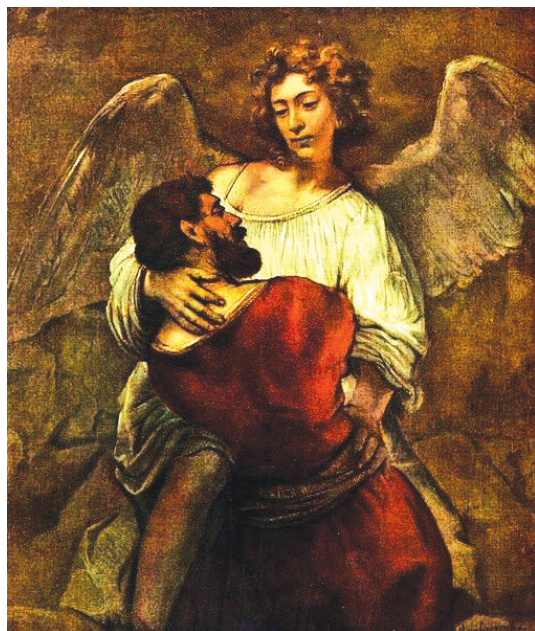




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L. Scott Smith

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## A Christian View of “Faith” in God: a Bi-Modal Interpretation

*Abstract:* While central to the Christian religion, the act of faith has been notoriously difficult to define. This essay is an attempt to illuminate, with the aid of insights from cognitive science and process philosophy, what it means for a Christian to have faith, specifically in God. In doing so, the *a priori* and *a posteriori* aspects of faith are explored, along with its connections to science and empirical evidence, revelation, knowledge, doubt, morality, and additional Christian beliefs.

*Key words:* process philosophy, cognitive science, epistemology, *a priori*, nonreflective belief, reflective belief, knowledge, modes of faith

In the Christian religion, as in others, the idea of faith is front and center. St. Paul instructs Christians that the righteousness of God is revealed “through faith for faith” (Rom 1:17) and that “what is not of faith is sin” (14:23). Jesus ruefully referred to his closest disciples as “men of little faith” when they feared perishing in a storm at sea (Matt 8:26), and on another occasion explained to them that they would be able to move mountains if they had “faith as a grain of mustard seed” (Matt 17:20). It is also clear that Christians are to stand firm in their faith (I Cor 16:13). The Christian religion, from beginning to end, treats faith as a cardinal virtue of both thought and action.

Yet defining the term defies easy consensus. It has been described, *inter alia*, as “a feeling of absolute dependence” and “God consciousness” (Friedrich Schleiermacher), an “ultimate concern” (Paul Tillich), a “leap” (Søren Kierkegaard), the “will to believe” (William James), a “moral disposition” (Immanuel Kant), an “encounter” (Emil Brunner), an act of trust (Martin Buber), an experience of “the holy” (Rudolf Otto), and even of knowledge (Dallas Willard). While plausible arguments can be made to support these descriptions as highlighting aspects of faith, none alone captures the quintessence of the term. In some respects, it may appear that jettisoning it because of its vagueness would be a prudent course. But the Christian tradition supports the idea of faith and, moreover, is dependent upon it. It is incumbent upon Christians to retain and to use the term, yet in the most informed manner possible.

Synthesizing insights from cognitive science and process philosophy, I will attempt to advance and to defend a novel view of faith, arguing that it is bi-modal, or manifested in two ways. No claim is being made that what is offered herein should be regarded as definitive or that it, *ipso facto*, precludes other definitions of the term. This essay is instead pre-

sented in the modest hope that it will be helpful to those attempting to understand and to defend the term. Throughout this treatment of the matter, I will assume that the act of faith (*fide qua creditur*) and its content (*fide quae creditur*) are mutually implicative. Since many readers may be unfamiliar with relevant findings from cognitive science, I will begin with an explanation of them.

### From Intuition to Rational Theology

When considering faith, one must distinguish between its modes. There are two modes, one primal and basic and the other expansive and developed. Faith in its more elemental mode is a vague nonreflective belief,<sup>1</sup> from which flowers an intellectually reflective one.<sup>2</sup> Cognitive scientist Justin L. Barrett explains the difference between the two kinds of belief. The former occurs instantaneously and often below immediate conscious apprehension and is guided by “our information processing, speech, and other actions,”<sup>3</sup> whereas the latter is ponderous and involves deliberation or instruction,<sup>4</sup> and represents the “higher-order” or “executive functions”<sup>5</sup> of the mind. Reflective beliefs are those that we “consciously hold and explicitly endorse”<sup>6</sup> One who is hungry may, for example, believe nonreflectively that she should eat. She may also believe reflectively, either through examination of nutritional data or explicit instruction, that she should consume mostly foods high in protein.

Tools of the human mind categorize, describe, and facilitate what we encounter in experience, and do so unconsciously with amazing fluidity.<sup>7</sup> They represent, according to Barrett, the fundamental tools of human cognition. The “categorizers” receive information from the senses and determine the character of what is perceived, such as whether it is a plant, an animal, or a human artifact.<sup>8</sup> One such categorizer detects the agency of others on the basis of their beliefs and desires. If an individual, for instance, places a tool in a storage shed and soon thereafter opens the shed only to discover that the tool is not there, the mind’s “agency detection device” is instantly activated, forming the conclusion that someone opened the shed and removed the tool.

The “describers”<sup>9</sup> determine the properties of an object once identified by a categorizer. They accomplish this in a variety of ways. When a small child, for example, recognizes an object as a ball, the child automatically assumes that the object has all the properties of a ball; meaning that it occupies a single location at a given time, is unable to pass through other solid objects, is subject to gravity, and is movable by contact. When the cat-

1 Justin L. Barrett, *Cognitive Science, Religion, and Theology* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2011), 47.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. 48.

4 Justin L. Barrett, *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?* (Boulder: AltaMira Press, 2004), 1-2.

5 Ibid., 7.

6 Barrett, *Cognitive Science, Religion, and Theology*, 47.

7 Barrett, *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?*, 3-6.

8 Ibid., 4.

9 Ibid.

egorizing device of the mind identifies agency, then a describer is triggered that attributes mental properties to the agent, such as desire, memory, thought, and purpose.<sup>10</sup>

The "facilitators"<sup>11</sup> primarily coordinate social activity and other behaviors arising from situations given by experience, and help one to understand and to predict human behavior in such situations. When an agent is identified and described, three facilitators in particular may kick in to determine the appropriate manner of behavioral response to the agent. The first is a "social exchange regulator," the function of which is to determine who owes what to whom. The second is a "social status monitor" that seeks to pinpoint the members of a group with whom it is beneficial to form alliances and from whom one may learn. The third is an "intuitive morality tool," which helps one function in settings that require behavioral norms.<sup>12</sup> If a mother, for instance, discovers her six-year old boy furtively taking and eating freshly baked cookies that she planned for his sister's birthday party later in the day, these three facilitators might lead the boy to feel a sense of remorse (intuitive morality tool) for eating cookies intended for others (social exchange regulator), and eventually compel him to ask his mother, with authority over the cookies (social status monitor), for her forgiveness. Barrett notes that the boy's response to being discovered by his mother is not the result of conscious planning or cogitation. His mind automatically facilitates his response.

Categorizers, describers, and facilitators, which generally operate under the radar of conscious thought, constantly produce nonreflective beliefs.<sup>13</sup> These can, and often do, form the basis of reflective ones. The plausibility of reflective beliefs depends, in large measure, upon how closely they comport with nonreflective ones.<sup>14</sup> One may as an indeterminist, for instance, believe after deliberation that humanity is possessed with at least a degree of free will and that each individual bears moral responsibility for his or her actions. The cognitive strength of this reflective belief is based upon and supported by the unconscious intuition that "I am free to decide whether to act and am free to act as I desire."<sup>15</sup> Oxford philosopher Isaiah Berlin highlighted the strength of this intuition when he observed that J. L. Austin once quipped that, although many pay lip-service to determinism, no one really believes it in the same way "we all believe that we shall die"<sup>16</sup> and so incorporate the fact of our mortality into plans for the future.

When referring specifically to religious beliefs, one usually speaks of the reflective kind, although they can be of the nonreflective sort as well.<sup>17</sup> What Barrett calls "natu-

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>16</sup> See Charles Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (Albany: State University of New York, 1984), 19. Hartshorne attributes the quip to "J.S. Austin," which is probably a typographical or publishing error.

<sup>17</sup> Barrett, *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?*, 10.



ral cognition” unconsciously imposes limits on perception, attention, and memory and thereby shapes our cognitive experience accordingly.<sup>18</sup> It creates receptivity to what he terms “natural religion,”<sup>19</sup> which is the expression of numerous natural tendencies that include “belief in gods and other related concepts and practices.”<sup>20</sup> Concerning the issue of deity, for example, the human mind surveys phenomena of the world, activating the “agency detection device,” allowing one to infer nonreflectively that the world is the work of an agent. A describer is then triggered, which attributes to the agent features such as power, intelligence, and creativity. In response to this extraordinary agency, the mind’s facilitators are prompted to establish the appropriate behavioral reaction, which has perennially been one of reverence and worship and has, in David Hume’s words, resulted in humans “being thrown on their knees.”<sup>21</sup> This agency is that to which St. Paul refers as a primal awareness, when he states that “what can be known about God is plain” to all (Rom 1:19), or is universally recognized.

Yet a consideration of St. Paul’s theology leaves no doubt that faith also has a reflective mode. When he states of God, “for in him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28), the idea is that of a highly abstract, intellectual vision of deity. It is one dictated by reason, coherence, and logic. St. Paul’s vision of deity appears to include the world and, as such, bears at least some resemblance to the panentheistic concept of a “superhuman organism”<sup>22</sup> that embodies the entire universe and provides intelligibility, value, and meaning to all that there is,<sup>23</sup> including science, ethics and aesthetics.<sup>24</sup> To understand God in such a way allows us a “total perspective [on whatever is], taking all legitimate interests of man into account.”<sup>25</sup>

This transition from nonreflective to reflective belief is one that has traditionally been acknowledged in Christianity. The Christian moves from a basic intuition to a thoughtful reflection, which is an analysis of the attributes of God’s being and of how he or she is related to the world. Anselm’s aphorism of “faith seeking understanding” (*fides quaerens intellectum*) summarizes this process. Faith expands from a vague and even unconscious sense to an abstract worldview. The first mode of faith evolves into the second.

## Observations and Inferences

**Nonreflective Faith and the Apriori.** One may philosophically refine Barrett’s insight by stating that the functions of human cognitivity are such that, given the various conditions and influences of the surrounding environment, they cause one to produce a primitive,

<sup>18</sup> Barrett, *Cognitive Science, Religion, and Theology*, 30.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> David Hume, *The Natural History of Religion*, ed. H.E. Root (1777; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), 75.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Hartshorne, *Beyond Humanism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1937), 32.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method* (Bristol: SCM Press Ltd, 1970), 149.

<sup>24</sup> Hartshorne, *Beyond Humanism*, 50.

<sup>25</sup> Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method*, 4.

nonreflective concept of deity. These functions or mechanisms, which may be either acquired or innate,<sup>26</sup> help to ground the concept empirically and to issue in a belief about it. That is, cognitive mechanisms receive input from a wide range of experience,<sup>27</sup> which should not be equated with merely the impressions the senses deliver.<sup>28</sup> Experience in this case must be interpreted broadly, to cover as Whitehead insists "experience drunk and experience sober"<sup>29</sup> as well as intuitions of "a realm of adjusted values" and "a character of permanent rightness" inherent in the nature of things. This does not suggest that experience may include "a private psychological habit,"<sup>30</sup> since to qualify as experience means possessing a kind of general appeal. The point is that the vast multifarious data of experience are filtered through our cognitive mechanisms to evoke a nonreflective apriori concept of deity that results in an attendant and like belief. The term apriori, as used here, refers to a concept that stands on its own nonreflectively without epistemic reliance upon empirical evidence.<sup>31</sup> That which is apriori is self-evident, but nonetheless informed by experience, conveying information about the real world. Roderick Chisholm explains apriority as "once you understand it, you see that it is true."<sup>32</sup> If one tweaks this description with the caveat that the verbs "understand" and "see" may be functions of a nonreflective process informed by experience, the precision of the description is heightened considerably.

The close relation between an apriori concept and experience is not a novel idea. Plantinga and C. S. Jenkins both observe, each in his and her respective ways, that apriority does not mean "knowledge or belief prior to or without having any experience at all."<sup>33</sup> There is nothing inconsistent or conflicting about the notion that experience informs an apriori concept without providing evidential proof of it or, to put the matter another way, that a concept may be empirically grounded without depending upon inductive procedures.

Jenkins takes this tack when addressing the subject of apriority in arithmetic. She argues that an arithmetical proposition is traceable to its concepts, which are informed by sensory experience. That experience, she argues, is limited to what is provided by the senses; but this condition has to do with the nature of arithmetic as a discipline. Sensory experience, she

<sup>26</sup> See C.S. Jenkins, *Grounding Concepts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 138-140, who provides an interesting discussion of these possibilities with regard to arithmetic. Also see her "Naturalistic Challenges to the A Priori," in *The A Priori in Philosophy*, eds. Albert Casullo and Joshua C. Thurow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 274-290, in which she argues that apriori concepts are not incompatible with naturalistic premises.

<sup>27</sup> See Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Meridian Books, 1965 (1929)), 60.

<sup>28</sup> See Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: The Free Press, 1969 (1929)), 188. It is not clear from Barrett's treatment of cognitivism how precisely he defines the term "experience," but it would appear to include more than sense impressions in the case of nonreflective belief in God.

<sup>29</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: The Free Press, 1967 (1933)), 226.

<sup>30</sup> Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, 58-63.

<sup>31</sup> Jenkins, *Grounding Concepts*, 269.

<sup>32</sup> Roderick Chisholm, "The Truths of Reason," in *Theory of Knowledge* (1977), repr. in *A Priori Knowledge*, ed. P. Moser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 119. In other words, it is not the case, according to Chisholm, that apriori knowledge may be defined as that which is justified evidence gathered by induction. *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>33</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 103-104.

explains, conveys a structure, which in turn reflects something of the real world.<sup>34</sup> This empirical link explains why Jenkins as an externalist is convinced that we learn about the world by attending to these concepts, which thereby prove indispensable to us. Even though empirically grounded, the concepts are able to stand by themselves in stark immediacy without the benefit of evidence. They are not fortuitous, definitional, or a matter of social convention, but possess the attribute of “essential independence”<sup>35</sup> conveying insights into reality itself.

A proposition about God’s existence, like the arithmetical one of  $7 + 5 = 12$ , is empirically informed, but not evidentially falsifiable. This attribute implies that theology and arithmetic share an apriori character in common. Perhaps no better example of the connection between the empirical and the apriori is found in Christian theology than Calvin’s notion of the *divinitatis sensum*.<sup>36</sup> The data of experience are appropriated through a mechanism that, for Calvin, is a stamp of the Creator, or the *Imago Dei*, forming a concept that is incorporated into a concomitant belief establishing the key premise of what is referred to as “natural theology.”

Calvin’s insight was of course influenced by St. Paul’s statement in Romans 1:19, and so has a long pedigree, extending from well over a millennium before that of the great Reformer as well as to eras long after him. Even the skeptical Hume implies that our minds compel the idea of deity, and observes that a widespread tendency of human beings is their “being thrown on their knees”<sup>37</sup> in worship. He maintains that this “universal propensity to believe in invisible, intelligent power, if not an original instinct, being at least a general attendant of human nature, may be considered as a kind of mark or stamp, which the divine workman has set upon his work.”<sup>38</sup> What is it about people, one may ask with Hume, that creates the response of faith, if not some apriori concept of a divine being? Emile Durkheim likewise explains with penetrative insight that religious faith has not only enriched the human intellect, but has also contributed to forming it.<sup>39</sup> His statement exudes a number of rich implications, one of them being that religious faith possesses an apriori component. Rudolf Otto expresses a similar point in his analysis of “the holy.” He concludes that

not only the rational but also the non-rational elements of the complex category of “holiness” are apriori elements and each in the same degree ... its non-rational content has, no less than its rational, its own independent roots in the hidden depths of the spirit itself.<sup>40</sup>

Of course a critic, such as Hume or Richard Dawkins, may be quick to contend that the foregoing analyses provide no real justification for a belief in deity, stressing that

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<sup>34</sup> Jenkins, *Grounding Concepts*, 162.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>36</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J.T. McNeill and trans. F.L. Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 1:43.

<sup>37</sup> David Hume, *The Natural History of Religion*, 31.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>39</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. J.W. Swain, (New York: The Free Press, 1965 (1915)), 21.

<sup>40</sup> Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. J.W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958 (1923)), 136.

such a belief is unsubstantiated and amounts, in Hume's assessment, merely to "sick men's dreams"<sup>41</sup> or, in Dawkins's estimation, to "a disease of the mind."<sup>42</sup> That such a belief may be the product of our cognitivity in response to experience does not, they argue, guarantee the truthfulness of its content. Even a belief that is innate can be mistaken. A demon may, after all, be at work leading humanity astray, or the culprit may be an as yet unexplained glitch in the evolutionary process. The question becomes "on what basis do we determine that our nonreflective belief in deity is true?" The skeptic urges that, for the intuition to be true, there must be a relationship between it and the world. To put the idea in material terms, thinking there is a waterfall in front of us is different from there actually being one there. It is a difference that depends upon whether what we recognize as a waterfall is other than a mere fantasy or figment of our imagination. The critic may wish to invoke Kant's critical distinction between "thinking" and "knowing," along with the comment that "thinking one has cash in his pocket is quite different from knowing its actually there." Such observations are fair enough, but are they convincing?

The fact is that when we perceive that something is "out there," we usually assume that our perception is not merely playing tricks on us,<sup>43</sup> or we assume that there is some nomological relationship between the belief and what makes it true. Either way, belief in the existence of a reality outside the self involves an externalist assumption. Even if we suppose, against Thomas Reid and Plantinga, a demon is at work in our cognitive faculties that renders them fallible, "the fallibility of a source of beliefs does not mean it cannot by itself supply knowledge."<sup>44</sup> Although sense perception may be fallible, there need not be an immutable epistemological disconnection between it and knowledge. Plantinga makes the further observation that, for any belief to be "warranted,"<sup>45</sup> it is absolutely crucial that we suppose our cognitive faculties are, in fact, functioning properly and are calibrated to the epistemic environment in which we find ourselves, with a design plan successfully aimed at truth.<sup>46</sup> While the proper functioning of these faculties is only what we can suppose is the case, this "supposition" does possess strong appeal. For to dismiss a nonreflective belief in deity in the manner of a Hume or a Dawkins, by assuming a demon at work or an evolutionary glitch, calls into question everything across the board that these faculties produce. In the absence of their reliability, the skeptic is hard pressed to believe that he or she is able

<sup>41</sup> Hume, *The Natural History of Religion*, 75.

<sup>42</sup> See Paul Copan, "Does Religion Originate in the Brain," at <http://www.equipo.org/article/does-religion-originate-in-the-brain/>, 2.

<sup>43</sup> Alvin I. Goldman, "A Causal Theory of Knowing," in *The Theory of Knowledge: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993), 136, 141.

<sup>44</sup> Jenkins, *Grounding Concepts*, 193.

<sup>45</sup> Plantinga eschews the term "justification" in favor of "warrant" because the former implies, he thinks, that rational belief in God is acceptable only if it is supported by evidential reasons, plus it suggests duty, obligation, and requirement. Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 70, 102. See also Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 4. For a discussion of evidentialism, see "faith and evidence" herein below.

<sup>46</sup> See Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, vii, 214; *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 82, and *Warranted Christian Belief*, 156.

to discern the truth about anything, much less to have knowledge of it. Although this is not an argument that refutes skepticism in any decisive manner, it does tend to cause one to doubt the doubters by viewing their objections as perverse.

Keith Lehrer, another skeptic, argues that knowledge, whether formulated from an internalist or externalist perspective, is impossible to possess at all. He contends that even he does not know that he does not know.<sup>47</sup> He admits that a form of skepticism embodying “the thesis that we know that we do not know anything” is self-contradictory. Yet he figures that he can extricate himself from this contradiction by admitting that even he as a skeptic does not know. His formulation serves only to compound the conundrum, since it may be rephrased as follows: the skeptic “knows” that he is not sure whether he knows that he does not know. Skepticism, insofar as it tells us anything noteworthy at all, is never able to escape its self-refutational character.

**Reflective Faith and the Apriori.** Apriority is not restricted to nonreflective belief in deity, but also characterizes reflective belief as well, which as already explained builds upon the content of the prior mode. This nonreflective content lends itself to close scrutiny by theologians, philosophers, and others. Aside from denying or ignoring it, a third option is to examine it with the various resources at one’s command, including that of modal logic. St. Paul ruminated about the concept of deity even to the point of approaching panentheism. A belief in God, such as he espoused in Acts 17:28, suggests that every person and thing is included in the divine being. If so, this means that “[t]he logic of the ideal of God itself ... shows that the whole content of metaphysics must be contained in the theory of deity.”<sup>48</sup> Metaphysics is therefore about identifying “the universal traits”<sup>49</sup> of whatever exists within God’s being. The upshot is that rational theology and metaphysics have overlapping meanings and interests as the two converge with each other. Everything, including all that we experience, serves to exemplify the universal and absolute character of divinity. This expansively reflective idea is one that is, again, immune to empirical falsification. One might expect this result since the reflective belief piggybacks upon the nonreflective. Moreover, since everything is included in God’s being, there is no fact or cluster of facts to which one can point that will falsify this reflective concept. Evidence for or against this expansive concept of deity is irrelevant, since the concept contains all the data of experience. The God-belief is therefore, in each of its modes, both apriori and aposteriori.

Yet questions reassert themselves. How do we know that deity, thusly conceived, really exists? Could this reflective idea be merely a fictional construct? Logical analysis dictates that God, as conceived in his or her reflective mode, is the sole being worthy of worship and cannot be an accident. If an accident, then the divine existence is contingent upon another being or thing that surpasses it. If God’s existence is contingent, one’s worship of him or her is idolatrous, since it is of a being who is less than ultimate. If not contingent, then God’s being must be necessary. Since the idea of God is that of a being who *necessarily* exists, he or *she*

<sup>47</sup> See Keith Lehrer, “Why Not Skepticism” (1971), in *The Theory of Knowledge*, 48-49.

<sup>48</sup> Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method*, 39.

<sup>49</sup> Charles Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process* (Glencoe, Ill: The Free Press, 1953), 130.

*cannot be conceived not to exist.* Hence, modal logic dictates that, if the reflective idea of deity is conceptually *possible* (and there is every reason to think it is), then he or she *necessarily* exists and, by inference, does exist.<sup>50</sup> Viewed in this light, the primary issue is not whether God exists, but whether the idea of God is possible. Countless ideas are possible. The burden would shift to the atheist and agnostic to show that this specific idea is impossible.<sup>51</sup>

**Faith and Doubt.** For doubt to pose a legitimate threat to a Christian's faith in God, the nature of the doubt cannot, as previously noted, be based upon empirical evidence. It must be analytical. This implies that the doubter must be a positivist who holds that there is no meaning for the divine existence save as an "emotive, 'convictional,' or inconsistent one."<sup>52</sup> The idea of God must be viewed as impossible and meaningless, but this is a heavy burden to shoulder. If the God-concept is coherent and explicable without internal contradiction, in conformity with syntactical and semantic rules of language, harmonious with scientific laws, and compossible with its defining attributes,<sup>53</sup> then its meaning hardly seems problematic. Hartshorne puts the matter in trenchant relief: "If belief in the divine existence even makes sense, unbelief does not, and if unbelief makes sense, belief does not. The issue between them is not one of fact or of contingent truth but of meaning. One side or the other is confused." The issue is distillable to one between positivism and theism. This insight was Anselm's unique "discovery."<sup>54</sup>

Paul Tillich's view of doubt as an ontological element structured into faith is mistaken. Most will recognize that the ideal of absolute certainty is a regulative goal that implies an asymptotic pursuit. Constructive doubt may help facilitate the pursuit, yet the failure to reach the ultimate goal does not suggest that doubt is symbiotic with faith or always undermines it.<sup>55</sup> It is far more reasonable to posit that our cognitive faculties are functioning properly and are conducive to rendering true concepts and beliefs about the world that in turn enhance humanity's survival on earth. There is no reason to suppose that these faculties are, as part of the human condition, enfeebled and enervated by doubt to the extent that there is a disjunction between them and our theological beliefs any more than between them and our arithmetical ones.

**Faith and Knowledge.** At this juncture Lehrer may assume the role of interlocutor and advance the objection that more is required of knowledge than externalism allows.<sup>56</sup> He may insist that the externalist notion of knowledge as that which is produced in "the

<sup>50</sup> See Anselm, "Proslogion," in M.J. Charlesworth, *St. Anselm's Proslogion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 110-155. Anselm makes two distinguishable arguments, the first in Proslogion II and the second in Proslogion III. In the first, Anselm's point is about "existence," while in the second "necessary existence."

<sup>51</sup> See L. Scott Smith, "The Worship of God as 'Sick Men's Dreams': A Response to David Hume," *Process Studies* 47, no. 1-2 (2018): 111, 116.

<sup>52</sup> Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Company, 1962), 46.

<sup>53</sup> See Daniel A. Dombrowski, *Rethinking the Ontological Argument: A Neoclassical Theistic Response* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 32.

<sup>54</sup> Charles Hartshorne, *Anselm's Discovery* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Company, 1965), 4.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), 20.

<sup>56</sup> See Keith Lehrer, "A Critique of Externalism" (1990), in *The Theory of Knowledge*, 306, 312.



appropriate manner” leaves an epistemological gap. While our cognitive faculties may assure us that a waterfall is in front of us, we still, according to Lehrer, need internal justification for this assurance in order for it to rise to the level of knowledge. Reasons must be adduced for believing that the waterfall is really there. His argument assumes that knowledge consists of “justified” true belief. Yet this is a definition that Edmund Gettier shattered when he showed that justification can rest upon a false premise.<sup>57</sup> There are, in other words, clear cases of justified belief that are not true and those of unjustified belief that are, all of which tend to underscore the irrelevancy of a justification requirement for knowledge as Lehrer would have it.

Those like Lehrer who adhere to such a requirement are sometimes described as foundationalists. Many prominent Western thinkers, inspired by the iconic John Locke, have adopted a foundationalist theory of knowledge. What all have in common is their casting about for basic evidential propositions upon which to build a justification for belief, which is a method that issues in an infinite regress, as one may always ask how one knows the proposition on which a proposition is based. There are also a host of ordinarily accepted propositions that do not conform to the precepts of foundationalism because they do not rest on “basic” propositions. Examples of commonly accepted, but nonconforming, truths are that time flows steadily, that the past has existed and influences the present, that the laws of physics will hold in the future, that our own minds can be trusted, and that other minds exist. There are, in addition, no basic propositions that support the theory of foundationalism itself, rendering the theory self-referentially incoherent. Yet, aside from these thorny problems, a more primary question concerns why it is necessary to justify an apriori belief with empirical evidence anyway. Since faith in God, considered in each of its modes, is apriori, justification, foundationalism, and evidentialism are beside the point and nothing more than a vainglorious attempt to understand the meaning of faith. Demands for basic propositions to justify true belief appear to be a dead-end street in epistemology. A wide range of figures has made such demands, which cannot withstand scrutiny.

Indeed, defining the term “knowledge” has often been as difficult and as perplexing as defining an act of faith. Yet it is understandable that some contemporary Christian apologists have criticized the view of faith as a “mere belief” or as a “personal opinion,”<sup>58</sup> and have insisted that it is actually an act of knowledge. The late University of Southern California philosophy professor Dallas Willard asserts that “there is a body of uniquely Christian knowledge.” He writes:

For most of Western history, its proponents have in fact regarded the basic claims of the Christian tradition as knowledge of reality, and they were presented as such. You cannot understand the history of the European peoples unless you understand that. Indeed, a similar point is to be made of all religions and their cultures.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Edmund Gettier, *Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?*, at <http://fitelson.org/proseminar/gettier.pdf>.

<sup>58</sup> Dallas Willard, *Knowing Christ Today: Why We Can Trust Spiritual Knowledge* (New York: Harper One, 2009), 2.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

Willard further maintains that "one can hardly imagine a religion offering itself on the basis of belief or commitment"<sup>60</sup> instead of facts and knowledge. He decries the present state of affairs in which faith is thought to be "believing something without good reasons to do so."<sup>61</sup>

Yet Willard himself at times seems surprisingly tentative about identifying Christian faith with knowledge. He writes, "Faith, indeed, is not the same thing as knowledge, and it arises in many ways, often independently of knowledge."<sup>62</sup> His reader may, with some impatience, ask: is faith or is it not knowledge? If it is not knowledge, then it seems beside the point to call it that, much less to write a book about how one "knows" Christ and can trust "spiritual knowledge." But if faith is knowledge, then it would appear incumbent upon Willard to demonstrate precisely how and why that is so.

He insists that Christian beliefs are true. Yet he is too philosophically adroit to argue that true belief is to be equated with knowledge. A gambler may believe that the next roll of the dice will come up snake eyes. In the event that occurs, one would scarcely care to equate the gambler's belief, however true, with knowledge. The same holds for knowledge as "*justified* true belief," a theory that Gettier explodes.

So where do these considerations leave us? Until the term "knowledge" is defined and its theory elaborated in a manner that commands general and widespread approbation by taking Gettier cases into account, it is prudent to regard the term in contemporary parlance as a political stamp of approval. This suggestion is not intended as obeisance to either alethic or epistemic relativism or a postmodern view of reality. The idea instead is that what passes for knowledge is a product of many considerations, one of which is certainly a belief's political standing.<sup>63</sup> That which a Christopher Hitchens or a Daniel Dennett may label as knowledge differs decidedly at times from what a Hartshorne or a Plantinga views as such. When the decision is open to question and the judgments widely variant, political influence is at its strongest and often wins the day. The war over school textbooks is a case in point. How and by whom knowledge is determined, who disseminates it, and to whom it is disseminated are issues pervaded by political considerations.

