phaedrus* (244a-257d) as a recantation or palinode in honor of love. He first announces that he wants to explain the truth about the soul, after which he outlines a proof for its immortality and an explanation of its structure (245c-246a). It is here where he introduces the image of a chariot pulled by a pair of winged horses and driven by a charioteer as an analogy for the soul. He then explains the way in which souls either fly high into the heavens to glimpse intelligible reality or, if the soul's wings are not nourished by things like Beauty, Wisdom, and Goodness, the soul sheds its wings, plunging down into physical reality. This is what souls do either before or after their life on earth, according to this speech, and the success of souls in this regard is linked to the souls' ability to become human in their next life and also gain wisdom in that life (246b-249c).

Socrates later explains the nature of the two horses and the charioteer in further detail, to shed further light on the nature of the soul. In the context of this description, he says that what keeps the whole chariot under control is the charioteer's recollection of intelligible realities from before birth. The charioteer represents the soul's rationality, and, if it is able to control the soul's erotic appetitive urges (represented by the horse that is untame), it will live virtuously and happily both during life and after it, while those who give in to the demands of the appetites adopt a lower way of living and are punished beneath the earth during the afterlife (253c-257a).

The images Socrates describes include the horses and charioteer (246a-b) (which bears a striking resemblance to the tripartite soul of the *Republic*), the heavens (246e-247c), and the realm that is beyond the

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windings of a Platonic dialogue, one may investigate and find true knowledge. She adds that one may speak of certain knowledge only if one has suffered through the task of first considering many other possibilities (36). Hadot's words here may remind us of Socrates' description of psychagogy in the *Phaedrus*, where soul-leading, when done artfully by one who knows the truth in its fullness, mainly involves directing others toward what *is* by first leading them toward partial truths. One must suffer and strain through the repeated realizations that what one thought was the real truth actually is not, in such a way that one is ultimately led to what is real and true. Concluding her remarks on Platonic psychagogy, Hadot says that the Platonic dialogue both is itself a way and also shows a way for the soul to progress toward the good (37).

heavens (247c-e), with the latter two both helping to explain the intellectual heights to which the soul may ascend. Socrates also conveys the story of the souls' journeys before and after life, including their judgment (248a-250c), as well as their rewards and punishments (256b-e). These details arguably convey the benefits of intellectual love and the negative aspects of physical love by portraying the rewards of the former and the punishments associated with the latter. It seems that this speech is leading the soul to pursue intellectual love rather than physical love, where the former really is good and the latter only appears so. Socrates conveys the beauty of intellectual love by using erotic imagery.

It is not difficult to defend the viability of a figurative reading here, in large part due to the built-in allegorical elements, especially the charioteer image[9]. A purely literal reading is not viable, due to the myth's inherent reliance on a figurative image of the soul. It is viable, however, to understand the story of the soul's journey, including its rewards and punishments, as an account with many elements likely to resemble a probable literal truth in a very general sense[10]. The second speech treats love, in large part, by means of explanatory passages that do not tell a story with invented details, but that rely on the aid of a central analogy, as well as a story and its invented details. The speech also relies on a proof of the immortality of the soul. The entire speech can thus be called a likely account. Furthermore, the element of reincarnation, a widely accepted belief found in Orphism and Pythagoreanism, adds to the likelihood of the account. There seems to be grounds for a metaphorical reading portraying the immediate rewards or punishments for injustice in *this* life, like the description of immoderate souls not being able to see true reality as well as moderate souls can (247b). Since there is a clear

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[9]   R. Hackforth echoes this. Pieper also presents a figurative reading of the myth, although he, like Hackforth, does not identify the "myth of the soul" with the entirety of the second speech (see Hackforth 1952, 72; and Pieper 1964, 77-83).

[10]   Richard Bett argues for the viability of a literal reading (see Bett 1986, 24). Hitchcock argues for a literal interpretation of the divine procession, but he also considers a metaphorical reading of the speech's account of reincarnation and recollection (Hitchcock 1974, 230). Morgan argues that only a sophist, according to the opening of the *Phaedrus* (229c-230a), would seriously investigate the literal truth of a myth (see also Morgan 2000, 160). There's clearly some truth to this, in our estimation, given that the "likely" in the *Phaedrus* is associated with what is generally accepted by the many.

discussion of Forms in this account, it may also be possible to argue that this myth provokes contemplation of those Ideas and the others to which they are related. The function of Socrates's second speech involves teaching the reader about the nature of intellectual love, including its rewards, in contrast to the deprecating results of purely physical love.[11]

While the erotic language and imagery engages our base appetites, the myth entices us to view the erotic imagery in a way that recollects divine Beauty, with the former motivating the latter. In 251a-252d, for instance, Socrates describes the way in which one experiences the longing of love. At the same time that the erotic language he uses engages the appetites, Socrates' description of the pain of yearning for one's beloved strikes the reader. The reader simultaneously recalls the feelings of erotic longing and awe for his beloved, as well as the desire to compete for this person's love. Then, describing the experience of love, Socrates highlights the important role of shame in helping to keep the soul from acting on appetitive impulses (254a-e and 256a-b). For fully experiencing the various desires and pains of love and refusing to give in to the temptations of the appetites, the reward is the greatest good possible for a human being: one ascends to the intellectual realm of the divine (256b).

The myth invites further inquiry. The audience is invited to understand madness by beginning a philosophically fruitful conversation about it and not arriving at a final definition. The audience is also invited to engage in dialectical metaphysics. When the soul travels its circular path, it sees Justice, Self-Control, and Knowledge (247d). This discussion of the Forms invites dialectical engagement with the following questions: Why are only Justice, Self-Control, and Knowledge mentioned? Why is Plato highlighting them? Human self-control is a bad thing according to the speech, so then, what is divine Self-Control by comparison?

Describing souls in the heavens before birth, Plato designates three levels of vision and then nine types of lives (248a-b and d-e). Which lives correspond with the soul who is god-like, which with the one who

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[11] Pieper thinks the second speech is the "real" content of the *Phaedrus*, making the whole dialogue worthwhile (Pieper 2011, 42). Though we see the palinode as a high point of the dialogue, Pieper risks overstating its role with such a remark.

misses some real things, and which with the one who sees no reality? Apart from the gods' souls, there is a three-fold distinction: souls that see Forms fairly continuously, those that see them intermittently, and those that do not see Forms at all (248a). In the discussion of incarnations, there is a corresponding distinction: (1) Souls that follow gods and see the Forms are not incarnated (248c3-5); (2) souls that are not able to follow gods continuously, but have glimpsed some of the Forms are incarnated into the nine types of human lives in the order of the extent of their vision (248c5-249b5); and (3) the souls that have not even glimpsed Forms are incarnated into animals (249b5-6). This pair of three-fold distinctions invites important questions about the cognitive potential of human beings: What knowledge of Forms are we capable of and what does that look like when manifest in our lives? What are the implications of achieving it or not?[12]

The second speech of the *Phaedrus* is interconnected with the dialogue around it in numerous ways, one of which is the criteria for its own value. This palinode recognizes its limitations by indicating some of the directions in which further study can proceed in order to continue the lines of discussion begun in the less mythological, more strictly rational, aspects of the dialogue. One result of repeated consideration of the mythical imagery[13] is that it might evoke a communion with the Forms like a kind of prayer or meditation.

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[12] R.S. Bluck says that this myth exemplifies the principles of collection and division (see Bluck 1961, 52). Cristina Ionescu engages in a thorough exploration of the relationship between recollection and dialectic in the second speech (see Ionescu 2012, 1-24). Morgan argues that the method of collection and division could not be developed in the second speech, because it is only there by chance and needs to be developed by rational inquiry (see Morgan 2020, 239).

[13] This objection assumes that myth is a type of poetry, which is how I understand the relationship between the former and latter. I do not see them as simply equivalent. Janet Smith explains that we can identify myth as poetry since most ancient Greek poetry had myth as its content. Also, Platonic myth has a number of features typically considered poetic, like beautiful language, similes, metaphors, and emotional intensity. Additionally, she says, Plato's myths are sometimes rhythmical. However, completely equating the Platonic myth with poetry is problematic, according to Smith, because Plato's myths are not metrical. She cites 393d8 where Socrates says he will speak without meter since he is not a poet (see Smith 1985, 10-12). Catherine Collobert argues convincingly that Plato sees myth as poetic philosophy (see Collobert 2012, 87).

In the *Republic*, Plato lays out a well-known, controversial, and elaborate set of criteria for good image-making that the palinode of the *Phaedrus* seems to satisfy – in addition to the guidelines laid out in its own dialogue. This is not to say that Plato wrote one dialogue before the other, or that he composed the *Phaedrus* with the *Republic* in mind. Rather, the fact that the second speech of the *Phaedrus* might satisfy even the criteria of the *Republic* is further evidence of its value as self-aware imagery.

In book 2 of the *Republic*, Socrates begins censoring art for the sake of children's rearing, arguing that this is warranted because of their impressionability and inability to understand certain adult themes (377b). The censorship eventually grows quite expansive, extending to many well-known passages from Homer, Hesiod, and others. Rather than just banning these passages from use for children, as was initially suggested, much of this literature is either severely restricted or eliminated entirely from the city[14]. The justification here is that these texts present themes that are dangerous for the average citizen to hear, like portrayals of the gods as deceptive[15] and, in general, depictions that might encourage vice,[16] including those of unjust people being rewarded (392a-b).

The justification for this censorship is maintained throughout the *Republic*, and even into the final book, where Socrates confirms that they were right not to admit any imitative art (595a) because of its distance from the truth and the way it perverts the thoughts of those who hear it[17]. Socrates explains why the mimetic arts are distanced from truth, saying that, whereas a craftsman produces a copy of a Form, an artist produces a copy of the craftsman's copy, thus being twice removed from truth (597b-598c, 602a-c). Explaining why imitation has a perverting effect on thinking, Socrates claims that it relaxes the rational part of the soul and allows shameful emotions to surface (605d-606d).

We suggest that Plato's palinode in the *Phaedrus* is conscious of both of these criticisms, as well as the criticisms of art from the earlier books of the *Republic*. He does this by carefully regulating the emotion

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[14]   377e-378b, 378d-e, 379d-e, 383a; This list is far from exhaustive.

[15]   379b-c, 381b, 381d-e, 382e.

[16]   388e-389a, 389e-392a.

[17]   595b, 596b-598b, 598d-600e, 602c-d, 605a-b.

his work evokes,[18] and by producing copies that function like objects in the cave that inspire freed prisoners (his readers) to turn around toward the light[19]. Also, he portrays the divine – the Forms – as good, as opposed to deceptive, and presents the unjust as being punished while the just are rewarded. Plato consequently encourages virtue rather than vice with his depictions. However, even well into book 10 of the *Republic*, the reader has not heard anything even remotely positive about the imagery of poetry and art, so why would Plato even consider writing it? Furthermore, why would he possibly want us to take it seriously?

