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**Philosophical Theology
and the
Christian Tradition:
Russian and Western Perspectives**

**Russian Philosophical Studies, V
Christian Philosophical Studies, III**

Edited by
David Bradshaw

The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy

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INTRODUCTION

DAVID BRADSHAW

The papers contained in this volume were presented at a conference entitled “Philosophical Theology and the Christian Tradition: Russian and Western Perspectives” held at Moscow State University, June 1-3, 2010. The conference was sponsored jointly by the Philosophy Department of Moscow State University, the Institute of Philosophy of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the Biblical-Theological Commission of the Moscow Patriarchate, and the Society of Christian Philosophers, with the generous support of a grant from the John Templeton Foundation. It was the seventh in a series of joint Anglo-American/Russian conferences on various topics organized by the Society of Christian Philosophers. The proceedings have also been published in Russian in *Philosophy of Religion: An Almanac 2010-2011*, ed. Vladimir K. Shokhin (Moscow: Vostochnaya Literatura Publishers, 2011).

The papers have been arranged here in broadly chronological order, beginning with methodological issues, continuing through the Biblical, patristic, and medieval eras, and concluding with modern thought. The opening paper is by **Vladimir Shokhin**, who offers a probing examination of the boundaries of philosophy of religion in relation to various forms of “rational theology” such as natural theology and philosophical theology. Shokhin argues for the importance of recognizing philosophy of religion as a discipline distinct from rational theology in all of its forms, however important the latter may be. After this methodological preface, the contribution by **Richard Swinburne** provides a case study in the careful analytic assessment of a Biblical concept, that of atonement. Swinburne argues that the atonement of Christ consists in offering a perfect human life to God as reparation for sin, a reparation that believers can appropriate and offer as their own through prayer, baptism, and partaking of the Eucharist. Swinburne also critiques several alternative ways of understanding the atonement, such as that it is a restoration of human nature, a ransom offered to the devil, or a form of penal substitution.

The next several papers deal with issues in patristic theology. That by **Alexey Fokin** describes six different models adopted (separately or in conjunction) by the Church Fathers in discussing the Trinity: the arithmetical, metaphysical, anthropological, psychological, social, and logical. Fokin provides a concise explication of each of the six as they appear across both Greek and Latin patristic literature,

arguing that although each has advantages and disadvantages, collectively they present an excellent model for philosophizing about the mystery of the Trinity. The paper by **Richard Cross** also deals with patristic teaching on the Trinity, this time in connection with divine simplicity. Cross argues that Gregory of Nyssa is a nominalist regarding the *propria* (distinguishing features) of the three Persons of the Trinity, and that such a view brings him close to the position later adopted by Augustine. Cross suggests that this convergence provides fertile ground for a *rapprochement* in Trinitarian doctrine between the Eastern and Western churches.

The next paper, by **Metropolitan Kallistos Ware**, describes the concept of the human person in the Greek patristic tradition, particularly as it emerges through the two interlocking themes of man as made in the image of God and man as mediator between creation and Creator. The paper argues that each of these is not simply a given condition, but a vocation, so that full personhood emerges only in active engagement with God and with others. The paper by **David Bradshaw** also deals with the Greek patristic tradition, focusing on the issue of divine freedom as it has been debated within contemporary philosophy of religion. Bradshaw argues that the Greek Fathers present an original and insightful approach to this issue, one that offers a way out of the contemporary impasse between classical and “open” theism.

There follow three papers dealing with themes in the philosophy and theology of the Middle Ages. That by **Katherin Rogers** argues on behalf of Anselm’s understanding of sin as willing other than that which God wills one to will. Rogers argues that this view is superior on both philosophical and theological grounds to a number of alternatives – among them a reductive evolutionary account of sin, the thesis that sin is necessary in order for God to achieve a greater good, and versions of classical theism in which all acts (including the choice of evil) are caused by God. The paper by **Robert Koons** turns to Aquinas, offering a close explication and defense of Aquinas’s Second and Third Ways. It suggests that a crucial premise of the Second Way – that all things have a *per se* cause – can be defended via the Third Way, and builds on this insight to present an “Aristotelian First Cause Argument” that is a synthesis of the two Thomistic arguments. The paper by **Tatyana Borodai** offers a wide-ranging survey of the value assigned to imagination in classical and medieval thought. It points to the early fourteenth-century *Meditationes vitae Christi* as the work that inaugurated the positive valuation of imagination (and particularly of imagining scenes from the life of Christ) that became so characteristic of spirituality in the late medieval West.

The next several papers turn to the modern era. **Vladimir Mironov** offers an explication and defense of Hegel's philosophy of religion, particularly Hegel's delineation of the separate spheres of faith, philosophy, and theology, and his understanding of faith as rational although it is based on personal perception and experience. **Irina Tsvyk** describes the philosophy of Viktor Kudryavtsev-Platonov, the leading representative of the Russian "ecclesiastical-academic" philosophy of the nineteenth century. Kudryavtsev-Platonov advocated a distinctive form of Christian Platonism in which "the Absolute," in contrast to its role in Hegel's philosophy, is a personal being who is never fully cognizable and is inexhaustible by his manifestation within creation. **Alexei Kozyrev** describes the Sophiology of Fr. Sergei Bulgakov, an important Russian author of the 1920's and 30's whose works have been receiving increasing attention in the West. Kozyrev argues that Bulgakov's thought ultimately owes less to Orthodox sources than to the tradition of "European Gnosis" typified by figures such as Jakob Böhme and John Pordadge.

The final two papers deal with contemporary thought. **Alexander Filonenko** discusses the "Eucharistic theology of communion" in twentieth-century Eastern Orthodoxy. He argues that it constitutes a third strand within contemporary Orthodox thought, comparable in importance to Sophiology and the neo-patristic synthesis, and superior to at least the latter in that it possesses an implicit social ethic. **Kristina Stoeckl** discusses the post-secularism of authors such as Jürgen Habermas. She argues that this philosophical movement requires a "philosophical re-configuration of the subject" that can be achieved only through a more open engagement with religious traditions, and that Russian Orthodoxy, in particular, has much to offer in this regard.

As this brief summary should make plain, the papers collected here represent the rich fruit of a truly interdisciplinary and intercultural exchange. The conference organizers wish to thank the participants and the John Templeton Foundation for their contribution to producing a successful conference, as well as the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy for undertaking to publish the present volume. I also wish to thank my assistant, Tamara Patterson, for her assistance in organizing the conference and preparing these proceedings. I invite the reader to share in the fruits of our exchange.

University of Kentucky

CHAPTER I

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AND THE VARIETIES OF RATIONAL THEOLOGY

VLADIMIR K. SHOKHIN

The present conference deals with philosophical theology, either with its particular topics or particular epochs of its history. Such a topic seems to assume that it is quite clear what philosophical theology is, and that we need not scrutinize what the term itself means. And this is right, inasmuch as in order to work on something we have to avoid questioning its legitimacy, at least when we are doing it. But philosophy as a special kind of theoretical activity, at least from the epoch of Socrates, differs from others just insofar as it puts under question self-evident matters and, to say more, its very activity consists in this questioning. For me, when I utter the combination of words *philosophical theology*, the question immediately arises (in the old Socratic vein) as to a genus to which the corresponding species can belong and then, when the latter is identified as the area of some “sciences of religion and sciences of spirit” (now in the German vein), questions arise again concerning its place on the “geographical map” of these sciences. The map under discussion needs, in my opinion, a revision, and this is of significance within the context of the present conference. Philosophical theology as a special discipline is a native product of Anglo-Saxon philosophizing (see below), but its counterparts (under the titles of “apologetics,” “fundamental theology” and “speculative theology”) were also seen in Russia before the upheaval of 1917, and now the first attempts are being made to revive them, including pioneering courses at Moscow State University. In this regard I use will take the present opportunity to carry on a dialogue with analytic philosophers and place into question some methodological presuppositions which rarely become a matter of controversy. This seems justified inasmuch as controversy has been part of philosophy from its very beginnings in different cultures. Such philosophers should be also interested, I believe, to learn more about how such presuppositions appear from without, especially within the dialogical context of our meeting.

(1) To begin with, let us consider some of the latest facts. In 2009 the monumental *Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology*, edited by Thomas Flint and Michael Rea, was published. This book is

distinguished by its high quality of reasoning and many of its contributors are world famous. Already the first section, entitled “Theological Prolegomena”, where the authority of Scripture, Tradition and Church is made a subject of philosophical analysis (Richard Swinburne), followed by chapters dealing with “Revelation and Inspiration” (Stephen Davies), the interrelations of science and religion (Del Ratzsch), and theology and mystery (William Wainwright), is of much significance. Then the main sections follow, that is “Divine Attributes” (from divine simplicity, described by Jeffrey E. Brower, up to the moral perfectness of God, presented by Laura Garcia), “God and Creation” (from reflections on the interrelations between divine action and evolution by Robin Collins up to the problem of evil in the context of “skeptical theism” presented by M. Bergmann), “Topics of reflection in Christian philosophical theology” (from an examination of the dogma of the Trinity by Michael Rea to analysis of the Eucharist by Alexander Pruss) and, finally, “Non-Christian philosophical theology” (exemplified by its varieties in Islam, Judaism and Confucianism).

Obviously, this voluminous compendium (of six hundred pages) sets up an important landmark in the field¹. Both because of what has been included therein (non-Christian traditions), and excluded therefrom (arguments for the existence of God which usually make the starting point of any book on theology in connection with philosophy), I became very interested in the degree to which the editors undertook to identify the discipline under discussion and justify why they include some topics and exclude others. I believe that I am justified in such a questioning, at least by the simple fact that philosophical theology as *an area of cognition* is very ancient, but as *a separate discipline* very new, because specialized academic books on the subject began to be published only in the twentieth century.

What I learned from the introduction to the handbook is this: philosophical theology is considered (as something self-evident) as a part of a more general discipline, i.e., philosophy of religion². The editors adopt the wide-spread view that its revival (in the context of the revival of philosophy of religion in general) could be correlated with the epoch-making anthology by Anthony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre, *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (1955). This revival of philosophy of religion in general and of philosophical theology in particular which took place in the middle of the twentieth century was conditioned by such three factors (here Flint and Rea refer to Nicholas

¹ A Russian version of the text is being prepared now as part of a translation project supported by the John Templeton Foundation.

² See: *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*. Ed. by Thomas P. Flint and Michael C. Rea. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 3.

Wolterstorff): the crisis of logical empiricism, disillusionment with positivistic endeavors to narrow the possibilities of knowledge, and the flowering of meta-epistemology which was the same as rejection of epistemological fundamentalism. But two or three decades ago, the philosophy of religion (including philosophical theology) survived a new turn for the better which could be defined as the shift of its interest from philosophical analysis of general theistic beliefs and claims to that of the divine attributes, the main Christian dogmas (those of Trinity, Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection and others) and divine Revelation and inspiration. It is the further promotion of these subjects wherein Flint and Rea see their goal as editors of the handbook under discussion. In so doing they coordinate their project with some others, firstly, with the lately published *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion* (2005) edited by William Wainwright (also a voluminous book), where, e.g., the problems of evil and theodicy are paid very modest attention while Flint and Rea try to make up such a deficiency by three separate chapters³.

References to the latter text also help explain that specific trait of the *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion* which its editors did not consider deserving explanation (in my opinion, rather groundlessly). I mean the abovementioned dropping of so basic a subject of any theology in connection with philosophy as arguments for the existence of God. Two big chapters are dedicated to them in Wainwright's handbook of philosophy of religion⁴, and this explains why, given that philosophical theology is considered a kind of detailed elaboration of general philosophy of religion, the editors of the handbook of philosophical theology omitted them.

But omitting arguments for the existence of God is not the only thing in the handbook lacking justification. Another one is the said inclusion of non-Christian traditions into the framework of philosophical theology. It is doubtlessly a godsend in itself, but there is not a single sentence in the book which would comment on the introduction of this subject, nor concerning the very genus of philosophical theology to which regional versions should be related as species. Neither is there any explanation of the principles of selecting, e.g., why Confucianism, which does not have theistic features, is included while the Indian theistic tradition of *īśvaravāda* ("the teaching that God exists"), providing us with arguments for the existence of God, discussion of

³ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴ One to the ontological argument, another to both the cosmological argument and that from design. See: *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*. Ed. by William J. Wainwright. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 80-116, 116-38.

divine attributes and even some versions of theodicy, is wholly disregarded without any comments.

In 2009, *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, edited by William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland, was also published. It is again a very fundamental work, this time dedicated exclusively to the arguments for the existence of God, the problems of evil and theodicy being included into their body. Besides the classical arguments many “rarities” are displayed differing from the familiar ones to which a reader of such literature is accustomed⁵. But Craig and Moreland do not feel even the least incentive to explain why a “companion to natural theology” may manage safely without dealing with divine attributes (contrary to all historical tradition), to say nothing of inclusion of the problem of evil into the arguments—much as, in the *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*, these arguments have simply been omitted.

This manner of treating matters which are anything but “transparent” as self-evident also explains why in dealing with philosophical theology not a word is uttered concerning its correlation with natural theology, and, conversely, while in dealing with natural theology no suspicion is expressed that philosophical theology also exists. So my claim that the map of “sciences of religion and sciences of spirit” needs some revision proves justified. I’ll begin with the biggest “self-evident” identification in our field which I already alluded to and which turns out to be most doubtful.

(2) The claim that philosophy of religion as a philosophical discipline must elaborate, analyse, verify etc. theistic claims (as well as counterarguments against them) concerning the existence of God, divine attributes (simplicity, eternity, immutability, omnipotence, omniscience, goodness, necessity, incorporeality, omnipresence etc.), their correlation with both some crucial attributes of man (like the possession of free-will) and the state of affairs in the world (like the problem of evil), the possibility of future life and miracles along with the compatibility of all these claims with those of science, has been made in innumerable monographs, collection of papers, anthologies, handbooks, textbooks and encyclopedic articles. But in 99 cases from 100, this claim is not provided any justification, as if it were as self-evident as saying that a brother is a male, or a sea a big accumulation of water. In a few exceptional cases I met only such arguments that the aforesaid body of

⁵ So besides such well-established arguments as those from religious experience and miracles, arguments from reason and consciousness are developed in detail. See: *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*. Ed. by William L. Craig and J.P. Moreland. Maiden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, pp. 282-343, 344-90.

topics is justified simply because it is generally acknowledged in the Anglo-American tradition, which differs in this regard from the Continental one⁶, that any publication deserving the title of philosophy of religion should deal firstly with the critical evaluation of theistic truth-claims (while one lacking it does not, correspondingly, deserve this name⁷) and that dealing with religion is a distinctive feature of religious studies and not of philosophy⁸. But these reasonings do not stand up to criticism.

To begin with, not only Anglo-American philosophers but also not a few Continental authors (to name only Ulrich Mann, Hubert Hubbeling, Bernhardt Welte, Richard Schaeffler, Franz von Kutschera among most well-known) have had no doubts that philosophy of religion was either wholly, or at least partially, theology in connection with philosophy. It is true that the aforesaid well-packed set of topics of this philosophy-as-theology is a rare bird in Continental books on philosophy of religion if one compares them with Anglo-American ones, but the very opinion that this discipline has a theological component is by no means rare in Europe⁹. Conversely, it is true that more Continental philosophers of religion (I'd refer among many names of repute only to those of Wilhelm Trilhaas, Andreas Nygren, Joseph Bochenski, Wilhelm Dupré, Natalie Dupraz, Arie Molendijk), than those of Anglo-American background argue that not God, but religion itself should be the subject of this discipline. But we have good counterexamples here also. For example, such a thoughtful American philosopher as Frederick Ferré (University of Pennsylvania) indicated long ago that philosophical

⁶ See, e.g.: *Philosophy of Religion. An Anthology of Contemporary Views*. Ed. by Melville Y. Stewart. Boston: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 1996, p. 1.

⁷ See, e.g.: H.M Wroom. "A Spectrum of Worldviews: An Introduction to Philosophy of Religion in a Pluralistic World (Review)." *Religious Studies*, 2007, Vol.43, N1, pp. 112-13.

⁸ See, e.g., Alston W.P., "Religion, History of Philosophy of." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Gen. Ed. Edward Craig. Vol. 8. London, New York, MacMillan, 1998, p. 238-48. Here the author directly states that "major issues of concern in the philosophy of religion include arguments for and against the existence of God, problems about the attributes of God, the problem of evil, and the epistemology of religious belief", that curriculum of its subjects "can more specifically be called *philosophical theology*" and that only these issues have to do with understanding religion, while others with describing it (in the borders of history, sociology or psychology of religion) – *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁹ And it has chances to be viable as long as philosophy of religion will be taught and studied in the framework of faculties and chairs of theology of European universities and other institutions.

theology could constitute only a part of the subject matter of philosophy of religion and was by no means identical to it, stressing that the latter was “a special area of interest attending to the subject of religion, within the general discipline of philosophy.”¹⁰ Richard M. Blackstone highlighted the main issues of philosophy of religion as “what characterizes any religious phenomenon as being religious” and “what criteria uniquely determine that an experience is a religious experience.”¹¹ Among new books one could refer to *Prolegomena to a Philosophy of Religion* (2005) by John L. Schellenberg (University of Calgary). However doubtful his own world-view is, his professionalism cannot be questioned, and he is consistent in his insistence that the definition of religion, the nature of religious faith, belief and disbelief, different types of both religious commitment and scepticism make up the basic subjects of philosophy of religion and that too much attention is paid in the field to the substantiation of religious propositions and too little to religious practices and life.¹² Another alternative to the understanding of philosophy of religion’s tasks as analysis of the propositional claims of theism was offered in England by Mark Wynn (University of Exeter) whose book *Emotional Experience and Religious Understanding: Integrating Perception, Conception and Feeling* concentrated on the emotional texture of religious experience.¹³ If we add to this list P. Burke, for whom the goal of philosophy of religion was defining the essence of religion as the activity centered on salvation,¹⁴ or Paul Griffiths, who elaborates philosophy of religion as the method aiming at comparative classification of religions¹⁵ (not to mention many others), we will not depart too far from the conclusion that Anglo-American views of philosophy of religion considerably differ and cannot be treated as a homogeneous alternative to the homogeneous Continental understanding of it.

¹⁰ Ferré F. *Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1967, p. 11.

¹¹ Blackstone R.M. “Is Philosophy of Religion Possible?” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 1972, Vol.III, N 3, p. 180.

¹² Schellenberg J.L. *Prolegomena to a Philosophy of Religion*. Ithaca (NY): Cornell University Press, 2005, p. 186.

¹³ See: Wynn M.R. *Emotional Experience and Religious Understanding. Integrating Perception, Conception and Feeling*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

¹⁴ Burke P. *The Fragile Universe: An Essay in the Philosophy of Religions*. New York: Harper & Row, 1979, p. 17.

¹⁵ See: Griffiths P.J. “Comparative Philosophy of Religion” *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*. Eds. by Philip L. Quinn and Charles Taliaferro. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997, pp. 615-20.

But let us imagine, against all the facts, that there really exist two mutually contradictory big traditions in contemporary philosophy wholly disagreeing in their vision of the subject of philosophy of religion. Would it follow that their views on the matter should be of equal worth? I do not think so. As I do not think that two traditions of philosophy of education, one insisting that its subject-matter should be the philosophical investigation of educational processes and the other sure that its subject-matter should be the very subjects of education (like mathematics, physics, history, literature and so on), could both be equally right. Or, to give another example, I am sure that if one tradition of philosophy of science insisted that this branch has to do with characteristics of scientific theories, the nature of scientific paradigms, dynamics of scientific revolutions etc., and another one that it has to do with the very concrete problems of astrophysics, chemistry, biology themselves, only one of them could be close to the truth, and not both. The case would be similar with all other numerous *philosophies of the genitive case*, as I prefer to call them, to which philosophy of religion belongs. In short, if one “tradition” tells us that $2 \times 2 = 4$ and another one that $2 \times 2 = 8$, it does not follow that both have their own rights.

Given that these similarities do work, we can be sure, from common sense, that it is the multidimensional phenomenon of religion that can be the main “legitimate” topic of philosophy of religion from a logical point of view, in the same degree as law and politics those of philosophies of law and politics, etc. Indeed, some authoritative philosophers of religion, like Eleanore Stump, state that today, when the interdisciplinary approach is triumphant in every area, a philosopher of religion too may embark on traditional theological topics, as well as a philosopher of science may be a physicist, biologist or any practicing scientist.¹⁶ This is right, and one could add that it is even profitable for a philosopher of religion to be also a theologian.¹⁷ But it does not entail that the activities of a philosopher of religion and a theologian are the same any more than it follows that if a person can be both a poet and a critic, that criticism is a part of poetry or vice versa.

In addition, those who insist on wholly or even partially identifying the philosophy of religion as rational theology (be they from Anglo-American or Continental origin) consciously or non-consciously usurp a foreign territory, and this is against “international law.” In actual fact, the main topics of this “philosophy of religion” are the same as

¹⁶ *Reasoned Faith: Essays in Philosophical Theology In Honor of Norman Kretzmann*. ed. by E. Stump. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993, p. 2.

¹⁷ As for a philosopher of science to be a scientist, inasmuch as in such a case he (she) has firsthand knowledge of what he works on.

those of classical natural theology, for the view that *theologia naturalis* should deal with arguments for the existence of God and the analysis of divine attributes (eternity, infinity, immutability, unity etc.), along with modes of their cognition by natural reason, while the Christian dogmas are to be discussed in *cursus theologici*, was one of the cornerstones of the second Scholastic era which systematized the first one. One may refer here to *Disputationes metaphysicae* (chapter XXX) by Francisco Suarez (1597) as the most authoritative text in the field. The same was true also with his followers. So while disputatio LIX of *Disputationes in universam philosophiam* by Guiseppe Polizzi (1675-1676) dealt with the existence of God, the next one dealt with the divine attributes, and this curriculum was reproduced also in *Quaestionum philosophicarum* (Lib. V, quest. 2.39-44) by Silvestro Mauro (1670), not to mention others.

The motives behind this breach of what the Confucians called “the order of names” are not quite clear for me, except for one: an attempt to seek philosophical accommodation for theistic theology within a more and more secularizing society under such an academically neutral label as *philosophy of religion*. The task is sound and righteous, with good apologetic thrust beneath it, and it can be better evaluated in view of the numerous and strong enemies of theism in general and Christianity in specific who are almost triumphing in Britain¹⁸ and Continental Europe and are not without success also in the United States. All this being acknowledged, nevertheless, does not change such a state of affairs that when we pass *A* off as *B* we violate the rules of good reasoning.

Groundless also is the view that there is no intermediary land between philosophy of religion as rational theology and empirical religious studies. Philosophy having religion as its subject-matter has its own area different from those of the latter both in statements of questions and modes of answering. The main subjects of this discipline could be distinguished according to such hierarchical principles which provide us with three levels of *Religiöse*¹⁹, i.e., *religiousness* as it is, *religion* (in singular) as the genus of all those phenomena which are designated as empirical religions and concrete *religions* themselves (in plural). The application of both philosophical goals and methods to all these levels gives us a map of the subject-matters of philosophy of religion. It is true that the philosophical science of religion has been

¹⁸ Where the advocacy of different trends of aggressive atheism reminds one of the situation in France before 1789 or in the Soviet Union.

¹⁹ The term, introduced, according to my knowledge, at the very end of the 18th century by Johann Gottlieb Fichte, has no real counterpart in English, because the question here is about “the religious” as a substantive and not adjective.

closely connected with the philosophical science of God during many centuries, but already Sextus Empiricus (from the second to third century A.D.) distinguished between two issues, i.e., whether gods exist and how people first conceive their ideas of them,²⁰ in other words, a differentiation between *theology* and *religiology*.²¹ Sextus also touched on the philosophical matter of religiosity by his shrewd criticism of the naturalistic reduction of religion to social needs and physiological peculiarities of man (provided by the older Sophists, like Critias and Prodicus, Democritus, Euhemerus from Messina, Epicurus and others), criticism, in my opinion, much in demand also today. While the reality of religions (in plural) besides *vera religio* (in singular) was becoming more and more salient for the European mind beginning with the Middle Ages and the period of Modernity, the philosophical teaching of religion became a task of European philosophy which began to be realized in the late Enlightenment and the beginning of the nineteenth century. In a monograph on the subject I singled out 13 main tasks of philosophy of religion in connection with these three levels of Religiöse,²² but time does not permit me to discuss them here.

I'll confine myself with the last one, i.e., its *metatheoretical competence* in regard to adjacent disciplines, i.e. the “sciences of religion and sciences of spirit” (see above). It may lay claim to it as any philosophy of the genitive case (in relation to a corresponding adjacent territory) to which European philosophical consciousness itself has delegated such powers. One could refer to Hegel's *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, but also to the second volume of the opus magnum by Arthur Schopenhauer *The World as Will and Representation* (1844), where it is stated clearly (II.2.12) that while sciences only express different facets of the law of sufficient reason, philosophy deals with it as its subject and constitutes, therefore, the basis of all rationality and “the foundation of all sciences.” Therefore every science has to be provided by the corresponding philosophy, as, e.g., philosophy of botany, zoology, history etc., which are responsible also for their main results.²³ Two comments are appropriate concerning this issue which is

²⁰ Adv. Math. IX, 48.

²¹ The term *Religiologie* was introduced in the 1920s-1930s by some German Catholic theologians and endorsed in the 1970s, by the French scholar P.Bourgault and Canadian P. Pummer. In English it became current in the 1960s. See, e.g.: McDermott R.A. “Religion as an Academic Discipline” *Cross Currents*, 1968, Vol.18, pp. 11-33.

²² For details see: Schokhin V. *Introduction into Philosophy of Religion*. Moscow: Alpha-M, 2010, pp. 228-52 (in Russian).

²³ Schopenhauer A. *Sämtliche Werke. Bd.II. Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung. Bd.II*. Leipzig: Hesse & Becker, 1919, S.155-56.

by no means outdated: first, this belief in philosophy's participation in other areas of knowledge has parallels also in the non-European world;²⁴ second, that there are “metatheoretical commitments” of philosophy does not mean that other areas of knowledge are excluded from solving their own problems themselves, but makes us understand that philosophy by its very nature cannot but “cooperate” with them in their self-reflection.

(3) The initial metatheoretical task of philosophy in relation to adjacent disciplines should be an attempt at marking out their borders. Religious studies do not constitute the topic of the present conference (so we may abstract ourselves from them) while rational theology is a direct subject of our interest. Here, I believe, philosophy of religion could offer several classifications of the latter, wherefrom I would offer one fitting to the very capacious and, in addition, ancient scheme of trilemma.

Assuming as our basis the very motivations of the subjects of rational theological discourse, and, in accordance with it, the dilemma of *theoretical* and *practical* interests, rational theology could be presented in three main varieties:

(1) pursuing *purely* theoretical goals, i.e., theology as a part of speculative metaphysics, wherein philosophizing is an *end-in-itself*;

(2) pursuing *purely* practical goals, i.e., theology as both “inward” and “outward” apology of faith for which philosophizing is only a *means*;

(3) pursuing *both* goals, i.e., natural theology and philosophical theology, wherein philosophizing is both an end *and* means.

The first type of rational theology which could also be seen as pure speculation is exemplified by numerous thinkers who worked in the frameworks of pagan traditions, “natural religion” and theistic religions. In the last case their religious commitment has not really influenced their “inner dispositions,” in spite of their sincere or insincere wish to persuade both others and themselves that their philosophizing has been a means for coping with not only speculative, but also soteriological tasks. Here one can confine oneself to delineating only several big historical traditions and names, including firstly Neoplatonism, then Muslim

²⁴ One can refer, for example, to the *Arthaśāstra* (circa from the first to second century A.D.) where the counterpart of “philosophy”, i.e. *ānvīkṣikī*, is endowed with the competence to recognize the truth in other disciplines, selected for the education of a king, that is the Three Vedas, state, government and economy (I.2).

Aristotelianism and Western Averroism, the so-called ontological argument for the existence of God by Anselm, the teaching of Absolute by Nicolas of Cusa, the purely rationalistic theology of Raimundus Sabunde, Italian Platonic theology of Renaissance, deistic foundations of “natural religion” laid by Herbert of Cherbury, metaphysical theology of the seventeenth century German universities along with that of Leibniz and Wolff, idealistic theology of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, up to the contemporary eclectic teaching of God by Richard Schaeffler or those analytic philosophers for whom it is of interest to dissolve super-intelligent realities into categories of ordinary reason without residues.

In contrast, for theologians of the second species, philosophical rationality has been coordinated with the truths of Revelation and regarded only as an introduction to and means of counteraction to such philosophizing which opposed these truths. Here again we meet the multitude of names including Justin Martyr and Tertullian, the Cappadocian Fathers of the Church, then the opponents of many heterodoxical trends, like Muslim Peripatetism (whose first great opponent was Al-Ghazali), the deism of the Enlightenment (opposed by Johann Hamann, Petrus Maria Gazzaniga, Sigmund von Storchenau, Para du Phanjas, et.al.), Russian sophiology (opposed by Vladimir Lossky), twentieth century agnosticism, naturalism and “creative evolutionism” (opposed by C.S. Lewis and many others), or the evolutionism of Teilhard de Chardin (opposed by, e.g., G. Tilleke and P. Smulders), to say nothing of many others. Still wider has been the application of rational arguments in polemics with atheism.

(4) The designations of the remaining varieties of rational theology, wherein theoretical and practical elements are relatively balanced, are used in general as synonyms, and there are some reasons behind this. The very term *theologia philosophica*, introduced by Aquinas in his commentary on the *De trinitate* of Boethius (1257 or 1258) in conceptual opposition to *theologia sacrae scripturae*, designated the science whereby God is cognized by means of natural reason. But this was just the meaning of the term *theologia naturalis* which corresponds in *Summa contra gentiles* to knowledge of truths available also to those led by the natural light of reason (*ducti naturalis lumine rationis*) – in contrary to the verities unattainable without the light of Revelation.²⁵ The origin of both notions is also common, for instance, the Roman division of theology into three parts (cf. *theologia tripartita*) testified by the great erudites of the first century B.C. Mucius Scevola and Marcus Terentius Varro and going back, probably, to the

²⁵ Adv.gen., lib.1, cap.3.

Stoics.²⁶ According to Tertullian and St. Augustine, these authors distinguished “three kinds of theology,” or “the theory that gives explanations concerning gods” (*tria genera theologia dicit esse, id est rationis quae de diis explicatur*), wherein the first one, “mythical” (*mythicon*), is in use with poets, the second, “physical” (*physicon*), with philosophers, and the last one, “civil” (*civile*), with city authorities. The second kind, i.e., “philosophical”, corresponds to allegoric (mostly naturalistic) interpretations of the characters of the traditional pantheon, i.e., “in-reading” of natural phenomena into them.²⁷ In other words, the question is about the interpretative work of philosophically prepared intellectuals on some “sacred information” which is being transferred by tradition.

Nevertheless, natural and philosophical theologies by no means simultaneously identify themselves as “self-conscious” disciplines. Two dates at least testify to it. The first treatise under the title *Theologia naturalis* was written by a Scotist Nicolas Bonetus in 1330 and printed in 1505.²⁸ The first book entitled *Philosophical Theology* was published by English theologian Frederick Robert Tennant in 1928.²⁹ Such a chronological gap cannot be purely accidental and makes one suggest that the second discipline has been somehow stimulated to make up for something lacking in the first one. In reality, the main thrust of Tennant’s work was not so much in *substantiation* of the existence of God, His attributes and justice of His actions in the world (what took place in the standard textbooks on natural theology) as in *understanding* of all these matters and, in addition, of the Divine self-manifestation in Revelation.

With this confrontation of understanding and substantiation as the point of departure I would highlight at least three points of demarcation between these varieties of rational theology. In one case I

²⁶ This almost generally accepted view was, however, being repudiated in the most authoritative presentation of the topic: Lieberg G. *Die “theologia tripertita” in Forschung und Bezeugung. Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischer Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung.* Herausg. Von H.Temporini I.4. Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1973, S.63-115. The author expressed the opinion that the contribution of almost all main ancient schools in the elaboration of the scheme was roughly equal.

²⁷ Civ.D. III.4, IV.27-31, VI.4-7.

²⁸ See: Schröder W. *Religion bzw. Theologie, natürliche bzw. vernünftige* Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie. Bd. VIII. Hrsg. J.Ritter und K.Gründer. Bd. 8, Basel, 1992, S. 714-15.

²⁹ See: Tennant F.R. *Philosophical Theology. Vol.1-2.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928-1930.

would generalize what we have with Anglo-American authors, in other one develop it and in the last one suggest an alternative.

For example, Alvin Plantinga, referring to his Calvinist commitment, stubbornly dissociates himself from natural theology which always has been definitely supported by Thomism. But he also undertook a very delicate attempt to justify the so-called ontological argument of Anselm with the use of modal logic and concluded this investigation stating (quite correctly) that although this argument could be defended against the usual criticisms (Kantian in the first place) and considered as correct in the context of possible worlds, it does not seem too persuasive.³⁰ Then, Stephen Evans, referring to George Mavrodes, prefaces his survey of the main arguments for the existence of God by distinguishing between arguments themselves, as valid, correct, cogent and persuasive and his own statement that to be persuasive these arguments should not be approved by the whole of mankind.³¹ Richard Swinburne would not, as it seems to me, approve the last statement, but in his book *The Existence of God* he also prefaced elaboration of the arguments by distinguishing between various kinds (deductive and inductive) of arguments themselves.³² It is true that natural theologians also criticized their predecessors from the point of persuasiveness, but if we would offer such a distinction that among two kinds of rational theology the one which concentrated mostly on the *elaboration* of argumentation could be better designated as natural theology, and the other, dealing more with its *critical analysis*, as philosophical theology, we would arrive at not too bad a differentiation.

The next distinction is suggested by the last section of the *Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology* by Flint and Rea which I started with, where non-Christian traditions are fitted into the framework of the whole. *Natural theology* is a correlative notion, senseless without referring to its antonym, that is *revealed theology*. But the very strictness of this conceptual opposition dating from the very beginnings of the Christian writings³³ is a specific feature of Christianity. It is true that every theological tradition knows some frontiers between knowledge “in the limits of pure reason” (to cite Kant) and that coming from

³⁰ See: *The Analytic Theist: an Alvin Plantinga reader*. Ed. by James F. Sennett. Grand Rapids, Michigan/ Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 1998, pp. 50-71.

³¹ Evans C.S. *Philosophy of Religion: Thinking About Faith*. Downers Grove (Ill), Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1981, p. 44.

³² Swinburne R. *The Existence of God*. Second Edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004, pp. 12-13, 19-20.

³³ The first established passage to the point is, according to my knowledge, Tetrullian's *Adversus Marcionem* (I.18).

authoritative texts, but no other feels the distance between knowledge and faith in such a degree as Christianity does. This is because it claims to take on trust much more than any other religion³⁴ and attaches to faith such importance in the renewal and salvation of man as no other. So while natural theology seems to be in the strict sense a Christian phenomenon, philosophical theology seems an intercultural one. In reality, it would be ridiculous to call Plato, Chrysippus or Epicurus, who worked out arguments for the existence of gods, natural theologians (because they did not know any revelation), but nothing is in our way to rank them among philosophical theologians. The same is true also with such Indian philosophers, as Uddyotakara, Jayanta Bhatta or Vācaspati Miśra, who proved the existence of Īśvara in their controversy with antitheists (the Buddhists and others).

Now, given that the names which we give to things do mean something, and classical natural theology (as I discussed in connection with Francisco Suarez and his followers) worked on the general *rational foundations of theism*, the same should be true today. Meanwhile beginning in the 1980s, more and more people who call themselves Christian philosophers³⁵ embarked on philosophical interpretation of those subjects which had always been the indubitable domain of *theologia revelata*, viz., the dogmas of the Holy Trinity, Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection, the sacraments of Eucharist, prayers etc. So if we state that rational theology attempting to work within this domain may be better designated as philosophical than natural, we could reach another important point of demarcation.

But here some middle way, or, in the words of the Fathers of Church, “the royal path,” is preferable, as in many other things. On the one hand, as was stated before, Christianity claims much more faith, or, which is the same, submission of reason, before its main revealed truths or dogmas, which are above reason by their very nature, than any other religion. So those contemporary philosophers who (like many medieval scholastics) pretend to give them rational interpretations in the terms of simple rational categories forget “the advice to Christian philosophers” suggested by the non-Christian philosopher Plotinus to desist from these categories while dealing with non-empirical realities, especially of the

³⁴ In the first place that One Who in reality has created the whole universe out of nothing and then somehow placed Himself at the head of mankind (as the second Adam), had to tolerate mockeries, spiting, beating and the most disgraceful death for the atonement of sins that He had never committed even in thought. Each of these “items” is not comprehensible for reason separately, still less the whole set of them.

³⁵ Especially after the famous Plantinga’s manifesto *Advice to Christian Philosophers* in 1984.

Divine nature.³⁶ What such reasoning gives us is not knowledge of God but rather self-knowledge on the part of reason itself, or, in the words of the eighteenth century German philosopher Friedrich Jacobi, not the knitting of a sock but mere knitting of knitting. That is why what philosophical reason can do here at the most (even if it is of much help) is merely to criticize those who try to repudiate dogmas on the strength of rational suppositions or negligent critique of the historical sources. On the other hand, the revealed truths which are considered in a religion of revelation to be of Divine (not human) origin are transmitted to us through human language, understanding and texts. Holy Scripture is also of a double nature, being considered, at least from the Orthodox point of view, as a synergy between Divine message and human means of its reception.³⁷ The latter being also sacred, are not absolutely above the scope of reason, while the “tools” for interpreting those scriptural passages have much to do with it. The first of these “tools” is Tradition,³⁸ the second could be designated as personal enlightenment from God (to which not only saints may be open), while philosophical reason is to be regarded as the third.

(5) But philosophy of religion may not only classify varieties of rational theology, it also has the right to evaluate them. And its evaluation should be, in correspondence to its peculiar competence, from the viewpoint of religion itself. In this regard all four varieties discussed above with the exception of the first may be acknowledged as compatible with Christianity and other theistic religions, while the first one only with pagan religions (where, as we saw, religions of poets, philosophers and magistrates could coexist without problems), the so-called natural religion of early modernity and enlightenment (which in reality was not a religion) and such “philosophical religions” (like Jainism and Buddhism) which have been founded without any need for revelation. Seemingly self-sufficient speculative philosophizing on God, His actions in the world and other “transcendent matters” is incompatible with a theistic world-view because of the two foundations of the latter. The first one, the doctrine of creation, presupposing the infinite ontological gap between the Creator and creatures, excludes such knowledge of God whereby the Uncreated Being could be resolved

³⁶ See: *Enneads* VI 1, 1, 27-29. Cf. also “an advice” of St. Gregory the Theologian who (in the *Five Sermons on Theology*) expressed regret for having spent so much time looking for analogies of the Uncreated Trinity from the created world.

³⁷ In accordance with the two natures of Jesus Christ.

³⁸ Scripture itself testifies indirectly to this while asserting that *the church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth* (1 Timothy 3:15).

without remainder into the categories of reason which itself had been created by this Being. The second one, the doctrine of the Fall, which is of much more importance for Christianity than for other theistic religions and presupposes the great loss of spiritual vision on the side of the subject of such knowledge, excludes effective vision without such sources of light which are called Revelation and regarded as recommended by the One Who is considered the Maker of human sight itself. To say more, this speculative philosophizing on God, as an end in itself, is in contradiction to the genuine religious attitude of mind in general which, according to the founder of phenomenology of religion, Rudolph Otto, is rooted in the numinous experience or an encounter with Being majestic, awesome and overwhelming, in whose presence one realizes one's insignificance.

As to the three other kinds of rational theology, all of them are compatible not only with theism but also with each other. To say more, they seem to be mutually complementary, because theistic thinking needs not one side of activity, but different ones, including *polemics* with its numerous and "everlasting" opponents, *justification* of reasonable knowledge of God and the created world and rational *clarification* of the scope of this knowledge and its limits as well as language fitted for conveying the eternal truths for every "contemporary" generation. As to philosophical theology in particular, I would single out as its most promising avenues the employment of theistically committed philosophical analysis in interpretation of Scripture and attention to some "foreign voices" in the intercultural, comparative dimension. It is not seldom that our positions, corroborated from the outside, become fortified for ourselves and more defensible before our opponents³⁹.

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³⁹ I have dealt with this, citing as an example Indian counterparts of theodicy, in a special article: Vladimir Shokhin, "Philosophical Theology and Indian Versions of Theodicy." *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 2010, Vol.2, N2, pp. 177-99.

CHAPTER II
CHRIST'S ATONING SACRIFICE¹

RICHARD SWINBURNE

The New Testament is full of claims that Christ died for our sins, claims which imply very clearly that Christ's act made it possible for the guilt of our sins to be removed and for us to be forgiven by some objective process. I shall call a theory of how this process worked a theory of the Atonement. But while the early Ecumenical Councils spelled out the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity in precise ways, no Ecumenical Council (or Pope) has pronounced on *how* Christ's death secured that Atonement.

In this paper I shall seek to analyse how one person can provide atonement for the sins of another. I shall then show that – given certain other Christian doctrinal and historical claims – Christ did provide atonement for human sins in this way; and I shall conclude by pointing out the inadequacies of rival theories of how this happened. The theory which I shall claim to be the correct theory coincides with the account given in the Letter to the Hebrews of Christ's death as Christ's voluntary sacrifice, and also with Aquinas's modified version of Anselm's satisfaction theory.

I begin with an analysis of the nature of wrongdoing and how it is to be dealt with in ordinary inter-human relations. Obligations are obligations to someone. I have an obligation to you to tell you nothing except what is true; I have an obligation to my children to feed and educate my children. When we fail in our obligations, we wrong those to whom we had or believed we had the obligation. Wronging is of two kinds – objective wronging, which is failing to fulfil your obligation whether or not you believed that you had obligation; and subjective wronging, which is doing what you believed to be objectively wrong. In the first case you wrong the person to whom you had the obligation, and in the second case you wrong the person to whom you believed that you had an obligation. I wrong you objectively if I have borrowed money from you and do not repay it. I wrong you subjectively if I believe that I have borrowed money from you and do not repay it. And of course

¹ This paper was originally published in *Archivio di Filosofia* 71 (2008), nos 1-2, pp 81-88; and is a short and updated version of the account of Christ's atonement given in my book *Responsibility and Atonement*, Clarendon Press, 1989, especially ch. 10.

much wrongdoing is both objective and subjective, as when I do not repay money which I both have borrowed and believe that I have borrowed. By objective wrongdoing, I acquire what I shall call objective guilt; and by subjective wrongdoing I what I shall call acquire what I shall call subjective guilt. Obviously subjective guilt is the worse kind of guilt since it results from consciously chosen action . It is a stain on the soul, and needs to be dealt with. We are culpable, blameworthy for our subjective wrongdoing. But objective guilt matters also. If I have not repaid the money I owe you, there is still something amiss with me which needs to be dealt with even if I believe that I have repaid you. In interacting with other people we accept responsibility for our obligations to them, and an unintended failure to perform these obligations involves (non-culpable) guilt. I shall call dealing with our guilt ‘making atonement’ for our wrongdoing.

Atonement has four components – repentance, apology, reparation and penance, not all of which are required to remove objective guilt or the subjective guilt arising from less serious wrongdoing. If I wrong you I must make reparation for the effects of my wrongdoing. If I have stolen your watch, I must return it and compensate you for the inconvenience and trauma resulting from my thieving. If the watch has been destroyed, I must give you back something of equivalent value. When I have deprived you of a service I owe you, I must perform the service and compensate you for the delay. But what needs to be dealt with is not merely the effects of wrongdoing; there is also the fact of wrongdoing – that I have sought to hurt you. I must distance myself from that as far as can be done. I do this by sincere apology; and that, where the wrongdoing is subjective, involves not only an apology but inner repentance as well. But for serious wrongdoing, mere words of apology are often not enough. I need to show you my repentance by doing something extra for you, doing for you more than is needed to compensate for the effects of my wrongdoing. I may give you a small gift, or provide an extra service as a token of my sorrow; and I shall call doing this making a penance. Where the guilt is only objective, repentance is not required (I cannot repent of something for which I am not to blame); and where the wrongdoing is not serious, there is less need of penance. The process is completed when the wronged person, whom I will sometimes call the victim, agrees to treat the wrongdoer, in so far as he can, as one who has not wronged him; and do that is to forgive him. It is often done by saying the words ‘I forgive you.’

It is not necessary, in order for the victim to forgive the wrongdoer, that the latter should make a full atonement. Some apology and (if the wrong is subjective) repentance is always required, but the victim can determine how much (if any) reparation is required.

(Henceforth when I write 'reparation', 'and penance' should also be understood.) I may let the wrongdoer off the need to compensate me for stealing my watch, if he has destroyed it and has no money with which to repay me – so long as he apologizes, and the apology sounds sincere (that is, sounds as if it is backed by repentance). It is however bad, I suggest, to treat someone who has wronged you seriously and yet makes no serious attempt at apology and repentance, as one who has not wronged you. It is not to take his hostile stance towards you seriously; it is to treat him as a child not responsible for his actions. If someone has killed your much loved wife and yet for some reason is beyond the reach of the law, it would be bad simply to ignore this and to enjoy his company at a party; it would be insulting to your wife to do so. Since forgiving is a good thing, I suggest that we only call treating the wrongdoer as one who has not wronged you 'forgiving' him where it is good so to treat him, that is when treating him in this way is a response at least to some apparent repentance and apology on his part. Without this, treating the wrongdoer as someone who has not wronged you is condoning his wrong actions. Those theologians who think that God forgives everyone whether or not they want to be forgiven seem to me to have an inadequate view of what his perfect goodness consists in.

Now it does look as if almost all humans have wronged God, directly and indirectly. Wronging God is sinning. We wrong him directly when we fail to pay him proper worship. Deep reverence and gratitude is owed to the holy source of our existence. We wrong him indirectly when we wrong any of his creatures. For thereby we abuse the free will and responsibility we have been given by God – and to misuse a gift is to wrong the giver. And in wronging God's creatures, we wrong God also in virtue of the fact that he created these creatures. If I hit your child, I wrong you, for I damage a person on whom you have exercised your loving care. Such wronging is actual sin – sometimes only objective but often subjective as well, at least in the respect that the wrongdoer believes that he is doing wrong to someone, even if he does not realize that he is doing wrong to God. But it is, of course, far worse if he realizes that he is wronging the good God who created him and keeps him in being from moment to moment.

But there is more to our bad condition than mere actual sin. There is an element inherited from our ancestors and ultimately from our first human ancestor, whom – defined as the first of our ancestors who had free will and moral concepts – we may call Adam. There is first a proneness to wrongdoing which (in view of the fact that so much wrongdoing involves wronging God, at least indirectly) I shall call original sinfulness. Our original sinfulness consists of the bad desires which we have inherited from our ancestors, especially a proneness to

seek our immediate well-being in lesser respects at the expense of others and at the expense of our ultimate well-being. This inheritance is partly 'social'. If our parents behave badly, that influences us to behave badly. But the inheritance is also genetic. We inherit our ancestors' genes, which cause our strong desires to seek far more than our fair share of food, sleep, shelter, sex, etc.; and evidence has emerged within the last two years that what a person does and suffers (at the hands of others) at an early age affects the genes he or she hands on to their children.²

But, as well as inheriting original sinfulness, we also inherit something analogous to the guilt of our actual sin. All our ancestors have done wrong, and in consequence they owe God atonement; but they have not (at any rate in general) made that atonement – it still needs to be made. We are indebted to our ancestors for our life and so many of the good things which come to us. For God in creating us has acted through them who have (in general) not merely brought us into the world, but often lavished much care on our nurture (or on the nurture of others of our ancestors.) Those who have received great benefit from others owe them a smaller benefit in return. What we could do (in theory) for our ancestors is to help with their atonement. We who have inherited from them so much positive good have inherited also a debt. Even the English law requires that before you can claim what you inherit from your dead parents you must pay their debts. To inherit a debt is not to inherit guilt.³ For we were not the agents of our ancestors' wrongdoing, but we have inherited a responsibility to make atonement for this debt of 'original sin', as far as we can – perhaps by making some reparation.

It is beginning to look as if we humans are in no very good position to make proper atonement for sins, good though it would be that we should make that atonement. We owe much anyway by way of service to God our creator, who has given us so much. We owe a lot more in virtue of our own actual sins; and yet more in virtue of the sins of our ancestors. And yet, because of the size of the debt and because of

² See for example the news report in *The New Scientist*, 7 January 2006, p10, and the earlier article 'Hidden Inheritance' by Gail Vines in *The New Scientist*, 28 November 1998, pp. 27-30.

³ Augustine was responsible for the wide acceptance in the Western church of the view that the descendants of Adam are guilty for his sins (and so suffer from 'Original guilt'), although – as far as I can see – none of the Fathers before Augustine had advocated it. On this see my *Responsibility and Atonement*, p. 144. The biblical passage which is always cited as expounding the doctrine of Original Guilt is Romans 5:12-21. I argue in *Responsibility and Atonement*, Additional Note 8 (p.206) that this passage cannot bear that interpretation.

our own original sinfulness, it would be very difficult for us to make any proper atonement. We need help.

How can someone else help us to make atonement? 'No one can atone for the sins of another.'⁴ Taken literally, that remains profoundly true. You cannot make my apologies, or even pay my debts. If I steal £10 from John and you give him an equivalent sum, he has not lost money; but it remains the case that I still owe £10 to John. But one human can help another to make the necessary atonement – can persuade him to repent, help him to formulate the words of apology, and give him the means by which to make reparation.

So what would be a proper reparation (with penance) for us to offer to God, if someone else provided the means of reparation? What has gone wrong is that we humans have lived bad human lives. A proper offering would be a perfect human life, which we can offer to God as our reparation. Maybe one human life, however perfect, would not equate in quantity of goodness the badness of so many human lives. But it is up to the wronged person to deem when a sufficient reparation has been made; and one truly perfect life would surely be a proper amount of reparation for God to deem that sufficient reparation had been made.