Understanding knowledge in this way is a plausible explanation for why, as Willard notes, Christian beliefs, which were for centuries regarded as knowledge, are no longer generally accepted as such, having lost considerable ground to metaphysical naturalism. Yet beliefs associated with the latter are often no less problematic than Christian ones.<sup>64</sup> Notwithstanding this fact, metaphysical naturalism continues to condition investigations into science, history, and even biblical scholarship. One may wonder why this is so. A com-

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>63</sup> Willard, *Knowing Christ Today*, 29-30. The author agrees that knowledge is political in its effects, but not in its substance. Without defining the nature of it, one is at a loss how he advances this contention. Also see Michael W. Apple, *Official Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 2, 38, writing of the "politics of knowledge" and stating that a curriculum begins with the political question, "From whose perspective are we seeing, or reading, or hearing?" That knowledge has a social and political aspect is widely accepted.

<sup>64</sup> Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, 194-237.



elling response is that the current standing of Christian beliefs has little to do with their intellectual merit, but much more to do with their lack of political prestige. The moniker of “knowledge” involves an implicit affirmation that the content of a belief passes, or should pass, political approval, which is invariably decided by a presumed elite. Although political factors do not affect a belief’s truth, justification, or warrant, it may (indeed usually does) eventually influence public awareness and the prevailing culture in a profound way.

**Faith and the Aposteriori.** By emphasizing apriority in the foregoing discussion, it is tempting not to give the aposteriori aspect of faith its just due. As previously noted, experience is integral from start to finish in the concept of God and suffuses it with content in each of its modes. As a nonreflective belief, faith depends upon a vague and unconscious concept of deity that is empirically grounded. As a reflective belief, faith rests upon a concept that embraces the entire universe of experience.

The connection between reflective belief and experience may deserve additional clarification. A crucial distinction should be made between God’s *existence* and *actuality*. The former does not change, but the latter does. Every state of God’s being from moment to moment exemplifies his or her absolute existence as well as metaphysical (rational theological) attributes, but God’s actual concrete being is subject to modification and change. How could this not be so since God includes the world in which we live, move, and have our being, and the world changes? This distinction has weighty consequences for a Christian’s reflective faith. If the discussion concerns God’s *existence*, then having faith in God involves the philosopher and theologian in an apriori and analytical endeavor. If on the other hand the discussion is about experiencing the actual being of God, the effort has to do with subjective enjoyment of deity and is without apriori implications since God’s actuality is contingent and not necessary.

For one not to admit that the actual being of God can be and is experienced as a sense of unconditional dependence, including a response of mystery and awe, aesthetic and moral apprehensions, hopefulness in the midst of uncertainty, confident trust, and being “grasped by an ultimate concern” is to dismiss volumes of testimony from not only Christians, but also from communicants in other religious traditions. Subjective experience is vital to the religious life. But one cannot reason persuasively from that to God’s existence, because there is nothing dispositive in experience by which to persuade the nonbeliever that God exists. As important as experience is to the vitality and life of faith, empirical data do not reach the apriori essence of faith nor constitute a convincing case by which to defend it.

**Faith and Revelation.** Faith in God can, like any other phenomenon, be explained in an epistemologically naturalistic manner. But this conclusion may leave Christians, especially in the Reformed tradition, theologically uneasy. They may object that faith is a divine gift and its truth revealed only through God’s own initiative. They, like Karl Barth, may be suspicious of and repudiate any view that calls to mind “natural theology.” What this familiar objection overlooks is that all beliefs, whether “revealed” or not, are delivered through concepts informed by experience and assimilated by our cognitive faculties. This human cognitive apparatus need not be interpreted as antithetical to the spirit of revela-

tion but may be viewed as accommodating it. Because a belief is revealed, it hardly follows that it must be received in some unusual and unique cognitive fashion.

**Faith and Science.** Treating the anatomy of faith as I have underscores that it a grievous mistake to import the scientific method into discussions of deity. "The prestige of science is misused," Hartshorne rightly declares, "if it is taken as establishing the universal competence of empirical methods."<sup>65</sup> Rational theology is concerned with understanding "the general nature or eternal essence of God," whereas the task of science is understanding "some of the accidents of God in their more abstract aspects."<sup>66</sup> Although these two lines of inquiry are concerned with one and the same reality, they involve distinct subject matters and ways of knowing, where one has an apriori aspect and the other does not.

Theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking insists "that science can explain the universe, and that we don't need God to explain why there is something rather than nothing or why the laws of nature are what they are."<sup>67</sup> Hawking's conclusion is not deducible from empirical scientific premises. He attempts in unwitting futility to pit empirical fact against apriori belief. In the process, his statement demonstrates not only a monstrously perverted scientism, but also a beguiling hubris, as well as a misconceived understanding of the meaning of faith in God.

**Faith and Evidence.** At the risk of belaboring the point, adducing empirical evidence in the attempt to understand an act of faith is a serious misstep. Evidentialism is a theory of justification that may be logically expressed as "person S is justified in believing proposition p at time t if and only if S's evidence for p at t supports believing p." W. K. Clifford sums up this perspective in deontological terms when he writes that "it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything upon insufficient evidence."<sup>68</sup> What his statement overlooks is that empirical evidence elicited for or against faith is irrelevant. It is absurd to speak of "evidence for God" when no evidence can count against the idea. New Testament scholar Bart D. Ehrman attributes the loss of his faith to the alleged inability of Christianity to explain suffering.<sup>69</sup> He seeks specifically to discover evidence in order to explain suffering and to justify faith. Yet, in doing so, he demonstrates his misunderstanding of the nature of faith, which is why he suffered the loss of it in the first place. He searches for explanations where none exists.

**Faith and the Will.** Faith as an act of belief necessarily involves the will. Having faith, however, does not entail constraining or coercing the will. The bi-modal interpretation of faith does not necessitate voluntaristic distortions. The will is not activated in a "prescriptive" sense<sup>70</sup> by faith. If one sees a tree, she freely believes that she has seen one. Her

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., xvii.

<sup>66</sup> Hartshorne, *Reality as Social Process*, 173.

<sup>67</sup> "Stephen Hawking Quote: Heaven is a Fairy Story," at [https://age-of-the-sage.org/stephen\\_hawking/heaven\\_is\\_a\\_fairy\\_story.html](https://age-of-the-sage.org/stephen_hawking/heaven_is_a_fairy_story.html).

<sup>68</sup> W. K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief" (1879), in *The Theory of Knowledge*, 502, 505.

<sup>69</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *God's Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question -- Why We Suffer* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008).

<sup>70</sup> See Louis P. Pojman, "Believing, Willing, and the Ethics of Belief" (1985-86), in *The Theory of Knowledge*, 525, 526.

will accommodates the belief without difficulty. If one asserts that she has seen leprechauns and demands that others believe in their existence, the resultant belief is prescriptive and amounts to an abusive demand. To argue that one can or should embrace a belief through the bending of the will, as Soren Kierkegaard, William James, and more recently Jack Meiland<sup>71</sup> maintain, is wrong-headed. The content of the belief becomes a heteronomous demand involving an arbitrary and dictatorial voluntaristic act. Insisting upon belief in spite of intellectual reservations is overreaching and in opposition to the gentle and kind spirit of faith, which does not require blind adherence. Faith and the will move in a single harmonious progression without distortion of either.

**Faith and Additional Christian Beliefs.** This essay is not intended to provide an outline for a complete systematic theology or credo of the Christian religion. Any detailed treatment of the numerous doctrines of Christianity is far beyond the scope of this undertaking. Notwithstanding these limitations, it seems appropriate to suggest how the Christian's faith in God may aid in the appropriation of other beliefs as well. As Barrett observes, "Being a believer ... in a god makes one more sensitive to detecting the god's action or presence."<sup>72</sup> Once our apriori belief in deity establishes itself as the condition for further theological understanding, additional cognitive resources, such as those of testimony and memory, may support additional beliefs reflecting the power, knowledge, and love of God.

There is nothing unreasonable about believing the testimony of others, even when there are no additional means by which it can be attested. Beliefs are routinely based upon testimony.<sup>73</sup> We believe that Socrates was a philosopher who taught that the life unexamined is not worth living. We believe that, in 490 B.C., the Athenians defeated the Persians in the Battle of Marathon. Christians believe that there once lived in Nazareth, a town in Northern Israel, a Jewish teacher named Jesus. All these "facts" depend exclusively upon the testimony of others. One can and should, of course, cull through testimony and decide which to accept or to reject. If an individual is an inveterate liar, her testimony may be presumed false. If she testifies against her own interest, or in a dying declaration, her testimony may be presumed true. Indeed decisions in a court of law regarding guilt and innocence, even life and death, are often made on the basis of little more than the testimony of one person or another.

The specific testimony to which I refer involves propositional memory. One who was present at Appomattox Courthouse, on April 9, 1865, may state from memory that Robert E. Lee, when surrendering to Ulysses S. Grant, denied having a recollection of him from their time of service together in the War with Mexico. Testimony from memory of this event is a generally accepted part of the history of that fateful day. Yet the memory is not the product of deduction, analogy, or abduction.<sup>74</sup> If the cognitive faculties of the testifier were functioning properly in those circumstances, and the testifier was honest, then his testimony and memory of the event would be worthy of belief in the absence of a defeating proposition.

<sup>71</sup> Jack Meiland, "What Ought We to Believe?" (1980), in *The Theory of Knowledge*, 514.

<sup>72</sup> Barrett, *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?*, 39.

<sup>73</sup> See *Warrant and Proper Function*, 77.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

The Gospels, along with other writings of the New Testament, include testimony about memories regarding Jesus of Nazareth. The writers testify that his teachings astounded listeners. They assert that "[n]o man ever spoke like this man!" (John 7:46), and explain "how he went about doing good ... (Acts 10:38). They also testify that he was crucified and died under Roman law, and add that he was resurrected from the dead and appeared to them thereafter. Certainly, in view of the indeterminate nature of the universe described by the science of quantum mechanics, reports of miracles cannot be dismissed out of hand as contrary to the "laws of nature," which may be viewed as statistical probabilities. Of course this fact still does not allow the Christian to measure lone events such as the Creation, Incarnation, Resurrection, and Atonement in statistical terms. It is, however, fair to point out that science is indifferent to exceptional occurrences like these and tends to focus upon routine patterns of activity.<sup>75</sup> While there are inconsistencies in the biblical accounts of the Resurrection of Christ, the accounts were written hundreds of years before the advent of current historiographical standards. These inconsistencies seem beside the point in an attempt to impugn the overarching claim being made. In the absence of a defeater, there is warrant to believe the event whether it is true or false.

## Conclusion

However else one may choose to describe faith in God in its nonreflective mode, it is an act of belief that arises from an empirically grounded apriori concept of deity. Experience is filtered through cognitive mechanisms, which constitute the software of the human brain and gives rise to the concept. In this mode, faith needs no defense any more than eating and drinking do, for there is a universal propensity in humanity to recognize the concept and to accept the attendant belief. One may, of course, come to view the belief as the symptom of a disease or glitch affecting the mind, but in order to be consistent, it is then necessary to suspect that everything we know, or rather think that we know, is susceptible to the same malfunction. The result is skepticism, which is epistemologically incoherent and raises more questions than it answers. Contesting one's natural inclination to embrace this primal mode of faith is unnatural and nothing less than an attack upon the human mind itself.

The substance of nonreflective faith invariably seeks further investigation and understanding. When subjected to the discipline of logic, the initial concept of deity swells into an expansively reflective one containing the whole of reality, as suggested in St. Paul's Mars Hill sermon. Included within the compass of this belief are all those aspects of faith that have been perennially recognized, described, and discussed. Failing fully to ponder the deepest implications of it, or to recognize at least the importance of the task of doing so, amounts to the repudiation of a spiritual and intellectual pursuit that is distinctively human, shaping our identity and self-understanding, both individually and collectively, as well as the contours of the culture to which we belong.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>75</sup> For a helpful discussion of faith and science, see William G. Pollard, *Chance and Providence* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 54-55, 117.

<sup>76</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Christianity and Culture* (1939; New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1976), 101; Christopher

Faith in God may then, for the Christian, be described as an organic process that begins unconsciously in mechanisms of the mind, which conduce to form a concept issuing into a nonreflective belief that in turn expands into a comprehensively reflective one, shaping one's view of whatever is, including science, aesthetics, and ethics. As persuasive, and as emotionally and intellectually gratifying as this faith is, the believer must exercise caution and counsel restraint. With words of seasoned wisdom Hartshorne reminds us:

Belief is a privilege. To scold or think ill of those who are unable or refuse to avail themselves of this privilege is inappropriate. To persecute them is monstrous. But there is also little need to congratulate them. Nor perhaps are they wise to congratulate themselves.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Hartshorne, *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method*, 297.



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## **Missiological Dimensions of Philosophy: St Paul, the Greek Philosophers and contact-point making (Acts 17:16-34)**

*Abstract:* This study demonstrates how and with what aim philosophy is received into the missionary activities of the apostles Paul and Luke as regards the *Areopagitica* in Acts 17. By an ingenious utilization of Greco-Roman learning and *paideia*, generally, and philosophy, particularly, Lukan Paul offers a context oriented cross-cultural model of preaching the kerygmatic word as of evangelization. A model for the inculturation of the power and meanings of the Gospel message is offered. In this a significant function is allocated to disciplined mindful reasoning, viz. philosophy. The author demonstrates the special ways in which contact-points are made, and common ground established, between the apostle Paul and Athenian philosophers. This allows him to observe that philosophy is endorsed by the primordial Church: both (a) as a dialectical (critical analytical) and rhetorical (persuasive oratorical) science-skill of addressing significant intellectual others and (b) as a faith-friendly mode of the Christian's practice of philosophy. The author infers a number of conclusions regarding the substantial role that philosophy acquires within the early Church. Moreover, the Christian endorsement of philosophy as a missionary tool has its grounding in the apostolic Church and, consequentially, it has its grounding in the New Testament. In this way philosophy, utilized and re-functionalized by the apostles Paul and Luke themselves, in its special way, participates in the "authoritative establishment of tradition by means of apostolic origin". The missionary model laid-out in Acts 17:16-34 has lasting value and needs to be continuously re-actualized: the same follows suit for a faith-conducive practice of philosophy.

*Key words:* mission, philosophy, contact-point making, inculturation, evangelization, Acts 17, *Areopagitica*, apostle Paul and Athenian philosophers, re-actualization

### **I. Method, objectives and goals**

**1.** Luke sets the dramatic scene in Acts 17:16-34. This is especially so regarding a segment which scholars name as St. Paul's *Areopagitica* (Acts 17:22-31). On one hand, the apostle Paul is seen carrying the good news, that is, the living word about Jesus. On the other hand, he faces the philosophers of no other city but Athens, the cradle of classical learning, steeped in the arts of philosophy: particularly those of dialectic and rhetoric. How is this possible? How does the Apostle dare think it is possible to address such an audience, successfully? Is it not true that he stands no chance? For, all he has to offer are seemingly simple words about an unbelievable event: that of the resurrection from the dead of a man named Jesus, a Jew from a faraway land!

“We wish to know therefore what these things mean” (Acts 17:20b).

These words represent the reaction of the Athenian intellectual elite as they sought to understand St. Paul’s proclamation of the good news regarding the word of God (Acts 17:18). But, is it not true that we as confessing Christians also wish to know what these things mean? Reflection on the paradigmatic passage in Acts 17:16-34 may bring us closer to what St. Paul’s acts and messages meant almost 2000 years ago. Moreover, reflection on what was there proclaimed may expose what these acts and messages might mean today: to those in faith and those who have no faith, and to those who are struggling to secure a founded immersion of thought and life in faith. Therefore, I propose we examine the following main questions: • *What* was proclaimed? • *Where* was it proclaimed and to *whom*? • *How* and *why* was it proclaimed? And, perhaps most importantly, • What can we *learn* in practical terms? Answering these questions, I trust, will help us better understand that evangelization presupposes inculturation and that both constitute crucial dimensions of the mission of the Church. What would be the role of philosophy in all of this, if there is a role to disclose? In fact, the main goal of this study essay is to explore the role and status of philosophy in the ancient Church inasmuch as Lukan<sup>1</sup> Paul can reveal this to us through the classical narrative of the *Areopagitica*. It is in connection to the latter that I wish to underline that this study essay is a part of a wider project dedicated to the role and status of philosophy in the Pauline corpus, Luke’s Acts of the Apostles notwithstanding. As well, I wish to emphasize that in the following expositions I will apply a particular methodological restriction. Namely, I will focus strictly and exclusively on Lukan Paul’s strategy of preparation (*proparaskeuē*) of the Athenian philosophers for the revealed word about Jesus as Lord and Judge of mankind. I delve not into exploring the domain of revealed truth addressing or inviting pure faith (Acts 17:30-31). Rather, I venture to explore what is argued and done by Paul from within the domain of natural truth inasmuch as he, purposefully, meets the philosophers on their own terms, as of pure reason (Acts 17:24-29). In other words, in order to observe and fully understand the significance and structure of Paul’s apologetic theology argumentation (viz. defending the revealed truth that Jesus is Lord Acts 17:30-31), we need to understand that, in Acts 17:16-34, it presupposes and is opened up by Paul’s natural theology argumentation (viz. defending the reasoned and reasonable truths about what is naturally proper to men regarding God). The application of this methodological stricture will, thus, open our path rather than close it. For, it is a necessary step that we mustn’t disregard. Alongside, and in virtue of such an approach, the multilayered and multifaceted richness of Lukan Paul’s missionary strategy at the Areopagus will come out in fuller view.

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1 I hold that Luke coveys a real historical event regarding Paul’s address at the Areopagus, most likely working from Paul’s oral testimony or from notes left by Paul. However, he cleverly lays-out a narrative and a description out of this event, using special rhetorical and dramaturgical devices, with evangelical and missiological goals in mind. Hence, by “Lukan Paul” I understand the joint effects of Paul’s action and Luke’s subsequent written witness to this event. The unraveling of the said relation (with delicate and demanding exegetical-hermeneutical status questions, viz. authorship, respective contributions of the two apostles, etc) would necessitate a separate study in its own worth. On the whole, Luke plays a non-trivial part in laying out the narrative.



## II. What is proclaimed: content

2. Laconically speaking, in Acts 17 St. Paul (c.5–c.67) proclaims what he proclaims ubiquitously: the man Jesus as in fact the Son of God<sup>2</sup> (Acts 9:20) in whom mankind is to be saved<sup>3</sup>: “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). Looking attentively into the events that precede and follow his sojourn in Athens, we see that in Thessalonica: “... Paul went in, as was his custom, and [...] he argued (dielexato) with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, ‘*This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ*’” (Acts 17:2-3). And then, later in Corinth: “When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with preaching (to logo), testifying to the Jews that the *Christ was Jesus*” (Acts 18:5). Let us see what he says in Athens. For, that is where the apostle abides after his stay in Thessalonica, before his departure to Corinth. At the Athenian Areopagus the apostle exclaims:

“... [God] has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a *man*\* (en andri) whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance (pistin) to all men by raising him from the dead (anastesas auton ek nekrōn)” (Acts 17:31).

3. At first sight, it would seem that the Apostle states the same in Athens as elsewhere, e.g. Thessalonica, Corinth etc. However, there is one major difference. Looking at it closely will help us understand a fundamental aspect of the way in which the Gospel is proclaimed. What Paul does not mention at the Areopagus is the fact that this “man” is the Christ, i.e. the Son of God anointed (echrisen) by the Father in whom mankind is being saved by the Spirit (Is. 61:1; Lk. 4:18; Acts 4:26, 10:38). Still, Paul comes nearly close. Namely, at the Areopagus he says that this man is the “appointed” (hōrisen) one. The reason for this lies in the fact that Paul, having entered the Athenian central gathering place (Agora), is addressing neither Jews, nor the adjoining Judaized Greeks. He spoke to this group earlier, in the Athenian synagogue (Acts 17:17a). Paul is now addressing the other two groups of Athenians, both of them pagan: (a) the common citizens and (b) the learned elite, especially members of the Areopagus assembly (Acts 17:19, 22)<sup>4</sup>.

2 On the Son of God thematic in wider perspectives, see: Martin Hengel, *Der Sohn Gottes, Die Entstehung Der Christologie und Die Jüdisch-Hellenistische Religionsgeschichte*, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), Tübingen 1975 = idem, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion*, tr. J. Bowden, Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1976.

3 “For several days he was with the disciples at Damascus. And in the synagogues immediately he proclaimed Jesus, saying, ‘He is the *Son of God*’” (Acts 9:19-20).

4 In earlier times the Areopagus council, the city’s main governing body, used to meet on Mars’ Hill (Areion pagon), south of the Agora. At the time when Paul enters the city the council (now invested with charge over religious affairs and crime) are most likely meeting at the Royal Stoa (Stoa Basileios) within the Agora perimeter. Therefore, it is not automatically certain that the hearing took place on Mars’ Hill. Paul’s speech might have been delivered within the bounds of the Agora, in front of the gathered members of the Areopagus council. This option cannot be excluded. More on the history of this institution in: Mogens H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes: Structure, Principles and Ideology*, tr. J. A. Crook, Blackwell Press, Oxford 1991. More on the debate about the exact location where the Areopagus speech was delivered:

The majority of the gentile Athenians (Acts 17:17b-18a) would not have understood anything connected to Old Testament promise, including prophecy about the anointed Saviour (Messiah, Christos). Accordingly, the narrative of Paul's *Areopagitica* (vv. 22-31) does not give explicit OT references. It keeps them in reserve, allusively: viz. Is 66:1; 1Kings 8:27; 2Chr. 6:18; Ps. 50:9; Deut. 32:8; Is. 55:6; Is. 40:18. These OT loci are implied in *Areopagitica* ll. 24 (2x), 25, 26, 27 and 29. Nevertheless, they are discernible. (They are present implicitly, for a special typological reason: namely, when the truth about Jesus is finally revealed by Paul [in v. 31] the hitherto implicit OT context will connect Jesus, explicitly, with OT prophesies concerning the Messiah). What is more, Christ is not mentioned at all. At the same time, the shocking words about Jesus and resurrection are mentioned (Acts 17:18).

However, in order to accommodate those willing to listen, Paul (that is, Lukan Paul) lays-out a complex of preparatory arguments, in the *Areopagitica* (especially vv. 24-29). His aim is two-fold, at least: on one hand (1), this preparation aims to absorb their shock (viz. v. 31) positively, and, on the other hand (2), it amplifies the Apostle's hope of having prospective continued conversations: more conversions with those originally assembled (v. 32b). This is the main reason why the Apostle to the gentiles (ta ethnē) is seen applying a special strategy of evangelization (Acts 17:22-31) as the philosophers usher him into their midst at the Areopagus (en mesō): the political, judiciary and cultural hub of Athens.

This strategy is relevant today as it was then. For this reason we need to examine its essential aspects. In order to do so successfully, we also need to understand precisely where and exactly to whom was the word of God (kerygma) proclaimed on that day. Martin Hengel's dictum remains obligatory: "A New Testament scholar who understands only the New Testament, *cannot* at all correctly understand this"<sup>5</sup>. As was suggested in this regard by Gregory E. Sterling, ideally, an aspiring NT reader should understand the context as well: the Hellenistic, Roman, and Jewish life-worlds<sup>6</sup>.

### III. Where is it proclaimed and to whom: context

4. Paul's admirer and loyal pupil St. Luke (fl. 1<sup>st</sup> C) leaves a brief yet telling remark in Acts 17:16. As the Apostle walks the streets and fora of Athens in the winter of 51-52 AD, waiting for Silas and Timothy, "... he saw that the city was full of *idols\** (kateidōlon)". Ancient sources confirm this. For example, Gaius Petronius (27-66) remarks sardonically on Athenian customs. He relates that "... the gods walk abroad so commonly in our streets that it is easier to meet a god than a man"<sup>7</sup>. Athens was in fact infested with a poignant if not bi-

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Timothy D. Barnes, "An Apostle on Trial", *Journal of Theological Studies* 20:2 (1969) 407-410; Colin J. Hemer, "Paul and Athens: A Topographical Note", *New Testament Studies* 20:3 (1974) 348; Frederick F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids MI (1954) 1988 (revised), 276, 343, 343 n. 97; Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible Vol. 31, Doubleday, New York 1998, 605.

5 Martin Hengel, "Aufgaben der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft", *New Testament Studies* 40:3 (1994) 321.

6 Gregory E. Sterling, "Hellenistic Philosophy and the New Testament", in: Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament*, Brill, Leiden – New York – Köln 1997, 313.

7 Titus Petronius (Gaius Petronius Arbiter), *Satyricon*, tr. Michael Heseltine, LCL 15, Harvard University

zarre amalgam of Hellenistic<sup>8</sup> religious-philosophical beliefs and displays of idol worship and magic. Most likely entering through the Piraeus gate, Paul arrives at the famous Agora square. Architecturally regarded, it is an “open space in the dense city”<sup>9</sup>. The space itself is organized as a grid of sacral and social structures making this space meaningfully public. The Apostle is overwhelmed. What he knows from previous knowledge<sup>10</sup>, which figures like Strabo (64–23) and Ovid (43–18) have depicted vividly<sup>11</sup>, emerges in its immediacy: it stands all around him and engulfs him sweepingly.

Looking from the Agora epicenter, i.e. from the vicinity of the Odeion (major recital hall gifted to Athens by the general of Augustus, Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, in ca. 15 BCE), the astounded Apostle sees the following edifices of greater significance as he makes his rounds: to the west, the Hēphaisteion (temple dedicated to the god of fire and smiths and to the goddess of arts and crafts: to Hephaistos and Athena, jointly); the Bouleutērion (meeting place of the Boulē or governing city senate [numbering 500 men]); the Mētrōon (shrine of the Mother of the Gods and the archive building of the city); the Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios (temple commemorating the expulsion of Persians from Greek lands, viz. the battle of Plataia [479]); and across the Mētrōon, as closest to Paul, he perceives the Eponymous heroes’ memorial (bronze statues representing the ten heroes of the tribes): gazing to the north-west, and moving some more, he observes the Stoa Basileios (head office of the king archon: as second in order of command of the Athenian government, he was the official responsible for religious matters and the laws<sup>12</sup>): looking to the north, he beholds the

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Press, Cambridge MA – William Heinemann, London 1913, xvii. (This edition of the classics is further referred to under abbreviation: LCL = Loeb Classical Library [with the given series book number added]; HUP: Harvard University Press [with date of publication given]).

**8** The terms “Hellenic” and “Hellenistic” need to be distinguished. The former denotes the Greek world before the fall of Greek provinces under Roman rule. The latter denotes the Graeco-Roman world which begun to shape after the Battle of Corinth (146 BCE) and lasted until the inauguration of the city of Byzantium by Constantine (i.e. Constantinople 330 CE) as the seat of the eastern part of the divided Roman Empire. In comparison with the historical-chronological dimension, the cultural-ideological dimension is more important in regard to our thematic. It signifies the synthesis of Greek and Roman culture whereby the Greeks re-conquered their conquerors, precisely through their culture, of which philosophy was the highest expression. Stanley Porter places Hellenism within the following time frame: 4 C. BCE till 4 C. CE (see: idem, “The Greek Language of the New Testament”, in Stanley E. Porter [ed.], op. cit., 99).

**9** Denise Costanzo, “City”, in: idem, *What Architecture Means: Connecting Ideas and Design*, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, New York and London 2016, 64.

**10** References to pagan sources by Paul are better understood as effects of earlier Jewish polemics against pagan Hellenism, rather than as direct influences of classical Greek sources. His knowledge of pagan Greek culture is not necessarily direct but mediated (viz. M. Hengel’s thesis that there is no direct dependence of early Christianity on non-Jewish thought). See more in: Vadim Wittkowsky, “‘Pagane’ Zitate im Neuen Testament”, *Novum Testamentum* 51:2 (2009) 107–126. For Hengel’s argumentation see: Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, tr. J. Bowde, Fortress Press, Philadelphia 1980.

**11** Strabo, *Geographica* (Γεωγραφικά), <sup>17</sup> AD, <sup>23</sup> AD = Strabo, *Geographica*, vol. I (b. 1–2) LCL 49 (1917); vol. II (b.3–5) LCL 50 (1923), HUP, Cambridge MA; Publius Ovidii Nasonis, *Metamorphoseon libri XV*, <sup>18</sup> AD = Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, LG Classics, New York 2006.

**12** It was here, note, that Socrates was brought to trial. As conveyed by his beloved pupil, Plato, Socrates confesses to the geometer Theodorus that: “... now I must go to the Porch of the King (tou basileōs stoa), to

Temple of Ares ([Mars] the god of battle and warfare); behind it is revealed the Altar to the Twelve Gods (mirroring the Olympic canon, built by the son of Hippias the tyrant, Peisistratos, in 552/551); and in the far rear he can make out the Stoa Poikilē ([ca. 460] the colonnaded thoroughfare where philosophers convened to conduct their discussions, especially since Zeno of Kition, the pre-eminent Stoic, adopted this bustling place for the promulgation of his philosophical teaching in dialogue<sup>13</sup>): the view to the east allows him to see the Stoa of Attalos (a building housing 42 shopping spaces for rent, built by an alumnus of the Academic sceptic philosopher Carneades of Kyrene, i.e. by king Attalos II of Pergamon [159–138]): looking and moving to the south-east down the Panathenaic way, as further out and above, the Apostle perceives the temples of the Acropolis and multifarious gods of the Parthenon, including the temple of Athena Nikē perched upon the bastion rock to the right of the Acropolis entrance gates, i.e. the Propylaea: gazing to the south, he captures the view of Mars' Hill (Areion pagon) dedicated to one of the Twelve Olympians, Ares (Mars), the son of Zeus and Hera: and, enclosed within the Agora square, the view of the Middle Stoa (the longest structure, dividing the Agora into two unequal halves): finally, to the south-west he finds the Tholos (headquarters of the executive committee [prytaneis] of the senate [boulē]<sup>14</sup>, ca. 470), behind which lay the Piraeus gates<sup>15</sup>. The bounds of the Agora had varied over time. But it always consisted of the poikilē stoa (Painted Porch) with the Acropolis towering over the city centre to the south-east. More still, the city surroundings as well as households are peppered with statues symbolizing phallic cults, hermaphrodite figures, idols of gods and semi-gods, even divinized men. Some of these are named as hermae after Hermes, the god believed to bring luck.