To answer this question, we will turn now to Plato's final word on poetry in book 10. Socrates says:

> "Nonetheless, if the poetry that aims at pleasure and imitation has any argument to bring forward that proves it ought to have a place in a well-governed city, we at least would be glad to admit it, for we are well aware of the charm it exercises. But, be that as it may, to betray what one believes to be the truth is impious… Therefore, isn't it just that such poetry should return from exile when it has successfully defended itself, whether in lyric or any other meter? …Then we'll allow its defenders, who aren't poets themselves but lovers of poetry, to speak in prose on its behalf and to show that it not only gives pleasure but is beneficial both to constitutions and to human life. Indeed, we'll listen to them graciously, for we'd certainly profit if poetry were shown to be not only pleasant but also beneficial." (607c2-e1)

Four times, Socrates says that the city will benefit from poetry if it is *proven* to be beneficial. Plato's myths possess a built-in philosophical defense, which results in large part from their interconnectedness with

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18 Destrée, for instance, says that by multiplying the indirectness of the account, Plato allows us to feel emotion in a distant, even ironic way (see Destrée 2012, 124). Plato clearly does this in the *Phaedrus* with the second speech, which Socrates says is by Steischorus (244a).

19 Collobert is especially illuminating on this point. She argues that Platonic imagery has a philosophical model as its original, and therefore, delusion is removed from the illusions he creates. While poets and sophists merely copy from the realm of opinion, which leads to the confusion of images with their originals, Plato's copies are well-grounded, because they are devices to portray philosophical content, and have a grasp of what *is* as their foundation. Also, unlike the sophist, the philosopher does not conceal the distance between image and model, making the deluded viewer aware of the delusion (see Collobert 2012, 87, 95, 102). Collobert (2012, 99), specifically argues that the imagery of Platonic myth is only once removed from the truth.

the broader dialogical context[20]. Plato here makes the point emphatically that poetry can really be a good thing, *if* framed correctly, that is, philosophically or non-poetically. One reason for this benefit, as stated above, is the charm (*kayloumenois*, c7) of poetry. Socrates implies here that this charm could be a tool for good if implemented by one who could defend its use[21]. Specifically, great poetry can be a source of pleasure that is beneficial for the soul. This is contrary to the many appetitive pleasures discussed throughout the dialogue that threaten the harmony of the soul and that lead down a slippery slope resulting in dooming one to the miserable life of a soul driven entirely by the most depraved pleasures. The good pleasures of poetic imagery on the other hand include contemplation of the Forms, which myths like the second speech of the *Phaedrus* stimulate largely because of their treatment of the Forms, which comes forth in close figurative reading, and the re-reading and re-thinking they provoke through their charm effect. One need not even have the actual text before them to engage in such pleasant contemplation. Ultimately, such repeated pleasant contemplation leads to glimpses of beautiful, virtue-inspiring Ideas, along the lines experienced by the charioteers who manage to rise temporarily above the constant procession.

Contemporary Perspectives on Spiritual Philosophy and Its Relationship with Imagery

Contemporary approaches to this problematic utilize several overlapping but related terms including: imagination, cultural imagination, imaginary, and many variations therein. Theorists from fields as divergent as psychoanalysis, theology, anthropology, and sociology continue to work and rework theories that converge around the concept of the imaginary.

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[20]   It is precisely because Platonic myth provokes critical reflection that Marina McCoy argues it satisfies the criteria for good poetry (607e-608a). Also, she says, Plato's poetry might awaken the lower parts of the soul, but it does so in a way that promotes rational goals. In these ways, Platonic poetry incorporates its self-prescribed limits (see McCoy 2012, 130-131).

[21]   Stanley Rosen refers to those who have this ability as those who possess the remedy for poetry (see Rosen 1993, 10).

The imaginary encompasses both what can be expressed in language and the unconscious attitudes and directive images beneath language. The imaginary can be understood to have a core of directive images and a horizon delineating the limits of what can be thought. It is deeply individual, but the development of an individual's imaginary is heavily dependent on their context. Just as for Plato myths and images invite reflection into their deeper dimensions, the purpose of the spiritual practice of contemplation can be to widen that horizon and subsequently re-view one's directive images. In her thoughtful book on imagination and spiritual development, Sarah Arthur argues that there is a general feeling that:

> "… the imagination is somehow evil or at least something we're supposed to grow out of… No doubt we have Freud and the moderns to thank for equating imagination with fantasy and illusion and making it all negative… Even now there's a tenacious tendency among both liberals and conservatives to equate imagination with making stuff up." (Arthur 2007, 41)

Arthur instead describes the imagination thus: "the imagination is the image-making faculty of the intellect that helps us discover, process, and creatively express coherent meaning. Or, to state it quite simply, imagination is how we put things together" (Arthur 2007, 53)[22]. The imagination is, for Arthur, the tool that constructs one's imaginary. She shows how the imagination, thus described, can also be a useful tool for spiritual formation. She casts the youth mentor as "bard," inviting young people to journey to Middle-Earth, Hogwarts, or Redwall on their way to Calvary. In distancing herself from an imagination which actually *does* "make stuff up," Arthur limits the imagination's role to expressing or deriving meaning from some pre-existing reality. This is the imagination's ability to construct imaginaries: the imagination draws connections between disparate bits of information in order to construct imaginaries, discrete but overlapping clusters of concepts and understandings which enable an individual to both negotiate the troubled waters of the world and derive meaning from it.

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[22] This is similar to Richard Osmer's definition of the primary imagination as "*the activity of pattern formation and recognition*" (Osmer 2014, 55).

Anthropologist Claudia Strauss argues that the term *Imaginary* – as in, a national-cultural imaginary, or a social imaginary – has gained traction as the term 'culture' has been sliding into obscurity (see Strauss 2006, 322). Strauss argues that the term has become so commonplace that its meaning is generally assumed. However, current uses of 'imaginary' in anthropological studies typically come from one of three sources: "for Castoriadis, the imaginary is a culture's ethos; for Lacan, it is a fantasy; for Anderson and Taylor, it is a cultural model (*i.e.* a learned, widely shared implicit cognitive schema" (Strauss 2006, 323). Strauss meticulously outlines these positions, all the while arguing against any conception of the imaginary which creates a false homogeneity:

> "This means talking, not about 'the imaginary of a society', but of people's imaginaries." (Strauss 2006, 323)

The imaginary is not the way a culture presents itself to an individual. It is the way individuals imagine their culture, relationships, purpose, and so on (see Strauss 2006, 326). This is another way of saying what we've argued at the outset: that our directive images exert a relentless influence on the experience of being human.

One's imaginary thus has several delineable characteristics. First, one's imaginary develops in relation to material objects and practices (325). Thus, it is likely that people who participate in similar practices and with similar material surroundings will develop similar imaginaries surrounding those objects and practices. Second, the imaginary can be distinguished from both the symbolic and the real (327). Whatever the *real* is, it is not accessible to an individual. We always interact with the world through our imaginaries, preverbal constructs developed from birth. This leads to the third important characteristic: an imaginary can actually obscure the real, it can be 'misconstructed' (327). At any given moment an individual juggles numerous imaginary – these imaginaries may overlap to greater or lesser degrees. In her analysis of post-Columbine discourse, Strauss shows how different imaginaries are operationalized by the same person depending on the circumstances and that person's individual goals. One's individualistic moral imaginary may prevent one from giving

money to a beggar. But later, that same person may draw upon a communal moral imaginary to argue for the centralization of healthcare.

The imaginary is often implicitly assumed to inscribe the limits of what is real. However, this often does not leave any space for creativity. Rather, one's imaginary – or, the sum total of one's imaginaries – is implicitly assumed to readily correlate with what is 'out there,' and the imagination, contrary to Arthur, is seen as existing outside of that sphere. For example, in 1830, a member of the British Parliament named William Huskisson was attending the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway when he attempted to cross the tracks ahead of an oncoming train. The size and speed of trains had no place in his spatial imaginary, and he was summarily run over (Gonzales 2003, 76)[23]. Had Huskisson possessed the right knowledge – of train speeds, for example – and a reasoning faculty, he would have survived. The imaginary is therefore seen as the place where reason works with knowledge to enable an organism to function (*Fig. 1*). This positivistic conception renders intelligible a certain epistemology that renders objects passive and 'knowers' generic[24]. This model fails, however, in its inability to account for the creative moment which makes possible the invention of a train capable of existence. Where is the convergence of the imagined and the real? For this, we turn to the work of Paul Ricoeur.
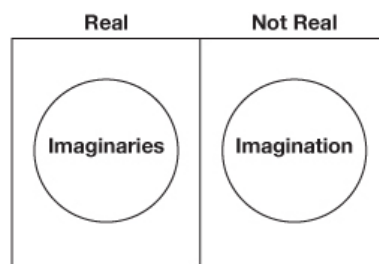

Figure 1

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[23] It is possible that he understood how trains worked, and knew how to profit from their expansion. So, one could say there was a place for trains in his economic or mechanical, but not spatial imaginaries. This further illustrates the presence of multiple, overlapping imaginaries an individual juggle.

[24] This conception can also be linked to the subject-object binary common in Enlightenment thought. See the work of Grace Jantzen, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and others.

For Ricoeur, the imagination is not incidental to thought; it permeates all of thought and has both a reproductive *and* a productive function. The reproductive imagination is an essential ingredient of perception, a point ignored in *Fig. 1*. George Taylor, summarizing Ricoeur's imagination lectures, echoes Arthur's claim about the marginalization of the productive imagination: "to the degree the imagination tries to portray something different from the original, it is simply marginal, an escape or flight from reality; it produces nothingness" (Taylor 2006, 95)[25]. This is the sense behind the oft-heard critiques of imagination as irrational, or even in recent debates about arts education. On this view, which in some ways resembles Plato's critique of poetry above, knowledge is produced solely by the rational reflection of a rational agent on their experiences. The arts, which depend on the imagination, are mere fancy, incapable of moving from the imagined to the real. Feminist and Postcolonial thinkers, however, have exposed the ways in which Western thought's separation of reason and the imagination has served particular power structures and interests. In short, it is hegemonic.[26]

In contrast, Ricoeur develops a conception of the productive imagination that discloses new dimensions of reality (see Taylor 2006, 98). In Taylor's words:

> "The productive imagination is not something 'irrational,' [Ricoeur] says; 'it must be categorical in order to be transcategorical. To be effective, the productive imagination must transform existing categories; it cannot exist totally outside and separate from them. This suggests that any transformative fiction… must have elements of reproductive imagination, must draw from existing reality sufficiently so that its productive distance is not too great." (Taylor 2006, 97-98)

The productive imagination is thus dialectically related to the reproductive imagination and the boundary between the two is porous (*Fig. 2*). So while imaginaries exist primarily within the reproductive imagination, a disease – or a new healthy growth – can readily spread to the imagination as a whole. Conversely, a healthy productive imagination draws upon

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[25] This history, which will not be addressed here, goes back as far as Plato.

[26] This visual representation fits well with Jantzen's critique of a Lockean epistemology which features a stark subject/object binary: "It is in fact a technology of power for excluding radical difference, and thereby effectively limiting who shall count as knowers" (Jantzen 2001, 7).

the reproductive imagination and is, for Ricoeur, at the heart of both redemption and conversion.