But why would God require any reparation, when he could simply forgive us in response to some minimum amount of repentance and apology? Well, he could have done so – many theologians accept that. But they also say that there is much good in him taking our wrongdoing so seriously as to insist on some reparation. When serious wrong has been done, parents and courts rightly insist on the wrongdoer providing some minimum amount of reparation. It involves the wrongdoer taking what he has done seriously. And if he has no means to make reparation, a well-wisher may often provide him with the means; the wrongdoer can then choose whether or not to use that means for that purpose. Suppose that I owe you some service, for example suppose that I have promised to clean your house and that you have already paid me to do this. Suppose also that I have spent the money but omitted to clean the house at the promised time, and that I have now had an accident which makes me unable to clean the house. Clearly I owe you repentance and apology; but I must also try to get someone else to clean the house. Even if you don't badly need the house to be cleaned, you may think it important that I should be involved in getting it cleaned; it matters that I should take responsibility for what I have omitted to do. So you may encourage a third person to offer to me to do for you the

⁴ This point was made both by Jeremiah (31:29-30) and Ezekiel (18 *passim*) who affirm that no one will be held guilty and so condemned to die for the sins of their parents or children.

service on my behalf. If I accept the third person's offer I am involved in providing the reparation. When with repentance and apology, I ask you to accept the third person's action as my reparation, you, the victim, may then judge that I have taken my wrongdoing seriously enough to forgive me for it.

As we have seen, ordinary humans are in no good position to make atonement for our own sins, let alone provide reparation for the sins of all other humans. The Christian claim is that in Jesus Christ God provided the atonement, and I now suggest that this may be best understood in this way that he provided an act of reparation of which we can avail ourselves. God the Father (or perhaps God the Holy Trinity) was the wronged person (the victim of our wrongdoing); and God the Son was the one who, as Jesus Christ sent by God the Father, thinking it so important that we should take our wrongdoing seriously, made available the reparation for us to offer back to God the Father.

What would show that Christ provided an atonement for our sins in this way? Jesus Christ would have to have been God incarnate, to have led a perfect life, and to have claimed that this life was available for us as our reparation. Also God would need to show by some act which God alone could do that he had accepted the sacrifice (and which would be recognizable in the contemporary culture as showing this) – for example by raising Christ from the dead, and thereby showing his approval of what Christ had done. To the extent to which we have evidence that these things are so, to that extent we have evidence that Christ has provided an atonement for our sins. A perfect life need not end in a death by execution, but in so many human societies that may well happen; those who protest too strongly against injustice, above all if they claim divine authority for their actions, were very likely to get executed in many ancient societies. If God is to live a perfect life among us, just once for the sins of the world, it is plausible to suppose that he might choose to live in a society where it is highly probable that living a perfect life would involve bearing serious suffering, and where protest pays the highest price. Most theologians have thought of the reparation made by Christ as his Passion or Crucifixion, or perhaps the series of events from his betrayal to his death. But they have also stressed that what mattered about these events is that Christ freely allowed them to happen; and so the series must include the free actions of Christ which led to his crucifixion, and that will include at least all the public part of his perfect life. The reparation is not so much his death, as the actions which led to his death.

This account of how Christ made an atonement coincides with the account in terms of sacrifice given in the Letter to the Hebrews. The letter regards Christ's death as an effective sacrifice which achieved

what the sacrifices in the Jewish temple could not. Christ was 'a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners' who 'offered up himself'⁵ to 'bear the sins of many'.⁶ This offering avails not just because it was a death, but because of the life which led up to the death – 'Although he was a Son, he learnt obedience through what he suffered, and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.'⁷ The sacrifice was made only once, and that was all that was needed – 'He entered once for all into the Holy Place, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.'⁸ In the most primitive way of thinking about sacrifice lying behind (the far more sophisticated) Old Testament thought, a sacrifice is the giving of something valuable to God who consumes it by inhaling the smoke, and often gives back some of it to be consumed by the worshippers (who eat some of the flesh of the sacrificed animal).⁹ The sacrifice of Jesus is then Jesus (God the Son) giving to God (the Father) the most valuable thing he has – his life; a perfect life of service to God and humans in difficult circumstances, leading to its being taken from him by his crucifixion. In order for the sacrifice to be successful (that is, for God to accept the sacrifice) Christ 'entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf';¹⁰ and the letter also alludes to what the writer must regard as our evidence of Christ's exaltation, that God 'brought [him] back from the dead ... by the blood of the eternal covenant'.¹¹

I have written that Christ 'provided' an atonement and pointed out that the benefits of sacrifice are available only to those who associate themselves with it. And clearly Christians have always claimed that Jesus' act makes no difference to us if we do not in some way appropriate it for ourselves. (See the above citation from Hebrews – Christ is 'the source of salvation to all who obey him'.) We can say to God 'Please accept instead of the life which I ought to have led (and the lives which my ancestors ought to have led) this perfect life of Jesus as my reparation.' Thereby we join our repentance and apology with the reparation (and penance) which Christ provides. The ceremony of entry to the Christian church is baptism. The Nicene creed echoes various New Testament texts in affirming belief in 'one baptism' (that is, a non-

⁵ Hebrews 7:26-7.

⁶ Hebrews 9:28.

⁷ Hebrews 5:8-9.

⁸ Hebrews 9:12.

⁹ See J. Pedersen, *Israel. Its life and culture*, Oxford University Press, rev. ed. 1959, pp. 299-375 (esp. p. 359).

¹⁰ Hebrews 9:24.

¹¹ Hebrews 13:20.

repeatable ceremony) ‘for the forgiveness of sins’. It is in this way that God gives those of us who seek it, his forgiveness. At their baptism, wrote St Paul, Christians are baptised into the death of Jesus;¹² as adults, they appropriate it for themselves, or – when infants are baptised – parents do so with the prayer that when the infants become older, they will themselves accept the association that their parents made on their behalf. And the association established by baptism is renewed at each eucharist when, St Paul claims, ‘as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he come.’¹³ Since the bread and wine of the eucharist are given the status of the ‘body’ and ‘blood’ of Christ (however that is to be understood), our participation in the sacrifice of Christ has an exact analogy to participation in older sacrifices when worshippers ate some of the sacrifice. ‘Body’ and ‘blood’ are the elements of sacrifice; and since the phrases ‘this is my body’ and ‘this is my blood’ are fairly clearly the original words of Christ, the sacrifice theory is not – I suggest – only that of the Letter to the Hebrews alone, but of Christ himself.¹⁴

While many of the Fathers continued to teach that Christ’s death was a sacrifice, some of them put forward one or both of two other theories (to my mind very unsatisfactory theories) which some of them combined with the sacrifice theory.¹⁵ Some of them thought of the atonement (in the sense defined at the beginning of this paper) as brought about by Christ taking and so perfecting human nature. But that involves a Platonic view of our human nature as a separately existing universal in which all humans participate; and Plato’s theory of forms seems to most of us highly implausible. Further, this theory seems to imply that the atonement was achieved by the incarnation; and that makes it unclear how the Crucifixion has any role in this, as all the Fathers acknowledged that it did. Other patristic writers wrote of the Crucifixion as a redemption or the payment of a ransom. The question then arises to whom the ransom was paid? The only possible answer seems to be – the Devil. But then why did the ransom need to be paid?

¹² Romans 6:3.

¹³ I Corinthians 11:26.

¹⁴ Although differing in other respects, all four accounts of the Last Supper given in the New Testament (in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and in I Corinthians) describe Jesus as uttering these words over the bread and the wine. Although John’s Gospel has no account of the Last Supper it insists on the need to eat the ‘flesh’ and drink the ‘blood’ of Christ in order to belong to the Christian community and share in Christ’s resurrection – see John 6:41-59.

¹⁵ See (e.g.) J.N.D. Kelly *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed., 1977, ch. 14.

Could not God just have annihilated the Devil? The reply sometimes given is that in some way God had promised the Devil that he would be allowed to control the fate of those who sinned against God. But why should God have made so foolish a promise? True, there is much talk in the New Testament of Christ 'redeeming' us and even paying a 'ransom'. There is much talk, too, of his rescuing us from evil, and sometimes this is put personally in terms of his rescuing us from the Devil. But any idea of a prior bargain with the Devil, so that God was obliged to pay a ransom to him, is – I suggest – alien to the New Testament. All that the New Testament texts are claiming is that Christ rescued us from the guilt of sin, and (to some extent) from the power to sin – that is, he gave us the power not to sin. And any theory of the Atonement (including the sacrifice theory) will incorporate the former element; the latter is a further aspect of the work of Christ – the beginning of our sanctification.

Anselm's theory in *Cur Deus Homo?* is however similar to the sacrifice theory, although he uses the word 'satisfaction' for the reparation which is offered to God, the voluntary payment of a debt by one who is God. His theory does however make rendering satisfaction of an amount equal to the harm done, necessary before forgiveness can be given. And it leaves it unclear how the benefits of Christ's death come to us. Aquinas takes over Anselm's basic idea, but remedies these deficiencies. Christ's death was desirable but not necessary, claimed Aquinas. 'If God had wanted to free man from sin without any satisfaction at all, he would not have been acting against justice.'¹⁶ While God can provide the satisfaction, Aquinas accepted the objection that 'the man who sins must do the repenting and confess', but 'satisfaction has to do with the exterior act, and here one can make use of instruments, a category under which friends are included.'¹⁷ He also claimed that the benefits of Christ's death flow to us through our incorporation into it in baptism and other sacraments – 'Christ's passion, the universal cause of the forgiveness of sins, has to be applied to individuals if they are to be cleansed from their sins. This is done by baptism and penance and the other sacraments, which derive their power from the passion of Christ.'¹⁸ And Aquinas regarded his theory as a sacrifice theory – 'Christ's passion was a true sacrifice.'¹⁹

The Reformers had a penal substitution theory of the Atonement. Christ's death was a punishment which he voluntarily underwent instead of the punishment which we would have had to

¹⁶ *Summa Theologiae* 3a.46.2 ad 3.

¹⁷ *op.cit.* 3a.48.2 ad 1.

¹⁸ *op. cit.* 3a.49.1. ad 4.

¹⁹ *op. cit.* 3a.48.3.

undergo.²⁰ Anselm's theory is often regarded as such a theory; and – whether or not that is fair – Aquinas's theory is sufficiently different from the Reformers' theory not to call it a penal substitution theory. Punishment is something undergone, imposed (whether on the guilty person or someone else) by the wronged person (or someone acting on his behalf) when the wrongdoer is unwilling or unable to deal with his guilt. But Aquinas held and – I have claimed – rightly held, that Christ's life ending in his death was God's glorious voluntary act designed to help us to deal with our guilt; and that while God could have forgiven us without this life and death, it was good that he should make available to us this glorious reparation, to use if we so chose.

To give a theory of the Atonement, as I have understood that notion, is to give a theory of how Christ's act made it possible for the guilt of our sins to be removed; and in this paper I have sought to give such a theory. But in doing so I have no wish to deny that God's incarnation in Jesus Christ served many other good purposes – including showing solidarity with us in the sufferings which he causes us to endure for good reasons, giving us an example of how to live, revealing to us important truths, and – as I have already mentioned – providing help to us in avoiding future sins and in forming characters fit for Heaven.

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²⁰ While Calvin allowed that (in theory) God could have used another 'mediator' between God and man, than one who was both God and man – though he did not see how (See J. Calvin *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2.12.1), he seems to assume that it was necessary that there be a 'mediator'.

CHAPTER III

MODELS OF THE TRINITY IN PATRISTIC THEOLOGY

ALEXEY FOKIN

1. Introduction. The question of how to approach one of the greatest mysteries of biblical Revelation – the mystery of the Holy Trinity, or rather of the Triune God – with rational methods in order to understand it and to express it adequately remains of great relevance for both theologians and philosophers. This question appeared already in the early Christian apologists such as St. Justin Martyr, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Tertullian, and Clement of Alexandria, and soon afterwards became one of the most important questions of the Trinitarian controversy of the fourth century A.D. In that time the Fathers of the Church formulated basic rational approaches and ways of understanding and expressing the mystery of the divine Triunity. These approaches were strengthened in the next few centuries of the patristic period (fifth to eighth centuries) and later came to serve as models of philosophizing about God's Triunity. And it is quite natural that what has been said on this subject by the Fathers of the first centuries of the Christian era is still attracting great attention both in the Christian East and Christian West. It seems that in the patristic epoch we can find a number of basic conceptual Trinitarian models or "schemes," which I will label as follows: the arithmetical scheme, the metaphysical scheme, the anthropological scheme, the psychological scheme, the social scheme, and the logical scheme. In doing this, the Fathers, while clearly aware of the divine revealed character of the Trinitarian dogma, to some extent relied upon Greek philosophical tradition and used philosophical methods and concepts peculiar to a particular philosophical school. In what follows we will examine these basic conceptual Trinitarian schemes, without taking into account different physical analogies of the Holy Trinity, taken from particular phenomena of the physical world (such as root – stem – fruit or spring – stream – river or sun – beam – light, etc.), which were widespread in patristic literature, since the majority of these analogies are but simple illustrations of the Trinitarian dogma, without any philosophical import.

2. The Arithmetical scheme. This quite abstract scheme, which is not common among patristic theologians, is an attempt to discover the very "mechanism" of the Trinitarian dialectic by virtue of the

Pythagorean doctrine of numbers and their ontological significance¹. One of the first who applied this method to the Trinitarian problem was St. Gregory the Theologian. In a famous passage he wrote:

Therefore Unity having from all eternity moved to Duality, stopped in Trinity. This is what we mean by Father and Son and Holy Spirit. The Father is the Begetter and the Emitter (γεννήτωρ καὶ προβολεὺς), without passion of course, and without reference to time, and not in a corporeal manner. The Son is the Begotten, and the Holy Spirit is the Emission; for I know not how this could be expressed in terms altogether excluding visible things².

The very “mechanism” of this Trinitarian dialectic is explained by St. Gregory elsewhere:

Unity has moved because of [its] richness (διὰ τὸ πλούσιον) and has surpassed Duality, since it is above matter and form, from which bodies are consisted, and has been restricted by Trinity because of [its] perfection (διὰ τὸ τέλειον), since it [i.e., Trinity] firstly surpasses the synthesis of Duality (δυάδος σύνθεσιν), so that the Godhead will not be contracted (στενῆ) and will not overflow into infinity; in the first case [this would mean] oafishness (ἀφιλότιμον), and in the second case [it would lead to] disorder (ἄτακτον); the first is quite typical to the Jewish [notion of God], and the second to Hellenistic polytheism³.

In arguing this St. Gregory seeks to remove from this “Trinitarian dialectic” not only any trace of corporeal and temporal categories, but also any involuntary and natural-forced character of the movement of the Godhead from Unity to Trinity, such as in Plotinus’s doctrine of emanation of the One as “an overflow of goodness” (ὑπέρχυσις ἀγαθότητος)⁴.

¹ Cf.: *Aristot.* *Metaphys.* A 5. 985b23–987a9; *Phys.* Γ 4. 202 b 36; *Diogen. Laert.* *Vita phil.* VIII 25; *Aet. Placita.* I.3.8; *Sext. Emp.* *Adv. mathem.* X 281 etc.

² *Greg. Naz.* *Or.* 29. 2.

³ *Or.* 23. 8.

⁴ *Or.* 29. 2.

Subsequently, this “arithmetical Trinitarian scheme” of St. Gregory was shared by a certain Job the Monk, who wrote a book called “Treatise on divine economy” (Οικονομική πραγματεία), mentioned by Photius in his “Library”⁵. To the explanation of St. Gregory he adds that number three is “a most apparent image of equilibrium” (ζυγοῦ τύπος σαφέστατος), and the equilibrium is ‘both the result and the symbol of equality’ (ισότητος ἔργον ἅμα καὶ σύμβολον); for this reason among all other numbers only number «three» equally and unchangeably occupies a middle position (τὸ μέσον) in relation to their extreme limits – to unity and duality and regarded without any synthesis⁶.

A different interpretation of the words of St. Gregory was proposed by St. Maximus the Confessor, according to whom the movement from Unity to Trinity is not referred to God Himself, but to how we may know Him. In fact, at first we understand that God *exists*, that is, we understand the unity of His essence (or the principle of His being, λόγος τοῦ εἶναι), and then we may know the way *how* He exists, i.e., the trihypostatic mode of His existence (τρόπος τοῦ ὑφεστάναι)⁷. That is why we may say that the Holy Trinity is moving inside our mind as we think of it and investigate its mode of existence⁸. But this does not contradict the fact that the reason for this Trinitarian mode of existence of God lies in God Himself and does not depend on our knowledge of Him⁹.

3. *The Metaphysical scheme.* As we have seen, St. Gregory in constructing his Trinitarian scheme used the Pythagorean notion of numbers, but also knew the Neoplatonic doctrine of the One that generates all other beings. There were also a number of Christian theologians who more closely followed the logic of Neoplatonism in adopting its doctrine of three Hypostases, namely the One, Intellect, and Soul, to Christian theology. Thus, Eusebius of Caesarea, a sympathizer of Arianism, in his *Preparation of the Gospel* regards the doctrine of the “three kings” of Plato’s Second Letter as an anticipation of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity¹⁰. Such views were not alien to some later Fathers of the Church such as St. Cyril of Alexandria¹¹ and St. Theodoret¹². The

⁵ Phot. Bibl. Cod. 222.

⁶ Phot. Bibl. Cod. 222 // Bekker. P. 192a 17–31.

⁷ Maxim. Confess. Ambigua ad Thomam, 1 // PG. 91. Col. 1036C.

⁸ Idem. Ambigua ad Joannem, 5 // PG. 91. Col. 1260D.

⁹ Cf.: Maxim. Confess. Quaest. et dub. 105.

¹⁰ Euseb. Caesar. Praep. Evang. XI 20. 1-3.

¹¹ Cyrill. Alex. Contra Julianum I 46–47; VIII 270–273.

¹² Theodoret. Graec. affect. cur. II 84–86.

latter for his explanation used the so-called “theory of borrowing” well-known from the early Christian apologists:

These philosophers [Plotinus, Plutarch, Numenius], who lived after the coming of our Savior, in their doctrines borrowed much of Christian theology. For example, Plotinus and Numenius, developing an idea of Plato, say that in his opinion there are three timeless and eternal [Principles] (τρία ὑπέρχρονα καὶ αἴδια): the Good, the Intellect and the universal Soul. And by the name of the Good he called that One whom we call the Father, by the name of the Intellect called that One whom we call the Son and the Logos, and by the name of the Soul called the Power, animating and vivifying all things, which in the Holy Scriptures is called the Holy Spirit. This, as I said, they stole from the philosophy and theology of the Jews¹³.

However, such a simple identification of the first three Neoplatonic Hypostases disposed in vertical manner inevitably led to the ontological subordination of the two Hypostases of the Holy Trinity, as was typical of the pre-Nicene and especially of Origen’s and Arian Trinitarian theology¹⁴. That is why many Christian theologians refused to use this Neoplatonic Trinity and sought for other Trinitarian schemes and conceptions inside Neoplatonic philosophy itself.

It seems that a completely different and so to speak horizontal and coordinated Trinitarian scheme, which also has Neoplatonic roots, was first proposed in the middle of the fourth century by Marius Victorinus. Based on the Neoplatonic theory of the so-called “intelligible triad” (νοητὴ τριάς), *Being – Life – Intellect* (ὄν – ζῶή – νοῦς)¹⁵, which goes back to Plato¹⁶, as well as on the triadic process of generation of a new being, *remaining – procession – return* (μονή – πρόοδος – ἐπιστροφή)¹⁷, Victorinus proposed the following Trinitarian

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Cf. *Cyrril. Alex. Contra Julianum* I 48.

¹⁵ Cf. *Plotinus. Enn.*, I.6.7.10-12; V.4.2.43-44; VI.6.18.35; VI.6.15.2; III.6.6; III.7.3; V.1.4; V.3.5; V.4.2; V.5.1; V.6.6; VI.6.15; VI.6.18; VI.9.2; *Porph. Com. in Parm.*, 14.16-26; *Procl. Elem. theol.*, 101-104; *Com. in Tim. T. III. P. 45.9*; *Damascius. De princ.*, 43. Vol. 1. P. 86.3-10.

¹⁶ *Plato. Sophist.*, 248e-249a; *Tim.*, 39e.

¹⁷ Cf. *Plotinus. Enn.*, III.9.5; V.1.6; V.2.1; V.4.2; V.6.5; VI.7.16; *Porphyr. Com. in Parm.*, 14.16-26; *Procl. Elem. theol.*, 35.

scheme, according to which three Hypostases of the Holy Trinity are identified with three main divine attributes or properties¹⁸:

Being (*esse* = Father) → Life (*vivere* = Son) → Intellect (*intellegere* = Holy Spirit)
 Remaining (*status*= Father) → Procession (*processio*= Son) → Return (*regressus* = Holy Spirit)

Indeed, according to Victorinus, God as He is, necessarily is a supreme Being (i.e., the Father), who does not remain secluded in Himself and without movement, but from eternity moves by a “double movement”: by movement *from* Being, that is Life (i.e., the Son), and then by reverse movement *to* Being, that is Intellect or self-consciousness (*sui ipsius cognoscentia*¹⁹, i.e., the Holy Spirit). He writes:

The Logos and the Holy Spirit are one and the same movement (*unam motionem et eandem et Λόγον et Sanctum Spiritum*), but the Logos in regard to life, and the Spirit in regard to knowledge and intellect²⁰.

This one movement is Life and Wisdom (*et vita et sapientia*), that is Life which has converted into Wisdom (*vita conversa in sapientiam*), or to speak more precisely, which [turned back] into the Father’s Existence (*in existentiam patricam*), and speaking even more precisely, which by reverse movement [turned back] into the Father’s Potency (*retro motae motionis in patricam potentiam*) ... And Life is a descent and Wisdom is an ascent (*descensio enim vita, ascensio sapientia*), and both are Spirit, Two in One²¹.

This eternal movement, in which God “determines Himself” and “thinks Himself”²² is a circular movement (*circularis motus*) around the unique center, i.e., God the Father²³:

¹⁸ *Marius Victorinus*. Adv. Ar., I.63.11-14; III.4.6-17.9; IV.21.26-28; 25.44-45 etc.

¹⁹ Adv. Ar., I.57.28-29.

²⁰ Adv. Ar., I.58.1-3; cp. II.2.31-32.

²¹ Adv. Ar., I.51.15-28. Cf. Adv. Ar., II.2.31-32; III.8.42-43; Hymn. I.75-78; De gen., 31.3-13.

²² ipse se ipsum circumterminavit... tu te ipsum intellegis, Adv. Ar., I.31.19-20; cf. IV.18.44-33.25; Adv. Ar., IV.28.5-10; Com. Philip., 2.5, Col. 1207C.

In the Three there is one substance, descended from the Father
to the Son,
and returned in the Spirit²⁴.
Stay – Procession – Return: O Blessed Trinity!²⁵

Thus, for Victorinus the eternal generation of the Son and procession of the Holy Spirit is a process of self-determination of the undetermined Father, the pure Being, Who determines Himself firstly as Life, processing from Himself, and then returns to Himself as Intellect, thereby achieving the fullness of self-consciousness and self-determination.

Besides Marius Victorinus a similar metaphysical Trinitarian scheme can be found in some later Latin and Greek theologians such as St. Augustine²⁶, Synesius of Cyrene²⁷, Cassiodorus²⁸, St. Maximus the Confessor²⁹ and John Scott Eriugena³⁰. It should also be noted that the intelligible triad of Victorinus has its representation on a subjective level in the human soul. In fact, according to Victorinus, our soul, being a substance, has an independent existence or *being* (*esse*), and it does not just exist, but *lives* (*vivere*), and not just lives, but lives, *thinking of* (*intellegere*) its being and life. Thus, our soul is “the existent one” (*unum õv*) which has united in itself its being, life and intellect. In the human soul life is not something completely different from being, but is its form and manifestation, and intellect is not something completely different from life, but is another form and manifestation³¹. Thus, for Victorinus the human soul is not just an image of God, but “an image of the highest Trinity” (*superioris Triados imago*)³² and “the second united trinity” (*trinitas unalis secunda*)³³. Thus Victorinus puts the metaphysical scheme in close connection with the well-known anthropological scheme of the Trinity, to which we now turn.

²³ Adv. Ar., I.60.1-61.3.

²⁴ tribus una substantia est, progressa a Patre Filio et regressa Spiritu. Hymn. I.4-6; I.75-76.

²⁵ Hymn. III.71. Cp.: Adv. Ar., I.51; I.57; Hymn. I.4-6.

²⁶ *August.* De ver. rel., 31.57; Confess., XIII.11.12; 16.19; De civ. Dei, XI.26-28; De Trinit., X.10.13; X.11.17-12.19 etc.

²⁷ *Synesius.* Hymn. III.58-65.

²⁸ *Cassiodor.* Exp. Ps. 50. 13

²⁹ *Maxim. Confess.* Quaest. et dub. 105; Quaest. ad Thalass., 13; Cap. char., II.29; Cap. theol., II.1; Orat. Dom., 422; 440-445; Mystag., 23; Amb. ad Joann., 10/19 (23) // PG T. 91. Col. 1136BC; 1260D etc.

³⁰ *Eriugena.* De div. nat., I.13; II.19.

³¹ *Marius Victorinus.* Adv. Ar., I.32.16-78; 61.1-64.8; cf. I.20.24-37.

³² Adv. Ar., I.63.18.

³³ Adv. Ar., I.64.5.

4. *The Anthropological scheme* of the Holy Trinity (ἐκ τῶν καθ' ἡμᾶς) is one of the earliest and most widespread in Patristic literature. It was typical of many pre-Nicene theologians such as Tatian³⁴, Athenagoras³⁵, Theophilus³⁶, Tertullian³⁷, Novatian³⁸, Lactantius³⁹, and Origen⁴⁰. However, they did not use it in its fullness, because usually they contented themselves with the doctrine of the first and the second hypostases, namely God the Father and His *Logos*, Who in His being undergoes two stages: the “internal” stage, eternally remaining inside the Father, and the “external” stage, when He goes forth at the moment of creation of the world (a doctrine borrowed from Stoic logic⁴¹). And, with few exceptions, they did not find in their Trinitarian scheme a place for the third hypostasis, namely the Holy Spirit⁴².

The anthropological scheme was most clearly and exhaustively formulated by St. Gregory of Nyssa in his *Catechetical Oratio*⁴³. According to St. Gregory, God as He is can not be “speechless” (ἄλογον, or “without reason”). And one who is not “speechless” necessarily has a word (λόγον, or “reason”). And in the same way that our word originates from our mind (ἐκ τοῦ νοῦ εἶναι τὸν λόγον), in the Godhead the divine Word (the Son) is begotten from the divine Mind (that is, the Father), and They are “the true Mind and the true Word” (ὁ ὄντως νοῦς τε καὶ λόγος)⁴⁴. According to St. Gregory, the Word of God, unlike our word, is not dissipated in the air but exists as “the true hypostatic being” (οὐσιωδῶς ὑφ'εστῶς), i.e., has independent existence; He is a rational thing (νοερόν τι χρῆμα), alive, eternal, incorporeal, endowed with free will (προαιρετικόν), omnipotent (πανταδύναμον),

³⁴ *Tatian. Oratio adv. Graec.*, 5.

³⁵ *Athenagor. Supplic.*, 10.

³⁶ *Theophil. Alex. Ad Autol.*, II.22.

³⁷ *Tertullian. Adv. Prax.*, 8; *Adv. Herm.*, 45.

³⁸ *Novatian. De Trinit.* 31.

³⁹ *Lactant. Div. instit.* IV.9; *Epit.*, 42.

⁴⁰ *Orig. De princ.* I.2.6.

⁴¹ *Sext. Emp. Adversus Mathematicos*, VIII.275; 278; *Pyrrhoniae hupotyposes*, I.65.

⁴² Among some pre-nicene Greek and especially Latin theologians there was a strong tendency to identify the Holy Spirit with the Son. This tendency later was called “binitarism”, i.e., the doctrine of the Dyad: the Father and the Son. See, for example, *Hermas. Pastor*, 58.2; 78.1–2; *Tertullian. Adv. Prax.* 26; *Victorin. Poetav. Comm. in Apoc.* 6.9; 12.1–2; *Lactant. Div. Inst.*, IV.5–6; IV.12. For more details see my book: *Fokin A.R. Latin Patrology. Volume I. The Pre-Nicene Period (150–325)*. Moscow, 2005 (in Russian).

⁴³ *Greg. Nyss. Or. Cat.*, 1–4; cp.: *De op. hom.* 5–6.

⁴⁴ *De op. hom.* 5; *Or. Cat.* 1; *Ad Simpl. // GNO. III.1. P.* 64.23–65.8; *C. Eun.*, III.6.29.1–6; *Ref. conf. Eun.*, 58.2.

without any inclination to evil, but always directed to the good⁴⁵. The divine Word, while manifesting in Himself the Father (that is, God's Mind), is different from Him in hypostasis (ἕτερον τῆ ὑποστάσει) or in subject (ὑποκειμενῶ), but is one with Him in nature (ἐν κατὰ τὴν φύσιν)⁴⁶. At the same time St. Gregory, contrary to the apologists, does not accept in the Godhead any distinction between ἐνδιάθετος λόγος (internal word) and προφορικὸς λόγος (proceeding word), i.e., the difference between the hidden stage of remaining of the divine Word inside the Father and the stage of His manifestation in the creation of the world. He supposes that the Word was eternally not only “in God” (ἐν τῷ θεῷ) but also “with God” (πρὸς τὸν θεόν), having “His own hypostasis, generated from the Father's essence” (ἰδίαν ὑπόστασιν ἐκ πατρικῆς οὐσίας ὑφειστώσαν)⁴⁷.

In exactly in the same way St. Gregory demonstrates that in the Godhead there should be a third hypostasis, namely the Holy Spirit⁴⁸. Indeed, as our word in the moment of pronouncing is accompanied by breathing, which becomes the voice (φωνή) and manifests in itself the whole power of the word, in a similar way in the Godhead there is the Spirit of God (τὸ πνεῦμα θεοῦ), Who accompanies the Word (τὸ συμπαραμαρτοῦν τῷ λόγῳ) and manifests His action (φανεροῦν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐνέργειαν)⁴⁹. Just like the Word of God (καθ' ὁμοιότητα τοῦ θεοῦ λόγου), the Holy Spirit also has His own hypostatic being: He is “a self-existing power, which is contemplated in its own hypostasis (ἐν ἰδιαζούσῃ ὑποστάσει), but cannot be separated from God in Whom He remains, or from the Word of God whom He accompanies. ... He exists hypostatically (καθ' ὑπόστασιν οὔσαν), endowed with free will, self-moving, efficient, always chooses only good, and for all intention has power corresponding to His will”⁵⁰.

A similar scheme can be found in works of many subsequent Byzantine theologians, in particular in St. Anastasius of Sinai, St. Maximus the Confessor⁵¹, and John of Damascus. The latter in his “Third Oration on behalf of the holy icons” points out:

The third kind of image [of God] (τρίτος τρόπος εἰκόνοϋ), is that by imitation (κατὰ μίμησιν) which God

⁴⁵ Or. Cat., 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Adv. Ar. et Sab. // GNO. III.1. P. 81.10-18.

⁴⁸ Or. Cat., 2.

⁴⁹ Or. Cat., 2.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ *Maxim. Confess. Quaest. et dub.* 105; *Ambigua ad Joannem*, 23 // PG. 91. Col. 1196A.

made, that is, man. For how can what is created be of the same nature as what is uncreated, except by imitation? As Mind (the Father), the Word (the Son) and the Holy Spirit are one God (νοῦς [ὁ πατήρ] καὶ λόγος [ὁ υἱὸς] καὶ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον εἰς θεός), so mind and word and spirit are one man (νοῦς καὶ λόγος καὶ πνεῦμα εἰς ἄνθρωπος), according to God's will and sovereign rule⁵².

St. Anastasius of Sinai slightly modifies this Trinitarian scheme, but its main sense remains unchanged. In his “First Sermon concerning the creation of man according to the image and similitude of God” he makes the following analogy between the structure of the inner man and the Holy Trinity: just as in the Holy Trinity there are unbegotten and causeless God the Father and the Word (λόγος) begotten from Him and the Spirit (πνεῦμα) proceeding from Him, so in us

there is our soul (ἡ ἡμετέρα ψυχή) and its intelligent word (ὁ νοερός λόγος) and its mind (ὁ νοῦς), which the apostle called ‘spirit’, when he ordered us to be holy in soul, body, and spirit (I Cor 7:34). For the soul is unbegotten and causeless according to the image of the causeless God the Father; and its intelligent word is not unbegotten but ineffably, invisibly, inexplicably and passionlessly begotten from it; and the mind is neither causeless, nor unbegotten, but proceeding, and everywhere penetrating, and all observing and invisibly touching according to the image and similitude of the most Holy and proceeding Spirit⁵³.

Thus the question of the human soul and its structure leads us to the next Trinitarian scheme.

5. *The Psychological scheme.* As we have seen in Marius Victorinus and Anastasius of Sinai, this scheme is a particular case of the anthropological scheme. Its origin is usually (and not without reason) associated with the Western theological tradition, more precisely with the Trinitarian doctrine of St. Augustine of Hippo. In fact, Augustine clearly states that in order to understand the mystery of the Holy Trinity we should turn to ourselves, to our “inner man (*homo*

⁵² *Joann. Damasc.* De imag. Or. 3. 20. 1–7; cp.: De fide orth. I 6–7.

⁵³ *Anastas. Sinaita.* Sermon in constit. hom. 1.3 // PG. 44. Col. 1333BC.

interior), in whom the Truth dwells”⁵⁴, i.e., to our soul, possessing in itself an image of God (*imago Dei*), “an image which, though it be not equal to God, or rather, though it is very far removed from Him (being neither co-eternal, nor, to say all in a word, consubstantial with Him), is yet nearer to Him in nature than any other of His works”⁵⁵. St. Augustine notes that our rational soul is a unity of three powers: of being (*esse*), of knowing (*nosse = intellegere*) and of will (*velle*) (quite similar to Marius Victorinus’ Trinitarian scheme, *being – life – intellect*):

I would like that men would consider these three, that are in themselves (*in seipsis*)... Now the three I am speaking of, are to be, to know, and to will (*esse, nosse, velle*). For I am, and I know, and I will: I am knowing and willing; and I know myself to be, and to will: and I will to be, and to know. In these three then, let him discern that can, how inseparable a life there is, indeed one life, one mind, and one essence (*inseparabilis vita, et una vita, et una mens, et una essentia*), and lastly how inseparable a distinction there is, and yet a distinction (*inseparabilis distinctio, et tamen distinctio*)⁵⁶.

Transferring this discourse to God as to the archetype of a human soul and making the necessary changes, Augustine asserts that God is the supreme Being, Intellect, and Will, which in Him are supreme, unchangeable, and co-eternal and are three Persons — the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit:

How You exist, only You know completely, Who exist unchangeably, and know unchangeably, and will unchangeably (*es incommutabiliter, et scis incommutabiliter, et vis incommutabiliter*). And Your essence knows and wills unchangeably; and Your knowledge exists and wills unchangeably; and Your will exists and knows unchangeably⁵⁷.

Besides the *Confessions* (where the psychological scheme first receives detailed explanation), in later theological treatises St. Augustine proposed some modified versions of his basic Trinitarian scheme. Thus,

⁵⁴ *August. De ver. rel.* 39. 72

⁵⁵ *August. De civ. Dei* XI.26; cf. *De Trinit.*, X.12.19. □

⁵⁶ *Confess.* XIII.11.12.

⁵⁷ *Confess.* XIII.16.19; cf. *Confess.* XIII.11.12.

assuming that the power of human will is fully expressed in love (*amor, caritas, dilectio*), he also points out such necessary powers of human soul, making man an image of God, as *being – thinking – love* and *eternity – truth – love*:

For we both exist (*sumus*), and know (*novimus*) that we exist, and love (*diligimus*) our existence and our knowledge of it ... We are men, created in the image of our Creator, Whose eternity is true, and Whose truth is eternal, Whose love is eternal and true, and Who Himself is the eternal, true, and adorable Trinity, without confusion, without separation⁵⁸.

Since as a personal being man is unchangeable mainly by virtue of his memory (*memoria*), which is capable of holding the past and thus ensures our self-identity, Augustine concludes that in God His eternal Being is the same thing as Memory (i.e., God the Father). In connection with this Augustine modifies his basic Trinitarian scheme as follows: *memory – knowing – will*:

The ineffable unity of the [Holy] Trinity should be distinguished in the same way as [the unity] of memory, knowing, and will are distinguished in our soul⁵⁹.

In this case, these three properties of God, as well as of man, belong to the same single substance (*una substantia*) and are closely connected to each other without confusion and division:

Since these three, memory, intellect and will (*memoria, intellegentia, voluntas*) are not three lives, but one life (*una vita*); nor three minds, but one mind (*una mens*), it follows certainly that neither are they three substances, but one substance (*una substantia*)⁶⁰.

Based on his identification of will with love (*voluntas = amor*), Augustine also asserts that the Trinity is a Triunity of divine *Memory*,

⁵⁸ De civ. Dei XI.26–28.

⁵⁹ sic discernere ineffabilem trinitatis unitatem, sicut discernitur in animo nostro memoria, intellectus, voluntas, Epist. 169. 2; cf. De Trinit. X.10.13; X.11.17–12.19.

⁶⁰ De Trinit. X.11.18.

*Intellect and Love, or Mind, Knowledge and Love*⁶¹. In addition, Augustine finds an image of the Holy Trinity not only in the inner faculties of the human soul, but in their external realization in the three following elements, *ability–knowledge–use* (*ingenium, doctrina, usus*)⁶², and in three well-known parts of philosophy (*scientia*), *logic, physics* and *ethics*⁶³. Augustine also finds an image of God (or more precisely, His “traces”, *vestigia Trinitatis*, because the “image of God”, *imago Dei*, is present only in the human soul) in “external man” (*in exteriore homine*), i.e., in the human body and its senses, and even in the external world. Thus, Augustine points out traces of the Trinity in the “external man” precisely in the very act of sense perception (*in his quae cernuntur extrinsecus*), in which he distinguishes three closely connected elements: “body perceived by vision” (*ex corpore quod videtur*), “form of body, which is imprinted in the faculty of vision” (*forma quae inde in acie cernentis imprimitur*), and “intention of will, connecting both” (*utrumque copulantis intentione voluntatis*)⁶⁴. And if we pay attention to the inner side of sense perception, these three elements will be imagination (*imaginatio*) of body in memory, informing (*informatio*) of the soul, when the eye of knowledge turns to the subject of imagination, and intention of will (*intentio voluntatis*), connecting both⁶⁵. Finally, even in the external world we can find “traces of the Trinity”: the *existence* of things points to the Father as the source of all being and the supreme being; the variety of *forms* and *sorts* of beings points to the Son as the source of all forms and supreme Wisdom, and the *order* of beings in relation to each other and their *consistency* with themselves points to the Holy Spirit as the source of all order and of love⁶⁶.

In general, according to common opinion, the Trinitarian doctrine of St. Augustine (as well as of Marius Victorinus), which places a strong emphasis on the unity of God’s substance, sharply differs from the Trinitarian doctrine of the Eastern Fathers of the Church, particularly the Cappadocian Fathers, who, emphasizing the trihypostatic mode of God’s existence, proposed a so-called “social model” of the Trinity⁶⁷, which we will examine in what follows.

⁶¹ De Trinit. IX.3; XIV.15.

⁶² De Trinit. X.11.17.

⁶³ De Trinit. X.17.

⁶⁴ De Trinit. XI.2-5.

⁶⁵ De Trinit. XI.4.

⁶⁶ De ordine 7; De Trinit. VI.12; De civ. Dei XI. 28; De divers. quaest. 83.

⁶⁷ According to this common opinion, in Western theology God is regarded as one both common and individual substance (or essence) which discloses itself in Three Persons. On the contrary, in Eastern theology God is

6. *The Social scheme.* Although this scheme is a kind of the “anthropological scheme”, since it draws an analogy between God and man, strictly speaking it should be regarded as one of the logical schemes. In fact, its origin is closely associated with the logical doctrine of general concepts (or universals) and their individualization in particular things. The first full explanation of the social scheme we find in St. Basil the Great and his brother, St. Gregory of Nyssa, more precisely in their doctrine of the difference between essence (οὐσία) and hypostasis (ὑπόστασις). According to the well-known definition of St. Basil, given in a letter to St. Amphilochius of Iconium:

The distinction between *essence* and *hypostasis* is the same as that between the general and the particular; as, for instance, between an animal and a particular man. Wherefore, in the case of the Godhead, we confess one essence, so as not to give a different definition of existence (τὸν τοῦ εἶναι λόγον), but we also confess a particular hypostasis (ὑπόστασιν ἰδιάζουσαν), in order

regarded as Three individual Hypostases who possess one common essence (or nature). In other words, Western theological tradition starts from the one substance (or essence) and then goes on to Three Hypostases, whereas Eastern theological tradition starts from Three Hypostases and then goes on to the one essence. It seems that for the first time this distinction between Western and Eastern Trinitarian approaches was shown by Théodore de Régnon in 1892 (see: *Théodore de Régnon. Études de théologie positive sur la Trinité.* Paris, 1892. Vol. 1. P. 433). This idea was picked up by the Russian theologian Fr. Sergei Bulgakov (see his *Comforter*, ch. 41) and further by the Greek theologian Metropolitan John Zizioulas. Today this opinion is widely criticized, particularly by Catholic scholars who would like to eliminate the distinction between these two Trinitarian approaches (see, for instance, *Hart D.B. The Mirror of the Infinite: Gregory of Nyssa on the Vestigia Trinitatis // Modern Theology* 18/4 (2002). P. 541–542; *Coakley S. Introduction: Disputed Questions in Patristic Trinitarianism // Harvard Theological Review* 100 (2007). P. 125–140; *Orthodox Readings of Augustine / Ed. by G.E. Demacopoulos and A. Papanikolaou.* N.Y., 2008, passim). Nevertheless I generally hold the opinion of de Régnon, but it is not my purpose here to argue in favour of it. See my arguments independent of de Régnon’ in my article: *Fokin A.R. St. Augustine’s Trinitarian doctrine in light of the Orthodox triadology of the Fourth cent. // The Trinity: East/West Dialogue*, ed. Melville Stewart (Boston, 2003).

that our conception of Father, Son and Holy Spirit may be without confusion and clear⁶⁸.

This doctrine of the difference between essence and hypostasis was developed in more detail by St. Gregory of Nyssa, who puts knowledge of the Holy Trinity in close connection with knowledge of human nature and of the mode of its existence. According to St. Gregory,

if you transfer to the divine dogmas (ἐπὶ τῶν θεῶν δογμάτων) the same definition (λόγον) of difference which you recognise in the case both of essence and hypostasis in human affairs, you will not go wrong⁶⁹.

He describes the difference between essence and hypostasis in human affairs as follows. There are two classes of names (τῶν ὀνομάτων), or concepts (λόγων): *general* concepts (τὰ κοινά), which are predicated of many and numerically different things and have more general significance (καθολικωτέραν τινὰ τὴν σημασίαν), and *particular* concepts (τὰ ἰδιάζοντα, τὰ ἴδια), which are predicated only of one single concrete thing and have more particular sense (ἰδικωτέραν τὴν ἔνδειξιν). The former concepts indicate the *common nature* (τὴν κοινὴν φύσιν) or *essence* (τὴν οὐσίαν) of many things that fall under one general class. The latter concepts indicate *a certain particular thing* (πράγμα τι), having its characteristic feature (τὸ ἰδιάζον), by virtue of which it differs from other things of the same class. An example of the first class of names is “a man in general” (καθόλου ἄνθρωπος), and of the second class “a particular human person” (ὁ τις ἄνθρωπος), for instance, Paul and Timothy⁷⁰. This kind of distinction between different classes of names goes back to Aristotelian logic⁷¹; but whereas Aristotle called the first class “second substances” (δεύτεραι οὐσίαι, i.e., genera and species, γένη καὶ εἶδη), and the second class “first substances” (αἱ πρῶτως οὐσίαι λεγόμεναι, i.e., individuals who are subjects [ὑποκείμενα] of genera and species), Gregory of Nyssa, following his brother, usually calls the first class *common essences* (κοινὰ οὐσία, or *common natures*, κοινὰ φύσεις), and the second class *hypostases*

⁶⁸ *Basil. Magn.* Epist. 236.6; cp.: C. Eun. 2.4. It is noteworthy that St. Augustine did not accept the difference between substance (or essence) as common and hypostasis as individual in God. See his *De Trinit.* VII. 7–9.

⁶⁹ *Greg. Nyss.* De dif. essen. et hyp., 3.30–33.

⁷⁰ *См.* De dif. essen. et hyp., 2.1–30; *Ad Graec.* // GNO. III.1. P. 30.20–32.5; *Ad Abl.* // GNO. III.1. P. 40.5–23; 54.1–4.

⁷¹ Cf. *Aristot.* *Categoriae*, 2 a 11–27.

(ὑποστάσεις, or *persons*, πρόσωπα), and very rarely *particular essences* (μερικαὶ οὐσίαι, ἰδικαὶ οὐσίαι)⁷²:

That which is spoken of in a special and peculiar manner (τὸ ἰδίως λεγόμενον) is indicated by the name of hypostasis (τῷ τῆς ὑποστάσεως ῥήματι) ... This then is the hypostasis: not the indefinite concept of the essence (ἡ ἀόριστος τῆς οὐσίας ἔννοια), which, because what is signified is general, finds no "standing", but the concept which by means of the expressed peculiarities gives standing and circumscription to the general and uncircumscribed (τὸ κοινόν τε καὶ ἀπερίγραπτον)⁶⁷.

Gregory also identifies essence with the concept of *species* (εἶδος) and hypostasis with the concept of *individual* (ἄτομον) and *particular person* (ἰδικὸν πρόσωπον)⁷³:

Species and individual (εἶδος καὶ ἄτομον), that is essence and hypostasis, are not the same thing. Since one who says "individual" (that is, hypostasis) immediately draws attention to investigation of [qualities] of the subject: curly-haired, blue-eyed, son, father and so on. But one who says "species" (that is, essence) draws attention to clarifying [what it is]: a rational and mortal animal, possessing intellect and knowledge, or an irrational and mortal animal, neighing and so on. So, if species and individual (i.e., hypostasis) are not identical, their own peculiar features which characterize them are also not identical. And if they are not identical, then we cannot use the same names in regard to them⁷⁴.

As has been shown above, this idea of logical distinction between essence and hypostasis in the created world was applied by Gregory to God as well, in Whom there is one common essence or nature (μία οὐσία, μία φύσις), in which participate (μετέχουσιν αὐτῆς) or to which belong (ἧς ἐστὶ) three peculiar divine hypostases or persons

⁷² Cf. Ad Graec. // GNO. III.1. P. 23.5-18.

⁷³ Cf. De dif. essen. et hyp., 3.1-12.

⁷⁴ Ad Graec. // GNO. III.1. P. 31.1-11.

(τρεις ὑποστάσεις, τρία πρόσωπα)⁷⁵. And each of the three divine hypostases is characterized by its *special properties* (τὰ ιδιώματα, τὰ ιδιάζοντα σημεῖα, τὰ χαρακτηρίζοντα, αἱ ιδιότητες, τὰ γνωρίσματα), which cannot be transmitted and are not common to other hypostases (ἀσύμβατα καὶ καὶ ἀκοινώνητα)⁷⁶. The content of the divine hypostatic properties were usually regarded by Greek Fathers under the categories of “cause and caused” (ὁ τοῦ αἰτίου λόγος, κατὰ τὸ αἴτιον καὶ αἰτιατὸν) and of mode of existence (ὁ τῆς ὑπάρξεως τρόπος), and rarely under the category of relation (ἢ πρὸς ἄλληλα σχέσις). According to St. John of Damascus,

We recognize one God, but only in the properties of Fatherhood, Sonship, and Procession (τῆς τε πατρότητος καὶ τῆς υἰότητος καὶ τῆς ἐκπορεύσεως) and in respect of cause and caused (κατὰ τὸ αἴτιον καὶ αἰτιατὸν), and of perfection of hypostasis, that is, mode of existence (καὶ τὸ τέλειον τῆς ὑποστάσεως ἦτοι τὸν τῆς ὑπάρξεως τρόπον), do we perceive difference⁷⁷.

The given notion of “mode of existence” means that *identity of the essence*, which is common to many hypostases of one and the same species, is compatible with different ways of their *coming into being*. For example, two men or two trees are identical in nature, but may have different origins, as in the case of Adam and Abel, or a tree planted by the gardener and a tree which grew up spontaneously⁷⁸. The Fathers apply the same notion to the trihypostatic mode of God's existence. Just as Adam was not begotten but created by God, Eve was created from Adam's rib, and Seth was begotten from them, so in the Godhead the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit differ by virtue of unbegottenness, being begotten, and procession. This means that the difference between

⁷⁵ Cf. Ad Abl. // GNO. III.1. P. 38.13-15; 40.24-41.7; 46.14-16; Ad Graec. // GNO. III.1. P. 19.15-16; 20.27-21.15; 22.13-24; 26.1-4; 29.9-11; 33.2-5; De dif. essen. et hyp., 4.2-21; 83-87; Ep. 5.9; см. также Cross. 2002. P. 280-281.

⁷⁶ Cf. C. Eun., I.1.277.8-278.2; De dif. essen. et hyp., 4.38-44; Ref. conf. Eun., 12.4-13.8; De or. Dom., III // Oehler. S. 262.19-28.

⁷⁷ Joann. Damasc. De fide oth. 8. 250-253; ср.: 8. 248-249; 10. 3-6; 49. 2-6; cf. De recta sent. I // PG. T. 94. Col. 1421A; Greg. Nyss. Ad Abl. // GNO. III.1. P. 55.24-56.20; 57.4-10; C. Eun., I.1.497.3-4; I.1.690.5-691.10; II.1.386.11-13; III.5.60.8-10 и др.

⁷⁸ Cf. Greg. Nyss. C. Eun., I.1.496.1-497.8; Ad. Simpl. // GNO. III.1. P. 65.12-24; Ad Abl. // GNO. III.1. P. 56.22-57.2.