**5.** It might have been the staggering presence of the hermae which especially exasperated Paul. As Richard Wycherley describes them, there is one kind of idol figure "... in particular which made it literally true that the whole city was seen to be full of idols. Far more numerous and more widely distributed than all the rest were those most characteristic Athenian dedications, the Herms, square pillars surmounted by the head of Hermes [...]. They

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answer to the suit which Meletus has brought against me"; see: Plato, *Theaetetus* (Θεαίτητος), 210 d, tr. H. N. Fowler, vol. VII, LCL 123, HUP, Cambridge MA 1921.

**13** As preserved in Diogenes Laertius, "(Zeno) used then to discourse, pacing up and down in the painted colonnade, which is also called the [...] Portico of Pisanax, but which received its name from the painting of Polygnotus [...]. Hither, then, people came henceforth to hear Zeno, and this is why they were known as men of the Stoa, or Stoics...". Similarly states Athenaeus the Epigrammatist, speaking of all the Stoics together: "O ye who've learnt the doctrines of the Porch"; see: Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* (Βίων καὶ γνώμων τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ εὐδοκίμησάντων), VII 1:5, 1:30, tr. R. D. Hicks, vol. II, LCL 185, HUP, Cambridge MA 1925, 115–117, 141–143.

**14** Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution* (Ἀθηναίων Πολιτεία), 43:3, tr. H. Rackham, vol. XX, LCL 285, HUP, Cambridge MA 1935.

**15** For more on the history, structures and meaning of the Athenian Agora see: John McK. Camp II, *The Athenian Agora: A Guide to the Excavation and Museum*, ASCSA, Athens 1990. Also excellent are the historiography and pictorial illustrations found in: Craig A. Mauzy (with contributions by John McK. Camp II), *Agora Excavations 1931–2006: A Pictorial History*, ASCSA, Athens 2006.

were ubiquitous at Athens, and many have been found in the agora excavations...”<sup>16</sup>. As archaeological evidence attests, these idols stood “... at the north-west corner of the agora, between the Poikilē (Painted) Stoa and the Basileios (Royal) Stoa; in fact the figures so dominated the scene that the place was called simply ‘the Herms’. This was the main approach to the agora, by which Paul would probably enter as he came up from Peiraeus”<sup>17</sup>. Is it not very ironic that the citizens of Lystra tried to worship Paul as Hermes, to his dismay and outrage! For, they mistook Barnabas and himself for gods in the likeness of men (Acts 14:8-18). The memory of this, too, must have made Paul’s spirit additionally sensitive to manifestations of idol worship.

The citizens of Athens were immersed in idol worship no less. And Paul’s spirit, as Luke tells us, was stirred to a paroxysm (parōxyneto), as he beheld the “common hearth of Greece (koinēn estian)”, as Athena’s city was known in olden times, according to Claudius Aelianus (175–235)<sup>18</sup>. This is no wonder. Especially if we keep in mind the zealous streak which never faded out from Paul’s commitment to the Law: be it the one given through Abraham as commandments of the Decalogue (Ex. 20:3-4), be it the one given in and through Jesus (Matt. 5:17; Rom. 3:31). Paul knew his prophets by heart. One can only imagine how deeply this “veritable forest of idols”<sup>19</sup> impacted upon the spirit of the Apostle who, surely, endorsed the outcries of prophet Jeremiah: “Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with their foreign idols?” (Jer. 8:19): and, “Are there any among the false gods of the nations that can bring rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Art thou not he, O Lord our God?” (Jer. 14:22). It is no surprise, then, that after departing from Athens Paul declares to the Corinthians: “What pagans sacrifice they offer to demons (daimoniōn) and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons” (1Cor. 10:20).

**6.** Aside from orthodox Jews (Ioudaiois) and Judaizing Greeks (sebomenois), and next to common Athenian folk, whom he met every day at the marketplace<sup>20</sup> (en tē agora), there was a third distinct group. It is members of this group who will lead Paul to the Areopagus:

“Some also of the Epicurean (Epikoureion) and Stoic (Stoikōn) philosophers met him. And some said, ‘What would this babblers (spermologos) say?’ Others said, ‘He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities’ — because he preached<sup>21</sup> (euēngelizeto) Jesus and the resurrection. And they took hold of him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, ‘May we know (gnōnai) what this new teaching (kainē didachē) is which you present?’” (Acts 17:18-19).

<sup>16</sup> Richard E. Wycherley, “St. Paul at Athens,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 19:2 (1968) 620.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Claudius Aelianus, *Varia historia* (Ποικίλη ἱστορία), IV:6 = Aelian, *Historical Miscellany*, tr. N. G. Wilson, LCL 486, HUP, Cambridge MA 1997.

<sup>19</sup> Richard E. Wycherley, op. cit., 619ff.

<sup>20</sup> It is likely that some of those were not amicable characters at all, resembling those volatile and unpredictable “market loungers” (tōn agoraion) Luke refers to regarding Jason’s, Paul’s and Silas’ troubles in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-8).

<sup>21</sup> Literally: Paul “gospelized”: that is, he spoke and gave witness to the “good news” (euangelion) regarding salvation in Jesus.



Apostle Paul will soon let them know the essentials of this, as they said, “new” teaching containing “strange things” (xenizonta 19b-20a). But who were these “philosophers” (philosophōn)? What is their distinctive mark in regard to other groups Paul happens to meet or challenge in Athens? The specific difference lies in the fact that these Athenian intellectuals were heirs to the philosophical critique precisely of ancient Greek mythology, even of official religion. In fact, Greek philosophical theologies, notably those of Plato and Aristotle, as well as those of subsequent classical philosophy (including the likes of Poseidonius of Apamea and Dio Chrysostom), are both the result and generator of this process of “demythologization” of ancient theogonies and cosmogonies, as well as common vulgar belief<sup>22</sup>. In this sense, importantly, Classical Greek philosophy is the cradle of theology proper<sup>23</sup>, freed from vulgarized mythology and even more so from superstition.

We may denote this critical and higher philosophical theologizing as the outcome of the era of Greek rational “enlightenment”. Let me illustrate by quoting the convert into Stoicism, Dio Chrysostom (c. 40 – post 110). Nearly half a millennium after the death of Socrates (which in itself is indicative of the ubiquitous logical-critical ethos of the representative intellectual Greek), he states clearly that knowledge of what is true and divine comes from human nature, as of its innate god-given intelligence: to wit, “... without the aid of human teacher and free from the deceit of any expounding priest (mistagōgos<sup>24</sup>)”<sup>25</sup>.

**22** The satirist Lucian of Samosata (ca. 120–190) gives an indicative account of the Epicureans. He portrays them as relentless critics of religious impostors and superstition, epitomized, say, in the spurious figure of Alexander the False Prophet (Alexander Pseudomantis): “When at last many sensible men (ton noun echōnton) [...] combined against him (Alexander), especially all the followers of Epicurus, and when in the cities they began gradually to detect all the trickery and buncombe of the show, he issued a promulgation designed to scare them, saying that Pontus was full of atheists and Christians (sic B.L.) who had the hardihood to utter the vilest abuse of him; [...] About Epicurus, moreover, he delivered himself of an oracle after this sort; when someone asked him how Epicurus was doing in Hades, he replied: ‘With leaden fetters on his feet in filthy mire he sitteth’”; see: Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet*, tr. A. M. Harmon, vol. IV, LCL 162, HUP, Cambridge MA 1925, 208-209 (= Luciani Samosatensis, *Alexander [Pseudomantis]*, 25, and also 43-44). Cf. Hans D. Betz, *Lukian von Samosata und das Neue Testament. Religionsgeschichtliche und paränetische Parallelen. Ein Beitrag zum Corpus Hellenisticum Novi Testamentum*, (TUGAL 76), Akademie-Verlag, Berlin 1961, 5-13.

**23** In the sense of Aristotle’s conception of theologikē which defines theology as the primary science (protē philosophia), the object of which in principle are things separable from matter (chorista) and immovable (akinēta). Philosophy thus regarded inaugurates a disciplined reflection on God as the highest being — freed through critical abstraction from anthropomorphic projections and from mythological decoration or superstitious ornamentation. The logical-conceptual “intellectualization” of the attributes of God (in fact, their noetic “ontologization”) leads to, and is supported by, a conception of God as pure and necessary being: a divine mind (nous) which, being perfectly self-sufficient and actualized, moves and orders natural beings (ta onta) as their final cause. Cf. Aristotelis, *Metaphysica* (Μετὰ τὰ φυσικά), VI:1026a 27-31; XII:1072a 22-26, 1072b 5-11 = Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, tr. H. Tredennick, vol. XVII (b. 1-9): LCL 271 (1933) – vol. XVIII (b. 10-14): LCL 287 (1935), HUP, Cambridge MA.

**24** This phrase allows us to cognize the allusion of Dio Chrysostom to an officary of the Hellenic-Hellenistic rites connected with the so called Eleusinian mysteries. This mystagōgos was the person who would annually aid, accompany and initiate the aspiring candidates (mystae) into the cult’s secrets connected with the goddesses Demeter and Persephone (within the old agrarian death-rebirth cult, possibly with roots in the cultic practices characteristic of the Mycenaean period [ca. 1600–1100]).

**25** Dio Chrysostom, *Oratio* (Λόγος “Ὀλυμπιαχός”), XII:27 = idem, *Discourses 12-30*, tr. J. W. Cohoon, LCL 339, HUP, Cambridge MA 1939.

This does not mean that these philosophers had no concept of God, nor were the majority of them impious. The greater part of the philosophers of Athens, especially those of the Stoic school, expounded a theistic worldview, albeit philosophically. Such a worldview was projected by means of conceptual discourse, quite systematically, with the aim to offer elaborate answers to questions relating to theology, cosmology, gnoseology, psychology, ethics and politics. Their philosophizing was imbued with a genuinely religious spirit. Even the Epicureans speculated about things divine, despite their all-pervasive caustic wit. One should not make haste to equate their impious disregard towards inherited common belief with radical atheism<sup>26</sup>.

Fortuitously, apostle Paul was proficient enough in Graeco-Roman philosophy. As we shall soon observe, we find him standing ready to challenge Hellenistic philosophical precepts, especially those proffered by the Epicureans and Stoics. At the same time, note, we shall see him embracing philosophy as an eminent medium for communicating critically about the origin, structure, meaning and purpose of existence and life. Let us acquaint ourselves, briefly, with the basic ideas and beliefs held by these philosophers. This is necessary in order to prepare a better understanding of the multifarious effects of St. Paul's engagement at the Areopagus.

**6.1.** The Epicureans (deriving from Epicurus of Samos 341–270) were polytheists. Conditionally<sup>27</sup> speaking, their views of the gods approximate to what the modern term deism signifies in general. They professed that gods do exist yet abide aloof of human affairs in unreachable other worlds (*metakosmia*). Accordingly, the gods are indifferent to human affairs in principle. Coupled with this, understandably, they nurtured a sceptical attitude regarding traditional religious mores and practices, generally. Because, as by rule, these traditions of cult, belief and practice were imbued with a projection of overly human passions and inclinations onto gods and what is divine. As regards the cosmos, they followed the ontology of pre-Socratic atomists, Leucippus (fl. 5 C) and Democritus (ca. 460 – ca. 370).

This led them to suppose that the cosmic universe is composed, rather mechanically, of atoms and nothingness. Since this condition encapsulates the human being as well, ontologically, they drew their ethical consequences accordingly. One of these led to the conclusion that human beings should not fear death, no matter how saddening such a state of affairs happens to be, no matter how terrifying it seems to be. For, death is nothing else but a mere decomposition of particles assembled in – and as – the human being. These atomic particles, subsequently, return into the pan-cosmic swirl. Following the precepts of pre-So-

<sup>26</sup> It is also true that they tended to sublimate the sentiment of religious piety in favour of venerating their founding teacher Epicurus. Thus, they inadvertently and inconsistently kept sliding towards idolatry (e.g. Colotes' gesture of prostrating himself before Epicurus: "And even Colotes (an outstanding Epicurean B.L.) himself, hearing one day Epicurus discoursing of natural things, fell suddenly at his feet and embraced his knees, as Epicurus himself..."); see more in: Plutarch, *Contra Colotes* (*Πρὸς Κωλώτην*), 17 = idem, *Moralia* (*Ἠθικά*), 1117bc = idem, *Moralia*, "... Reply to Colotes in Defence of the Other Philosophers...", tr. B. Einarson, Ph. H. De Lacy, vol. XIV, LCL 428, HUP, Cambridge MA 1967.

<sup>27</sup> For, deism is monotheistic and modern.

cratic atomistic physics the Epicureans also proffered that the human intellect (*nous*) is composed of the lightest, sphere-like and most fiery atoms.

The Epicurean ethic (entwined with, and derived from their ontology) is given succinctly in the so called four-fold cure (*tetrapharmakos*). The four main precepts are laid out by the one-time Athenian philosopher, a student of Zeno of Sidon, the Epicurean Philodemus of Gadara (ca. 110 – ca. 30), who will eventually move to Italy, establishing himself in Naples. Later, after the 1752 discovery of the Villa of the Papyri, in Herculaneum (Italy), the said precepts were retrieved from one of the papyri scrolls<sup>28</sup>: “§1 Don’t fear god / §2 Don’t worry about death / §3 What is good is easy to get / §4 What is terrible is easy to endure”. As regards precept §2, which is of particular interest to us, Epicurus himself explains: “Death, therefore, the most awful of evils, is nothing to us, seeing that, when we are, death is not come, and, when death is come, we are not. It is nothing, then, either to the living or to the dead, for with the living it is not and the dead exist no longer”<sup>29</sup>. Death is a radical caesura of perception, sensation, cogitation: nothing less, nothing else.

In contrast to later Roman-Greek, Hellenistic, philosophical moods: for instance, those found in the works of eclectic poet and philosopher Horace (65–8) (where the awareness of death casts its melancholy shadow over the “fixed-term” enjoyment of life: where death is still regarded as something irreducible, no matter how “thin” in comparison to the fullness of life), the classical Epicureans endeavour to liquidate death as a concern in life, totally. This allows them to preach considered enjoyment of life (*eudaimonia*), breaking forth wholly unimpeded by destructive fears ushered by unrestrained, as much as non-enlightened, anticipations of death. As we just saw, they profess that death is nothing at all. According to Epicurean advice, every human needs to literally forget about death. Paradoxically, the reason for this rests in their absolute affirmation of human mortality — by means of arguments which refer to the unavoidable (and irreparable!) corruption of sub-divine atomic assemblages, including human beings.

The task of the philosophically enlightened human being is to seek pleasure (*hēdonē*) with measure (*metron*), coupled with a practice of avoiding of fears, pain and excess. The pinnacle of life is a state of undivided impassive calm (*aponia*<sup>30</sup>). This is in itself is preferably pleasurable for it marks the attainment of tranquillity of both body and mind (*ataraxia*). Humans should keep their calm before the lesser, greater and greatest of life’s challenges, equally. Such a state both presupposes and affirms the practice of control of one’s self, as well as freedom from need, unwarranted hope or dread (of course, as much as such freedom is humanly, that is, philosophically attainable). Such a way of being and the accordant state of mind, finally, are associated with divine-like self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*).

Nevertheless, in a final count over things, looking from a cosmic level, events relating to human matters unfold according to irrevocably fated rules, regardless of human inter-

<sup>28</sup> They were deciphered from the Herculaneum Papyrus 1005, 4:9–14.

<sup>29</sup> Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*, tr. R. D. Hicks (the locus is to be found in: Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*, X:125), vol. II, LCL 185, HUP, 1925, 651.

<sup>30</sup> Viewed strictly philologically, *aponia* designates a state of being “pain-less”, exempt from pain.



ests, wishes and hopes. Relying on philosophical wisdom (*sophia*), the mortal is left with the task to drain as much joy as possible from his place within the pre-set limits of life dictated by laws of the cosmic order (*kosmos*, *taxis*).

In later times, Epicurean, Stoic and Pyrrhonic-Sceptic traditions of classical Hellenic philosophical wisdom (with one of the common denominators found in their affirmation of respective quests for *ataraxia* and moderate *pathē*<sup>31</sup>) enter into a relation of mutual synthesis, or symbiosis, especially within the all-pervasive eclectic mannerism of high cultured Graeco-Roman Hellenism. Even when (within this eclectic admixture) the gods are acknowledged as agencies which may decide human destinies (seemingly suspending the Epicurean barrier between gods and men, viz. *metakosmia*), the gods will have it their way, and their way only<sup>32</sup>. That is to say, in the final instance, again, this translates into indifference of the gods towards humankind, as the original Epicureans did in fact postulate.

As one who had been open to both Epicurean and Stoic strands of teaching, albeit selectively and to an extent<sup>33</sup>, Horace exhorts tellingly: “Ask not – we cannot know – what end the gods have set for you, for me; nor attempt the Babylonian reckonings Leuconoe. How much better to endure whatever comes, whether Jupiter grants us additional winters or whether this is our last, which now wears out the Tuscan Sea upon the barrier of the cliffs! Be wise, strain the wine; and since life is brief, prune back far-reaching hopes! Even while we speak, envious time has passed: pluck the day (*carpe diem*), putting as little trust as possible in tomorrow!”<sup>34</sup>.

The certainty of death, the shortness of life, the sad prospect of wallowing amongst shadows in a forlorn exteriority of eternal death divorced from the fullness of life, leave their burdensome mark on the poet’s soul. Immersed in melancholy and the bizarre joy of mortal living, with the aid of Epicurean and Stoic intuitions, the poetic philosopher

<sup>31</sup> Where *pathē* signifies “passion”. In this connection Sextus Empiricus (160–210 CE) transports the words of Pyrrho of Elis (360–270 BCE) as follows: “We always say that as regards belief the Skeptic’s goal is *ataraxia*, and that as regards things that are unavoidable it is having moderate *pathē*”, cf. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrronism* (*Πυρρώνειοι ὑποτυπώσεις = Pyrrhoniaron hypotyposeon*), I:12, tr. R. G. Bury, LCL 273, HUP, Cambridge MA 1933.

<sup>32</sup> No matter how convincing a human sacrificial petition might seem, an offering in words or material gift, the human being remains — mortal, tied to this unenviable and tragic lot. What is more, even gods themselves are subdued to necessity as the all-determining principle of cosmic law. Necessity is beyond even their control and power. Things and processes must be what they are, and cannot be otherwise. Simonides of Ceos (ca. 556 – ca. 468) makes the point memorably: “Not even the gods fight against necessity (*anankē*)”. See: Plato, *Protagoras* (*Πρωταγόρας*), 345d = Plato, *Laches*, *Protagoras*, *Meno*, *Euthydemus*, tr. W. R. M. Lamb, vol. II, LCL 165, HUP, Cambridge MA 1924. (Cf. Simonides, *Fr.* 37.1.30 = LCL 476, HUP, 1991, 436).

<sup>33</sup> Horace undoubtedly did draw on some Epicurean and some Stoic views regarding wisdom and life (as the analysis of some of his *Odes* [e.g. *Ode* 1] and some of his *Epistles* [e.g. *Ep.* XVI] has shown). Equally, one needs to acknowledge that Horace was an eclectic. This means that he was relatively detached from both Epicurean and Stoic philosophical teaching in the purist dogmatic sense. He certainly was not an ardent disciple of Epicurus in the way Lucretius was. Horace was an intelligent and compassionate borrower. Yet, equally, he was spontaneous and remained independent from the schools of Epicurus and Zeno. This precautionary observation is laid out well by W. S. Maguinness, “The Eclecticism of Horace”, *Hermathena* 27:52 (1938) 27–28 ff, 41–42 ff.

<sup>34</sup> Quintus Horatius Flaccus, *Ode* 1:11.

Horace ponders the inevitable outcome: life without life, divorced from hope of a better outcome. As Philip Merlan portrays well, depicting the pessimistic frame of expectations in the Graeco-Roman world, expounding his dialogue with Horace's opus: "Everyone is doomed to see the slowly flowing, slowly winding rivers of the netherworld, everyone is doomed to external exile, everyone must join the flock of shadows"<sup>35</sup>.

**6.2.** Now we need to consider the other party of wisdom-seekers facing St. Paul. This community of thinkers (deriving from Zeno of Citium 344–262), the Stoics, were pantheists. They professed that all beings, ultimately, are but organic parts of one universal intelligent substance. This living substance was referred to as Nature (or Cosmos) *or* God, and was regarded as "all in all". In this sense, conditionally, they can be regarded as "monotheists" as well. It is no less true that they were prone to admit of "ordinary" gods over and above which they posited the superiority the one Zeus: and, more still, over all gods to place the superiority the one universal Nature or Cosmos — which alone is self-sufficient (autarkē). (Plutarch deemed such illogicality repugnant: for, gods must be self-sufficient by definition, if they are truly gods<sup>36</sup>).

Be that as it may, the rational ordering of the universe is explained as emanating from this substance, as of Nature or Cosmos, i.e. God, taken to be an active first principle as well. This is explained well by Cicero (106–43), who invokes the pupil of Cleanthes<sup>37</sup>, Chrysippus of Soli (or of Tarsus<sup>38</sup>) (ca. 280–206): "The universe itself is God and the universal outpouring of its soul (ipsumque mundum deum dicit esse et eius animi fusionem universam); it is this same world's guiding principle, operating in mind and reason, together with the common nature of things and the totality that embraces all existence; then the fore-ordained might and necessity (sic) of the future; then fire and the principle of aether..."<sup>39</sup>.

Accordingly, they divided this uncreated and indestructible Substance into a passive (material) and active (spiritual) part. The active part of this cosmic substance (deemed to consist of intelligent aether) was seen as endowed with an all-pervasive spiritual soul (pneuma) structured formally by seed-like generative principles (logoi spermatikoi), of

<sup>35</sup> Philip Merlan, "Epicureanism and Horace", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10:3 (1949) 445.

<sup>36</sup> Plutarch ascribes this teaching to Chrysippus: "But Chrysippus [...] says, that the World (Kosmos) *only*\* is self-sufficient (autarkē monon einai ton kosmon physi), because this alone has in itself all things it needs. What then follows from this, that the World (Kosmos) alone is self-sufficient? That neither the Sun, Moon, nor any other of the gods is self-sufficient, and not being self-sufficient, they cannot be happy or blessed". See: idem, *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* (Περί Στωϊκῶν ἐναντιωμάτων = *De stoicorum repugnantiis*), 40 = idem, *Moralia* (Ἠθικά), XIII:72, 1052e = Plutarch's *Morals*, vol. IV, tr. W. W. Goodwin, Little, Brown and Co., Boston 1878, 467–468 (cf. = LCL 470: p. 568). Also cf.: Ioannes ab Arnim (ed. coll. 1903), *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta*, Vol. II: *Chrysippi Fragmenta Logica et Physica* (viz. *De Mundo*) = abbr. SVF, Cap. II:10, B. G. Teubneri MCMLXIV, Stuttgartiae = B. G. Teubner, Stuttgart 1964, 186 (§605); Plutarch, *Moralia* (*Stoic Essays*), tr. H. Cherniss, vol. XIII part 2, LCL 470, HUP, Cambridge MA 1976, 568.

<sup>37</sup> As we shall see, it is to Cleanthes, the successor of Zeno, that Paul makes an allusion in Acts 17:28.

<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, this is the birthplace of the apostle Paul: "I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city..." (Acts 21:39).

<sup>39</sup> M. Tullius Cicero, *de Natura Deorum*, I:39 (cf. O. Plasberg [ed.], *ibid.*, B. G. Teubner, Leipzig 1917, 16–17) = Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods, Academics*, tr. H. Rackham, vol. XIX, LCL 268, HUP, Cambridge MA 1933.

which the human intellect (nous, mind<sup>40</sup>) is a prominent exemplar. These seed-like agencies (logoi) are in fact “parts” of God, that is, of the divine Intellect (Logos) which itself is constitutive and expressive of Nature (physis). Hence, the pneuma is a mediatory vehicle of the Logos, whereby the natural world is supplied with intelligibility, living movement, ordering and direction. The passive part of this cosmic substance was seen as the material side of things.

Human beings are organic emanations of this pantheistic natural Whole or God, imagined to be a self-contained sphere. For this reason they should not fear death either. As death takes hold of individual beings, their souls return into the primordial cosmic fire (pyr), or ethereal spirit. When embodied souls reach the end of life’s cycle, they are dissolved – “reconciled” – into this fire by a process of conflagrative combustion (ekpyrōsis<sup>41</sup>), possibly coming back through rebirth, or in another form or shape.

The task of a philosophically ennobled human, then, is to harmonize his intellect with the divine Intellect, that is, with universal Nature or God. In doing so the enlightened philosopher, in fact, affirms his own “divinity” in the very act of returning to “himself”, i.e. to his “true” being. In a way, this “self-divinization” entails the affirmation of analogical – if not substantial – sameness of the divine and the human. As minimum, understanding and reason, as of the logos, are shared by both: divinity and humanity. As Dio Chrysostom of Prusa states later, in Bithynia (97 AD), in his Olympic oration, speculating on the primordial order of things: “... these earlier men (palaiotatous) were not living dispersed far away from the divine being [...] and had remained close to him in every way, they could not for any length of time continue to be unintelligent beings, especially since they had received from him intelligence<sup>42</sup> and the capacity for reason (synesis kai logon eilēphotes peri autou), illumined as they were on every side by the divine and magnificent glories of heaven and the stars of sun and moon”<sup>43</sup>.

In any case, universal Nature (or “God”) acts according to its own laws alone, unconditionally. It is at work ceaselessly determining everything through a pan-cosmic net of causes and effects: with fated regularity or, to use a stronger expression, with supreme necessity. The aforesaid harmonization of the philosopher’s mind is pre-eminently accomplished through reflection on the true nature of things. An example of this is the eradica-

<sup>40</sup> Depending on context I use two senses of the term mind: (a) mind as the capacity for logical reasoning: hence reason, ratio, dianoia (viz. the reasoning brain) and (b) mind as the capacity for an integrative “deep” vision of reality inspired by and illuminated by divine light: hence spiritual mind, intellectus, nous.

<sup>41</sup> Plutarchus ascribes this teaching to Chrysippus in: idem, *De stoicorum repugnantibus*, 41 = idem, *Moralia* (Ἠθικά), XIII:72, 1053a = Plutarch’s *Morals*, vol. IV, Boston 1878, 468. Also: Ioannes ab Arnim, SVF, 186 (§605).

<sup>42</sup> Possibly as a better option, this term could also be rendered as: “understanding”. Nevertheless, I here follow the translation given by J. W. Cohoon viz. Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses 12–30*, vol. II, LCL 339, HUP, Cambridge MA 1939 (see: op. cit., *Or.* [= *Λόγος*] XII:28. p. 31).

<sup>43</sup> Dio Chrysostom, *Oratio* XII:27–28. The referred to rhetorician from Prusa, Dio, came under significant Stoic influence: likely, that of the earlier mentioned Poseidonius of Apamea in Syria (ca. 135–51). See: Max Pohlenz (ed.), *Stoa und Stoiker, Bd I: Die Gründer, Panaitios, Poseidonios*, Zürich 1950 (1964), 341ff., 382 (cit. acc. Martin Hengel, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, [Fortress Press 1976] 2007, 24 n. 51).

tion of destructive emotions which are regarded, note, as consequences of poor judgment. Consequently, the removal of pathological emotions is accomplished through a comprehensive understanding of the nature of one's being, and, through the virtuous use of discerning will (*prohairesis*) in accordance to the proper nature of things. And conversely, the Stoics taught that uncontrolled emotions grievously impair the faculty of one's understanding, that is, the intellect.

The best conduct, then, is to conform one's mind, soul and body to what is necessary according to the grand design and laws of Nature or God. These laws rule over human individuals and collectives as well as over the multitudes of all kinds of beings in nature, in each realm accordingly. On the human level, mindful conforming to these laws entails a restrictive (negative) side and an affirmative (positive) side. On the restrictive side: the acceptance of pain, loss and frustration as parts of the inevitable, the relinquishing of hopes and fears, especially the abandonment of rampant hedonistic gratification. On the affirmative side: the acceptance of one's duties in accordance to conscience (i.e. the law of one's inner nature<sup>44</sup>) and in accordance to obligations of citizenship in the cosmopolis (populated by gods and men, ideally, without distinction of race or nationality<sup>45</sup>).

Such cooperation<sup>46</sup> with the grand design and laws of Nature or God (and thus cooperation<sup>47</sup> with fate [*heimarmenē*], necessity [*anankē*], providence [*pronoia*] and fortune [*tychē*<sup>48</sup>]), informed by philosophical insight, releases the soul into a blissful state of being passionless (*apatheia*). Such a state is similar to Epicurean *aponia*. It heralds the attainment of self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*) within unstirred tranquillity (*ataraxia*). In a

<sup>44</sup> The syntagm "law of (one's inner) nature" viz. "nomos physeos" is here used in the conditional and freer sense which primarily denotes conscience (*synēidesis*). "The Older Stoics do not use the phrase 'natural law'. Greek-speaking Stoics find it hard to combine the two terms *physis* and *nomos*. Cicero, however, uses *lex naturae* [...] and Philo uses *nomos physeos*"; see: G. Kittel, G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, tr. G. W. Bromiley, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, (1985) reprinted 2003, 1285.

<sup>45</sup> Anton-Hermann Chroust, "The Ideal Polity of the Early Stoics: Zeno's *Republic*", *The Political Review* 27:2 (1965) 173.

<sup>46</sup> In connection with this see the sentence given by Seneca (4–65): "Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt" = "The fates lead the willing and drag the unwilling" (see Latin version in: Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*, 107:11 [ed. Kurt O. F. Hense] = Seneca, *Epistles*, tr. R. M. Gummere, vol. III: ep. 93–124, LCL 77, HUP, Cambridge MA, 1925). Seneca fashioned the mentioned sentence after Chrysippus or Zeno who give the exemplar Graecum for it (see: Hippolytus, *Philosophumena*, 21 in: H. Diels [ed.], *Doxographi Graeci* [G. Reimeri, Berolini MDCCCLXXIX = Berlin 1879], Hippolyti *Philosophumena*, 21:11 [p. 571]). For more on this see: Miroslav Marcovich, "On the Origin of Seneca's 'Ducunt Volentem Fata, Nolentem Trahunt'", *Classical Philology* 54:2 (1959) 119–121.