> "[The imagination] is, par excellence, the instituting and the constituting of what is humanly possible. In imagining his possibilities, man acts as a prophet of his own existence. We can then begin to understand in what sense we may speak of a *redemption through imagination*: by means of dreams of innocence and reconciliation, hope works to the fullest human capacity… The imagination, in so far as it has a mytho-poetic function, is also the seat of profound workings which govern the decisive changes in our visions of the world. Every real conversion is first a revolution at the level of our directive images." (Ricoeur 1965, 127)
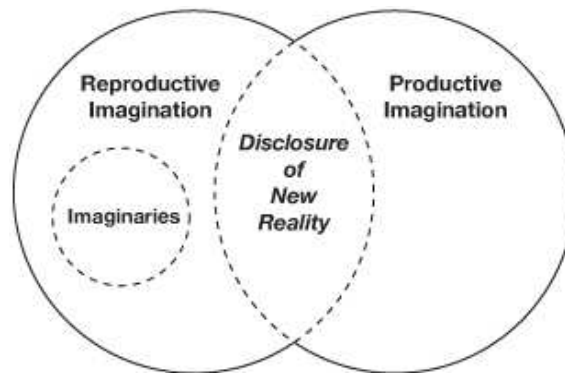

Figure 2

Ricoeur thus takes others to task for limiting the imagination to its synthesizing capabilities. There is, in the intersection between the reproductive and productive imaginations, the potential to disclose a new reality. Ricoeur links this to, for example, the ability to imagine a vision of utopia. I can imagine a world without racism even though I have no 'real' referent for such a world. Furthermore, my ability to imagine such a world is the first step in actualizing that world. Richard Osmer notes the importance of the productive imagination for both individual and societal transformation. On the individual level psychological developmental models point to the imagination's role in discovering limitations of the status quo and imagining one's life differently. On the societal level, the productive imagination creates myths, or "imaginative stories that depict the everyday world within an interpretation of the ultimate context of human existence" (Osmer

2014, 57) These myths, products of the imagination themselves, become the basis of new social arrangements and understandings and fodder for new creative moments. The space created in the intersection of one's reproductive and productive imaginations is the space in which the imagined becomes real.

Conclusion

We've sketched a philosophy with high aspirations for overcoming a malaise of thought prompted by, depending on whom one asks, technocracy, social media, AI, sports, advertising, neoliberalism, the culture industry, or simply the ascendancy of emojis. One need not accept Plato's metaphysics to observe that these images lack both depth and coherence. Therefore, the world of the 21st century tends to collapse into static. Plato suggested that poetry's usefulness is dependent upon one's framing of it, but the modern world admits little time to even construct a frame. Indeed, one could plausibly suggest that the default directive imagery of the 21st century individual is itself an over-saturated mental state devoid of content, what Karmen MacKendrick calls a "scattered time" (MacKendrick 2016, 40). It is not the content of the images that matters; it is the mode of engagement.

In contrast to the image-saturated nature of modern life in which one can scroll mindlessly through seemingly infinite, banal content on the internet, the kind of contemplation suggested by Plato and Ricoeur requires sustained effort. This is precisely the role of philosophical training in a spiritual mode. An image, it is said, is worth a thousand words. This is only true, however, if we spend time in thoughtful contemplation. Otherwise, we are cutting off our imagination before it can really get started by limiting it to, at most, its reproductive function. Isn't there more pleasure to be found, as Plato suggested, in contemplating images in one's own mind even when those images are not physically present? Is this not exactly the way in which such images, like memories, both provide pleasure and are transformed?

We hope to have troubled the space between "the real" and "the imagined." Since at least the time of Kant, skepticism about the human ability to access things in themselves has prevailed. Knowledge is a slippery

thing. This need not, however, prevent the curious and the thoughtful from practicing philosophy in a spiritual mode that goes beyond rational argument to the deepest recesses of our image-generating faculties. Following Plato and Ricoeur, a spiritual mode of philosophy refuses to end inquiry, observation, and reflection too soon. This in turn produces new, slower habits of thought. The process is not linear, like scrolling on a phone, but iterative, like walking the same trail again and again until the trail itself changes. In this way philosophy, by prompting thoughtful reflection on directive images, has the power to uniquely alter the human predicament.

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Varghese MANIMALA[1]

LISTENING TO THE GROANING OF MOTHER EARTH.
A CHALLENGE AND AN INVITATION TO MOVE BEYOND ECOLOGY,
THROUGH *ECOFILIA* TO *ECOSOPHY* – THE NECESSITY
FOR A RELEVANT SPIRITUALITY TODAY

Abstract. All over the world there is a great concern about Global Warming, migration, wars, poverty, inhumanity, etc. In addition, there is a great concern about Mother Earth as it is being exploited for the sake of profit for a few, and denying opportunities and necessities to the vast majority. In this paper our concern is very much similar because, if we have to build up a relevant spirituality it should be in this context eco-centred which also means humanity-centred. Perhaps, the rich of the Earth have become too selfish that their humaneness seems to have disappeared, and believe only in manipulation and exploitation, and Mother Earth is the greatest victim, which in turn affects the whole humanity. Hence, as Raimon Panikkar says an Ecology which is a pure science is not enough, but we need *Ecofilia* (friendship with the Earth) and *Ecosophy* (wisdom of the Earth); we need to learn from the wisdom of Mother Earth, which is sadly lacking today. The effects of the great exploitative wonder Globalization have been disastrous, especially for the developing and underdeveloped nations, and rich countries made use of it for economic colonisation, thus bringing a big majority under thorough economic exploitation. It is here that a new counter-culture and a thoroughly radical spirituality need to evolve, and if need be on the basis of a revolution. We need prophets of such spirituality who will denounce the existing exploitative structures and announce the coming a new society established in peace, justice, and harmony – a new Heaven and a new Earth. The sad fact is that such prophets are extremely lacking being afraid of the ruling parties they do not want to risk their lives. We shall not be proclaimers of doom but prophets and proclaimers of hope that a new society can be built through our commitment to justice, equality, and liberty. Let us take up this mission.

Keywords: *Ahimsa, Ecofilia, Ecosophy*, counter-culture, cosmotheandric, demythification, interbeing, cosmology, *Mokṣa, Navasūtrāṇi, Nirvāṇa*, responsibility

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Introduction

We are all aware of the dangers that confront us because of the denuding of Mother Earth, and its consequences. The recent flash floods that killed thousands and destroyed property worth crores of rupees in Uttarakhand (North India) have shown that these were man-made disasters because of the avarice and greed of the human beings. The Chipko movement which protected such naturally sensitive areas have fallen prey to the unbridled exploitation by various groups of people supported by the powers that be caused such immense damage. But yet be sure these natural disasters are not going to open the eyes of the people who are blinded by only a single motive – that of profit by hook or crook, although they themselves are at risk and endanger their own lives and that of their dependents. It is in this context that we who claim to be enlightened in various ways need to wake up from our slumber and act with determination and haste lest the future of the whole humankind and that of the whole environment be at risk. In this endeavour both theory and praxis need to go hand in hand. Just as we highlight the tragedies we need to suggest a change of attitude through enlightenment drawing upon the ancient wisdom and modern scientific discoveries, suggesting to move away from technocracy to respect for Mother Earth and the whole genus of living beings. Hence, in this paper what we aim to do is to reflect a little more deeply and suggest that we should not be satisfied with mere ecology, even the so-called Deep Ecology but move towards the *Ecofilia* and *Ecosophy*. Perhaps we could call this dialectics – *Ecology → Ecofilia → Ecosophy*, somewhat drawing inspiration from the great dialectical philosopher – Hegel. But in this presentation, I am very dependent on the thoughts of my friend and guru – Prof. Raimon Panikkar, who even coined some of these terms. He coined another important term and on which he based his later thought and approach calling it "Cosmotheandric". He even advocated a spirituality based on such an approach, and coined beautiful terms like "sacred secularity, cultural disarmament, *kairological* moments, interculturality, etc."[2]

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[2] Since many of our readers may not be familiar with the great philosopher-theologian and indologist Prof. Raimon Panikkar of happy memory I shall give a brief introduction to him here as I have known him and spent quite bit of time in Barcelona, his native place, and here in India. He had an Indian (from Kerala) Hindu father and a Spanish

We shall limit ourselves to our specified topic and reflect how to bring about change in our own attitudes doing a lot of self-critiquing and questioning, and try to challenge our own self-complacency.

Meaning of the Terms

We are using three important terms in our discussion – *Ecology*, *Ecofilia* and *Ecosophy*. All these are based on the Greek language: the first term coined from *Eco + logos* (έκο-λογός) = science of the earth, Eco + *filia* (έκο-ψιλία) = friendship with the earth, and *Eco + Sophia* (έκο-σοψία) = wisdom of the earth. In the first term there is a clear-cut duality expressed namely the Earth is made an object of a subject's analysis; and hence there is a lot of imposition of the pre-suppositions of the subject on the object, and the analysis is done not with any prescribed ethics or norm but Earth as an object to be made use of. At present there may be some amount biological ethics being brought in because of the impending danger that may overtake us. In the second term, *Ecofilia*, there is a movement from reducing the Earth to an object to a companion as if, because the term *filia* means friendship. As we can guess friendship is possible only between beings who can acknowledge one another as inter-subjective and inter-protective. A true friendship is not possible in a relationship of over-protection or domination. In friendship there is an assurance given:

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mother. He is the eldest son from the second wife of his father, and he did most of his studies in Europe and obtained three doctorates – in Chemistry, Philosophy and Theology. He taught in Spain, in Benares Hindu University, Mysore University, Harvard, California, Oxford and many other European universities. He spent nearly a quarter of a century at California University as the professor and the head of the department of religious studies at Santa Barbara. He knew most of the European languages, Sanskrit and Hindi. His was a wisdom unparalleled in many ways, and remained a critic of the modern technocracy wrote voluminously on many subjects related to religion, dialogue, peace, etc. Some of his important books are: *Vedic Mantra Manjari, Cosmotheandric Experience, Unknown Christ of Hinduism, Fullness of Man, Silence of God: The Answer of the Buddha, Rhythm of Being: Gifford Lectures, Cultural Disarmament – The Way to Peace, Interreligious Dialogue, Intra-religious Dialogue, Invisible Harmony, A Dwelling Place of Wisdom, De La Mystica*, an attempt is being made to publish Omnia Opera of Panikkar. The Italian version is already out. We in India need to become a little more acquainted with his thoughts and study them in depth.

"I shall be there for you," and there is also a certain mutuality expressed in the notion of friendship; there cannot be a one-way friendship. Thus, we find that in *ecofilia* there is a little more intimacy expressed. This leads us to the final term of our discourse – *Ecosophy*, the wisdom of the earth. Here it is not the subject who imposes a concept or a notion upon the object but the Earth itself is inviting the human to learn from her, thus calling for an attitude of receptivity from the part of the human being. Wisdom is the result of enlightenment and an attitude of humility, and it will call for commitment. Wisdom is not so much the result of analysis and research but is more of intuition, and it is more a gift rather than an attainment. Hence, one remains always grateful for this gift, and that attitude makes one more receptive. The attitude of Receptivity is very much at the core of wisdom (*Sophia*). Wisdom also indicates a willingness to share and be co-responsible.

1. Ecofilia, Ecosophy, and Responsibility

We have shown briefly the meaning of the first two terms, and now we need to proceed to analyze them in some detail and also try to understand in some depth the notion of Responsibility. Aware of the fact that the whole ecosystem is in peril, there need to be a shift of emphasis to the ecosystem, accompanied by the acceptance that the individual or the species can survive only within a viable ecosystem, there comes the urgency for a new ethical system based on relationships. The key quality in ethical relationships is responsibility, responsibility as a particular kind of responding to biodiversity in my species and in my ecosystem. My response is, consciously or not, shaped by my belonging there in a state of '*inter-esse*,' *interbeing*, in which my *inter-ests*, are contingent, on the reality of being sustained in an ecosystem I share not only with those of my own species but with myriads of others. How do I exercise my responsibility when I am part of so many different wholes? In what spirit do I respond? Perhaps, the short and veritable answer is non-violent response in the spirit of compassion. Response to the other in this way constitutes the ethical relationship required by biodiversity. Else what will come about is destruction, and this destruction occurs at many

levels: the personal, interpersonal, transpersonal and the communal, the individual and the systemic (Primavesi 1998, 52-53).