Them consists not in essence or dignity, but in the manner of Their coming to being⁷⁹.

However, the “social model” of the Trinity, proposed by the Cappadocian Fathers and later common among orthodox theologians, is not limited to this logical aspect. To it the Cappadocians and other Greek Fathers added the doctrine of the “perichoresis” of the divine hypostases, according to which God is one single and indivisible life (ζωή), eternal communion (κοινωνία), connection (συνάφεια), and indivisible co-indwelling (ἀχώριστον συνουσία) of three divine Hypostases, Who possess not only a common nature, but also one and the same will, power, energy, and glory⁸⁰. In order to explain this concept of mutual compenetration (περιχώρησις) of Persons of the Holy Trinity, St. John of Damascus, following St. Gregory the Theologian, makes a distinction between knowledge of something in reality (πράγματι) and knowledge of something in mind and by thought (λόγω καὶ ἐπινοία). In the way in which these concepts are applied to God and to creatures, we see a fundamental distinction between the uncreated Godhead and created beings, and between Aristotelian formal logic and the “dialectic antinomy” proper to the Divine Being. Indeed, in the created world every particular hypostasis is an individual unit separated from others in reality. Any unity and community of one human person with others appears only in the mind, while particular human persons are in reality separated from one another, and what they have in common – i.e., human nature – is a mere concept, abstracted from real human beings who differ from each other by virtue of place, time, desire, strength, appearance, condition, habits, etc. That is why they are called two, three or many people⁸¹. Quite the opposite relationship between unity and plurality holds in the Holy Trinity:

For there the community and unity are observed in reality, through the coeternity of the Hypostases, and through their having the same essence and energy and will and concord of mind, and then being identical in authority and power and goodness — I do not say similar but identical (ταυτότητα) — and then movement by one impulse. For there is one essence, one goodness, one power, one will, one energy, one authority, one and the same, I repeat, not three resembling each other. But

⁷⁹ Cf. *Greg. Naz. Or.* 31.11; 39.12; *Joann. Damasc. De fide orth.* 8. 114–122; *Greg. Nyss. Ad Abl.* // GNO. III.1. P. 55.24–56.19.

⁸⁰ Cf. *Basil. Magn. De Sp.S.* 16.38.1–2; 16.40.44; 18.45.23; *Hom.* 24 // PG. 31. Col. 609; *Greg. Nyss. De inst. chr.* // GNO. VIII.1. P. 42.6–10.

⁸¹ *Joann. Damasc. De fide orth.* 8. 223–237.

the three Hypostases have one and the same movement. For each one of them is related as closely to the other as to Himself: that is to say that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one in all respects (κατὰ πάντα ἓν), except those of not being begotten, of birth and of procession. But it is by thought that the difference is perceived (ἐπινοία τὸ διηρημένον)⁸².

And since in respect to the infinite Godhead we cannot speak of any spatial dimension or borders, “hypostases remain inside each other (ἐν ἀλλήλαις εἰσίν), not in such way that They are commingled, but closely connected to each other, according to the word of the Lord, saying: *I am in the Father and the Father is in me*” (Jn 14. 10)⁸³. They are “closely adjacent to one another (ἔχουσι ἀλλήλων) and have a mutual compenetration without confusion and commingling” (τὴν ἐν ἀλλήλαις περιχώρησιν ἔχουσι δίχα πάσης συναλοιφῆς καὶ συμφύσεως)⁸⁴. That is why St. John of Damascus, following the terminology of the *Corpus Areopagiticum*⁸⁵, could say:

The hypostases dwell and are established firmly in one another (ἢ ἐν ἀλλήλαις τῶν ὑποστάσεων μονή τε καὶ ἴδρυσις). For They are inseparable and cannot depart from one another (ἀδιάστατοι καὶ ἀνεκφοίτητοι ἀλλήλων), having unconfused mutual circumincession into one another (ἀσύγχυτον τὴν ἐν ἀλλήλαις περιχώρησιν) without any coalescing or mingling, but cleaving to each other. For the Son is in the Father and in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in the Father and in the Son: and the Father is in the Son and in the Spirit, but there is no coalescence or commingling or confusion. And there is one and the same motion, for there is one impulse and one motion of the three hypostases, which is not to be observed in any created nature⁸⁶.

Thus, the social Trinitarian scheme, which became common to all Eastern Fathers of the Church, not only lays down the logical

⁸² De fide orth. 8. 240–250.

⁸³ De fide orth. 8. 253–256.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 263–264. Cp.: *Greg. Nyss. Adv. Ar. et Sab.* // GNO. III.1. P. 83.20–84.3; cp. *De dif. essen. et hyp.*, 8.24–26.

⁸⁵ Cf. *Corpus Areopagiticum. De div. nom.* II 4.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 14. 11–18; cp.: Ibid. 49. 2–9; *De recta sent.* 1 // PG. T. 94. Col. 1421AB.

foundation for the doctrine of distinction in the Godhead between one common essence and three particular Hypostases, which is illustrated by the “social anthropological analogy”, but also demonstrates that the inner life of the Godhead is a unity of knowledge, love, and communion between the three unique and perfect divine Persons, who are not reducible either to one another or to the divine nature. But we cannot say the same about the logical Trinitarian scheme, which was widespread through the Christian West since the days of St. Augustine and Boethius and in which the three Persons of the Trinity are not regarded as perfect and real Persons, but are reduced to essential functions or logical relations within one and the same Godhead.

7. *The Logical scheme.* This scheme was first briefly sketched by St. Augustine⁸⁷, but it was Boethius who gave it its full rational form. Although the method used by Boethius, like that of the Cappadocian Fathers, was based on Aristotelian logic, Boethius did not go beyond this logic. In fact, Boethius distinguishes between two classes of the ten Aristotelian categories:

The first class denotes the reality of a thing (*rem monstrant*) and declares that a thing is something (*esse aliquid*); these are such categories, as substance, quality, and quantity. The second class denotes the accidental circumstances of a thing (*circumstantias rei*) and says nothing about its being anything, but simply attaches to it, so to speak, something external (*extrinsecus*). These are the seven other categories⁸⁸.

The first class of categories Boethius calls “categories according to thing” (*praedicationes secundum rem; secundum se*) or substantial categories, and in respect to God “categories according to substance of thing” (*secundum substantiam rei praedicatio*). The second class he simply calls accidents or accidental categories⁸⁹. Given this classification, the Persons of the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, cannot be predicated to God as categories of the first class, i.e., *according to substance (substantialiter)*, since to do so would bring difference into the divine substance, which should be indifferently predicated of all three Persons at once⁹⁰. Instead the three Persons should

⁸⁷ Cf. *August. De Trinit.* V.6 ff.

⁸⁸ *Boethius. De Trinit.* 4.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5; *Utrum Pater* // PL. T. 64, col. 1301B-1302B.

be predicated to God as categories of the second class, or, more precisely, as one of them – a *category of relation (relatio, ad aliquid)*⁹¹. For of course the Father is the Father of someone, i.e., of the Son; and the Son is the Son of someone, i.e., of the Father; and the Spirit is the Spirit of someone, i.e., the Spirit of the Father and of the Son⁹². A predication in the category of relations cannot add anything to a thing itself (*secundum se*), or deprive it of something, or change something in it. This category denotes not what a thing is in its essence (*in eo quod est esse*), but how a thing stands in comparison to the other (*in eo quod est in comparatione aliquo modo se habere*), and this is not always in comparison with something else (*ad aliud*), but sometimes with one and the same thing (*ad idem*). Thus relation makes in God a distinction not of the substance, but of the Persons (*interpretatum est personarum*)⁹³. So, according to Boethius, the plurality of the Holy Trinity (*trinitatis numerositas*) consists of the category of relation, while at the same time the unity of God (*unitas*) is maintained through the fact that there is no difference of substance, or operation, or generally of any substantial predicate⁹⁴. In other words, substance preserves the unity of God, and relation multiplies Him into the Trinity⁹⁵. Finally, Boethius explains that the relation of three divine Persons to one another is not a relation between different things, like a relation between master and slave. It is like a relation of one thing to the same thing (*ejus quod est idem, ad id quod est idem*), for one and the same thing is identical to the same thing (*idem ei quod est idem idem est*) and “equals are equal, likes are like, identicals are identical, each with other, and the relation of Father to Son, and of both to Holy Spirit is a relation of identicals”⁹⁶. According to Boethius, a relation of this kind cannot be found in created things, because of the difference (*alteritas*) which is common to all created things⁹⁷.

I believe that the idea of Boethius can be explained by the following formula:

$$A' = A''$$

where A' is the Father, A'' is the Son, and “=” is the Holy Spirit. That is,

⁹¹ De Trinit. 5; Utrum Pater // PL. T. 64, col. 1302B.

⁹² Utrum Pater // PL. T. 64, col. 1302A.

⁹³ De Trinit. 5.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁹⁵ Ita igitur substantia continet unitatem, relatio multiplicat trinitatem, ibid., 6.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 6.

according to Boethius, the Holy Trinity is the eternal and immutable relation of God *to Himself*: One Who is identical is God the Father, One to whom He is identical is He Himself, but as the Son, and finally the very Identity through which God is identical with Himself is One and the same God, but as the Holy Spirit. It is worth noting that a similar understanding of the Holy Trinity can be found much later in the writings of Nicholas of Cusa (fifteenth century), who proposed the following logical Trinitarian schemes:

*this – it – the same; unity – thatness – identity; unity – equality – connection*⁹⁸.

The common source for Boethius and Nicholas of Cusa was probably St. Augustine, who once proposed the following scheme:

unity – equality – concordance
(*unitas – aequalitas – concordia*)⁹⁹.

8. *Conclusion.* In our brief examination of the different rational methods of approaching the mystery of God's Triunity in patristic thought we have shown that there were at least six basic Trinitarian models: arithmetical (Gregory the Theologian, Job the Monk, Maximus the Confessor), metaphysical (Origen, Eusebius, Synesius of Cyrene, Theodoret, Marius Victorinus), anthropological (the Greek Apologists, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, Anastasius of Sinai, John of Damascus), psychological (Augustine), social (Cappadocian Fathers, Corpus Areopagiticum, John of Damascus) and logical (Boethius). As we have seen, many Fathers of the Church to some extent based their doctrines on the Greek philosophical tradition, represented by the logic and ontology of Aristotle, the Pythagoreans, Platonists, and Stoics. At the same time they transformed these philosophical concepts according to their own purposes, adapting them to Church doctrine based on the biblical Revelation of the Triune God. It seems to me that although every Trinitarian scheme has its advantages and disadvantages and none of them, taken separately, can claim to be the only right and correct interpretation of the Trinitarian dogma, all together they may serve as an excellent example of Christian philosophizing about the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

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⁹⁸ *Nicolaus Cusanus*. De docta ignorantia, I.9.

⁹⁹ *August.* De doctrina christiana, I.5; cf. *Cassiodorus*. De anima 12 (16): parilitas – aequalitas – unitas.

CHAPTER IV

**DIVINE SIMPLICITY AND THE DOCTRINE OF
THE TRINITY:
GREGORY OF NYSSA AND AUGUSTINE**

RICHARD CROSS

Until twenty or so years ago it was fashionable in the West to draw a strong contrast between the Trinitarian thought of Latin Patristic writers and the Trinitarian thought of the Greek Patristic writers. The contrast was something like this: that the Latin writers tended to ‘start from’, or ‘emphasize’, the unity of the divine substance, while the Greek writers tended to ‘start from’, or ‘emphasize’, the plurality of persons. Consequently, so the story went, the problematics confronted by the two respective groups were rather different: for the Latin writers, it was to give an account of a genuine plurality of persons (i.e. the avoidance of Modalism); for the Greek writers, contrariwise, it was to give a sufficiently robust account of divine unity (i.e. the avoidance of Tritheism). The story is well-known, and can, very roughly, be traced historically to Théodore de Régnon, *Etudes de théologie positive sur la sainte Trinité*.¹ I do not want to rehash this story now, not least because recent work on the Cappadocians has largely tended to discredit this analysis. But it is nevertheless possible that there are more subtle ways in which the two traditions differ, and I would like to consider some of these here. One thing I will not be concerned with in any great deal is the vexed question of the *filioque*. This issue is logically independent of any of the topics I deal with here, and I will briefly suggest at the end of my paper why this is so. Rather, I shall focus on the question of divine simplicity, and my protagonists will be simply Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine, as two significant representatives of Greek and Latin Patristic writing, respectively.

Two recent accounts suggest that there may be a strong difference between Gregory and his Western counterparts on the question of divine simplicity, and it is at least arguable that, if this difference can be substantiated, it has an effect on Trinitarian theology significant enough to warrant our thinking of two distinct traditions of Trinitarian speculation, one associated with the East, and the other with the West. And what is more, these accounts suggest that the old de Régnon paradigm may not be so far off the mark after all. One of the accounts is more systematic, and the other historical; the systematic one tends to focus on the Western theologians,

¹ Vol. I (Paris: Victor Retaux et fils, 1892).

while the historical one focuses on the Eastern ones. Since the two accounts independently tend to the same conclusions, I will first present the two accounts, and then comment on their cogency. First, then, the systematic one; thus Brian Leftow:

Some explanations begin from the oneness of God, and try to explain just how one God can be three divine Persons. As Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas pursued this project, let us call it Latin Trinitarianism (LT).²

This is not just a re-statement of the old de Régnon paradigm, because Leftow turns out to have a very specific account of what it is to ‘begin from the oneness of God’:

The Latinists ... held to a strong doctrine of divine simplicity ... taking God to be identical with his essence.³

Underlying this account of divine simplicity is a view that there are no real distinctions between any of God’s attributes, or, indeed, between God and any of his attributes. Augustine, for example, maintains that

God is said, in many ways, to be great, good, wise, blessed, true, and whatever else does not seem unworthily said; but his greatness is the same thing as his wisdom (for he is not great in mass but in power), and his goodness the same thing as his wisdom and greatness, and his truth the same as thing as all these; and being blessed is not different from his being great or wise or true or good, or different at all from his being.⁴

And he makes the point explicitly about God’s identity with his essence: ‘God is called simple because he is whatever he has’;⁵ ‘it is the same thing for him to be as to be God’.⁶ What this amounts to is that there is a set of true predications *in divinis*, but that what grounds these predications – what explains their truth – is just the simple divine essence itself: the attributes signified by the relevant predicates are identical with the divine essence

² Brian Leftow, ‘Modes without Modalism’, in Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (eds.), *Persons: Divine and Human* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 357-75 (p. 357).

³ Leftow, ‘Modes without Modalism’, 359.

⁴ Augustine, *De trinitate* [= *De trin.*] 6.7.8, ll. 1-7 (ed. W. J. Mountain, 2 vols, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina [= CCSL], L (Turnhout: Brepols, 1968), 237).

⁵ Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 11.10 (ed. A. Kalb, CCSL, XLVIII, 330).

⁶ Augustine, *De trin.* 7.6.11, l. 25 (CCSL, L, 262).

itself. Augustine does not explicitly claim that the predicates are non-synonymous, but this seems to be a presupposition of his account.⁷ We might label this a ‘nominalist’ or (perhaps) ‘conceptualist’ account of the divine attributes: not that the predications are not true, but that what grounds them is not some set of items in any way distinct from the divine essence.

Leftow goes on to make the point that the Latin view involves accepting that the only real constituent of a divine person is the divine essence, though he does so in a way that does not bring out the distinctive claim, made by the Western theologians, that what underlies this is the fact that relations, which somehow explain the distinctions between the persons, are not themselves things with some kind of extramental existence. The point is made explicitly, later, by Aquinas,⁸ but something like it can be found in Augustine too – if not so clearly – if we link together various relevant texts. First, Augustine’s reason for thinking that God is more properly labelled an essence rather than a substance is that God does not ‘stand under’ his attributes, but is identical with them.⁹ In line with this, Augustine denies that God ‘stands under’ the relations that distinguish the divine persons:

In God, nothing is said accidentally, because in him there is nothing changeable; but nevertheless is it not the case that that everything is said substantially. For relation – as the Father to the Son – is said, which is not an accident, because the one is always Father and the other always Son.¹⁰

And it turns out that these relations are merely ways in which we can talk about the three persons – and not, I take it, items somehow distinct from the divine essence:

Let us hold this above all, that whatever is said of that most eminent and divine greatness is said substantially. But whatever [is said] ‘to another’ (*ad aliquid*) is said not substantially but relationally. ‘Of the same substance’ is of such force in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that whatever in the highest nature is said of each with respect to themselves is said not plurally but singly. For just as the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God,

⁷ Aquinas makes the point explicitly: see *Summa theologiae* [= *ST*] 1.13.4 c.

⁸ ‘In God, the essence is not really distinct from the persons (*non sit aliud essentia quam persona secundum rem*). ... When the relation is compared to the essence, it differs not really but merely rationally’: Aquinas, *ST* 1.39.1 c.

⁹ See Augustine, *De Trin.* 7.5.10, ll. 1-26 (L, 260-1).

¹⁰ Augustine, *De trin.* 5.5.6, ll. 1-5 (CCSL, L, 210).

which no one doubts is said according to substance, nevertheless we do not say that the most excellent Trinity is three gods but one God.¹¹

On the face of it, then, the thing or item that licenses all of the predictions *in divinis*, whether they be predicates signifying the essential attributes, the persons, or the personal properties, is simply the divine essence itself. This evidence is decisive in the case of the so-called essential attributes, but admittedly perhaps not so in the case of the so-called personal properties; curiously enough, however, as I will show in a moment, the point is made explicitly by Gregory, thus aligning Gregory more closely with (say) Aquinas even than Augustine is.

I take it that all of this provides us with a strong account of divine simplicity in the context of the Trinity. I shall argue that Gregory explicitly takes exactly this line, at least in *Contra Eunomium* 2, which I take to be a clear exposition of Trinitarian doctrine espoused by Gregory at least in his most refined anti-Eunomian argument (whatever he may be committed to elsewhere). But I begin with my second opponent, one who claims that even in his anti-Eunomian argument Gregory is not committed to such a strong doctrine of divine simplicity. I use my discussion of this view to bring out my own preferred account of Gregory on the Trinity and divine simplicity.

Andrew Radde-Gallwitz argues that Gregory's distinction between the different *epinoiai* or conceptualizations that we can use when talking about God attempts to mediate between two different positions, one that Radde-Gallwitz labels 'hyper-realism', and one that he labels 'nominalism'. On the first, 'concepts discovered by means of *epinoiai* have external "referents"', such that the *epinoiai* are 'constituent, inherent aspects of objects'¹² – in this case, of God. On the second, 'all theological claims are only conceptualizations'.¹³ Radde-Gallwitz maintains that the hyper-realist view entails composition in the divine essence, and that the nominalist view entails that the divine attributes are merely mind-dependent, and thus not really attributes of God at all. Radde-Gallwitz prefers a kind of *via media*: the attributes known by means of *epinoiai* *inhere* in the divine essence, but are not identical with the divine essence.¹⁴ This allows us to make true claims about God that nevertheless do not compromise the unknowable character of the divine essence itself.

On this view, Gregory rejects the strong account of divine simplicity that we find in the Western theologians, replacing instead with a

¹¹ Augustine, *De trin.* 7.8.9, ll. 1-6 (CCSL, L, 215).

¹² Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 177.

¹³ Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, 177.

¹⁴ Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, 202.

view according to which the divine attributes are attributes that inhere in the unknown divine essence in the way that *propria* might be held to inhere in a substance that includes other necessary properties – properties constituting the *essence* of the substance – the identity of which properties remains unknown to us. Thus, Gregory uses the words ‘*idion*’, ‘*idioma*’, and ‘*idiotēs*’, to talk about necessary but non-essential attributes: all of which are technical terms in the philosophical tradition signifying necessary but non-essential properties: *propria* in Latin. But is the view that Radde-Gallwitz ascribes to Gregory actually Gregory’s view? I doubt this, and to show so I will first of all present what I take to be Gregory’s view, and next discuss the evidence that Radde-Gallwitz presents in favour of his interpretation. I will then show how the reading I defend ties in to Gregory’s account of the properties that distinguish the persons from each other. Basically, it seems to me that Gregory explicitly defends what Radde-Gallwitz labels the nominalist account of the *epinoiai*, and hence of divine *propria*. And it should be clear enough from what I have already said that this nominalist account would be a close cousin – perhaps even a sibling or twin – of Augustine’s account of the divine attributes. In fact, Gregory’s account is clearer than Augustine’s own account, because he makes it clear – in a manner later made clear by Thomas Aquinas – that the various *epinoiai* are not synonymous, as we shall see.

Gregory takes it as a general truth that, where ‘ ϕ ’ expresses a *proprium*, what makes locutions of the form “ x is ϕ ” true is just x ’s having the essence it does:

What he [Basil of Caesarea] said was that corn by itself appears to be essentially a single reality, but it changes its designations according to the various *propria* (*idiotētas*) envisaged in it: as it becomes seed, fruit, food, and whatever else it becomes, so many are its names. ... Corn, though a single thing, enjoys various appellations derived from various ideas about it.¹⁵

¹⁵ Gregory, *Contra Eunomium* [= *C. Eun.*] 2.353 (Gregorii Nysseni opera [= GNO], ed. W. Jaeger and others (Leiden: Brill, 1960-), I, 329, ll. 3-7, 16-17; ET by Stuart George Hall, in *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II. An English Version with Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the 10th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Olomouc, September 15-18, 2004)*, ed. Lenka Karfiková, Scot Douglass and Johannes Zachhuber, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*, 82 (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2007) [= Hall II], 138, slightly adapted). Gregory refers to Basil of Caesarea, *Adversus Eunomium* 1.6 (PG 29:524BC).

The claim that corn is one thing is to be contrasted with the claim that it is in any sense *composite*.¹⁶ The idea is that corn is a simple substance that can be described in different ways as it comes to exist in different states: it falls under the extension of different concepts without this implying that it is in any way, at any given time, composite, or that there are any sorts of extramental distinctions between its various properties, corresponding to the linguistic distinction of predicates, or mental distinction of concepts. As the last sentence makes clear, Gregory believes that, corresponding to the nominal distinction between predicates there are relevant conceptual distinctions too. For names signify concepts:

Every word, or every word properly so called, is a sound which denotes some movement of thought; and every activity and motion of the healthy mind aims, so far as it is able, at the knowledge and consideration of existent things.¹⁷

Properly functioning cognitive mechanisms give genuine knowledge and information about real things in the world: these things fall under the extensions of the concepts entertained by means of such mechanisms. The important point, however, is that the *propria* of (e.g.) corn are not entities over and above (the essence of) corn, and what makes the various predications of corn true is simply the corn's having the (non-composite) essence that it does. I return to these points later, because Gregory makes his claim about merely conceptual distinctions between attributes most clearly in the Trinitarian context, which I discuss below.

Gregory's theological opponent, Eunomius, found this claim counterintuitive. If, in the predication ' x is ϕ ', we 'apply ... [ϕ] merely] conceptually', then it cannot be the case that the predication is true, 'For what is so spoken ... is as fleeting as the words themselves.'¹⁸ The idea is that, if our terms signify mere conceptions, then they do not signify real properties of things, and if there is no real or extramental property ϕ -ness, over and above the thing, x , of which it is a property, that it cannot be true that x is ϕ . But Gregory certainly has the tools to respond to this. Truth requires that thoughts, and the locutions expressing them, accurately correspond to reality.¹⁹ But this correspondence, contrary to Eunomius's metaphysical claims, does not require any elaborate ontological apparatus to

¹⁶ For the contrariety between one (*mia*) and composite (*sunthetos*), see Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eun.* 2.501 (GNO, I, 372, ll. 25-26; Hall II, 172).

¹⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eun.* 2.572 (GNO, I, 393, ll. 14-17; Hall II, 188).

¹⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eun.* 2.44 (GNO, I, 238, ll. 26-27; Hall II, 69), summarizing Eunomius's views.

¹⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eun.* 2.576 (GNO, I, 394, ll. 12-17; Hall II, 189).

secure it, since meanings are not dependent on such metaphysical machinery. The semantics, Gregory claims, is simply independent of the metaphysics, and Eunomius is confusing two distinct questions in attempting to tie the two together. In consequence, Gregory is able to posit a much more metaphysically parsimonious world than Eunomius.

Now, all of this applies straightforwardly in the case of God. Gregory holds God to be simple, and this entails, according to Gregory, that God is really the same as each divine property:

Nothing about him therefore is either previous or recent, otherwise he would have to be older or younger than himself. If God is not everlastingly all things, but in some order and sequence he is one thing and becomes another, and there is no compounding where he is concerned, but whatever he is, he is entirely; and if, as the [Eunomian] heresy teaches he is first Unbegotten and then becomes Father; since the amassing of qualities is not conceivable in his case, he can only become in his entirety both senior and junior to his entire self, as Unbegotten being prior to himself, and in terms of the concept of Father becoming subsequent to himself.²⁰

Radde-Gallwitz highlights a useful passage in this context, from the treatise *On the Holy Spirit against the Macedonians*:

So, if the formula of his nature is simple, then he does not have goodness as something acquired, but, whatever he himself is, he is goodness, wisdom, power, sanctification, justice, eternity, incorruptibility, and all lofty and transcendent names.²¹

This entails further that each divine property is really the same as each other divine property:

In a case [such as the Trinity] ... it is not possible to conceive any mixture and combination of qualities, but the mind apprehends a power without parts and composition. ... One who observes that such comparisons [viz. of greater

²⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eun.* 1.597 (GNO, I, 198, ll. 7-14; ET by Stuart George Hall, in *El "Contra Eunomium I en la Produccion Literaria de Gregorio de Nisa: VI Coloquio Internacional sobre Gregorio de Nisa*, ed. Lucas F. Mateo-Seco and Juan L. Bastero (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1988) [= Hall I], 121, punctuation altered).

²¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *De Spiritu sancto contra Macedianos* (GNO, III.1, 92, ll. 21-5).

or lesser] be made must inevitably envisage the incidence of some qualities in the subject.²²

But Gregory insists nevertheless that the various concepts – the meanings of the various words we use of God – are different from each other. He makes the point by means of his main anti-Eunomian argument that if we believe unbegottenness to be the same concept as other concepts indicating the divine essence, then the only true claim to be made of God is that he is unbegotten. Equivalently, as Gregory puts it, if unbegottenness is something extramental, then so too must other divine attributes be: and this compromises divine simplicity:

They [i.e. Gregory's Eunomian opponents] insist that, because the Father's essence is simple, it must be reckoned nothing else but unbegottenness, since it is also said to be unbegotten. To them we may also reply that, because the Father is also called Creator and Producer, and the one so called is also simple in essence, it is time these clever people announced that the essence of the Father is creation and producing, since no doubt the argument from simplicity attaches to his essence the meaning of every word which applies to him.²³

So our different words have different meanings – they express different concepts. But do these different meanings correspond to distinct extramental *propria*, as in Radde-Gallwitz's account? I doubt it, for reasons made clear in passages of which Radde-Gallwitz takes pains to provide careful translations. Consider the passage from treatise *On the Holy Spirit against the Macedonians* quoted above. In this text, Gregory makes it clear that he understands *propria* simply to be names ('all lofty and transcendent names'). What Gregory thinks is that the unknown divine essence ('whatever he himself is') is itself sufficient grounds for all other true predications *in divinis*. Radde-Gallwitz unwittingly cites three passages that make this unequivocally clear (I quote in Radde-Gallwitz's versions):

Nothing is deficient in wisdom, power, or any other good which has goodness, not as something acquired, but which *is itself naturally such in virtue of what it is*.²⁴

²² Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eun.* 1.232-233 (GNO, I, 95, ll. 1-3. 5-6; Hall I, 69, slightly adapted).

²³ Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eun.* 2.31 (GNO, I, 235, 18-26; Hall II, 66, adapted).

²⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eun.* 1.234 (GNO, I, 95, ll. 12-15), translated in Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, 204.

If he [i.e. Eunomius] truly conceived of the essence as 'simple and altogether one', *being good in virtue of what it is* and not coming to be so by acquisition, he would not have considered greater and lesser in connection with it.²⁵

The uncreated nature is far removed from this kind of difference [i.e. difference of more and less], inasmuch as it does not have goodness as something acquired and does not admit goodness into itself by participating in a transcendent good. Rather, *in virtue of what it is by nature, it is good* and is considered to be good and is testified to be a simple, uniform, and incomposite source of good even by our opponents.²⁶

The crucial claims are the italicized ones: it is in virtue of the divine essence or nature that our predications *in divinis* are true, or that God can be conceptualized in such-and-such a way: even though these predications signify not the divine essence itself but divine *propria*.

What about the question of the divine personal properties? As we saw above, Augustine seems to deny that these are any kind of reality over and above the divine essence. Gregory agrees, and makes the point much more clearly than Augustine. According to Gregory, 'unbegotten' does not signify the divine essence – it cannot, because the Son has the divine essence and yet is begotten. Unbegottenness is a property of the Father's. But like other terms employed to talk about God, it 'is applied to God only conceptually'.²⁷ Gregory goes on to explain that unbegottenness is a conception that is *not* included in the conceptions of the shared *propria*.²⁸ Presumably, then, we can partition conceptions of God into (at least) two groups: those that are somehow included in, or immediately entailed by, the conception of the shared *propria*, and those that are not so included: those that, to speak very loosely, are *propria* simply of one person, as it were. *Unbegottenness* falls into this second group. Gregory is explicit that what makes it true that the Father is unbegotten is simply the Father himself: '[The Father's] unbegotten existence does not derive from his being called "unbegotten", but because he is such, he has the word attached to him.'²⁹

²⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eun.* 1.235 (GNO, I, 95, ll. 20-3), translated in Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, 205.

²⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eun.* 1.276 (GNO, I, 107, ll. 4-10), translated in Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, 205.

²⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eun.* 2.11 (GNO, I, 229, l. 30-p. 230, l. 2; Hall II, 61-62).

²⁸ This is, I take it, the burden of the whole discussion in Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eun.* 2.31-43 (GNO, I, 235, l. 18-p. 238, l. 26; Hall II, 66-69).

²⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eun.* 2.162 (GNO, I, 272, ll. 8-10; Hall II, 94).

But the relation is not some real constituent of the Father distinct from the divine essence: there is no difference in terms of simplicity, and our utterances about God do not require any real distinction between divine properties, be they shared by the persons or proper to just one person. So it will turn out that what makes it true that the Father is unbegotten is simply the divine essence: there is, we might say, no entity other than the divine essence to do the relevant explanatory semantic work.

All of this holds for the Son's property of being the only-begotten: 'terms [such as "unbegotten", "only-begotten"] ... [are] not derived from the natures, but applied conceptually to their subjects.'³⁰ This entails that each of the Father and the Son is no more complex than the divine essence. And Gregory insists, unsurprisingly, that the Son is no more complex than the Father:

What we assert is this: each of the words has its own connotation, and 'indivisible' is not implied by 'unbegotten,' nor 'unbegotten' by 'simple.' Rather, by 'simple' we understand 'uncompounded,' and by 'unbegotten' we learn that something has no originating cause. We think that we should believe that the Son, being God from God, is himself also simple, because the divine is free from any composition; and similarly in his case, too, that we neither signify simplicity of essence by the title 'Son,' nor conversely do we express the meaning of 'Son' by 'simplicity'; but that by the one word his existence deriving from the Father is expressed, and by 'simplicity' just what that word connotes. Since then the phrase 'simplicity of essence' is exactly the same whether it is applied to Father or Son, differing neither by subtraction nor by addition, while 'begotten' is very different from 'unbegotten,' because in each word there is a meaning which is absent in the other, we therefore claim that there is no necessity, the Father being unbegotten, just because his essence is simple, for his essence to be called unbegottenness.³¹

Given all this, it is necessary to consider the evidence that Radde-Gallwitz proposes in favour of his anti-nominalist reading of *epinoiai* in Gregory. As far as I can see, it is based on an interpretation of a highly sketchy definition of *epinoia* offered by Gregory as a summary of Basil's

³⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eun.* 2.125 (GNO, I, 262, ll. 23-24; Hall II, 87).

³¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eun.* 2.29 (GNO, I, 234, l. 23-p. 235, l. 8; Hall II, 65-66).

understanding of the term (an understanding with which Gregory, of course, agrees):

‘Having formed an idea about a matter in hand, we attach the next thing to our initial apprehension by adding new ideas, until we bring our research into the subject to its proposed conclusion.’³²

Radde-Gallwitz comments:

One must begin with an apprehension *before* one can engage in conceptualization. If [this] is the method for making additional discoveries based on an initial concept, then one of two claims must be true. Either every initial concept is the product of conceptualization, in which case there would never be an original concept to start the process of discovery, or some concepts are not devised through conceptualization.³³

The latter disjunct, of course, is the one Radde-Gallwitz defends. Now, the quoted passage is part of a description that Gregory offers of Basil’s approach not to a theory of properties but to an understanding of how one might go about the investigation of an academic or scientific discipline. It is not supposed to be part of the theory of *propria* that Gregory develops, but merely a description of a scientific methodology *illustrative* of the notion of an *epinoia*. We start from one idea – whatever the source of that idea – and then continue the investigation. But we cannot investigate without an initial idea. I do not see what bearing this has on the rejection of a nominalist theory of *propria*. After all, one might think that all *propria* are *epinoiai* (at least in the divine case), and Gregory himself is explicit that there is nothing else that we can know about God (e.g. his essence) – so there in divine science there can hardly be a starting point that is somehow simply *apprehended*. It is the utterly mysterious and unknown divine essence that warrants our predicating the divine *propria* of God, and its doing this does not require that the predicates somehow name properties that have some distinction in God more than a merely mental one.

Gregory’s account of divine simplicity is, then, more assured than Augustine’s, but Augustine – and for that matter much of the Western tradition after him – is recognizably in the tradition of Gregory, both on the question of the simplicity of the divine essence and on the question of the

³² Gregory of Nyssa, *C. Eun.* 2.182 (GNO, I, 277, ll. 20-3; Hall II, 97), as quoted in Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, 177 (slightly adapting Hall’s translation).

³³ Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, 177-8.

simplicity of each divine person. This is all directly relevant to the old de Régnon paradigm. If each person is as simple as the divine essence, then clearly Modalist problems seem to arise; if, contrariwise, each person includes something real not included by the divine essence, then it will be hard to resist the view that the persons are distinct from each other in the way that created substances are distinct from the essence that they instantiate, and (by analogy) problems about Tritheism need to be confronted. Of course, underlying an account such as de Régnon's are worries about analogies such as those chosen by Gregory, and explicitly rejected by Augustine, according to which the Trinity of persons is comparable to the relation between human nature and a plurality of human persons – hence worries, understandable but wholly misguided, about Tritheism. I have argued elsewhere that we misunderstand Gregory – and the ways in which Augustine differs from him – if we take these analogies too seriously, and I am not the only person to have made this suggestion. If my reading is correct, the problem for both thinkers is to find a convincing riposte to Modalist challenges. But my main point is that the account of divine simplicity found in the two traditions, represented by Gregory (in *Contra Eunomium* 2) and Augustine, is equally strong. And this, I argue, provides further evidence that the old Western analysis of the history of the doctrine is profoundly mistaken, and that the time for serious consideration of some kind of *rapprochement* is overdue on both sides of the Ecumenical divide.

This is all independent of the question of the *filioque*: one could accept a strong account of divine simplicity, like that advocated by Gregory and Augustine, and yet be neutral on the question of the *filioque*; and the same seems to be true if the strong account of divine simplicity is rejected in favour of a weaker one. One reason for this is that part of the issue with the *filioque* lies in securing the distinction of the Spirit from the Son. For example, Richard Swinburne has argued that the *filioque* is necessary for the distinction between Son and Spirit on the grounds that difference between spiration and generation – and thus the difference between the Spirit and the Son — consists ‘simply in dependence on two co-causes as opposed to dependence on one cause’.³⁴ But powerful voices in both the East and the West reject this line of argument: generation and spiration might just be fundamentally distinct kinds of relation irrespective of the number of causes involved: *being a Son of* ____, and *being passively spirated by* ____, could simply be distinct *kinds* of relation (think of *being a Son of* ____, and *being a daughter of* ____), and in this case Son and Spirit are distinct irrespective of any causal relation between the two. This point seems to me to be accepted implicitly by the Gregory, who seems simply to assume an irreducible distinction between generation and procession; and

³⁴ Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 184. Aquinas makes much the same point at *ST* 1.36.2 c.

later in the Latin Middle Ages Duns Scotus explicitly makes the point in the context of a rejection of the standard Western defence of the *filioque*.³⁵ And this line of thought rejects the view that the *filioque* – the Spirit's dependence on the Son – is necessary for the distinction between Spirit and Son. But the distinction between generation and spiration has nothing to do with the question of divine simplicity: we could accept that the divine essence is the only constituent of a divine person, while yet holding that the causal relations between Father and Son, on the one hand, and Father and Spirit on the other, are irreducibly different in kind.

What about the question of the monarchy of the Father: that if the Son is a (partial) causal origin of the Spirit, the Father's role as sole cause is undermined? This is certainly true: if the Son is a partial cause of the Spirit, then the Father cannot be the sole cause, even if he is the sole cause of the Son. But none of this has any bearing on the question of divine simplicity, which has been the focus of my paper today.

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³⁵ Scotus, *Ordinatio* 1.11.2, nn. 40-8 (*Opera omnia*, ed. C. Balić and others (Vatican City: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1950-), V, 16-20).

CHAPTER V

THE UNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON ACCORDING TO THE GREEK FATHERS

METROPOLITAN KALLISTOS (WARE) OF DIOKLEIA

PERSON AS MYSTERY

During the past two centuries, Western thinkers – whether poets, psychologists or theologians – have repeatedly insisted upon the mysterious character of human personhood. We are an enigma to ourselves, so it is often claimed; we know and understand only a very small part of our nature as human beings. ‘The greatest secret is man himself,’ says the German Romantic poet Novalis.¹ In the words of Carl Gustav Jung, the psyche is ‘a foreign, almost unexplored country’.² Personhood, argues the Anglican theologian David Jenkins, is something irreducible: ‘There is a sense in which we do not know what is involved in being a person. ... We do not know how far being a person goes. ... The mystery of the fact of being a person [cannot be] reduced to the facts of the appropriate sciences’.³ The reality of our personhood, that is to say, is far more than any explanation that we choose to give of it. It is an intrinsic feature of personhood to be open, self-transcending, always to *point beyond*. The human person, unlike the computer, is that in which new beginnings are made. To be human is to be unpredictable, free and creative.

With this emphasis upon human unknowability both the Bible and the Christian tradition are in full agreement. ‘What is man?’ enquires the Psalmist (Ps 8:5), and he replies: ‘The heart is deep’ (Ps 63 [64]:7). St Augustine calls our human *memoria* or self-awareness *penetrabile amplum et infinitum*, a ‘secret shrine, vast and infinite’, and he asks: ‘Who can plummet the bottom of it?’⁴ St Gregory of Nyssa goes further, providing a specific reason for this mysterious, indefinable character of the person: it is because man is made in God’s image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27). ‘Has anyone ever understood his own

¹ Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg [1772-1801]), *The Disciples at Sais and Other Fragments* (London:Methuen, 1903), p. 75.

² *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (London: Routledge [Ark Paperbacks], 1984), p. 86.

³ *The Glory of Man* (London:SCM, 1967), pp. 5, 10.

⁴ *Confessions* 10:8; cf. 10:5.

intellect?’ asks Gregory; and he answers that exhaustive self-knowledge is impossible, precisely because the human person is a created icon of the uncreated God. Since God is incomprehensible, so also is God’s image, man. ‘An image is only such in so far as it expresses the attributes of the archetype,’ he writes. ‘One of the characteristics of Godhead is to be in its essence beyond our understanding; and so the image should express this too.’⁵ Apophatic theology requires as its counterpart apophatic anthropology.

PERSON AS IMAGE

In explaining why our human nature is a mystery to ourselves, St Gregory of Nyssa touches on the fundamental and determining feature in the Christian understanding of man: we human beings are in the image of God. But this in itself does not provide a clear answer to the question ‘What is man?’; for in the Christian tradition there is considerable uncertainty concerning the precise character of this divine image. In the words of St Epiphanius of Salamis, ‘Tradition holds that every human being is in the image of God, but it does not define exactly in what this image consists.’⁶

In the dogmatic teaching of the Church, there are in fact only very few explicit definitions concerning anthropology. Emphasizing the unity of the human person, the Fifth Ecumenical Council (553) denied the pre-existence of the soul, and insisted that soul and body come into existence simultaneously. Likewise underlining the unity of our personhood, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381) affirmed, ‘I await the resurrection of the dead’; as Christians, we do not simply believe in the immortality of the soul, but we look beyond the separation of soul and body at our physical death, and express our firm hope in their future reunification at the Last Day. That, however, is all that is said in the dogmatic definitions of the Church. As St Gregory Palamas remarks, Tradition leaves it an open question how the soul is united to the body, whether the intellect resides in the head or the heart, and what is the seat of the imagination or the memory;⁷ there are no dogmas concerning physiology or psychology. In the same way, there are no dogmas defining the precise character of the divine image.

Individual Fathers, however, have sought in their writings to go further than this. Many of them sought to identify the image of God with a particular aspect or faculty of the human person. More specifically,

⁵ *On the Creation of Man* 11 (PG 44, cols. 153D, 156B).

⁶ *Panarion* 70: 3: 1. Cf. Epiphanius, *Ancoratus* 55: 4-5.

⁷ *Triads in Defence of the Holy Hesychasts* 1:2:3,; 2:2:30.

they frequently claimed that the divine image in man is to be associated with the soul and not the body; and within the soul it is to be associated especially with the power of self-awareness, of conscious thought and of reason.⁸ Nevertheless, this is not the invariable opinion. There are a number of Patristic authors – a minority, perhaps, but a significant minority – who adopt a more holistic approach, maintaining that the divine image embraces not just the soul but the total human being, body, soul and spirit together. In this way they concur with the unitive standpoint already mentioned, expressed by the Fifth Ecumenical Council and the Creed.

A notable statement of this holistic standpoint is to be found in St Irenaeus of Lyons:

By the hands of the Father, that is, by the Son and the Spirit, man was created in the likeness of God. Man was so created, not just a part of man. Now soul and spirit are certainly a part of man, but they are not man as such. For the complete man consists in the fusion and union of the soul, which receives the spirit [or breath] of the Father, and which is mingled with the flesh [or physical nature] that is fashioned according to God's image.⁹

Here St Irenaeus remains faithful to the Hebraic and Biblical view of the human being as a unified whole. His approach is not so very different from that of Carl Gustav Jung, who notes: 'Spirit is the living body seen from within, and the body the outer manifestation of the living spirit – the two being really one.'¹⁰

In the later Byzantine period, Michael Choniates makes exactly the same point as St Irenaeus: 'The term man is applied, not to the soul alone or to the body alone, but to both of them together; and so it is with reference to both together that God is said to have created man in His image.'¹¹ Following out the implications of this unitive approach, St Gregory Palamas maintains that it is the total person – body, soul and spirit together – that participates in the vision of the Divine Light. The glory of Tabor, so he believes, is perceived by the saints not merely in an inward manner but through their bodily eyes; and on occasion it also

⁸ See, for example, Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 45: 7; Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection* (PG 46, col. 57B); Isaac of Nineveh (Isaac the Syrian), *Homily* 3 (tr. Wensinck, p. 21).

⁹ *Against the Heresies* 5: 6: 1.

¹⁰ *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 253.

¹¹ *Prosopopoiiai* (PG 150, col. 1361C) (previously attributed to Gregory Palamas).

transfigures their physical bodies, so that they shine outwardly and visibly with the uncreated radiance that they contemplate.

Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, in his recent work *Communion and Otherness*, adopts a similar understanding of the divine image as involving the totality of the human person. The image, he states, involves not man's nature but his personhood or his 'mode of existence'; it has to do not with *what* man is, but with *how* man is.¹² That is to say, we should not seek to locate the divine image in some particular aspect of man's nature, in some individual part or constituent of his being, but we should regard it as expressing his attitude or orientation as a *total person*.

By speaking in this way of the divine image in man as expressing the orientation of the total person, we have surely come close to the true meaning of what it is to be in the image and likeness of God. The divine image denotes fundamentally an *alignment*, a *direction*, a *relationship*. It signifies that we have God as the innermost centre of our existence. Human personhood, that is to say, cannot be understood apart from divine personhood. As a human person I do not contain the meaning of my selfhood exclusively within myself. Only when I see myself in relationship with God does my personhood acquire authentic meaning: without God I am unintelligible. Within each one of us, there is a God-shaped hole that only He can fill.

From this it follows that it is a basic error to attempt first to work out a doctrine of man considered on his own, as a self-contained, autonomous entity, and only when that has been done to proceed subsequently to consider his relationship with God as a kind of appendix. On the contrary, Christian anthropology needs from the very outset to take into account our God-ward orientation. For man, existing in separation from God, is not in a normal but in a highly abnormal state; he is no longer truly human but has become altogether subhuman. To be created in the divine image means that we are created for fellowship and communion with God, and if we repudiate that fellowship and communion we are repudiating our own true selves. When we affirm man, we also affirm God; and when we deny God, we also deny man. In this sense the theist is the only true humanist.

In this understanding of the divine image in man as a relationship of the total human person with God, a crucially important factor is human *freedom*. As God is free, so man created in God's image is also free. In the words of St Cyril of Alexandria, 'Man was created in

¹² John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, ed. Paul McPartlan (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2006), p. 165.

the beginning with control over his own decisions, and was free to direct his will as he chose. For he was formed in God's image, and God is free.'¹³ 'If man', says St Maximus the Confessor, 'is created in the image of the blessed and supraessential Godhead, then – since the Godhead is free by nature – this signifies that as God's true image man is also free by nature.'¹⁴ The freedom of the human person is likewise a master-theme in the *Spiritual Homilies* attributed to St Macarius. 'Heaven was established once for all, and so also were sun, moon and earth; and they cannot change from what they were created to be, nor have they any free will. But you are in the image and likeness of God; and this means that, just as God is His own master and can do what He wishes – and, if He wishes, He has power to send the righteous to hell and sinners to the Kingdom, but He does not choose to do this – ... so, in like manner, you also are your own master and, if you choose, you can destroy yourself.'¹⁵

In saying that, as God is free, so also man in God's image is free, we need of course to add an important qualification: God's freedom is absolute and unconditioned, whereas our human freedom is conditioned in a fallen world by heredity and environment, by our past sins, and by the influence of our unconscious motives. Yet despite every limitation, our human liberty continues to be a genuine reflection of the divine Trinitarian liberty.

PERSON AS MEDIATOR

Keeping in mind this understanding of the divine image in man as signifying an orientation or relationship – an orientation expressed pre-eminently through the exercise of human freedom – let us consider two typical descriptions of the human person in the Greek Fathers: the Thirty-Eighth Homily of St Gregory of Nazianzus (Gregory 'the Theologian'),¹⁶ and the Forty-First of the *Ambigua* by St Maximus the Confessor.¹⁷ In both texts a key feature is the notion of man as mediator. Gregory begins by distinguishing between the two levels of creation: the invisible or spiritual, and the material or physical. Angels belong to the first level, animals to the second. Alone among living creatures, man exists on both levels at once:

¹³ *Glaphyra on Genesis* 1: 4 (PG 69, col. 24C).

¹⁴ *Dispute with Pyrrhus* (PG 91, col. 304C).

¹⁵ *Spiritual Homilies* 15: 23.

¹⁶ *Oration* 38:11 (PG 36, cols. 321C – 324B).

¹⁷ *Ambigua* (PG 91, cols. 1304D – 1308C).

Wishing to form a single creature from the two levels, from both invisible and visible nature, the Creator Logos fashioned man. Taking a body from the matter that He had previously created, and placing in it the breath of life that comes from Himself, which Scripture terms the intelligent soul and the image of God, He established man on earth as a second cosmos, a great universe within a little one.

Here Gregory takes up the notion, familiar in classical thought, of man as microcosm; but in a striking and decisive way he reverses it. Man is not 'a little cosmos within a great one', but on the contrary 'a great cosmos within a little one'. It is not the physical universe with the planets and stars that is the 'great cosmos'; incomparably greater is the universe that exists within the human person. Vaster than the distances of outer space is the inner space of man's heart. Man, in other words, is not *mikrokosmos* but *megalokosmos*.

Developing the implications of man's double nature, both material and spiritual, Gregory goes on to speak of the human person as a 'mixed' or 'mingled worshipper', 'overseer of the visible creation and initiate into the intelligible creation', 'earthly yet heavenly, temporal yet immortal, visible yet intelligible, midway between majesty and lowliness, one self-same being, but both spirit and flesh'. Here Gregory, allowing for the effects of the Fall, emphasizes man's fragility: we contain within ourselves infinite potentialities, yet in practice there is all too often a tragic gap between our expectations and our actual achievement. There is a Jewish saying that illustrates very effectively this paradox of our human personhood. Everyone, it is said, should have two pockets, so that he can reach into the one or the other, according to his needs. In his right pocket there is to be a piece of paper with the words, 'For my sake was the world created'; and in his left pocket another piece of paper, stating, 'I am dust and ashes.'¹⁸

Endowed as he is with this mixed character, at the same time physical and spiritual, man is placed at the centre or crossroads of the created order. As St Gregory of Nyssa expresses it, man is *methorios*, on the border or frontier between the intelligible and the material.¹⁹ This cannot be said of the angels, for they are 'bodiless', nor yet of the

¹⁸ Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim*, vol. 2, *The Later Masters* (New York: Schocken, 1961), pp. 249-50.

¹⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies of the Song of Songs* 11 (PG 44, col. 1009A); for earlier uses of this term, with reference to human nature, see Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 2: 18 (p. 155: 18); Methodius of Olympus, *On the Resurrection* 2: 18 (p. 368: 13); *Symposium* 3: 7 (p. 34: 10).

animals, for they do not possess spirit or a rational soul; man alone in God's creation occupies this liminal position. In consequence of this mixed character, man is usually seen as occupying a lower level than the angels in the hierarchy of being, although on this point there are some dissenting voices.²⁰ Yet, even if man is not at the summit of creation, he is certainly at its hub or focal point. Precisely because it is mixed, our human nature is more complex than the angelic, and by virtue of its greater complexity it also possesses richer possibilities.