<sup>47</sup> "For the Greeks *physis* is a final court. Since it can be known only rationally, it is open to discussion, along with its norms, but since it forms a causal nexus, it rules out human freedom except as free concurrence with nature (as with Stoics)..." see: G. Kittel, G. Friedrich (eds.), op. cit., 1285.

<sup>48</sup> This should be taken in the sense of a subjective category: one tied to human ignorance of the higher ordering of causes (i.e. the full causal nexus), especially in relation to possible events and the future in general. The Stoics made chance compatible with their basically deterministic presuppositions. They disconnected this category from objective contingency in a non-deterministic world (which they rejected). At the same time, they widened the conception of determinism (viz. causation as a one-dimensional chain of actual events) to accommodate a "many-dimensional network of possible occurrences, all of them equal possibilities fitting within

word, mindful accord of the human will with Nature is conducive to bliss-inducing virtue (aretē), be it physical, moral or intellectual. Since concordance with nature (harmonia) includes the discerning will substantially, and demands its activity without exception, Stoic philosophy gives priority to the practical side of philosophical life.

The ideal of self-sufficient contentment (autarkeia), vouchsafed by a life of self-restrained temperance (sōphrosynē) in following the logos of physis, was held as the quintessential practical effect of theorizing, by both the Epicureans and Stoics. Although one should add that, in comparison with the Epicurean impassive calm, the Stoic was generally more politically engaged. Self-subduing was tied with dutifulness<sup>49</sup> intoned politically (viz. the polis and cosmopolis). This is accordant with the fact that theory was regarded as a function of, or intimately connected to practical philosophy. That is to say, theorizing was conceived to be in service of living (and) wisdom. As Antipater of Sidon (fl. ca. 100 BC) exclaims: “Here lies great Zeno, dear to Citium, who scaled high Olympus [...] this was the path he found out to the stars — the way of temperance (lit. saōphrosynas) alone”<sup>50</sup>. Or, as conveyed by Plutarch (ca. 46 – post-119): “Say then that a wise man has need of nothing, that he wants nothing, he is fortunate, he is free from want, he is self-sufficient, blessed, perfect (autarkēs, makarios, teleios)”<sup>51</sup>. This triune ideal was received from pre-Platonic Greek philosophy with its roots embedded in Homeric ethos.

Now, as philological-grammatical analysis and history of concepts analysis may display, contextually speaking, it is very helpful to acknowledge that Luke’s Paul refers to this ideal. He is perfectly aware of its meaning and Hellenic origin. Here are some non-Lukan and Lukan New Testament contexts. As regards autarkeia: “Not that I complain of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content (en hois eimi autarkēs einai)” (Phil. 4:11). In a context referring directly to things divine, the term is rendered in an entirely Christianized sense: “There is great gain in godliness with contentment (eusebia meta autarkeias)” (1Tim. 6:6). As regards sōphrosynē, for example: “Paul said, ‘[ ] but I am speaking the sober truth (alētheias kai sōphrosynēs rhēmata)’” (Acts 26:25; cf. 1Tim. 2:9; 2:15).

**6.3.** As his encounter with the philosophers draws near, let us turn to Paul and look at his state of mind and soul, again. On the whole, having entered Athens, the Apostle finds himself surrounded by myriads of signs and acts relating to religious cults uninformed by the

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the frame of ‘fate’...”. Actually, the Stoics took over Aristotle’s definition of chance (“...chance is inscrutable to human calculation, and is a *cause*\* only accidentally [aition kata symbebēkos]”: idem, *Metaphysica* [Μετὰ τὰ φυσικά], XI:1065a 33 et passim); and, they made the Aristotelian notion suit their philosophy through a re-working of its meaning and usage. As stated by Boethius: “The Stoics who believe that everything happens out of necessity and by providence, judge the causal event not according to the nature of chance itself but according to our ignorance”; see: Boethius, *In Librum Aristotelis De Interpretatione*, III, 194:22-24 = *ibid.*, in: Migne, PL 64, 492 AB. (Cf. Samuel Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey [1959] = Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1987, 73, 76-77).

<sup>49</sup> W. S. Maguinness, *op. cit.*, 30.

<sup>50</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*, VII:1:29 = *ibid.*, vol. II, LCL 185, HUP 1925, 141.

<sup>51</sup> Plutarch, *On Common Conceptions against the Stoics* (Περὶ τῶν κοινῶν ἐννοιῶν πρὸς τοὺς Στωϊκοὺς = *De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos*), 20 = idem, *Moralia*, XIII:74 = Plutarch’s *Morals*, vol. IV, Boston 1878, 391.



good news of salvation in Jesus. We can imagine how amazing and unprecedented this event in fact was. On one hand, we find the unknown god of the Greeks wrought in stone (Acts 17:23). On the other hand, we acknowledge the imageless god of the Israelites towering in transcendence (Ex. 20:4). In between stands the Church's Apostle preparing to declare the good news about God revealed in the person of Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, raised from the dead. And, the zealous apostle, Paul, finds himself surrounded by post-Platonic and post-Aristotelian representatives of philosophy, notably the Epicureans and Stoics<sup>52</sup>.

Admittedly, they profess reserve (epohē) towards mythological and cultic superstition, yet, only to pay the price of fatalism and resignation, priding themselves in what boils down to a basically sceptical, restrained, attitude towards matters of life and death inasmuch as these concern one's personal immortality. This is a life-world torn between superstition and rationalism, polytheism and pantheism. Viewed from a Christian perspective, the common streak of what is at hand is a fundamental unknowing of salvific truth in Jesus, encased within a frame of mind overpowered by a rationality still impervious to the workings of the Holy Spirit. Later, during his captivity in Rome (ca. 62), Paul will reminisce on pagan matters while writing to Colossians:

"And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind (dianoia), doing evil deeds, he [God in Christ] has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, provided that you continue in the faith (pistei), stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel (euangelion) which you heard (ēkousate), which has been preached to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister" (Col. 1:21-23).

#### IV. How is it proclaimed: Strategy level 1 — natural theology

7. What follows next is most important. The Athenians steer St. Paul into the Areopagus, where the genius of the Apostle breaks forth in splendour, in word and in power by the Spirit (1 Thess. 1:5). (The same should be said of St. Luke who very cleverly interprets the Areopagus event. He achieves this by redactional choices of scenes, images, words and accents; and by narrative structuring and plotting, so as to accentuate [not to "invent"] the crucial aspects of Paul's missionary engagement in Athens, especially at the Areopagus. Therefore, looking at Paul in this context is always tied to observing *Lukan* Paul as well, accordingly and to an extent). On the whole, whilst facing the philosophers, including other members of the Athenian elite (lawyers, judges, officiers), accustomed to dialogue and dialectic, the apostle Paul is actually confronting the whole of the glory that was<sup>53</sup> Greece (J. K. Stobart<sup>54</sup>). This is of paramount importance in light of the

<sup>52</sup> We cannot exclude the possibility that representatives of other philosophical schools of the times were present as well in the wider Agora: possibly the Platonic Academicians and Aristotelian Peripatetics, and others more.

<sup>53</sup> As Paul arrives at the seaport gates of Athens, i.e. at the port of Piraeus, the city is already 400 years away from the "golden age" apex reached in the times of Plato, Aristotle, Pericles and other luminaries (phōstēres) of Athena's city.

<sup>54</sup> John C. Stobart, *The Glory That Was Greece. A Survey of Hellenic Culture and Civilisation*, Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd., London <sup>1</sup>1911.

fact that Acts themselves represent the event of transition of the faith in Christ from Jerusalem to Rome via Athens, both cities being symbols of the power of pagan reasoning. “From now on I will go to the Gentiles”, retorts Paul to the Christian Jews in the Graeco-Roman city of Corinth (Acts 18:6b), during the continuation of his Second missionary journey (50–52<sup>55</sup>).

**7.1.** A crucial dimension of this historic happening, that is, of evangelizing the great world of the Graeco-Roman Gentiles, is remarkably illustrated by the exemplary passage given as the *Areopagitica* in Acts 17:22–31. It is an event in which tool and model, tactic and strategy, are forged in order to successfully face the pagan world in general, especially the learned echelons of it. If need be, at the cost of one’s blood on the Cross (Col. 1:20).

### St. Paul’s Areopagitica

“[22] So Paul, standing in the middle of the Areopagus, said: Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. [23] For as I passed along, and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, ‘To an unknown god’. What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. [24] The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man [Acts 7:48; Matt. 5:34–35; Is 66:1; 1Kings 8:27; 2Chr. 6:18], [25] nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything [Ps. 50:9]. [26] And he made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation [Deut. 32:8], [27] that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us [Is 55:6], [28] for ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your poets have said, ‘For we are indeed his offspring’. [29] Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man [Is. 40:18]. [30] The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent [Acts 14:16; Lk. 24:47], [31] because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead” [Acts 10:42; Rom 2:16].

A closer examination of Paul’s (Lukan Paul’s) specific strategy of preaching to a non-Christian audience is now in order. What the apostle Paul does, entails far-reaching – universal – consequences. To be exact, (1) firstly, Paul searches for, and does find a common ground. As we shall see, he does so ingeniously. I name this his Strategy level 1 — *natural* theology. And, (2) secondly, only after securing a common ground between himself and the Athenian listeners: between his message (euangelion) and the mindset of pagan Greek intellectuals, does he advance the radical force of the word of salvation (kerygma). Namely, God has appointed a righteous Judge of all mankind “... and of this he has given assurance (pistis) to all men by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). For that reason, repentance

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<sup>55</sup> St. Paul’s Second missionary journey to gentile Greece transpires between 50–52. It is reported in Acts 15:36–18:22. The main points to be connected are given in the following line: from Antioch, through Cyria and Cilicia, Lystra, Phrygia, then to Galatia, Troas, Philippi and Thessalonica (major city in Macedonia), Berea, Athens and — Corinth (where he lingers 1 ½ years), Ephesus, Caesarea, finally returning to Antioch in Syria.

(Acts 17:30) is required from each human being without exception. I name this his Strategy level 2 — *revealed* theology<sup>56</sup>. In what follows we shall see what the common ground is, how it is forged and why is it important. Even more significantly, we shall explore the reasons why positing common ground is necessary<sup>57</sup> (albeit not sufficient) in regard to delivering the gospel kerygma in fullness.

**8.** Now, part of the common ground is established by forging sets of *contact-points* between the two parties. If we read the wider passage in Acts 17 (especially vv. 16-29), as closely as needed, then several of these come to the fore.

**8.1.** In the aforementioned section of Acts 17, firstly, we may discover the literary device of implicit simile between Socrates and St. Paul. Both are confessors of truth. Both are brought to trial and public questioning. According to one of the historical sources, Xenophon (430–354)<sup>58</sup>, Plato's teacher "Socrates is guilty of crime in refusing to recognize the gods acknowledged by the state, and importing strange divinities of his own; he is further guilty of corrupting the young"<sup>59</sup>. The way the writer of Acts depicts the *Areopagitica* scene (including the narrative itself) makes the most of this Socratic background. Likely, the aim is to strike connotative empathy with the prospective readers and-or listeners of Acts 17:16-34. This is especially meaningful when the recipient audience, predominantly, is bound to derive from a Hellenistic cultural background.

The resonances of the Socratic history with St. Paul's drama are not inconspicuous: "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities' (xenōn daimoniōn) because he preached Jesus and the resurrection. And they took hold of him (epilabomenoi) and brought him to the Areopagus" (vv. 18b-19a). Luke depicts the Athenians imparting to Paul that he is a bringer of a "new teaching" (kaine [...] didachē) and that these are "strange things indeed (xenizonta gar tina)" (vv. 19b-20). All these exclamations and the ensuing situation, cul-

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<sup>56</sup> The more convincing Paul is on the level of natural theology 17:24-29 (utilizing the philosophical tools of dialectic and rhetoric, of erudition and wit, and argumentative positioning), the more will his shift to the level of revealed theology 17:30-31 appear as shocking. The surprise is all the more intense since it is the *same* Paul who, just a while ago, discoursed with the pagan philosophers on equal terms, seemingly by reasoning "alone", who now seems to offer a message hard to grasp rationally. Some of them must have felt it strange – and, perhaps enticing! as well – that this stranger, disciplined in reasoning and sensitive to his surrounding listeners, suddenly makes such an astounding claim, viz. 17:31. (As I said in the introduction to this study, in-depth exploration of Strategy level 2 and its relation with Strategy level 1 is not the immediate subject of reflection and exploration in this study: however, the relation between the two, in its most elementary form, must be noted, for it is far more than merely presupposed by the whole of the *Areopagitica*).

<sup>57</sup> As a minimum, it is highly helpful: especially in a surrounding such as a city centre, the city being Athens.

<sup>58</sup> The other main historical source, of course, is Plato: *Apologia Socratis* (Ἀπολογία Σωκράτους), 24b, 25e-26a; cf. also: Plato, *Crito* (Κρίτων), 53b-c = Plato, *Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo*, tr. Ch. Emlyn-Jones, W. Preddy, vol. I, LCL 36, HUP, Cambridge MA 2017. For an insightful and erudite analysis of the political, legal and ethical frameworks of relations leading to Socrates' indictment, trial and verdict see: John R. Wallach, *The Platonic Political Art: A Study of Critical Reason and Democracy*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001, 95-101.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Xenophon, *Memorabilia or Recollections of Socrates* (Ἀπομνημονεύματα), I:1:1. See: *The Works of Xenophon*, tr. H. G. Dakyns, volumes I-IV, Macmillan and Co., London 1897; Xenophon, *Memorabilia. Oeconomicus. Symposium. Apology*, tr. E. C. Marchant, O. J. Todd, vol. IV, LCL 168, HUP, Cambridge MA 2013.



minating in the “taking hold of” Paul, resemble the trial situation drama or indictment brought against Socrates. “Absurd things, my friend, at first hearing”, confides Socrates to Euthyphro, “For he says I am a maker of gods; and because I make new gods and do not believe in the old ones, he indicted me for the sake of these old ones...”<sup>60</sup>. As regards our Apostle, the philosophers, at least for a while, are ready to listen. Paul’s life is not threatened, nor is he dispatched into a court hearing, formally.

→ The preceding reflections allow me to bring out the first important contact-point present in the *Areopagitica* narrative: §1. Socratic figuring A: witness of truth (trial motive).

**8.2.** As we move through the passage under scrutiny (vv.16-29), secondly, we discover at least two modalities of being philosophical in the classical sense. Luke brings them out looking at Paul. As previously, Luke is making sure that empathetic relations are forged regarding St. Paul as the truth-bearer and, potentially, as a tragic figure. Let me broaden this: Paul’s faithful companion and pupil, St. Luke, is here working especially on behalf of implied readers and-or future listeners of the readings of Acts: those in his contemporary time, as well as those who are yet to appear in time.

On one hand, as was the case in Acts 17:2 (viz. *dielexato*<sup>61</sup>), apostle Paul is again seen engaged in argument, debate, discussion. It is to be expected that Athenian “marketplace” discussions (viz. *dielegeto* [...] *kai en tē agora* 17:17a) gravitate around topics such as welfare, custom, piety, god and truth, but also around “news” generally. It is more than likely that these discussions, possibly heated, proceed through bursts of spontaneous questions and answers. Now, these aspects provide at least the necessary condition for qualifying Paul’s situation, conditionally, as commensurate to one in which dialogical dialectic is presupposed. That is to say, as minimum, he is questioned and he does provide answers.

On the other hand, as we see from 17:17b, Paul demonstrates an “open-air” style of preaching<sup>62</sup>. The apostle argues outdoors and is ever on the move, dynamically. He therewith adopts, or expresses, a character similar to that posited as the Cynic philosopher’s ideal<sup>63</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> See: Plato, *Euthyphro* (Εὐθύφρων), 3b.

<sup>61</sup> Note the semantic proximity of the terms “*dielexato*” and “*dielegeto*” with the term “*dialektikē*” (dialectic). The first two terms signify: to reason, to discuss, to debate. The third term, i.e. dialectic, signifies: to transform hypotheses into truths by reasoned argument, usually through the positing of questions and answers: individually or collectively, mentally or verbally, in and through dialogue (cf. Plato, *Republic* [Πολιτεία], 511bc, 531d–532b, etc); it also signifies to criticize and then replace mere opinion (*doxa*) with knowledge (*epistēmē*): that is, to replace mere opinion with true opinion combined with a reasoned explanation (*meta logou alēthe doxan*) (cf. idem, *Theaetetus*, 201d–210a, etc). The semantic proximity of the first two terms with the third (imbued with a rich Graeco-Roman prehistory) is underpinned by logical and methodological senses which the mentioned terms do share respectively. Generally, in the Graeco-Roman and Graeco-Judaic worlds all three mentioned terms are wedded to, and mediated by dialogue (dialogos); or, as is the case with Paul, with dialogue-through-debate (*dielegeto* Acts 17:17). Such a dialogue both presupposes and generates the event of the gathering together of persons, things into a world of meaningful relationships.

<sup>62</sup> Luke T. Johnson, “Paul in Athens”, in: idem, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Sacra Pagina Series, vol. 5, Michael Glazier Book, Liturgical Press, Collegeville MI 1992, 312–313 n. 17.

<sup>63</sup> Some have described Paul’s approach in Athens, i.e. that of discussing whilst on the move, as analogous

According to the Stoic philosopher Epictetus (55–135 CE), who is himself alike to Paul in many ways, this is “... the character of a Cynic, of a man who lives under the open sky, of a free man”<sup>64</sup>. Let us hear more of what Epictetus has to say: “... the true Cynic cannot be satisfied with this; but he must know that he is sent a messenger from Zeus to men about good and bad things, to show them that they have wandered<sup>65</sup> and are seeking the substance of good and evil where it is not, but where it is, they never think; [...]. It is his duty then to be able with a loud voice, if the occasion should arise, and appearing on the tragic stage to say like Socrates [sic B.L.]: ‘Men, whither are you hurrying<sup>66</sup>, what are you doing, wretches? Like blind<sup>67</sup> people you are wandering up and down: you [...] have left the true road: you seek for prosperity and happiness where they are not, and if another shows you where they are, you do not believe him’”<sup>68</sup>.

As we might perceive, Socrates, as depicted by Epictetus, bears a striking resemblance to Paul. Both are messengers of truth, disregarded by common people, who do not believe them because they are spiritually blind (viz. psēlaphēseian, 17:27). It is not merely coincidental that the Stoic Epictetus refers to Socrates whilst reflecting affirmatively about authentic Cynic philosophy. The school’s founder, Antisthenes of Athens (ca. 445–365), the pre-eminent Cynic, and Socrates of Athens (470–399) are contemporaries. The bond

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to that of the Aristotelian “peripatetic” philosophers. However, a cautionary remark is here in place. Namely, the name “peripatetics” derives from the colonnaded pathways (peripatoi) of Aristotle’s Lyceum where the members of his school came to meet, rather than from a rigorously applied method of walking-during-discussion. It seems that the claim that Aristotle expounded his teachings whilst walking is rather legendary. In any case, Paul is a more spontaneous. He is ever on the wing, using every opportunity to start a discussion about matters of truth revealed in Jesus.

**64** Epictetus, *Discourses* (Ἀρριανῶν τῶν Ἐπιτεκτῶν Διατριβῶν), III:22, 26–30; also cf. Dio Chrysostom, *Orationes* (Λόγοι), XXXII: 9 (credit: L. T. Johnson, *ibid*). Dio Chrysostom, the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD orator, gives a plastic description of the Cynic’s way of conduct: “... these Cynics, posting themselves at street-corners, in alley-ways, and at temple-gates, pass round the hat (i.e. deceive the naïve = ageirousi, B.L.)...”. Admittedly, the portrayal comes across as somewhat derisive. By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD the Cynics were a common occurrence across city centers of the Roman Empire (Dio describes a scene from 2<sup>nd</sup> century Alexandria). But, not all of them were as sound as the founding fathers of the philosophical movement (e.g. Diogenes, Antisthenes) nor of a level of excellence attained by contemporary Cynics, say, by the likes of Demetrius and Demonax (credit: P. R. Bosman). Not a few failed to attain a well grounded philosophical theory, and their ethics of personal conduct were sometimes questionable (This is targeted by Dio and Lucian). In a word, the outer gestures of philosophy tended to prevail over the inner depths of it: charlatanism over eminent Cynic ethos. Cf. Philip R. Bosman, “Traces of Cynic Monotheism in the Early Roman Empire”, *Acta Classica* 51 (2008) 1–20: 3–4. (Cf. also: Luke Timothy Johnson, “Proselytism and Witness in Earliest Christianity”, in: *idem*, *Contested Issues in Christian Origins and the New Testament: Collected Essays*, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2013, 622 n. 94).

**65** Compare this to the mentioned address of Paul to Colossians: “And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds...” (Col. 1:21).

**66** Compare this to Paul’s beseeching of Athenian citizens: “So Paul, standing in the middle of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that...” (Acts 17:22a).

**67** Let us remember to compare this with Paul’s or Luke’s *Areopagitica* term (retrieved from the Homeric corpus): namely, with the verb “psēlaphēseian” = like the blinded Cyclops “groping”, “seeking”, “feeling-out” for truth or god (cf. Acts 17:27).

**68** Epictetus, *Discourses*, III:22 et passim.

is not merely geographical, however. The Cynic and Socratic schools of philosophy share a number of fundamental precepts, both historically and doctrinally. And, they uphold a similar ethos of life generally. This is particularly so in regard to their nurture of mobile, open, convivial dialogue about truth, good, justice and meaning of existence. In this, too, the Socratic and Cynic, Stoic and Epicurean, philosophies share another important bond, as of their ethos in general. It is especially relevant in respect to what transpires, analogically, in the *Areopagitica*.

→ The preceding reflections allow me to bring out the second important contact-point present in the *Areopagitica* narrative: §2. Socratic figuring B: messenger of truth (mobile debate motive).

**8.3.** Furthermore, thirdly, we can see that St. Paul endorses the priority of the practical domain of human existence. The practical goal of theory is strongly underlined. Moreover, as a careful reading of the *Areopagitica* will disclose, the Apostle promotes thinking *for* salvation life<sup>69</sup>. Technically speaking, the block of verses given in Acts 17:22-29 presents a special kind of *thinking* which is in the service of – a preparation for – the block of verses in Acts 17:30-31, which in turn serve the exclamation about *salvation* of mankind in Jesus, the man raised from the dead.

It is thus appropriate to stress that the parallels between Paul's approach to truth and life, as demonstrated at the Areopagus, and the proclivities of philosophy in the Graeco-Roman period extend not only into the planes of theory<sup>70</sup> (*theoria*), formally, but also into the planes of practice (*praxis*<sup>71</sup>), substantially. The Hellenistic philosophers do try to seek out truth by grounding their thought, ideally, in adequate methods, clear disciplined reasoning and meaningful propositions. This does comprise their way of life: *bios theōrētikos*. But that is not all. For, theory is a function of their search for the appropriate *practice* of life: *bios praktikos*. They seek truth, theoretically, so that they may orient their lives in accord with it, practically. This quest is welded into wisdom-seeking: *philosophia*. In the final instance, it is welded into wisdom-living. Theory is conspicuously harnessed in the service of their quest for the good life (*kalē zōē*) of the soul (*psychē*) in wisdom (*sophia*).

This is organically connected with their essentially classical (Socratic, Platonic and Aristotelian) commitment to philosophical soul-guidance: *psychagogia* and philosophical soul-healing: *psychē iatria*. Both of these, furthermore, depend significantly on another practical aspect of philosophy: namely, on the art of rhetoric (*rhetorikē technē*). Next to the dialectical framework of the *Areopagiticum*, let me underline in advance, the workings of the rhetorical framework must be accounted for as well. Aristotle defines

<sup>69</sup> More on the Christian distinction between biological life and life in the spirit, viz. salvation, see: F. R. Montgomery Hitchcock, "Salvation as Life", *The Churchman* (April 1937) 76.

<sup>70</sup> In the sense of being philosophical through logical-methodical and critical examination of the validity of theories, ideas, statements, concepts, belief attitudes etc.

<sup>71</sup> In the sense of living philosophy through truth messaging, truth witnessing, truth dialogizing, wisdom practicing etc.

rhetoric as the “... possibility (dynamis) of seeing at each moment what can speak for a matter<sup>72</sup>”<sup>73</sup>. He further elaborates rhetoric as the art of addressing others with credible integrity of character (ēthos)<sup>74</sup>, appropriately (pathos) and convincingly (logos)<sup>75</sup>.<sup>76</sup> (We shall see that Lukan Paul’s performance in the *Areopagitica* event satisfies the listed conditions of proper rhetorical performance).

Aristotle’s teacher, Plato, allows us to reflect another aspect of the art of convincing speech. This aspect is highly important in the context of philosophically guiding and healing a soul. As Plato’s Socrates explains to Phaedrus: “The method of the art of healing (iatrikēs) is much the same as that of rhetoric (retorikēs)”<sup>77</sup>. Phaedrus is led to understand rhetoric is the art of speech which has at its disposal an adequate knowledge of the kind of soul one is addressing, coupled with the goal of improving the interlocutor’s well-being by exposing him to truth in adequately administered words. (This is precisely what St. Paul is seen doing at the Areopagus). Applying a speech to a listener (soul) in this way will have a positive effect, similarly to administering the right medicine to a needy patient (body)<sup>78</sup>. Accordingly, it has been well said that Plato understands rhetorical ēthos as the “space where language and truth meet”, in words (rēmata), “and are made incarnate in a concrete individual”<sup>79</sup> — the dialectical rhetor. This presupposes the ethical as well as ontological inseparability of the speaker and the speech act. We are not only accountable for what we say, we *are* what we say.

<sup>72</sup> Translation according to R. D. Metcalf’s and M. B. Tänzer’s rendering of Heidegger’s (preferred) translation of Aristotle’s Greek wording from *Rhet.* I:2.1 viz. “ἔστω δὴ ἡ ῥητορικὴ δύναμις περὶ ἕκαστον τοῦ θεωρήσαι τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν”. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Grundbegriffe der aristotelischen Philosophie: Marburger Vorlesung Sommersemester 1924*, M. Michalski (ed.), Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 2002.

<sup>73</sup> Aristotle, *Ars Rhetorica* (*Ῥητορική*), I:2, 1355b 25. (In Freese’s 1926 translation: “Rhetoric is the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever”) = Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, tr. J. H. Freese, vol. XXII, LCL 193, HUP, Cambridge MA 1926.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Craig R. Smith, “Ethos Dwells Pervasively: A hermeneutic reading of Aristotle on credibility”, in: Michael J. Hyde (ed.), *The Ethos of Rhetoric*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia 2004, 1-19.

<sup>75</sup> Aristotle, *Ars Rhetorica* (*Ῥητορική*), I:2, 1356a 3-7.

<sup>76</sup> In Plato we find that an invaluable aspect of the art of rhetoric is given by speech offered in a timely (kairos) manner. When Phaedrus admits to Socrates that a healer (medic) needs to know “to whom”, “when” (opote) and “how much” of a cure (medicine) to administer, this is placed by Plato as an analogy to rhetorical speech. Tactful awareness of the nature of a particular rhetorical occasion is thus embraced into the set of non-trivial aspects of rhetoric, by Socrates i.e. Plato. Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* (*Φαῖδρος*), 268b = John Burnet (ed.), *Platonis opera*, t. II, Oxford Classical Texts, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1922.

<sup>77</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* (*Φαῖδρος*), 270b. For a critical discussion of the relation between rhetoric and healing in Plato’s *Phaedrus* see: Elizabeth Asmis, “Psychagogia in Plato’s *Phaedrus*”, *Illinois Classical Studies* 11:1-2 (1986) 153-172; Daniel Werner, “Rhetoric and Philosophy in Plato’s *Phaedrus*”, *Greece and Rome* (Second Series) 57:1 (2010) 21-46.

<sup>78</sup> As explains Socrates: “In both cases you must analyze a nature, in one that of the body and in the other that of the soul, if you are to proceed in a scientific manner [...] to impart health and strength to the body by prescribing medicine and diet, or by proper discourses (logous) and training to give to the soul the desired belief (nomimous peithō) and virtue (aretēn)”: cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* (*Φαῖδρος*), 270b.

<sup>79</sup> James S. Baumlin, “Ethos”, in: Thomas O. Sloane (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001, 264 et passim.

In contrast to Aristotle, who thinks it suffices that an audience believe<sup>80</sup> the rhetor is in possession of qualifying virtuous characteristics, Plato (via Socrates) advocates a substantial pre-condition: the rhetor must be truly virtuous and must speak the truth. Speaking words to others is no trivial thing. Words may express truth and heal, or they may not. Worse, they may mislead others into cognitive or emotional, mental or soul infirmity. That is why both dialectic (truth) and rhetoric (speech) should be equally important for both sides: for the apostles Paul and Luke and for the Epicurean and Stoic wisdom-seekers<sup>81</sup>. As well, that is why *ēthos* (rule of character) implies *ēthikē* (rules for character), and conversely. Ideally, both sides assembled at the Areopagus (should) endorse these values: the Hellenistic philosophers and Paul.

The goals of soul-guidance and soul-healing, through argued and convincingly expressed speech acts, emerge in what both the philosophers and the apostle Paul attempt to do, whenever they meet others. The important difference between them is this: when Paul meets individuals and communities, including Epicurean and Stoic thinkers, he strives to create healthy ones in Jesus. This is the main thrust of his *ēthos*. The expressing of words of truth has for its purpose to lead the human being (body, soul and spirit) to full salvation life (*sōtēria*) in Jesus as Christ: "...we wait for adoption as sons [...]. For in this hope we were saved (*esōthēmen*)"<sup>82</sup> (Rom. 8:23-24). The important thing, then, is to keep in mind that in late antiquity the theoretical life was in service of the *practical* life. And, conjointly, to heed that the practical dimension of philosophy was markedly open to religious reality (Acts 17:22). Philosophy, to wit, was a practical and existentially relevant matter. In this sense Paul and Luke are attuned, and finely so, to the basic *ēthos*<sup>83</sup> of Athena's philosophers (not excluding other intellectual audiences: especially, implied readers from the wider context of the Graeco-Roman imperial era).

→ The preceding reflections allow me to bring out the third important contact-point present in the *Areopagitica* narrative: §3. Thinking for salvation life: primacy of practice (*bios praktikos* motive).