Emmanuel Levinas, one of the great contemporary philosophers of the West, gives a beautiful formulation regarding the responsibility for the quality of interactions. He holds that life's work consists in proclaiming the primacy of ethics. Taking for example the norm: "Thou shall not kill," he shows that this norm implies "You shall do everything so that the other lives" (Levinas 1984, 41). As is well known the image of 'the Face' has a predominant place in Levinas's philosophy. Face stands for what one cannot kill, or at least it is that whose meaning consists in saying "thou shall not kill". It is true murder takes place, but prohibition against killing renders murder evil; one may kill but it is universally acknowledged that it is better not to kill. The moral law still has relevance because the face of the sufferer remains calling us to responsibility. This resonates well with Gandhi's advice: "Whenever you are in doubt, apply the following test: recall the face of the poorest and weakest person you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be any use to that person". The moral law stands because the evidence of its violation is still there within the face of the sufferer.

1.1. Move towards Eco-centric Ethics

The sad aspect of human search for ethics and morality is very much anthropocentric, and even very much male dominated. We need to extend the notion of ethics to include other species and work out an ecological evolution which bases its origin in the tendency of interdependent individuals or groups to evolve modes of recognition and cooperation. This we call symbiosis – the complex cooperative mechanisms which evolve between organisms and their environments. We do not find any meaningful ethics developed with regard to human being's relation to land, and to the animals and plants which grow upon it, although governments have enacted some regulations with regard to the forests, which are also continuously being violated especially by multinational companies. The extension of ethics to this third dimension is an evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity. The land ethics simply enlarges the boundaries

of the community to include soils, waters, plants and animals – the diversity of life in all its manifestations. Levinas' concept of 'interessence,' a being linked to all entities whose interrelations are determined by each being's endeavour to maintain and expand its own existence, infers that if the nonviolent relation between humans is the trace of God, and that trace is 'proximity of God in the face of the other,' then the quality of that relation must inform all our interbeing. We know that the world-wide response to the loss of biodiversity has been extremely slow, even after the signing of the Convention on Biological Diversity. It calls for responsibility that goes beyond what I do to the attitudes which inform all relationships (Primavesi 1998, 54-55).

When a person is involved in environmental ethics his/her relationship to all aspects of life becomes transformed; many questions such as how I live, and what choices are being made with regard to life, consumerism, etc., arise. My choices involve a lot of relationship both overt and covert, and a sincere and conscientious person will have to ask many questions to himself/herself as to how his/her actions affect others. My responsibility is universal and is not limited to those whose faces I can see. The complexity of our interbeing within an ecosystem is such that we cannot limit our responsibility to those who are nearest to us. World-wide webs of trade, pollution and resources connect us to others we never see or meet. In such a situation a particularly theological response would be that this issue which religions have neglected for long should be taken up as a priority especially in the field of interreligious dialogue. The hostility between religions and consequent wars has been a contributory factor in the destruction of biodiversity. Religion is a major factor both in peace and war; and the challenge of religions is to make human beings more peaceful, and lead their followers to respect earth and the biodiversity. Here the Indian attitude of seeing as Mother Earth will be greatly beneficial (Primavesi 1998, 56; Manimala 2009, 551-554).

Today it is commonly acknowledged that the creation account in the Bible has been wrongly interpreted. It was thought that just because human beings were created at the end, Man is the crown and superior to all creatures, and that he is called to master and manipulate nature which was seen as opposed to him. Man was projected as the controller and ruler of the world having the power to deal with nature as he wishes. Ever

since Francis Bacon, the relationship between human beings and nature has been continually described as relationship of master to a slave. Up to now the creations of human history have led only to nature's depletion. Today we are becoming conscientious of the peril we are in unless there is a different attitude being shown to nature. If the common catastrophe of human beings and the earth is still avertable at all, then it is certainly only by synchronizing human history with the history of nature, and if the experiment of modern times is carried out 'in accordance with nature' and not in opposition to nature, or at nature's expense. For the survival of the human beings and the whole of creation there needs to be a reversal of attitude. In order to arrive at a viable symbiosis between human society and natural environments, it is essential to 'cool off' human history, and to slow down its one-sided varieties of progress. Our understanding of time must be brought into harmony with the laws of life and the rhythms of nature, in the environment and in the bodily nature of human beings themselves. This is urgent because among human beings the progress of one group is always achieved at the cost of other groups. If technological progress is achieved at the expense of nature or the coming generations, this progress is illusory and fictitious. We stand in need of more systems of equilibrium in order to keep the advancing processes of history within bounds and to make them endurable. The relationship between progress and equilibrium in the human and natural systems must be brought into a coordinated, fluid equilibrium if the cost-utility accounts are to be set up realistically and honestly, and if the sum is to come out right (see Moltmann 1989, 323; Manimala 2009, 554-555).

1.2. Necessity of All-inclusive History

In order to understand the necessary *ethical* limitations of human history it is incumbent on us to make the *natural* limitations of the history of human beings clear to ourselves. Human history runs its course within the great comprehensive ecosystem: earth, sun, moon and the stellar galaxies, and these affect human history. Every gaze into immeasurable spaces of the stellar systems and galaxies cuts human history down to

scale, showing it to be a small and limited phenomenon in the evolution of life on this one single planet Earth. The insights and reflections of the various sciences of today should reduce the Earth and the human history that is played out there to their proper proportions, showing their limits, when we think of the heavens and the innumerable spaces of the invisible worlds. History has become too anthropocentric, and everything was thought to be at the disposal of and for the use of human beings since Man is the crown of creation. Hence, history needs to become more ecocentric or cosmocentric and human beings playing their small role in this huge expanse. There is the rhythm of being at work and the more we attune ourselves to this rhythm in our space and time the better and meaningful our existence will turn out to be. The more men and women discover the meaning of their lives in joy in existence, instead of in doing and achieving (performance), the better they will be able to keep their economic, social and political history within proper bounds. "The experience of history" which is the human prerogative, is annulled and at the same time preserved and embraced in meditation, contemplation and in the doxology of the Eternal One. Our health can be restored if we discover serenity in the midst of all our activities. It is possible to assert that "the crown of history" is the Sabbath, because without the Sabbath quiet history becomes self-destruction of humanity; but through Sabbath rest history is sanctified with the divine measure and blessed with the measure of true humanity (Manimala 2009, 555)[3].

It is in this context that Panikkar's proposal of *ecofilia* and *ecosophy* come into focus. According to him a mere study of the Earth through ecology will not do, but a true love and affection for the Earth and the whole Cosmos is necessary. One of the reasons for the evolution of his concept of cosmotheandrism is this association with the earth and the rest of the cosmos. For him the whole reality – Man, Nature and the

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[3]   I would suggest to the reader to refer to Panikkar's most important book: *The Rhythm of Being: Gifford Lectures* (Orbis Books), in which he beautifully analyses time, space and rhythm. This book is, indeed, a masterpiece; although Panikkar himself thought that it is not complete as he wanted to write the last chapter on: "The Survival of Being," which he could not achieve, and concluded the book with a one-page epilogue that portrays his wisdom and intellectual humility.

Divine – is continuous there is no break up or discontinuity; it has a triple dimension and is to be seen as a continuous whole. We have to understand the Nature as the *oikos* (όίκος), the house, habitat of Man.[4] Here the divine is subsumed in Nature, which is not merely "natural" but sacred, and ultimately one with the divine. The entire World is Man's habitat; he lives and cultivates it. There is no need for him to contemplate Nature, since he himself belongs to it. All his actions are done on this Earth (*karmabhūmi*). He is neither a spectator nor an actor on Earth, but its natural product. Man is part of the whole, and communion with reality is coextensive here with the absence of separating and reflective self-consciousness (Panikkar 1998, 24-25). Nature inspires awe, elicits worship, needs to be propitiated; she is often considered to be the superior term of a personal relationship. Nature engenders gods, living beings, people and all sorts of beings. She is the great begetter; she is *natura naturans* as much as *natura naturata*, just as for Greeks *physis* (ψίσίς) is the dynamic principle of everything. In many cultures Nature or Earth is called 'the mother' (Panikkar 1972, 23f)[5]. Since the whole of reality stands in interrelatedness exclusion of one aspect will automatically affect the other, the harm done to one aspect of reality is equally a blot to the rest of it. Hence today's philosophy, theology, spirituality, etc., if they are to be relevant, have to take into serious concern the eco-diversity and eco-suffering.

1.3. Role of Religions – Fight for Eco-human Well-being

Today the whole religious experience needs to be grounded differently as Paul Knitter has pointed out. According to him if religions are to be relevant they have to realize that 'eco-human well-being' is a criterion for religious truth. Today good many thinkers in science, philosophy and theology are suggesting that the Earth is providing us not only with a context for experiencing the Divine/Truth in a vast variety of ways, but also with a common story by which we can better understand our

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[4] Here one could refer to the Sanskrit term *vis*, which means man's house. Man is *vispati*, the houselord [cf. *Vesah, vicinus* (*Lat*.), neighbour, and *vicus*, a group of houses].

[5] Panikkar tries to show the new understanding of Nature in many books and papers. Cf. *El Concepto de naturaleza* (1972, 23f).

different religious experiences, coordinate them, and even give them a unified shape. Today the Earth itself is offering all humans (belonging to all cultures and religions) *a common cosmological story*. With our new awareness of the universe and our sense of ecological kinship with it, we could speak of the universe as a larger religious community in which the particular and diverse religious communities of history can now recognize one another and come to see how their individual stories are part of the universe story. When religion begins to appreciate that the primary sacred community is the universe itself, then it realizes in a more and sacred perspective the sacred community is the Earth community. The human community becomes sacred through its participation in the larger planetary community (cf. Knitter 1995, 118-121).

The knowledge that we have today about the Earth and the universe provides not only the possibility of a shared religious story but also with the necessity of a common ethical task. It is especially on the ethical level that the universe story can exercise a practical unifying force among the religions as well as other disciplines; and in this our common creating story can help us for providing a compelling response. There is danger lurking beneath, a "flirting with the extinction of our species" as we witness, and cause the extinction of thousands of other species. The task of preventing this suicide and the broader genocide is the most compelling and unsettling ethical imperative facing humankind today. There seems to be on the horizon the closing down of the Earth's most basic systems, which support us and all other forms of life. Our Earth beautiful in its mysterious connectedness and evolution is menaced by the devastation that the human species has wrought upon it. The Earth community currently faces through the dynamics of an increasingly manipulative, globalized, consumption-oriented political economy based on rapacious growth and the supposedly pragmatic destruction of being-in-relation. Hence, religions and other institutions need to urgently fight for an eco-human well-being (*soteria*, liberation, *moksa*, *nirvāna*). It is for the justice of the Earth that we need to fight, and for this we need to give up all other considerations for the moment and take up this gigantic task in a common concerted effort. Precisely because human and ecological suffering is both *universal* and *immediate* it can serve persons of all cues with a common context and criterion for assessing truth claims. In its universality, human

and ecological suffering confronts and affects us all; in its immediacy it has a raw reality and challenge that is somehow beyond differing interpretations of it (cf. Knitter 1995, 122-127).