More specifically, by virtue of this mixed or dual nature, man can act as mediator, in a way that the angels cannot. 'Earthly yet heavenly', it is our human vocation to reconcile and harmonize the differing levels of reality in which we participate, and so to draw them all into unity. In the words of St John Chrysostom, we humans are the 'bond' or 'bridge' of the creation.²¹ Acting as the priest of creation, offering the world back to God in joy and thanksgiving, man is called to raise earth to heaven and to bring heaven down to earth; he is called to spiritualize the material order without thereby dematerializing it. In the whole of God's creation, only man can do this; for only man participates in the two realms at once, both the material and the spiritual. The ecological implications of all this are manifest.

In his Thirty-Eighth Homily St Gregory of Nazianzus develops the notion of man as mediator in two particular ways. First, after speaking of bodily death – which is part of the tragic fragility of fallen man, that has been mentioned earlier – Gregory looks beyond this to the final resurrection of the body of the Last Day: 'So God has bound them both [body and soul] together; and, though He separates them, He will hereafter bind them together once more in a yet more glorious way.' Here significantly Gregory stresses the integral unity of our human nature, both body and soul together, which I have already emphasized. Death fragments this unity, but only temporarily so. Only by recognizing the unitary character of our humanness – only by regarding our physicality as an essential expression of what it is to be human – can we fulfill our vocation as cosmic mediators. If we repudiate our bodies as alien, no longer seeing our own human nature as a unity, then we cannot unify the cosmos.

²⁰ See, for writers who affirm the superiority of man to the angels, Macarius, *Spiritual Homilies* 15: 22 and 43; Anastasius of Sinai, *Questions* 78 (PG 89, col. 708AB); Gregory Palamas, *Theological, Ethical and Practical Chapters* 63 (PG 150, col. 1165CD); but contrast *Chapters* 27 (PG 150, col. 1140A), which seems to affirm the opposite.

²¹ *On the Obscurities of the Old Testament* 2: 5 (PG 56, col. 182); *Homily on the text 'My grace is sufficient for you'* 1 (PG 59, col. 509) (this latter work is possibly not by Chrysostom).

Secondly, and yet more strikingly, Gregory insists that our vocation as human beings extends beyond the created world into the divine realm. We are called, not only to unite the creation within itself, but also to unite the creation with God. Accordingly, he terms man *zoon theoumenon*, ‘a living creature that is being divinized’; and he refers to this as *peras tou mysteriou*, the supreme fulfillment and culmination of the mystery of what it is to be human. Here once more we are reminded of the essential and all-important factor in our humanness: that we are created in the image of God, and so we enjoy by grace the possibility of becoming ‘partakers of the divine nature’ (2 Pet. 1:4), sharers in His uncreated energies and His eternal glory. As living ikons of the living God, it is only through *theosis* that we become what we are called to be.

All that is said here by St Gregory of Nazianzus in his Thirty-Eighth Homily is powerfully confirmed by St Maximus the Confessor in the Forty-First of his *Ambigua*. Underlining, as Gregory does, the all-inclusive character of human nature, Maximus says that man is, ‘as it were, a kind of laboratory, containing everything in a most comprehensive fashion’. This means that we can act, within the totality of the world, as a ‘natural bond of unity’. Man is able to mediate between all the divided extremes within reality, because he is related to them all through the different aspects of his own self. In this connection Maximus significantly employs the term *mysterion*, a word that we have already identified as central to any Christian theology of personhood, and that was also used (as we have just noted), by St Gregory of Nazianzus when referring to *theosis*. It is man’s appointed task, writes St Maximus, ‘to make manifest in himself the great mystery of the divine intention – to show how the divided extremes in created things may be reconciled in harmony, the near with the far, the lower with the higher, so that through continual ascent all are gradually brought into union with God’.

In this connection St Maximus distinguishes five levels of division within reality which man is called to overcome. These include the division between male and female, the division between the realm of the senses (the physical world) and the intelligible or spiritual realm, and, most importantly of all, the division between the created and the uncreated. These divisions we overcome through the power of love (*agape*), a key concept in the theology of Maximus. It is noteworthy that, in Maximus’s view, as in Gregory’s, man is able to mediate between the material and the spiritual precisely by virtue of his ‘mixed’ nature, because he is himself both body and soul/spirit. Mediation is only possible if man’s nature is recognized as an integral unity; if we repudiate our bodies, we deny our mediatorial vocation. It is also noteworthy that, for Maximus as for Gregory, our mediatorial task

extends beyond the created world into the divine realm: through man all created things are brought into union with God.

It needs to be added that, alike for Gregory and for Maximus, this work of mediation is only possible *in Christ*. Christ is *the* mediator, who through His Incarnation has united the uncreated and the created. In Him all created things are summed up and recapitulated (Eph. 1:10); it is He who draws them all together, who holds them in unity (Col. 1:17), and so offers them back to the Father (I Cor. 15:28). If we men are to act as mediators, then this can only be in and through Christ the 'one mediator' (I Tim. 2:5).

Earlier, when discussing the divine image in man, I spoke of it in vertical terms: it signifies that man is created for fellowship and communion with God, and that without such communion human beings cease to be truly human. But our analysis of the human mystery would be seriously incomplete if, before concluding, we failed to speak also of the divine image in horizontal terms. The image of God within us signifies not only relationship with God but also relationship with one another. For the God in whose image man is formed is God the Holy Trinity. God, as Trinity, is not self-love but mutual love, not just personal but interpersonal, not just a unit but a union. We are formed, that is to say, in the image of the *perichoresis* that embraces Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In the words of Metropolitan John of Pergamon, 'The being of God is relational being; without the concept of communion it would not be possible to speak of the being of God.'²² As persons in the divine image, then, we humans are called to reflect on earth – so far as this is possible for created beings – the movement of love that passes eternally between the three hypostases of the Trinity. To use a phrase of Professor Christos Yannaras, it is our vocation to reproduce in our daily lives 'the ethos of Trinitarian communion'.²³

Such in brief are the dimensions of the human mystery, according to the teaching of the Greek Fathers. In order to be human according to the divine image, in order to be mediator in and through Christ the one mediator, we need to regard our human personhood as an integral unity of body and soul. Moreover, we need to see our personhood not only in its relationship to God, but also in its relationship to our fellow men. We come close to the heart of the human

²² John D. Zizloulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), p. 17.

²³ Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), p. 16.

mystery when we affirm the double truth, I need God in order to be myself; and equally, I need you in order to be myself.

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CHAPTER VI

DIVINE FREEDOM: THE GREEK FATHERS AND THE MODERN DEBATE

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The question of divine freedom remains as controversial today as it was in the ancient world. It is well known that the leading philosophers of antiquity generally did not think of God in personal terms, nor, in particular, as exercising choice in a way that involves a capacity to do otherwise. Plato and Aristotle did not even ascribe will (*boulēsis*) to their own first principles, the Good and the Prime Mover, to say nothing of choice. Others, such as the Stoics and Plotinus, were more free in speaking of a divine will, but they identified this will with the purely rational recognition of that which is best – or, in the case of the One of Plotinus, with the full and unimpeded expression of its own nature. The necessitarian character of Plotinian emanation, in which everything that can come forth from the One must do so, makes it clear that the “will” of the One is not in any sense a capacity for alternatives.¹ In all of this, the Greek philosophers were true to their fundamental conviction that perfect freedom and perfect rationality ultimately coincide.² The capacity for alternatives is, on this view, at best a limitation that necessarily accompanies human existence, one that falls away at the higher reaches of divinity.

Christianity had from the beginning a different outlook. The Bible presents a God who seeks, and indeed demands, full personal communion with His creatures. It would seem almost unthinkable to say of such a God that He could not do otherwise than He does, for such necessity is more characteristic of machines and natural processes than of persons. It is for this reason, more than any particular Scriptural text (although many could be cited), that Christian philosophers have tended to recognize in God a capacity for choice. Yet we should not be too hasty in simply identifying this as the Christian view, for even within the Christian tradition there have been prominent thinkers who have held, in

¹ For the necessitarian character of Plotinian emanation see *Enneads* IV.8.6, V.12.45-48, and for the “will” of the One see *Enneads* VI.8.

² See, for example, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* IX.8 1168b33-69a2: “we regard a man as acting voluntarily in the truest sense when he has acted rationally.”

essence, that the Greeks were right. St. Augustine, for example, writes in *On Free Choice of the Will* that “it is not possible for something that you conceive by right reason not to exist... if, therefore, [the soul] knows by right reason that God ought to have made something, let it believe that God has in fact done so, even if it does not see the thing among those that God has made.”³ In other words, the purely rational consideration of that which is best is capable of ascertaining what God has made. Augustine goes on to apply this method to conclude that both angels and the souls of the damned must exist, since without them the universe would be incomplete.⁴ Peter Abelard in the Middle Ages and Gottfried Leibniz in the seventeenth century argued on similar grounds that God necessarily creates that which is best, or, as Leibniz famously put it, the best of all possible worlds.⁵ Plainly there is a strong affinity between such views and those of the ancient Greeks. Abelard, in fact, explicitly defended his position by reference to the statement of the *Timaeus* that “for him who is most good it neither was nor is permissible to do anything other than that which is best” (30a).

Views minimizing divine freedom continue to recur within contemporary philosophy. Norman Kretzmann, in a well-known essay, has argued that the principle that “goodness is by its very nature diffusive of itself,” deriving from Plato via Dionysius the Areopagite, ought to lead one to conclude that God necessarily creates.⁶ This is Kretzmann’s response to what he calls the “general problem of creation,” that of why God creates at all. There is also the “specific problem of creation,” why God creates this particular world. A necessitarian response to this problem has been vigorously defended by William Rowe. In his *Can God Be Free?* Rowe proposes the principle that “if an omniscient being creates a world when it could have created a better world then it is possible that there be a being morally better than

³ Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will* III.5, tr. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 80.

⁴ *Ibid.*, III.9; cf. discussion of this text in Roland J. Teske, “The Motive for Creation according to Saint Augustine,” *Modern Schoolman* 65 (1988), 245-53, reprinted in his *To Know God and the Soul: Essays on the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 155-64.

⁵ Peter Abelard, *Theologia Scholarium* III.27-56; Gottfried Leibniz, *Theodicy* passim. For helpful discussion see John Marenbon, *The Philosophy of Peter Abelard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 217-25; William Mann, “The Best of All Possible Worlds,” *Being and Goodness: The Concept of the Good in Metaphysics and Philosophical Theology*, ed. Scott MacDonald (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 250-77.

⁶ Norman Kretzmann, “A General Problem of Creation: Why Would God Create Anything at All?,” *Being and Goodness*, 208-28.

it.”⁷ This principle is carefully framed to leave open the possibility that there may be no best possible world. Rowe infers from it the following dilemma: either there is such a world, in which case God necessarily creates it, or there is not, in which case there can be no God, understood as an omniscient and morally perfect being. Like many theistic philosophers, Rowe thinks that the latter alternative is more likely (although perhaps not demonstrable), and so the dilemma he presents is, by implication, a probabilistic argument for atheism.⁸

Rowe’s argument gives particular bite to the question of whether God must necessarily do that which is best. Even aside from the challenge of atheism, however, the examples of Augustine, Abelard, Leibniz, and Kretzmann show that Christian philosophers, too, have been willing to conclude that divine goodness constrains God to create, and perhaps to create precisely this very world. This is one strand – let us call it the Platonic strand – in the philosophical challenge to a naively Biblical view of divine freedom. There is also another strand, which I shall for simplicity refer to as that of Aristotle. This view, in line with the Aristotelian tradition within Christian thought, holds that for God to deliberate or possess unrealized potentiality would be an imperfection. As an example we may take Rowan Williams in an essay critiquing the theology of St. Gregory Palamas. Responding to the suggestion of John Meyendorff, made on behalf of Palamas, that “while God eternally possesses the power to create, it is not eternally actualized,” Williams replies:

But this is gross: it involves us in supposing that God is subject to some form of temporal succession, that his ‘decision’ to create is comparable to human choice, that he has unfulfilled or unrealized potentialities – in short, that he is mutable.⁹

Williams here runs together two issues that are often held to be separate, temporal succession and decision. Surely, one would think, it might be possible that God decide from all eternity upon a particular course of action without this decision involving any temporal process. But of course Williams is responding to the suggestion that God does not

⁷ William Rowe, *Can God Be Free?* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 4.

⁸ Rowe does not actually argue that the actual world is not the best possible, but he does state that such a view is not “plausible” (2); cf. 50-53, 88-89.

⁹ Rowan Williams, “The Philosophical Structures of Palamism,” *Eastern Churches Review* 9 (1977), 27-44, at 38.

eternally actualize His power to create, so that presumably there is some sort of transition (even if not, strictly speaking, a temporal one) when He does so. Within this context, Williams is right to assume that a decision to create would imply some form of divine mutability. He is also right to mention the further issue of unrealized potentiality, which from an Aristotelian perspective is alone quite troubling.

My purpose in this paper is to examine what light the Greek Fathers can shed upon these issues. I will first briefly review the key aspects of their teaching, focusing particularly on Dionysius the Areopagite, the source of the “diffusiveness of the good” axiom cited by Kretzmann.¹⁰ I will then make some suggestions regarding where their views fall in relation to the modern debate.

The first point to note is that the Greek Fathers quite freely drew an analogy between divine and human choice. The reason was, of course, the doctrine that man is made in the image of God. A number of early Fathers such as St. Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and St. Gregory of Nyssa understood the image of God in man as consisting in two aspects: possession of reason, on the one hand, and that of free choice or self-determination (*to autexousion*), on the other.¹¹ These two qualities are closely related, for it is because we possess reason that we are also free respecting choice. The Greek Fathers generally understood this freedom in a straightforwardly libertarian way. St. Justin Martyr, for example, states that human beings have been made self-determining like the angels, and so have the power to turn toward either good or evil through free choice (*prohairesis eleuthera*).¹² Similar statements can be found in Irenaeus, Clement, Origen, Methodius, Athanasius, and others.¹³ In line with this train of thought, the Greek Fathers generally saw predestination as subordinate to divine foreknowledge of human free choice.¹⁴

¹⁰ I repeat here some material previously published in “Divine Freedom in the Greek Patristic Tradition,” *Quaestiones Disputatae* 2 (2011), 56-69.

¹¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* IV.4.3, 37.4, 38.4; Clement, *Stromata* VII.7 (PG 9 458C-460A); Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity* 12, *On the Dead* (= GNO vol. 9, 54), *On the Making of Man* 16, *Great Catechism* 5.

¹² Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 43, *Second Apology* 7.

¹³ Tatian, *Oration* 7; Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolytus* II.27; Athenagoras, *Legatio* 24.3; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* IV.37; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* I.17.83-84, VI.12.98; Origen, *On First Principles* Preface, III.1.3-5; Methodius, *Banquet* 8.16, *On Free Choice* ad fin; Athanasius, *Contra Gentes* 4, *On the Incarnation* 3.

¹⁴ See Dom M. John Farrelly, *Predestination, Grace, and Free Will* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1964), 73-79; James Jorgenson, “Predestination according to Foreknowledge in Patristic Tradition,” *Salvation in Christ: A Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue*, ed. John Meyendorff and Robert

Since human freedom involves the capacity for opposites, presumably, in light of the doctrine of the image of God, the same is true in the case of God. Yet although this conclusion seems straightforward enough, there was little explicit discussion of this subject prior to Nicaea. The fullest discussion is that of St. Hippolytus of Rome, who states that God created “when He wished, as He wished,” and that divine freedom extends so far that, had God wished to make any one of us a god rather than a man, He could have done so.¹⁵ Others deal with the subject more briefly. Methodius of Olympus, in his critique of Origen, asserts that the Father created the world out of nothing “by His bare will (*boulēmati*).”¹⁶ The early Athanasius states in *On the Incarnation* that God “did not create automatically because [the things made] are not without forethought (*apronoēta*).”¹⁷

This initial tendency became more explicit during the Arian controversy. The defenders of Nicaea were faced with the necessity of clearly distinguishing the begetting of the Son, as an act intrinsic to the Godhead, from the act of creation. In order to do so, St. Athanasius argued that the Son’s existence flows from the essence (*ousia*) of the Father, whereas creatures are the products of the Father’s will (*boulēsis*). This means, he says, that the Son would exist even if creatures did not: “if it had pleased God not to create any creatures, the Logos nevertheless would be with God, and the Father would be in Him.”¹⁸ He returns to this subject in dealing with a dilemma posed by the Arians, that of whether the Father begot the Son by will or by necessity. In reply Athanasius posits an analogy: just as God is good neither by necessity nor by will, but by nature, so likewise He is Father of the Son neither by necessity nor by will, but by nature. Crucially, the reason that God is not good “by will” is that “to counsel and choose implies an inclination two ways” (*to bouleuesthai kai prohairesthai eis hekatera tēn rhopēn echei*), so that if He is good by will, He could also *not* be good.¹⁹ This shows

Tobias (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992), 159-69; Robert L. Wilken, “Free Choice and the Divine Will in Greek Christian Commentaries on Paul,” *Paul and the Legacies of Paul*, ed. William S. Babcock (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990), 123-40.

¹⁵ Hippolytus, *Against Noetus* 10 (PG 10 817B; ANF vol. 5, 227), *Refutation of All Heresies* X.33 (PG 16.3 3450A; ANF vol. 5, 151).

¹⁶ Methodius, *On Things Created* 7 (GCS 27, 498; ANF vol. 6, 381).

¹⁷ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 3 (PG 25b 101A; NPNF vol. 4, 37).

¹⁸ Athanasius, *Orations against the Arians* II.31 (PG 26 212B; NPNF vol. 4, 364).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, III.62 (PG 26 453C; NPNF vol. 4, 428). See also the classic article by Fr. Georges Florovsky, “St. Athanasius’ Concept of Creation,” *Studia*

quite plainly that Athanasius understands the divine will as embracing a capacity for opposites.

The Cappadocian Fathers adopted a similar view. St. Basil in his *Hexaemeron* rejects the idea that God created the world “without choice (*aprouhairetōs*), as the body is the cause of shadow and light the cause of brightness,” and Gregory of Nyssa, likewise attributes creation to “the impulse of divine choice” (*hē hormē tēs theias prouhaireseōs*).²⁰ Yet, like Athanasius, Gregory does not see divine choice as wholly unconstrained, for God is good by nature and so cannot choose evil. Thus he argues that it is not possible that “the good fail to be the object of the Father’s will” (*aboulēton tōi patri to agathon*).²¹ In discussing God’s motive for creation, Gregory explains that God was moved “not by any necessity ... but because it was fitting (*edei*) that neither His light should be unseen, nor His glory without witness, nor His goodness unenjoyed.”²² Here the first clause, “not by any necessity,” indicates that God exercised free choice, while the second, “it was fitting,” indicates that His choice was motivated – although not determined – by His consideration of the good.

All of this is important as background in considering the nature of divine freedom in Dionysius. As I mentioned earlier, Dionysius is the primary source within Christian thought of the axiom of the self-diffusiveness of the Good. One might think that he, if anyone, would be likely to exclude free choice from the act of creation, and in fact there are several passages which seem to support such an interpretation. Chapter 1 of the *Divine Names* states that God “by His mere being (*autōi tōi einai*) is the cause of all beings”; the beginning of chapter 4 likens God to the sun, which “without reasoning or choosing (*ou logizomenos ē prouhairoumenos*) by its mere being illuminates all that are able to partake of its light”; and later in chapter 4, Dionysius adds that “love (*erōs*), preexisting in excess in the Good, did not permit (*ouk eiasen*) it to remain in itself without offspring, but moved it to

Patristica 6 (1962), 36-57; reprinted in his *Aspects of Church History* (Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1975), 39-62.

²⁰ Basil, *Hexaemeron* I.7; Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and Resurrection* (PG 46 124B; NPNF vol. 5, 458). It seems likely that Basil, at least, is taking aim at Plotinus, who was known to the Cappadocians through long excerpts in Book XI of *The Preparation for the Gospel* by Eusebius.

²¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* III.6.18 (GNO vol. 2, 192; NPNF vol. 5, 202).

²² Gregory of Nyssa, *Great Catechism* 5 (GNO vol. 3.4, 17; NPNF vol. 5, 478). See also the similar statement of Gregory Nazianzen that “it was fitting (*edei*) that the Good be poured out and go forth to multiply the objects of its beneficence, for this was the height of goodness” (*Orations* 38.9).

productive action.”²³ These passages would seem to suggest that God produces beings by a necessity intrinsic to His nature, much as does the One of Plotinus. Eric Perl in a recent study of Dionysius explicitly likens Dionysius to Plotinus in this regard, arguing that for both authors, “to produce all things is not a ‘choice’ on God’s part,” and that “precisely as the Good, as the productive condition of beings, God cannot not produce.”²⁴

An awareness of the background to Dionysius in the patristic tradition ought, I believe, to give one pause before adopting this conclusion. Recent scholarship has emphasized the degree to which Dionysius was indebted to the Greek Fathers, especially Clement of Alexandria, the Cappadocians, and Evagrius of Pontus.²⁵ In light of the apparent unanimity of this tradition regarding divine choice, it would be odd if Dionysius were so thoroughly out of step. In fact, at least as regards *human* choice, he is fully in keeping with earlier authors. At the end of chapter 4 of the *Divine Names* he argues that we are responsible for our actions because we could do otherwise, and in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* he adds that we possess “self-directed self-determination” (*hē authairetos autexousiotēs*).²⁶ He also speaks frequently of the divine *philanthrōpia*, love for man, exhibited in the Incarnation.²⁷ Of course, in the Incarnation God became a *particular* man at a particular place and time. That this took place without some form of choice would be counterintuitive, to say the least.

As regards creation, there are two key texts arguing against the interpretation of Dionysius as an emanationist. One is the description in *Divine Names* V.8 of the divine *logoi*, the paradigmatic causes of creatures, as “predeterminations and divine and good acts of will (*thelēmata*).” That the *logoi* are *acts* of will is significant, for it plainly

²³ Dionysius the Areopagite, *Divine Names* I.5 593D, IV.1 693B, IV.10 708B.

²⁴ Eric Perl, *Theophany: The Neoplatonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 52.

²⁵ See Alexander Golitzin, *Et Introibo ad Altare Dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita* (Thessalonica: Patriarchikon Idruma Paterikon Meleton, 1994) and “Dionysius Areopagita: A Christian Mysticism?,” *Pro Ecclesia* 12 (2003), 161-212; Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1989); David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 179-86; John D. Jones, “An Absolutely Simple God? Frameworks for Reading Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite,” *The Thomist* 69 (2005), 371-406.

²⁶ Dionysius, *Divine Names* IV.35 736A, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* II.3.3 400A; cf. *Celestial Hierarchy* IX.3 260C, *Epistle* 10 1117B.

²⁷ For example, *Divine Names* II.3 640C, II.6 644C, II.10 648D; *Epistle* 3 1069B, 4 1072A.

suggests something like a process of decision-making. By way of comparison, one need only imagine encountering such a definition in Plotinus. Plotinus could in principle speak of the One as possessing will, *thelēma* (although in practice it is a term he prefers to avoid), since he understands such *thelēma* as simply another designation for the One's nature. What he does not do, and so far as I can see, could not consistently do, is speak of it as performing *acts* of will – for how are such acts to be distinguished from one another, if not as distinct outcomes of the process of choice?

The second piece of evidence is the intriguing statement in *Divine Names* V.1 that “the divine name of the Good ... extends both to the things that are and the things that are not (*ta ouk onta*),” whereas the name of Being extends only to the things that are.” What are “the things that are not”? Perl takes the phrase as referring to formless matter, but surely in that case Dionysius would have spoken of non-being, *to mē on*, rather than *things* that are not.²⁸ A more plausible construal is that they are things that *could be* and are not, the point being that anything God might create would be good. To speak of God calling or making “the things that are not” to be was a common way of describing the act of creation, one that can be found in Philo of Alexandria as well as in early Christian literature such as II Clement, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Clementine Homilies*, and the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.²⁹ But of course, if there are things that *could be* but are not, then presumably the discrimination of which things to create, and which to leave as unrealized possibilities, has been made by divine choice.

What about the apparently countervailing passages? On a closer inspection they turn out to be fully compatible with the reading offered here. To state that God “by His mere being is the cause of all beings” may be meant to exclude, not divine choice, but merely the use of pre-existing matter and the assistance of subordinate agents (as the Demiurge, for example, is assisted by the lesser gods in the *Timaeus*). The comparison of God to the sun, which “by its mere being illuminates

²⁸ For the view that it is formless matter see Eric Perl, “Dionysius the Areopagite” in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lloyd Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), vol. 2, 779.

²⁹ See Philo, *On the Special Laws* IV.187; II Clement 1.8; *Shepherd of Hermas* Vision I.1.6, Mandate 1.2; *Clementine Homilies* III.32; *The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom* (Daytona Beach: Patmos Press, 1981), 27. Note also the scholion on this passage by Maximus the Confessor: “the Good extends to the things that are not in that it calls them into being” (PG 4 309B). The notion of God “calling the things that are not into being” achieved prominence through Romans 4:17, although there it appears to refer less to creation than to God's dealings within the world.

all,” actually refers in context not to the creation of beings but to the bestowal on them of goodness, and so presupposes that the beings already in some sense exist. Here is the full passage:

Just as our sun without reasoning or choosing, but by its mere being, illuminates in its own proper measure all that are able to partake of its light, so too the Good ... by its mere existence sends in a proportionate way the rays of its entire goodness to all beings.³⁰

Plainly the beings illuminated by the sun must already exist in order to receive that illumination. Analogously, the beings which receive the “rays” of the Good also already exist – and in fact, as we have seen, for Dionysius their existence is determined by the divine *logoi*, which are specific acts of will.³¹ Finally, that God’s love “did not permit Him to remain without offspring” need not be taken as referring to a necessity of the divine nature, but might mean only that God’s motivation to create was so strong that He found nothing appealing in the opposite alternative. In the same way we might say of a young couple that their love “did not permit them not to remain apart,” while recognizing that in fact they exercised free choice and, in the relevant sense, could have done otherwise.

With these historical markers in mind, let us turn now to the relationship between the Greek Fathers and the contemporary debate. Despite their commitment to divine free choice, I believe that the Greek Fathers would have little use for the Leibnizian notion that creation consists in a selection among possible worlds. The most basic problem with such a notion is that it is not truly a belief in *creation* at all. Creation, even among human artisans, involves a certain degree of spontaneity and imaginative exploration, such that the creative act is an expression of the creator’s character without being determined by that character. This is, as we have seen, the view of creation held by the Greek Fathers, and it is arguably also that suggested by Genesis. The repeated statement, “and God saw that it was good,” invites us to envision God as, like a human artisan, standing back from what He has created to assess and admire it. There could be little point in His doing so if, as Leibniz supposes, He already knew and had explicitly determined its every detail.

³⁰ Dionysius, *Divine Names* IV.1 693B, my translation.

³¹ Note also that Dionysius goes on to refer approvingly to the teaching of Moses regarding the existence of light before the creation of the sun, during “the first three of our days” (*ibid.*, 700A), something he could hardly do if his views were similar to those of Plotinus.

But here a problem arises. Does not divine omniscience *require* something like the Leibnizian picture? For if God knows everything that is possible, how could creation be anything other than a selection among such possibilities? In reply it is important to note that several recent philosophers, including James Ross, Christopher Menzel, and David Burrell, have questioned the very coherence of the Leibnizian picture.³² Ross makes the simple point that, if a possible world is (to use one common definition) a “maximum compossible set of states of affairs,” then each possible world must include the state of affairs that *God creates this world*. But then the notion that creation is a selection among such worlds becomes incoherent, for each possible world already includes, as a component, its being selected by God.³³ More generally, these philosophers question whether the very notion of a “possible world” is coherent, since it presupposes that the individuals constituting such a world – that is, the individuals referred to in specifying its component states of affairs – are uniquely determinate. Menzel, in a paper far too detailed to summarize here, offers a painstaking examination of the different proposals that have been made for specifying the identity of possible individuals. He concludes that we must reject “the idea that the merely possible, or merely future, is nonetheless entirely determinate with regard to its singular details, even when the individuals allegedly included in those details don’t exist.” Instead, he argues, “a definite individual is not determined until it is actual.”³⁴ But of course, if the notion of a merely possible individual is incoherent, so too is that of a merely possible world.

Admittedly, there are issues here that deserve careful discussion. Still, I hope that these brief considerations will give some *prima facie* reason to reject the picture of creation as a selection among fully determinate possibilities. Having done so, we are free to recover a more Biblical and patristic understanding of creation as something like the

³² See James F. Ross, “Creation II,” *The Existence and Nature of God*, ed. Alfred J. Fredosso (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 115-41, “God, Creator of Kinds and Possibilities,” *Rationality, Religious Belief, and Moral Commitment*, ed. Robert Audi and William Wainwright (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 315-34, and “The Crash of Modal Metaphysics,” *Review of Metaphysics* 43 (1989), 251-79; Christopher Menzel, “Temporal Actualism and Singular Foreknowledge,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 5 (1991), 475-507; David Burrell, “Creation and ‘Actualism’: The Dialectical Dimension of Philosophical Theology” and “Creation, Will, and Knowledge in Aquinas and Duns Scotus,” both in his *Faith and Freedom: An Interfaith Perspective* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 76-90, 176-89.

³³ Ross, “Creation II,” 135.

³⁴ Menzel, “Temporal Actualism,” 494.

work of a human artisan. Another recent thinker whose work can helpfully be enlisted at this point is the Anglican theologian, Keith Ward. Ward poses the question of how, if there are no determinate possible worlds, even God could know what it is possible to create. His answer is that God does so in the same way that we know what is possible, namely, by extrapolating from experienced actualities. In the case of God the experienced actuality is the infinite fullness of the divine life, from which God extrapolates by “divine imagination.” Ward explains:

On such a picture, there is an infinite divine actuality of experience, which humans are wholly unable to envisage. ... There is also a divine imagination, which is able to envisage different particular ways of expressing this life in finite forms. It can envisage endlessly new particular forms of expression; but it does not have to envisage all of them at once. Indeed, if possible expressions are infinite, one might better think of endless creative conceptions of new possible states of affairs. On this picture, God does not passively contemplate an array of given possible worlds. Rather, God actively and endlessly imagines possible finite expressions of the infinite divine life. ... God can actualize any envisaged possibility; and that actualization may in turn prompt new envisagements of new possible acts.³⁵

Ward goes on to offer as an analogy the composition of a piece of music. In musical composition, each successive note is neither simply arbitrary nor fully determined by what has come before; instead, it is the product of a mind intently focused upon creating “a unique and original form of beauty.”³⁶

The analogy with musical composition is helpful for seeing what is wrong with the Platonic objection to divine freedom. Even if one rejects the Leibnizian picture, one might still hold that God, being perfectly good, must create that which, all things considered, is best; this, after all, was the position of Augustine and Abelard, as well as Plato himself. But such a view would be false to the nature of artistic creativity, for there is no single musical composition – any more than

³⁵ Keith Ward, *Religion and Creation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 280-81.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 303.

there is a single painting, sculpture, or building – which, all things considered, is best. The most one can say is that an indefinite multitude of superb and unsurpassable achievements are possible within each artistic genre. The role of the artist is not exactly to attain to such a level of excellence – for that would be to assume a predetermined standard – but instead to show what kinds of excellence are possible *precisely in the act of achieving them*. And if this is true even in acts of human creativity, certainly it is far more true in the creation *ex nihilo* of an entire world.

Yet it might seem that we have escaped the Platonic objection only to fall into the arms of that of Aristotle. After all, the notion of divine imagination advanced by Ward presupposes that God can *learn something new* as He considers the infinite range of possibilities open before Him, and particularly as He considers the possibilities opened up by what He has already made. It thereby places God within the flux of time. The same is true of the analogy with an artist, for no artist already knows precisely what he will produce when he begins to create. We might more nearly say that he learns the nature of his product precisely in the act of making it, although it is equally true that that nature is determined by his own creative intent. So the artist analogy, whatever its advantages, is of no use unless we are prepared to admit that there can be growth in divine knowledge.

We touch here upon what has been in recent years a hotly contested topic. Most theologians and theistic philosophers, at least in the English-speaking world, fall into one of two camps: classical theists, who affirm divine atemporality and immutability, along with fully exhaustive divine foreknowledge of future events; and open theists, who agree that God knows all that can be known at any given time, but nonetheless see God as growing in knowledge because the total extent of what is knowable – roughly speaking, all that has occurred or is occurring in the past or present, along with future events that do not depend upon the decisions of free agents – continues to grow with the elapse of time. The artist analogy would seem to require open theism, but it thereby inherits the objections generally raised against such a view: namely, that it limits the scope of divine foreknowledge in a way that is contrary to traditional Christian teaching, and that it makes God subject to change in a way that is hard to square with traditional understandings of divine eternity, not to mention with the Scriptural teaching that God is the creator of time.

So far I have merely been positioning the Greek Fathers in relation to the current debate, but at this point I believe that they in fact have something vitally new to contribute. Despite a widespread assumption that the Greek Fathers were classical theists, they actually fit

within neither of these two camps. The key figure who makes this plain is, again, Dionysius the Areopagite. Dionysius makes statements about the relationship of God to time and eternity which at first glance might seem self-contradictory. On the one hand, God is “the eternity of things that are, the time of things that come to be”; on the other, He “transcends time and eternity, and all things in time and eternity, for eternity itself and the things that are and the measures of the things that are ... are from Him and through Him.”³⁷ Anyone familiar with Dionysius will recognize here a common pattern in his writings, the assertion both that God is x and that God transcends x as its source. For Dionysius this is a way of indicating that x is a divine “procession” (*proodos*). By this I take him to mean that it is *a form under which God is manifest and knowable*, so that to name it is to name God, although God is also its “source” in that it is under His control and it in no way constitutes the fullness of His being. As a Biblical parallel one might consider the divine glory which filled the Tabernacle and the Temple, and which shone around Christ at the Transfiguration. For the Greek Fathers this glory is not a created symbol (as became the most common view within western theology), but is God himself manifest under a particular form – precisely as is true of the divine processions in Dionysius.³⁸ Dionysius includes among the divine processions such perfections as goodness, beauty, being, life, wisdom, truth, power, righteousness, holiness, and unity. Although he does not explicitly add time and eternity, it would seem from passages such as those quoted that they, too, are to be understood in this way.³⁹

If time and eternity are divine processions, then both of them legitimately manifest an aspect of the divine being, although neither does so with sufficient fullness to exclude the other, nor even in such a way that the two together provide an exhaustive description. That is presumably why, at different points in the *Divine Names*, Dionysius both denies that temporal language – ‘was,’ ‘is,’ and ‘will be’ – can be applied to God, and affirms that all such terms are “properly hymned” of Him.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, Dionysius does not go much beyond these brief and tantalizing remarks. For more on this subject we can turn to his first commentator, John of Scythopolis, whose scholia accompanied the

³⁷ Dionysius, *Divine Names* V.4 817C, V.10 825B, my translation.

³⁸ See further my “The Divine Glory and the Divine Energies,” *Faith and Philosophy* 23 (2006), 279-98.

³⁹ I have developed this interpretation of Dionysius in more detail in my “Time and Eternity in the Greek Fathers,” *The Thomist* 70 (2006), 311-66, from which I borrow in this and the following paragraphs.

⁴⁰ Dionysius, *Divine Names* V.4 817D, V.8 824A.

Areopagitic corpus from almost its first circulation.⁴¹ John defines eternity (*aiōn*) as “unextended and infinite life,” or more fully as “the life that is unshaken and all together at once, already infinite and entirely unmoving, standing forth as a unity.”⁴² He then continues:

Thus also time, being once at rest in He Who Always Is, shone forth in its descent when later it was necessary for visible nature to come forth. So the procession of the goodness of God in creating sensible objects, we call time. For the movement of intervals into portions and seasons and nights and days is not time, but homonymous with time. Just as we are accustomed to call by the same name that which measures and that which is measured – as for instance, when that which is measured by a cubit, such as a foundation or wall, we call a cubit – so is it here. ... The motions of the stars were made by God for us for the sake of clear division and distinction [of time]. Hence the One who ordered them is Himself these things, supereternally and timelessly, as their cause.⁴³

There are here two distinct ways in which God can be referred to as Time. One is in reference to time in the proper sense, “the procession of the goodness of God in creating sensible objects.” Time in this sense is the unfolding of divine eternity, the life of “He Who Always Is,” within the act of creating sensible beings. Although time in this sense can truly be said to be God, as can any of the divine processions, nonetheless it comes forth only as God creates.⁴⁴ Second there is time as “the movement of temporal intervals,” that which is measured by time in the first sense. God can also be called Time in this sense, just as He can be called by the name of any of His creatures, since they pre-exist in Him as their cause. John is careful to qualify this second way of referring to God as Time by the adjectives “supereternally and timelessly,” so as to make it clear that there is here no diminishment of divine transcendence.

⁴¹ See Paul Rorem and John C. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Areopagitic Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

⁴² *Scholia on the Divine Names* (PG 4 313D, 316A), my translation.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 316A-B.

⁴⁴ John may well have been inspired at this point by Plotinus, for whom eternity is the life of Intellect and time the life of Soul (*Enneads* III.7.11.43-57). For John’s knowledge of Plotinus see Rorem and Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis*, 119-37.

I would suggest that such a view offers a way of retaining the concept of divine imagination, and with it a properly robust understanding of creation, without requiring a full movement to open theism. Since God is both temporal *and* eternal, He can be said to grow in knowledge although, in another sense, the knowledge is always present to Him. Dionysius himself expresses a similar view in discussing divine knowledge in chapter 7 of the *Divine Names*. There he writes:

The divine mind embraces all things by its transcendent knowledge of all, having precontained (*proeilēphōs*) within itself, as cause of all, the knowledge of all. Before angels came to be He knew them and brought them forth, and so also all the others, knowing them and leading them into being from within and, so to speak, from their very source. This, I believe, is what Scripture means when it says, “You who know all things before they come to be” (Dn. 13:42 LXX). The divine mind does not know by learning of beings from beings, but precontains the knowledge and understanding and substance of all from itself and within itself as cause. It grasps them beforehand, not attending to each separately, but knowing all in its single embrace as cause, just as light precontains within itself as cause the knowledge of darkness, knowing darkness from no other source than from light.⁴⁵

The analogy to the knowledge that light has of darkness is, of course, meant to underscore that God’s knowledge is not derived from anything other than Himself. Yet it might also be used to make another point: that the light, in knowing itself as light, need not consciously think of the darkness at all. It is always *capable* of thinking of the darkness, and can do so at will, yet the thought might be one that it consciously summons up only when moved to do so by its own autonomous thought processes. In this sense it “precontains” the knowledge of darkness, but this knowledge comes into conscious actuality only when the light itself so determines.

There are the makings here of a rich and subtle response to the Aristotelian objection. Since time is a manifestation of the divine being, God can be said to be mutable; as Dionysius puts it, ‘was,’ ‘is,’ and ‘will be’ are “properly hymned” of Him. Yet this mutability is not the result of being acted upon, as it is with creatures, but is intrinsic to the

⁴⁵ Dionysius, *Divine Names* VII.2 869A-B.

unbounded fecundity of the divine life. Nor is it in any way opposed to divine eternity, for time is precisely the *unfolding* of eternity, and its very existence presupposes the unity of the divine life, “unshaken and all together at once, already infinite and entirely unmoving, standing forth as a unity.” Corresponding to these two manifestations of the divine – neither fully exhaustive of its source – one has also two levels of knowledge, that in which all knowledge is “precontained” and that in which it is sequentially made explicit. (Besides the light analogy offered by Dionysius, we might think here of the two different ways the features of a face can be known – as a unity, when one takes in the face as a whole, and as discrete parts, when one separately analyzes the content of that unified apprehension.) Divine choice and decision, including the individual acts of will which are the divine *logoi*, occur at the second of these levels. This process is indeed a realization of certain potencies, and there are presumably an infinity of other potencies that remain unrealized. But it is merely an Aristotelian prejudice to suppose that either of these is intrinsically objectionable. What would be objectionable would be to suppose that God has potencies that, due to factors beyond His control, He is *unable* to realize, as is often true of creatures; but that is ruled out by divine omnipotence.

The question of the nature of divine experience, and in what ways God is free, is one that the human mind can hardly hope to fathom. The debate undoubtedly should and will continue. I hope that enough has been said here, at least, to show that the Greek Fathers deserve a place within the mainstream of that debate.

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CHAPTER VII

THE REALITY OF SIN: ANSELM'S UNUSUAL VIEW

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When it comes to faith in the powers of human reason, Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) is surely one of the most optimistic philosophers ever to have lived. He claimed to be able to prove, setting revelation aside, that God had to become a human being. His aim was to show fellow Abrahamic theists, Jews and Muslims, that the Incarnation was necessary.¹ In *Cur Deus Homo* (*Why a God-man?*) he asks his readers to allow three assumptions. First, there is a perfectly good, creator God who does what is best. Both his Christian and non-Christian target audiences certainly accept that there is a God, and, while there may be some debate, many will hold that God inevitably does what is best. Second, the reader must allow that human beings were made for happiness, a very broad and deep and lasting happiness at that. Again, his audience is likely to grant that. As the standard argument goes, we do all desperately want happiness. A perfectly good God would not have made us with such a powerful longing if it were not meant to be fulfilled. The third assumption is that because of sin human beings do not deserve and are not capable of happiness. So something must be done to remedy the situation and, after a great deal of discussion, it turns out that that “something” could only be the Incarnation.

But this third assumption is problematic. Throughout *Cur Deus Homo* Anselm seems to be assuming a robust conception of original sin which it is doubtful that Jews and Muslims would accept. Someone wishing to defend Anselm might hold that it should be easy to convince the non-Christian theists at least of the fact that there is sin and it is awfully wide-spread. And that might be enough to motivate some of the moves in the argument. This approach may not do the job, in that some of Anselm's arguments require acceptance of a fall by the first human beings, the consequences of which affect all subsequent generations.

¹ Some argue that he was speaking only to Christians and that his goal was simply to help explain what his co-religionists already accepted on faith. That is certainly one of his goals, but he repeatedly says that his work is aimed at those who do not believe in the Incarnation, and at the end of the work he has his interlocutor exclaim that his arguments should convince the Jews and the *pagani*, by which he meant Muslims.

This is an extremely difficult doctrine. But, with respect to sin, there is an even more fundamental problem in that there is a deep divide even among Christians over the very nature of sin itself. In the present paper I want to focus on the more basic question of what constitutes sin and what is its ultimate source.

As Anselm has it, to sin is to will other than what God wills that you should will.² What a simple and obvious definition. Surely there is not much to dispute here! But, au contraire! Among Christian philosophers, past and present, there have been many, many, including some of the most towering figures, who disagree with this characterization. Anselm has it that sin is to will what God *really* wills that you should not will. Period! Sin truly *should not happen*. Anselm insists that sin, in the perspicuous phrasing of Kevin Diller, "...is thoroughly evil. It is not good in evil clothing."³ Hereafter I will capitalize Sin on Anselm's understanding to distinguish it from other phenomena going by the name of sin. That Sin happens is very far from a standard position. I will look at three opposing analyses of sin and then argue that the Christian has good reason to prefer Anselm's view, even if it does entail some difficult conclusions.

A first position has become popular recently as part of the effort to establish warm relations between science and religion. Being a dedicated medievalist I operate on the assumption that science and religion cannot conflict when both are done right, but when it comes to analyzing sin some philosophers have proceeded incautiously it seems to me. Recently some philosophers have gone so far as to argue that the doctrine of original sin is supported by the study of evolutionary biology. They take sin to mean something like various manifestations of the sort of human selfishness and aggressive behavior of which we tend to disapprove, and then they note that such selfishness and aggressive behavior can be explained as an inheritance from our ancestors' struggle to survive. And – voila! – science proves original sin!⁴ But this cannot

² See my *Anselm on Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 89.

³ Kevin Diller, "Are Sin and Evil Necessary for a Really Good World? Questions for Alvin Plantinga's *Felix Culpa* Theodicy," *Faith and Philosophy* 25 (2008) 87-101, see p. 95.

⁴ John T. Mullen, "Can Evolutionary Psychology Confirm Original Sin?" *Faith and Philosophy* 24 (2007) 268-283; Patricia A. Williams, "Sociobiology and Original Sin," *Zygon* 35 (2000) 783-812. Marilyn Adams' view that our problems are due in part to our hybrid nature as creatures of matter and spirit may also be a version of the evolutionary argument, though I do not know that she is interested in offering a scientific analysis of sin (*Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God: Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999*) 94-96.

be Sin as Anselm understands it. First of all, sin as understood within the Christian tradition, is not just bad behavior in an earthly context – selfishness, aggression, failure to maximize happiness, that sort of thing. Sin is an affront to God. And, since God is the absolute standard of value and source of all, sin is a sort of attack on the value of all that is. The least sin occurs within this universal, and not just a local, context. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church has it, under the title, “The reality of sin”, “To try to understand what sin is, one must first recognize *the profound relation of man to God* [emphasis in the original], for only in this relationship is the evil of sin unmasked in its true identity as humanity’s rejection of God and opposition to him, even as it continues to weigh heavy on human life and history.”⁵ A discussion of sin that does not include God is not Sin by the Anselmian standard.

Moreover, if one sees Sin as something that *should not happen*, then on a phenomenological level, the bad behavior resulting from our evolutionary history will just not “feel like” sin. John T. Mullen, a proponent of the idea that evolutionary biology supports the doctrine of original sin includes as a premise in his argument, “It is almost always sinful (i.e. morally wrong) to promote one’s own welfare at the expense of others.”⁶ But as it stands that is obviously false. The birds who visit my bird feeder, including the occasional hawk, are selfish and aggressive, but I do not see them doing anything morally wrong, much less sinful. Their behavior is not of a piece with the brutality practiced by the genocidal dictators of the last century. There is no sense in which it *should not happen*.⁷ If the selfishness and aggression that humans engage in is a manifestation of our evolutionary history, if it is just more mammals mammaling, then it isn’t Sin. In the Christian tradition – see, for example, St. Augustine’s *On Free Will* – it has been widely assumed that behavior which is ultimately traceable to the causal efficacy of the laws of nature cannot be praiseworthy or blameworthy. At least at first glance, behavior caused by evolutionary processes looks to be naturally caused, and so cannot be Sin.

⁵ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New Hope, Kentucky: Urbi et Orbi Communications, 1994) Section 386.

⁶ Mullen (2007) 270.

⁷ There are some who argue that the nasty side of animal behavior is a consequence of the Fall which may even have a backwards causal effect on animals who existed before the Fall. This strikes me as a position with deep metaphysical problems. For example, if we are to suppose, as *Genesis* (and the evolutionary story) tells us, that God made fish before man, and that the fish were good, the claim would have no meaning for us if “fish” does not mean anything like what we understand by the term. But fish, as we know them, are predator and prey.

And further, presumably we hold it to be a good thing that human beings have evolved upon the planet. The claim from evolutionary biology is that the “sinful” traits have developed as an inherent part of that evolution. They are a necessary part of the causal history of the human species. Thus those traits are as they ought to be – and the supposed sin is actually good in evil clothing. And if we are positing our evolutionary story within a theist universe, then it is God who produced the evolutionary mechanisms and the traits in question. Our selfish and aggressive behavior is not a rejection of God, but a fulfillment of His plan. We might point to evolutionary processes “gone wrong” in the sense that sometimes the traits that drive our survival and reproduction might produce an unwholesome excess. Patricia Williams notes the case of a bird, the oyster catcher, who, “...will abandon its own eggs and brood a giant, artificial egg when tempted by curious ethologists. When temptation summons, fundamental natural dispositions can go awry.”⁸ But even this “going awry” of the natural dispositions cannot be considered bad in some fundamental sense. The processes underlying the whole system, which in some cases may mislead, as with the poor oyster catcher, produce the good result of the evolution of the human species and are divinely ordained. I take it that it is not a helpful move to seek the support of science to establish the doctrines of faith, if doing so transforms the doctrine beyond recognition.

A second analysis of sin – and here we can understand “sin” to mean roughly disobedience to an overt divine command – appeals to the idea that the sin is necessary to produce some great good in fulfillment of the divine plan. A prominent example, which can stand for any instance of such a necessary sin, is the “Fortunate Fall”. John Milton has Adam in *Paradise Lost* exclaim, upon being shown God’s plans for mankind, including and especially the Incarnation,

O Goodness infinite, Goodness immense!
 That all this good of evil shall produce,
 And evil turn to good; more wonderful
 Than that which by creation first brought forth
 Light out of darkness! Full of doubt I stand,
 Whether I should repent me now of sin
 By me done, and occasioned; or rejoice
 Much more, that much more good thereof shall spring;
 To God more glory, more good-will to Men

⁸ Williams (2000) 805.

From God, and over wrath grace shall abound.⁹

The thesis of a “Fortunate Fall” can be read in a minimal way as the claim that God, in his omnipotence, can respond to evil and bring about some overbalancing good. No evil is so great that God cannot work it into the fabric of the universe in such a way that the world is a place of enormous value, in spite of the evil. Anselm subscribes to this minimal understanding. He holds that God, if He is to create truly free beings, must risk the possibility of Sin. He cannot prevent Sin without nullifying the nature of the created free agent. And since a free creature is the best image of God, it would be a woefully impoverished universe if there were no free agents.¹⁰ Created agents do in fact Sin, most notably the first human beings, and do themselves great harm incurring a terrible debt. Anselm explains in *Cur Deus Homo* that God responds by seeing that the debt gets paid in the only possible way, through the freely-chosen death of the God-man who, in the words of a Christmas card I once received, “came to pay a debt he did not owe, because we owed a debt we could not pay.”¹¹ So the story of the Fall and the salvation of mankind is ultimately a story of great joy. For the great good of free created agency, God must *permit* Sin. And He can respond with an overbalancing good.