<sup>80</sup> Øyvind Ihlen, "Good Environmental Citizens: The Green Rhetoric of Social Responsibility", in: R. L. Heath, E. L. Toth, D. Waymer (eds.), *Rhetorical and Critical Approaches to Public Relations II*, Routledge, New York 2009, 363. (The instrumental streak in Aristotle's rendering of rhetoric, I'd like to add, means not that we should regard him as harbouring a "quasi-Machiavellian" motivation).

<sup>81</sup> I take the Epicureans and Stoics gathered around Paul in bona fide terms. I see no need to caricaturize them in a depreciative sense as mere cynical users of philosophical skills, without substantial interest in the good, truth, or wisdom.

<sup>82</sup> The accent is in this movement of bringing-to salvation (*esōthēmen*).

<sup>83</sup> If Craig R. Smith has it right in claiming that Aristotelian *ēthos* in the rhetorical sense "... dwells in the character of the audience..." and "... in the speaker's style", and not exclusively in the rhetor, then, this entails a non-subjectivist understanding of rhetorical *ēthos*. In that case *ēthos* is not an exclusive property of the rhetor himself: it rests in the rhetor's style as much as in the audience itself (listeners). If we transfer this to Lukan Paul's situation, then, this means that the Apostle takes into account, albeit conditionally, the credibility and-or integrity of the listening philosophers, as well as their (implicit) referential philosophical mindsets, texts and authorities. In other words, Paul (Luke's Paul) accounts for the dialectical and rhetorical situation he finds himself in. Cf. Craig R. Smith, op. cit., 3 et passim.



**8.4.** Having been brought to the Areopagus, fourthly, Paul appeals to the universal proclivity of mankind to seek God and commune with divinity. This deeply set inkling is paradigmatically manifest in the genius of Greek spirit. The Apostle compliments the Athenians (andres Athēnaioi) as being very religious. His amicable greeting, in which he qualifies those gathered as “exceptionally pious” (deisidaimonesterous; Acts 17:22), needn’t be taken as mere courtesy, nor understood as outright ironical (admittedly, fine ironical undertones abide, but elsewhere e.g. v. 30a).

Next, without further ado, he refers to an altar dedicated to an “unknown god”<sup>84</sup> (AGNŌSTŌ THEŌ; Acts 17:23). It is precisely this god that needs to be known, truly and properly. Paul offers to do that. He is now connected to what all the Greeks themselves seek. Yet, he is convinced that hitherto they have done so unsuccessfully. Admittedly, for the time being, the zealous Apostle keeps in reserve the Decalogue commandment which proscribes idolizing God in stone or matter (Ex. 20:4<sup>85</sup>). As well, although he does indeed presuppose it, Paul refrains from detailed elaborations of the Law written in the tablets of human hearts, by the Spirit of the living God ([Pneumati Theou zōntos] 2Cor. 3:3<sup>86</sup>). Even more so, he abstains from revealing that Jesus, the Christ, is the supreme realization of divine Law in person (Matt. 5:17<sup>87</sup>; Rom. 3:31).

At this junction we may observe still more. Namely, the apostle emits his appeal fully aware that according to divine intention every human being, not only Athenian Greeks, is

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**84** As regards the inscription to the “unknown god”, scholars have put forward several hypotheses on how it came about and what it meant in the given Athenian religious-cultural context. Some (H. Conzelmann) have argued that Paul’s usage was merely Luke’s literary apologetic device. The actual inscription that was at hand was rephrased to suit the apostles’ purposes, thus transporting the plural into the singular “to an unknown god” (viz. Pausanians’ “altars of gods” called unknown” = “bōmoi de theōn te onomazomenōn agnōstōn” [Pausanias, *Attica* 1.1.4 (Ἑλλάδος περιήγησις: Ἀττικά)] = LCL 93). Others (P. W. van der Horst), referring to historical, archaeological and evidence from literature as well (Homerus, *Iliad*, XI:808 = LCL 170; Juvenalis, *Saturae*, III:145 = LCL 91), have argued that in those times it was more than likely that Paul would have found altars dedicated to *one* individual god, and some of these might well have been dedicated to an *unknown* god (lit. arae deorum = Gk. bōmoi de theōn: which is in no grammatical nor logical incongruence with what Pausanias actually states). Others (F. F. Bruce) hold that the title “unknown” might have been solicited due to the effects of destruction of altars in wars. Hence the name would have been lost, and the inscription “to a\* god” would be restored as the best solution. This may well be what Paul saw. Consequently, in order to create an entry point to his audience, apologetically, he (or Luke) added the adjective “unknown”: thus, altar “to an *unknown* god”. Finally, some scholars have proposed that Paul’s adage in fact reflects the inscription given by Judaizing Greek God-fearers who thus denoted the unknowable God of the *Jews* (e.g. Van der Horst referring to Livy’s now lost book, loc. 102d [Titus Livius, *Historiarum Romanorum*], where it is written in regard to Judea: “the god there worshipped is unknown”). See: Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids MI – Paternoster Press, Carlisle UK, 1998, 521–523.

**85** “You shall not make for yourself a graven image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth”.

**86** “You are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts (plaxin kardiais sarkinais)”.

**87** “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them...”.



an image of God (*eikon tou theou*). He knows well that being an *image* of the living God (Gen. 1:26-27) endows every human being with god-awareness and self-awareness, where the latter is a deeply connected with the former<sup>88</sup>. He is also aware of other constitutive capacities and characteristics inherent in the human being seen as an image of God<sup>89</sup>. McGregor Wright understands clearly that the common ground between St. Paul and his Areopagus audience is forged on the basis of the defensible supposition that the image of God is stamped into the very nature (*physis*) of mankind, and that each individual is an instantiation of it: "Paul assumes then, that all of us have the *imago Dei*, the Image of God, in common, and with it the elements of self-consciousness, rationality, and an ethically sensitive conscience that God built into it from the beginning".

In a word, Paul appeals to the innate inkling for *god-seeking* and *god-thinking* (Acts 17:22-23) given to each human being as gift of God's grace. This is of crucial importance. Especially so if and when "... (Paul) cannot assume that we have world views in common, or the meaning they provide, for our presuppositions differ from those of the unbeliever, and so facts and logic sustain different relations to each other in the outworking of the two world views"<sup>90</sup>.

→ The preceding reflections allow me to bring out the fourth important contact-point present in the *Areopagitica* narrative: §4. In the image of God: or, innate God-seeking and God-thinking.

**8.5.** Fifthly, amongst other constitutive characteristics pertaining to the image of God (*eikon*) in the human being, one has to recognize reasoning consciousness (*dianoia*) and moral conscience (*syneidēsis*). As we shall see, this is why the apostle Paul recurs to *natural* revelation<sup>91</sup>. In other words, he calls upon that which is revealed to *reason* and *conscience* through nature *alone*: that is, without the aid of supernatural light or grace (cf. Acts 17:24-25, 27b-28a<sup>92</sup>). This implies not only the notion of outer nature (*viz.* cosmos) but also the notion of inner nature (*viz.* conscience): "Yet he is not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live (*en autō gar zōmen*) and move and have our being'" (Acts 17:27b-28a). Incidentally,

<sup>88</sup> In purely philosophical terms, I would venture to argue that one could infer God from self-awareness alone.

<sup>89</sup> The following is a helpful list of characteristics constitutive of the image of God in the human being: (1) god-awareness: prayer, worship, adoration of the divine mystery (2) self-awareness: rationality, conscience, sense of right and wrong (3) self-transcendence (*ekstasis*): the ability to reach out beyond ourselves to God and others in love (4) self-sacrifice as voluntary self-giving and self-emptying (*kenosis*) for the sake of the other (5) freedom and responsiveness, self-restraint and growth (6) self-expression as creativity and inspired imagination (7) responsibility for creation. See: ICAOTD, *In the Image and Likeness of God: A Hope-Filled Anthropology*, Anglican Consultative Council, London 2015, 24-25.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. R. K. McGregor Wright, "Paul's Purpose in Athens and the Problem of 'Common Ground'", A Research Paper of the Aquila and Priscilla Study Center (© 1996: Johnson City, TN), (1988)<sup>2</sup>1993, 10-12.

<sup>91</sup> Natural revelation is not to be identified with natural theology although it is correct to assume that the two are closely connected, since the first is the necessary condition for the second.

<sup>92</sup> "[24] The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, [25] nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything..." In order to grasp the meanings of these verses one has no need of supernatural help, or of revelation proper: the naturally reasoning capacity may suffice.

the Apostle will recur to the “grammar” of (inner) nature during his first sojourn in Corinth, immediately after leaving Athens: “Does not nature *itself*<sup>93</sup> teach you...” (oude hē physis autē didaskei hymas; 1Cor. 11:14). This can be restated in contracted terms: “nature teaches!” In the Epistle to Romans we find yet another sign of Paul’s reliance on the revelation through (inner) nature alone: “When Gentiles who have not the law do by *nature*<sup>\*</sup> what the law requires (physei ta tou nomou poiōsin), they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts (grapton en tais kardias), while their conscience<sup>93</sup> (syneidēseōs) also bears witness...” (Rom. 2:14-15).

If one understands that human reason and conscience are part of human nature, and that non-human nature is open to human agency (inasmuch as human beings are part of non-human nature as well, in which they make their marks), then we do find that nature “itself” (via the agency of humankind’s nature) teaches evaluative inferences regarding moral rules, or, logical inferences regarding its origins, or, enables postulations regarding what is divine — on the merit of reasoning alone. Furthermore, it is here that natural reasoning and natural theologizing meet, complementarily. During his third visit to Corinth, wherefrom he writes to Romans in 57-58 CE, St. Paul states clearly: “Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly *perceived in the things that have been made*<sup>\*</sup> (apo ktiseōs kosmou nooumena)...” (Rom 1:20).

What is more, such formulae and statements ring undertones suggestive of Stoic senses and meanings. Reasoning about nature from the nature of reason and conscience — as naturally given — was not an approach unknown to (at least some) of the Greek listeners that surrounded the Apostle at the Areopagus. The intellectuals amongst them, presumably, would have known the basics of natural theology, and of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophical theology, promulgated in the later Academy, Peripatetic circles or among the teachers and pupils of the Middle Stoa. Elements of suchlike thinking in Paul’s sermon, including certain aspects of its content, arguably, would have appealed enticingly to a Greek philosophical audience.

In the passage of Acts under scrutiny, especially 17:22b-29, Paul wishes primarily (but not exclusively) to engage the intellectually minded or philosophically inclined listener (and reader, viz. Lukan Paul). Consequently, at least for a while (until Acts 17:31-32), he ties the question of the true yet unknown god with the capacity of reason *itself* — allowing for its ability to make inferences about god or divinity from outer and inner nature *alone*. One of the main lines of possible albeit tentative rapprochement between Paul and the

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<sup>93</sup> James Strong’s *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* §4893: syneidēsis p. 69 (p. 216) offers the following explanation relating to the innate capacity of conscience: “co-perception, i.e. moral consciousness: — conscience”. According to *Discovery Bible project: Helps Ministries Inc.* (G. L. Archer, G. Hill eds.) © 1987, 2011, syneidēsis in its NT usage is explained as follows: “Properly, joint-knowing, i.e. conscience which joins moral and spiritual consciousness as part of being created in the divine image. Accordingly, all people have this God-given capacity to know right from wrong because each is a free moral agent (cf. Jn. 1:4, 7, 9; Gen 1:26-27). ‘Conscience’ is an innate discernment, self-judging consciousness”. Let me here add that the term “conscience” (syneidēseōs) is yet another of Paul’s appropriations from eminently Hellenistic registers of ethical, philosophical and religious language, including the multifaceted connotations they carry.

philosophical members of the audience<sup>94</sup> thus comes to the fore (especially in Acts 17:24-25, 27b-28a, before the abrupt ending in Acts 17:31-32). That is to say, what is revealed through nature “itself” may translate into “natural theology” through disciplined reasoning alone<sup>95</sup>.

→ The preceding reflections allow me to bring out yet another, fifth, important contact-point present in the *Areopagitica* narrative: §5. In the image of reason: or, God in the mirror of nature.

**8.6.** Before moving on, I would like to reassert the results of the hermeneutical-exegetical work executed thus far. In this respect two basic structural aspects of the *first* part or level of St. Paul’s missionary strategy towards the gentiles (i.e. those who know not of Jesus and are not of Jewish identity) need to be specially underlined and determined.

Firstly, the missionary strategy consists of establishing multifarious *contact-points* (Anknüpfungspunkte<sup>96</sup>). These points of contact differ amongst themselves: in form, content, function and type. No less importantly, these contact-points (regardless of their mutual difference) map out the terrain of the *common ground*. This ground, once it is secured, allows the parties gathered to establish the necessary, if not sufficient, conditions for the realization of this extraordinary encounter. It is upon such a ground that the good news about salvation in Jesus (viz. the *second* part or level of St. Paul’s missionary strategy) will be posited and subsequently promulgated in the given circumstances.

Secondly, the building of this common ground is analogical to the activity of *inculturation*. This activity itself translates into creating cultural, intellectual and existentially relevant idioms for transferring the kerygma about Jesus as successfully as possible. If so, then, the established contact-points are concrete instances – or conditions of – of inculturation which, sequentially, facilitate the main goal of mission: the *evangelization* of the recipient hearers or readers.

All things considered, the apostle Paul and the apostle Luke (through his redactorial furnishing of the Areopagus speech by Paul) create an impressive purpose-serving common ground structure in Acts 17:22b-29. This structure consists of a many-layered as much as multi-faceted web of contact-points. I have identified five thus far:

- §1. Socratic figuring A: witness of truth (trial motive);
- §2. Socratic figuring B: messenger of truth (mobile debate motive);
- §3. Thinking for salvation life: primacy of practice (bios praktikos motive);
- §4. In the image of God: or, innate God-seeking and God-thinking; and

<sup>94</sup> Needless to remind, it is not only philosophers who are gathered to listen to Paul at the Areopagus.

<sup>95</sup> Natural theology in the here presupposed traditional sense is to be understood as the attempt to prove the existence of God, divine intention, immortality of the soul etc, through observation of ordinary human and ordinary non-human nature — with the aid of human reason. This brings natural theology into close proximity to (and into partial overlap with) philosophical theology. In turn, the latter can be defined as disciplined analysis and development of theological ideas, theorems and values — with the aid of critical methods of philosophical thinking.

<sup>96</sup> In the sense in which Norden uses the term with regard to St. Paul’s contact-making reflections and utterances about the “unknown god”. See: Eduard Norden, *Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede*, B. G. Teubner, Leipzig – Berlin 1913, 31 et passim.

§5. In the image of reason: or, God in the mirror of nature.

For the time being we may leave aside (and keep in reserve) the first two contact-points. They surely are significant. However, they are so more in the cultural-social sense. This allows us to focus on the last three. For, they imply existential, ontological, and cognitive implications of the highest order. By doing so we perceive clearly the deeper three-fold layer of the common ground: firstly, the appeal to death-awareness, implied in the search for preservation (as of the need to save one's being from dissolution and death, if possible); secondly, the appeal to god-awareness and spirituality (as of the image of God: *eikon tou theou*); thirdly, the appeal to self-awareness through conscience and rationality (as of the moral sense: *syneidēsis*, and, as of natural reason: *dianoia*). By latching onto these points of contact, constitutive of the common ground, St. Paul is doing all he possibly can to attract, sustain and, ideally, transform the mindset of the assembled Athenians, especially the philosophers.

9. In what follows next I display the *effects* of Paul's address upon the recipient listener groups at the Areopagus. Conjointly, I delve deeper into exploring the ways in which the said narrative, especially Acts 17:24-29, introduces a natural theology, and does so in virtue of the introduction of previously listed contact-points (especially viz. §§4-5). The function of this natural theology is to prepare the philosophers for the revealed theology proper that arrives in Acts 17:30-31. The more developed and convincing the natural theology part is, the more difficult it should be for the philosophers and all others present, to reject the oncoming revealed theology party. If Paul is a reasonable expositor in the opening (Acts 17:22-23) and first section (Acts 17:24-29) of his discourse: if he has acquired some support and tentative trust in what he claims, then he is expected to retain the same at the closing (Acts 17:30-31) section of his discourse.

If what comes out in the closing section of the discourse, however, happens to be in stark contrast (in terms of style, expectation and content) to what transpired in the previous sections, then there should be a good and justifiable reason for this. However, a moment of utter surprise does appear at the end of his speech. It is of such magnitude that it marks a *break* with the relative acceptability of what transpired previously (but, this is not due to any feebleness of reasoning or weakness of spirit of the Apostle). This, too, needs to be explained. I'd wish to stress that it is precisely the solidity of the reasoned natural theology of Paul in vv. 22b-29 which makes the revealed theology of vv. 30-31 such a shocking thing in respect to its effects on the philosophers. The relation between these two sections will be taken into account in what follows<sup>97</sup> (viz. the relation of natural-philosophical and revealed-apologetic theology in the *Areopagitica*).

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<sup>97</sup> Strategy level 1 (NTA) and Strategy level 2 (ApoTA) presuppose each other, where the latter both reaffirms *and* overcomes the former. In this sense, the first level (natural theology), resting on reason "alone", does not in principle exclude the second (revealed theology), which rests on reason and mind illuminated by faith. It is my view that the two comprise an organic whole. Consequently, the combining of the two does not entail an unwarranted "Hellenization" of Christianity, nor does it lead to jeopardizing the biblical kerygma. As was said earlier, it is my methodological intention to here explore the Strategy level 1. A separate study will thematize the Second strategy level 2 in its own right.

For the time being, an additional articulation of the *Areopagitica* is both required and helpful. It can be divided into two main parts, albeit only technically: I. vv. 22b-29 and II. vv. 30-31. The first part may be named as the natural theology argument (NTA) and the second part may be named as the apologetic theological argument (ApoTA). Of course, the whole passage is apologetic since all of it serves to defend (apologos) the truth in Jesus as Christ and as the Logos of God<sup>98</sup>. Both parts have a wider and a narrower or stricter form. The stricter forms are the following: NTA(s) vv. 24-29 and ApoTA(s) v. 31.

### I. NTA(s)

“[24] The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man [Acts 7:48; Is 66:1; 1Kings 8:27], [25] nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything [Ps. 50:9]. [26] And he made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation [Deut. 32:8], [27] that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him. Yet he is not far from each one of us [Is 55:6], [28] for ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your poets have said, ‘For we are indeed his offspring.’ [29] Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man [Is. 40:18].

### II. ApoTA(s)

[31] because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead” [Acts 10:42; Rom 2:16].

Let me now address the prospective effects of the stricter form of the natural theology argument upon the listeners in the concrete Areopagus situation. What is Paul saying? What are the essential aspects of his message? In simplest terms, according to the main current of the traditional interpretation of the *Areopagitica*, Paul’s message contains a succinct three-fold teaching on:

1. creation (creatio)
2. conservation (conservatio)
3. salvation (salvatio)

The Apostle claims that God has created the world and everything in it, including the heavens and earth; that God sustains the world and keeps it in the hollow of his providing and equally providential hand; and that it is the will of God for mankind to be saved from death in a man of absolute righteousness, Jesus, whom he has raised from death as a sign of hope for all mankind, who are God’s kin. The first two parts (creatio and conservatio) of this three-part teaching fall exactly within the first part of the *Areopagiticum* (I. vv. 24-29): that is, they are covered by the natural theological part or level of the argument (NTA[s]). Standing on the common ground, forged by Paul (and Luke) within vv. 24-29, let see what happens.

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<sup>98</sup> I separate the natural (philosophical) theology part of Acts 17 from the apologetic (revealed) theology part of Acts 17 — only in conditional terms, analytically. For, as I will demonstrate, the whole passage represents an apologetic argumentation steeped in the event of God revealed in Jesus: an event which is the central motivating force behind all senses and meanings of the discourse in and of Acts 17:16-34.

**9.1.** Firstly, a convincing critique of vulgar pagan religion is executed. The preconceptions and practices of gentile Greek religiosity are in fact destroyed. Even then, though, Paul refrains from “naming and blaming”, which is indicative. The apostle states clearly what God is *not* and cannot be. Consequently, he adds what we should not do when approaching or seeking God: in piety or in intellectual reflection. He in fact offers a kind of negative theology (theologia negativa) realized in a philosophical key. It is not by accident that in the passage vv. 24–29 we find three grammatical-lexical particles denoting negatives of the kind “x is *not*” (the adverbially used negation ouk: twice<sup>99</sup>, v. 24, 29) and “*nor* is x such and such” (the conjunctively used negation oude: once, v. 25). Looking from the side of the philosophers, the verses are releasing their implicit and explicit contents. Arguably, these contents are endorsed by the hearers as relatively commensurate to their philosophical tenets. At least, as a collateral positive effect, the said utterances dispose of vulgar pagan conceptions about divinity. For example, they reject the vulgar conceptions criticised by Euripides, to whom, note, St. Paul alludes precisely in the *Areopagitica*<sup>100</sup>. The church father Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–216) makes note of the connection between Paul’s utterance in Acts 17:25 and Euripides. The Alexandrian father cites Euripides and “Plato”<sup>101</sup> against vulgar religiosity. (As we shall soon see, in the same passage Clement does the same by citing Paul and Zeno). He aligns completely against offensive misconceptions and practices regarding divinity: “Most excellently, therefore, Euripides accords with these, when he writes: ‘What house constructed by the workmen’s hands, with folds of walls, can clothe the shape divine?’ And of sacrifices he thus speaks: ‘For God needs nought, if He is truly God [...]’. ‘For it was not from need that God made the world; that He might reap honours from men and the other gods and demons, winning a kind of revenue from creation, and from us, fumes, and from the gods and demons, their proper ministries’, says Plato”<sup>102</sup>. More is to happen yet. Paul’s argument (viz. NTA) carries propositions which, as next, challenge both groups of philosophers: each in a particular way.

<sup>99</sup> In fact, the negation “ouk” is used thrice. The third utilization of it (in v. 27b) is reserved for the Epicureans in particular, as I will demonstrate.

<sup>100</sup> Eduard Norden credits Wilamowitz-Moellendorff with identifying this “significant” parallel (wichtige Parallel) between Lukan Paul and Euripides (see: Eduard Norden, op. cit., 13). Norden himself goes on to remind, in terms of biblica patristica, that it was Clement of Alexandria who commented exegetically on that very same parallel (for Wilamowitz misses out on noting that). See: Wilamowitz’s commentary on *Herakles mainomenos* v. 1346: Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Euripides: Herakles*, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, Berlin <sup>2</sup>1895, 272.

<sup>101</sup> Actually, Clement references an apocryphal text which he, erroneously, ascribes to Plato. He makes his point, nevertheless.

<sup>102</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* (Στρωματεῖς), V:11 ll. 75–76, in: Migne, PG 9, 112 D–113 A. The text is given according to the translation in: A. Cleveland Coxe (ed.), *Ante-Nicene Fathers. Volume 2: Fathers of the Second Century: Hermes, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria*, Christian Literature Publishing Co., New York 1885, 462. Clement of Alexandria refers to Paul’s *Areopagiticum* (viz. v. 23 agnosto theo) in: op. cit., 124A. St. Clement is not the only church father who reflected on Paul’s *Areopagitica*. We need to remember others as well, particularly: Irenaeus of Lyons, Tertullian, Arator, venerable Bede, and John Chrysostomos.



**9.2.** Secondly, regardless of the established common ground, and despite the philosophers' likely agreement with Paul against vulgar religiosity, he in fact criticizes the Epicureans, albeit implicitly. His masterful insider-type of knowing of things Greek and philosophical must have made his critique all the more effective. For example, by speaking of God in the singular (17:26-28) he indirectly challenges the Epicurean conception of a plurality of gods. A grammatical-syntactical analysis of Paul's truth-claim (namely, that God is unique and numerically one) may demonstrate this point.

Let us scan the aforesaid verses: v. 25 "he *himself* gives to all" (autos didous pasi [the personal possessive pronoun "autos" is placed in the nominative case in 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine *singular*]); v. 26 "he made" (epoiēsen [this verb is in 3<sup>rd</sup> person *singular*]); v. 27a "to seek *God*" (zētein ton Theon [the article "ton" is in the accusative case of the masculine gender *singular*]); v. 27a to "feel after *him*" (psēlaphéseian<sup>103</sup> auton [the personal possessive pronoun "auton" is in the accusative case of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine *singular*]); v. 27a "might find *him*" (heuroein [this verb is in 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural yet syntactically it indicates "their finding of *him*"]); v. 27b "he is not far from each one of us" (ou makran apo henos hekastou hēmōn hyparchonta [the verb "hyparchonta" is a present participle active placed in the accusative case of the masculine *singular*]); v. 28a "In *him* we live" (en autō gar zōmen [the personal possessive pronoun "auto" is placed in the dative case of the masculine *singular*]); v. 28b "we are indeed *his* offspring" (Tou gar kai genos esmen [the article "Tou", indicating that mankind are his kin, is placed in the genitive case of 3<sup>rd</sup> person *singular*]).

These instances of syntax structuring are totally non-conducive to polytheistic theology. It is hard to imagine that the Epicureans (present or implied) failed to catch the sense of that. Further still, earlier I referred to the Epicurean teaching on gods abiding in the intemundia: aloof and far from trite human affairs. The next line from the NTA part of the *Areopagitica* is in direct opposition to that: "Yet he is not far from each one of us" (v. 27b). Similarly, by referring to divine nourishment of humanity Paul challenges the viewpoint that gods are indifferent<sup>104</sup> to human affairs: "... he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything" (v. 25).

Let us assume that alongside all of that, Paul's (and Luke's) proficiency in Hellenistic learning could have, in principle, made him aware of some or many formal logical difficulties in Epicurean philosophical theology. For instance, possibly, he could have known of the logical contradiction implied in conflating the compound nature of gods – which was affirmed<sup>105</sup> – with incorruptibility or immortality. For, this is contradictory to general at-

<sup>103</sup> Note again that this term = psēlaphéseian is used by Homer in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* IX:416) to describe the blind and groping Cyclops in the cave (credit: Richard L. Anderson). See: Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, Harper & Brothers, NY 1883, 1755 (cf. Strong's *Old and New Testament Greek Lexicon*, §5584: psēlaphaō). It is a high likelihood that Paul (or Luke) are employing this term intentionally so as to intone a high lingual style. As elsewhere in the *Areopagitica*, this usage might be suggesting to the audience that the Apostle is no amateur in matters classical or Greek. Still more, the tactile moment of the Cyclopean metaphor suggests an affirmation of an explorative-natural approach to what is created viz. the cosmos and-or God.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Quintus Horatius Flaccus, *Ode* 1:11.

<sup>105</sup> According to Epicurean belief, in contrast to mortals the souls of the gods (and they do have one as well) do

omistic theory, etc. Having said that, I should underline that Paul, even after all the implicit criticism displayed, retains a positive contact-attitude, still. Because, his statement in v. 25 affirms one of the central doctrines of the Epicurean school: namely, that god(s) needs nothing from humans and depends not on their service<sup>106</sup> (“... as though he needed anything”). To be exact, divine nature is absolutely self-sufficient (viz. *autarekeia*).

**9.3.** Thirdly, precisely by laying-out an open and even inclusive conversational frame (set in terms and images which, on a level, are conducive to “natural” or “philosophical” theological reasoning), Paul, without totally renouncing the Epicureans, comes closer to the “more pious” Stoics. His discourse somewhat “befriends” the Stoic mindset in the same stroke in which he departs from the Epicureans. This is secured by the following which is part and parcel of Paul’s discourse at the Areopagus. Firstly, in v. 25 Paul asserts that God is the source of all life, breath and everything. This is perfectly in accord with one of the central Stoic doctrines, that of the omnipresent life-giving agency of God<sup>107</sup>: “he is not far from each one of us” (v. 27b). Secondly, in vv. 22–31 the Apostle relays what he deems is the true knowledge of God. It is knowledge of such a god who, among other things, has made mankind from one (blood [v. 26]). Thereby this God has made humankind his *kin* (vv. 28b–29a). This entails that God can be known through our intellect, inasmuch as the intellect is analogous to God who has “fathered” humankind<sup>108</sup> as his “offspring” by gift. As far as the Stoics may have understood, this is reasonably acceptable. According to their doctrine, the intellect (*nous*, *logos*) is part of the pan-cosmic divine intellect (*logos spermatikos*): where the latter, as was said earlier, is understood to be the spiritual essence of god or nature (*physis*), universally. Moreover, as Epictetus the Stoic suggests in his *Discourses*, philosophy maintains our intellect as “the governing part conformable to nature”<sup>109</sup>.<sup>110</sup>

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not part company of the body, ever. Hence the god’s are immortal, since they do not decompose: neither in terms of soul nor in terms of body; nor in terms of breakage of the bonding of the two, respectively. However, inconsistently, their souls and ethereal bodies are nevertheless composed of “finest” atoms as well. This has led some observers to conclude that Epicurean philosophical theology was in fact a cover for atheism; and more, that the gods were in fact nothing else but exemplars of how divine beings would look like and behave, ideally. In a word, some think their gods are ethical constructs: nothing more. Some scholars (e.g. Frederick Copleston) remind that Epicureans didn’t endorse the belief in gods exclusively in terms of pious affirmation of the pan-Hellenic ideal of undisturbed bliss (*makarioteta*, *eudaimonia*). Namely, as Epicureans seem to have believed, the universality of the belief in gods can be explained only by asserting the presupposition of their objective existence.

**106** Cf. Frederick F. Bruce, op. cit., 342 n. 87.

**107** Let me add that v. 25 is especially interesting because, like a doublet, it unites one of the central Epicurean (v. 25a) and one of the central Stoic (v. 25b) doctrines.

**108** The Stoics would have regarded this analogy in “consubstantial” terms. That is to say, they would have regarded the human intellect as a co-natural part of the divine intellect itself. Needless to say, from a Christian standpoint, this goes against the substantial difference between created (nature) of humanity and uncreated (nature) of divinity.