1.4. *Navasūtrāṇi for a Meaningful Ecosophy*

Thinkers of Deep Ecology and other great masters have suggested various principles for maintaining a good ecological system with a diversity which we are unable to fathom. Following Panikkar's way of putting principles in the form of *sūtras* here I am attempting at nine principles (*navasūtrāṇi*) which should guide all our efforts at the restoration of the ecological balance. Not that they are exhaustive but are some basic principles we should adhere to.

1. The whole ecosystem is a chain of beings with interrelationship and inner worth. They are of immense value and no one has the right to disrupt this relationship or destroy their worth.

2. All need to respect the rich biodiversity and there should not be any priority or exclusive greatness attributed to any being as every species is unique.

3. Human beings are called to shepherd Nature and not to exploit it. They can make use of Nature for the satisfaction of their basic needs.

4. In the name of development and growth there should not be denuding of Nature because she is our Mother, and depleting of resources should be avoided as these places the future of the World in jeopardy.

5. Since the species are disappearing at an alarming speed policy that are adopted and found to be harmful should urgently be changed.

6. The norm of 'higher standard of living' should be modified to "respect for all forms of life and Mother Earth," and thus bring about an ecological balance.

7. In the wake of Global Warming an all-out effort should be made by all nations to reduce gas emission. This should not be seen as a problem of some nations and thus minimize the efforts.

8. There should be an immediate reduction and stoppage of production of nuclear weapons and their sale. All chemical weapons should be destroyed forthwith, and no nation should be excluded from this responsibility. Without total disarmament life in its various forms is at the risk of extinction; the after effects of the usage of nuclear weapons are unpredictable.

9. A peaceful living in an ecologically balanced Nature is possible only through the acceptance and practice of *Ahimsa*, which does not mean not to do harm to human beings, but a principle which supports and promotes all forms of life. *Ahimsa* should be exercised not only among human beings but should be applied to the whole of Nature.

2. Promotion of Ahimsa and a New Spirituality for a Sustainable Ecosytem

As a conclusion to this paper I would suggest the great Indian virtue of *Ahimsa* be promoted, and that we arrive at a new spirituality which will promote and make life flourish in its variety of forms. Very often *Ahimsa* has been interpreted in a negative meaning 'not to do any harm to humans,' but an integral meaning of the term is something different. It means not only the absence of doing harm especially to human beings but it means promotion of life. We can say it is justice in praxis; justice is not giving what is his/her due but doing all that is required to give fullness of life. *Ahimsa* calls for wishing the good of the other in thought, word and deed, and doing everything one can to promote life. This is the meaning of *Ahimsa* especially in the Jaina understanding. Life is sacred and doing harm to life is a desecration.

When we accept life in the above described way we need a spirituality to sustain it. The term 'spirituality' is not to be taken in the sense of opposition to the secular or as meant for some elite group of people, but the cosmotheandric spirituality tries to integrate both the secular and the sacred. The whole cosmos is filled with life and is life-generating. Man, as the microcosm, is a model but is not in a privileged position to dominate the Earth. The three worlds – Heaven, Earth and Man – share in the same adventure of life (cf. Manimala 2009, 63). Earth

is seen as reverberating with life from two perspectives, first is the solidity and, hence the centrality of the Earth; the second is her receptivity and, accordingly, her expansiveness. For indicating these two aspects Indian tradition uses two terms – *bhūmi* for the first aspect, and *prthvi* for the second. The Earth supports everything and also is an ever-expanding horizon. The cosmos is a 'hierophany,' a sacred manifestation. The Earth is not only the grounding reality, but also brings forth realities; she is the womb of beings. The Earth is the *locus* where the great manifestation of life takes place, and it is the domain of our hope (*e.g.* the hope of the farmer, miner, etc.). After having discovered the double symbolism of the Earth we need to realize that she has a soul and is alive; but we should overcome the duality of the body and soul. The Earth is not a corpse enlivened by a soul; it has a spontaneity with its own pattern and freedom. What is called for is the greatest respect for Mother Earth (cf. Panikkar 1972, 137-139).

Panikkar also shows the need to move from cosmology to '*kosmology*' although the distinction is not very clear to an ordinary reader. He says by *kosmology* is meant the science (in the classical meaning of the term) about the holistic sense of the *kosmos*. *Kosmology* (*kosmos legein*, κοσμος λεγέίν) is a "reading" of the *kosmos*, the disclosure of the world to our human consciousness by means of all forms of knowledge we may possess. Humans should try to hear and understand by attuning themselves to the music of the world, to the mysteries of the kosmos. On the other hand, Cosmology, as Panikkar understands, is the result of the scientific *ratio* applied to the cosmos, which is open to the rational *logos*. *Kosmology* deals with how Man envisions the universe, how the *kosmos* displays itself to Man, and with the experience of the universe of which Man is a part helps to discover the real universe in which he lives. *Kosmological* is paramount and also there will be conflicting cosmologies. In order to overcome this conflict what we stand in need of is an Emerging Mythos, and it will call for 'demythification' and a new 'remythification.' A mere scientific concept will not do, one should become capable of feeling and hearing the music of the universe. Panikkar's proposal is the cosmotheandric mythos.[6]

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6   Panikkar proposes this in his famous book *The Rhythm of Being: The Gifford Lectures* to which we have referred earlier. He is very much aware of the meaning of the words

Another important character to be noted is temporality. The world is in movement and is not a dead reality. Being and Time are intimately connected; time is not an accident to Being; Being itself is temporal. Time is the peculiar way each being exists and lasts. Gradually Time became identified with its quantitative parameter under the assumption that there was a univocal correspondence of "measured time" to the richer reality of time. Temporality is a peculiar form of human existence and, as such, not just a freeway along which Man drives, but part and parcel of his/her own constitution. The past is not left behind, but accumulated in the present, the future is not just to come, but to some extent also effective (as hope) in the present. Time is the "Lord who works change in beings." Time created the Earth, in time is consciousness; and in time is life *(prana)*. Indian tradition expresses various aspects of Time by using words like *pran, jīv-, jīvanam, āyus,* etc. (Panikkar 1972, 140-142). In time Man enters into a relationship with the Earth, which is thoroughly transformed, and it becomes a 'personal' relationship. We can have an I-It relationship with the Earth, but that will not reveal meaning of Life to us. Things have a face for us, they have a special language of their own; they put us at ease or make us uncomfortable. Martin Buber, the famous philosopher of inter-personal relationship, used to say that even a tree can have an I-Thou (personal) relationship with us. As is clear a personal relationship is not one-sided; it elicits a response and registers a certain initiative from the other side as well. Things are not indifferent to us, although in general we cannot measure their "personal" reactions. Still, at times we feel certain things "speak" to us and others repel us; there are things we like because we are convinced they like us. The environment belongs to me and not only influences me, but is part and parcel of myself (Manimala 2009, 64-65).

Our effort was to show how the whole cosmos is in a network of relationship, and it is this relationship that sustains all. Friction or breakage of this relationship brings about unpredictable harm, and to restore such a relationship calls for tremendous effort. Harmony of all beings is something that has to be highlighted and human beings with

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he chooses and at times gives a new meaning and interpretation and also coins new words, not for the sake of neologism, to express his ideas better.

all the great advancements infuses disharmony into creation. Let us make a concerted effort for reinstatement of eco-balance and arrive at a cosmological harmony. There are simple ways to contribute to this ecological equilibrium as Dr. Mathaai, the Nobel Laureate did, planting millions of trees to save the people and nature. She took it up as a life mission, and today we need such committed people for saving our planet earth[7]. This calls for a counter-culture that will challenge the principle of maximum profit through exploitation and cut-throat competition, and unbridled development and progress.

3. A Relevant Spirituality for Today Based on the Notion of Ubuntu

Science has progressed beyond limits even endangering human existence, and even survival of all that live on Mother Earth. The Spirituality today calls for a mission to be responsible for human survival as well as the integrity of all creation. This is possible, as I perceive, on a deeper understanding of the African notion of Ubuntu. This a simple term they use to communicate the inter-dependent existence. This notion occurred in a very simple act of a missionary. A white missionary working in Africa on a Christmas day wanted the celebration with the small children. He hid a 'big treasure' a few hundred feet away from the children with a flag indicating the place where the treasure is hidden. Then he told the children to run; and the condition was that one who reaches the spot first will get the whole prize (it was small bag filled with chocolates). Children began running and one of them very much ahead and almost reached the spot. When he looked back he found others still far away, and he waited there so that others too may reach the spot in order to claim the prize together. They went there and found the bag of chocolates, and holding it together lifted up the bag. The missionary was surprised and asked the

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[7] The contribution each one can make is very valuable howsoever small or insignificant it may appear to be in the sight of modern scientific minded person. Here I would like to refer to a small booklet in Malayalam: *Nohayude Kathayum Kathayile Rehasyangalum* by Prof. S. Sivadas (Ernakulam: Varna Press, 2012). It is a book meant for children, and the book beautifully illustrates through the story of Noah in the Bible how the whole ecosystem consists of millions of species with inter-relationship and inter-dependence.

boy who reached the spot first, "why he didn't get there and take the prize and claim whole of it?". He shouted *Ubuntu*. This means "I am because you are," and "You are because I am." What a beautiful notion of intersubjective and interdependent existence; this is what we can call true spirituality. The direction of whole human thinking has to take such a direction.

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BULGAKOV AND *THE JESUS PRAYER*

Abstract. The issue surrounding the Name Controversy on Mount Athos in early 20th century provoked a long and systematic response from Father Sergius Bulgakov in defense of the hesychastic prayer in the Name of Jesus. Two remarkable aspects of the response deserve attention. The first is the self-conscious identification of his defense with that of St Gregory Palamas' in the 14th century, also involving the prayer life of the hesychasts and the Jesus Prayer. The essay argues for the Bulgakov's working within the framework of Palamite doctrine, wishing to "further" it. The second has to do with this furtherance via a creative reworking modern German philosophy within the perspective of the dogma of consubstantiality in order to establish the ontological character of the Name and especially the one invoking Jesus.

Keywords: The Jesus Prayer, Bulgakov, Palamas, name, antinomies

A distance of six centuries separate the respective defences of the holy hesychasts by St Gregory Palamas (1296-1359) and Father Sergius Bulgakov (1871-1944). Both were called out of their usual preoccupations – Gregory Palamas the monastic desirous of solitude, Bulgakov the Russian Orthodox "Intelligent" with a vision for a Christian nation – to argue for the legitimacy of the prayer of the heart invoking the Name of Jesus. The parallel between their respective responses would not go unnoticed by those who look toward hesychasm as typifying Orthodox Christianity and see the controversies around it as involving a crucial feature of how it understands the Christian faith. It is all the more striking for their involvement with occurrences

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that took place on Mount Athos, given the privileged status that it generally has in the minds of the Orthodox faithful. In that sense, they exemplify issues that go beyond the mere incidences of the moment.