But this is not to say that God somehow *needs* the sin to produce the good; that it is really a better world in which the sin occurs; that God wants, indeed wills, the sin to happen so that He can bring about the fortunate consequences. One can permit something to happen, and permit it for good reasons, while genuinely preferring that it not happen. Anselm’s position is that, all things considered, it is possible that created agents freely choose never to Sin and that is the situation God prefers *simpliciter*. If created agents Sin, then God prefers not to destroy or abandon them. But this is not the more robust understanding of the Fortunate Fall, which holds that, all things considered, it is better that the Fall happened and God wills it so. Anselm’s argument against this robust understanding of a Fortunate Fall is simple: If God *needed* sin (under some description) to produce the good consequences He has in mind, He would be weak. If He produced the good consequences using sin, but did not need to do it that way, then He is not perfectly good.¹²

⁹ *Paradise Lost*, xii. 469-78.

¹⁰ Rogers (2008) 56-60.

¹¹ *Cur Deus Homo* Book 2, 6-7.

¹² Rogers (2008) 89-90. Anselm does not consider the question of whether or not the Incarnation would have occurred without the Fall. He does hold that God actualizes the best world consistent with the free choices of created agents. If any world containing the Incarnation is better than any world

Many have defended the stronger doctrine of the Fortunate Fall. Alvin Plantinga offers a version of this view which incorporates an underlying Molinist metaphysics.¹³ Contemporary Molinism has it that there exist, independently of God, true propositions about what any possible agent would freely choose in any possible situation. These are sometimes called, “counterfactuals of freedom”. (Perhaps not the best name, since true propositions about free choices in the actual world are included and are not counterfactual, but I do not know of a better or more standard term.) God has knowledge of all of these counterfactuals of freedom, Middle Knowledge, and so can survey all of the possible worlds, noting what all of the possible agents choose in each, and can then create the world that best suits His divine purposes. A world with sin may be a better world than one without sin in that the sin is necessary for the great good of the Incarnation and atonement.¹⁴

There is much to give us pause in this picture. Molinism limits divine omnipotence in a way which the tradition of Augustine and Anselm and Thomas Aquinas would have found insupportable in that it proposes that there are contingent “truths” which exist independently of God and which circumscribe what He can do. One who accepts a libertarian view of freedom ought to worry because contemporary Molinism, though claiming consistency with libertarianism, contradicts the basic criteria of libertarian freedom in that it holds that there are eternal “truths” which determine (though not causally) what an actual agent must choose, but which exist independently of the agent. For our purposes the locus of concern is Plantinga’s claim that sin is a necessary means to a greater good. It is better that it should have happened and so the sin is good in evil clothing. Again, it is not just that God *permits* sin because to prevent it would require the non-existence of created free agency. No, God *wants* it to happen and *brings it about* that it happens. But then it is not Sin by Anselm’s definition.

It is easy to see why someone who has already accepted a Molinist metaphysics feels moved to adopt this position. Although it is not up to God which worlds will be possible, since that is in part determined by the counterfactuals of freedom, it is up to God which world, among all the possible worlds, to actualize. Whatever possible world is actual is actual because God has willed it so. It is God’s will,

without it, then presumably Anselm would hold that God would become Incarnate even if it were not necessary for atonement. My impression is that Anselm is just not very interested in meditating on non-actual worlds.

¹³ Rogers (2008) 148-150.

¹⁴ Alvin Plantinga, “Supralapsarianism, or ‘O Felix Culpa,’” *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil*, ed. Peter van Inwagen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004) 1-25.

then, that our world is the one actualized of all the possible worlds. But it contains sin and evil. If God chooses to actualize our world containing each and every sin that He knows will occur – He knows this before they occur, perhaps temporally and certainly logically, through His eternal Middle Knowledge – rather than any other possible world, one would like to suppose that there was a good reason for His doing so. On a libertarian account of freedom which entails that there can be free agents who are not causally determined to choose to sin, it seems unlikely that every possible world must contain as much sin as, or more sin than, our world. Thus, given that God actualizes our sinful world, when He could actualize any possible world, we find ourselves facing a dilemma: Either God has made a rather dreadful world when He could have made a much better one, or God has made a world of great value, and the sin which casts such a dark shadow over our history is, in the final analysis, a necessary part of the greater good. Of these two options the second may be the better one. But the dilemma is generated by Molinism, and if Molinism leads us to deny the reality of Sin, then that is yet another strike against an already deeply problematic position.¹⁵

A third analysis of sin, of which a version of the Fortunate Fall doctrine could be a consequence, is generated by one of the fundamental claims of classical theism. Classical theists, Anselm included, hold that God is the absolute source of anything with ontological status. Some, Augustine and Thomas are noteworthy examples, say that, since choices are things of a sort, God must be the ultimate cause of choices, and hence even of the choice to sin. The *evil* of the sin is just an absence or a lack and so God is not the cause of the *evil*, but He does cause what exists in the sin, the choice itself. (This argument seems to entail that the created agent is not responsible for the evil, either, if it is just a lack. Does it follow that no one is responsible? I do not know that either Augustine or Thomas addresses this point.) And both subscribe to the more general application of the Fortunate Fall principle. God causes the choice to sin in order to bring a greater good out of it. These philosophers will insist that to say otherwise is to deny divine omnipotence and reject divine sovereignty. If it is not God that causes all choices, even the choice to sin, then something exists in the world not made by God, and it is a something which lies outside of His control.

¹⁵ Some philosophers object to Plantinga's position because he seems to allow that some sinners may be "used" in the production of a world which is of great value overall, but not to the particular sinner. See for example, Marilyn McCord Adams, "Plantinga on 'Felix Culpa': Analysis and Critique," *Faith and Philosophy* 25 (2008) 123-140. The criticisms I mount in this paper would not be answered even if we theorized that God brings it about that the sinner sins for the ultimate good of the sinner himself.

They take it to be absurd that something could happen in the world which God does not will. On this view it is not true to say that the sin really should not have happened.

Augustine seems to go even a little further. Even the “nothing” of evil seems to have a sort of being, or at least causal efficacy, and to be traceable to God. There are two ways of understanding the nothingness of evil. One might take it as a simple absence of something that ought to be there. By a “simple” absence I mean just a lack which has no causal efficacy. A simple absence does not provide an explanation for some thing or event. But “nothing” could be understood to have a sort of power, the power of a vacuum. In discussing why some of the first created agents, the angels, sinned, Augustine says that there was no efficient cause, but there was a deficient cause. They were made from nothing, and they are inevitably drawn back towards that nothingness. If God does not extend extra grace to them, they will sin. He extends grace to some and not to others, and those that are not given the extra grace fall.¹⁶ Thomas, too, says something very like this. As Josef Pieper explains, “In other words, not because the will is free, but rather ‘because the free will comes from nothing, that is why it is inherent to it not to remain in the good by nature.’ At the same time, of course, Thomas says that such a ‘bent toward evil’ comes to the will ‘not by virtue of its origin from God, but because of its origin from nothing.’”¹⁷ This view of “nothing” is curious in that it seems to give “nothing” a sort of being and power. But if it is even the most minimal sort of something, then it must come from God, and God is the source of evil. Perhaps one could say that what Augustine and Thomas really mean here is that the created agent is made with weaknesses which are inherent and necessary given its created status. But God could give them the grace by which they would overcome their weaknesses and chooses not to. So the sin that created agents commit is ultimately traceable to their divinely made nature and to God’s choice not to give them the extra grace necessary to remain good, though He could do so. But then sin is what God wants to happen. Why? Augustine writes that, “...the evil will that refused to keep to the order of its nature did not for that reason escape the laws of God who orders all things well. A picture may be beautiful when it has touches of black in appropriate places; in the same way the whole universe is beautiful, if one could see it as a whole, even with its sinners, though their ugliness is disgusting when they are

¹⁶ Rogers (2008) 43-52.

¹⁷ Josef Pieper, *The Concept of Sin*, trans. Edward T. Oakes, S.J. (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2001) 81.

viewed in themselves.”¹⁸ (Augustine makes a similar point specifically with regard to sinners filling out their appropriate level in the hierarchy of created being.¹⁹) I find the analogy of the painting very telling. The black paint is not an absence of paint. Today we would know that it appears black because of the way it absorbs the light. But it is *real* paint, put there by the artist, to achieve his artistic purposes. So the imagery fits very well with my claim that Augustine’s position here fails to treat sin as something that really should not happen and treats evil as a minimal sort of something. Instead, sin ought to happen and evil is a palpable “darkness” produced by the Creator as an essential part of the good creation.

Though he takes himself to be squarely in the Augustinian tradition, Anselm sees things differently. Sin ought not to happen and the evil of Sin is injustice where justice ought to be. It is not an infringement on divine omnipotence to say that God does not cause Sin. God *cannot* cause Sin, as that would be logically impossible. Sin according to Anselm is when the created agent wills against what God has willed that it should will. God *cannot* will that the created agent should will against what He has willed that it should will. Someone of a very different turn of mind from Anselm – Calvin, for example – can avoid this contradiction by saying that in God there are two wills, an overt will by which He issues commands, and a secret will, by which He causes His created agents to break those commands. On this view one could describe sin, as I did above, as disobedience to the overt command. It does not seem to have occurred to Anselm that God might so thoroughly deceive His created agents.²⁰ (More on this below.) Does Anselm then reject the foundational thesis of classical theism that God is the absolute creator of all that is? No. He proposes an extremely clever analysis of the mechanics of free choice whereby all of the existing elements in the choice, the agent, the will, the motivating desires, are from God. In a morally significant choice all that is up to the created agent is that one of a pair of god-given desires is successfully pursued rather than the other. But successfully pursuing one desire does not add any new *thing* to the universe. The “choice” is not a new being introduced to the universe by the activity of the free agent.

And “nothing” is really and truly just not anything. Anselm never tries to help explain Sin by appealing to the fact that the created agent is made from nothing. There is no deficient cause for Sin at all. There is no explanation for Sin in terms of preceding causes which lead

¹⁸ *City of God* XI. 23. I am following the Bettenson translation in the Penguin edition (1972).

¹⁹ Rogers (2008) 39-40.

²⁰ Rogers (2008) 89-90.

the agent to Sin rather than to persevere in the good. The Sin is simply the result of the created agent pursuing one god-given desire over another, when he really could have pursued the other. If the agent pursues the desire that ought not to be pursued at that time, then the agent abandons justice. The nothingness of evil is simply the absence of the justice which was abandoned by pursuing the wrong desire. The injustice is entirely due to the choice of the created agent, but it is simply the absence of justice, so there is no evil *thing* produced by the choice. Anselm, then, insists that the created agent bears ultimate responsibility for his choices, without thereby abandoning the important traditional position that all that exists is caused by God.²¹

On the other hand, he must allow the view that things happen in the universe which God does not cause, and which He does not want to happen; Sins. God permits Sin, and can incorporate the evil in His plan and produce a universe of tremendous value overall, but some things in this world are up to created agents and not to God. That there are created agents whom God “cannot” control is not an infringement on divine omnipotence. God cannot do the logically impossible, and a controlled, free agent is a logical impossibility. It was God who made the created

²¹ Rogers (2008) 108-109, 117-23. It seems to me that Anselm’s consistency in treating the nothing of evil as truly *nothing* is helpful in understanding his position on original sin, which position has elements which may help to make sense of the doctrine. Original sin is often described metaphorically as a disease or a stain inherited from our first parents. Anselm treats it differently. Our original parents desired justice. Had they not abandoned justice by choosing to pursue other desires instead, they would have kept that desire, and kept it in such a way that their children would receive it from them in the very biological process which brings them into being. How could that possibly work? Well, really, how would a non-lapsarian world have gone on? We do not know. Adam and Eve abandoned justice and, just as the children of parents who were once rich, but have squandered their wealth, do not inherit the lost wealth, we do not inherit the desire for justice. We have the inherent *ability* to be just, in that the will which pursues desires performs its function even in the fallen human being. We just don’t have the desire. Human beings who have reached the age of reason, but have not received the grace which restores the desire for justice, may properly be blamed for not being just. They ought to be just. And they could be just if they wanted to. On some standard versions of compatibilism this should be enough to explain how Adam’s sons and daughters can be blameworthy due to his sin. I am not a compatibilist. I do not think this does the job. And small children are left out of the calculation. More needs to be said, and Anselm does offer a much more developed, though still problematic, understanding. What I want to note here is just that Anselm’s insistence on the fact that the evil of sin is absolutely nothing, not a stain but a lack of justice, could prove an important piece in solving the difficult puzzle of original sin.

free agent, and who decided upon the system. Nonetheless, if, by divine sovereignty, we mean that God is in absolute control of absolutely everything – I take it this is what Augustine and Thomas *do* mean – then Anselm's view does propose a more restricted concept of divine sovereignty. If Sin happens, and if it is *really* against the will of God, then he has got to say this. But perhaps this is taking sin too seriously. The reality of Sin seems to be a cornerstone and non-negotiable point in Anselm's system. Maybe it would be better to hold, as the three theories described above suggest, that there is no Sin in Anselm's sense of the term. Perhaps we should agree that the overtly disobedient behavior of created agents is actually caused by God and is ultimately good in evil clothing.

I think there are several reasons why the Christian, at least, should side with Anselm. First, what of Anselm's argument that if God needs sin He is weak, and if He causes it without needing it, He is evil? None of the proponents of the three theories I describe above holds that God causes sin and evil arbitrarily. They say that He does it to bring some greater good out of it – the evolution of the human species, the Incarnation and atonement, the metaphysical perfection of the universe, etc. But there are problems with each of these justifications for God's causing sin. God could make human beings without evolution and God could make evolutionary processes without selfishness and aggression. If selfishness and aggression are really the divinely preferred traits for the evolutionary process – which I grant may be the case regarding the birds at my bird feeder – then it is hard to see them as bad. Augustine's claim that sinners are necessary to complete the order and beauty of the universe is odd and ad hoc. The Great Chain of Being requires a hierarchy of all the kinds of things that can fit together in one universe, but it does not require maimed and crippled instances of the kinds.²²

What of the Incarnation and atonement? Well, we do not know that the Incarnation would not have happened without the Fall. Atonement? Well, is atonement an intrinsic good? If the value of restoration to friendship with God lies in the friendship, then would it not have been better never to make God your enemy? If the value of atonement lies in a deeper understanding on our part of what friendship with God means precisely because we have experienced rebellion and separation, then God does not need the actual sin. The understanding is contingently dependent on the experience, but an omnipotent God could create the understanding without the experience. If the thought of what it

²² For a quick sketch of the Great Chain of Being see "The Medieval Approach to Aardvarks, Escalators, and God," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 27 (January, 1993) 63-68.

is like to rebel against God and be separated from Him is real, then God can create it without making us go through the actual sin. If there are other possible goods which result from sin, cannot the same argument be made? If they are not the sin, but rather the result of sin, cannot God produce them without producing the sin? If not, then God is weak.

It is true that if one takes “the defeat of sin” to be an intrinsic good – not good because of the wisdom or strength of character that it engenders or because of particular important good events following upon it, but good in itself – then perhaps the sin is absolutely necessary to the consequence. It is not the defeat of sin, if there is no sin. But how is the defeat of sin an intrinsic good? It cannot be because sin ought not to be since the claim here is that sin ought to be in order to allow the good of defeating it. And in what sense is sin “defeated”? The sin is caused by God who uses it as the necessary element in its own “defeat”. It has served its divinely ordained purpose. That does not seem like real defeat. It is a pretend defeat in that, from the outset, the struggle was only a mock battle in which God takes both sides.

This last point leads me to my main, and explicitly Christian, reason for embracing the reality of Sin. (This is in addition to the fact that I see with intuitive clarity that children *really* should not be abused. I see it with almost the degree of certitude with which I see that $2+2=4$, such that rejecting it would cast doubt on even my most trustworthy beliefs. But be that as it may. ...) If sin is needed, and wanted, and caused by God then the entire story of Christianity seems to be a sort of fiction. God may write Himself into the novel such that as a character He can speak to the other characters in the fiction, and tell them to do this and that, and that this or that pleases or displeases Him. But He is in total control and the characters will do and say all and only what He has them do and say. In the end a world of great value is produced – like a great novel – but it is a world which is the acting out of the one efficacious will of the single, divine author. If that is how it is, then isn't there something deeply deceptive about the fundamental teachings and practices of Christianity? We are told not to disobey God. But if we do disobey Him it is because He wanted us to and it is better that we did so. We are told, as I said early in this paper, that sin is more than bad behavior. It is rebellion against and separation from God. But, on these analyses, it isn't really rebellion against and separation from God, since what looked to be choosing against God is really God's pushing you away and holding you at arm's length for purposes of His own.

The central events in Christianity are the Incarnation and Resurrection, and the corresponding central events in the life of the individual Christian are repentance, forgiveness, and salvation. But how is repentance to work on these analyses – even bracketing the

Augustinian and Thomistic entailment that, since God is the cause of all choices, it is God directly causing the repentance for the sins He directly caused? This is especially troubling on the Fortunate Fall scenario. It would seem that in order to repent sincerely the agent must be deceived about the actual situation, lest he find himself saying, with Adam in *Paradise Lost*, "Full of doubt I stand, Whether I should repent me now of sin By me done, and occasioned ..." The Anselmian might say such a thing, seeing that God has brought good from the Sin which He *permitted*. But if sin is caused and wanted by God, then, if the created agent believes this, it is hard to see how he can be sorry at all. Nor should he be. But how can there be forgiveness without sincere repentance? Of course, on these analyses, there is no genuine wrong for God to forgive, since all is as it should be.

On the thesis that God wants and causes sin, should the preferred position be roughly this: A coherent understanding of Christian practice can be maintained as long as most Christians are subject to a fortunate deception such that they *believe* that sin is against the will of God and really should not happen? If the motive for embracing this approach is to insist upon absolute divine sovereignty, then the deception, too must be caused by God. Anselm would find that unbearable. He asked to have his two books on free will and the devil's sin bound together with, and preceded by, a third book, *On Truth*. In it he argues that God Himself is the Truth by which everything which is as it should be can be judged to be right. This includes the very essences of things.²³ Truth and "rightness" are ultimately the same, and God's will is the standard for every sort of rightness. Truth, then, is the standard for all value. Things are as they ought to be insofar as they conform to Truth. But what if, *per impossibile*, the standard itself were deceptive? Then there would be no objective value or rightness anywhere. The absolute sovereignty of God is defended at the cost of denying that He is the True and the Good.

The obvious response is that, in spite of all, God may be the True and the Good, just not in a way which we can understand. Thomas, with his doctrine of analogical language about God, can make that move. So perhaps God is the True and the Good, but in a way that is so distant from what we think of as true and good that He can deceive us and then punish us for what He has caused us to do. Anselm believes that our

²³ He starts with talk about propositions, which can be "true" or "right" in two ways, first simply by having a meaning – that is, by simply expressing a coherent meaning the proposition does a job it ought to do – and secondly by expressing what actually is the case. Then he moves to the truth or rightness of the senses, of essences, and of various other things, concluding with justice, which is a truth of the will, being "rightness of will preserved for its own sake."

language is used univocally of God and creatures, but Thomas, or one of his ilk, could say that Anselm's optimism about human reason is excessive. Perhaps we should give up on trying to understand – however feebly – the nature of God and His relation to creation. Or we could, like the three analyses of sin I described above, reject the existence of Sin as Anselm understands it, and allow that Christian belief and practice is rooted in deception. Or, lastly, we can give up on the claim that God is in absolute control of absolutely everything such that everything that happens happens because He wills it so. Anselm must make this last move, since he will not jettison the truthfulness of God and the reality of Sin. I suggest that this is the most wholesome move for the Christian.

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CHAPTER VIII

WAYS TWO AND THREE: THOMAS AQUINAS ON THE INTELLIGIBILITY OF BEING

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In Q2, article 3 of the first part of the *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas argues that we can in fact demonstrate God's existence, using only our natural reason (without resort to faith). His main argument in favor of this conclusion is an appeal to the authority of St. Paul's letter to the Romans 1:20. Aquinas considers three objections to his position:

1. The existence of God is an article of faith, revealed by the Scriptures, not a matter of rational proof.
2. We cannot know God's essence or nature (as Aquinas himself concedes). How can we prove the existence of an utterly unknown thing?
3. Since we cannot see God directly in this life (as, again, Aquinas would concede), we can know God only on the basis of His effects (i.e., creation). However, creation is finite, and God is infinite, and we cannot infer an infinite cause from a finite effect.

Aquinas responds to objection 1 by arguing that the existence of God is not an article of faith but a "preamble" of faith, a necessary presupposition of faith. Faith involves believing things because we are convinced that God has revealed them to us. Thus, faith presupposes that there exists a God who could be the source of such revelation.

In response to objection 2, Aquinas points out that we can infer the existence of something as the cause of things we do understand. We cannot prove that a being with nature G exists (where G = God's essence), since we do not know what G is, but we can prove that something exists that is the cause of everything else, and we can from this infer certain things about what the unknown G must be like (more about this later).

Aquinas agrees with objection 3 to this extent: perfect knowledge of God is not possible through the knowledge of his effects. Such perfect knowledge is available only to the blessed (angels and saints in heaven) who enjoy a direct vision of God. However, an imperfect but nonetheless valid knowledge of God is possible here and now.

Aquinas distinguishes between two kinds of proofs or “demonstrations”: a demonstration of the bare fact (*quia*), and a demonstration of the fact according to its reason (*propter quid*). The first kind of demonstration does not provide us with an explanation or scientific understanding of the fact that it is demonstrated, while the second kind does. A *quia* demonstration moves from known effects to a hypothesized cause, while a *propter quid* demonstration moves from known cause to known effect. The purpose of the *propter quid* demonstration is not to prove that something exists, but to explain why something exists, to lay bare the explanatory structure of the world. For example, if I explain how the build-up of electrical charge in clouds causes lightning, what I’ve accomplished is not a proof that lightning exists (we already knew that), but an explanation of why lightning exists.

The *quia* demonstrations are not like this. When a crime scene investigator infers the existence of a murderer from telltale signs at the scene, he is not explaining why the murder occurred. The crime scene may tell him nothing about the murderer’s motives or relationship to the victim. Instead, he is inferring that a cause of the visible signs (i.e., a murderer) must exist. Similarly, Aquinas’s demonstrations of God’s existence are all *quia* demonstrations, inferences leading from effects to a hypothetical cause.

A *quia* demonstration is not undeniable in the way that a mathematical proof or a logically impeccable scientific explanation are. If one proves a theorem in geometry, it is impossible to accept the axioms and definitions and deny the theorem without contradicting oneself. The conclusions of a *quia* demonstration are not inescapable in this same way. One can always simply refuse to posit a cause for the phenomena in question.

However, Aquinas is claiming that the *quia* demonstrations of God’s existence are good enough and strong enough to convince any perfectly reasonable inquirer. To refuse to accept the conclusion that God exists, given the demonstration, is to betray (Aquinas would say) an intellectual flaw, a regrettable insensitivity to good and sufficient reasons. When talking about Aquinas’s “proofs” of God’s existence, we should think of proof in a legal setting: proven beyond a *reasonable* doubt (not beyond all doubt).

So, in evaluating the proofs, we shouldn’t make the mistake of thinking that Aquinas is aiming too high (by pointing out, for example, that Aquinas’s proofs aren’t proofs in a deductive or mathematical sense), or that he is aiming too low (by assuming that all that he is trying to establish is that one can, if one chooses, believe in God without being unreasonable).

One more thing to bear in mind when reading the five ways in the *Summa Theologica* (Q2, article 3): the *Summa* was intended as an *introductory* textbook in *sacred doctrine*. It would be a mistake to expect that we would find here the most complete and rigorous versions of the proofs that Aquinas was capable of producing. These are instead very brief, even cursory, abstracts of the actual proofs. For the details, we need to refer to other texts of Aquinas (especially the *Summa Contra Gentiles* and *On Being and Essence*), and to the texts upon which Aquinas is relying (especially those of Avicenna and Maimonides). For example, the first and third ways are clearly drawn from Maimonides, and the second from Avicenna.

THE SECOND WAY (FROM EFFICIENT CAUSATION)

In moving from the First Way to the Second, the focus of the argument shifts from the explanation of change to the explanation of the existence of things. Like the first way, Aquinas is concerned with the present explanation of the present existence of things. Aquinas thinks that it is possible that I was caused to exist by my father, and he by his father, and so on ad infinitum. Aquinas would call such a series a chain of “accidental” causes, since my father caused me to exist by virtue of being a man, and not by virtue of being the son of his father or the grandson of his grandfather, or anything of the kind. What Aquinas and Avicenna are interested in explaining is why I exist (as a man) here and now.

Here are the bare bones of the argument:

1. Something exists (whose nature is not identical to its own act of existence).
2. Unless a thing’s nature is identical to its act of existence, its existence must have a cause (an “efficient cause”).
3. So, there is a cause of the existence of the thing mentioned in 1.
4. Nothing causes itself to exist.
5. Therefore, the thing mentioned in 1 is caused to exist by something else.
6. If this cause does not have a nature identical to its own act of existence, then it too must have a cause (from 2).
7. The chain of causes implied by 1-6 cannot extend to infinity.
8. Therefore, there must exist a thing whose nature is identical to its own act of existence, which is the ultimate cause of the thing mentioned in 1.

This argument implicitly assumes the real distinction between essence and existence, which I will discuss a little later. Something is contingent if its nature is not identical to its own act of existence. In the case of contingent things, we can distinguish between the thing's nature (what it is) and the fact of its existence (that it is). There is in this case a real composition of essence and existence: existence is something that happens to the essence (thought of as a bare possibility of a being of a certain kind), and the essence shapes or modifies the act of existence, making the thing's existence the existence of a thing of a particular nature. A non-contingent or necessary being is one whose very nature is identical to its existence. Nothing modifies or limits the existence of the thing: its existence is a "pure" existence, unmodified or qualified. There is no way of specifying the abstract nature of such a thing so as to consider its existence merely possible: no mere possibility is actualized by the thing's existence. Its possibility consists in the fact that it actually exists.

Aquinas does not assume that a necessary being exists. He does not even assume that it is possible that such a being exists (if he did, he would have had recourse to the modal version of Anselm's ontological argument), nor even that we can conceive of what such a necessary being would be like. He admits that the nature of such a necessary being is incomprehensible to us. Nonetheless, all five ways in the end are designed to establish (on the basis of the principles of causation) that such a necessary being must exist.

There are two points in the argument that invite the attack of the skeptic: steps 2 and 7. As I mentioned above, the skeptic can always deny the necessity of postulating a cause of the existence of something (by denying premise 2). Aquinas cannot show that there is anything illogical or self-contradictory about such a denial. Nonetheless, Aquinas would claim (plausibly, I think) that such a denial is not perfectly rational. A perfectly rational person always expects to find a cause in such cases. Even the atheist operates this way when the existence of God is not at stake. The Thomist can accuse the atheist or agnostic here of "special pleading": denying a principle in this context that he or she would never deny in other contexts.

What about premise 7? Why couldn't there be an infinite regress of causes? Again, we must remember that Aquinas is denying the existence of an infinite chain of *essential* causes, not of merely *accidental* ones. Aquinas would argue that a chain of causes going backward in time could be infinite, since it would be a chain of merely accidental causes. The real cause of the existence of each thing in the chain would be the timeless God: the previous members of the chain would be merely instruments used by God. Aquinas clarifies what he

means here by means of his hammer illustration. Consider a shoemaker who has made a pair of shoes. The shoemaker and his craft is the essential efficient cause of the existence of the pair of shoes. Let's suppose that the use of a hammer is an indispensable part of the shoemaker's craft. Then the involvement of at least one hammer would be part of the essential cause. However, the number of hammers would not be. Suppose that the shoemaker used several hammers in making this pair, because the first hammer wore out, the second was lost, the third borrowed by a neighbor, and so on. The number of hammers involved makes no difference to the origin of the shoes. Similarly, the number of ancestors that a person has is only an accidental feature of his cause, since human parents are only instruments God uses in causing the existence of particular men. God could have created an infinitely old universe, using infinitely many ancestors as instruments in the creation of each human being without violating the principle in premise 7, since the chain of essential causation would in each case terminate in God.

Suppose the skeptic believes that my present existence is *essentially* caused by my own past existence, and, more remotely, by the past existence of my ancestors. In this case, Aquinas would deny that the causal chain could be infinite, even if it does go back in time. Thus, the important distinction is between essential causation and accidental causation, not between simultaneous causation and causation through time. Aquinas assumes that causation through time is always accidental causation, since he can't accept that a past event could be the essential cause of a present event (like my present existence). However, if a skeptic denies this and argues that we do receive our present existence from the past (by a kind of "inertia of existence" principle: whatever exists tends to go on existing), then Aquinas will deny that this chain of existence-receptions can go back to infinity, again because such a chain would fail to explain why anything in the chain (and the chain as a whole) has come to exist.

THE THIRD WAY

This is almost word-for-word a translation of an argument of Maimonides in *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Here is my reconstruction of the argument:

1. If everything that exists is potentially non-existent, then it is possible for everything to cease to exist simultaneously (= an event of cosmic annihilation).
2. Whatever is possible will, given an infinite amount of time, inevitably happen at least once.

3. So, if there has been an infinite amount of time, and if everything that exists is potentially non-existent, then an event of cosmic annihilation has already happened at least once.

4. Once an event of cosmic annihilation has occurred, nothing whatsoever will ever afterward come into existence, since nothing comes from nothing.

5. So, if there has been an infinite amount of time, and if everything that exists is potentially non-existent, then nothing whatsoever now exists.

6. But, obviously, there are things that do now exist.

7. So, if there has been an infinite amount of time, then there is at least one thing that exists that is not potentially non-existent (i.e., something that exists necessarily and eternally).

The argument implicitly proposes a dilemma for the agnostic: either there has been an infinite amount of time, or not. If there has, the argument establishes the existence of a necessary being. If there hasn't been an infinite amount of time, then there must exist a necessary and timeless being that can causally explain the beginning of time. So, either way, a necessary being must exist.

Aquinas adds a second stage to Maimonides's argument. He wants to establish not only the existence of a necessary being, but of a necessary being that has existence "in and of itself", that doesn't derive its necessary existence from something else. Here again Aquinas has recourse to his no-infinite-regress assumption: the chain of causation explaining why derivatively necessary beings are necessary must terminate in a thing that is non-derivatively necessary, and this being will be God (a being whose essence is its existence).

INFINITELY COMPLEX ESSENCES

Aristotelians assume that no essence can be infinitely complex. We might try to gloss this as 'no essence contains infinitely many parts.' That, however, would be a mistake: an essence can be infinitely broad (with infinitely many, distinct, non-overlapping parts), but it can't be infinitely deep, in the following sense. The essence cannot have a proper part p_1 that contains a proper part p_2 that contains..., ad infinitum. If it did, it would be unintelligible in itself. No one could ever understand the essence, even if they had infinitely many moments in which to learn and an infinite memory in which to store all the facts, since even a partial understanding of the essence would be impossible. In order to understand an essence *partially*, the partial understanding must be part of a potentially infinite series of states of partial understanding that

approaches complete understanding in the limit. However, if the essence is infinitely deep, then one never approaches complete understanding, even as a limit, since there is always some part the understanding of which is infinitely remote. This distinction between infinite depth and breadth, and its importance for the cosmological argument, was first noted by Barry Miller (1992).

THE SECOND WAY REVISITED

The Second Way argues that there must be a first cause whose essence is existence, on the grounds that every finite thing (thing whose essence is not identical to existence itself) has a *per se* cause, and no *per se* causal regress can be infinite. A *per se* causal series cannot be infinite, since this would entail that the essence of each member of the series is infinitely deep and so unintelligible.

This raises two challenges: (a) why think that all finite things have a cause at all (*per se* or *per accidens*)? and (b) why think that all finite things have *per se* causes (i.e., why couldn't there be a *per accidens* infinite regress, with no *per se* causes at all)?

Why Must Finite Things Have a Cause at All?

The Aristotelian answer to question (i) turns on the usual axiom of intelligibility: everything in reality is intelligible in itself (although not necessarily intelligible to us). In addition, we would need the following assumptions:

(1) If a finite being is contingent (it might not have existed), and it has no cause whatsoever (not even *per accidens*), then it is unintelligible in itself.

(2) If a finite being is necessary, then it must either be necessary in itself, or else it has a cause from which it derives its necessity.

(3) No finite being is necessary in itself.

You may recognize assumption (2) from the second part of the Third Way. This is one way in which the Third Way patches a hole in the second way.

Why Must There Be per se Causes for All Finite Things?

Now, let's turn to question (b). Why couldn't there be causes in every case but not *per se* causes? In other words, why couldn't there be an infinite *per accidens* regress with no *per se* cause at all? Why do we

need *per se* causes? The Aristotelian has two possible responses. One might simply assert that a contingent thing is not intelligible in itself unless it has a *per se* cause, that is, if the very essence of the thing includes its being caused by something in some way. However, there is a second, more interesting response, one involving the Third Way.

BRINGING IN THE THIRD WAY

Suppose there is an infinite *per accidens* regress, and each thing in the series has no *per se* cause. Now, just as there can be no *per se* infinite causal regress, there also cannot be a *per se* infinite causal progress. That is, it cannot be the case that each thing is such that it essentially has a certain effect, and that effect essentially has a further effect, and so on ad infinitum. Such an infinite progress would also require each thing to have an essence that's infinitely deep and so unintelligible. Thus, in the world we're imagining, no effect has any cause essentially, and no cause has any effect essentially. All of the causal connections are accidental in both directions. (Let's call this a doubly accidental series.)

This is where the Third Way comes in again. There are two cases to consider:

- (A) at some point in the causal regress, we reach a cause that exists necessarily, or
- (B) every cause in the regress is contingent.

Why Must There Be a Necessary Being? (Why not case B?)

The first part of the Third Way is designed to rule out case (B). Everything that exists, we're now assuming, is both contingent and dependent on a thoroughly accidental infinite causal series. There is, by hypothesis, no explanation of why all of the causes in that series were successful in the actual world in producing their effects. It is, therefore, an infinitely large coincidence that each series has reached its current position.

Maimonides and Aquinas make this point by means of a very vivid picture: they suggest that at some point in the infinite past it is very likely that all causal lines would have 'petered out' simultaneously, resulting in an empty world from which there could be no recovery. As many critics have pointed out, this seems to commit the fallacy of composition: if it's possible for each thing to cease to exist, then it's also possible for all of them to cease to exist simultaneously. However, argument doesn't depend on this extreme hypothesis. All that Aquinas

needed to point out was the infinitely large coincidence involved in the eternal, accidental perpetuation of *each* doubly accidental causal series, taken individually.

When we reconstruct the Maimonides/Aquinas argument in terms of modern probability theory, the argument does require two additional assumptions: (i) that there have been (throughout history) only finitely many causal chains, and (ii) that there be a finite, nonzero probability for each chain to expire at each link, with the probability of expiration of any link being independent of the probabilities of expiration for any of the later links. If there had been an infinite number of chains, then there might be a finite, non-zero probability that a finite number of causal chains survive an infinite series of opportunities to expire. This would also be the case of all but finitely many of the links in the chain had either a zero or infinitesimal chance of not occurring. Formally, here is the argument:

1. Necessarily, any infinite causal chain is contingent in both directions (from cause to effect and effect to cause).
2. Necessarily, if an infinite causal chain is contingent in the cause-to-effect direction, then there is, for each link in the chain a finite, nonzero probability of the cause's failing to produce the effect, and these probabilities are mutually independent.
3. The set of all infinite causal chains that have ever existed in the history of the world is finite in number.
4. Therefore, the probability of the existence at any time of any infinite causal chain that is contingent in either direction is either zero or infinitely close to zero.

It might be thought that Aristotelians like Maimonides and Aquinas would have an argument for premise 3, given their rejection of the possibility of actual infinities. However, the falsity of premise 3 would not require that infinitely many chains should exist at any one time. Imagine, for example, a world in which the number of chains increases exponentially as time recedes into the past. In such a world, the number of chains that exist at some time or other is infinite, even though there are never more than a finite number in existence. Moreover, even if we assume that the universe has a finite bound on its size, this would not entail a finite bound on the number of simultaneous causal chains unless there was also a finite bound on the smallest possible size for a causal agent. We could, for example, imagine a world of fixed and finite size, in which the causal agents get smaller and smaller the farther back in time one goes. So, premise 3 will have to

stand as an independent assumption of the proof, and a potential weak point.

Why Must There Be a Being That Is Necessary in Itself?

So, in order to avoid such coincidences, we must conclude that each causal regress reaches, in a finite number of steps, some necessary being. As I said above, necessary beings are of two kinds: those that are necessary in themselves, and those that derive their necessity from their causes (the accidentally necessary). Aquinas assumes that the only thing that could be necessary in itself is something that is identical to its own existence (i.e., God). So, to reach the conclusion that God exists, Aquinas must rule out the possibility of an infinite regress of accidentally necessary things. This is what he attempts to do in the second part of the Third Way.

Suppose for contradiction that there were such an infinite regress of accidentally necessary beings. To be accidentally necessary, it must be the case that, *per impossibile*, if the being's cause had been absent, it would not have been necessary itself (it, too, could have failed to exist). If so, it seems obvious that the existence of the whole regress must then be contingent, since we can conceive of each being as not existing because we are simultaneously conceiving of its cause as also not existing. But if the whole series is contingent, then each member of the series must be contingent. This contradicts our assumption that each was (accidentally) necessary. So, such an infinite regress of accidental necessity must be impossible.

If so, any accidentally necessary being must derive its necessity ultimately from some being that is necessary in itself.

A Formal Version of the Argument

1. The Distinction between Per Se and Accidental Infinite Regresses

a. Some Assumptions

A1. If the essence of x includes x's being caused by some y qua F, then the essence of x includes the essence of y.

A2. If the essence of x includes y, and the essence of y includes z, then the essence of x includes z.

A3. If x is actual, and the essence of x includes y, then y is also actual.

A4. There are no cases of circular causation or self-causation.

A5. If x is caused by y qua F , then the essence of y is not infinitely deep (i.e., there are no infinitely long chains of parts of parts of the essence of y).

b. Definition of Per Se Infinite Regress

A bad (*per se*) infinite regress would result from the following two assumptions:

1. Some x is caused by some y qua F (where x and y are both actual).
2. For every x and y , if x is caused by y qua F , then the essence of y (or the essence of the accident of y 's being F) includes its being caused by some z qua F .

c. Per Se Infinite Regresses are Impossible

Theorem 1. Assumptions 1 and 2 (the postulation of a *per se* infinite regress) are inconsistent with A1-A5. Proof:

3. Assume that x_1 is caused by x_2 qua F , and x_1 and x_2 are both actual (From 1)
4. The essence of x_2 includes x_2 's being caused by some x_3 qua F . (From 2, 3)
5. The essence of x_2 includes x_3 . (From 4, A1)
6. x_3 is actual. (From 3, 5, and A3)
7. x_2 's being caused by x_3 qua F is actual, i.e., x_2 is caused by x_3 qua F (From 1, 2, A3)
8. x_3 is not identical with x_1 or x_2 (From 7, A4).
9. By repeating lines 3-8, we can generate an infinite series of essences, each of which is part of its predecessor, of the form: x_n is caused by x_{n+1} qua F . (Using A2)
10. Thus, the essence of x_2 is infinitely complex (infinitely deep in its compositional structure).
11. However, no essence is infinitely complex. (From A5) Contradiction.
12. Therefore, *per se* infinite regresses (as expressed by 1 and 2) are impossible.

d. The Possibility of Accidental Infinite Regresses

One can have an accidental infinite regress. For example, the following is possible:

(x_1 is caused by x_2 qua F) & (x_2 is caused by x_3 qua F) & ..., so long as each succeeding step is not part of the essence of its predecessor.

In fact, it is even possible that an accidental infinite regress exist as a matter of necessity. The following is possible:

(Necessary Accidental Regress) Necessarily, for all x and y , if (x is caused by y qua F), then there is some z such that (y is caused by z qua F).

In fact, Aristotle believes that NAR is true in cases where F is 'man'. It is a matter of physical necessity that man have begotten man in infinitely many past cycles (since men cannot be spontaneously generated from mud, as Aristotle thought certain maggots and worms could be). However, Aristotle would have denied that it was part of the essence of man that this should be so.

Wherever there is an accidental necessity of this kind, there must be some causal explanation of why the accidental fact (in this case, an infinite regress) is necessary. For Aristotle, this is where God comes in. God is responsible for the fact that the universe has successfully undergone infinitely many cycles in the past. Without that divine guarantee, there would be no reason for men to exist in the present, and hence no basis for the truth of NAR (since, for Aristotle, all necessities of this kind have to be anchored in some real, currently existing kind).

2. An Aristotelian First Cause Argument (A Synthesis of Ways Two and Three)

Some more axioms:

A6. If x is caused by y , then there is some property F such that x is caused by y qua F.

A7. If y is F accidentally and not essentially (i.e., it is not part of the essence of y to be F), then the accident of y 's *being F* exists, and there must be some z and some G such that the essence of the accident of y 's *being F* includes that it (the accident) be caused by z qua G.

A8. If (i) y is F, (ii) it is part of the essence of y to be F, and (iii) the essence of y is not Existence itself, then there must be some z and some G such that the essence of y includes y 's being caused by z qua G.

A9. If the essence of z is Existence itself, then z is uncaused.

Theorem 2: if there is some x and y such that x is caused by y , then there is some z such that the essence of z is Existence itself, and z is uncaused.

Proof.

1. Assume, for conditional proof, that x_1 is caused by x_2 .
2. So, x_1 is caused by x_2 qua F_2 . (By 1, A6)
3. There are three cases: (i) x_2 is F_2 accidentally, (ii) x_2 is F_2 essentially, but the essence of x_2 is not Existence and (iii) the essence of x_2 is Existence. In case (iii), the theorem is proved, so we need consider only cases (i) and (ii).
4. In both cases, there is some x_3 and F_3 such that the essence of the accident of x_2 's being F_2 (case ii) or the essence of x_2 itself (case iii) includes its being caused by x_3 qua F_3 .
5. If $F_2 = F_3$, and nothing that is F_2 has Existence as its essence, then lines 2-4 can be used to show that for any x and y such that x is caused by y qua F_2 , then the essence of y includes its being caused by some other F_2 .
6. Thus, if $F_2 = F_3$, and nothing has Existence as its essence, then lines 2-4 would lead to a *per se* infinite regress.
7. A *per se* infinite regress is impossible. So, either something has Existence as its essence (and the theorem is proved), or $F_2 \neq F_3$. (from 6, Theorem 1)
8. x_3 is F_3 (by 4, A1, A3)
9. Again, we have three cases, of which we need consider only two: x_3 is F_3 accidentally or x_3 is F_3 essentially.
10. In either case, there is some x_4 and F_4 such that..., etc.
11. Thus, 1-10 generates an infinite regress of conditions of the form: the essence of x_n includes x_n 's being caused by x_{n+1} qua F_{n+1} .
12. If $i \neq j$, then $F_i \neq F_j$, since if $F_i = F_j$, then, by the transitivity of essence inclusion (A2), the essence of x_i includes x_i 's being caused by x_j qua F_i , which would generate another *per se* infinite regress.
13. Thus, the essence of x_2 is infinitely deep, by including infinitely many distinct parts, each nested within the last (one corresponding to a different F_i , for every number i).
14. No essence can be infinitely deep. (A5) Contradiction (with 13).
15. Thus, we must at some point reach an instance of case (iii), an x such that x 's essence is Existence.
16. This x is uncaused. (by A9)

There is another reason that Aristotle could give for rejecting the infinite regress in line 12: Aristotle believes that nature contains only finitely many natures. At some point, the set of natures would be exhausted, forcing either a circle or an uncaused First Cause.

The crucial assumptions of this argument are the two essential causal principles, A7 and A8. A7 is pretty plausible, since we might take it as part of the very definition of an accidental property of a thing that that thing has been caused by something to have the accidental property. So, everything depends on A8, which I take to be the assumption that underlies Aquinas's Second Way (the way of efficient causation). Each thing other than God is such that its essence includes its being caused to exist. It is not enough for the Second Way that everything other than God be caused, or even that it be necessary that everything other than God be caused. (However, we could interpret the Third Way as Aquinas's attempt to deal with just this doubt: what if efficient causality was a necessary attribute of every finite thing, but not essential to each of them?)

The real distinction between essence and existence in everything except God is supposed to close the gap between principles A7 and A8. Al-Farabi, ibn Sina and Aquinas are arguing that, whenever a finite thing exists, there is something 'accidental' going on: the accidental combination of real existence with that thing's individual essence (nature or definition).

For material things, there is a precursor for this real distinction in Aristotle himself: the distinction between form and matter. Every material being consists in some matter to which a substantial form has "happened" accidentally. The matter by itself doesn't guarantee that it would be formed into a single, coherent natural substance. The form has to be "added" to the matter, in something like the way accidents are "added" to natural substances. Thus, a principle like A8 would be pretty plausible for material substances (compounds of form and matter). We might think that it is part of the very essence of every kind of material substance that that substance's existence (the appropriate informing of its matter) be caused by something.

Aristotle himself takes his first cause argument to establish the existence of at least one immaterial Intellect, an intellect that is pure form, without any constituent matter. Aristotle would imagine that such an Intellect simply is, and thus has no need of any cause.

However, Aristotle cannot prove that there is just one such intellect (in fact, at some points he seems to take seriously that there might be as many as fifty of them, each corresponding to a different celestial sphere). In addition, Aristotle cannot prove that his Intellectual First Causes have all the characteristics Jews, Christians and Muslims

would associate with being God: omnipotence, omniscience, perfect goodness, and so on. At best, the Aristotelian could argue that the simplest hypothesis would be one that posits a single, infinitely powerful God, and he could appeal to the orderliness of nature (as Plato did) to argue for God's wisdom and goodness.

Al-Farabi, ibn Sina and Aquinas wanted to go farther. Aquinas in particular tried to prove that the First Cause is a being of absolute perfection. For this, he required the stronger assumption (A8) that anything other than absolute and simple Existence must have a cause.

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CHAPTER IX

THE ROLE OF IMAGINATION IN ATTAINING THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

TATYANA BORODAI

1. Certain concepts change their meaning with time. For example, in the works of Greek, Roman, and medieval writers, the word “passion” meant not only falling in love, but also illness, suffering and passivity. But in the Romantic age, being passionate became a necessary quality of any person living a full life. The concept of novelty in antiquity was burdened with negative connotations, for the “golden age” of happiness was perceived as being in the past. For Romans to seek something new, that is *rerum novarum studere*, meant to plot against the state. So the desire for the new was legally persecuted. A philosopher, historian, or poet tried to show that the thoughts he offered to his readers went back to antiquity or were sufficiently old. In antiquity, plagiarism was not considered to be a fault. On the contrary, it was considered good manners to ascribe your own original thought to someone in the past, for if the thought is fresh, its authority is negligible. The connotations of this concept started to change from negative to positive with the appearance of the New Testament: now the universal overturn was interpreted not as disastrous, but as bringing salvation; the “new heaven” and the “new earth,” the “young wine,” the “new life” became the desired promise.

In the realm of philosophy the notions of “simplicity” and “infinity” underwent similar changes. For ancient and medieval thinkers, “simple” beings were seen as eternal and divine. In the traditional system of philosophical notions, the soul is simpler than the body, the spirit is simpler than the soul, and only God himself is truly simple. In science, understanding moves from complexity to simplicity; therefore a man who seeks the salvation of his soul should move in the same direction. The notion of “infinite” for Plato and Aristotle meant indefinite, imperfect, not finished and therefore not fully real; the more definite something is, the better and higher it is. Thus, the ultimate cause of being limited, of every definiteness is God himself, the ultimate *peras* and *finis*. In the early modern period we encounter the opposite perception of this concept.

The change in the perception of many similar notions does not come as the result of the natural changes in the meaning of words, the natural development of a language. It manifests a general change in world-view. In most of these cases this fundamental change took place

during the turn from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern period – a change that took a long time, from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries.

My subject in this essay is the reappraisal of the concept of “imagination” in general and “creative imagination” in particular. My starting point is the following: in antiquity and the Middle Ages¹ imagination was considered to be one of the cognitive faculties of the soul, common for both men and animals. It was evaluated as either neutral (Aristotle, Stoics, Augustine, Proclus) or negative (Plato, Plotinus, Origenists). In the early modern period (Renaissance to the seventeenth century), and especially in modern times (from Kant to the present), imagination in general, and the productive or creative imagination in particular, became the central cognitive faculty of a human being, crucial for the fulfillment of a man as a free creative person.

I will not dwell on or illustrate this last point because of its obvious nature. I will only give you two examples. David Hume in his *A Treatise of Human Nature* describes the human mind and its cognitive mechanism exactly the same way as Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas described the work of imagination. Hume was probably the first prominent philosopher for whom imagination (in its broad sense as both the sensual impressions or the images from memory, and ideas of the mind) constitutes the thinking mind. In other words, it is the essential part of the human being as an *animal rationale*. Second, I would like to refer to a remarkable treatise of J. Golosovker, *Imaginative Absolute*, where the superiority of imagination is seen not only in cognition, but also in the moral character and the actual being (in a metaphysical and theological sense) of a person. To be more exact, the superiority of imagination in the formation and development of a person towards perfection and divinity is expressed here more directly than anywhere else. The author affirms not only the gnoseological but also the ontological and moral pre-eminence of the creative imagination. So the two hundred years between Hume and Golosovker witnessed the flourishing of the development of the concept of imagination, which penetrated philosophy, theology, pedagogy, art and other strongholds of European culture.

I will here try to briefly outline the development of imagination from antiquity to the thirteenth century and the change in the perception of the concept of imagination that happens in the fourteenth century. A noticeable landmark in this change is the treatise of Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*. This work was the first to start the new,

¹ Approximately up to the thirteenth century, i.e., including Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure.

meditative genre of Christian literature. This year I translated an earlier Latin text, which only recently has been published in a critical Latin edition and therefore only recently has become part of the academic discourse. This Latin text is called *Meditationes vitae Christi* and is ascribed in the majority of manuscripts (incorrectly) to St. Bonaventure.² It was written by a Franciscan monk twenty-five years before the *Imitation* appeared, and it seems to have been the first in the genre of “meditative” Christian literature. According to its editor this treatise was immensely popular and was the most widely read book in the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries after *The Little Flowers* by St. Francis of Assisi. It was together with the other books on the desks of both St. Thomas More and St. Ignatius of Loyola. In my opinion, this treatise marks the turning point in the perception of imagination in Europe, and I would like to dwell on this point in my paper.