**109** Epictetus, *Discourses*, I:15.

**110** There is a Platonic and Aristotelian streak to be observed in such a claim. This is tangential to Plato’s teaching on the intellect as the principle ruling both things divine and things human (viz. *ho pantōn hēgemōn nous*); it is also correspondent to Plato’s teaching on the rational capacity or “part” (to *logikon*) in man which rules over the main psychic capacities or “parts” of the soul (especially emotion-will [*thimi*] and appetite-desire

Alongside, note, Paul's word on God also affirms an all-pervasive purpose (telos) inherent in nature. It directs all beings to a final goal or destiny — that of uniting with the divine: "that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel after him and find him" (v. 27a). This teleological dimension, i.e. reference to a directive principle of being, is concordant to Stoic belief in divine guidance of nature universally, albeit by providential "fate".

What is more, Paul then reconnects to both groups of philosophers, again, by saying that "... we ought not to think that the Deity (to Theion) is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man" (v. 29). Epicurean and Stoic philosophers could not agree more on that. Paul has still got their attention. More importantly, he still holds a share in their conditional approval, albeit more from the Stoic side. In this manner Paul maintains a common point of reference. He does succeed: despite the critical hints of the address, regardless of the tension implicit in this situation of actual comparison between parties, and in spite of the oncoming standoff (17:32). "Nor, more important still, does he do anything to attack Greek philosophy as a whole or its modes of thinking", summarizes James Barr, and adds: "Nor does he try [...] to suggest the ultimate failure of Greek philosophy as a whole"<sup>111</sup>. [...] Paul's speech is distinctly friendly to Greek thought and displays no polemic in principle against it. He moves unembarrassedly within its language, terms, and categories — just as other Jewish thinkers of Greek speech did"<sup>112</sup>. The Stoics, presumably, agree on most that is hitherto uttered by Paul. But even they concur on the basis of the qualified and *conditional* congeniality of Paul's utterances thus far with Graeco-Roman philosophical reason, nature and custom. This process of successive elevation, in and by the sermon given by St. Paul, is aptly described by Joseph A. Fitzmyer: "His starting point is

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[epithimi]): including self-rule (autokratia): this, in turn, regulates and produces the cardinal virtues (wisdom, courage, temperance: the unity of which is justice). The analogy of intellectual rule conformable to one's proper nature is expanded to incorporate the socio-political and cosmic scale. In respect to the latter Plato advises as follows: "And the way of tendance of every part by every man is one: namely, to supply each with its own congenial food and motion; and for the divine part (theion syngeneis) within us the congenial motions are the intellections and revolutions of the Universe. These each one of us should follow [...] making the part that thinks like unto the object of its thought (to katanoooumeno to katanoooun exhomoiōsai), in accordance with its original nature, and having achieved this likeness attain finally to that goal of life which is set before men by the gods..."; see: Plato, *Timaeus*, 90c-d, tr. R. G. Bury, vol. IX, LCL 234, HUP, Cambridge MA 1929. Quite platonistically, and regardless of his regular insistence on the psycho-physical unity of the human being, Aristotle states the following (which is commensurate to Stoic standpoints on this topic): "... that which is best and most pleasant for each creature is that which is proper to the nature of each; accordingly the life of the intellect is the best and the pleasantest life for man, inasmuch as the intellect (nous) more than anything else is man": Aristotelis, *Ethica Nicomachea* (Ἠθικῶν Νικομαχεῶν), X:7:9 (1178a8) = Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. H. Rackham, vol. XIX, LCL 73, HUP, Cambridge MA 1926. Previously, the Stagirate speaks of "something divine within him (man)" which elevates man beyond human nature: "If then the intellect is something divine in comparison with man, so is the life of the intellect divine in comparison with human life" (idem, op. cit., X:7:8 [1177b27-29]).

**111** I propose we compare this with St. Clement's remark: "For Paul too, in the Epistles, plainly does not disparage philosophy (ou' philosophian diaballon phainetai)"; see: idem, *Stromateis*, VI:8 in: Migne, PG 9, 284 BC. Still, both Paul and Clement indicate to the teaching of Christ as higher than Greek philosophy, for it is the full truth.

**112** James Barr, "Paul on the Areopagus", in: idem, *Biblical Faith and Natural Theology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1994, 33.

Athenian piety, and he tries to raise them from such personal experience to sound theology”<sup>113</sup>. But, we must remember, this is a process of making *and* breaking common ground.

**10.** At this intersection, arguably, we could be tempted to conclude that Paul (and Luke viz. Lukan Paul) has done all he possibly could in order to attract the attention, good will and understanding of the gathered hearers. This would be a reasonable conclusion. But there is still more. Another type of contact-point is released by Paul. This type of contact-point needs to be taken into account as well. It sheds additional light on the underpinnings of the common ground that is being established in Athens. Expressly, without explicitly naming them, Paul’s utterances bear many allusions to classic Greek dramatists, poets and philosophers. These hints, too, serve to illustrate and back-up the truth-claims put forward by the apostle. They are embedded in a very condensed fashion. This invites an explanation of their implicit contents.

**10.1.** Firstly, in v. 25 St. Paul alludes to the great Athenian tragic dramatist Euripides (ca. 484–406): “nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything (*prosdeomenos tinos*)”. Philological and theological scholarship successfully identified the connection of this verse with Euripides’ play *Herakles mainomenos*: “If god is truly god, he is flawless, lacking nothing” = “*deitai gar o theos, eiper esti orthos, oudenos*” (l. 1346)<sup>114</sup>. As was said earlier, Eduard Norden took this opportunity to indicate towards St. Clement of Alexandria. Clement’s account is extremely important because, among other things, he exposes the affluence of the Hellenic background that Paul in fact releases to his listeners in Acts 17:25 et passim. The relevant passage is found in his *Stromateis*: “Most instructively, therefore, says Paul in the Acts of the Apostles: ‘The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man; nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything’ (Acts 17:24–25 BL). And Zeno, the founder of the Stoic sect<sup>115</sup>, says in this book of the *Republic*<sup>116</sup>, ‘that we ought to make neither temples nor images; for that no work is worthy of the gods’”<sup>117</sup>. As we have seen, St. Clement connects St. Paul’s allusion to

**113** Josef A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 607.

**114** This is the translation provided by R. E. Meagher (cf. idem, *The Essential Euripides: Dancing in Dark Times*, Bolchazy – Carduci Publishers Inc., Wauconda Ill. 2002, 77).

**115** Let us note the term “sect” (*haireseos*) as used by St. Clement. It denotes the Stoics as a religious philosophical group standing substantially outside the Church. Since they expound a philosophy which is not “ours”, that is, not of “Christ” (cf. *Stromateis* [Στρωματεῖς], II:2). Interestingly, the same grammatical form, lexeme, and its accordant meaning is found three times in the Bible. All three occurrences fall into the Book of Acts (Acts 15:5; 24:5; 28:22).

**116** Clement is referring to Zeno’s lost work *Republic*. Only a meager number of references and extracts survive. It deals with constituting the ideal polity. This early work is influenced by the traditional Greek political particularism. Only later will Zeno develop his political views so as to embrace proper cosmopolitanism. This work is mentioned by many Graeco-Roman authors (Diogenes Laertius; Athenaeus; Philodemus; Plutarch); but also by the church father John Chrysostom (Joannis Chrysostomi, *In Matthaeum Homilia I*, 4 [Ὁμιλία Α’ εἰς τὸ κατὰ Ματθαῖον Εὐαγγέλιον], in: Migne, PG 57, 48). Cf. Anton-Hermann Chroust, op. cit., 173 n. 1.

**117** Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, V:11 ll. 75–76, in: Migne, PG 9, 113 B.

Euripides' *Herakles* (MPG 9, 112D) with "Plato" (MPG 9, 113A). Now he does the same in regard to Zeno (MPG 9, 113B). Following Wilamowitz again, Norden (viz. 17:25a) adds yet another philosopher into this line of thinkers: namely, the Sophist thinker Antiphon (480–411). The sentence cited arrives from Antiphon's *Peri aletheias* where it is stated that god or divinity<sup>118</sup>: "(lit.) ... is bound-less and need-less (apeiros kai adeitos)"<sup>119</sup>. On the whole, such religious philosophical thinkers insist that the transcendence of god or deity cannot be reduced to material terms; nor can the riches or worldly glamour do it pious justice.

As well, we should here perceive the connection between the classic Greek notion of self-sufficient and self-contained nature of divinity or god, on one hand, and the Stoic ideal of autarkeia or self-sufficient calm which, ideally, is the product of attaining likeness to god (homoiosis theo<sup>120</sup>) as much as this is possible to human beings. That is why the Stoics speak of themselves in categories which are used to describe their god: aprosdei, autarkēs. Such insights are derived through pre-Platonic, Platonic<sup>121</sup> and Aristotelian traditions. These traditions are subsequently received and developed by Philo of Alexandria<sup>122</sup>, St. Paul and the church fathers in general, e.g. Gregory of Nyssa<sup>123</sup>.

**118** Herman Diels interpolates: "ho theos" (see: H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Berlin <sup>1</sup>1903 = abbr. FDV); Norden interpolates: "die Gottheit" (see: idem, op. cit., 13–14).

**119** Herman Diels, FDV, 553; Antiphon der Sophist = Antiphontos *Aletheias* AB, Fr. B10.

**120** On assimilating oneself to god (homoiosis theo) and likening oneself to one's object of contemplation (ex-homoiōsai), see: Plato, *Theaetetus*, 176a–b; idem, *Timaeus*, 90d. This in turn is analogous to Plato's commendation of god-following (akolouthēin) and god-alikening (tō men homoiō to homoion onti metriō philon) where God is set as the measure of all things in the highest degree (pantōn hrimatōn metron an eiē malista): see: idem, *Nomoi* (*Nóμοι*), 716c (in: idem, *Laws I*, tr. R. G. Bury, vol. X LCL 187 [1926], HUP, Cambridge MA, 294); and it is similar to his appreciation of imitating god (mimoumenos; mimesthai): idem, *Phaedrus* (*Φαῖδρος*), 252d, etc.

**121** For example, Plato describes the perfection of the Kosmos as a reflection of God's perfection: it is thus "self-sufficient and in need of nothing else" = "autarkes on ameinon esesthai mallon hē prosdees allōn": cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 33d, 34b. Similarly states the Platonist Plutarch about divinity while discussing poverty: "God alone is absolutely free from wants" = "aprosdeis aplos ho theos": Plutarch, *Aristides and Cato Major* (*Marcus Cato*), 4:2 in: idem, *Lives* (*Βίοι Παράλληλοι* = *Vitae parallelae*), vol. II, tr. B. Perrin LCL 47, HUP, Cambridge MA 1914, 355. As well, Plutarch refers to the Stoic Chrysippus: that is, to his treatise on gods (*Περὶ θεῶν* = *Peri theon* cf. SVF II), where Zeno's successor, Chrysippus, argues that the deity Kosmos: "... alone is said to be self-sufficient, because it alone has in itself all things it stands in need of (autarkes d' einai legetai monos ho kosmos dia to monos en auto pant' echein on deitai)": Plutarch, *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* (*Περὶ Στωϊκῶν ἐναντιωμάτων* = *De stoicorum repugnantiis*), §39 in: idem, *Moralia* (*Ἠθικά*), XIII:72, 1052d = Plutarch's *Morals*, vol. IV, Boston 1878, 467. Immediately after section §39 of his refutation of *Stoic Self-Contradictions*, note, Plutarch himself refers to the exact same line 1345–1346 from Euripides' *Herakles* (*Hercules Furens*, 1345) so as to again underline the right notion concerning God: "... the conception of the gods contains in it felicity, blessedness, and self-perfection. Wherefore also Euripides is commended for saying: 'For God, if truly God, does nothing want': cf. Plutarch, op. cit., §40, 467. Lastly, it is helpful here to recall again that Paul (incidentally, a contemporary of Plutarch [ca. 46–post-119]) uses the same lexical form, i.e. autarkēs, in Philipians 4:11: "I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content (autarkēs)".

**122** The contemporary of St. Paul, Philo of Alexandria (ca. 25 BC–50 AD), writes as follows: "... a man should imitate (mimesthai) God as much as may be and leave nothing undone that may promote such assimilation (exhomoiosis) as possible" (idem, *De Virtutibus*, 168 = LCL 341 [1939]; *De Specialibus Legibus*, IV:73 = LCL 341 [1939]; *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesim*, IV:178 = LCL 401 [1935]) (the translation from Philo is given in: David Bradshaw, "The Vision of God in Philo of Alexandria", *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72 [1998] 483–500).

**123** For insight into the creative reception of this by the Cappadocian church fathers see: Hubert Merki,



Nothing less than all of that that, and more, lurks in verse 17:25 alone. It is very plausible that the philosophers, especially those of the Stoic group, extrapolated the implied meanings of this utterance as it reverberated at the Areopagus. The same was done by other listeners—readers of Acts 17, in contemporary times, and later in ecclesial history. At that point in the Areopagus drama the gathered philosophers must have regarded Paul more favourably than at the moment when they accosted him, earlier (viz. *epilabomenoi* 17:19). A line of speech, contextually and missiologically oriented in its basic intentionality, can hardly be more condensed and simultaneously semantically rich, as well as listener enticing, than is the case with Acts 17:25.

**10.2.** Secondly, a few verses later, in Acts 17:28, apostle Paul alludes to another group of illustrious Greek ancients: Epimenides of Crete<sup>124</sup> (7–6 C. BCE) — “in him we live” (note, he will cite this anti-Cretan context again, in his Epistle to Titus 1:12<sup>125</sup>); Aratus of Soli<sup>126</sup> in Cilicia<sup>127</sup> (ca. 315–245) and the Stoic Cleanthes of Assos<sup>128</sup> (331–231) — “we are his offspring” (with a strong – albeit post festum – parallel to Dio Chrysostom<sup>129</sup> [ca. 40–

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*Ὁμοιωσις θεῷ (Homoiosis theō): von der platonischen Angleichung an Gott zur Gottähnlichkeit bei Gregor von Nyssa*, Paulus Verlag, Freiburg/Schweiz 1952.

**124** As stated in Epimenides’ *Cretika* (Κρητικά): “They fashioned a tomb for you, holy and high one, Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies. But you are not dead: you live and abide forever. For in you we live and move and have our being”. For the history of reception of Epimenides’ line quoted by Paul, with a particular discussion of James R. Harris’s discovery of it (given in a series of articles in the *Expositor* 1906, 1907, 1912), see: H. J. Lawlor, “St. Paul’s Quotations from Epimenides”, *The Irish Church Quarterly* 9:35 (1916) 180–193.

**125** As Clement writes: “... others, Epimenides the Cretan, whom Paul knew as a Greek prophet, whom he mentions in the Epistle to Titus, where he speaks thus: ‘One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. And this witness is true’. You see how even to the prophets of the Greeks he attributes something of the truth...”. See: Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, I:14.

**126** As stated by Aratus in his *Phaenomena* (Φαινόμενα): “Let us begin with Zeus, whom we mortals never leave unspoken. For every street, every market-place is full of Zeus. Even the sea and the harbour are full of this deity. Everywhere everyone is indebted to Zeus. For we are indeed his offspring”. Let me here note what Riemer Faber states in his article “The Apostle and the Poet: Paul and Aratus”, *Clarion* 42:13 (1993) 291–305. Faber helpfully informs us that “Recently M. J. Edwards, ‘Quoting Aratus: Acts 17, 28’, *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 83 (1992) 266–269, plausibly argued that Paul’s direct source was Aristobulus, a second century BC Jew who cites the opening lines of the *Phaenomena*”.

**127** Paul of Tarsus and Aratus of Soli share the same homeland: Cilicia.

**128** Paul’s erudition is impressive at this point. He knows well that Stoic philosophers-poets also expressed similar views. Notable among them is Cleanthes with his hymn to Zeus. (The longer version is preserved by Stobaeus [fl. 5 AD] in his *Eclogae* [Ἐκλογαὶ φυσικαὶ καὶ ἠθικαί], I:1:12 = cf. idem, *Eclogarum physicarum et ethicarum*, vol I:1, A. Meineke [ed.], B. G. Teubneri, 1860). The phrase quoted by Paul comes from Aratus (likely via Aristobulus). The layer from Cleanthes comes through. It is likely that it reverberated in the ears of learned Stoics listening to Paul, or in the minds of those who had read the Acts of the Apostles later. Possibly, at that moment in time, they were less prone to call him a seed-pecker, i.e. a half-wit babbler (spermatologos; Acts 17:18). Here is the rendering of the opening strophes, given by Frederick C. Grant: “Most glorious of immortals, Zeus / The many named, almighty evermore, / Nature’s great Sovereign, ruling all by law / Hail to thee! On thee ‘tis meet and right / That mortals everywhere should call. / From thee was our begetting\*; ours alone / Of all that live and move upon the earth / The lot to bear God’s likeness\*. / Thee will I ever chant, thy power praise!” See: Frederick C. Grant, *Hellenistic Religions*, Liberal Arts Press, New York, 1953, 152–154.

**129** It is difficult to here push aside Dio Chrysostom’s utterance in respect to the same matter. In his oration delivered before a large public at Olympia in 97 AD he offers a crystal clear paraphrase of the Stoic understand-



120 AD] as well). Let us recall that the religiously and historically rich connotative parallels with ancient Greek poets, dramatists and thinkers (offered in v. 25 and v. 28) are mirrored in 1 Corinthians as well. Namely, in 1 Corinthians 15:33 Paul, again, makes an allusion to great Greek versifiers. This time Paul's associative hook leads to the Athenian dramatist Menander's<sup>130</sup> (ca. 342–292) play *Thais*: “Bad company ruins good morals (phtheirousin ethe chresta homiliai kakai)”.

**10.3.** This junction offers an opportunity to elaborate even further. It allows us to cognize more of the context of Paul's Hellenistic learning, and inter-textually so. Such an expansion, I trust, is helpful for developing our hitherto collated presuppositions for understanding the reception and utilization of philosophy by our two apostles, especially Paul.

Firstly, let us leave aside the Book of Acts, for a moment. A brief excursion will allow us to note Paul's masterful usage of the OT quotes<sup>131</sup> on the basis of the Septuagint, i.e. the *Greek* translation of the Old Testament. This can be explained by the fact that Hellenistic culture permeated Palestine regions as well, notably Jerusalem.<sup>132</sup> This culture was not reserved exclusively to Attica, Magna Graecia or Antioch etc. The influence of Hellenism even on conservative Judaism was unexpectedly all-pervasive. “During the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman eras,” states Étan Levine, “Jews encountering alternatives to their Bible-based traditions, rejected outright paganism yet manifested willingness to select and adapt foreign influences, even to shape uniquely Jewish institutions. [...] the Rabbinic Academy [...] itself bearing the features of the Greek philosophical Academy!”<sup>133</sup> <sup>134</sup> I hasten to add that one mustn't over-

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ing of divine-human kinship: “Now concerning the nature of the gods in general, and especially that of the ruler of the universe, first and foremost an idea regarding him [...] common to the whole human race [] a conception that is inevitable and innate in every creature endowed with reason (to logiko), arising in the course of nature (gignomeni kata physin) *without*\* the aid of human teacher [...], has made its way, and it rendered manifest God's kinship (syngeneian) with man and furnished many evidences of the truth...” See: idem, *Oratio* XII:27. Of course, the Christian and the gentile Hellenistic conceptions of divine-human kinship are dramatically different, respectively. More discussion on the matter in: K. Reinhardt, *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, XXII:1, Metzler, Stuttgart 1953, 812–813 (also cf. Martin Hengel, *The Son of God*..., 24 n.51).

**130** As I've said, in the *Stromata* Clement of Alexandria confirms Epimenides as the author of Paul's citation in Titus 1:12. He goes on to compare it with Paul's citation of Menander in 1 Corinthians 15:33. Thus we read: “... (Paul) is not ashamed, when discoursing for the edification of some and the shaming of others, to make use of Greek poems. Accordingly to the Corinthians (for this is not the only instance), while discoursing on the resurrection of the dead, he makes use of a tragic Iambic line, when he said, ‘What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’. Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals’”. See: Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis*, I:14.

**131** In Acts 17:16–30 alone one can identify seven OT references or parallels: Is 66:1; 1 Kings 8:27; Deut. 32:8; Is. 55:6; Ps. 50:9; Is. 40:18. (As well, I shall have much more to say on this OT dimension of the *Areopagitica* in the forthcoming study dedicated to Strategy level 2 — viz. revealed theology: that is, dedicated to the apologetic theological argument as a whole (ApoTA) and in regard to Acts 17:16–34 as a whole [NTA+ApoTA]).

**132** Daube proves this point beyond question: David Daube, “Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation and Hellenistic Rhetoric”, *Hebrew Union College Annual* (1949) 239–264.

**133** Étan Levine, *Marital Relations in Ancient Judaism* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte 10), Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2009, 41. (On p. 41 n. 7 Levine shares the crucial literature concerning the relation between Hellenism and Judaism: next to Daube's seminal study, he refers to other standard-setting works, i.e. those by Saul Lieberman, Victor Tcherikover, Jacob Neusner and Martin Hengel).

**134** After the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD), the last of Hillel's disciples, Johanan ben Zakkai, established

emphasize this. Regardless of their Hellenistic formatting (i.e. educational stages and import of some elements of learning), the Jewish schools remained different in terms of the essential content. “The aim of Jewish education was a religious one: the knowledge and practice of the Torah”<sup>135</sup>. In any case, the point is this: Paul, the pupil not only of Tarsus but of Hillel’s Jerusalem as well, was exposed to all of this during a pre-eminently Hellenistic era. Even he could scarcely have resisted the influence of that which was elemental to the spiritual-cultural codes of the period. Gregory E. Sterling gives an important account: “His citizenship in a Greek city would have required not only a primary education, but passing the ephebia”<sup>136</sup>, and possibly advanced education<sup>137</sup>. Since Tarsus was famous for philosophy (Strabo 14:5:13), especially for her Stoic philosophers (Dio Chrysostom 33:48<sup>138</sup> and Lucian, *Octogenarius* 21), and Paul’s letters betray acquaintance with philosophy, it is possible that he received some *advanced*\* training in philosophy. [...] It also suggests that Paul, like Philo of Alexandria, had the requisite training to create his own applications. While Philo’s knowledge of Hellenistic philosophy is more profound than Paul’s, the apostle has the more creative mind”<sup>139</sup>.

Secondly, this time from a more general perspective, we should take the opportunity to mark Paul’s dexterity in utilizing Hellenistic philosophical verbiage, categories, ideas and images. According to John D. Zizioulas, apostle Paul borrows with ease the concepts and phrases from Hellenistic literary and philosophical tradition: “(Paul’s) familiarity in Hellenistic education and most of all his command of the Greek language give witness that he surely spent a large part of his youth in touch with Hellenistic education (ellini-

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an Academy at the Judean seaport of Jabneh (Gk. Iamnia), with the aid of the remnants of the school of Hillel and some Shammites.

**135** Everett Ferguson, “Society and Culture: Education”, in: idem, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids MI (1987) 3003, 112.

**136** Sterling refers to an ancient Athenian institution: that of a finishing school reserved for Greek aristocrat boys. These adolescent men would spend one year in the ephebeia, after celebrating their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was designed to provide physical and cultural nurture: philosophy was taught as well as rhetoric. The ephebs could access the gymnasium library. In olden times it was designed to give military training. In the Hellenistic period, however, the military accent faded out. The ephebeia was primarily oriented to instil cultured awareness of one’s public and political duties, as a Greek, but, it was also a “strong Hellenizing force” vouchsafing a Hellenic identity (cf. H. I. Marrou: *A History of Education in Antiquity*, tr. G. Lamb, Wisconsin University Press, Madison 1956, 109-110). Coming closer to what is here discussed, it is important to note (courtesy to Everett Ferguson, “Society and Culture: Education”, in: idem, op. cit., 111 n. 70) that Tcherikover and Fuks have documented the aspiration of Alexandrian Jews to enlist their children into the Hellenistic ephebeia (see: Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, Cambridge 1957, 1:38-39, 59, 61, 64, 75-76). This was the case with Jerusalem’s high priest Jason as well (H. I. Marrou, op. cit., 110).

**137** This suggests that Paul, having Graeco-Roman citizenship, could have gone further still, choosing between the three main options of higher education available at the time: philosophy, medicine, or law (cf. E. Ferguson, op. cit., 111).

**138** It is noteworthy that Dio Chrysostom appraises Tarsus in his *Oratio XXXIII*:48. As we have seen, it is he who speaks out on behalf of human “kinship” with God, emphatically, as does Paul (Acts 17:28). However, the two of them presuppose radically different conceptions of human kinship to God (one Stoic the other Judeo-Christian). Still, this is of lesser importance in this context where we reflect on the Hellenistic cultural background of both.

**139** Gregory E. Sterling, op. cit., 341.

ki paideia). [...]. In general, very few Jewish Hellenists, even those of whom we know that they acquired Hellenistic education (e.g. Philo or Josephus), can compare with Paul in gift and power with regard to Greek language”<sup>140</sup>.

The following selection of only several of a multitude of examples may suffice. In Philippians the Apostle uses the term “aretē” (virtue [Phil. 4:8<sup>141</sup>]). He does so with full awareness of the eminently Hellenic pre-history of the semantics and ethics attached to the term: not least, knowing well of its status in Stoic literature (which in turn leads back to Platonic-Aristotelian, and ultimately to Homeric aretology<sup>142</sup>). In the same Epistle he refers to “autarkeia” (self-sufficient contentment [Phil. 4:11]): of which I spoke earlier viz. the Stoics and Epicureans, and viz. the nature (physis) of deity according to Euripides et alii. In 1 Corinthians he cites an analogous term: “aperispastos” (without distraction [1 Cor. 7:35]). He is aware of the term “to kalon” (beautiful) as synonymic for good (especially for good as virtue or as wisdom), and conversely (e.g. Rom. 7:18, 21; 2 Cor 13:7; Gal. 4:18, 6:9; 1 Thess. 5:21). This indicates that he understands the notion of “kalokagathia” (kalos k’agatos), deeply rooted in Hellenic high culture and literature, especially that of Platonic<sup>143</sup> provenance. The same holds for his usage of previously mentioned terms denoting conscience: “syneidēsis” (Rom. 2:15) and nature: “physis” (1 Cor. 11:14) as teachers of what is good. Still more, St. Paul can be seen using Greek philosophical schemata to offer his pupils, as much as himself, ontological, ethical and cosmological orientation points. For example: being vis-à-vis nonbeing (to eon/alētheia vs. mē eontos/doxa<sup>144</sup>): or, the sensory material realm vis-à-vis the spiritual intellectual realm (ta aesthēta vs. ta noēta<sup>145</sup>): or, the famous three-part order-

**140** John Zizioulas, *Hellenism and Christianity: The Meeting of Two Worlds* = Ιωάννης Ζηζιούλας, “Ελληνισμός καί χριστιανισμός: Ἡ συνάντηση τῶν δύο κόσμων”, in: *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους*, τόμος Ζ', Εκδοτική Αθηνών, Αθήνα 1976, 534. Zizioulas also asserts that the *content*\* (periehomeno) of St. Paul's Areopagus speech, “according to contemporary interpretations”, is to be regarded as the effect of St. Luke's “industrious re-working” of it (see: idem, op. cit., 533). He does not delve into discussing what exactly is implied by Luke's “significant” (poly) “reworking” of Paul's address in Athens.

**141** This term has deuterocanonical OT parallels: notably, Wis. 4:1; 5:13; it is abundant in 4 Maccabees. The latter in particular is a deuterocanonical text which has served to prove the Hellenistic permeation of Jewish OT literature see: David A. deSilva, *4 Maccabees: Introduction and commentary on the Greek text in Codex Sinaiticus*, Septuagint Commentary Series, Brill, Leiden 2006.

**142** See: e.g. *Od.* II:205 ff, VII:50 ff; *Il.* I:265 ff, II:55 ff, 245, 265, XI:790 ff. etc. These are instances where we find vivid Homeric references to “aretē” as excellence of chastity-faithfulness, courage, honour, strategy-making, speech-delivery, sense of shame, friendship.

**143** Plato refers profusely to the idea of the beautiful and especially to beauty as an aspect of divine and human good (e.g. *Hippias major* [Ἱππίας μείζων], 287d). For an approximation of beauty and the good via the beneficiality of beauty (which causes something good), see: *Hipp. maj.*, 289e ff = LCL 167, vol. IV, HUP, 1926; *Symposium* (Συμπόσιον), 204b, 210a–211d = LCL 166, vol. III, HUP, 1925, etc. Incidentally, in the *Symposium* Plato makes explicit references to Homer and Hesiod (209d) in regard to beauty as the object of love (eros) which moves the poets to produce their works.

**144** Ultimately, this distinction is of Parmenidian origin. See: Parmenides, *Peri Physeos* (Περὶ φύσεως), in: H. Diels, FDV, Parmenides: *Frs.* B8:19/B1:29 and B8:12/B1:30.

**145** The classical origin of the distinction between what is perceived by the senses (aesthēta), viz. the material, and that which is perceived by reason (tēs dianoias logismo), viz. the immaterial (noēta), is generally associated with Plato (although it appears as early as Parmenides' treatise on nature [or, what is true being]). See: e.g. Pla-

ing of the human being: body, intelligent soul, spirit [soma, psyche {nous}, pneuma<sup>146</sup>] (e.g. 1Thess. 5:23; Rom. 12:1-2; 1Cor. 2:14, 6:19, 15:44-46; Heb. 4:12 etc)<sup>147</sup>. Lastly, the apostle to the gentiles, Paul, utilizes the methods of allegory and typology taken over from names (e.g. Gal. 4:24 [hatina estin allēgoroumena]; 1Cor. 10:6 [tauta de typoi hēmōn]; 10:11 [tauta de typikōs]). These interpretative methods, allegory and typology, systematically observe how one thing is expressed yet another is actually intended. The interpreter (e.g. Paul in Gal. 4:24 or 1Cor. 10:11) supplies the deeper meaning to the literal meaning. He does so by viewing a certain phrase<sup>148</sup> as figure or type for something else (allo agoreuein). Both levels of meaning, literal and figurative, support each other respectively. These methods have a pre-eminently Hellenic origin. The application of these methods in Greek classical culture can be traced, for instance, from Pythagorean teaching methods to exegetical attempts to furnish the Homeric corpus, by allegorization<sup>149</sup>, with an ethically and socio-politically

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to, *Phaedo* (Φαίδων), 78d-79a. It will be imported by Aristotle (e.g. *De anima* [Περὶ Ψυχῆς], II:418a [regarding the discussion of sensory organs and sensory perception]) and transported by a long tradition, reaching Alexander G. Baumgarten who stabilized its modern meaning, especially reaffirming the oppositionary relation between the sensory and intellectual realms (see: idem, *Aesthetica*, I-II, Kleyb, Frankfurt am Oder 1750/1758).