At the outset of his own explication of the Jesus Prayer's meaning, St Sophrony of Essex alludes briefly to the commotion that had rather recently transpired before his arrival to the Holy Mountain in 1925. He recognises in passing that they raise some fundamental questions about prayers of invocation:

> "But what does God's Name mean? In order to pray in His Name is it necessary to understand its significance, its attributes, its nature? […] Not long before [my arrival], stormy disputes had erupted concerning the Nature of the Name of God, similar to the controversy in the fourteenth century respecting the Nature of the Light that the three disciples beheld on the high mountain of Tabor." (Sophrony 1977, 100)

Sophrony completes his consideration by suggesting that the controversy represents a reflection of "a natural disposition" to distinguish between quest for the ontological belonging ("the prophet and the poet") from that of externalised, or instrumental, rationality ("the scientist and the technocrat"). The divergent tendencies, qualified as "natural," express themselves in specific "secular" binary positionings, *e.g.*, "nominalists and realists," "rationalists and idealists."

Sophrony's recollection of the heated controversy over the nature of God's Name is meant only to set the scene for his own exposition, which is primarily biblical and firmly within the monastic tradition shaped by the Fathers. While he would insist on the ontological status of the Jesus Prayer, *i.e.*, the real inner-connection between the Name and the Named, he does not follow Bulgakov, his former teacher at the Saint Sergius Institute in Paris, in thinking that an extended theoretical effort to give foundational justification for its practice is called for. At this more abstract level, one might see the *cause celebre* as a way of testing the principles of Bulgakov's philosophical theology that began to take shape in his pre-exilic writings. Along with the conceptual labour to provide theoretical support for popular devotional practices, *e.g.*, relics, icons, as well as the Name of Jesus, that typify the prayer life of Orthodox Christians, his early self-conscious identification with the Palamite struggle to safeguard the ontological consistency of the Orthodox faith is

frankly relevant. Sophrony recognised the comparison, but Bulgakov took it to heart: he will follow Palamas in order to further him for the sake of Orthodoxy. But what does "further" actually mean in this context and how is it that the question of God's Name, or more precisely, "onomadoxy," is germane to his own Christian Sophiology?

Starting from an endpoint of Bulgakov's thinking in order to appreciate the scope of the concerns already expressed in the earlier work, this passage from his arguably crowning work, *The Bride of the Lamb* (posthumously published in 1945), is especially noteworthy:

> "The sophiological interpretation and application of Palamism are yet to come in the future. By accepting Palamism, the Church has definitely entered onto the path of recognizing the sophiological dogma. But the theological realization of this recognition still requires a long path of intellectual labor. Essential here is the connection with onomadoxy, which has recognized the divine reality and power of the divine-human name of Jesus and, in general, the power of the name of God in the world. It is not by chance that onomadoxy is linked with Palamism. However, these particular applications of sophiology do not yet go to the root of the sophiological problem." (Bulgakov 2002, 19)

The above passage is clearly programmatic: for Bulgakov, the Church's acceptance of Palamism effectively means that, whether or not she is aware of it, she has already entered into the realm of "sophiological dogma," *i.e.*, the interpenetration of the divine and the creaturely. He prophetically sees that, although it will take time, it will become the task for future Orthodox dogmatic theologians to explore relationship between the power that inheres in the Name of Jesus, of the Godman, and the power of Name of God as it pertains to the created order, the world. Onomadoxy, the doctrine of right-naming, as it appeared in the time of Gregory Palamas, has not been explicated sufficiently well. Both the names of Jesus and of God are complicit in the power attributed to each – the first to His consubstantial incarnate nature, capable to be addressed in the heart; the second to the One Who Is. However, much Bulgakov deems this to be for future times to think through, this essay hopes to suggest nevertheless that much about their distinguishing, but ultimately convergent features are already significantly delineated in the philosophical theology of his early work.

A basic tenet in the alignment of Bulgakov's doctrine of Divine Sophia with Palamas' conceptual scheme resides in the latter's intentionally ambivalent understanding of God's Divinity around the Essence (*Ousia*) – energy distinction. This will suit Bulgakov's Christian Sophiology in a way that it will come to be framed as implied in the theological antinomy that he postulates. This can be succinctly outlined thus:

(a) God as super-essential Divinity, related only to Himself as tri-hypostatic;

(b) God as divine energies (*e.g.*, Divine Sophia, Uncreated Light), relates both *ad intra* to God's unknowable Essence and *ad extra,* to the creation in its "multiform" expressions;

(c) hence, God is at once, antinomically, absolute and relative.

Given this, one can anticipate that the onomadoxy that Bulgakov intends to bring to the fore in the furtherance of Palamite doctrine will involve the situating of the Uncreated Light thematic alongside that of the sophianic Name of Jesus, both within the sphere of divine energies, both accentuating the reach of deifying grace into the heart of human being and, through Him, all of creation. In his work on the Holy Spirit, *The Comforter*, Bulgakov underscores the resemblance between the Name of Jesus and the calling down of the Holy Spirit and how both enter normally into the Palamite concerns about deification and the Uncreated Light.

> "Here, the power of the divine-human Name Jesus and the power of the invocation of the Holy Spirit are equivalent. These prayers represent a spiritual work which is a deification *in actu*, in which the person praying, overcoming the spiritual distance between him and God, becomes a god by grace and communes with divine life. This idea is the chief theme of the Palamite disputes about the significance of 'the light of Tabor'." (Bulgakov 2004, Kindle Edition loc. 5853)

By the time of Bulgakov's composition of *The Philosophy of the Name* between 1918 and 1922, the Name controversy had already come in 1913 to a highly disputed resolution. This took the form of an ecclesiastical condemnation and, with the involvement of the Russian government, led to the forced removal and repatriation of the so-called Name-Venerators, a substantial group of Russian Athonite monks, to their homeland in 1913. These were accused of confounding the name "Jesus" itself with God. For example, the prayer could become understood as

"Jesus Christ's name is itself our divine Saviour Jesus Christ". Such a formulation was contested as possibly leading to Christological heresy, confounding the unnameable reality of God into a name conceived by human beings: one could suspect a pantheistic tendency in it, or even the idea that the mere repetition of the Name would be sufficient for salvation, thereby diminishing the importance of sacraments. In spite of these objections, the widespread popular acceptance of the Name's mystical power, inside and outside of the monasteries, remained vigorous. The dispute provoked significant agitation in Russian society and defied Church authority. The punishment meted out to the Name-venerating monks to quell the discussion seemed, to many, unduly harsh. Nevertheless, reasoned arguments in defence of the idea that the Name of Jesus is someway divine persisted among the Christian Intelligentsia. Thus, the contested verdict came eventually up for reassessment. This would take place at the All-Russian Church Council (planned for 1917-18), in which Bulgakov would have been a participant. However, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 put an end to that possibility. Even so, with the encouragement of Pavel Florensky, an extended philosophical response came from Bulgakov.

In *Philosophy of the Name* considered as a whole, references to the intervening factions in the debate are relatively few, but those that exist leave no doubt about what the contentiousness surrounding the controversy meant for Bulgakov and for Orthodox theology. For example, he alludes directly to "the great and terrible question that is making the rounds in Orthodox theology with overwhelming force; that of the Name of God, and Its sacred mystery" (292). For him the stakes are high and he sees his participation in this issue as resonating with two decisive dogmatic instances constitutive of Orthodox tradition: the restoration of the icons in an Ecumenical Council and the acceptance Palamite doctrine as normative for Orthodox Christianity by the Constantinopolitan Synod of 1341.

> "The question about the Names of God and the meaning of the veneration, in connection with other questions, was already examined once, covertly, at the seventh ecumenical council, where it received the indirect resolution of the universal church. The problem of icons, at least those with the depiction of God, is in many features analogous with the question under discussion." (Bulgakov 2020, Kindle Edition, 296)

> "If the Godhead were our caprice and illusion, then the name would be powerless. But in the Name of God, the Very God names Himself in us and through us; in it the thunder sounds and lightening of Sinai flashes for us; the energy of God is present that (in accordance with the conclusion of the Constantinopolitan council apropos the Palamite disputes) is indivisible from the Godhead, although it is not identifiable with it. Our sinful indifference, distraction, and blindness prevent us from being fully aware of the whole magnitude of the Name of God; when we pronounce it, we seemingly partake of the power of God, Name-fighting is unconscious, not fully thought through Antropotheism or godlessness." (309)

Some of the thematic features of the above passages will need revisiting later on below. For the present they serve to appreciate Bulgakov's inclination to see the theme of the Name as related to the dogmatic resolutions concerning the restoration of the icons and Gregory Palamas' culminating articulation of the Essence – energy distinction. Curiously, they actually correspond to the first two Sundays of Great Lent, *i.e.*, The Triumph of Orthodoxy and Saint Gregory Palamas Sunday, often remembered as the second triumph. What is fundamentally being celebrated in both is the reaffirmation of the Incarnation under the sign of consubstantiality, the material world's capacity to receive God, in such a way that its natures are inseparable but yet unconfused. What the iconoclasts are to the icon-venerators and the Barlaamite critics of hesychasm are to the Palamites, the Name-fighters (onomaclasts) are to the Name-venerators. The loss of the sense of the incarnational realism is likely to produce in the threatening parties an "unconscious, not fully thought through Antropotheism or godlessness," even as they profess Orthodoxy. Such would be the consequence of willed ignorance, or simply obtuseness, rendering one practically unavailable to the out-pouring of divine energy in the form of God's Name, inseparable ("indivisible"), yet unconfused ("not identifiable") with it. At issue is the participation in the transformative power that the Divine Name *qua* divine energy unceasingly offers. And, correlatively, God seeks to be known in His Name such that He is effectively and rightly invokable by human being, thus creating the conditions of divine-human communion.

For Palamas, and eventually for Bulgakov as well, the issue is not limited only to the legitimacy of hesychasm but also but of Christian Orthodoxy itself and the primacy of the Incarnation as the consubstantial

reality and point of engagement with the living God in prayer and in the sacramental life of the Church. But for Bulgakov, in particular, consubstantiality is not only thematically central but, even more dramatically, a heuristic formula that opens the mind to a large spectrum of applicability: it is "truly a dogmatic miracle, surpassing the natural powers and possibilities of the epoch [of the Chalcedonian Council]". Moreover, "The Chalcedonian dogma is not only a doctrinal norm according to which the conciliar consciousness of the Church must measure itself. It was also given to human thought as a limit problem of the theological and philosophical understanding" (Bulgakov 2008, Kindle loc. 917). In other words, it is the inspired resolution – indeed a "dogmatic miracle," a "crystal" through which the Church understands herself and creation – that ontologically resolves *in actu* the antinomy presented to the human mind about Christ's dual nature. Significantly, he further defines his conception of the antinomic approach that he favours, along with the consubstantiality that underlies the process and seemingly begging to be made explicit, in this way:

> "An antinomy attests to the equivalence of contradictory propositions, as well as to their inseparability, unity and identity." (Bulgakov 2012, Kindle Edition loc. 445)

Anticipating Bulgakov's own thinking and decisively influencing it, Pavel Florensky already underscored that, when confronted religious experience and language, like that of the Divine Liturgy's "ceaselessly exuberant wit of antithetic juxtapositions and antinomic affirmations," the antinomies ought not be conceived in terms of either/ or but rather yes *and* no together (Florensky 1997, 117). In the light of the real impact that religious experiences can transmit, antinomies demonstrate the "tragic" frustration inherent in purely philosophical investigations to comprehend them. Yet, even under these circumstances, they can nevertheless be embraced as comprising an *"ascesis* of rationality," an exercise of reasoning, inspired by these experiences and in which faith is not a mere supplement: faith is rather a striving to transcend the self-imposed limits of what human thought on its own is capable of conceiving. Such is a rationality in a new key, spurred on by apparent contradictions, gathering into its life's diversity. It is this that Florensky identifies, *grosso modo*, with "the task of an orthodox, namely a universal

rationality, collecting all the fragments into a fullness" (119). Yet, within the generality of this "task," a more specific one appears which further accentuates the antinomic and consubstantial character of this rationality that lays claim to orthodoxy, namely, that of dogmatics, to the extent that it brings together inseparably and non-confusedly two valid spiritual exigences: the intellectual demand to clarify and establish concepts about the content of the experience that is semantically stable and, thereby, identifiable; and the trusting faith in the same content to produce noetic transformation of the believer, including its ensouled body.