2. Both the sociology of religion and the history of philosophy justifiably treat Classical philosophy as a rational version of the religion of salvation. Max Weber explains the denial of the world in Platonic teachings along those lines.³ Pierre Hadot refers to the ascetic and cathartic nature of philosophical discourse in all the Classical schools. In these schools the way of salvation can be reached by attaining knowledge. True knowledge is not the accumulation of external facts or the means to obtain power over nature and people,⁴ but is a change and a new forming (*informatio*) of the learning subject. During the act of cognition the one who is learning and the object of learning are one and the same. The thinking soul acquires the form of what it thinks about.⁵ When a man thinks about things unchangeable and eternal (for example, demonstrates a theorem in mathematics) he becomes a partaker of eternity. He overcomes the fluid and transitory character of the physical world and in the end he tramples down death. For classical philosophers

² Sarah McNamer, “The Pseudo-Bonaventure *Meditationes vitae Christi*: opus integrum,” *Franciscan Studies* 55 (1998), p. 253.

³ Max Weber “The theory of levels and directions of the religious rejection of the world,” from *Max Weber. Selected Works*. Moscow, 1994, pp. 30-31.

⁴ Unlike the modern period, when the definition of Bacon, *Scientia potentia est*, and the definition by Karl Marx, “Science is the productive force,” became the key notions.

⁵ Parmenides, “To think and to be is the same;” Aristotle, *Simile simili cognoscitur* (*De an.* 1.2); for Plato the reasoning soul grazes on the wonderful meadows of comprehensible reality; for Aristotle, in the act of thinking, the reasoning part of the soul takes the shape of what it thinks about.

from Thales⁶ to Seneca,⁷ knowledge is a way of salvation and a reason for living.

The more elevated the subject is, the more knowledge acquires real and true character. The empirical cognition of the visible and touchable things in time and space does not constitute true knowledge, and it is not true science (*episteme*); for Plato this type of knowledge is opinion (*doxa*), for Aristotle experience (*empeiria*) or craftsmanship (*techne*). The practical knowledge acquired by means of exercise forms “practical science,” that is, ethics and politics; according to Aristotle, this practical science is necessary for achieving happiness, which is the ultimate goal of learning. At the same time it is not enough for true happiness (*eudaimonia*) because the latter can be obtained only through contemplation (*theoria*), i.e., through theoretical science. According to Plato, only those who see ideas with the help of their mind are men of virtue; i.e., practical philosophy cannot exist without theoretical philosophy, therefore a man ignorant in geometry can never become truly just, pious, brave, or happy. For both philosophers, the highest form of cognition is “theory,” that is, contemplation, “seeing with one’s mind.” Both Plato and Aristotle call the principal theoretical knowledge “theology” – “knowing of God.” Its subject is the forms (*eide*) and first principles (*archai*) of everything that exists. The subject is invisible, untouchable, unchangeable, eternal, self-identical and simple. It is either God himself, or what is perceived by pure mind, that is, Mind and Spirit (*nous*), which comes closest to the unknowable God.

3. In the seventh book of *The Republic*, Plato offers the correct way of bringing up a human person, i.e., a ladder of sciences which leads to true knowledge and thus to happiness and the salvation of the soul. Children should be taught music in order to harmonize and bring order to the soul by means of rhythm; then they should be taught geometry, in order to teach the soul to think without relying on sensual experience. Then from geometry, based on spatial imagination (*phantasia*), one should proceed to arithmetic in order to cleanse the mind from the representations of imagination. And it is only then that

⁶ Thales is thought to be the first philosopher because, according to the tradition, he was the first man to prove a mathematical theorem (about the equality of the triangles). By so doing, he discovered a wholly new type of knowledge – unchangeable, universal, and necessary.

⁷ Seneca, for example, calls for one to spend less time working (*negotium*), and during the spare time (*otium*) not to eat too much, but to study science. This elevates the soul and allows it to leave behind the body, “this heavy bag, filled with food,” and to join the stars in the blissful dance (*Quaestiones naturales* I. 1).

the highest level of knowledge is achieved, that is dialectic, the study of the Divine. It is also more or less along these lines that the progression in learning and human self-perfection is described in *The Seventh Letter*.⁸

Learning is the most important thing in one's life. Neither virtue and happiness within earthly life nor bliss in the "heavenly motherland of the soul" after death can be achieved without knowledge. Sin is the result of ignorance, of the unawareness of good ("Nobody sins freely"). Knowledge is gained by way of cleansing (*katharsis*): Plato's way to knowledge is a negative one. One should begin by abstaining from meat, wine, idle talking and physical love in order to achieve at the end the apophatic theology, as described in *Parmenides*. Alongside the cathartic way of attaining knowledge, Plato looks at the less important way – the positive one. Here we speak about exercising the reasoning part of the soul in music, geometry, arithmetic, and dialectic (exercise in Greek is *askesis*, so there is an ascetic way to God in Platonic terms). A philosopher strengthens his soul by means of exercises the same way an athlete strengthens his body.

On the other hand, in a sense one need not struggle to obtain the subject of knowledge – it is never too far, for knowledge is innate. If the subject of knowledge, i.e., immaterial Form, were not inside the soul, the person who tries to achieve knowledge would not have existed, since the spiritual, comprehensible Essence forms the source and heart of our being. We are unable to see it, because "the eyes of our soul are covered with dirt" and are not transparent for the light of the Mind. Cognition consists in cleansing the eyes which are the windows of the soul: first one needs to clean them from sensuality, then from the representations of imagination, then from discursive reasoning (*logismos* means reasoning with words, both said and silent, *noesis ex akolouthias* means reasoning with conclusions and arguments, *dianoia* "the speechless conversation of the soul with itself"). Unless one cleanses one's mind from pictures of the imagination (*phantasmata*) it is not possible to achieve the knowledge of God, which in its turn forms the aim and meaning of life for a reasoning soul.

4. In his dialogues *Philebus* and *Sophist*, Plato looks at the connection between imagination (*phantasia*), will (*to boulesthai*) and pleasure (*hedone*). The imagination is the source of delusion and lie –

⁸ "For everything that exists there are three instruments by which the knowledge of it is necessarily imparted; fourth, there is the knowledge itself, and, as fifth, we must count the thing itself which is known and truly exists. The first is the name, the second the definition, the third, the image, and the fourth the knowledge" (342a-343b).

both in theoretical knowledge and practical (moral evil). In *Philebus* Socrates likens the human soul to a book. Two small masters (*demiourgoi*) inhabit the soul: one is a scribe, and the other a painter. When we see and touch anything, the scribe writes his comment into a book – “This is a tree”, or “This is a cliff” – while the painter depicts a corresponding picture (38c-39c). The sensuous impression is vague, but not deceitful. Deceit enters the soul when the scribe writes untrue judgment, and the painter distorts the image. The reason for distortion lies in the wish for pleasure. Every person wants to be good, strong, handsome and rich. Thus every person has a better judgment and image of himself than he actually is, and a worse picture of others.⁹ The same happens in theoretical cognition – a person tends to see what he wants in things. For example, in order to get pleasure from thinking himself to be wise and intelligent, he tends to run ahead and equate the unknown with what he already knows. The same is true of visual art and poetry: an artist does not convey true beauty and proportionality of things and events, but distorts truth in order to convey illusion, which brings pleasure to him and his viewers (*Republic* VII).

This is the reason why all “mimetic arts” based on imagination (sculpture, painting, epic, and tragic poetry) are false and harmful. Here Plato uses the word *phantasia* in the same way it is used in modern language – to denote an imaginative, virtual world (*Sophist* 235e-236c). Such products of artistic imagination are illusionary ghosts, which are harmful for both the creators and the consumers: they immerse the soul in deceit, in other words, into obscurity and evil. Therefore there should be no place for artists and poets in a properly organized state.

Imagination is the realm of pleasure. Bodily pleasures, as explained in *Philebus*, are transient: as long as the desires – for example, the desire to eat or drink – are fulfilled, they end. The pleasures of the soul last longer and are more intense due to memory and imagination, for the soul remembers the pleasures once felt and foresees possible future pleasures.¹⁰ Later the Stoics, for whom freedom from passion (*apatheia*) was the ultimate goal of life, would consider imagination (along with vile pleasures) to be the main obstacle in the way of achieving it. According to Seneca (*On Anger*), imagination nourishes two basic passions – fear and hope, compelling a person to live either in the past or in the future, but not in the present, which is the human vocation from God.

⁹ Plato sees the origin of laughter, humour and comedy in this desire to see other people foolish, ugly and insignificant.

¹⁰ Plato does not draw a strict line between the abilities of the soul to remember, imagine, and discourse (*logismos*).

Thus Plato sees imagination as the source of delusion, a condition of achieving all the false physical pleasures. Imagination should be avoided if one wants to know God, which forms the true vocation of a human being.

Plato speaks about three products of imagination. The first is the judgment about sensually perceived things (which the little Scribe writes down into the soul), the second is a picture painted by the little Painter in one's soul, and the third product of imagination is the effects that accompany the first two. In the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, when the technique of meditation was in the process of development, it is exactly these three sides of imagination that were singled out (*cogitatio*, *phantasma*, *affectus*), and about which we will speak further.

5. Aristotle's teaching on imagination is well known, so we will just stress a few points. Unlike Plato, Aristotle is more strict and systematic. He differentiates imagination, memory, and the lower mental faculties (*logismos*, Lat. *cogitatio* – the ability to distinguish the similarities and differences in things). However he stresses their proximity, in particular the fact that they are common for both humans and the highest non-speaking animals¹¹.

Together with memory and reasoning (*logismos*), the imagination occupies the middle ground in the hierarchy of our cognitive abilities: it stands between the lowest level – senses, and the supreme level – reason. Aristotle and his followers in the Middle Ages, such as Thomas Aquinas, differ from Plato in claiming that a human being is unable to think without producing images of imagination (*phantasmata*). In order to form an object in our mind, the active mind should separate the noetic form of an object from the sensual impression of it. The sensual idea is formed by our imagination, and the thought itself is independent of the idea, but it cannot acquire shape without it. If, according to Aristotle, everything is the result of the union of matter and form, then in every act of thinking the idea or image (*phantasma*) becomes matter, while the actual mind becomes the form, and our thought of the thing a *syntheton* of imaginary matter and spiritual form.¹²

¹¹ According to Aristotle, memory is an active rather than passive faculty. Recollection is not an impression (*typos*) left in the soul by a feeling. It is an action, caused by the repeated creation of the sensuous image. Therefore according to the object (*kath' hypokeimenon*), memory and imagination constitute one faculty, and we can distinguish them only logically (*De memoria*).

¹² The difference in the views of Aristotle and Plato on the subject of the role of imagination in thinking is otherwise called the dispute about the possibility of intellectual intuition (pure contemplation or *visio Dei*) for a

Thus the *phantasma* is not the thought or its cause, but its necessary condition (*synaition*). Aristotle considers matter, as well as imagination, as neutral. (For Plato and his followers, matter is evil; therefore its role in human life is negative, as well as the role of imagination in knowledge).

There are three functions of imagination – mimetic, affective, and cognitive. Aristotle assesses them in the following way: imitation (*mimesis*) is a form of cognition, and despite its being the lowest form (“childish”), it has an undisputed value. Imitation is wholly based on imagination. Passions (*pathe*, *affectus*) are also necessary for a human being (a man unable to get angry is seen as a weak-willed non-entity);¹³ therefore the evocation of passions by way of imagination, as in the theatre, is undoubtedly a positive phenomenon, provided the passions are properly cleansed (*katharsis*).

So imagination, as I have said, is a necessary condition for thinking, but Aristotle also partially agrees with Plato in seeing it as the source of delusion and lie.¹⁴ Judgments, conclusions, and arguments can be constructed according to the strict rules of logic, so that they do not contain mistakes, but imagination participates in the formation of concepts. This point forms the most vulnerable part of our logical constructions. Imagination is a sort of motion,¹⁵ where motion presupposes continuum, which means infinity (*apeiron*) and uncertainty, something irrational and therefore incomprehensible by definition. Therefore, for Aristotle, as well as for his teacher, true cognition implies the overcoming of imagination. This is necessary in the highest form of theoretical cognition – “first philosophy,” *theologia*; but it is also desirable in the next highest form, “practical philosophy,” the science of how one should properly act in life. But the majority of people are unable to overcome imagination; they are ruled by it in their thoughts and deeds, which is why they live like speechless beasts.¹⁶ As we see,

human being. This dispute divided the radical Platonists and the followers of Aristotle in the course of the Middle Ages, and also the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It seems to continue with less intensity up to our days (for example, modern Russian “intuitivists”).

¹³ Here Aristotle expresses a radically different view from not only the followers of Pythagoras and Plato, but also with the future Stoics and Cynics, who considered freedom from passions not only possible for a human being, but also necessary for the blessed life and knowledge of God.

¹⁴ Cf. *De anima*, 428 a 5 - 429 a 9.

¹⁵ “Imagination must be a movement resulting from an actual exercise of a power of sense” (*De anima*, 429 a 1-2).

¹⁶ “And because imaginations remain in the organs of sense and resemble sensations, animals in their actions are largely guided by them, some

the assessment of imagination as a cognitive faculty by Aristotle is twofold: on the one hand, it is neutral, because imagination is a necessary condition for science. On the other hand, it is a defect which one should overcome, for it is an obstacle to acquiring the knowledge of God and a cause of moral delusion.

There is one more side of imagination noticed by Aristotle and his followers in the Middle Ages (Augustine, Thomas Aquinas): among the faculties of the soul, imagination is the most unique to the individual. The act of cognition consists of three parts: sensual impression, imagination, and thought. Sensual impressions are more or less the same with all people (people see, hear, and perceive an object in more or less the same way). The thought, for example “three” or “ $2 \times 2 = 4$ ” is necessarily identical for all thinking creatures, human or not. But the images that accompany this or that word or concept are individual. In thinking and sensing all people are similar and live in the same common world, whereas in the area of imagination – in their dreams, or in delirium, or blinded by passion – each person lives in his own world.¹⁷ So neither a state (“common cause,” *res publica*), nor science (“common and necessary knowledge”) can be built on the principle of imagination.

It is remarkable that the elevation of imagination to the status of a highest human creative faculty coincides in time with the new perception of the concept of “individuality.”¹⁸

6. A few words should be said about the concept of imagination during the time of Hellenism and late Antiquity. The Aristotelian teaching on *phantasia* became generally adopted and was shared by all the philosophical schools.

The Stoics introduced to it some new elements. For them *kataleptike phantasia* becomes the criterion of truth.¹⁹ But insofar as imagination is also the source of passions and aspirations for pleasures, the late Stoics considered it a low and dangerous faculty. To them, the

(i.e., the brutes) because of the non-existence in them of mind, others (i.e., men) because of the temporary eclipse of the mind by feeling or disease or sleep” (429 a 5-9).

¹⁷ Cf. Aristotle. *De anima*. 429 a 7.

¹⁸ The Classical and Medieval philosophical tradition sees individuality (as opposed to the notion of “person”) as insufficiency, incompleteness and imperfection of a human being who cannot reach its full potential (in the language of Aristotle – its “form”). In the same way each individual person does not realize in his life all the potentiality of his nature, as opposed to spiritual beings, which have no individuality: each angel, according to St. Thomas, is a separate species, i.e., pure form.

¹⁹ *Sextus Empiricus*, VII, 227.

imagination was something to rid oneself of, since the goal of life is getting to know God and becoming like God (Nature), which could be achieved only by acquiring *apatheia* and by the rejection of pleasures, apart from the pleasure attained from one's own virtue.

Plotinus, the founder of Neoplatonism, was the chief critic and persecutor of imagination. He was not only a follower of Plato in his rejection of imagination, but he goes further. He makes imagination an ontological category and objectifies it. In his treatise "On the Possible and Actual" (*Enn.* II.5) he calls matter a *phantasia*, an essence and source of the cosmic evil. Matter gives rise to *phantasmata* – deceitful ghosts, who fill our earthly illusory world, which is the realm of evil, non-existence, deceit, and misery. The idea 'incarnate in matter' (*to eis ten hylen emphantasthen*) is called by Plotinus "imagination taking the form of matter," and it ruins every good thing (*Enn.* 1.8.8.19).

For a human soul, imagination causes misfortune in this life and suffering beyond the grave. When a soul is governed by fantasies rather than reason, "the soul continues to desire sensuous things, such as food, drink and bodily pleasures." But there is no body in the afterlife, and therefore it is impossible to fulfill one's desires. Thus, such a soul is doomed to suffering in the afterlife (*Enn.* 1.2.5.20).

We do evil and suffer from evil, but the reasoning part of the soul is not guilty of it. The cause of evil lies in the animal part of our soul, which communicates with the body. The cause of evil is wrong judgment, which in fact is imagination, since the soul forms judgments without waiting for reason (*Enn.* 1.1.9.8).

Men must overcome imagination in order to be happy. Only the sage can be happy, according to Plotinus. But one "would be neither wise nor happy if he had not quitted all imaginations (*phantasias hapasas*) and become, as it were another being, having confidence in his own nature. ... We count alarming and grave what his felicity takes lightly," because we let imaginary fears and desires rule us. Imagination is like a silly little child within us, and reason – like a wise grown-up (*Enn.* 1.4.15).²⁰

And finally Plotinus offers an evaluative definition of imagination, noticeably different from Aristotle's: "Imagination is the stroke of something unreasonable outside the Soul, accepted ... only because the Soul takes up false notions through having gone outside of its own truth, by ceasing to be purely itself" (*Enn.* 1.8.15.18). The soul is

²⁰ "As for any involuntary fear rising in him and taking the judgment by surprise while his thoughts perhaps are elsewhere, the Sage will attack it and drive it out; he will, so to speak, calm the refractory child within him, whether by reason or by menace, but without passion, as an infant might feel itself rebuked by a glance of severity."

exposed to such strokes because it is united with a body, and thus cannot remain simple or clean. This results in a fatal disease of the soul, which reveals itself in mistakes and passions.

But the philosopher hopes to get rid of the dangerous enemy in the end: “The life of the soul, is, so to speak ... like the reflection resting on ... the surface of a mirror.” While we live in our bodies, “the mirror within us is shattered through some disturbance of the harmony of the body. Reason and the Intellectual-Principle act unpictured.” There is only a ceaseless and fast flow of imaginary illusions (*phantasmata*) that we are used to call ‘thinking.’ But “imagination (*phantasia*) is not thinking (*noesis*).” When we leave our bodies, our soul-life will “become like the reflection resting on the smooth and shining surface of a mirror.” There will be “peace within us which is capable of reflection, and there will appear the images of the Rational and Intellectual-Principles” (*Enn.* 1.4.10). (That state of peace of mind without imaginary flow will later be described by St. Augustine as *visio Dei*, the most direct knowledge of God accessible for humans).

7. Two followers of Plato – Augustine and Proclus – introduce two important novelties into the theory of imagination. Proclus in his *Commentaries on Euclid* distinguishes between three matters: the first one is the matter of sensuous bodies; the second, of geometrical bodies; and the third, of comprehensible bodies. Accordingly, they constitute the three abilities of the imagination which allow us to obtain empirical, mathematical, and metaphysical knowledge. He rehabilitates, as it were, imagination and the role it plays in acquiring exact knowledge.

Augustine is the first to consider imagination as an intentional faculty. He is perhaps the first after Plato to see it connected to will. On every level of cognition – such as feeling, imagining, thinking – cognition is conditioned by “concentrated attention” (*attentio*, or *intentio animi*, “directed effort of the soul”). We can fail to see what is in front of our eyes, or to hear what someone says, because our mind is focused on something else. Every act of seeing or hearing is an act of our concentrated will. Augustine speaks of many wills acting together in us and replacing each other constantly. This happens in the course of our whole life (*De Trinitate* VII). Cognition is impossible without the action of will or love in us. The will is less present in the senses, and more present in the imagination and remembrance. The will is prominent in contemplation and attaining the knowledge of God because to do so requires total concentration.

Sensual knowledge is determined by love for the outside world, whereas contemplative knowledge is determined by the love for God. Which type of love and will reveals itself in the act of imagination? The

act of will, according to Augustine, is determined, on the one hand, by the subject, which we consider good and which we desire and love. On the other hand, it is determined by our freedom of decision and a total freedom of desire: the desire is determined only by myself – myself seen not as part of nature (a “human being”), but as an individual. It is that moment of free will that reveals itself most vividly in the act of imagination. This is why each person has his own, individual representations of imagination. We can summarize the Augustinian idea in the following way: love for the world allows sensual perception; love for God allows contemplation; and love for oneself (*amor sui*) allows imagination.

Both Proclus and Augustine see imagination as a neutral faculty. It is among the average faculties of the soul, because it is related to a body part (brain) and is necessary for cognition. The only exception is made for the highest level of theoretical cognition – theology, or knowing God. Here it is necessary to overcome the imagination or to get rid of it altogether. Without it the true *theoria*, that is, contemplation of divine things, is impossible.

8. As far as I can judge, up to the thirteenth century nothing changed in the understanding of imagination or in the assessment of its role in the nature of things and in human life, either in the Eastern or Western Christian tradition. Imagination continued to be seen as either in the Platonic tradition (as in the works of Maximus the Confessor or Gregory Palamas), or in the tradition of Aristotle (Thomas Aquinas).

A new understanding of imagination and its role in the acquisition of the knowledge of God emerged among the Franciscan monks in the first third of the fourteenth century due to the appearance of a new spiritual technique – meditation.

The treatise *Meditationes vitae Christi* was written around 1325 by a monk for his spiritual daughter, a young nun of St. Clara's order. Each of its hundred chapters offers the same spiritual exercise (*exercitio spiritualis*) – meditation on the theme of one of the episodes of Christ's life. The author insists that his spiritual daughter should meditate every day for no less than one hour in the morning and in the evening without ever missing a single day. One cannot succeed in spiritual life without this spiritual exercise, which is as important as prayer, fasting, and charitable deeds. As far as the exercise is concerned, one should imagine each episode from the Gospel as vividly as one can – “as if you are present there yourself.” It is most important “not to miss a single detail of what was done or said.” It doesn't matter if “some small things might seem to you too commonplace, simple or even childish.”

On the contrary, the more commonplace the details or the more familiar they are from every-day life, the better. They serve as the basis for imagination, helping to move the mind into the environment on which one is meditating. To achieve this, one may slightly change the Gospel story or add some missing details, on the condition that “one doesn’t harm the atmosphere of piety and truthfulness.” The mentor keeps urging his disciple in each chapter to follow the order: *cogita, imaginare, compatere*.

Let us take as an example the meditation on the theme of the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law. Peter invites Jesus to come into his house for dinner. Jesus accepts the invitation. The author urges his disciple to think (*cogita*) about the reason why Jesus always accepted similar invitations. First, He didn’t have a house of his own; second, He loved poverty and had nothing to eat Himself; and finally, He was happy to give people a chance to practice charity towards Him as a neighbour. The author continues to instruct his disciple: *Imaginare*, i.e., try to imagine a dusty road and a small house with only one room in it. Try to imagine the inside of the house: a bed with Peter’s mother-in-law lying sick on it. She is old, probably thin and suffering from a fever. One can see drops of sweat on her forehead. Look closely at her face. The Lord takes her hand – “try to feel how hot her hand is.” Little is said about the healing, but attention is drawn towards the furniture of the room – there is a table in it. Peter is also an advocate of poverty, thus, there is only one table in the room and it is covered with various things. So Jesus helps to clear the table while Peter helps his mother-in-law to get up – “look how meekly and carefully He clears the table and try to help Him yourself.” He is well known in this house, and therefore He feels at ease in it (*familiariter*): He knows where a cleaning cloth lies, He takes it, wets it in a bowl and wipes the table – “you should also wipe it with Him.” Then He cleans vegetables for dinner – “you should do the same with Him.” Then everyone sits down to have a meal – “you should also sit down, if invited,” – taste the food, see how delicious it is, despite being simple and inexpensive.

The third instruction is to feel compassion – *compatere*, i.e., try to have the same feelings and emotions (*affectus*) as the participants of the episode. One should try and place oneself in the position of Peter’s mother-in-law and try to feel relief from pain, as well as joy, gratitude, surprise, and total devotion to the Lord. Then one should try and put oneself in place of Peter and, finally, in place of Jesus himself.

These three devices or methods – *cogitatio, imaginatio, compassio* – form the three main elements of imagination during meditation. *Cogitatio* implies a composition of a reliable and devout reason for every action. By the way, here we have an exact notion of the

distances implied: in all the episodes which describe the movements of Christ and His Holy Mother, the author gives the exact distance in miles, based on the travels of one of the pilgrim monks who visited the Holy Land and measured the distance in strides (for example, the distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem, then from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, and so on). Sometimes the author denotes the distance in the following way: “the tomb was the same distance from the Cross as the gates of our monastery are from the entrance to the church.” Here we also get the idea of the interior of the houses (“you should know that the house where the Last Supper was happening was a two-story building,” that the washing of the feet was happening on the ground level whereas the meal itself was on the upper level). One should have an exact idea of the arrangement of various objects. It is essential to have an exact idea of the arrangement of the Cross and the methods of crucifixion, where and how the ladders were used, what the length of the nails was, how the special hammer looked like, and so on.

One should have a clear idea of how the table used at the Last Supper on Holy Thursday was arranged. It is important to know that the table had no legs, was composed of four square boards, each being the length of one and a half elbows: “I saw this table in a Lutheran chapel and measured it myself.”

Imaginatio is the sensation of what is happening with the help of all five senses, the most important ones being sight and hearing. A detailed instruction is given for how to “see a picture” of what is happening. First, one should have a vivid picture of the interior, then the posture and figures of all present, their position in the interior, then their clothes and, finally, the most important element – their faces. Initially one should try to “see” secondary characters – the sick, the disciples, the magi – then the noble Joseph, then the Mother of God, and finally, one should look at Christ. One should also try to imagine the feel, the taste, the smell. Thus, for example, when one considers (*cogitare*) Christ walking the twelve miles from Nazareth to Jordan to be baptized, one should remember that He is barefoot (because He loved poverty), that the country is mountainous and the road stony, that the sun is burning, and the stones are very hot; then one should “try to imagine (*conspice, imaginare*) that you are walking barefoot next to Him, try to imagine every stone, every thorn, have a long walk, as long as His way was” in real time, as we would say now.

It is recommended to the disciple to try to physically feel the smell of frankincense, brought by the Magi, (“try to get used to the smell”), to feel the silkiness of the hair of the Christ-Child (“stroke His head”), feel the tenderness of His skin (“you can kiss His cheek”), feel how heavy His body is. “Express sympathy (“*compatere*”) with Joseph

and Mary on their way to Egypt, as they have to carry the baby all the way. Do help them, take the Baby and carry Him yourself, feeling the weight of the holy body.”

Compassio is the third necessary element of meditative imagination. If one has a sufficient experience and succeeds in creating a vivid image of the events, the accompanying sensations, such as happiness and sadness, love and compassion, joy and grief, pain and relief appear of themselves. The aim of such exercises is to achieve true knowledge of God through love (*affectus Domini*) and effective imitation – trying to feel what He feels (*compassio*). Besides, the author explains, in order to achieve salvation “you should become familiar (*familiaris*) to Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Mother,” meaning one becomes easily recognisable, homely. In this case after your death they will welcome you in heaven as their intimate friend.

The author’s instructions about imagination differ considerably from the advice given by St. Bernard whom he often quotes. Bernard traditionally warns the monks who seek “spiritual contemplation” against the dangers they might meet on their spiritual path, the most difficult one being “a constant change in one’s mind of imagined pictures (*phantasmata*).” The instructor explains that the type of contemplation Bernard talks about is the highest stage in the spiritual ladder, which can be reached by very few. It can only be reached by God’s grace by the particularly talented and gifted – people like St. Bernard or St. Francis. But meditation with the help of imagination can be practiced by anyone, and therefore is the first and most effective means of the knowledge of God.

In further work I hope to address the use of the teaching on meditation and the technique of imagination in the *Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola as well as Sergei Eisenstein’s close study of this work and his application of its principles to the impact of cinema upon its audience.

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CHAPTER X

INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF HEGEL'S HERITAGE

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1. The metaphysical approach to the investigation of reality is characterized by the ultimate formulation of problems that relate to the most disparate manifestations of being, problems which philosophy tries to solve. It is this aim – to formulate ultimate problems and to search for variants of their solutions – that requires us to view philosophy, as we try to determine its subject, not as a science but rather as a special non-rational consciousness, which on a metaphysical level makes it close to religion. To a large extent, philosophy and religion have a common metaphysical conceptual field, particularly in relation to the global and ultimate character of the problems stated. However their differences depend on the solutions proposed. As is well known, one of the four famous questions of Immanuel Kant, which circumscribe the subject of philosophy, is the question “What can I hope for?” It is this question that allows a person to understand himself and to find a proper place in the world. It is closely related to the necessity of a philosophical analysis of faith as a fundamental presupposition of human existence. In contrast to a merely theological or religious approach, faith in philosophy is exposed to rational, and therefore critical, analysis as a specific phenomenon of human consciousness and a significant element of culture.

Faith belongs to the most important existential characteristics of human life and is a premise for inquiring into the ultimate, i.e. metaphysical, foundations of what there is. Within the conceptual field of metaphysics, fundamental principles and solutions of cardinal issues of human existence are elaborated. These issues concern the relationship of the individual to reality and being as such. From the metaphysical point of view, a human being cannot be reduced to an abstract, typical creature only. He is always an individual, a person. This is why, along with the problems of inquiring into being itself (that coincides with the world as a whole), a person is always investigating himself too, for his ego is a part of reality. He reasons upon the interrelations between a person and the outer world, between a person and another person. In this sense, an individual understands himself not only as a person, involved

in certain socio-cultural circumstances and depending on them, but as a special aspect of reality. So the central problem of metaphysics and philosophy in general is the question of whether individual existence makes sense, including the question of faith.

The interrelations between philosophy and religion are not simple. Philosophy as a form of rational and theoretical consciousness often opposes religion. But it cannot ignore religion as a special object of inquiry. On the other hand, philosophy is often criticized from the religious standpoint, for it tries to reflect on God by means of human reason and even to construct conceptual schemes of His determination and justification. As Karl Jaspers notes, “authoritarian church thought has condemned independent philosophy on the ground that it is a worldly temptation which leads man away from God, destroying his soul with vain preoccupations.”¹ At the same time, it is clear that philosophy is not merely a form of purely rational-theoretical cognition. This is only one of its aspects. A true wise man knows that non-rational components of comprehension are not less important, both for culture in general and for a person in particular.

Many things coincide in philosophy and religion. First of all, both contemplate forms of individual self-consciousness, reflecting on personal life and experience and uniting people into certain communicative circles. Jaspers writes, “The difference between philosophy and religion is that the latter is centered on *religious feeling*, which in itself shows an integrity of mental life; all facets of worldview are determined on the foundation of religious experience.”² A religious person starts with an absolute value, which does not require any further justification. This value is not the object of reflection; it is the object of faith. On the other hand, philosophical reflection spreads to *all* spheres of human activity, including those which go beyond the limits of spiritual experience. The consolidating *absolute origin* is absent in philosophy, and so must be found or constructed. Thus, in contrast to religious consciousness, philosophy looks for general rational justifications and constructs them in the process of determination. In this sense, philosophy has a tragic character and leads to disillusionment, because it will never be able to find the absolute general justification.

There is always a certain contradiction between religion and philosophy. Religion has been used as the basis for the moral norms of social behavior, providing assistance to the state. Philosophers, on the other hand, often criticize the state and its structure, and therefore those

¹ Karl Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951, p. 7.

² Wilhelm Dilthey, *Das Wesen der Philosophie*. Wiesbaden: Marix Verlag, 2008. S. 76 ff.

norms which support it. This was one of the causes of Socrates' conviction. Anaxagoras was also convicted of disrespect for the ancient gods (and his life was saved only due to Pericles' intervention); Protagoras was exiled from Athens; and even Aristotle evoked a similar suspicion. The list continues.

It is important to note that in all of the above-mentioned cases, the cause of conviction was not disregard of religion by the philosophers. All of them honored their gods and observed ceremonies. The main point is that they were searching for truth, whereas the official state religion, in their view, looked prejudiced and hence could be neither compulsory nor obligatory for all, especially for someone aspiring to wisdom, i.e., a philosopher.

But philosophy cannot bypass or ignore religion. Religion can be an object of philosophical analysis, given that "all significant philosophical thought" does not provide us with a certainty proper to exact knowledge, but "to authentic self-hood it gives a free area for decision."³ A philosopher must reason upon God and Faith as modes of ultimate comprehension of being, and in this dimension he is also striving towards the Absolute. But while in religion the Absolute is based on faith and is considered a divine substance or God, in philosophy it is constructed rationally, as a requirement for our inquiry into the essence of being. It is these two approaches – faith and reason – that determine the specifics of our thinking about being as a whole, ourselves, and our place in the world.

2. For modern scientists it is not necessary to refer constantly to their remote predecessors, whose work and results either came into the corpus of scientific knowledge long ago or were discarded. But philosophy deals with "eternal questions," and even the most archaic solutions to these questions remain of interest. In my opinion, George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) was the best philosopher of the past who examined the problem of the complicated interrelations of philosophy and religion.

Hegel notes, "We know that in religion we withdraw ourselves from what is temporal (*der Zeitlichkeit*), and that religion is for our consciousness that region in which all the enigmas of the world are solved, all the contradictions of deeper-reaching thought have their meaning unveiled, and where the voice of the heart's pain is silenced – the region of eternal truth, of eternal rest, of eternal peace."⁴ This is a

³ Karl Jaspers, loc. cit., p. 29.

⁴ Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. London, 1985. Vol. 1, p. 1.

very important idea, for it implies that religion is everlasting and complete, and therefore its truth is eternal and absolute. But, besides the absolute truth available only through faith, a person also strives to understand the world personally, subjectively. The sphere of knowledge opened by human reason cannot be completed in principle, so we construct the objective world through the lens of a certain discipline or sphere of knowledge. A person is able to approximate the truth, but only within the framework determined by the subject area. At the same time, a person strives to conceive a truth as such. Thus we take the path of metaphysics, or philosophy, understood as a process of striving (aspiration) for absolute truth. It is clear that absolute truth cannot be achieved on this path, but it can be constructed by means of human reason. This is why philosophy represents a *construction of the Absolute*, whether we call it Truth, Good, or Beauty.

Religion differs significantly from philosophy and its intellectual methods. Comprehension of God is, according to Hegel, the “highest level of consciousness” that cannot and need not be brought into correlation with anything objectified. Hegel states, “Religion, as something which is occupied with this final object and end, is therefore absolutely free, and is its own end; for all other aims converge in this ultimate end, and in its presence they vanish and cease to have value of their own.”⁵ Philosophy has the right to investigate this highest level of consciousness, too, for this level attracts a lot of individuals. We may not ignore religious consciousness, putting on an arrogant mask of an intelligent mind, for abilities of the human mind are insufficient in this respect. At the same time, philosophy must be philosophy and should not put on unnatural theological garments. Religion as such cannot make a person believe – through certain rites and mysteries or sacred books – but philosophy is not able to implement this task either, because “it is not the concern of philosophy to produce religion in any individual.... Philosophy, it is true, has to develop the necessity of religion *in and for itself*, and to grasp the thought that Spirit must of necessity advance from the other modes of its will in conceiving and feeling to this absolute mode.”⁶ What a brilliant thought! The aim of philosophy is not to involve a person in religion and faith, but to understand religion as such, as a mode of self-consciousness, as a part of human culture, i.e. to understand religion *per se*. This is not a theological but a philosophical task, for it requires distance from the object. Neither is this task the same as a priest's, for a priest is trying to increase the number of his parishioners by awakening their faith. As Hegel notes, “Religion is

⁵ Hegel, loc. cit., p. 2.

⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

essential to man, and is not a feeling foreign to his nature. Yet the essential question is the relation of religion to his general theory of the universe, and it is with this that philosophical knowledge connects itself, and upon which it essentially works.”⁷

Philosophy, in Hegel’s opinion, cannot ignore religion because “philosophy only unfolds itself when it unfolds religion, and in unfolding itself it unfolds religion.”⁸ Let us try to bring this idea to the end. Philosophy, searching for eternal truth, seems to become abstract, and its subject becomes thus too conventional, transient, uncertain. This is not the impotence of philosophy, but the ultimateness of its cognitive interests. The truths achieved by such cognition do not become final, but represent only the process of inquiring into being, followed by different variants of answers that in their turn depend on the personal essence of the individual involved, as well as on relevant socio-cultural circumstances. Religion also abstracts from itself, for its purpose – comprehension of God – cannot be objectified.

Theology makes use of the language, methods and results of philosophy, defined by religious authorities and precise dogmatic formulas. Hegel described this process as an evolution from ancient gods created by human fantasy to gods created by thought. Religiosity turns out to be speculative, based on the fact that “theology is religion together with conscious thought and comprehension,” and that “it is to their [the Church Fathers’] philosophical culture that the Christian Church is indebted for the first beginnings of a content of Christian doctrine.”⁹ In the case of theology, philosophy (or rational philosophical thinking) is used for the consolidation and rational justification of faith. In fact, philosophy becomes the *ancilla theologiae*, for “knowledge, in constructing its world for itself without reference to religion, had only taken possession of the finite contents; but since it has developed into true philosophy, it has the same content as religion.”¹⁰ Thus, through theology, religion becomes a speculative consciousness, the limits of which are established unconditionally so that thinking cannot transcend them. This is why theology is always an interpretation (exegesis) of one or another church doctrine; it develops a chain of specific opportunities of such exegesis. Interpretation of the Bible by Protestants might differ considerably from that given by the Catholic or the Orthodox Church. And paradoxically enough, despite the fact that faith forms the background for all such interpretations (that refer to texts as conceptual systems), any exegesis is implemented by reason. “This exegesis, having

⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

⁸ Ibid., p. 19.

⁹ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 21.

thus taken counsel with reason, has resulted in a so-called Theology of Reason, which is put in opposition to that doctrinal system of the Church, partly by this theology itself, and partly by that doctrinal system to which it is opposed. At the same time, exegesis takes possession of the written word, interprets it, and pretends only to lay stress on the understanding of the word, and to desire to remain faithful to it.”¹¹ One must admit that this position is rather equivocal, as regards faith as such.

In this sense, it would not be an overstatement to say that *theology is opposed to religion* as an immediate understanding of faith by a person, thus urging him to the rational adoption of one or another conception. But at the same time, theology is opposed to the philosophy of religion, which is free in its reflections – including those on God and religion – and does not follow (in Hegel’s words) the path trodden by dogmatics. Philosophy is not engaged in the interpretation of sacred texts, but it analyzes religion as an important form of culture, a form of consciousness, etc. So if we oppose philosophy to religion, as often happens, it is necessary to understand that theology, in a certain sense, comes into an even sharper opposition to religion as an immediate comprehension of God. For, while reasoning as rationally as philosophy, theology is much more dogmatic than religion and therefore constrained in this rationality.

Intellectual speculation in philosophy is unrestricted in its essence, being limited only by the subjectivity of a thinking person. Theology constructs an ontological system, while giving a rational foundation for the absolute character of God’s being, already defined by the church dogmata, whereas philosophy creates a certain Absolute (absolute Spirit, absolute Mind) as a speculative construction for building up an ontological system. This is why, according to Hegel, “God is the Idea, the Absolute, the Essential Reality, which is grasped in thought and in the Notion, and it is in common with *logical philosophy*.”¹² It should be noted, of course, that philosophical logic in Hegel’s thought has a different meaning these days. Hegel tried to ontologize the laws of classical formal logic and thus rehabilitate or create metaphysics as a science. Thus, the Absolute is situated as the origin of his ontological system and is understood as divine in its eternal essence, as a truth *per se*. The Absolute in Hegel’s system is identical to what he designates as the “Logical Idea,” representing a process of realization, a development of the original, unactualized plenitude of the Idea. Different stages of this process are described in Hegel’s system. First, the Absolute develops as the “Idea-in-itself, or Idea as logos.” This

¹¹ Ibid., p. 28.

¹² Ibid., p. 25.

is the subject of logic, a science that turns upside down all the ultimate categories of being. Furthermore, the Absolute is realized as the "Idea-without-itself" (philosophy of Nature) and is completed by the "Idea-in-itself-and-for-itself," or "Idea-returning-to-itself" (philosophy of Mind). According to this scheme, Hegel's philosophy of Nature is a special phase of alienation of the Idea on its way to the self-reflecting Mind. As we can see, it is logic that represents here a true ontology, which is structured into the logic of Being, the logic of Essence, and the logic of Notion.

3. But Hegel's consideration of the relationship between philosophy and religion leads to another philosophic discipline, the emergence of which could hardly be predicted in Hegel's time: the philosophy of culture.¹³ Human culture, if we consider it in the light of basic factors that have substantial influence on human consciousness, is not homogeneous. It is a pulsatile system vividly responding to all the twists and turns of civilizational development, including everything that relates to mankind – from the most savage prejudices to the greatest masterpieces of human intellect. Among all the various cultural phenomena, we find spiritual formations, which are, as it were, centered on one of the properties of human consciousness, one of its multiple relations to the world, its intellectual and worldview orientations. These appear to be relatively independent entities. Each represents a certain aspect of the universal human culture, contributing to its diversity. Therefore, the culture is a whole, but a diversified one. We may construct the most disparate limits of this cultural diversity, but it would not be an overstatement to say that the most important poles of the universal culture are its *rational* and *non-rational* components. Indeed, science (in its broadest sense) and religion exert an essential influence on the development of human culture, defining its ways and forms. The mutual contrariety of science and religion is not absolute and is not always clearly expressed. We should not consider science and religion as single modes of relation to the world. Science should not be seen as merely a self-expression of aspiration to the truth, nor religion as a mere self-expression of faith. Cultural phenomena intersect, and just as religion includes elements of knowledge, so science or any other form of rational relation to the world inevitably includes axiological moments.

The peculiarity of science and religion is thus associated not so much with the object of reflection itself, as with the specificity of its

¹³ It should be noticed that the German expression "Kulturphilosoph" ("philosopher of culture"), which is not yet identical with "Kulturphilosophie" ("philosophy of culture"), was first used most likely by the romanticist Adam Müller in the 1820s.

interpretation. For instance, there is no doubt that religion performs cognitive functions and is therefore a kind of knowledge. As knowledge, it focuses on truth, but in its religious interpretation. In this sense faith is a form of spiritual comprehension of truth. As such, religious faith is inferior to scientific truth regarding its methodological justification and objectivity. But regarding the results of its influence on a person's worldview and consciousness, it appears to be a much more efficient medium, since it immediately forms a system of individual values which then determines other aspects of personal activity. Faith allows a person to come to believe in truths that are not truths at all from the rational point of view. Because of this, we can consider religious faith as a special sort of reliable knowledge associated with the necessity of regulating relationships between people through the elaboration of religious imperatives. In this sense, religion represents quite a rational moral system, regarding its adequacy both to its own subject field and to the achievement of corresponding results. Therefore religion is a very flexible instrument of psychological influence which always allows a person to break a moral "deadlock," e.g., through repentance, confession, etc. The search for truth in religion is determined by values and worldview through both personal perceptions and experience of the world, and those perceptions and experience which are common to all mankind. Therefore, the evaluation of faith as a form of only non-rational comprehension of being seems vulgar.

The interrelations of philosophy and religion underwent many transformations through the epochs and survived both periods of peaceful coexistence almost to the point of mutual dissolution in each other, and periods of uncompromising struggle when a vulgar atheism was opposed to religious doctrines. Despite all the complexity of these interrelations, religion and philosophy cannot be totally separated from each other, both genetically and by virtue of the problems and questions which they consider. Each represents a different form of comprehension of the plenitude of interrelations between person and being. Therefore, it is important to strive for constructing a worldview that one day might be able to combine scientific approaches to the investigation of nature in a harmonious way with time-tested religious values and the well-trodden ways of philosophical thought.

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CHAPTER XI

PHILOSOPHY IN THE RUSSIAN ACADEMIES: THE CASE OF VIKTOR KUDRYAVTSEV-PLATONOV

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The Russian ecclesiastical academies had a distinctive approach to philosophy that has been little studied in the West. It originated in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in response to the challenge of teaching philosophy at the Kiev-Mogilev and Moscow Slavic-Graeco-Latin Ecclesiastical Academies. It reached its height in the mid-nineteenth century, having received a powerful impetus from the creation of the Ministry of People's Education (1802) and the educational reforms carried out under the religious school Orders of 1809-14, 1869-70 and 1884. In this paper I will focus particularly on Viktor Kudryavtsev-Platonov, perhaps the most brilliant representative of the ecclesiastical-academic philosophy in the latter period. First, in view of the unfamiliarity of this terrain, let me say a bit more about the cultural and historical background.

One of the fundamental purposes of the religious educational reforms was that of upgrading the standard of teaching philosophy at religious academies. Twin tasks were set before the professors and philosophy teachers: first, to create philosophical courses matching the standard of knowledge of the time and drawing on the latest Western philosophical ideas and doctrines; second, to preserve the purity of the Orthodox faith and to keep rationalistic and materialistic ideas out of the theological academies. The ecclesiastical-academic philosophical courses were also called upon to provide a philosophical grounding for the bedrock ideas of Orthodox consciousness.

The need to use philosophical methodology to interpret religious ideas stemmed from the social-historic and intellectual situation of the time. The spread of West European rationalism and materialism in Russian society in the first half of the nineteenth century and of various unorthodox mystical ideas made it incumbent upon Orthodox thinkers to display a high theoretical standard and a capacity to conceptualize Orthodox principles. In response to these challenges original philosophical courses were introduced at the St Petersburg, Moscow, and Kiev religious academies, numerous translations were made of classical and modern West European philosophical literature,

philosophical textbooks and dictionaries were published, articles were printed in religious and secular periodicals and the professors at Russian religious academies published fundamental philosophical works.

The situation was complicated by the fact that, as distinct from Catholic and Protestant theologians who had developed the symbol of faith by introducing new dogmas back in the Middle Ages, Orthodox theoreticians adhered to the Eastern mode of thought of the Holy Fathers that precluded adequate expression of the dogmatic truths of faith in a rational form. The orientation of Orthodox theology towards mystic contemplation, characteristic of oriental patristics, resulted in reason being either totally ignored as an instrument of expounding religious ideas or playing a subordinate role to faith in the Orthodox concept of the structure of religious consciousness. Accordingly, in Orthodoxy, philosophy was not an independent area of knowledge and philosophical theology as such did not exist.

The historical and cultural situation in the early nineteenth century confronted Orthodox thinkers with the need to look for new forms of conceptualizing religious knowledge. As a way out of the situation, philosophical methodology was applied to elaborate religious ideas. Thus, early in the century the most advanced Orthodox authors set the task of creating an "Orthodox philosophy", i.e., essentially a system of philosophical theology in the framework of the Orthodox confession.

The theoretical explanation of religious consciousness, the treatment of "eternal" and fundamental religious ideas, is a historical phenomenon: in each historical epoch it assumes a form that matches the intellectual level of society and reflects the problems that are uppermost in the minds of society at a particular period. Philosophical interpretation of religious consciousness in the framework of philosophical-theological systems arises when it becomes necessary to use philosophical methods to strengthen and develop religious ideas. Thus it is precisely when the intellectual level of society's development permits and demands a high degree of commonality in rational explanation of the main problems of religious consciousness that advanced religious thinkers turn to philosophical methodology. The philosophical-theological systems created as a result of such philosophical interpretation are, as a rule, qualitatively distinct and may differ substantially from one another, both in terms of how close they are to Orthodox dogma and in the degree of conceptualization of the main religious ideas.

The ecclesiastical-academic tradition represents an attempt to create such a system within the framework of Russian Orthodoxy in the nineteenth century. The fact that its representatives were close to Orthodox dogma and that their legacy includes not only philosophical,

but also strictly theological works, impedes an objective assessment of their work. At the same time, if one accepts the central ideas of religious consciousness as the criterion for the assessment of the difference between religious-philosophical systems and systematic theology, then the ecclesiastical-academic tradition can safely be categorized as philosophical theology.

Philosophical theology, as a rule, uses philosophical categories to offer its own solution to ontological, epistemological, cosmological and other classical philosophical problems. Thus it attempts to philosophically interpret and theoretically ground the central and most common ideas of religious consciousness at the conceptual level. Such interpretations more often than not are prompted by certain world-views and cultural-historical causes, and as a rule, provide rational explanations and conceptualizations of important religious tenets. Philosophical theology, through a system of concepts, expresses what traditional theology believes to belong to the domain of faith; therefore this or that system imparts a greater “reasonable form” to the basic concepts of faith than theology.

Looking at the structure of ecclesiastical-academic philosophy of the nineteenth century, one can readily discern the tendency to rationalize or conceptualize classical Orthodox dogma using the achievements of modern Western European philosophy. The representatives of the ecclesiastical-academic tradition believed that the task of Orthodox philosophy, which they labored to create, was to form and develop Christian consciousness by harmonizing key dogmatic ideas with various methods of cognizing the Divine Essence. Ecclesiastical-academic philosophers made much less frequent references to Revelation than Orthodox theologians, but they frequently turned to the religious and philosophical analysis of ancient, modern, and recent philosophy, as well as the achievements of natural science, psychology, and history, and engaged in polemics with contemporary scientists and European philosophers. The most complete philosophical system to emerge from the ecclesiastical-academic philosophy was that of Viktor Kudryavtsev-Platonov.