**146** The similarity between Paul's three-part ordering of the human being and that of Plato is formal, not substantial. That is to say, in counter-distinction to Pauline anthropology, Plato is a dualist and his tripartite division of human faculties pertains to the soul: alongside, his conception of spirit has nothing in common with Paul's biblical understanding of it. Nevertheless, it remains true that Greek thinkers provided the NT writers with terminological, schematic and conceptual tools for describing and analyzing the human being, as well as allowing them to insert new meaning into phrases which were culturally known (hence not extravagant) to the Graeco-Roman world. For Plato's determinations of the human being, dichotomist and trichotomist, see: e.g. idem, *Phaedo*, 64c, 65d, 66a; idem, *Timaeus*, 30a-c.

**147** St. Paul does come under the influence of Hellenic-Hellenistic schemata indicative of the three-part ordering of the human being. However, unless he is accentuating the contrast between spirit (Heb. ruach) and soul (Heb. nephesh), Paul keeps the biblical vision of the human being as a living integrated body-soul = psyche zosan (Gen. 2:7; 1Cor. 15:45): a being open to divine touch and inspiration in virtue of being an image of God: hence, possessive of a divinely gifted capacity for spiritualized life of the whole human being ("hagiasai hymas holoteleis kai holoklēron hymōn" 1Thess. 5:23). He is not a Hellenic dualist nor is he a Gnostic spiritualist. This remains the case even if in one instance (albeit only technically) a quasi-Gnostic concept (viz. life-giving spirit versus earthly vital soul) influences his way of talking about the soul-spirit divide, e.g. 1Cor. 2:14 where Paul attempts to criticize the naturalist-carnal human type (mere psychikos) in favour to the human type open to God in the spirit (pneumatikos): subsequently, he distinguishes between earthly body-soul (soma psychikon) and spiritual body-soul or man (sōma pneumatikon) (1Cor 15:44-46).

**148** In Galatians 4:24 these are the names of Abraham's wives Hagar and Sarah which are taken as figures or types signifying the two covenants (OT and NT) as well as those born within the realities of the two covenants respectively (viz. slavery and bondage [earthly Sion] and freedom and release [heavenly Sion]). Sometimes a distinction is made between type and allegory, where the former rests on a narrative held to be true and the later on one considered fictitious.

**149** Keeping in train with Homeric exegetical tradition, even the Cappadocian church father Basil the Great (330-379) teaches his class that the "nakedness" of Odysseus is in fact a sign (type, figure) denoting something else. Although capable of being cunning (but only when unavoidable), Odysseus is not duplicitous and has nothing to hide, for he is clad in virtue: "... all the poetry of Homer is a praise of virtue, and with him all that is not merely accessory tends to this end. There is a notable instance of this where Homer first made the princess reverence the leader of the Cephallenians, though he appeared naked, shipwrecked, and alone, and then made Odysseus as completely lack embarrassment, though seen naked and alone, since virtue served him as a

impeccable meaning, acceptable within the world of values of ancient Greece.

**11.** We may now back-track to the *Areopagitica*. There we find yet another two instances of the art of contact-point making. These as well are closely connected to the special ways Lukan Paul is seen to be using ideas, phrases and terms, i.e. religious, theological and philosophical terminology. They, too, are inserted by the author of the *Areopagitica* in terms of non-arbitrary and purposeful usage of particular semantic meanings. What sets them aside as extraordinarily exemplary, however, is the astounding precision and effectiveness in respect to the recipient audience that they aim to entice.

**11.1.** Firstly, let us inspect the term “divinity” (v. 29). As we have seen, after dropping tactical hints about Euripides, Epimenides, Aratus and Cleanthes (v. 25 and. v. 28), Paul is seen re-aligning himself to both groups of philosophers, in a specially delicate way, by adding in the next line that “... we ought not to think that the Deity (to Theion) is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by the art and imagination of man” (v. 29). The phrase to Theion occurs only once in the NT. Hence it is a hapax legomenon<sup>150</sup>. It is a lexeme that belongs strictly to the deposit of Greek philosophical theology, and Paul (or Lukan Paul) knows it. What is more, at this point Paul is using the term not in connection to any particular god (theos) or to the multitude of gods (theoi). Rather, taking the article “to” in accusative neuter mode, coupled with the adjective noun “Theion” in accusative neuter mode as well, Paul indicates to God in the most general and thus inclusive sense: to that of divinity (to Theion). Thereby he in fact refers to the nature of divinity as such, in the purely abstract sense. This decision is of huge importance at this stage because it allows the apostle to dive beneath all ephemeral or substantial differences in the philosophical theologies presupposed by his Stoic and Epicurean listeners. Through the use of adequate terminology he is evoking, conceptually, what can be claimed of god universally: by everyone everywhere. Common ground is still being forged, and kept, at every step. Incidentally, it is not by chance that this term is analogous to the one that appears in Paul’s natural theological opening of the Epistle to Romans. The same semantic connotation appears there as well: “... his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity (to theiotēs), has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made...” (Rom. 1:20).

**11.2.** Secondly, we inspect the term “proof” (v. 31). A striking example of Paul’s (or Lukan Paul’s) deliberate usage of special terms in special ways is given in the utilization of the lexeme “pistis”: “of this he has given *assurance*\* (pistin paraschōn) to all men by raising him from the dead” (v. 31)<sup>151</sup>. Let us observe that the biblical noun “pistis” generally signi-

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garment” (see: *Od.* VI:135-210). (Interestingly, Plutarch, too, leaves a comment on this locus from Homer). Cf. Basil the Great, *Address to Young Men, on How They Might Derive Benefit from Greek Literature* (Πρὸς τοὺς νέους, ὅπως ἂν ἐξ ἑλληνικῶν ὠφελοῖντο λόγων) in: Migne, PG 31, 572 C.

<sup>150</sup> This hapax legomenon does not appear in the Septuagint. See: Walter Bauer, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur*, 6, völlig neu bearbeitete Auflage, hrsg. von K. Aland u. B. Aland, Berlin – New York 1988, 719.

<sup>151</sup> My analyses and understanding of the philosophical-theological and apologetic function of Paul’s (or Luke’s) usage of the concretum “pistin” (so as to draw the philosophers closer into hearing, listening and to



fies “faithfulness” to something or someone, or faithfulness from someone (e.g. Matt. 23:23; Gal. 5:22-23; Rom. 3:1-3; Tit. 2:9-10; 2 Tim. 4:7). However, depending on context, the lexeme “pistin” can be distilled into two basic meanings: (a) promise (as in 1 Tim. 5:11-12<sup>152</sup>) and (b) assurance (as in Heb. 11:1). The latter sense is the one which Paul uses in the Areopagus address, intentionally. It may mean proof, sound logical and factual assurance. All these senses, together, allow the positing of reason-mediated “conviction” (elenchos). Paul’s classical explanatory definition of faith in his Epistle to the Hebrews rests on such a meaning: “Now faith is the *assurance*\* (pistin) of things hoped for, the *conviction*\* (elenchus) of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1)<sup>153</sup>. Faith is never intended to mean blind faith. Rather, it denotes trustworthy assurance (pistin) founded on concrete albeit special experiences which may be validated in principle, and integrated into logically meaningful as much as convincing (elenchos) statements. The point is this: the usage of the term “pistin” by Paul is entirely purposeful. Why? Well, alongside the lexical-philological meaning (that of offering proof = pistin paraschōn pasin), which the philosophers must have understood immediately, there is the historical-literary tradition from which it emerges. Many preceding generations of Greek intellectuals have used the lexeme pistis(n) precisely in the latter sense: that of “a token offered as a guarantee of something promised, proof, pledge”<sup>154</sup> in order “to convince”. This comes out, for instance, when the Pyrrhonian Skeptic, Sextus Empiricus (ca. 160–210), states that Democritus (ca. 460–370) intended to “assign power of evidence (kratos tēs pisteos) to the senses”<sup>155</sup>. Such usage and meaning: again, that of offering *proof* = pistin paraschōn pasin, is attested in the works of Graeco-Roman philosophers. Next to Democritus, we find it in Parmenides<sup>156</sup>, and in Plato, Aristotle, Diogenes Laertius (born in the Roman province Cilicia [fl. 3 C. AD], the capital of which was Tarsus), including others<sup>157</sup>. Let me

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facilitate understanding) have been enhanced by the study offered by: M. Vešović, Z. Ranković = M. Вешовић, З. Ранковић, „О једном значењу лексеме πίστις код Светог апостола Павла“ (“On One Meaning of the Lexeme πίστις in Saint Paul”) *Смисл* = *Stil* 10 (2011) 206-211. As well I consult W. F. Arndt / F. W. Gingrich / F. W. Danker’s, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago – London 32000 (based on: Walter Bauer, *Griechisch-deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der frühchristlichen Literatur*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed.) = abbr. BDAG for references to the Graeco-Roman tradition of re-receiving the lexeme “pistis”.

**152** Where the context for pistis (faith) is the “braking of promise”: “...they incur condemnation for having violated their first pledge” (pistin ēthetēsan) (1 Tim. 5:12).

**153** Now compare this to the words of Cebes to Socrates, as they are voiced in Plato’s *Phaedo*, a dialogue dedicated to the destiny of the soul after death: “... there would be good reason for the blessed hope, Socrates, that what you say is true. But perhaps no little argument and proof (deitai kai pisteos) is required to show that when a man is dead the soul still exists and has any power and intelligence”; see: Plato, *Phaedo*, 70b.

**154** See: BDAG 2000, 818.

**155** Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, VII:136 (Diels, FDV, *Fr.* B9: in this fragment Sextus relates affirmatively to the mentioned fragment given by Democritus, see in: Diels, FDV *Fr.* B125) = .

**156** Parmenides, *Fr.* B8:12 (also cf. B1:30 viz. pistis alethes) (Diels, FDV, *Fr.* B8:12: as early as in Parmenides we find “pistis” utilized in the sense of “force of trust” or “strength of evidence”: pistios ischus).

**157** Democritus, *Fr.* 125 (Diels, FDV, *Fr.* B125: in this fragment we are told that reason [phrēn] receives its proof [tas pisteis] from the senses); Plato, *Phaedo*, 70b (viz. deitai kai pisteos); Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1173a (viz. pistin ou panu pistotera); Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*, X:85 (viz. pistin bebaion).



underline that in the pre-Socratic period “pistis” is not an inferior form of knowledge as in Plato, *Rep.* VI 511e<sup>158</sup>, but evidence, both in the subjective sense of confidence that one’s belief is true and in the objective sense of reliable signs which justify such confidence<sup>159</sup>. The sense of pistis(n) as evidence-procuring is preserved in classical historians as well, viz. Polybius (ca. 200–118)<sup>160</sup>. Aside from the mentioned philosophers the same usage of the term is applied in the works of Hellenized Jews, notably Josephus Flavius (ca. 37–100) who draws on the aforesaid rich convention: the tradition in which Lukan Paul stands as well, and legitimately so<sup>161</sup>.

**11.3.** On the basis of preceding explorations of Paul’s aptitude in Graeco-Roman high culture we can add another, sixth, contribution to the set of types of contact-points (viz. the purpose-serving common ground structure in Acts 17:22b–29 and in the *Areopagitica* generally, vv. 22–31). It issues forth from his above displayed erudite as much as masterful utilization of Hellenistic ideas, phrases and technical terms (religious, theological and philosophical). I will subsume this type of contact-points under the category of *paideia*. *Paideia* in general denotes the canon of classical Graeco-Roman education and upbringing: in letters, understanding, ethics, piety and proper social-political conduct. The type of contact-point subsumed under the category of “*paideia*” is closely related to the first two types listed earlier (viz. §1. Socratic figuring A and §2. Socratic figuring B): nonetheless, it is not identical with them. It is part and parcel with the five previously extracted types of contact-point.

→ The preceding reflections allow me to bring out the sixth important contact-point present in the *Areopagitica* narrative: §6. *Paideia* 1: context-oriented variations of Hellenistic ideas, phrases and terms.

**11.4.** The *Areopagitica* (vv. 24–29) contains another two types of contact-point: Firstly, it can be shown that these lines (no matter how “loose” they might seem) are not entirely arbitrary in the logical sense. To my mind, they comprise a series of intentionally compressed – “natural” – syllogisms where the missing premises can be supplied by the listener or reader: spontaneously or formally: for instance, in the latter case by validation through a process of proper logical reduction. (Some of the lines are not logically valid in the strict sense, but can be made so, upon explication of implicit form and after validation: vv. 24, 25, 26; some are logically valid in principle, but the suppressed premises need to be supplied and validated: vv. 27b, 28, 29). Therefore, although the *Areopagitica* narrative is not laid out in terms of fully explicated formal sets of syllogistic propositions for necessary inference, the points of conclusive insight do come out of the actual conversation itself: as if gushing-forth from the listening interlocutor himself (who discovers that he has known this

<sup>158</sup> Still, in his dialogue *Phaedo* Plato allows Cebes to utilize the traditional sense of pistis as evidence, proof, assurance. Admittedly, Plato wrote his *Phaedo* during his early middle period, before the *Republic*.

<sup>159</sup> Lawrence J. Trudeau (ed.), “Democritus”, *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism*, vol. 136, Gale Cengage, Detroit 2012, 270.

<sup>160</sup> Polybius, *Histories* (*Ἱστορίαι*), II:52:4 = idem, *The Histories*, vol. I (b. 1–2), LCL 128, HUP, 2010.

<sup>161</sup> Josephus Flavius, *Antiquitates Judaicae*, II:218 (viz. hypo tou Theou pistin); XV:260 (viz. pistin pareichen) = idem, *Jewish Antiquities, Volume I* (b. 1–3), Josephus vol. V., LCL 242, HUP, 1930.

“all along”). What is more, the narrative is comprised mostly of truncated, condensed syllogisms where the audience (according to the given rhetorical situation) explicates the missing premise which is otherwise implicit. The rhetor assumes while inventing, the audience whilst understanding the argument<sup>162</sup>.

In a word, there is an enthymemic aspect to be observed. “The Enthymeme, according to Aristotle, is the Syllogism of probable reasoning about practical affairs and matters of opinion, in contrast with the Syllogism of theoretical demonstration upon necessary grounds (viz. categorical syllogism BL). But, as now commonly treated, it is an argument with one of its elements omitted...”<sup>163</sup> The enthymeme is an abbreviated syllogism. This is apologetically noteworthy for it entices the listener to respond himself and participate creatively. The enthymeme has another characteristic which makes it special and of considerable importance for the understanding of Lukan Paul’s *Areopagitica*. On one hand, the enthymeme is part and parcel of standard formal *logic*. On the other hand, it is part and parcel of standard *rhetoric*. It is a rhetorical syllogism. As the great master of classical antiquity states: “... all orators produce belief by employing as proofs either examples (paradeigmata) or enthymemes (enthymēmata) and nothing else...”<sup>164</sup> This makes the enthymeme the ideal tool for anyone who wishes to argue convincingly in public, to wit, in any impromptu speech situation. Such was Paul’s situation. That is why it is no coincidence that we find the enthymeme in the NT generally, and in the *Areopagitica* particularly, especially viz. Acts. 17: 27b, 28, 29.

→ The preceding reflections allow me to bring out the seventh important contact-point present in the *Areopagitica* narrative: §7. Paideia 2: dialectic and compressed syllogisms (enthymemic aspect).

**11.5.** Secondly, as regards Paul’s Areopagus sermon (regardless of the issue of extent and quality of Luke’s redactorial-compositional interventions), the demonstrable (and consciously intentional) presence of rhetorical macro-formatting of the sermon is hard to ignore or refute. Viewed from the level of its “macrostructure”, Paul’s self-contained and complete Areopagus speech is clearly ordered so as to mirror the classical four-part model of rhetorical speech-making or speech delivery. That is to say, in due historical time, the Aristotelian rhetorical model (composed of 1. prothesis = narratio → propositio and 2. pistis = argumentatio → probatio) is expanded. Subsequently, it is developed and comprised of the following parts which in fact represent the classical Greco-Roman standard:

1. prooemium = exordium: introductory appeal
2. diegesis = narratio: statement of the case
3. pistis = argumentatio: argument with proof
4. epilogos = peroratio: conclusion

<sup>162</sup> William Benoit, “On Aristotle’s Example”, *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 20:4 (1987) 261-267.

<sup>163</sup> Carveth Read, *Logic: Deductive and Inductive*, Grant Richards, London 1898, 115.

<sup>164</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric* (Ῥητορική), I, 2:8-9 = Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, vol. XXII, LCL 193, HUP, Cambridge MA 1926. Aristotle’s understanding of rhetorical syllogisms, or enthymemes, enlists two types (over time another two types have evolved). I propose that in Paul’s sermon we can find at least one type of enthymeme: the syllogism with a missing premise that is supplied by the audience as an unstated assumption (i.e. as a sort of mental responsive approval). This goes hand in hand with the brevity of Acts 17:24-29.

Quintilian (35–post-96) will opt for a forensic speech five-part model (he adds the refutatio after probatio, i.e. after argument with proof). In comparison, viewed through the lenses of rhetoric-literary structuring, Lukan Paul's practice of *persuasion* (pathos = persuasio) conforms to the genre of deliberative speech (as is shown by Satterthwaite<sup>165</sup> and others). According to the procedures of secondary rhetoric, it follows the four-part rhetorical-oratorical model of prose composition. I'd like to stress that it aims to facilitate the thrust of the overall logic of *argumentation*.

1. *exordium* (introductory address [17:22 Paul captures the Athenian's interest through naming them as very pious or God-fearing]);
2. *narratio* → in some cases subdivided as *propositio* (this summarizes in thesis form the central thought of the narratio, i.e. the proposed theme of discussion [17:23b Paul proposes to discuss the nature and character of a god unknown to the Athenians whom he claims to know: in fact, they already worship the god whom Paul is proclaiming, however, they have no true and proper knowledge of this god]);
3. *argumentatio* → in some cases subdivided as *probatio* (the positive proof of the proposed discussion theme through argued reasoning in steps: *divisio* [17:24-29 Paul will attempt to prove that God revealed in Jesus is this hitherto unknown god]); and
4. *peroratio* (the concluding attempt to persuade the audience to decide on taking the right course of action and behaviour [17:30-31 Paul beseeches those gathered to repent and believe in Jesus]).

The significance of the intertwining of dialectic and rhetoric in St. Paul's missionary engagement in general is well stated in the following reflection: "Far from being an artificial or merely literary exercise", underlines Helmut Koester, "Paul's use of persuasive rhetoric like the diatribe must reflect his practices as a missionary preacher and teacher"<sup>166</sup>. He goes on to add: "Since Paul's letters were not private communications but instead were meant for public reading aloud in the assembled congregations [...], he naturally drew as needed on established techniques of persuasion in deliberative settings. Paul's use of the Cynic-Stoic diatribe style [...], especially in Romans, is an adaptation of rhetorical techniques used in the philosophical schools to draw out and rebut the potential objections of one's opponents or student (cf. Epictetus)"<sup>167</sup>. Since at the time Paul's epistles, and Luke's Acts for that matter, are primarily aimed for public reading to converts or the faithful (and, therefore, only secondarily for private reading amongst individual confidants), the utilization of rhetoric is doubly necessitated. It is no accident that Philip E. Satterthwaite (draw-

<sup>165</sup> Philip E. Satterthwaite, "Acts Against the Background of Classical Rhetoric", in: Bruce W. Winter, Andrew D. Clark (eds.), *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting: vol. 1 The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1993, 337-379.

<sup>166</sup> Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament: vol. 2 History and Literature of Early Christianity*, Walter de Gruyter & Co., Berlin 2000, 73-74. (Interestingly, Koester also refers to Paul's speech in 1 Corinthians 15 as a paradigmatic instance of utilization of rhetorical convention. And, more interestingly still, he notes that this address, too, is about persuading a Hellenic audience in regard to a un-Hellenic notion viz. the resurrection from the dead [cf. 1 Cor. 15:3-7, 8-11; cf. Acts 17:32]).

<sup>167</sup> Helmut Koester, op. cit.

ing on Robert Morgenthaller's explorations on the connections of Luke's Acts and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*<sup>168</sup>) finds that "the literary techniques of Acts have been heavily influenced by classical rhetorical conventions"<sup>169</sup>. Of course, these insights are not meant to exclusively cover what Luke may have known or what he may have done. They may be (and in fact should be) legitimately connected with the educational background of Paul as well, especially in proportion to the historical reliability of Acts in respect to Paul's engagement in Athens. As Hans-Josef Klauck (relying on David A. deSilva) states, succinctly: "That Greco-Roman rhetoric was used in Diaspora Judaism is beyond doubt in light of the indisputable examples of 4 Maccabees<sup>170</sup> and Philo of Alexandria"<sup>171</sup>.

→The preceding reflections allow me to bring out the eight important contact-point present in the *Areopagitica* narrative: §8. Paideia 3: rhetoric and diatribe expositions (agoratic aspect).

- §1. Socratic figuring A: witness of truth (trial motive);
- §2. Socratic figuring B: messenger of truth (mobile debate motive);
- §3. Thinking for salvation life: primacy of practice (bios praktikos motive);
- §4. In the image of God: or, God-seeking and God-thinking;
- §5. In the image of reason: or, reflecting God in the mirror of nature;
- §6. Paideia 1: context-oriented variations of Hellenistic ideas, phrases and terms;
- §7. Paideia 2: dialectic and compressed syllogisms (enthymemic aspect);
- §8. Paideia 3: rhetoric and oratory expositions (agoratic aspect).

All of what was said so far, however, means not that Paul has nothing to say against Greek philosophy (for he does), nor should this mean that he is ubiquitously amicable towards pagan thought (for he is not). As was demonstrated, Paul's utterances at the Areopagus, and the ways in which Luke lays them out, in fact, do carry aspects which can be seen as critical of Epicurean and Stoic philosophical precepts. Therefore, the point is actually this: At that preparatory stage of the "dialogue" about Jesus it would have been counterproductive to make a full scale assault against Greek philosophy as a whole, to disparage it, or, to take sides explicitly, say, in favour of the Stoics against the Epicureans. As minimum, Paul doesn't try to divide or confuse the philosophers, "nor does he attack them"<sup>172</sup>. Concomitantly, the philosophical elite of Athens find themselves enticed to agree conditionally (Stoics) and disagree (Epicureans) conditionally with what the Apostle is expounding up till now (vv. 22–29). They keep pledging their implicit yet responsive Ayes and Noes, ac-

<sup>168</sup> Robert Morgenthaller, *Lukas und Quintilian. Rhetorik als Erzählkunst*, Gotthelf, Zurich 1993.

<sup>169</sup> Philip E. Satterthwaite, op. cit.

<sup>170</sup> In support, Klauck refers to David A. deSilva's study: idem, *4 Maccabees: Introduction and commentary on the Greek text in Codex Sinaiticus*, Septuagint Commentary Series, Brill, Leiden 2006.

<sup>171</sup> Klauck hastens to add that "... Paul and the authors of the Catholic Epistles lag somewhat behind this educational level. Yet this does not make recourse to classical rhetoric useless". See: Hans-Josef Klauck (Daniel P. Bailey ed.), "Epistolary and Rhetorical Theory", in: idem, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis*, Baylor University Press, Waco Texas 2006, 226.

<sup>172</sup> James Barr, op. cit., 32.

cordingly. Things are still moving along, albeit down lines of natural reasoning: finely attuned to the longing for God presupposed as inherent in mankind.

\* \* \*

All in all, here as elsewhere, according to St. Paul, prayer is not senseless, for it is permeated by understanding (*proseuxomai de kai tō noi*, 1Cor. 14:15), nor is faith blind, for it has an agile mind in Christ (*pistei nooumen*, Heb 11:3). Concurrently, both prayerful faith and understanding mind are wedded by grace through giving witness to God, in action (*viz. Acts: praxeōn tōn apostolōn*). It is in acts of giving witness to God in Christ (especially amongst those without faith) that grace draws faith (prayer) and mind (understanding) into a dynamic of mutual indwelling. The drama narrated in the *Areopagitica* springs from, or leads to, the giving of witness to Christ: in spirit and in mind.

## V. What can we learn:

### Philosophy in the service of mission — results and effects

**12.** We are now in a position to draw grounded conclusions with regard to what the role of philosophy is in the missionary venture of the apostles Paul and Luke, as reported in Acts 17:16-34. By extension, inasmuch as our reading of Acts 17 allows it, we may discern how and to what end is philosophy utilized, re-appropriated and re-conceptualized by the Church in apostolic times, with consequences reaching into post-apostolic times as well. What Paul says about philosophy elsewhere (as inter-textual analysis may clearly demonstrate) does not subvert<sup>173</sup>, in principle, what has been gained in Athens through the Areopagus event. As regards the importance of philosophy as such, I present these results in the form of the following general theses:

(1) Philosophy is endorsed by St. Paul and St. Luke as a preparation (*εὐαγγελικὴ προπαρασκευή* = *preparatio evangelica*) for the reception of kerygma about Jesus as the Saviour of mankind in God. (2) Philosophy allows and facilitates the inculturation of kerygma, through contact-point making. It is thus utilized as a function of evangelization. (3) In the Greek-Roman world philosophy is the most adequate context for opening the di-

**173** Inter-textual NT evidence for Paul's reference to wisdom (*sophia*) and philosophy (*philosophia*) attained and propagated by men without the power of grace and-or divine wisdom as of Christ (1Cor. 1:24) leads to the following loci: 1Corinthians 1, 2, 3: wisdom of Christ and the wisdom of men — the wisdom of divine folly (1Cor. 1:18-30; 2:1-5; 3:18-23); Romans: power of Christ and the power of men — the strength of divine weakness (Rom 1:16; ); 1:18-23); and Colossians 1, 2: light of Christ and the lights of men — the illumination of divine darkness (1:13-22; 2:1-9). Reflection on the ways Acts 17:16-34 relates to these NT loci (which clarify, deepen and additionally explain Paul's engagement in Athens) deserves a separate study. Let it suffice, then, to note briefly that in Col. 2:8 ("See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy [*dia tēs philosophias*] and empty deceit (*kenēs apatēs*), according to human tradition [*kata tēn paradōsin tōn anthrōpon*]...") St. Paul doesn't disqualify philosophy as such, nor does he target Greek philosophy per se. The context is given by the faithful living in Colossae near the Phrygian city of Laodicea in Asia Minor. At the time, in the vicinity of Colossae an admixture of Gnostic theosophy and idiosyncratic Judaic beliefs close to Essenism circulates. The Apostle warns against *these*, Judaic and-or Oriental, speculative brands of syncretic Gnostic doctrine: *not* against philosophy as the science (*epistēmē*) and art (*technē*) of thinking about being, truth, meaning, value, the good, and God, etc.



alogue about truth in Jesus. This local context (and it is local even within the imperial Greco-Roman setting, since there are other cultures and civilizations, too, in space and in time) doesn't detract from the fact that, structurally, philosophy represents a fundamental context for the projection of the evangelical message: and, thus, for theology as well. This is so because human nature, with its innate capacity of reason, naturally given, is universal to all human beings. Reasoned argumentation is not merely a good choice for advance in Athens, but remains so in every setting where human beings respond to reasoned meaning. (Of course, reasoning alone is not sufficient for attaining full faith: nevertheless, it remains necessary for a faith fully understood and thus held in an integral manner: "... I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the *mind*\* also (kai tō noi)" 1Cor. 14:15). (4) For the said reasons, philosophy is utilized as a means for the universalization of kerygma and mission through discursive and conceptual points of general reference which address human reason and conscience (viz. cultural and conceptual contact-point making and common ground making). (5) Philosophy is promoted as a standing skill (technē) of critical reasoning, falsehood prevention and persuasive oration. Alongside, philosophy is not degraded as a mere ad extra instrument used for a particular goal. (6) Inasmuch as the Strategy level 1 of Acts 17 (viz. natural theology and philosophical theology: NTA) prepares and leads to, and is confirmed retroactively by Strategy level 2 (viz. revealed theology Apo-TA) — philosophy is re-conceived in the frame of Christian philosophy. In Acts 17:22-31 we observe this in its germinal phase, in nuce, but it is there already. This holds if we define Christian philosophy as the defence of the revealed truths of faith as plausible philosophical premises (open to argumentation, discourse, and method): which, in turn, find their place within a creatively open worldview which best orients the human being towards what is true, good and salvific. (7) Consequently, philosophy is not a matter of erudition only, as if it were a mere cultural ornament. For, it is one of the necessary modes by which the Church re-appropriates, critically, and opens-up, critically, what surrounds her in the non-ecclesial life-world. (8) For this reason, let me expand, philosophy is not (nor should it be) external to the curriculum of theological disciplines. To the contrary, in the formal and pragmatic sense, faith-friendly philosophy is organically internal to the Church. Generally speaking, philosophy offers the formal-methodological way in which faith and theology are grounded logically and clarified conceptually for the ecclesial life-word of the faithful (viz. Christian philosophical theology). (9) As paradigmatically demonstrated by Acts 17, the Christian embracement of philosophy as a missionary tool has its grounding in the apostolic Church and, consequentially, it has its grounding in the New Testament. In this way faith-friendly philosophy, utilized and re-functionalized by the apostles Paul and Luke themselves, participates in the "authoritative establishment of tradition by means of apostolic origin"<sup>174</sup>. Christian philosophizing is a special tradition within apostolic Tra-

<sup>174</sup> Walter Schöpsdau, "Depositum fidei", in: Hans Dieter Betz (ed.), *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 4, Mohr Siebeck, 1998–2007. Schöpsdau's phrase focuses the concept of depositum fidei in general. Here I use it to illustrate my claim that the apostolic usage of philosophy falls into the depositum fidei as well, and with deserved right.



dition, viz. parathēkē or paradosis. (10) Philosophy is not only imported into the primordial Church. For, it is produced by the primordial Church as well. Acts 17 give assurance that philosophy (taken as the disciplined praxis of mindful reasoning) is able to mediate the kerygma in a proficient and efficient way. At the Areopagus we may observe the birth of “our” philosophy (kat’ hēmas philosophia). The exemplar of the *Areopagitica* is a lasting model of the way the Church may promote its kerygmatic message and, at the same time, remain wedded to disciplined critical reasoning. This is not a transient historical happening, diachronically, but a lasting dimension of the Church’s capacity for mission, synchronically. That is to say, in every epoch philosophers open to faith (building philosophemes opened by faith) have the duty to re-actualize the *Areopagitica* exemplar in their own living contexts. The beginnings of the tradition of that are inaugurated by the early church father Clement of Alexandria (150–c.215):

“... we shall not err in alleging that all things necessary and profitable for life came to us from God, and that philosophy more especially was given to the Greeks, as a covenant (sic B.L.) peculiar to them — being, as it is, a stepping-stone to the philosophy which is according to Christ (hē kata Christon philosophia)...”<sup>175</sup>

**13.** Speaking in concrete terms, the lesson of the paradigmatic event described in Acts 17:22–31 has two basic dimensions. Firstly, by an ingenious utilization of philosophy, set in a faith-friendly mode, it offers a context oriented cross-cultural *model* of preaching the word (evangelization). In other words, it offers a model for *inculturation* of the power and meaning of the Gospel message: “So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ” (Rom. 10:17): provided preaching is attuned contextually. Secondly, it leaves instructive guidelines for creative *re-actualization* (re-application) in our own given situations, as we come to face a growingly apostatic world: a world which prides itself in freedoms, knowledge, scientific and technological advance, and power, yet in many ways remains Christless: “And how are they to hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14). The mentioned model contains an exemplary *strategy* of preaching. We can articulate four elements of this strategy: (1) find common ground with non-believing others through careful observation and empathy informed by learning, (2) deconstruct what is false, (3) construct what is true, and finally (4) instruct by giving word and witness to God in Jesus Christ — crucified and resurrected, the first-born from the dead, whom one may reach in and through the *Church*, his living Body of which he is the living head (Col. 1:18–20). In a word: realign, deconstruct, construct, instruct. We can then conclude that Acts 17:22–31, being an exemplary model, teaches us that evangelization, if and when it is cross-cultural, needs to be contextually sensitive and recipient-oriented. If so, the Gospel will be inculturated as successfully as possible and missionary activity will thrive. Churches may thus be planted and ones already existent may proliferate. Interpreting the Gospel doesn’t end with the understanding of what it meant in its original setting. Proper interpretation entails its contemporary re-application, in and by the same spirit.