Taken up by Bulgakov and consistently deployed throughout his work as a way of framing whatever thematic he is dealing with, the methodology of thinking through antinomies constitutes an epistemological spearhead to initiate the explication of the Christian experience that is ultimately understood as consubstantial. In relation specifically to the practice of the Jesus Prayer and his treatment of it, two apparently incompatible (also "antinomic" in their way) elements enter into play. On the one hand, Kant and his German idealist legacy, though already challenged by Soloviev and Dostoevsky, prime movers of the religiously motivated philosophers of the Russian Silver Age at the turn of the 20th century, made antinomic thinking a standard for serious philosophical investigation.

> "Kant's most outstanding service in theoretical philosophy was the ascertainment of the antinomies of the intellect." (Bulgakov 2012a, 103)

On the other, within the wide scope of the Christian sophiology that he sought to advance, Bulgakov did indeed see his work as an expression of a creative fidelity in regard to Orthodox tradition. In other words, in Bulgakov, duly provoked by Florensky, Palamism meets the demands of modernity for more precise conceptual articulation of the primacy of the experiential that Orthodox Christianity notably values. As Alexander Schmemann once noted,

> "[…] the Orthodox man begins with the 'end', with the experience, the breakthrough, the very reality of God, the Kingdom, the Life – and only afterwards does he clarify it, but in relation to the experience he has had. The Western man rationally arrives at and evokes the 'end' from a series of premises. The Orthodox often expresses that "end" quite poorly in theology." (Schmemann 2000, 110)

One might see that Bulgakov's efforts consist in formulating the "end" of a long process of clarifying an experience "mythopoetically" expressed in prayer and ritual in a better way. Bulgakov deemed that right-thinking about God's Name has, as it were, a "narrow gate" status in the Christian life.

In *Unfading Light,* Bulgakov lays out preliminary philosophical conditions for what faith enables one to envision and, eventually, to confirm as an experience ontologically antecedent to Kantian efforts situate them in accordance with transcendental categories. There Bulgakov advances the idea of a Fourth Critique to complete and eventually overturn Kant's famous three *Critiques of Pure Reason*, *Practical Reason*, and *Judgment*. This Fourth Critique takes as axiomatic that religious consciousness is an ontological given for human being; it makes itself intelligible through the symbolic form of myth, or religion, seeking to represent the inclusion of transcendent reality in the immanence of human life. Under these circumstances, philosophising as the exercise of simple, unaided reason, is, in truth, a *post factum* activity. With this in mind, Bulgakov proposes the following:

> "One can say (by applying Kant's terminology) that *myth is a synthetic religious judgment a priori* from which *a posteriori* judgments can be deduced analytically." (Bulgakov 2012b, 64)

Both for the interests for what it reveals about the sort of the philosophical theology that he proposes and how its elements come into play in the question of the Name, Bulgakov's formula may be parsed in the following way:

    a. **myth [**a narrative that linguistically structures Orthodox Christianity in the form of an intrigue, *muthos*] is **a synthetic religious judgment** [an articulated discursive formulation about the truthfulness vis-à-vis an experience of the transcendent in the immanence of one's life] *a priori* [in accordance the inherent categorical conditions that identify Orthodoxy as such, *i.e.*, (i) catholicity, (ii) conciliarity, (iii) ecumenicity, and (iv) ecclesiality];

    b. **from which *a posteriori* judgments** [on the basis of which further dogmatic considerations about the truthfulness of the experience] **can be deduced analytically** [made the object of further explication as to the nature of its contents and the appropriateness of the original formulations of the dogmas in relation to the Orthodox narrative, the story that it tells].

A strictly analytic investigation of the nature of religious consciousness puts between parentheses how it functions in time and space, and then proceeds by a progressive explication of what true religion necessarily has inherently. Among the categories that may be postulated as transcendental, Bulgakov sets catholicity as primary, the other three appear to be measured in relation to it in the wake of synthetic judgments. Having situated the necessary *a priori* conditions, *a posteriori* judgments advance by affirming the measure of their actuality in the myth that they always presuppose as anchored in experience as a result of divine action: the transcendent, taking the initiative, while preserving itself as such, permeates the immanent with its grace.

Significantly, this fundamental antinomy of religious consciousness translates *in concreto* ritually and mythopoetically in the sacramental life of the ecclesial body, whereby the presence of the transcendent in the immanent is celebrated. This primacy of *lex orandi* (the rule of prayer), indeed the structuring of its mythopoesis, in relation to *lex credendi* (the rule of belief), underscores that the ascendant movement of thought has its initiation the practice of common worship – as the word, "liturgy," suggests, to wit, the shared, public work on behalf of the people. What then emerges from the poetics of devotional practices, aspiring to respond to the peculiar persuasiveness, implied in the religious experience, by setting dogmatic boundaries in order to conceptualise and affirm the givens of the revelation represented in the myth. The passage beyond negative theology, *i.e.*, the persistent negation of all definitions, of every "Yes," concerning the knowledge of God, Bulgakov affirms the factors that give life to the mythopoetics as a positive instance of revelation and knowledge: "religious self-consciousness cannot live, breathe, or be nourished by this emptiness alone – divine communion, divine experience, divine being constitute its vital foundation" (109). At the end of the day, under the sign of furtherance of what has been delivered in Holy Tradition, Bulgakov's intellectual labour is, for all intent and purposes, a sustained praxis of synthetic judgments *a posteriori* and his treatment of the Jesus Prayer is an example of it. "All religious dogmas seek new incarnations in philosophical creativity" (95). The dogma of the Name, rooted in ritual and devotional practices, follows suit.

"The Name of Jesus is the foundation stone for a Christian philosophy of the name." (331)

The experiential domain of prayer, associated with the Name, draws spontaneously on the poetics that symbol and myth provide. However, taking as usual his cue from Kant about what serious philosophy must look like, a transcendental *a priori* moment must also appear in dealing with the Name as preliminary to engagement with its more organic ontological content.

> "The Name of God must be considered in its general sense, *i.e.*, as part of a general theory of names, as signs; then it must be dealt with where it is exceptional, *i.e.*, in its singularity on account of its theophoric nature." (292)

Still, just as in the case of religious consciousness, Bulgakov's intent is to subvert and transform, eventually arguing that Kant chose to ignore the power of language and the peculiar movement of the grammatical elements at work in it: it is precisely these that ground the system of formal and abstract categories that Kant deemed to be invariable and universal. The "concrete" epistemology that Bulgakov proposes dislocates the source of judgments in cognitive acts from the transcendental forms of knowing to acts of naming and their relation to forming of sentences around the copula *is:* epistemology depends on a grammar which is constitutive of its ontology.

> "It is a functional dependence, teleological, in which the unity of the task allows for variety in the ways and means, as well as difference in the perfection of their resolution. Here both the spirit of a language and the genus of a people can manifest themselves." (192)

The "language" and "genus of a people" that concerns us is that which is conceived around the person of Jesus, but, to begin with, the most general quality of name as "word," already with its own incarnational features, in view of the Name's maximal definition, *i.e.*, God's proper Name.

Bulgakov's treatise is very rich in detail and insights, a fascinating tour de force, which, read together with *The Philosophy of Economy* (1912), *Unfading Light* (1918) and *The Tragedy of Philosophy (*written in 1920-21, published in 1927), constitutes a programme for a Christian philosophy inspired in the Chalcedonian dogma. They also have in common the task of working through and beyond Kant's epistemological schemata

that, for however much uneasiness it creates for its pushing away the knowledge of the noumenal from the domain of philosophical legitimacy, remain – for Bulgakov – an unavoidable legacy. His need to deal with it in these works is akin to the need to deal with the "unconscious" element in the minds of the Name-fighters that surreptitiously lead them to "Anthrotheism and godlessness". This consists of a wandering into a nominalist psychologism and away from the hypostatic reality of the Incarnation. In working through the particular response given in *Philosophy of the Name* with that of "Jesus" in view, the attempt will be made to bring to the fore the key steps on the path toward the clarity that Bulgakov wished to give to the theme:

   a.   A general theory of names

(i) "Thoughts without words do not exist anymore than words without thoughts." (50)
     With the same kind of abruptness that Wittgenstein initiated his *Tractatus Logico- philosophicus* ("The world is the totality of facts, not of things"), Bulgakov declares from outset that words are not sounds but, in the sphere of human cognition, are immediately given in complicity with thought. As such it constitutes an ontological axiom with broad ramifications that characterise both the phenomenal and noumenal quality of word that are innately conjugable. This can already be appreciated in the "bi-unity" that the very notion of logos possesses, *logos*-as-thought and *logos*-as-word. The incarnational pattern is established as a primary fact simultaneously containing two worlds without division and without confusion.

> "A word is inexplicable; it exists in its miraculous primordial state. […] As an idea does not exist without incarnation, so too sounds are not words without an idea." (53)

Taken as articulable between themselves, words-ideas are grounding instances of language. They are also incarnational energies in search of a sonic body, *i.e.*, language, its *ergon.* It is these prototypical words-ideas that sustain historically determined languages and, crucially, "speak" in human subjects before they themselves make use of them in their

particular idiom: "[…] *we do not learn* the inner language that lies beneath the idiom and at its base, words as ideas that are incarnated in sound or as symbols; rather they *arise* in us and moreover they do so in us all equally in the measure of our humanness" (80). This arising from within us of the inner language is also communicative and speaks to our humanity, or, one might say, "Divine-humanity," in consonance with Bulgakov's utmost conviction. This inchoate calling, enticing us to further self-understanding in relation to it, is subject to conscious remembrance and invocation associated with prayer. Prayer is a creative act of response and engagement with this communicative primordial *Logos.*

(ii) "[…] logos is not only a word, a thought, but also a connection of things." (93)

The bi-unity of *logos* is not only communicative but also connective. An aspect of its connectivity resides in the virtue it possesses to correlate grammatical parts of speech that stand in relation to one another with the wider order of the cosmos. The grammar of thought and speech is not a domain unto itself; it has the further mission to name judiciously what *is.* It is literally an ontological act, "the *logos* of the real," implied in speech acts that implies the presence of a subject, an "I" who is doing the naming but is not included in the named, *i.e.,* who is ontologically prior to it. The pronoun "I" acts in an essential way, *i.e.,* as *ousia,* as source of energy that the name possesses. Ontologically prior to the name, the pronoun is "the symbol of *ousia* [of noumenality], of the inexpressible depth of super-being, of proto-hypostaticity." (107)