Viktor Dmitriyevich Kudryavtsev (born October 3 (15), 1828, Novotorzhsky Uyezd, Pskov Gubernia – d. December 3 (15), 1891, Moscow) was born into a family of a regimental chaplain in the Pskov Gubernia. He studied at the Volyn, Mogilyov and Chernigov religious seminaries. Completing the Chernigov Religious Seminary in 1848 as an exemplary pupil both in terms of his academic achievements and behavior, he joined the Moscow Theological Academy. From that time and until his death Viktor Kudryavtsev’s life and work were intimately connected with the Moscow Theological Academy. His academic

success earned him the Metropolitan Platon Grant, which entitled him to add the honorary name Platonov to his last name. Kudryavtsev-Platonov's course paper "On the Unity of the Human Race" was praised by Archbishop Filaret of Gumilev. After finishing the Academy, Kudryavtsev-Platonov stayed on as a teacher as the Academy's Philosophy Chair. Initially, in 1857 he was appointed extraordinary professor, and in 1858 was promoted to ordinary professor, teaching metaphysics and the history of ancient and modern philosophy. An important part of Kudryavtsev-Platonov's work was the preparation and development of philosophical programs for other religious schools. In addition to his professorial duties, Kudryavtsev-Platonov fulfilled special missions for his superiors. It is interesting that in 1860 he taught philosophy to Nikolai Alexandrovich, heir to the Russian throne (died in 1865). At about the same time, in 1860, Kudryavtsev-Platonov was invited to join the Philosophical Chair at Moscow University, a proposal he declined. In 1861 Education Minister Ye.V. Putyatin offered Kudryavtsev-Platonov the head of the Philosophy Chair at St Petersburg University. However, Metropolitan Filaret personally pleaded with Putyatin "not to weaken the Philosophical Chair at the Moscow Theological Academy by depriving it of Professor Kudryavtsev," so the professor turned down that offer as well.

The bibliography of Kudryavtsev-Platonov's works contains more than 40 items. Prominent among them is the textbook *Fundamentals of Philosophy* which was reprinted many times, as well as three volumes of *Works* (9 issues) published in Sergiyev-Posad in 1893-94.

The main thrust of Kudryavtsev-Platonov's philosophical teaching and creative activities was to rework, within an Orthodox framework, contemporary Western European philosophy to include its most interesting and suitable ideas in the structure of religious consciousness, using them to expound religious ideas; in short, to borrow an apt expression of Zenkovski, "to lend a church character" to European philosophy. In our opinion, Kudryavtsev-Platonov successfully fulfilled the task that confronted ecclesiastical-academic thought in general. The system he developed within the spirit of the Orthodox tradition included the Cartesian idea of the transcendental origin of innate ideas, Kant's teaching of categories and a priori forms of sensuality and reason, and Jacobi's ideas of faith as direct knowledge and the religious-sensual origin of philosophy. One can trace the influence of Hegelian rationalism on Kudryavtsev-Platonov, particularly Hegel's doctrine of the Absolute Idea, even though Kudryavtsev-Platonov was a fierce critic of pantheism and Hegel's dialectics.

Kudryavtsev-Platonov remained a philosophy professor at the Moscow Theological Academy until his death in 1861.

The character of Kudryavtsev-Platonov's philosophical thought was determined by his religious affiliation. The main purpose of his theoretical constructions was a philosophical grounding for a theistic world-view. Thus, the central problem of his philosophical system was the problem of a theoretical proof of Divine Being. One can clearly discern in Kudryavtsev-Platonov's philosophy an ontology which considers a rational explanation of God as Absolute being and His synthesizing function with regard to spirit and matter, and an epistemology in whose framework the problems of cognition of God are analyzed and the teaching of the truth is developed. Kudryavtsev-Platonov described his system as "transcendental monism" because it was based on three types of being: material, spiritual and Absolute. This doctrine forms the nucleus of Kudryavtsev-Platonov's ontology and purports to offer a new solution to the fundamental question of philosophy, overcoming the one-sidedness of materialism and idealism. This ambitious declaration amounted to an attempt to include Absolute Being, i.e. the philosophical analogue of God, in an ontological system, presenting it as the ontological foundation of the world.

The methodological basis of Kudryavtsev-Platonov's teaching on Absolute Being which is central to his system of philosophical interpretation of religious consciousness was, on the one hand, his critique of Western European idealism and materialism and on the other hand, the theory of ideas which he developed in line with Christian Platonism. Kudryavtsev-Platonov's philosophical reasoning about ideas proceeds from the duality of every object being studied: one can identify the idea of the object and its manifestation. Kudryavtsev-Platonov's interpretation of "the idea" is similar to Plato's theory of ideas. The thinker revered Plato, but believed that the great Greek philosopher's main mistake was that he separated the essence of things from the things themselves and embodied that essence in an idea that had an existence of its own. Kudryavtsev-Platonov believed (more along the lines of Aristotle than Plato) that the idea of a thing was inseparable from it, that it is contained in the thing as its ideal aspect, as its permanent and immutable essence. The idea is constant, immutable and consequently constitutes something primal with regard to the changing phenomena. The ideal world, according to Kudryavtsev-Platonov, is a coexistence of various ideas, none of which individually, owing to its being relative, can command the absolute truth of being. Crowning the hierarchy of ideas is the Absolute idea which possesses the absolute truth of being. In this way, Kudryavtsev-Platonov tried to logically explain the concept of the Absolute as the original basis and goal of all that exists. "Because of

the Absolute idea, all other ideas are not disparate and independent elements, but form a single harmonious whole, the ideal world that ascends up the steps of development and is crowned with the idea of the Absolute which is at once the foundation and the crowning of all things existing, the Absolute beginning and the ultimate goal of being.”¹

Modern theologians claim that Kudryavtsev-Platonov’s teaching about the ideal world and the Absolute idea that harmonizes spiritual and material reality was the theoretical basis of Vladimir Solovyov’s philosophy of “all-unity,” notably, his analysis of the relationship between the all-uniting idea and its particular manifestations.²

Kudryavtsev-Platonov was aware of the importance of a theoretical definition of the idea of the Absolute, and tried to derive it logically from the concept of perfection. He maintained that the idea of perfection contained the feature that was common to the three root ideas in human consciousness— Truth, Goodness and Beauty. In his opinion, all these ideas are perceived by man as something to be striven for, i.e. as something perfect. But perfection itself lies beyond empirical reality and consequently has an absolute character. Therefore he considered the idea of the Absolute as the embodiment of the idea of perfection, and not an imagined, abstract ideal but absolutely perfect being, absolutely perfect reality or the Absolute Essence.

Obviously, the concept of the Absolute or the Unconditional being as a perfect and omnipotent personality was central to Kudryavtsev-Platonov’s philosophy. This prompts a more detailed consideration of the relationship between this concept and the theistic idea of God. Kudryavtsev-Platonov attributed his use of the concept of the “Absolute” and not “God” in his philosophical theories to his wish to broaden the framework of the system by allowing the existence of other points of view along with the theistic one. In our opinion, Kudryavtsev-Platonov needed a philosophical analogue of the theistic concept of God because he sought to present a philosophical interpretation of important religious ideas, including the idea of God. Seeking to “church” modern European philosophy and to include its ideas in a renewed and rationally explained Orthodox teaching of the world and man, Kudryavtsev-Platonov attempted to prove the necessity of a rational understanding of God. At the same time, in Kudryavtsev-Platonov’s opinion, and in accordance with the Orthodox tradition, excessive “openness” of the Divine or the “watering down” of the Absolute, as was the case with

¹ V.D. Kudryavtsev-Platonov. *Works*. Sergiyev-Posad, 1892-94, vol.I. Issue 1. p.33 (in Russian).

² See: VI.Ivanov. *The emergence of theological thought at the Moscow Religious Academy. Theological Works*. Jubilee Collection. Moscow, 1886, p. 146 (in Russian).

Hegel's philosophy, could not be allowed. In Hegel's system the Absolute was totally exhausted and cognized, leaving no room for mystery, and thus ceased to be a transcendental essence. Kudryavtsev-Platonov faced a fundamentally different task: to leave God intact as an absolutely perfect, transcendent entity which is the subject of theology, while presenting a philosophical vision and rational explanation of the possibility of knowing the Absolute as one of the facets of Divinity.

But, because of its impersonality and the meaning ascribed to it in the Hegelian philosophy, the concept of the absolute idea derived from philosophical reasoning about Kudryavtsev-Platonov's theory of ideas was not entirely suitable. It was necessary, on the one hand, to present the absolute as a spiritual-personal reality transcending the world and, on the other hand, to show that because of its transcendence, the Absolute becomes knowable not completely, but only to the extent that it is within reach of human reason, which is limited by comparison with the unlimited Absolute.³ In Kudryavtsev-Platonov's philosophy, that function is performed by the concept of the "Absolute Being" while the ontological picture presupposes the recognition of Absolute Being as the ultimate criterion and the supreme goal of all that exists that transcends the juxtaposition of spirit and matter. Absolute being is by definition outside the world yet at the same time actively influencing the world, determining its existence and development.

On the whole, Kudryavtsev-Platonov's teaching of three types of being and the synthesizing function of the Absolute with regard to spiritual and material being cannot be described as entirely logical and consistent. Ultimately, he failed to provide a clear logical grounding for the formula "God is the Absolute." That proposition, called upon to crown the philosophical grounding of religion, is genetically linked to religious consciousness itself. The close link with religious consciousness – the desire to stay within the framework of traditional Orthodoxy – is one of the key characteristic features of all ecclesiastical-academic philosophical interpretations of religious consciousness.

One can agree with Y.A. Kimelev who held that systematic theology will forever gravitate either towards using some philosophical system or towards unfolding itself into a metaphysical theory. "The point is that Christian theology must present God as the Absolute, as the supreme ontological principle of entire reality and accordingly, as an all-

³ That Kudryavtsev-Platonov allows for the possibility of man knowing one facet of Divinity does not mean that he admits philosophical rationalism in its pure form into the structure of religious consciousness. In ecclesiastical-academic epistemology Absolute being, although is reflected in religious thought, nevertheless is the subject of a specific type of cognition which draws on man's extra-rational ability.

embracing explanatory principle. This principle should also form the basis of intelligible reality, including the reality of an individual life.”⁴ Thus Kudryavtsev-Platonov’s theory of Absolute being as the fundamental element of the world that reconciles the spiritual and material being and is their fundamental reason, was a consequence of his philosophical interpretation of the Orthodox-Theistic worldview.

Kudryavtsev-Platonov’s epistemological teaching of the “ideal” cognition of the truth stems directly from the priority of the ontological principle of transcendental monism in his philosophy. That teaching was a reinterpretation of Platonic ideas under the influence of modern Western European, especially Kantian, philosophy. The structure of man’s cognitive abilities, in addition to empirical (sensuous) and rational cognition included “ideal,” “rational” knowledge, which in effect represents an irrational mystic vision. According to Kudryavtsev-Platonov, cognition includes, along with the empirical knowledge of the material world and rational understanding of the spiritual world, an extra-sensual perception of the world that is above experience and is “cerebral” and “ideal.” The philosopher interpreted that ideal knowledge as a match between what an object should be and what it is.

The teaching about ideal cognition occupied a key place in Kudryavtsev-Platonov’s philosophical interpretation of religious consciousness. It is not by chance that he had doubts about the choice of a proper term to denote that type of cognition. V. Zenkovsky considered the term “ideal cognition” to be infelicitous, as it did not reflect the essence of Kudryavtsev-Platonov’s teaching. Zenkovsky believed that because Kudryavtsev-Platonov’s ideal cognition was based on faith, the concept of “mystic vision” would be more appropriate.⁵ In our opinion, the fact that Kudryavtsev-Platonov rejects the term “mystic” is not accidental and has deep meaning. His main task was to prove that it was possible to know God rationally and not on the basis of mystic knowledge proceeding from man’s own cognitive ability. Nevertheless, tailoring his logic to the Orthodox tradition, Kudryavtsev-Platonov could not declare reason to be the only source of knowledge of God. He solves the problem of the relationship between faith and reason in the ecclesiastical-academic style: faith is something basic and original in the human spirit and reason is secondary and derivative. Although Kudryavtsev-Platonov’s philosophy contained a strong traditional Orthodox motive of glorifying faith over reason, he was among the first

⁴ Y.A. Kimelev. *Philosophical Theism*, Moscow, 1993, p.118.

⁵ See: V.V. Zenkovsky. *A History of Russian Philosophy*, St.Petersburg, 1991, Vol. II, Part 1, p.88 (In Russian).

academic philosophers to interpret faith as an organic part of the overall process of cognition without opposing it to reason, but uniting the two.

Because Absolute being in Kudryavtsev-Platonov's religious and philosophical thinking is the basis of all existing things, ideal cognition of it is the highest type of cognition, and is superior to empirical and rational cognition. The main task of ideal cognition is not confined to understanding and explaining the truth of God's existence. Kudryavtsev-Platonov defines it in the following way: "The main task of ideal cognition must consist not merely in defining and asserting the truth of the concept of God, but in applying that concept to explaining and throwing light on all the concrete phenomena of nature and spirit from a viewpoint that may be described as religious."⁶ Thus the significance of ideal cognition goes beyond epistemology to acquire the character of religious enlightenment.

Two fundamental elements can be singled out in Kudryavtsev-Platonov's ideal cognition: first, the immediate character of the knowledge received by the mind; second, in spite of the independent and self-sufficient character of that immediate knowledge, it is linked with rational cognition. The latter proposition is important in the context of Kudryavtsev-Platonov's work: reason is involved in forming the concept of the supra-sensual. A. Fedotov draws an interesting parallel between the ideal and sensuous cognition in Kudryavtsev-Platonov's work: "Just as in sensuous cognition we do not stop at perceptions, but bring them to light through concepts, so in ideal cognition we have no logical right to confine ourselves to mere impressions and perceptions of the supra-sensual. In the wake of sensations come diverse kinds of the work of reason, which through rigorous thinking and logical operations reworks the immediate impressions into various types of perceptions and concepts of ideal objects."⁷

Kudryavtsev-Platonov's concept of the truth, which he himself considered to be "new, more complete and many-sided," was based on his theory of the dyadic nature of any object in which two different aspects coexisted: the ideal and the phenomenal, which are substantially linked in any object, and yet are qualitatively different from each other.

Kudryavtsev-Platonov defined truth as harmony of the thing with itself, the unity of its two aspects, the harmony of what must be with what is, of the idea and the phenomenon. This harmony constitutes the true being of a thing, its objective truth. Kudryavtsev-Platonov also identified truth in the subjective sense as true knowledge, i.e. the

⁶ V.D. Kudryavtsev-Platonov. *Works*, Vol. II, Issue 1, p. 30 (In Russian)

⁷ A. Fedotov. *The Relationship Between Faith and Knowledge*, according to V.D. Kudryavtsev. Zagorsk, 1966. Manuscript, p. 18. (In Russian).

cognition of the ideal aspect of what exists as it relates to the empirical aspect.

Kudryavtsev-Platonov believed it was reasonable to study both the ideal and phenomenal aspects of reality within concrete sciences, but stressed that such a study was doomed to be one-sided and incomplete: "This knowledge presupposes a new and higher cognition that would encompass the truth more broadly and deeply than the above sciences can attain."⁸ That supreme knowledge that is capable of understanding the full depth of the truth is, according to Kudryavtsev-Platonov, philosophy or the science of ideas. However, the thinker's prime task is to trace the logical link between the truth of science via philosophy to theology, to link the philosophical truth and the truth of Revelation, to demonstrate that the truth of God's being is the Absolute truth. Kudryavtsev-Platonov tried to perform that task by elaborating the theory of ideas. Recognizing the reality of the phenomenal world, he argued that the idea was something initial and basic with regard to phenomena, the creative element of the thing and its purpose: the thing exists to express or materialize its idea, and thus fulfill its purpose and mission. The measure of that fulfillment constitutes the measure of its truth in the objective sense of the word. Thus the truth of an individual thing depends on the degree to which its idea is realized. This truth is relative because the idea of an individual thing does not possess all its features (reality, constancy and formal conformity to the laws of the world) in their absolute meaning compared with other ideas.

The ideal world which, according to Kudryavtsev-Platonov, forms the objective content of the truth is coexistence of ideas, each possessing only a relative truth. From his point of view ideas do not contain the entire truth of being, as each idea can serve as a means of implementing other ideas. Therefore Kudryavtsev-Platonov's hierarchy of ideas is crowned with the Absolute idea which combines all the properties of ideal being and therefore possesses the Absolute Truth. The cognition of the Absolute idea and approximation to the Absolute idea is the aim of philosophical reason, but only to the extent that it is within its reach. Consequently the Absolute idea as an object of philosophy is inexhaustible and can never be fully cognized.

However, it was important for Kudryavtsev-Platonov to show through logical argument that the possessor of the Absolute Truth is not an impersonal Absolute idea but the Absolute essence that combines the fullness and truth of being and knowledge, i.e. God. He tried to effect such a logical transition by introducing the concept of perfection.

⁸ V.D. Kudryavtsev-Platonov. *Works*, Vol. II, Issue 3, p. 25 (In Russian).

Kudryavtsev-Platonov believed that the diversity of the world of ideas was organized according to three underlying ideas: Truth, Goodness, and Beauty. The idea as a concept in his view must be normal, i.e. must represent a concept indicating the norm, therefore the ideas of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty express a certain perfection of things. Kudryavtsev-Platonov argued that perfection was absolute because it transcends empirical reality. But at the same time, it is concrete: absolute perfection “is not an imagined but real, existing perfection; in other words the overriding and basic idea we are concerned with is the idea not only of abstract absolute perfection but of absolute perfect being, of absolute perfect reality or, to put it another way, the idea of the Absolute essence.”⁹ The idea of truth, according to Kudryavtsev-Platonov, is a particular manifestation of the absolute perfection in the sphere of science.

Another important goal for Kudryavtsev-Platonov was to prove that truth is objective. In the spirit of Christian Platonism, Kudryavtsev-Platonov interpreted truth, first as the ideas preceding material being and, second, as concepts existing in the human mind, the spiritual sphere. The objective content of truth is in the things themselves as their ideas. But it is man who cognizes and expresses this content and therefore, such cognition is achieved gradually through understanding the hidden essence of the thing. Thus, the truth has objective content but is subjective in form.

The novelty of Kudryavtsev-Platonov’s approach to the problem of truth consists in his attempt to include the ideas of Western European philosophy and theology in the Orthodox tradition. V.V. Zenkovsky believed that Kudryavtsev-Platonov’s theory of truth as a juxtaposition of the thing as it is in empirical reality to what it must be implies recognition of the need for value judgment in cognition, which he considered to be the distinctive feature of Kudryavtsev-Platonov’s approach to the problem of the truth.

Kudryavtsev-Platonov believed that the ultimate goal of all the sciences was to attain the truth. Truth can only be achieved through reason. Only human reason, owing to its divine origin, can approach the Absolute idea. Kudryavtsev-Platonov’s work sought to prove that a rational way towards the truth and its rational understanding was possible and necessary. Therefore he criticized Jacobi’s teaching of faith as the basis of all knowledge, and Schelling’s concept of intellectual intuition, writing that according to Schelling the fundamental origin of being and knowledge reveal themselves “suddenly” and “for no apparent reason.”

⁹ Ibid. Vol III, Issue 2, p. 181.

Summing up his reflections on the truth, Kudryavtsev-Platonov formulated three main truths within his system which may well be considered pivotal for the ecclesiastical-academic epistemology in general:

- 1) the spiritual world, the world of ideas, is the basis and purpose of the existence of things;
- 2) the physical world exists in reality because it has been created by God;
- 3) there exists the absolutely perfect essence that combines the fullness and truth of being and knowledge, i.e. God.

The main outcome of Kudryavtsev-Platonov's reflections on the truth is arguably the proposition that philosophy and concrete sciences can and must understand the truth but should not claim to understand the supreme divine truth. Truth in the world represents agreement and non-contradiction of things and phenomena, a harmonious combination in each thing of the phenomenon and essence, of what must be and what is. This harmony and agreement of things with themselves is determined by the Supreme Law of Reason. Man cognizes the ontological truth that exists in being by his cognitive ability and by forming non-contradictory judgments of reality. Therefore the logical truth as a synthetic element of human reason integrates all the different elements contained in cognition, integrating thinking and being. The sole criterion of truth is the correspondence of human knowledge to God-created reality.

Kudryavtsev-Platonov's teaching of the truth is also interesting in that it contained a moral aspect, albeit only in an implied form. He saw the cognition of truth as part of the process of "deification," i.e., the moral improvement and transfiguration of man. Man does not merely learn the "revelatory truth" by his reason, but he "enters the truth," "inhabits the truth." Thus the individual's "participation" in divine truth is the starting point for active spiritual work and the concept of truth becomes not so much epistemological as ontological. Kudryavtsev-Platonov's treatment of truth as ontological, the identification of a "being" aspect in it, and the contention that it adequately reflects something that exists outside human consciousness was attributable to the idea of truth as genuinely existing, an idea that traditionally has been part of Russian philosophical thought.

In conclusion, although Kudryavtsev-Platonov's prime interest was in recent philosophy and he sought to introduce Western European philosophical ideas into the Orthodox tradition, he managed, up to a point, to avoid the eclecticism that is inevitable in such cases. Kudryavtsev-Platonov's philosophical reasoning is not the result of a

mechanical grafting of Western European doctrines onto Orthodox soil, but rather an organic synthesis of European and Russian philosophizing. The theoretical forms borrowed from Western European philosophy were invested with new spiritual content that reflected both the general features of Russian philosophy and traditional Orthodox principles.

Thus, while Kudryavtsev-Platonov's works reveal a preoccupation with epistemological problems characteristic of European rationalism, his epistemology, in accordance with Orthodox-theistic principles, takes the shape of the theory of knowledge of God, becomes ontological and subordinate to the larger task of explaining God's being. Kudryavtsev-Platonov addresses the problems that were traditional for European philosophy of his time: the relationship between empirical and theoretical knowledge, primary and secondary properties, the authenticity of knowledge and the possibility of obtaining objective knowledge. However, the central idea of his epistemology is the problem of holistic knowledge grounded in man's spiritual experience, including the spiritual and moral component. In line with the Thomist and Neo-Thomist tradition, Kudryavtsev-Platonov formulates a rational proof of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul while at the same time advocating the need for a sense of God and of contemplation of the Absolute with the heart. Finally one of Kudryavtsev-Platonov's key conclusions is the task, clearly formulated towards the end of the nineteenth century, of creating an original Russian philosophy, classical in form and Orthodox in spirit, on the basis of the principle of a harmonious combination of faith and reason within a special cognitive mechanism of "believing reason" or "reasonable belief."

Kudryavtsev-Platonov's aim of creating a confessional, but at the same time, classically oriented and professional philosophy accounts for the inherent contradictions of his philosophical ideas which have been extensively discussed in the literature. The use of rational methods to explain the supernatural could not be consistent by definition. Kudryavtsev-Platonov's wish to stay within the Orthodox patristic tradition led to numerous logical contradictions in his concept, which is why the system of transcendental monism met with a mixed reception in historical and philosophical studies.

However, the fact that his philosophical quest is not totally free of contradiction does not mean that it is of little value. In spite of a measure of eclecticism and the "derivative nature" of Kudryavtsev-Platonov's reasoning, some of his ideas have undoubtedly influenced the subsequent development of Russian philosophy. They include, first of all, the idea of the need to create systems which philosophically ground religious consciousness, a "justification of the faith of the Fathers;"

secondly, the interpretation of the world in terms of the principle of transcendental monism or “philosophical synthesis,” some elements of which can be traced in the development of the philosophy of “all-unity;” and finally, the doctrine of holistic knowledge as the concentration of man’s spiritual capabilities, including the cognition of irrational elements, while not dismissing rationality.

It should be noted that Kudryavtsev-Platonov’s philosophical studies are still regarded as classics by Orthodox theologians. They point out that these studies were prompted by the wish to “justify the faith of the Fathers,” to philosophically interpret the rich spiritual heritage of the Church and God’s revelation. This speculative path again led to legend, to history thus enriching theological academic tradition.”¹⁰

In modern literature one sometimes comes across the thesis about the “meeting of Orthodoxy and Russian philosophy” that occurred “at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.” The reference is to the phenomenon of the Russian non-church religious philosophy that traces its origin to the philosophy of Vladimir Solovyov. The study of ecclesiastical-academic thought as a whole and the best known philosophical doctrine within its structure, i.e. Kudryavtsev-Platonov’s system of transcendental monism, warrants the conclusion that this encounter, rightly described as a “philosophical interpretation of the organic principles of Orthodoxy” occurred as early as the mid-nineteenth century in the works of representatives of the ecclesiastical-academic philosophy. The fact that these Orthodox thinkers sought philosophical proof of religious truths to create a coherent system of philosophical interpretation of religious consciousness that blends organically into Russian philosophical culture led to the global task of “justifying the faith of the Fathers” which provided the core of that unique phenomenon of Russian and world culture, Russian religious philosophy.

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¹⁰ M.S. Ivanov. “Academic Theology. Historical Review.” *Zhurnal Moskovskoy Patriarkhii*, 1986, № 1.

CHAPTER XII

FATHER SERGEI BULGAKOV'S SOPHIOLOGY: PHILOSOPHEME OR THEOLOGEME?

ALEXEY KOZYREV

The teaching about Sophia, or the Wisdom of God, is the most intimate and, simultaneously, the most controversial element of the religious philosophy of the Reverend Sergei Bulgakov (1871-1944). This teaching, more than anything else, reflected the subjective nature of his religious sentiments and intellectual pursuits. No one has devoted so much time and effort to the development of the teaching about Sophia as Bulgakov, and it was his works that provoked the most heated debates within the Church. The Russian émigré community found it hard to come to terms with Bulgakov's sophiological theology, which is a direct continuation of his philosophical, sociological, and economic work begun in Russia. Complicating the perception of Bulgakov's sophiology was the fact that his teaching, debatable to say the least from the dogmatic point of view, was caught among the grindstones of inter-jurisdictional arguments of Russian Orthodoxy overseas, torn apart as it was by schisms and contradictions. If sophiology can be reasonably described as a trend in Russian thought, then Bulgakov is its central figure.

The teaching of Sophia has a rich pedigree: the principle of Sophia – i.e. the feminine element of Divinity which, in contrast to the semantic, active and formative element of Logos is an aesthetic, artistic, entelecheic, and crowning element – is encountered not only in Christianity, but in practically all the religious-mystic teachings of Mediterranean and Near Eastern cultures.

No matter what one's attitude is toward sophiology, the mere listing of its Russian adepts – G. Skovoroda, F. Golubinsky, V.S. Solovyov, the Rev. Pavel Florensky, Bulgakov, philosophers and to varying degrees theologians – reveals a nexus of two types of discourse: theological and philosophical. What, then, is Sophia – a philosopheme or a theologeme? Before attempting to answer that question let us give an overview of how Bulgakov's concept of Sophia evolved.

Bulgakov's book *Philosophy of Economy. Part 1. The World as an Economy* (1912) can be regarded as Bulgakov's first foray into the realm of sociology. For Bulgakov, the economy is not just a social or family process, but a religious, fundamentally divine process, the content of which is to restore the lost link between *natura naturans* and

natura naturata, creating nature and created nature (this would be challenged by Berdyaev who saw the economy as a burdensome necessity, a manifestation of man's fall). Revealing a strong Kantian influence in both methodology and idiom, Bulgakov's work raises the problem of the transcendental subject of the economy. In other words, the question is asked, who is the Master and who runs the economy?

A multitude of individual human consciousnesses and wills, independent of each other and acting in history, are likened metaphorically to a mirror smashed into a myriad fragments, each reflecting the world in its own peculiar way. The organic link between them lies deeper than genetic kinship. "The historical mankind, and in it each individual, are ontologically involved with Sophia, and the heavenly Sophia hovers over the earthly world made visible through reason, beauty, the economy and culture. Between the world as Cosmos and the empirical world, between humanity and Sophia, there is a vibrant communication that can be likened to the feeding of a plant from its roots."¹ Bulgakov sees the Chaocosmos in which the world has been plunged as the consequence of "the violation of the intrinsic unity of Sophia, the displacement of Being from its metaphysical centre, of metaphysical decentralization." Bulgakov explains the origin of decentralization in the spirit of Schelling's natural philosophy.

In his *The Undying Light* (1917) Sophia, as the intermediary and comprehensible matter of the world's creation, is central to the strategy of revealing the Christian teaching of the creation of the world and Theophany. The creation of the world by God is seen as "self-division of the Absolute, the sacrifice of the Absolute for the sake of the relative which becomes 'the other', a creative sacrifice of love." Seeking to avoid pantheism, Bulgakov denies the platonic eternity of matter and refuses to interpret "nothing" as the potential primary substance of creation. Based on the difference between Greek particles denoting negation (*a*, *ouk*, *me*) Bulgakov offers the following formula: "The world has been created out of nothing in the sense of '*oukon*' and therefore the first, main and substantive act of creation was its personification by *meon*. The transformation of *oukon* into *meon* signifies the creation of general matter, the Great Mother of the entire natural world." This assumption is fundamental for the first version of Bulgakov's sophiology. Bulgakov, after Dostoyevsky, compares this "God-Matter" (a concept also used by Solovyov and S.N. Trubetskoy) or Matter in God (the concept is traced to Duns Scotus), or Mother of the World, the Greek Demetra, Mother Earth to the Mother of God. He

¹ S.N. Bulgakov. *Philosophy of Economy*. Works in two vols. Vol.1. Moscow: Nauka Publishers, 1995, p. 158 (in Russian).

subsequently defines Sophia as created, combining the features of Plato's "knowing cosmos" (*kosmos noetos*) or the world of ideas.

The concept of Sophia is not fully expounded in Solovyov's published philosophical works. As a rule, Solovyov resorted to metonymy, and mentioned the name Sophia as if in passing. It also occurred in his later articles and speeches and in his works written in French. But Bulgakov found a precedent of sophiology in *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth* by the Rev. Pavel Florensky. The definitions of Sophia he provides in *The Undying Light* essentially replicate Florensky's *The Pillar*: the Guardian Angel of all creatures, the Beginning of God's Ways, the Object of God's Love or the Love of Love, the Idea of God, the World Soul and Eternal Femininity. The supreme manifestation of Sophia is the Church, the Virgin Mary, the Heavenly Jerusalem, the New Heaven and the New Earth. The intermediary being of Sophia between God and creatures is more pronounced: "It simultaneously separates and unites, it is a kind of *metaxu* (intermediate) in Plato's sense," which confers on it the character of mediator. Seeking to avoid the dyadic nature of Sophia, Bulgakov characterizes it by the Aristotelian term *entelecheia*: the world is basically Sophia, but is not Sophia in its current state. Accordingly, the world is an arena of Sophian theurgy through economy and art: the world must be given back its Sophian primary image. Bulgakov sometimes described this process by a not very euphonic word "sophicization." This deterministic concept of the process stemming from the substantial presence of Divinity in the world through Sophia was criticized by Prince Y.N. Trubetskoy and later by V.N. Lossky, author of the pamphlet "The Argument about Sophia" (Paris, 1936). Trubetskoy in his book *The Meaning of Life* argued that if Sophia is interpreted the way Bulgakov understood it, i.e. relating it to the temporal world as *natura naturans* to *natura naturata*, then "it is obvious that human freedom and the freedom of any creature is reduced to nothing. If God's providence about me is my substance or essence *I cannot be a manifestation of that substance*. Whether I like it or not I am in any way what God has conceived me: all my actions – no matter whether good or evil – are generated by that essence, *the manifestations of divine Sophia*. Obviously, that teaching makes Holy Sophia the cause of evil: for if my self is but its partial manifestation, my self-determination with regard to evil constitutes its self-determination." The ontological status of Sophia is another matter. Its definition played a fateful role in the "argument about Sophia." Bulgakov wrote: "Just as love of Love and love for Love, Sophia possesses personality and image, is a subject, a person or, to use a theological term, a hypostasis; of course it *differs* from the hypostases of the Holy Trinity. It is a fourth

hypostasis of a different order. It does not participate in internal divine life, *it is not God*, and therefore it does not turn three hypostases into four hypostases. But it is the beginning of a new, created multiple hypostasis, for it is followed by many hypostases (people and angels) that relate to God as Sophia.”

After emigrating from Russia, Bulgakov renounced the treatment of Sophia as “a kind of fourth hypostasis” and in general of hypostatic being (i.e., one that has personhood). This change of approach was already apparent in the article *Ipostas' i ipostasnost'* subtitled “Scholia to *The Undying Light*” (1924) where he provides “a somewhat different argument than that contained in *The Undying Light*. It is substantially the same, but more accurate.” In it, Bulgakov argues that Sophia does not have its own hypostasis, but at the same time is not merely an attribute or an allegory of Divinity. It possesses hypostasis “capable of being hypostasized and belonging to a hypostasis, being its revelation, *surrendering oneself* to it,” and “it blends with Trinity both as one and with each of its hypostases separately.”² At the same time Sophia in creation acquires its own being, becoming the world as its divine substance, as God in the World. Sophia “is the substance of the world which makes the world what it is, not ghostly, but self-founded.”³ In the created Sophia, i.e. in the world seen from its ideal side, it is given to man to be a world hypostasis, a worldly God. Bulgakov now proposes to regard Sophia as a principle of hypostasizing, non-hypostatic Love of God’s Love, capable of being hypostasized both as Trinity and as the many hypostases of God’s creatures.

Bulgakov’s identification of the Divine Wisdom of Sophia with its essence in God, which he makes in his later works beginning from *The Lamb of God* (1933), is characteristic of his later sophiology. In it he seeks to invest with life Aristotelian *ousia*, or nature, identifying it with Wisdom and God’s Glory. In his 1936 summary of sophiology Bulgakov writes: “The negation of links between *ousia*, on the one hand, and Wisdom-Glory, on the other, undoubtedly *divides* God. It leaves *ousia* vacant as an abstract metaphysical scheme which is different from the concrete images of the life of God in Wisdom and Glory. A necessary postulate of one God therefore is *identification* of both principles, the dogmatic and the Biblical. In a certain sense, which is subject to closer definition, *ousia* is Wisdom and Glory, ‘the eternal power and Divinity’ [Rom. 1:20].” Significantly, during that period he freely compares his Sophia to St. Gregory Palamas’s energies: “In the

² S. Bulgakov. *Ipostas' i ipostasnost'*. Collection of articles dedicated to P.D. Struve to mark the 35th anniversary of his scientific and journalistic activities (1890-1925). Prague, 1925, p. 362.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

history of dogmas we find an analogy in the teaching of St. Gregory Palamas (fourteenth century) accepted by the Eastern Church, on Divinity or Divine *ousia* and its energies. This affirms the identity of transcendental *ousia* and the multiplicity of the energies it reveals, while differentiating them. We find a similar identity in difference with regard to *ousia* on the one hand and Wisdom or Glory on the other.”

Konstantin Andronikov, who translated practically all of Bulgakov's theological works into French, a friend and interpreter of De Gaulle and one-time rector of Saint-Serge, succinctly summarizes the problems that sophiology puts before philosophy and theology. In his article “Sophiological Problems” published in *Messenger Orthodoxe* he wrote:

No philosophical teaching can sidestep the problem of *the original beginning, or the Absolute and the relative* as they relate to each other. The world, be it illusory or real, *depends* on something that is superior to it. Religious philosophy recognizes that dependence as degradation of the divine (Gnosticism, Buddhism, Hinduism) or as emergence (by emanation or some other way: Egyptian, Babylonian, Iranian, Greek, Judaist and Islamic teachings, European idealism, etc).

Philosophy... in the face of the ontological abyss between the Absolute and the relative has to admit its inferiority or *aporia*. If it attempts to solve that problem, it has sooner or later to ask itself the question whether it is *metaxu tertium*, a third member between the Absolute and the relative, or merely a link, a variety of connection or, more precisely, to borrow a term from corpuscular and quantum physics, “the energy of bonds.” If so, what is the nature of that energy and where does it originate from? Is it a “projection” of the Absolute? ... Or does the energy originate from the domain of the relative? ... Or is that energy itself a kind of essence and *metaxu* has a being. In that case a range of similar questions arises: what is the nature of that essence? Does it pertain to God or the world? If it is divine how does it relate to the world? If it belongs to the world, what is its relationship to God? Would it not be proper in both cases to look for an intermediary between that essence and God, on the one hand, and the world on the other? Thus we enter an interminable sequence of reflections leading to something like “bad

infinity,” to pantheism or atheism, to pancosmism, or acosmism. It means that we do not solve the problem but brush it aside by destroying one of its two members. However, there is no way for Reason to approach it differently.

Theology faces the same questions, along with other, no less serious ones, concerning both the hypothesis of the energy of bonds and the hypothesis of the essence. What are the relationships in both hypotheses, what are the similarities and differences between that energy and essence and the nature of God? But first, are we dealing with the essence of God or His Manifestations? “The properties” or “attributes” of Divinity? Finally, how does one relate *metaxu* to the scriptural and traditional “definitions” and “characteristics” of God such as the Way, Truth, Life, Love, Glory, Wisdom, Providence, Might?

The complexity of the questions raised shows that sophiology is a very laborious, painstaking enterprise of solving these issues on two fronts at once, the philosophical and the theological – an attempt that is almost doomed to failure.

One can regard sophiology as a certain philosopheme, as a model of philosophical knowledge in the mainstream of the classical tradition of Platonism and Aristotelianism, though we include it in what is today the classical heritage of the tradition of early Christian Gnosticism which heavily influenced Solovyov and provides a reference point of sorts in the argument of what Sophia is, and teachings about it. The repulsion from and attraction to Gnosticism, to the Gnostic interpretation of Sophia as a kind of divine element which has a declension (*kataneusin* – Gr.) which suffers a fall because of a primordial cosmic error as a result of which emptiness (*kenoma* – Gr.) is formed and the world of creatures is formed – that model of Gnostic systems inevitably comes to mind when we speak about sophiological discourse. And while Gnosticism arises as a religious trend opposite to the spirit of classical Hellenism (Plotinus criticized Gnostics in Treatise II.9, “Against those who believe that the world is bad and the Creator of this World is Evil,” where he accused Gnostics of being absolutely insensitive to the Hellenic muse and understanding nothing of the teaching of Plato), today Gnosticism, in a certain sense, is itself an element of the classical heritage. Sophiology is an important element of the relationship of the Russian philosophical tradition to the ancient classical tradition, which makes Russian philosophy not merely a

modern phenomenon, nor simply a latter-day exercise on philosophical themes, as opponents of Russian philosophy would have us believe. Russian philosophy is a perfectly independent phenomenon, very interesting, many-sided and profound, consistently rooted in the classical tradition, in the Hellenic roots of Russian and European culture. Sophiology arose in the modern epoch. In a sense, Solovyov is the forerunner of that epoch, expressing one of its three currents which answers the question, how can one treat the *problem of the relationship between God and the world*, how do the heavenly and the earthly, the empyrean and the empirical relate.

Father Vasily Zenkovsky's article, "The Problem of Cosmos in Christianity," published in 1937 at the height of the sophiological controversy in a collection under the telling title *Living Legend: Orthodoxy in Modern Times*, was supportive, if not of Bulgakov's system, then certainly of the problems that engaged his mind. Zenkovsky writes, "Christian thought *partially accepted* the cosmos problems as treated by ancient philosophy and partly *introduced very profound changes to it*." In this article the solution of the problem of acosmism – a problem characteristic not only of Gnosticism, where acosmism is carried to extremes, but of various versions of mysticism and even pantheism – is made conditional on the recognition of the ideal aspect of the created world, which itself is created, and of an "intelligent cosmos" in the transcendental God, linked inseparably but never merging. Sophiology is seen as the best philosophical and, simultaneously, theological teaching about the cosmos that overcomes the dangers of acosmism:

Because the ideal side of the cosmos is an ideal universal unity which possesses being bestowed on it *as a whole*, it should be recognized as having genuine, united and whole *life*. And if ideas of God in their unity constitute Divine wisdom (Sophia) we must recognize that the ideal in the cosmos has the image of Divine Sophia and can rightly be called the creative Sophia. The structure of "sophiology," or the teaching of the cosmos that asserts its own being (bestowed on the cosmos through the act of creation), reveals the unity and integrity, life and development, the regularity and harmony of the cosmos due to the presence of the ideal in it that has a concrete and untraceable link to the real side. The assertion that the ideal side of the cosmos exudes the (reflected) light of the ideas of God, whose image it contains, provides the foundations of all the

existing constructions that correspond to the Christian perception of the cosmos.

Zenkovsky, then still a layman, was by no means an unqualified supporter of Bulgakov's system when he provided its critique before a Commission created by Metropolitan Eulogius in 1936.

The three key trends in Russian philosophy are *symbolism*, *sophiology* and *glorification of the name*. These are three variants of tackling the problem of the relationship between God and the world. Let me add that this also constitutes Palamism, but Palamism does not appear in Russian philosophical and theological discourse until some time later. In the Catholic Church Pius X's 1907 encyclical against the modernists, *Pascendi Dominici gregis mandatam*, deals a crushing blow at the personalism of philosophers such as Lacroix. But in backlash, there emerged trends seeking to assert the Catholic philosophy in the framework of an earlier Orthodox paradigm, giving rise to Thomism. Gilson and Maritain consistently elaborated the Thomist paradigm in religious philosophy. Russian philosophy, which is intimately connected with Europe through exposure to European spiritual schools, elaborates on the theme of Palamism as a kind of reaction to Catholic Thomism. Catholics themselves provoked interest in Palamas. The Jesuit St. Martin in *Dictionnaire Catholique* is very hostile to Palamism, criticizing St. Gregory for introducing duality into God by dividing Him into essence and energy. The opposite view is held by Russian theologians such as Vladimir Lossky, Archbishop Vasily Krivoshein, Archpriest Georgy Florovsky, Father John Meyendorff. In Meyendorff's 1959 monograph *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, the text acquires an emblematic meaning because it is actively discussed by Catholic thinkers such as Cardinal Charles Journé, the Dominican André Halleux and others. Palamism was smuggled into Western theology to become a phenomenon that calls for a reaction and for scrutiny as one's own "other." Sophiology is also modified: being essentially a substantialist doctrine, it relates to the Palamist discourse. One can see how Bulgakov gradually develops the theme of Sophia without hesychasm in *Philosophy of Economy* and *The Undying Light*. In his 1924 work *Ipostas' i ipostasnost'*, published in a collection in honour of Pyotr Struve, Bulgakov compares Palamas's energy and Sophia. *Energy is one of the possible concepts for understanding Sophia*. Dated to about the same time is a text I have discovered in the archive of the St. Sergius Ecclesiastical Institute in Paris in which Bulgakov writes:

The second parallel. The Church has established the teaching of God's energy in the Palamist sense. Energy

as God's force and God's action (*Theos*, as defined by the Council of Constantinople) relates only to one hypostasis of the Holy Trinity or, as is expressly stated in the works of St. Gregory Palamas, energy can be an intentional action of each of the hypostases of the Holy Trinity or the Trinity as a unity. Does the distinction between *ousia and energy*, the unknowable and transcendental divine essence on the one hand, and God *ad extra* who reveals through creation, correspond, essentially identically, to the teaching of God's Wisdom as a revelation of Divinity, so that in a sense one can say that Sophia = energy?

The conclusion of the text runs like this – nota bene:

I entirely deny that Sophia, God's Wisdom, was the fourth hypostasis or had any personal hypostasis in general. Its hypostasis is in Christ, but also in the Holy Spirit and beyond that, as the basis of the created world, it is hypostasized in created hypostases, above all and directly in the Mother of God. That is why in liturgy *the personal* appeal is directed either to Christ or to the Mother of God. This interpretation of Sophia differs markedly from Solovyov's who indeed imputes a fourth, feminine hypostasis to Sophia, a distinct bow to Gnosticism. In my previous discourse there are traces of this influence, which I have now overcome.

This is a kind of sophiological *confessio fidei* on four pages dating back to circa 1923-1924. Palamist discourse, acquiring relevance in theology beginning around the early 1920s, enters Bulgakov's mind too.

In his autobiographical text "Two Meetings" Bulgakov recalls two trips 25 year apart to see the *Sistine Madonna* in Dresden. He recalled how in 1899 he wept in front of it as a youth – a "Marxist cub" as he described himself – and prayed to her, the son of a priest who had lost his faith. As a priest, twenty-five years later in 1924, returning from a conference to Prague and stopping over in Dresden, he went to have another look at Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* and experienced crude male lust. In other words, the change of the spiritual state, spiritual maturity, enables one to perceive what one used to worship as a surrogate of lofty reality, which one now sees from a somewhat different angle. What happens to sophiology is not unlike what happened to Bulgakov's perception of the *Sistine Madonna*.

Bulgakov seeks to *overcome the irrepressible Baroque* of sophiology. Sophiology is a Baroque theology, a theology that is traced back to the nineteenth century, which lacks a clear-cut definition, where definition, like the Baroque curls on a painting or on furniture, trails off into infinity. It is not by chance that we find sophiological views firmly held in the work of Grigory Skovoroda, an eighteenth-century Ukrainian mystic and a remarkable representative of Baroque philosophy. Sophiology grows out of a cosmos of associations which, addressing the common theme of God and the World, opens up infinite opportunities for various comparisons and interpretations. Thus, we find different definitions of Sophia in Solovyov's work. Within one and the same text, *Readings on Man Godness*, we can find Christ's Body and Christ's Soul. The soul is sometimes the world, sometimes the ideal Divine Wisdom, sometimes an anti-type of Divine Wisdom, the Gnostic concept of "Antitype" that he uses in French in his *Russia and the Universal Church*. With Bulgakov, too, we find the same tendency. As N.A. Vaganova pointed out in her book *The Teaching of Sophia, Wisdom and Sophiology of Father Sergei Bulgakov* (Moscow: Orthodox St. Tikhon University of Humanities, 2010, in Russian), Bulgakov constantly upgrades Sophia's ontological rank, conferring on her an ever higher ontological status. Initially she is a hypostasis but is ontologically a cut below the Holy Trinity, a crossing point of two tangents descending from God to the World and rising from the World to God. Subsequently Sophia becomes not a hypostasis, but a kind of hypostatic principle, the potential of hypostacization. Towards the end of Bulgakov's work, in a large trilogy, *The Lamb of God* (1933), he defines it as a living essence, a living spirit, albeit a creature without a hypostasis – God's divinity which lives a whole but at the same time undifferentiated life. Eventually he comes to define her as the essence of Divinity, as *ousia* – the apophatic *ousia* theology tells us to keep silent about.

The original title of the third book in the large trilogy, *God and the World* (established from archive notebooks containing a manuscript of this book) allows for the possibility of cataphatic theology. For Bulgakov, Sophia and sophiology offer the opportunity of cataphatic theology, which attests to God's presence in the world. When Bulgakov emigrated, moving from the Crimea to Constantinople, the first thing he did was go to Hagia Sophia with the lawyer N.A. Tsurikov. It is significant that the book *Sophia, God's Wisdom*, which has yet to be published in Russian, begins with his impressions of visiting Hagia Sophia in Constantinople:

He who has visited the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and experienced its revelations, not only aesthetically,

but also spiritually, will forever be enriched by the new vision and the vision of the world in God, of Divine Sophia. The heavy dome drooping towards and embracing it provides the ultimate form for expressing the unity of heaven and earth, the infinity *peras u apeiron*, the unity of the universe, its immobile eternity in the image of the created world, the miracle of *harmony*, the accord between image and the primal image. The lightness, lucidity, beauty, and divine harmony through which the heaviness of the dome and the walls disappears: it is a sea of light pouring from above and holding dominion over the entire space; it entrances, captivates and convinces one that I am in the world and the world is in me. This is Plato baptized into Christianity, his heavenly domain where souls rise to contemplate ideas. But Plato's pagan Sophia is seen and grasps itself in Divine Sophia and truly Hagia Sophia's Church is its artistic proof and demonstration: this is not God or man, this is Divinity itself, the divine pall over the world. This is the final silent revelation of the Greek genius about Sophia, God's wisdom bequeathed to the later centuries. It is a miracle of architecture that appeared in the theological age by the will of a theologian emperor, remaining a visible link to the theology of the Justinian age which lit that torch for the benefit of future centuries. The dome of Hagia Sophia crowns and sums up, as it were, the theological legacy of the era of the ecumenical councils. The church of Hagia Sophia, God's wisdom as the world message of good tidings of the ecumenical church in the new Rome – what does it mean?

One is struck by the large number of symbolic and philosophically loaded concepts. That is, cataphatics is impossible without philosophy. Bulgakov is aware that *Sophia is needed* not in order to introduce new gods, but *in order to solve the philosophical problem of the relationship between macrocosmos and microcosmos and the theological problem of the relationships between God and the world*. It is as much a theologumen as a philosopheme. While, theologically speaking, we cannot – we have no right – to attempt to penetrate the “holy of holies,” philosophically nobody forbids us to reflect on the essence of the Absolute. Therefore, in a certain sense, philosophy gives us a chance to take revenge and advance and penetrate into territory denied us by

theology. And in general, philosophy as a discipline is more free because it offers a host of heuristic, interpretative models.

This brings to mind the work of L.M. Lopatin, “The Immediate Tasks of Modern Thought.” This was a ceremonial university speech delivered on St. Tatiana’s Day in 1917, the last university speech at Moscow University. Lopatin, who had been a friend of Solovyov since the age of six, provides a striking conclusion to this tradition in his speech: he always thought of himself as a scientific philosopher, an agnostic in the philosophical sense, i.e. a person who should not dabble in the issues of faith because faith is beyond the pale for philosophy, faith is outside philosophy. Lopatin was an opponent of religious philosophy; he engaged in scientific philosophy. He believed that philosophy should have its own axiomatics. But in this speech Lopatin surprisingly expresses his opinions about all the religious models of the Russian religious philosophy: he speaks about the problems of theodicy and the immortality of the soul, Solovyov’s sophiology and Origenism. The tone of the speech is “maybe it is this” or “maybe it is that,” “maybe Solovyov is right,” “maybe Origen is right,” it is not for us to know. But, Lopatin says, philosophy cannot be philosophy if it does not proceed from certain axioms, and in this case, the axiom should be the existence of a certain spiritual reality which is the source of the world, the existence of causality, the original freedom and so on. In that sense he provides an interesting image of a philosopher who, setting foot on this *terra sancta*, provides several models of philosophical solutions to theological problems. The theme of the relationship between philosophy and theology today takes the form of a rivalry between two independent disciplines, each having its own methods, principles, horizons and boundaries. But theology too has an area of knowledge that constitutes philosophy. The philosophical horizon of theology is its work with concepts and its reflection on the methods and approaches of theology. Here it is more shaky and on less certain ground, but ground that is nonetheless necessary in theological knowledge. Without this, theology turns into an expository, police discipline rather like the book by Metropolitan Serafim Sobolev, *The New Teaching About Sophia*, in which it is argued that one has to expose heresies, and has to test every utterance by a right-thinking detector, comparing every heretical statement to a quotation from the Holy Fathers and ignoring the existence of something called *consensus partum*. This is the keynote of Metropolitan Serafim’s book.

In fact, in the 1930’s we deal with two totally different trends in theology. Bulgakov, for all his modernism, and his wish to find some black holes or open themes in theology, comes across as a bold priest who sees theology as *living legend*, which was the name given to a

collection of theological works of the "Paris school." On the other hand, there is critical and formal theology. It was not by chance that Archpriest Alexander Schmemmann said that Bulgakov remained a philosopher in theology. He does not shy away from philosophical questions in his theological discourse. Therefore we will probably keep going back to Bulgakov as we try to answer these questions. Another matter that we can ask today is just how relevant sophiological discourse is to our own times and to what extent can philosophy continue to exist if it embraces this mode of thinking? Martin Heidegger, discussing the victory of the Soviets in the war against Nazism, said that the Russians won because they had the teaching of the Divine Sophia. But we have only taken what already exists within the European discourse – this is not our doctrine. It has been borrowed from the Gnostics, from Bohme, and from Pordadge. Yet Heidegger speaks with "the mouth of a babe," as it were: the Russians won because they had the teaching of Divine Sophia. So, we are dealing with a certain national paradigm of thought which, whether we like it or not, survives for us in religious verses, in our churches and in our icons.

In other words, sophiology as a periphery of Orthodoxy, as an attempt to interpret the texts of Solomon and the Parables – not allegorically, but literally – is present both in Orthodoxy and in Catholicism. Similarly, the new European gnosis is an interconfessional phenomenon. The names to which sophiology turns – Bohme, Pordadge, Hichtel, Gottfried Arnold – are linked more with Protestant, rather than the Catholic, tradition, but it is by no means a Russian tradition. Sophiology, of course, is imported – it happened during the period when the Masons were actively assimilating the traditions of the European gnosis. Incidentally, a three-volume translation of Pordadge's *Divine and True Metaphysics*, made by Novikov's circle, was published in the late eighteenth century by Novikov along with other publications at the university printing shop. Pordadge is invoked by Florensky in his *Pillar and Ground of the Truth* as an authoritative source, and Bulgakov's thought about Sophia, at least in *The Undying Light*, is highly reminiscent of Pordadge. Pordadge thus defined one aspect of Divine Sophia: "*Far be it from us to posit the fourth person in Divinity because we show that this Wisdom is below the Holy Trinity and depends on it as the shining imprint of the Father's Image. However, one could equally say about you that you create a hundred persons in God for you maintain that everything that is in God, is God, and yet you have to*

admit that every divine Attribute has its own formal Substantiality.”⁴ It is not by chance that “the eighteenth-century English mystic, a physician by the name of Pordadge who wrote some remarkable treatises on Sophia” is mentioned in 1936 among the mystics who were precursors of the sophiological doctrines of the Russian philosophers. “Western sophiology,” Bulgakov goes on to say, “is remarkable above all in that it has the full grasp of its range of problems and has provided some valuable and insightful ideas on this theme. However, being connected with the non-church worldview of its authors, it could not be adopted in its entirety by modern Orthodox sophiology which, however, could not help giving it its due share of attention.”⁵

Russian religious philosophy is a romantic phenomenon that arises in the late eighteenth century as part of a philosophical awakening caused by Masonic reflections. The Masons are the teachers of the Romantics and the Slavophiles. Solovyov and his sophiology, of course, belong to the romantic current in Russian thought. We see the romantic impulse persisting from the Masons through the last works by Frank and Karsavin around 1950 before it runs dry. Romanticism today is an archaic and outdated style alien to the post-modern style. Riding this romantic crest, sophiology emerges as a model from the new European gnosis and is assimilated in Russia, especially since Russia has the liturgical non-verbal church material for absorbing it. Solovyov, it should be noted, who in his youth never turned to icons or church architecture, in maturity becomes more sensitive to Orthodox iconography and writes poems about the Icon of the Sign rescued from a fire in Kursk. He writes about the church in Novgorod, to which he invites Auguste Comte to an imaginary guided tour and shows him his *Grand Etre* (the Grand Being, Humanity Collectively, the Absolute of Positive Religion) in the icon of St. Sophia. Along with discovering the European mystic tradition, philosophers discovered the Russian spiritual tradition, albeit belatedly. One can even give the precise time when it happened: the 1880s. Prince Sergey Trubetskoy in his early work *Sophia the Wisdom of God* (1886) says that processions with the cross and the teachings about the Last Judgment are perceived by our intelligentsia as backward popular faith, but who knows? Perhaps that popular faith is the truth. Perhaps the people who walk hundreds of versts to worship the relics of saints are the true philosophers. This was thirty years before Florensky wrote his *Iconostasis* and Yevgeny Trubetskoy wrote

⁴ John Pordadge. *Divine and True Metaphysics or Divine and Acquired Knowledge of Things Invisible and Eternal discovered through DIP*. Moscow: Secret Masonic Press, circa 1787 (book 1, Chapter V, §117-118).

⁵ Sergei Bulgakov, *Sophia, God's Wisdom*. Manuscript, p.3. Archive of St. Sergius Ecclesiastical Institute, Paris.

Reflection in Colours. What happened was the discovery of the popular faith. When Solovyov speaks about the progress of Russian Enlightenment in his lecture in March 1881, calling on the Tsar to pardon the murderers of the Tsar, he makes an oblique reference to Khlysts and speaks about sophiology as the popular faith of the Russian Christian people. It is also indicative that Solovyov, who elaborates the Gnostic theme, embraces European Gnosis, and read Gnostic tomes and Kabbala Denudata by Knorr von Rosenrot, all of a sudden turned to the theme of Russian religious life, the folk religion which his sophiological, philosophical and mystical studies complement in a certain manner.

Bulgakov's theological thought was noted not only for its grandiose system, reminiscent at times of the systems of medieval scholasticism, but also for its lyricism that at times reveals a "human, too human" element that echoes the romantic quests of the Silver Age culture, of the "new religious consciousness." His theology is love of wisdom residing in an "ardent heart," which at times psychologizes complicated theological questions, introduces "grave thoughts" suggested by Dostoyevsky and by the entire intelligentsia period of Bulgakov's work.

Thus Metropolitan Sergius Stagarodsky had a point when he wrote in his Ukaz: "Bulgakov's system has been created not only by philosophical thought, but by creative imagination. It is also a poem that is compelling in its loftiness and beautiful form; it uses terms and concepts that are common in Orthodox dogma. But does Bulgakov invest this new form with church content?"⁶ Perhaps it is poetry and a literary structured text, replete with metaphors, which is the *Tertium* which reconciles philosophy and theology in the work of Bulgakov? But that is a subject that merits a separate presentation.

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⁶ *On Sophia Divine Wisdom.* Ukaz of the Moscow Patriarchate and memoranda of Professor Rev. Sergei Bulgakov to Metropolitan Eulogius. Paris, 1935, pp. 6-7.

CHAPTER XIII

THE THEOLOGY OF COMMUNION AND EUCCHARISTIC ANTHROPOLOGY

ALEXANDER FILONENKO

Theology of Communion and Its Anthropological Exposition

In Orthodox theology of the twentieth century, the theology of communion stands out ever more vividly, developing not from an experience of *the knowledge of God* but from *communion with God*. Its starting point is an encounter with God, generating communion with God as the basis for any encounter and communion of people with one another and with creation. The basis for the description of communion with God itself is the dogma of the Holy Trinity revealed through the insight of communion. Thus, for St. Basil the Great “in the uncomposed nature God, unity is in the communion (*koinonia*) of the Godhead.” And in Metropolitan John Zizioulas of Pergamon, who presented the most developed form of the theology of communion in his two works *Being as Communion* (1993) and *Communion and Otherness* (2006), we find: “The being of God is a relational being: without a concept of communion it would not be possible to speak of the being of God”, or, “the substance of God, ‘God’, has no ontological content, no true being, apart from communion”. The insight of communion leads to a personal ontology underlying all – Christology and pneumatology and ecclesiology. According to Zizioulas, it is based on the two conclusions: “a) there is no true being without communion. Nothing exists as an ‘individual’, conceivable in itself and b) communion which does not come from a ‘hypostasis’, that is, a concrete and free person, is not an ‘image’ of the being of God. The person cannot exist without communion; but every form of communion which denies or suppresses the person, is inadmissible”.

In this paper I will try to a) outline an anthropology revealed in the context of the theology of communion, b) show that such an anthropology in its core is Eucharistic, based on the work of thanksgiving and c) highlight the stream of the Eucharistic theology of communion complementary to Sophiology and neo-patristics in the tradition the twentieth-century Russian Orthodox theology.

The Shape of Eucharistic Anthropology

Anteriority of Communion to Personhood: Rejoicing. Modern communication theory (Apel, Habermas, speech act theory) postulates atomic personalities-identities who come into communication and then describes the conditions for productive communication. It conceives an event of encounter as a secondary manifestation of individual lives. The theology of communion reverses the relationship of personhood and communication and proceeds from the affirmation that in the very constitution of the human being there is something that cannot be observed apart from encounter and is revealed only in encounter, namely, *personhood*. Personhood comes into the world through encounter, being unobservable before it for the person himself and inaccessible for his reflection. What are observable are people, individuals, bodies, assemblies of bodies, assemblies of individuals, but it is only in the event of encounter that we can see in this world the presence of personhood. An encounter leading to such exposition of personhood is a *true* encounter. Such is encounter with God.

What then are the conditions for a true encounter? Metropolitan Anthony of Surozh, whose theology is first of all that of encounter, associates encounter with joy: “In Serbian the word ‘encounter’ means ‘joy’ and an encounter is described as a ‘meeting’ – the word we use for the feast marking the event when the Mother of God brought the Saviour to the temple and was welcomed by a prophetic greeting and the Living God. An encounter could always be joyful if only we were able to meet”. A true encounter is expressed through *rejoicing* or spiritual joy. The word ‘rejoicing’ itself, making up in its Russian version *likovanie* a knot of remote meanings, can serve as a key anthropological metaphor in the theology of communion.

First, its root *lik* has two meanings. The first one, tracing back to the Greek *choros*, refers to an assembly, a host, a chorus and a circle dance. It is this meaning that works in *perichoresis*, the circle of love between the Persons of the Holy Trinity. The second meaning, the later one, refers to a true image. For instance, in Father Paul Florensky’s *Iconostasis* we read: “*Lik* (image) is the likeness of God realized in the face. ... Those who transform their face into image proclaim the mysteries of the invisible world without words, by their very appearance”. Finally, in the word *likovanie* as a verbal noun there is an idea that rejoicing is not only a profound joy but also a certain movement in which the image is discovered and brought out.

These four seemingly remote meanings taken together make it possible to present and unfold a first anthropological thesis following from the theology of communion. Personhood is what is revealed only in

the event of a true encounter when I rejoice while *the other* person in this meeting, looking at me experiencing joy, becomes a witness to the rejoicing as revealing my true image showing through the face of daily routine. Observed by the other, my *lik* (image) remains hidden for myself. Therefore, an encounter is essentially rejoicing both as joy and meeting in communion and revealing the image. The image is not revealed in this world in any other way but in a meeting encounter. Personhood is not exposed apart from the sociality of a true encounter, which in its turn, is determined by the possibility of communion with God. This anthropology of Personhood is a maximalist anthropology which is not so much an anthropological given as something assigned, a source of the teaching of the Holy Spirit as anthropological and ecclesiological paradigm. One should recall the maxim of Nikolay Fyodorov that the teaching on the Trinity is actually our social program. The theology of communion describes the conditions generating personhood of encounter.

Communion and Vulnerability: Mutuality and Ethical Asymmetry. In reconstructing the personal ontology of the Holy Fathers through the relationship of communion and otherness, Metropolitan John Zizioulas proceeds from an impulse given by Buber's philosophy of dialogue and Levinas's philosophy of the Other. Seeking to perceive God through I-Thou relationship, we cannot but pay a tribute to these thinkers who represent the tradition of twentieth century Jewish thought. However, we will not proceed from the similarity of their philosophy, but rather from their inner tension with regard to mutuality in dialogue as very productive for the theology of communion.

Levinas problematized the idea of communication with the Other, building on dissatisfaction with Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue whereby communication and humanity together with it are possible only on the condition of *mutual* respect and I-Thou acceptance. Buber's idea of dialogue presupposes the symmetry of mutuality as a condition for meeting. Levinas tests it after World War II by the fire of post-Holocaust questioning. 'I' is exposed only in relation to 'You'; but then is there a possibility for exposing humanity in a concentration camp, in a situation where any humanity is exterminated when 'I' is deprived of any hope for mutuality? What are the conditions for this possibility? If it is a matter of humanity as a source of ethics, then how is an ethical effort possible in a concentration camp? If we, following Buber, presuppose the condition of mutuality, then ethics will prove impossible. Levinas develops this ethics of the Other as first philosophy, placing in its basis almost an axiomatic requirement of *ethical asymmetry* whereby the only way to realize humanity is to accept the

Other in his radical human otherness, without asking him about his attitude to you: “From the very beginning it is not important for me how the Other treats me as it is his own affair; for me he is above all the one for whom I am responsible”, or “I am responsible for the Other even if he bores or torments me”. Then before dialogue, with its principle of symmetry, comes a possibility of asymmetric ethics, showing in the beginning of communication the determination to meet the Other. The situation in a concentration camp shows that ethics is always born in the conditions of absolute asymmetry. We are as ethical as we are capable of meeting the Other without asking ourselves about his attitude to us. This is the birth of ethics.

A true meeting is possible due to the condition of ethical asymmetry. Before being exposed through mutuality, love reveals itself as self-sacrifice and vulnerability. Levinas’s principle of ethical asymmetry is remarkably consonant with Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh’s theology of meeting: “We should agree to be only what Christ was, what God was, revealed in his humanity – vulnerable, defenceless, frail, defeated, as if despised and contemptible – and nevertheless being the Revelation of something utterly important: the magnificence of man”. We are not called to seek only protection against the Other and invulnerability. We are not called to identify religion or faith with the experience of invulnerability. For us the theme of Christian presence in the world should begin with the affirmation that Christ gives a Christian the strength to be vulnerable and sends him like a lamb to wolves. And vulnerability, as the need to be asymmetrically open to the world, becomes not an obstacle but a value. The ethics of vulnerability is a courageous ethics, but from where can a human being take strength and courage to realize it? The theology of communion considerably complements the ethics of the Other.

For a Christian the very opportunity for an ethical attitude toward the world is rooted in the extent to which he is capable of recognizing and accepting the existing asymmetry in Christ’s attitude toward him. Thus, we read in Metropolitan Anthony: “We should be at our most vulnerable and flexible in the hand of God. The events of our life, if we accept them as a gift of God, will give us at every moment an opportunity for creative efforts to be a Christian”. Before my ethical effort, there already always exists the asymmetric attitude of Christ to me. And to the extent in which I can discover and recognize this attitude, I am capable of ethical determination. Hence, ethics has as its foundational aesthetics my ability to recognize the action of Christ, to see the strong and formidable asymmetry of Christ’s attitude to me.

The Anteriority of Aesthetics to Ethics: Asymmetry of Gift and Thanksgiving. How then is this effort of recognizing God's mercy realized? What is the phenomenology of discovering Christ's asymmetry? The works of Jean-Luc Marion on the theology of communion are extremely fruitful. Marion, a modern French phenomenologist and Catholic theologian and Hans Urs von Balthasar's disciple, expounds on the anthropological significance of the Eucharist through an analysis of gift and thanksgiving. His phenomenology of gift reverses the natural relationship of gift and thanksgiving in which thanksgiving is a response to giving. While classical phenomenology deals not with gifts but phenomena which are given, among them the gift being indiscernible, Marion's phenomenology helps to discern givenness in a phenomenon by exposing an irreducible givenness in it: "Phenomenology begins not with the obvious or the revealed (then it would remain identical to metaphysics) but with the amazing and hard discovery that the obvious, blind in itself, can become a screen for a phenomenon, a place for givenness". Marion's theology describes the effort of discernment standing behind the givenness of gift. This effort of discernment is precisely the effort of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving precedes the presence of certain givenness as a recognized gift in our life. Through thanksgiving we bring gifts in our life and prove capable of discerning the work of Christ in the world which is done literally for nothing. Marion proposes to listen once again to God's response to the apostle: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9) and to imagine in place of an activist, autonomous and metaphysical subject a person who exposes himself through confidence in the gift of the Other exposed through thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving as an anthropological condition for communion with God is essentially linked with the antecedent discovery of one's own *spiritual poverty*. According to Metropolitan Anthony, "If we only become aware that nothing of what we call our own belongs to us and at the same time understand that this is given to us by God and people, the Kingdom of God will begin settling in around us... If we were really attentive to what happens in life, we could gather *gratitude* from everything, like a bee gathers honey – gratitude for every movement, for free breathing, for the open sky, for all human relations... And then life would become richer and richer as we would seem to become poorer and poorer. Because when a person has nothing he realizes that everything in life is mercy and charity, and he has already entered the Kingdom of God". Thanksgiving is the only link between God's action and man, who through thanksgiving gathers himself and preserves what cannot be preserved otherwise. The human being capable of response to the

asymmetric action of God's grace, discerning gifts behind everyday givenness, is the human being giving thanks, *homo gratificus*. Metropolitan John Zizioulas describes the Eucharistic ethos as a consequence of the theology of communion: "This type of faith does not presuppose the security of rational conviction. The only credibility offered lies in *love* of the Other. The only proof of God's existence is His love demonstrated by our own being in otherness and communion. We are loved, hence He exists".

It is interesting that in the theology of communion, atheism is read, unlike spiritual poverty, as "a form of ingratitude, the absence of the Eucharistic ethos". However, a way out of atheistic senselessness is possible only through thanksgiving. Thus, Metropolitan Anthony links the experience of God's absence in the life of an atheist with the fact that "an encounter with God face to face is always a judgment for us". Therefore, "when we do not feel, do not experience tangibly the presence of God, our first move should be gratitude. God is merciful; he comes before time; He gives us an opportunity to look back at ourselves, to understand and stop seeking His presence when it would be to our judgment and condemnation". The opportunity for a person with an atheistic experience to be saved is rooted in his ability to open communion with God through gratitude for the mercy of God's absence.

Therefore, the theology of communion based on relationships with the Other discovers ethics before ontology, which is described by Metropolitan John Zizioulas as personal ontology, but lying as the basis of ethics is the kenotic asymmetry of vulnerability. The source of ethical determination itself however is the recognition of the Christological asymmetry of God's action in the world, realized through the work of thanksgiving. Metropolitan Anthony presented the relationship of thanksgiving and vulnerability in this way: "The fruit of life is gratitude, but gratitude itself should bring forth fruit... Gratitude and only gratitude can impel us to the utmost feat of love for God, for people. The sense of duty, obligations, may not find strength to perform the ultimate feat of life, sacrifice and love. But gratitude will".

The Anteriority of Liturgics to Asceticism: The Language of the Theology of Communion. The doubly-asymmetrical theology of communion is exposed anthropologically as the Eucharistic aesthetics and the ensuing ethics. This pattern of expounding theology is found in the works of Hans Urs von Balthasar, a great Swiss Catholic theologian who, in the 1970's and 80's, presented a fifteen-volume theological symphony built around the Revelation revealed with consistency aesthetically, dramatically and logically. He began unfolding theology with the aesthetics of God's Glory and the poetics of praise in his seven-

volume *Theo-Aesthetics*. Then he used dramatics in the five-volume *Theo-Drama* to express the relationships of God's action and human response in an ethical move based on theo-aesthetics. Only after that did he expose the theo-logic of harmony in his three-volume *Theologics*. For the modern Christian theology, Balthasar's effort to overcome confessional boundaries becomes ever more crucial. A study of parallels between it and Orthodox theology is still in the earliest stages, but it is already now clear that the relation between theo-aesthetics and theo-drama as exposed by Balthasar highlights the relation of the Eucharist and Christian action in the world. For the Eucharistic theology of communion, what becomes the most important thing is the relation of liturgics and ethics, neglected by theologians belonging to the tradition of neo-patristic synthesis. Lying between liturgics and ethics is asceticism. For Vladimir Lossky, Father Georges Florovsky, and Father John Meyendorff, it is precisely the ascetic tradition, and first of all the body of ascetical texts, from which Orthodox theology is generated. A return to the patristic source for them is a return to the ascetic tradition. But through the works of Father Nikolay Afanasyev, Metropolitan Anthony, and Father Alexander Schmemmann, the understanding developed that the foundation of asceticism itself is liturgics, the experience of thanksgiving as praise that has seen the Glory of God. The ascetic tradition is not self-sufficient. It is a human response to divine action. Eucharistic theology is basically about a clear and keen recognition that when we meet God, He proves to be closer to us than we could think – closer than we can be to ourselves. The discovery of this closeness of God to us is the first condition of asceticism. But we discover this experience in the work of thanksgiving, in the Eucharist, the primary language of which is *liturgics*.

If the Eucharist is the practice generating the theology of communion and the ensuing work of thanksgiving, then the primary language of theology should be neither apophatic nor kataphatic. The gift of God revealed as *the call* goes beyond both the apophatic and kataphatic theological language, while being the source of both. Indeed, the call generates an apophatic effort, since it comes as a gift, throwing one into reverential silence and depriving one of the power of speech. The call being heard is revealed in particular situations with special language practices. Its coming means a suspension of these practices, a glaring *gap* within which communion develops. Communion itself is born as a responsiveness to the call – a response in praise. The event of the call as gift is manifested in the world through thanksgiving, and is realized and lives by it. It is thanksgiving that makes up the source of the kataphatic effort.

In the neo-patristic perspective, it is appropriate, thanks to Vladimir Lossky, to highlight in Dionysius the Areopagite the apophatic way of affirmation and the kataphatic way of negation and to give a special significance to apophatics as “the basis of every true theology”. Marion, however, in studying the Areopagite, shows that they are based not on the predicative language of *statement* but on the verb *to extol, to praise (hymnein)*. While Sergey Averintsev sees “signs of time” in his philosophical prose “built as a hymn”, Marion goes further, affirming that the theology of Dionysius the Areopagite is wrongly radicalized up to the apophatics of mystical theology and the kataphatics of the theology of divine names, while overlooking the theology of hymnal praise. While speculative theology is built either apophatically or kataphatically, the Eucharistic theology of communion addresses the *liturgical hymn* as primary theology and is expounded as *Eucharistic hermeneutics*. Lying at the core of Eucharistic theology is the Eucharistic Canon of the Divine Liturgy with its formula as a response from which all theology begins: “It is meet and right to sing of Thee, to bless Thee, to praise Thee, to give thanks to Thee and to worship Thee in every place of Thy dominion”. Father Schmemmann comments: “Behold, this pure, free, blissful thanksgiving restored and given to man by Christ is lifted up again over the world – His thanksgiving, His knowledge, His filial freedom which have become and is ever becoming ours”. The crisis of today’s academic theology lies in the fact that the Eucharistic experience of God’s presence and our contemplation, in theory and interpretation, have lost a mediating link between them, and this link is *hymn*, which is immediately followed up by *preaching* and *witness*. It is only witness that can also unfold into *speculative theology*. Ms. O. Sedakova observed that today’s crisis of preaching – which has turned, according to Averintsev’s vocabulary, into “a didactic work of oratorical type with ethical requirements” – is caused by a rupture between preaching and hymn as its cradle. It is interesting that theologians associated with the Eucharistic theology of communion have given examples of renewed homiletics, among them Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, Father Alexander Schmemmann, Sergey Averintsev, and Father George Chistyakov.

Sophiology, Neo-patristics, and the Eucharistic Theology of Communion

The Eucharistic theology of communion, despite scholastic classifications reducing the themes of the entire Orthodox theology of the twentieth century to a field somewhere between Sophiology and neo-patristics, represents an independent and fruitful theological tradition *complementary* to those mentioned. The stream of this third tradition

also includes the teaching on “liturgy outside church” by Sister Maria Skobtseva and the Eucharistic ecclesiology of Father Nikolay Afanasyev and the theology of communion of Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh and the liturgical theology of Father Alexander Schmemmann and the theology of the Glory of God and the poetic of praise by Sergey Averintsev. The perspective of this tradition enables a fruitful exposition for the liturgically-nourished preaching of Alexander Men and the efforts of Father George Chistyakov, who has managed in a unique way to bring together hymnographic studies and Christian service in the world.

Sophiology represents a combination of theoretical contemplation and Christian activism. This second component of social activism has been underestimated for a long time. Sophiology was perceived first of all as a theological speculation born under the influence of German philosophy, but today it has become increasingly clear that there is a profound inner relation between the Sophiological intellectual impulse and the activism of its creators, between the pastoral work of Father Sergei Bulgakov and the circle of Christian socialism so close to him, between George Fedotov and certainly sister Maria Skobtseva and her circle. Sophiology, linked with Christian activism, had a solid ethical program, while representatives of the neo-patristic synthesis, focused on the study of the ascetic tradition, proved vulnerable precisely in that the neo-patristic synthesis failed to offer an understanding of Christian activism. There is still no neo-patristic ethics. Neo-patristic tradition, which moved from what is believed to be external limitations of philosophic speculation to a more authentic phenomenology of the mystical and ascetic tradition of Orthodoxy, has failed to expose the understanding of openness to the world. The Eucharistic theology of communion overcomes the rupture between contemplation, asceticism, and ethics, bringing them back to the *Eucharistic principle* which links them through the liturgical hymn, preaching, and witness.

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CHAPTER XIV

POST-SECULAR SUBJECTIVITY IN WESTERN PHILOSOPHICAL DEBATES AND ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

KRISTINA STOECKL

For the last two to three decades, political philosophy in the West has found itself increasingly confronted with the topic of religion. The secularization-thesis, according to which religion was expected to decline with the progressive modernization of societies, had turned out to be wrong; the world appeared, as expressed famously by the American religious sociologist Peter Berger, “as furiously religious as it had always been.”¹ What Berger and other theorists of the “return of religion” had in mind was primarily the resurgence of fundamentalist religions, especially Protestant Evangelicalism and fundamentalist Islam.² However, there are also less clamorous – or maybe one should say less “sensationalist” – accounts of the inadequacy of the secularization-thesis: in the works of sociologists of religion such as José Casanova or Danièle Hervieu-Léger, we find the topic of religion being treated not in terms of a “return”, but with regard to its permanence and altered presence under conditions of modernity.³ It seems to me that the reasons for the present preoccupation with religion in political philosophy are to be found in this second, rather than in the first strand of sociology. Political philosophy today includes a reflection

¹ Peter L. Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, ed. Peter L. Berger (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999).

² Peter L. Berger, "Secularization Falsified," *First Things* February, no. (2008); Klaus Eder, "Europäische Säkularisierung. Ein Sonderweg in die postsäkulare Gesellschaft?," *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* 12, no. (2002); David Martin, "The Evangelical Upsurge and Its Political Implications," in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, ed. Peter L. Berger (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1999).

³ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); José Casanova, "Religion, European Secular Identities, and European Integration," in *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein and Timothy A. Byrnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, trans., Simon Lee (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

on religion not because religion “knocks at its doors”, but because today’s late-modern and post-metaphysical political philosophy self-reflexively opens itself for religious argument. In this paper, I want to outline how this opening of political philosophy towards religion takes place. It seems to me that this shift in Western political philosophy is noteworthy from an Orthodox viewpoint for two reasons: first, because it is opening up to religious argument in general, the Western philosophical discourse changes in character and ideological secularism and self-sufficient humanism give way to post-secular attitudes; second, within this post-secular discursive space, Orthodox theology can offer important insights regarding the definition of religious experience, practice and subjectivity.

The concept of post-secularism is introduced into the sociological and political-philosophical debate at a point in time when the renewed attention to religion on a global scale and inside secular Western societies raises questions about the relationship between religion and politics, which modern social and political thought had considered resolved through the process of secularization and its epiphenomena of separation of church and state, privatization of religion and gradual decline of religion.⁴ Within this broad debate, it was Jürgen Habermas who coined the term “post-secular society” in order to describe a societal condition in which the continuity and presence of religion in the public sphere has become accepted normality.⁵

Post-secularism is one of three possible responses to the question of how to conceptualize the relationship between politics and religion that we find in political philosophy:⁶ The first, secularist, response holds that modern societies ought to be informed by an independent political ethic and religion should be stored away in the private realm. What is often implicit in this view is that religion will wither away under conditions of progressive modernization. The second, multiculturalist, answer holds that religious traditions and the group identities they circumscribe cannot be excluded completely from the public sphere. Multicultural politics should allow for the expression of (religious and non-religious) group identities and should also guarantee a certain

⁴ José Casanova, "Secularization," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences*, ed. J. Smelser Neil and Paul B. Baltes (Amsterdam, Paris et.al.: Elsevier, 2001).

⁵ Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006).

⁶ Ibid; Charles Taylor, "Modes of secularism," in *Secularism and Its Critics*, ed. Rajeev Bhargava (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

degree of institutional autonomy.⁷ These two responses have evoked two opposing sets of criticism. The first was accused of postulating a universalistic political ethic while in reality only privileging the rationalistic and individualistic core of Western Enlightenment deontology; the second that it risks losing sight of what holds the members of a polity together and cannot escape cultural and moral relativism. The third approach wants to offer an alternative to the excesses of both of these responses. It scales down the disagreement between laicism and multiculturalism in favour of a post-secular interpretation of the relationship between religion and political modernity. The most important contributor to this third, post-secular proposal over the last fifteen years has certainly been Habermas, but post-secular positions have also been advanced by many other authors.⁸ From the point of view of this consensus, I think we can say that the Orthodox Church actually finds an ally in Habermas and other exponents of post-secular political philosophy when it denounces the existence of a “militant secularism.”⁹

Habermas’s contribution to the debate about politics and religion is informed by his previous work on communicative action and deliberative democracy.¹⁰ What characterizes this work is the insistence on universalism as a valid category of political philosophy. Universalism, this is Habermas’s most basic position, does not lie out there in ‘principles from nowhere’, nor do we need to abandon the idea

⁷ Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

⁸ Robert Audi, *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); William E. Connolly, *Why I am Not a Secularist* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Jürgen Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008); John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 64, no. 3 (1997); Michael Walzer, "Drawing the line. Religion and Politics," in *Thinking Politically: Essays in Political Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁹ See the use of the expression “militant secularism” in: Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeev, "Christianity and the Challenge of Militant Secularism. Paper read at the International Conference on the Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools, 5-8 July 2004, Melbourne," *Homepage of Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeev*, <http://en.hilarion.orthodoxia.org/6-11> (accessed 25.04.2010), no. (2004).

¹⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *Justification and Application: Remarks on the Discourse Ethics* (Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 1993); Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge (MA): Cambridge University Press, 1996).

of universality in the light of a multiplicity of moralities and beliefs; agreement on 'principles valid for all' can, instead, emerge in the process of communication and deliberation, they can be the fruit of a mutual learning process and general consent. Habermas himself describes this kind of reasoning as "post-metaphysical", because it affirms the validity of moral and political principles not by reference to some transcendental point of reference, but through an immanent deliberation-process.

Habermas's appeal to universalism is an appeal in degrees. It depends on how we understand the 'all' in the 'principles valid for all'. In the initial formulation and intention of Habermas's philosophical work, this 'all' consisted in the members of a constitutional democratic state. It therefore comprised, necessarily, secular as well as religious citizens. From the normative starting point that only equal and democratic deliberation leads to the kind of universally agreed upon political ethic that should be characteristic of constitutional democracies, it is only logical that also the dialogue between the religious and secular citizen must take place under conditions of equality. This equality is threatened, however, when the secular public discourse renders it difficult for religious citizens to voice their arguments.

Post-secularism is a response to this very particular problem. The main point lies in the assertion that not only religious citizens should be asked to *translate* their claims into the language of secular public discourse, but also the non-religious citizen is asked to play his part, namely, to scale down his secularist aspirations. Only in that case can we expect equal conditions of communication and the possibility of mutual comprehension. It should have become clear by now why, in the introduction, I have said that contemporary democratic theory opens itself towards religious argument on grounds of its inner logic and structure, and not because religion "knocks at its door": Democracy must treat religious and non-religious citizens equally; democratic theory, by its own standard, must be able to accommodate religious arguments.

The invocation of "translation" by Habermas has caused a great deal of debate: Translation of what? Translation by whom? Translation from what kind of idiom into what kind of other idiom? Part of the confusion is due to the fact that Habermas's thinking about translation is still evolving and that several versions of "translation" are available. There is, for example, the version of the American philosopher John Rawls. Translation for him meant that religious reasons must be translated into secular language: "[...] reasonable comprehensive doctrines, religious or nonreligious, may be introduced in public political discussion at any time, provided that in due course proper

political reasons – and not reasons given solely by comprehensive doctrines – are presented that are sufficient to support whatever the comprehensive doctrines introduced are said to support.”¹¹ This definition of translation has been accused of being biased in favor of secular reasons.¹²

Habermas himself, instead, differentiates between the necessary institutional separation of church and state and the neutrality of the state vis-à-vis religion, on the one hand, and the motivations which citizens give to their public statements, on the other hand: “We cannot derive from the secular character of the state,” Habermas writes, “a direct obligation for all citizens personally to supplement their public statements of religious convictions by equivalents in a generally accessible language. And certainly the normative expectation that all religious citizens when casting their vote should in the final instance let themselves be guided by secular considerations is to ignore the realities of a devout life, an existence led *in light of belief*.”¹³

Reading Habermas carefully, we find that his portrayal of the religious citizen is characterized by a certain tension. On the one hand, Habermas looks at the believer as citizen. What is required of him is the “epistemic ability to consider one’s own faith reflexively from the outside and to relate it to secular views.”¹⁴ The requirement of epistemic self-reflexivity is nothing else than the requirement that every person, believer or non-believer, recognizes him- or herself in the role of the citizen, as participant in a polity to which he or she has said “yes” in principle. The sphere of political decision making is entirely immanent and the deliberation has no external reference-point beyond the language in which the reasons are voiced. This is what renders such a political philosophy post-metaphysical.

On the other hand, however, Habermas is aware that the religious citizen inhabits a world that is not confined to the immanent frame and that he draws from his existence “*in light of belief*” a standpoint on the world, society, and politics that may differ considerably from non-religious, secular arguments. Religious reasons, according to Habermas, may actually turn out to be a *decisive* component of public deliberation inasmuch as they can offer important arguments that would otherwise not be raised:

¹¹ Rawls, “The Idea of Public Reason Revisited,” 784.

¹² Audi, *Religious commitment and Secular Reason*; Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” 6-9; Charles Taylor, “The Polysemy of the Secular,” *Social Research* 76, no. 4 (2009).

¹³ Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” 9 italics in the original.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*: 9-10.

Today we have a situation in which ecclesiastical communities of interpretation are in competition with secular communities of interpretation. Looked at from the outside, it is not implausible that the monotheistic traditions may turn out to possess a language with a semantic potential that is not yet exhausted and that might turn out superior to secular traditions in terms of its capacity for explaining the world and creating identity [...].¹⁵

In this respect it is important to recall that Habermas's engagement with the topic of religion stems from debates about bioethics and not, as the timing of his famous speech "Faith and Knowledge" (during which he first used the concept of "post-secular society") in October 2001, just shortly after the terrorist attacks of 09/11, might suggest, with religious fundamentalism.¹⁶ Habermas, in short, is aware that on questions of ethical and communal life the religious traditions uphold normative positions otherwise not available in secular public debate.

Having presented the main argument of Habermas, let me now come to an overall evaluation of post-secularism: Post-secular political philosophy today, in the formulation of the authors I have cited so far, is the latest product of a well-defined school in philosophical thought: political liberalism. What seems important to me to understand at this point is that the whole discussion about religion and politics moved forward by liberal thinkers such as Rawls and Habermas works with a long series of preconditions and separations that allow it to circumscribe its subject with utmost precision: the citizen and constitutional debates. Liberal post-secular political theory makes a, in my view, convincing effort to include religion in its horizon; however, it does this through what the communitarian critic of liberalism, Michael Walzer, has aptly called the liberal "art of separation".¹⁷ Walzer's criticism, even though voiced already in 1984, can be read as a critical comment on post-secular political philosophy today:

The art of separation works to isolate social settings.
But it obviously doesn't achieve, and can't achieve,

¹⁵ Jürgen Habermas, "Exkurs: Transzendenz von innen, Transzendenz ins Diesseits," in *Texte und Kontexte*, ed. Jürgen Habermas (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1992), 131 translation K. Stoeckl.

¹⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *Glauben und Wissen: Friedenspreis des deutschen Buchhandels 2001* (Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, 2001).

¹⁷ Michael Walzer, "Liberalism and the Art of Separation," *Political Theory* 12, no. (1984).

anything like total isolation, for then there would be no society at all. Writing in defense of religious toleration, John Locke claimed that ‘the church ... is a thing absolutely separate and distinct from the commonwealth. The boundaries ... are fixed and immovable.’ But this is too radical a claim, deriving, I think, more from a theory of the individual conscience than from an understanding of churches and religious practices. What goes on in one institutional setting influences all the others; the same people, after all, inhabit the different settings, and they share a history and a culture in which religion plays a greater or lesser role.¹⁸

The quote by Walzer highlights that there are difficulties in separating epistemically, like Habermas suggests, the citizen-subject from the religious subject. Post-secular subjectivity appears not only impoverished if all it represents is the deliberating voice of the citizen, it also appears highly implausible; because we are, after all, not only what we say and argue, but also what we *do*. In the remainder of this paper, I therefore want to offer some considerations on the post-secular subject from the angle of *religious experiences* and *practices* and I want to show how the study of Orthodox religion and theology may contribute to a richer formulation of post-secular subjectivity.

Charles Taylor is one author who has recently drawn the attention of political philosophy to religious experience. In his book *A Secular Age*, Taylor shows how, with the onset of modernity in the West, the human search for fulfillment has increasingly abandoned religious frames of reference and has become an *immanent* search. Living in a secular age, he writes, means living in a society in which belief in God “is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace.”¹⁹ Living in an immanent frame, however, does not mean that human beings have stopped being in search of fulfillment or, as Taylor calls it, wholeness:

We all see our lives, and/or the space wherein we live our lives, as having a certain moral/spiritual shape. Somewhere, in some activity, or condition, lies a fullness, a richness; that is, in that place (activity or

¹⁸ Ibid.: 327.

¹⁹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 3.

condition), life is fuller, richer, deeper, more worthwhile, more admirable, more what it should be. This is perhaps a place of power: we often experience this as deeply moving, as inspiring. [...] we have the powerful intuition of what fullness would be, were we to be in that condition, e.g., of peace or wholeness; or able to act on that level, of integrity or generosity or abandonment or self-forgetfulness. But sometimes there will be moments of experienced fullness, of joy and fulfillment, where we feel ourselves there.²⁰

In order to give an example of the kind of experience of fullness, joy and fulfillment that he means, Taylor offers to the reader a long quote from the autobiographical writings of Bede Griffiths: It is the description of a scene experienced by the author as a school-boy; trees are blossoming, birds are singing, the author has the sensation that angels are present and that God is looking down on him.²¹ Taylor uses this quote in order to make clear that human beings can have experiences of a transcendental nature. He uses the rest of the eight-hundred pages of the book to explore why it has become increasingly rare and difficult in our secular age to live these kinds of experiences. Most of us, he says, live our lives in an “immanent frame”.

Religions in the world today, including the Orthodox Churches, largely operate in societies for which the immanent frame has become the dominant frame of reference. What should therefore be appreciated about Taylor’s argument in *A Secular Age*, even from the point of view

²⁰ Ibid., 5.

²¹ “One day during my last term at school I walked out alone in the evening and heard the birds singing in that full chorus of song, which can only be heard at that time of the year at dawn or at sunset. I remember now the shock of surprise with which the sound broke on my ears. It seemed to me that I had never heard the birds singing before and I wondered whether they sang like this all year round and I had never noticed it. As I walked I came upon some hawthorn trees in full bloom and again I thought that I had never seen such a sight or experienced such sweetness before. If I had been brought suddenly among the trees of the Garden of Paradise and heard a choir of angels singing I could not have been more surprised. I came then to where the sun was setting over the playing fields. A lark rose suddenly from the ground beside the tree where I was standing and poured out its song above my head, and then sank still singing to rest. Everything then grew still as the sunset faded and the veil of dusk began to cover the earth. I remember now the feeling of awe which came over me. I felt inclined to kneel on the ground, as though I had been standing in the presence of an angel; and I hardly dared to look on the face of the sky, because it seemed as though it was but a veil before the face of God.” Ibid.

of the Church as an institution and intellectual tradition, is that he puts the whole debate about secularization and post-secular society upside down. Instead of speaking about a “return of religion”, he makes clear that religion – and the human predisposition to religious kinds of experiences – has never left us, just as Churches have continued to occupy a certain space in society. What has changed is that many people today no longer seek experiences of fulfillment outside of their immanent frame or, which would be another way of putting it, with the organized religions.

But there is also something profoundly puzzling about the evidence which Taylor offers for this otherwise very clear argument: Why does he choose this example? The religious experience described by Taylor is a very particular pretender for a description of man’s openness towards the transcendent; it is highly individualistic, spontaneous, and personal. It is an isolated, unsocial event. It seems to me that with this description and his one-sided focus on the individual condition, Taylor expresses only half of the truth about religious experience. His intervention in the overall debate is important, because he argues for the human openness towards the transcendent, and in that sense offers a much richer ontology of the subject than liberalism does. However, what is missing in Taylor is a reflection on the practical and communal dimension of transcendental experience.

My objection can be explained more easily if we compare Taylor’s example of religious experience with the elaboration of religious experience and practice in Orthodox theology found in the works of Sergej Horuzhy. From the perspective of studies of *Hesychasm*, the Orthodox spiritual practice first described in full by Gregorios Palamas in the 14th century, religious experience and practice are not arbitrary phenomena. They are embedded in a tradition and in a collective body, the Church. They are individual experiences, but individual experiences that become possible in a specific context and through a codified type of preparation.²²

We find this point about religious practice also in Hans Joas’s article “Do we need religion?”, where he writes:

Religious traditions and institutions are not only rich repertoires of interpretations vis-à-vis our experiences of self-transcendence, but they enable us to have such

²² Сергей С. Хоружий, *Синергия: Проблемы аскетике и мистики православия* (Москва: Ди-Дик, 1995); Сергей С. Хоружий, *К феноменологии аскезы* (Москва: Издательство Гуманитарной Литературы, 1998); Сергей С. Хоружий, *Опыты из русской духовной традиции* (Москва: Изд. Парад, 2005).

experiences in the first place. They contain knowledge of a physical character relating to how we can prepare ourselves for such experiences – through ascetic practices, through certain bodily postures [...] Experiences of self-transcendence really have to be experiences of decentering rather than attempts made by the self that fully intends to remain itself but would like to enjoy the titillation of extraordinary experiences.²³

Joas's "decentering" resonates with Horuzhy concept of "synergetic anthropology", with the understanding of the human being as de-centred, exposed at its limits vis-à-vis the Divine Other and the human other, instead of being a closed essence in itself. Once we take the anthropological reality of mystical experiences and spiritual practices seriously, we are inevitably led to a reconsideration of the classical anthropological paradigm of man as an autonomous, self-centred subject.²⁴

The arguments in Taylor, Joas and Horuzhy all point into the same direction of re-configuring subjectivity in light of the reality of religious experience. Their works provide material for a better understanding of post-secular subjectivity than the one suggested by the liberal "art of separation", which separates the religious identity from the citizen-subject. Orthodoxy can offer to such an experiential and practical understanding of post-secular subjectivity an elaborate theology of spiritual practices and ecclesiology.²⁵ When I say "Orthodoxy can offer", I really do mean that the study of theology is an important element for the formulation of post-secular political philosophy. It is not quite adequate, as Rawls does, to consider religions as "comprehensive doctrines" on equal footing with other types of ideologies. What distinguishes religion from secular comprehensive doctrines is the right understanding of self-transcendence: the self-transcendence propagated by the political religions of the twentieth century was purely immanent; while negative theology prevents the closure of a religious doctrine. It is eschatology that distinguishes religion from ideologies.²⁶

²³ Hans Joas, *Do We Need Religion? On the Experience of Self-transcendence* (Boulder, London: Paradigm Publishers, 2008), 14.

²⁴ Сергей С. Хоружий, *Очерки синергийной антропологии* (Москва: Институт философии, теологии и истории Св. Фомы, 2005).

²⁵ I am thinking of: John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).

²⁶ See: Pantelis Kalaitzidis, ed. *Church and Eschatology*, ed. Pantelis Kalaitzidis (Athens: Kastaniotis Publications, 2003).

It is certainly no accident that some Orthodox thinkers, most prominently Christos Yannaras, have felt that the main connecting points between contemporary Western philosophy and Orthodox theology is a Heideggerian type of critique of the rational and autonomous subject.²⁷ And it is true that we find in this philosophy, for example in the works of Jean-Luc Nancy,²⁸ a sensibility towards the kind of transformation of the subject which the encounter with the 'other' entails. At the same time, however, postmodern political philosophy has had nothing to add to the current articulation of post-secularism, nor has, with the exception of Alasdair MacIntyre,²⁹ a connection been made between the de-construction of the rational and autonomous subject and the subject of religious experience and practice.

In the past, I have attempted to document the perception of Western philosophical debates from an Orthodox perspective and to map connecting points between the Orthodox intellectual tradition and the philosophical discourse of political modernity.³⁰ What emerged then was a close affinity between the postmodern deconstruction of the subject and philosophy of community and an Orthodox understanding of subjectivity. Liberal approaches to the subject, and with it the whole of Western modern political mainstream, appeared incompatible and indeed inimical; they were merely evidence of a self-sufficient humanism that leaves no space for religion in the modern world. I think that in the light of present debates about post-secularism, this conclusion has to be revisited. With the onset of post-secularism, political philosophy has, as I have shown above, started to reflect on the limits of self-sufficient humanism. Habermas's appeal to important insights from the religious traditions is evidence for this. With the incorporation of communitarianism and of insights from theology and sociology, post-secular political philosophy is moving beyond the abstract citizen-subject and appears today as the most plausible position in the Western

²⁷ Christos Yannaras, *Person und Eros: Eine Gegenüberstellung der Ontologie der griechischen Kirchenväter und der Existenzphilosophie des Westens* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 1982).

²⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

²⁹ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (London: Duckworth, 1988); Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Theory* (London: Duckworth, 1981).

³⁰ Kristina Stoeckl, *Community after Totalitarianism. The Russian Orthodox Intellectual Tradition and the Philosophical Discourse of Political Modernity*, ed. Vasilios Makrides, *Erfurter Studien zur Kulturgeschichte des Orthodoxen Christentums*, vol. 4 (Berlin, Bruxelles, Wien et. al.: Peter Lang, 2008).

philosophical arena with which the Orthodox viewpoint could argue constructively about the place and meaning of religion under conditions of post-secular modernity.

To conclude: The basic questions I have asked myself in this paper were: What kind of philosophical *re-configuration* of the subject is needed in order to make sense of the *trans-figuration* of the subject which religion is about? Where does the philosophical debate about religion and secularism in the West today stand on this question? I have shown that post-secular political philosophy is led to a re-consideration of the human subject in the light of religious experiences and practices, in a process of philosophical-sociological debate that is still going. My point here, in the context of a conference about Orthodox theology, was to show that Orthodox theology has a great deal to offer to this contemporary debate, and that some historical fault-lines between the Western philosophical tradition and Orthodoxy may, as a consequence, be re-thought.

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THE COUNCIL FOR RESEARCH IN VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

PURPOSE

Today there is urgent need to attend to the nature and dignity of the person, to the quality of human life, to the purpose and goal of the physical transformation of our environment, and to the relation of all this to the development of social and political life. This, in turn, requires philosophic clarification of the base upon which freedom is exercised, that is, of the values which provide stability and guidance to one's decisions.

Such studies must be able to reach deeply into one's culture and that of other parts of the world as mutually reinforcing and enriching in order to uncover the roots of the dignity of persons and of their societies. They must be able to identify the conceptual forms in terms of which modern industrial and technological developments are structured and how these impact upon human self-understanding. Above all, they must be able to bring these elements together in the creative understanding essential for setting our goals and determining our modes of interaction. In the present complex global circumstances this is a condition for growing together with trust and justice, honest dedication and mutual concern.

The Council for Studies in Values and Philosophy (RVP) unites scholars who share these concerns and are interested in the application thereto of existing capabilities in the field of philosophy and other disciplines. Its work is to identify areas in which study is needed, the intellectual resources which can be brought to bear thereupon, and the means for publication and interchange of the work from the various regions of the world. In bringing these together its goal is scientific discovery and publication which contributes to the present promotion of humankind.

In sum, our times present both the need and the opportunity for deeper and ever more progressive understanding of the person and of the foundations of social life. The development of such understanding is the goal of the RVP.

PROJECTS

A set of related research efforts is currently in process:

1. *Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change: Philosophical Foundations for Social Life*. Focused, mutually coordinated research teams in university centers prepare volumes as part of an integrated philosophic search for self-understanding differentiated by culture and civilization. These evolve more adequate understandings of the person in society and look to the cultural heritage of each for the resources to respond to the challenges of its own specific contemporary transformation.

2. *Seminars on Culture and Contemporary Issues*. This series of 10 week crosscultural and interdisciplinary seminars is coordinated by the RVP in Washington.

3. *Joint-Colloquia* with Institutes of Philosophy of the National Academies of Science, university philosophy departments, and societies. Underway since 1976 in Eastern Europe and, since 1987, in China, these concern the person in contemporary society.

4. *Foundations of Moral Education and Character Development*. A study in values and education which unites philosophers, psychologists, social scientists and scholars in education in the elaboration of ways of enriching the moral content of education and character development. This work has been underway since 1980.

The personnel for these projects consists of established scholars willing to contribute their time and research as part of their professional commitment to life in contemporary society. For resources to implement this work the Council, as 501 C3 a non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia, looks to various private foundations, public programs and enterprises.

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