The connective power of the logos, uniting transcendence with immanence, is sustained by an inner-life that personal pronoun tacitly evokes in the act of naming. Associated with a personal pronoun, the name as substantive noun of a sentence becomes liable to a wide range of predicates underscored by the copula *is,* the adhesive force of its realism. In accordance with the role that the Holy Spirit has in the economic life of the Holy Trinity, it works in an unseen way as a verbal energy related to its works, its *ergon,* providing for it a proper name or meaning. The heart of naming, the copula performs the task of predication, disclosing meaning, such that the process of naming incorporates in itself an act of judgment and of implied remembrance:

> "[…] we perform anamnesis, by naming things, so that in the final analysis, naming to which the speech-word is reduced, is nothing but remembering." (139)

In naming, as in prayer, there is a harkening back to a substantial bond, overcoming forgetfulness for the sake of achieving wider and deeper ontological connectivity.

b.   The theophoric nature of naming

(i)   "Cognition, from the elementary to the most complex, contains a triune act: that of the muffled voice of being, the sounding of a word, in the act of cognition the union of this stimulus and this word – in naming." (203)

Concrete epistemology seeks to resolve the problem of thought in function to the content that forms around the word that expresses it, *i.e.*, in the way it gathers in and releases the potential for further naming. Cognition operates in that manner essentially because it is triune:

> "Each elementary act of cognition refers to the great and sacred mystery of the creation of human being in the image of trihypostaticity." (202)

At its most basic, naming enjoins inchoate being (muffled, itself unnameable) to its manifestation and brings both together into meaning. At its highest in regard to articulation, the Prologue of Saint John's Gospel configures the movement of the word in terms of descent and ascent as if, "cut with a diamond chisel and miraculous in their measureless depth and conciseness" (208): in the beginning, the word was at once toward God and God; all things came through the word and those things consequently are what they are because of the word. A space thus is given to the recreated world logos to assume expansively its creative potential, while it is concomitantly being drawn upwards to the Divine Logos, for "apart from whom nothing arose from that which arose." (Jn 1:3)

Conceived in the image of the trihypostatic God, human being thereby is commissioned to act in a godlike the manner as bearer of world logos. The naming by God in the creation of the cosmos becomes the task of humankind in naming the living creatures brought to him for that purpose. With the Fall, the task of naming, presumably for those

called to do so (such as Saint John the Baptist), consists in making room, "for the incarnated hypostatic Divine Logos, by which was laid the foundation for the divinization of the whole creation in human being" (211). Inspired words of faith, adopting poetic language, take hold of the human subject; invitatory in character and rooted primal symbology, they are supremely revelatory. For instance, "the Bible is an eternal potential of divine inspiration, like a window into another world from which the rays and sounds of the Kingdom of God burst through" (252). Herein lies the centrality of devotions that incorporate into them the language of Holy Scripture.

> "A word is or rather can be a condenser of power, cosmic or gracious; the sacred formulas of sacraments are such condensers of power." (254)

(ii) "[…] a name is a force, a seed, an energy. It forms and determines its bearer from within." (263)

Because naming is also judging, an element of propriety enters into the attribution of a name. One might see this as implying an evaluation of rightness, an idea for the bearer himself, even allowing that it might prove too difficult to fulfil. If one must speak an inner-form, it is best to accentuate its entelechy, its inner force, directed towards its full realization.

> "Names arise not by chance and not arbitrarily; they are not contrived without any internal regularity; they exist in the human being […] and are only discovered in naming. Therefore, the naming of a name gets meaning and completeness, the problem of onomastics stand before us in all its breadth." (270)

A name once given incarnates the idea that it communicates to the flesh, as widely shown in the Bible and includes that of Jesus, named from above, as well as His renaming of some of His disciples in accordance with their new identity. In relation to realization, the Incarnation and its saving purposes resonate with the divine image and likeness of human being. He is the exemplary manifestation of Divine-humanity to which humankind is called; He is the Incarnation of Divine Logos and the Name that enlightens human being, the "world logos," and the latter's creaturely mode of naming and incarnating. But what of the Names of God?

(iii) "The naming of God takes place in and through human beings; it is their act, the awakening of their theophoric and theophanic potentials, the realisation in them of the enclosed image of God, of their primordial theanthropism." (295)

Following Pseudo-Dionysius' treatise on the subject, names attributed to God are energies, communicating themselves in human being who names them in accordance with character of the divine revelations. The latter name these energies that are anchored predicates that become subjects, *i.e.*, they acquire a certain sustainability in their own right. The names are recognised as referable to the power of God and, in that sense, they are verbal icons of the unnameable God in His Essence, in His "I". The symbolic character of word, even as it applies to God, likewise functions as a bridge between what is experienced and the depths of the utterly transcendent Name. That Name was revealed in two distinct ways, one to Moses (Yahweh: I, WHO AM) and the other to the Virgin Mary (Jesus): they constitute two images of the Name of the Godhead not made by human hands (315). Both are important, but the one communicated in the Annunciation is eminently, even apocalyptically, so both for what it reveals and for what it inaugurates.

> "The Annunciation: the calling of the name Jesus was performed by an angel sent by God, by God Himself. The Name of Jesus preceded His conception and birth from the Virgin. (327). It was not born but is in God pre-eternally, appearing in the fullness of time in the earthly incarnation in His Name: around this core of the person there arise a crystallization, a consolidation, and coverings." (328)

This is indeed a new revelation about what can be said about God: more than attributing to the Names of God the status of revelatory divine energies, the Name of Jesus is the Proper Name of God that is simultaneously a human name. In the Incarnate Word, the Lord (Yahweh, I AM), who eternally abides in the Godhead's fullness, is likeness of the fullness of humanity.

(iv) "All names meet or proceed substantially and dynamically from the Name of Jesus, for we cannot imagine anything inherent in the human being and lying outside of Christ except in the dark region of sin, of non-being, of satanic evil." (333)

Herein lies the scope of the scope of the Name of Jesus and thereby that of the Jesus Prayer. All of humanity created in the image and likeness of the Creator God are also to be contemplated in the Unfading Light of the Divine Logos, Christ Jesus. In that sense, the Name of Jesus is ontologically ascribable to all human beings: "If the Lord in whom everyone finds themselves in all-individuality, then the Name of Jesus is the *all-name*, the Name of all names." (333). What matters ultimately is not the sound (phoneme) of a name nor its form (*morphene*), but the mystical energy (*semene*) that inheres in all individual names and implies a call to true humanity to be realised in the Church under the creative power of Jesus' Name. Disclosing the foundational reality of Divine-humanity, the Name of Jesus is the name of all names.

(v) "Thus, in our understanding and in our interpretation, the formula 'the Name of God is God' signifies only that that the Name of God is divine and enters into the sphere of the Godhead, His energies." (349)

In the wake of God's revealing His Name to Moses, the invocation of the Name limited itself to the liturgical setting of Temple worship. This dramatically changes with the invocation of Jesus' Name, for henceforth the temple is primarily the believing human heart. There He may be called upon "at any time and at any hour" and be effectively joined at the heart in consubstantial communion.

> "Every believer has the priesthood of this temple imprinted with this Name. … It became close and accessible and is not separated by the ontological chasm that exists between the Creator and the creature. Across the chasm a bridge is erected, the divine and human heart were already united indivisibly and without confusion." (339)

Therefore, the Name-venerators can find dogmatic legitimacy for their practice of the Jesus Prayer: in the invocation of His Name, endowed with divine energy, they participate in the Lord's Divine-humanity, the real presence that is known to them by experience.

The realism of the Name is finally crucial for common worship, for it contributes in preventing the service from degenerating into an event that is merely representational. Divine worship is not only the service to God but also God's service in which we have Christ the High Priest

himself, and the priests consecrated in His Name show the power of His presence in the church's sacraments and accomplishes them by the power of the Name of God. (348) So, as energy, the Name of God is in that sense "God." But in the dynamics of consubstantiality, the copula *is* is not equational, but irreversible and communicative of divine qualities – just as Essence differs from its energies but is ever communicating itself in them. It is the judgement involved in the naming that constitutes at once the gage its irreversibility and the distinctive ontological character of the Name as revelatory and open-ended promise of communion.

Concluding remarks

In broad terms, the arguments for realism over against nominalism in Orthodox prayer life would be readily agreed upon. Slippage into "psychologism" about prayer and the sacraments would be judged as a drift into intellectualist constructivism, an attachment to an idea rather than an effective synergy of human and divine wills. Also, broadly speaking, the Orthodox would feel quite literally at home with a resolution along the lines of the Palamite articulation of the Essence (Unnameable Pronoun "I"/ Subject) – energies (nameable predicates around the "I") distinction. Thus, to that extent, the defence of the Name-venerators in *Philosophy of the Name* confirms the practice as dogmatically sound – a fact that does not preclude the authentic possibility of being positively moved by a deeper understanding of the Jesus Prayer's content that the work brings to the surface. Taken together with references to the Jesus Prayer and importance of onomadoxy in the edification of the Christian Sophiology, under the sign consubstantiality that he was developing, the details of the treatise's systematized exposition effectively reveals the dogmatic awareness of the Name of Jesus as foundational, a "cornerstone," to our knowledge of God's Name.

Undergirding the invocation of Jesus by Name, consubstantiality is not only understood as engaging explicitly with the power of Divine-humanity in order to deepen one's potential for personhood, as part of deifying process that God intends for human being made in His image. It is to be reckoned as conjuring up a psycho-somatic dimension already

found in the pact that binds immediately thought and word. This is re-dimensioned as one enlarges the perspective by which the root-action of naming sets in movement a gathering in and expanding of horizons. An action that always already precedes human action per se, they already abide in it.

One may be tempted to enlist Bulgakov's *Philosophy of the Name* as part of the Linguistic Turn that, expansively interpreted, involved the major figures of twentieth century Western philosophy. *Grosso modo*, it is about the precedence of language (myth, symbol, metaphor, and the like) as determinant in shaping thought. It is surely the primacy of the Word/ Name that governs this work of Bulgakov's. But the philosophy that Bulgakov allows as non-tragic is religious philosophy that has its ground in the experience of God through prayer, invoking Him in His transcendence, naming Him in the mode of His revelation.

In terms of content, the Name of Jesus, the human name that is also a proper name of God, is the invokable Divine energy that is exceptional among Divine Names in revelatory and deifying power, complete sense of which can only be the anticipation of the All-Unity in His Name. In regard to the nature of thought, the grammatical approach, conceived according to the inter-relationality of Divine Persons, encourages a catholic yearning for communion. As Bulgakov argues consistently, the tri-hypostaticity of divine substance has its analogue with what constitutes human life as noetic and communicative. As to language as a fundamental *Lebensform* of humankind, it already announces humankind's affinity to the metaphysical and mystical principles that anticipate eschatological promise contained in the Word of God. In *The Tragedy of Philosophy*, Bulgakov expresses this simply and very well indeed:

> "[…] our whole life, and therefore our whole thinking too, is a continuous self-realising proposition, a proposition which consists of a subject, a predicate, and a cupola." (Bulgakov 2020, 10)

Likewise, the human naming of God's revelation in Christ Jesus can also be continuous and self-realising with the royal priesthood of the faithful as its ultimate realisation in the eschaton. Such is the promise and the hope.

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