<sup>175</sup> Clementis Alexandrini, *Strōmateis* (Στρωματεῖς), VI:8, in: Migne, PG 9, 284 C.

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## **Ambiguities in Plotinus' Account of the Generation of the Intellect from the One**

*Abstract:* The paper examines the status of ambiguity in the thought of Plotinus (c. 204/205-270). Even though ambiguity should be regarded as the enemy of the philosopher and as pertaining rather to the rhetorical tradition and not the philosophical one as it was especially established by Plato and Aristotle, one can argue that the particularly Neoplatonist philosophical project permitted an important place to it due to some fundamental inherent aspects that it contained. Most importantly, the ambiguity in the generation of the Intellect from the One is examined in this paper as related to the dialectic between existence and being. In such a perspective, ambiguity is initiated by the fact that being is both one in order to exist and not one in order to be a being. Thus, it can be explained only in dialectic with an ontological reality beyond it, namely an absolute One. This means that, in turn, its generation as Intellect from the latter is necessarily a two-fold movement: Both a distribution of existence by procession and a reverting contemplative act for acquisition of substantial definition. This dialectic does not only concern the highest ontological level of the relation of the Being to the One, but is a permanent ontological vacillation in the system of Plotinus. The paper observes this valorization of ambiguity as an original and dynamic feature of Plotinian ontology that arguably paved the way for Modernity.

*Key words:* Plotinus, Intellect, One, ambiguity, Neoplatonism, Being, ontology, existence

### **Introduction**

Shouldn't ambiguity be the enemy of a philosopher? If ambiguity can commonly be defined (note that a "defined ambiguity" is in itself a good example of an ambiguous oxymoron) as the quality of being liable to many different meanings or interpretations, then it can be a powerful weapon for a rhetorician, an expedient means of expressive polysemy for an artist, but something loathsome for a philosopher who endeavours to articulate clear-cut propositions. Indeed, in classical times, ambiguity was the specialty of the sophists who knew the "art" of turning the "ἡττω λόγον" into the "κρείττω": As a signifier might be associated with different meanings, the middle-term contained in the premises of a syllogism might have the same signifier in all of them but diverse significances, and, thus, lead to a structurally irreproachable but logically invalid conclusion. To denunciate such sophistic fallacies was an engagement of the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition after the exemplar of the Socratic strive for definitions. What was the change, then, that had occurred in Late Antiquity until we come upon a philosopher like Plotinus, who rather indulges in ambiguity?

(Some random examples: "[The One] is everywhere and nowhere" (VI,18,16,1); "[the Intellect] would always behold [the One] or rather not behold him" (V,5,8,21-22); "but [the One] came as one who did not come" (V,5,8,15); "[the One] was within and yet it was not within" (V,5,7,36)). What is peculiar about Plotinus is that he does not try to conceal the ambiguities, but he rather lays a self-complacent emphasis on them. That is, he declares the ambiguity himself most usually in three ways: a) By both affirming and negating a certain predication, b) by putting an "οἶον" ("like", "sort of") before an attribute, leading thus the reader to a vacillation whether she/he should take that as an affirmation or an evasion of the definite attribution (e.g. "οἶον ἐν" V,1,5,3; "οἶον συναισθησις" V,1,7,11-17 etc.), and c) by using oxymora, often in the form of nouns preceded by adjectives that have an apparently or even really contradictory meaning. Then, if Plotinus was deliberately involved in such ambiguities that could prove to be even to the detriment of his philosophical credibility, he must have had a serious reason for insisting on them.

One such reason is that he is boldly engaged in discourse about ontological realities that are either beyond thinking (like the One), or on its "verge" being thus inaccessible to proper logical reasoning by affirmation and negation (like the Intellect). But the characteristic of the ontology of the One, in particular, is that it constitutes an "all-inclusive" reality, in which the famous Aristotelian laws of contradiction and the excluded third term may not apply. For the latter are valid only inside finite being, in which to decline the predication of a certain attribute would mean an automatic predication of its opposite (e.g. white-not white). But the infinite and transcendental reality of the One may include even opposites in a non distinguishable mode (V,3,15,31; V,2,1,1). Thus, ambiguity in Plotinus lies deeper than a mere toying with different significances of a signifier: It is rather the realities referred to that contain antinomies as being transcendently all-inclusive. But then, one could simply state that such realities evade conceptualization and leave it at that: that is, unambiguous propositions can be formed only about finite concepts; whatever transcends such conceptualization actually "lacks" a concept, it cannot be spoken or thought of. But for Plotinus (for whom in any case such critical speculation on the limits of language was not his primary preoccupation, but only incidentally implied), the problem was more complex.

## 1) Existence and being

Plotinus was urged to philosophize by a need to show the fundamental unity of being. But in seeking this unity one had to "by-pass" intellection as an inadequate unity, since it implied a primordial distinction of subject and object. The perplexity is thus caused by a fundamental Plotinian paradox: For Plotinus, a being, in order to exist, needs to be one; not being at all one would mean a diffusion into chaos that would imply not only non-existence but what is more, an inability to exist (VI,9,2,15). Thus, being, any being, exists as long as it is one, in other words, being is explained by its being one (VI,9,1,1-4). But, on the other hand, being is not simply one. As long as it is a substance, it is something definite and thus definable by being intelligible in terms of sameness (being that) and otherness (being other than that). Thus, being exists as an intelligible by means of a distinction between sameness and otherness which emerges as a form of the more elementary distinc-

tion between itself as an intelligible object and a subject which is postulated as a necessary “supporter” of intellection. Therefore, being is simultaneously one and not one (V,2,2,24). It is one so that it may exist, and is not one, so that it may be a being. This fundamental Plotinian paradox means that being cannot explain its own existence, if existence is insolvably linked with being one: Being is, indeed, one “enough” in order for it to exist, but it is not one “enough” in order for it to be able to explain itself. Thus, the paradox could be resolved only by an appeal to another paradox, namely postulating a One-ness, which, in turn, at the same time would not be being and would be a principle of being inherent to it (V,4,1,5-9). And whereas being is a being that is only incidentally one, this One would be a par excellence One, “existing” “before” being (V,4,1,5-9). One could perhaps summarize these paradoxical syllogisms in the term “transcendental monism” that is often applied to describe the Plotinian system (even though it is precisely the ambiguity of Plotinus that makes his thought “allergic” to any attempt of labeling it).

“Transcendental monism” could be regarded as an oxymoron in itself<sup>1</sup>. “Monism” implies that one single principle accounts for being in all its diversity and, thus, forms a fundamental affinity and “kinship” of all beings both among themselves and in relation to their common “parentage”. “Transcendental”, on the contrary, means a certain gap between being and another ontological reality, which in transcending being is somehow alien to it. The One’s “transcendence” safeguards that it is not just a “sum” of beings, that would not be different from any particular being in its insufficiency to act as an explaining principle (III,8,9,45-52; V,3,11,18-23; V,6,3,10-15). How is one to understand this ambiguous co-existence of continuity and discontinuity? Perhaps, a plausible answer may be found in a certain notion of gradation, or rather “grad-ability” of existence: If existence is due to the one-ness of a being, and if being is not one in a pure and absolute sense, it follows that pure existence is to be found only in the transcendental realm of the One itself. What is more, as a being can be said both to be one and not to be one (V,2,2,24), it could equally be said both to exist and not to exist. In other words, whereas absolute existence pertains only to the One, being has a gradable existence, in which the question that should be asked is not whether a being exists or not, but rather “to what extent it exists”. For absolute existence is beyond being in the One-ness that being cannot achieve, and absolute non-existence is equally beyond being, namely in a “non-existability”, which is logically inconceivable and ontologically impossible. As both of these metaphysical status are by definition impossible for being, the latter’s existence can be affirmed not in an absolute either confirmatory or negative way, but as a “more or less”, according to its approximation to the One. This is, in our opinion, the meaning of Plotinus’ insistence on ontological “priority” and “posteriority” (“πρότερον” and “ὕστερον”) which has led to the notion of an “ontological hierarchy” as an interpretation of his thought<sup>2</sup>. This hierarchical gradation accounts for both a) the

<sup>1</sup> Analogously to the Plotinian God, who is “both transcendent and immanent”. See: Armstrong, Hillary, “Plotinus and India”. In: *Plotinian and Christian Studies*, London: Variorum Reprints, 1979, p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> O’Meara, D. J., “The Hierarchical Ordering of Reality in Plotinus”. In: Gerson, Lloyd, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 66.

continuity of monism, since a being can be said to exist as partaking in the one-ness of existence, and b) the discontinuity of transcendence, as a being can be said not to exist purely as the One does. Whereas transcendence implies, in Plotinian terms, an “ὁμωνυμία” of existence, namely that the existence referred to in the two cases is but a common “name”, monism guarantees that there is, after all, a “συνωνυμία”, namely a “translation” of the absolute principle to conditions appropriate to each ontological level. This gradation of being as “existing to a certain extent” is, we believe, the root of Plotinian ambiguity, as it means that existence cannot be categorically asserted for being: Each being, in whatever ontological grade may it be situated, is liable to being interpreted both as “achieving” existence (in a certain extent) and as “failing” to exist (in a purer way). Ambiguity, thus, arises from the fact that being is not defined as a static, closed and self-explanatory entity, but as a dynamic reality that is orientated beyond itself in order to be dialectically explained.

This dialectic of existence and being is of key importance for understanding the ambiguity in the generation of the Intellect by the One. (It should be here noted that this dialectic is put forward only as a hypothesis for comprehending the Plotinian ambiguity; it is by no means an indisputable interpretation of Plotinian thought, if for no other reason, for the fact that the term “existence” is but a modern rendering of the Plotinian “ὑπόστασις”. For understanding Plotinus in such a perspective, I am based on the analyses by L. Gerson<sup>3</sup> and K. Corrigan<sup>4</sup>, reported also by J. Bussanich<sup>5</sup>. Other scholars, as for example A. Lloyd<sup>6</sup>, seem to use the terms “existence” and “substance” interchangeably when interpreting Plotinus). This dialectic is clearly expressed in: a) VI,8,20,9-15: “Nor should we be afraid to assume that the first activity (“ἐνέργειαν”) is without substance (“οὐσίας”), but posit this very fact as his, so to speak, existence (“ὑπόστασιν”). If then the activity is more perfect than the substance, and the first is more perfect, the first will be activity”. b) V,2,1,7-14: “The One is not being, but the generator of being. This, we may say, is the first act of generation: the One [...] overflows, as it were (“ὅσον ὑπερερρῶν”), and its superabundance makes something other than itself. This when it has come into being, turns back upon the One and is filled, and becomes Intellect by looking towards it. Its halt and turning towards the One constitutes being (“τὸ ὄν”), its gaze upon the One, Intellect. Since it halts and turns towards the One that it may see, it becomes at once Intellect and Being”. One could arguably understand Plotinus in the following way: a) For reasons of simplicity, the One is a principle without being an essence (“οὐσία”) nor a being (“ὄν”). But at the same time, it has to exist as an activity, because, in L. Gerson's expression, “to deny activity to it would be to deny it causal efficacy”<sup>7</sup>; but this would imply its failure to act as a principle. Equally, it has to “exist” as a simple super-ontic “ὑπόστασις”. Contrary to Aristotle, activity is dis-

3 Gerson, Lloyd P., *Plotinus*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 3-41.

4 Corrigan, Kevin, “Essence and Existence in the Enneads”. In: Gerson, Lloyd, ed., 1996, *op. cit.*, p. 105-129.

5 Bussanich, John, “Plotinus' Metaphysics of the One”. In: Gerson, Lloyd, ed., 1996, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

6 Lloyd, A.C., “Plotinus on the Genesis of Thought and Existence”. In: Annas, Julia, ed., *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, Volume V*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987, p. 176-177.

7 Gerson, 1994, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

engaged from the defined “substance/essence” (“οὐσία”) and is “merged” to an infinite “existence” (“ὑπόστασις”). b) Being (“ὄν”) emerges together with Intellect as the ontological counterpart of the latter’s gnosiological self-constitution. This is the realm of the definable “οὐσία”. c) But “οὐσία” and the Intellect, in being secondary to existence, cannot act as principles of existence. d) Correspondingly, the One does not act as a principle of essence. According to the strange Plotinian principle that “there is no necessity for something to have what it gives” (VI,7,17,3-4), this does not imply a deficiency for the One. Indeed, this is exactly what, in L. Gerson’s terms, a “subordinationist” or “instrumentalist” metaphysics<sup>8</sup> is all about: Namely, the fact that the One is the generator of existence of beings (VI,8,14,41; VI,8,7,53-4; VI,8,16,29), their being existent “goods”, while the Intellect is the cause of their essence, their being beings, or their “what-ness”<sup>9</sup>. In other words, the One is an efficient ontological cause distinct from the formal-essential one, which is the Intellect. The One produces existents only “using” the “template” of essence<sup>10</sup>; that is, it is an “overflowing stream” of existence transmissible to every being “according” to an essence bestowed upon it by Intellect. e) Every being is formally one as an instance of the form of unity identifiable with the Intellect. What the One causes is the one-ness as a prerequisite of existence. This one-ness of beings is a “trace” of the One’s activity, not a “partake-able” paradigm of the anyway unique and non-imitable nature of the One<sup>11</sup>. f) By the preceding speculations we can ascertain the fundamental ambiguity in the generation of the Intellect by the One: Intellect, (as identical with Being), owes its being both to the One and to itself; to the One it owes the “good” existence of its being; to itself it owes the fact that it is a being. But at the same time, in being a being it is less existent than if it had not been a being. Could one extend this line of thinking as far as to profess that to be (as a being) is to exist less? In any case, the examination of this ambiguity is relevant to the double character of the generation as procession and reversion.

## 2) Procession and Reversion

The ambiguity of being as both one and not one is very clearly manifested in Plotinus’ account of the “movement” through which Intellect is generated. According to Plotinus, this is a paradoxical double movement that entails both a proceeding or bringing forth (“πρόοδος”) of the Intellect from the One and a reversion (“ἐπιστροφή”) back to it. (The movements of procession and reversion are particularly described in I,7,1,23; I,7,16,14; V,1,6-7; V,2,1,9-II; V,4,2,4-5; VI,7,16,15-16; VI,7,37,21). How are we to understand the duality of this motion? One could say that the first proceeding is an indefinite distribution of existence by the One according to the principle of the “fertility” of perfection. This forms an “inchoate” Intellect which is not yet fully differentiated from the One and could be said in some sense to be closer to it and enjoying a fuller and more immediate pre-noetic con-

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36-37.

tact of it (VI,3,10,41-43), that is "unfortunately" lost by Intellect proper (III,8,8,30-37); indeed, this primordial Intellect is described as "νοῦς ἐρῶν" and its desire is compared to a "drunkenness" more sublime than the soberness of the "νοῦς νοῶν" (VI,7,35,20-25). However, in a characteristic ambiguity, this indeterminacy of the "inchoate" Intellect makes it similar to the Pythagorean-Platonic idea of the "Indefinite Dyad" which must be defined by limit<sup>12</sup> (V,1,5,6; V,4,2,7-8). Thus, the question arises if some reversion back to the One is necessary. But what would be the meaning of such a reversion? Isn't a "processive" generation enough for the constitution of a hypostasis? One could preliminarily remark that a "two-edged" ("ἀμφίστομος" III,8,9,31-32) Intellect is necessitated by the two-fold character of One as both an efficient and a final causal of being. As a distributor primarily of existence and not of formal shaping, the One is necessarily an efficient cause. This is a peculiar trait of the Plotinian thought inside the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition. But the Aristotelian (and probably also Platonic) element of the attraction of final causality remains strong in Plotinus, in whose thought also one finds the principle that a higher actuality actualizes a lower potentiality by attracting it without itself being influenced in any way (an echo of *Metaphysics* 12,7). Plotinus adapts Aristotelian elements ("misuses", according to L. Gerson<sup>13</sup>), in order to form his own peculiar doctrine of the "double actuality", namely that each ontological reality has both an actuality of the essence ("τῆς οὐσίας") and an actuality deriving from the essence ("ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας"), which in the Plotinian schema is identified with the immediately lower entity of the hierarchy. (This theory, often with an attempt to illustrate its universality by using the stock-examples of sun, fire, perfume and snow, is expounded in: IV,8,6,8-12; V,1,6,28-46; V,4,1,27-34; V,4,2,27-43; VI,8,18,51-52). Thus, the "inchoate" Intellect can be said to be identified with an actuality "derived" from the One<sup>14</sup>. It is to be noted that Plotinus disengages the concept of "actuality" from its Aristotelian exclusive correlation to thinking and ascribes it to the hyper-noetic reality of the One. Another remark to be made is that, in the Plotinian metaphysical schema, procession generally has a tendency towards an evermore decreasing existence, according to the simile of the cycle and the radii that get increasingly far from the centre. Thus, one could perhaps claim that the reversion to the One is a somehow necessary "halt" in order for "beings-to-be" to "secure" their existence as a substantial "concentration" on their One instead of following an indefinite diffusion in a direction of degradation. But the stability of intellectual limitation is the particular way of Intellect's being to receive existence: "Being must not fluctuate in the indefinite, but must be fixed by limit and stability; and stability in the intelligible world is limitation and shape, and it is by these that it receives existence" (V,1,7,24-27).

Thus, if the procession is a distribution of existence, the reversion is a striving of the inchoate Intellect itself to be identified with the One, of which the outcome will be the definition of Intellect as a proper substance. (These two phases of Intellect are also described by Plotinus in "theoretic" terms (III,8,11,2; V,1,5,18-19; V,3,11,10-11) as a poten-

<sup>12</sup> O'Meara, Dominic J., *Plotinus: An Introduction to the Enneads*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, p.53.

<sup>13</sup> Gerson, 1994, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> Lloyd, A. C., *op. cit.*, p. 177.



tial indefinite visibility (“ἀτύπωτος ὄψις”) and an actualized vision (“ὄρασις”), according to Aristotelian psychology (*De Anima* 426a13-14; 428a6-7)<sup>15</sup>. The basic ambiguity noted earlier between one-ness of existence and definition of substance is reflected in the double “movement”: The procession is an “endowment” of the Intellect with the one-ness that is necessary for it to exist at all; but in what concerns its substantial shaping, the (inchoate) Intellect shares in the causality of its self-definition along with the One (V,1,5,17-19: “[Intellect] is shaped in one way by the One and in another by itself”; similarly in V,1,7,11-17 and V,1,7,30-34)<sup>16</sup>. Another aspect of this ambiguity is the discrepancy between the Intellect’s “goal” in this endeavour and the final outcome. For the Intellect strives after unity with the One, but it proves that it cannot approach it save by its own “way”, which necessarily results in an objectification of the One. But the One as object is not the One in itself, but the One as peculiarly approached by Intellect. This objectification initiates a series of novel ontological status: Objectification of the One means the first emergence of otherness. “Before” the objectification of the One, it could be said that the Intellect was “still” an inherent part of it. But from the moment that the One becomes an object, it is no longer One, but something other than it. For objectification means a distinction from the subject of the act, and thus an including of the object in categories of sameness as opposed to otherness (one could possibly interpret like this the V,3,10,23-25; VI,2,15,14-15; VI,7,13,11-12). This means that even if the object is confirmed to be the same with the subject, this verification of sameness is preceded by a possibility of otherness grounded on ability of distinction. But that is how the definiteness of being along with intellection is established and the latter’s object turns out to be not the One but Intellect itself. Consequently, the subject-object, same-other duality (V,1,5,7-8) initiates multiplicity (III,8,8,31; V,1,7,10-12; V,3,11,30) and number (III,8,9,4-5), while the emerged thinking gets to be defined by the five genera (found in the *Sophist*): being, sameness, otherness, motion and rest (V,1,4,34)<sup>17</sup>. (Motion is the movement of Intellect’s activity, while rest implies the stationary character of the subject-object identity<sup>18</sup>). The paradox is that the (inchoate) Intellect in trying to attain the One “eventually” attains itself as other from the One (V,3,11). Thus, the definition of Intellect is an everlasting failure; Intellect is a One *manqué*. Being is the outcome of a, -in J. Bussanich’s expression-, “misapprehension”<sup>19</sup>, of a *mal-entendu*. The ambiguity consists in the very original fashion by which Plotinus, contrary to Aristotelianism, defines Intellect not by itself but dynamically as related with a reality that evades it: Intellect and all its logicity are thus produced in a desperate attempt to define the infinite, to put limit upon the illimitable, to think the unthinkable. Moreover, as the Intellect’s intellection consists in an identity of subject, object and act, the Intellect can be said to be

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>16</sup> Atkinson, Michael, *Plotinus: Ennead V. 1, On the Three Principal Hypostases. A Commentary with Translation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 171.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96

<sup>18</sup> In M. Atkinson’s expression, “the “στᾶσις” of the “ὄν” complements the “κίνησις” of “νοῦς”, *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>19</sup> Bussanich, John, *The One and Its Relation to Intellect in Plotinus*, Leiden: Brill, 1988, p. 76.

still grounded in the One's unity, from which it is not divided. Only thus is the paradoxical expression plurality-in-unity ("ἐν πολλῷ") justified. Similarly, Intellect could be said to be an Otherness-in-Sameness. This retaining of unity is important, because it means that Intellect is the being that is the closest possible to the One (V,1,6,44-54); nothing else can possibly be interjected between them (V,3,12,44). One could perhaps say that Intellect is a *self*-awareness of the One, an awareness that is the simplest entity possible after absolute simplicity itself.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, discussion of the ambiguity in the generation of Intellect from the One was based on the dialectic between existence and being. In such a perspective, ambiguity is initiated by the fact that being is both one in order to exist and not one in order to be a being. Thus, it can be explained only in dialectic with an ontological reality beyond it, namely an absolute One. This means that, in turn, its generation as Intellect from the latter is necessarily a two-fold movement: Both a distribution of existence by procession and a reverting contemplative act for acquisition of substantial definition. It is this dual motion that makes Plotinian metaphysics both "emanationist" and "contemplationist"<sup>20</sup>. For whereas the One is a power ("δύναμις") for "ungrudgingly" transmitting the goodness of existence, the Intellect emerges, in F. M. Schroeder's expression, as a "self-constituting awareness of the One's power to produce being"<sup>21</sup>, that is, an awareness necessary for the being to exist as definite substance. Thus, the Intellect ambiguously participates in the causation of its being, only in failing to achieve genuine existence. This dialectic should be regarded as an everlasting ontological vacillation. This means that the "pre-noetic motion and striving persist in the life of the fully actualized Intellect; an eternal, unchanging and perfect Intellect is impossible without an eternally indefinite and striving element within it"<sup>22</sup>. One of the greatest originalities of Plotinian thought is exactly this dynamism of the Intellect that "is always desiring and always attaining" (III,8,11,23-24).

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<sup>20</sup> "Emanationist" should, of course, be understood without crude materialistic connotations, or the notion of a necessity distinguishable from One's actuality and existence. See: Gatti, Maria Luisa, "Plotinus: The Platonic tradition and the Foundation of Neoplatonism". In: Gerson, Lloyd, ed., 1996, *op. cit.*, p. 34; Armstrong, Hillary, "Emanation" in Plotinus". In: *Plotinian and Christian Studies*, London: Variorum Reprints, 1979.

<sup>21</sup> Schroeder, Frederic, "Conversion and Consciousness in Plotinus, "Enneads" 5,1 [10],7". In: *Hermes*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, 1986, p. 193.

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## A Proposed Solution of St. Thomas Aquinas's "Third Way" Through *Pros Hen* Analogy

**Abstract:** St. Thomas's Third Way to prove the existence of God, "Of Possibility and Necessity" (*ST* 1, q.2, art. 3, response) is one of the most controverted passages in the entire Thomistic corpus. The central point of dispute is that if there were only possible beings, each at some time would cease to exist and, therefore, at some point in time nothing would exist, and because something cannot come from nothing, in such an eventuality, nothing would exist now—a *reductio ad absurdum* conclusion. Therefore, at least one necessary being must exist. Generations of critics and defenders have contended over St. Thomas's proof. This article argues that the principle of *pros hen* analogy is implicit in the Third Way and that once identified explains the ontological dependency of possible beings, as secondary analogates, on the first necessary being, as primary analogate. Thus, without the necessary being as primary analogate, possible beings simply could not exist. The fact that they do exist is evidence for the existence of the necessary being. St. Thomas makes synthesizes the principle of *pros hen* analogy, as found in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, with the Neoplatonic principle of participation. Aristotle develops *pros hen* analogy in contradistinction to univocal and equivocal predication as well as to genus in *Metaphysics* 4.2, 11.3, 12.3-5. Since Scotus and re-enforced by modern analytic logic, philosophers have almost universally regarded any kind of analogical predication as a sub-category of equivocal predication and, thus, implicitly occlude the possibility of considering *pros hen* analogy in their readings of the Third Way. Distinction of *per se* and *per accidens* infinite regress and of radical and natural contingency are also central to understanding the Third Way. While resolving apparent problems in the Third Way, the article also seeks to rehabilitate the doctrine of *pros hen* analogy as a basic principle in Thomistic and, indeed, Aristotelian metaphysics.

**Keywords:** Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Third Way, *pros hen* analogy, possibility, necessity, contingency, infinite regress.

The literature<sup>1</sup> is so extensive on St. Thomas Aquinas's Third Way to prove the existence of God, "Of Possibility and Necessity,"<sup>2</sup> that any further comment must justify the conceit of supposing that something new might be said. Critics accuse St. Thomas of logical fallacies and of ignoring obvious objections.<sup>3</sup> Defenders explain, sometimes tortuous-

1 An earlier version of this article was presented to The Metaphysical Society of America at its annual meeting in Cambridge, Massachusetts, April 2017.

2 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q.2, a. 3, resp. Leonine edition. Rome. 1882-. Vol. 13.

3 John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 463, 465-67. Anthony Kenny, *The Five Ways*:

ly, how and why the Third Way makes sense. The central point of dispute is that if there were only possible beings, each at some time would cease to exist and, therefore, at some point in time nothing would exist, and because something cannot come from nothing, in such an eventuality, nothing would exist now—a *reductio ad absurdum* conclusion. Therefore, at least one necessary being must exist. Generations of scholars have contended over St. Thomas's argument. I propose to reframe the discussion by introducing the principle of *pros hen* analogy which—as far as I can discover—has not previously been suggested as a basis for resolving the problems of the Third Way. *En route* to making the case for that claim, I shall also argue that the doctrine of *pros hen* analogy is an indispensable principle in Thomistic and, indeed, Aristotelian metaphysics. No small part of this article's burden is to argue for the legitimacy of analogy as a third kind of predication situated between univocal and equivocal predication and, further, for the legitimacy of *pros hen* analogy, a species of analogical predication, held by Aristotle as well as by Aquinas.

It is all well and good to maintain that the argument of the Third Way works just fine as many scholars have, but how it works has not been obvious to other scholars<sup>4</sup> even one as sympathetic, indeed reverential, towards St. Thomas as Monsignor John F. Wippel may well be identified.<sup>5</sup> A difference between the Third Way and the other four is that it is obvious how those others work. Scholars may argue over whether those arguments are successful, but the argument itself in each is clear enough. It is reasonable to suppose that St. Thomas thought the Third Way to be as obvious in the form of argument as the other four and that he would have been aware of evident problems. On the basis of the text alone, the Third Way is seriously flawed. That conclusion, however, is itself a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*: flaws evident to first-year graduate students eluded one of the greatest minds in the history of philosophy. When St. Thomas dictated the Third Way, he was just having a bad day. I am always nervous when I think I have detected a mistake which some genius has not. What are we missing when we read the Third Way? In other words, it is not merely a question of whether some scholar today is insightful and knowledgeable enough to figure out what St. Thomas really meant, rather

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*St. Thomas Aquinas' Proofs of God's Existence* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 54–66. Father Owens argues that the claim of logical fallacy simply does not hold. Joseph Owens, “*Quandoque* and *Aliquando* in Aquinas’ *Tertia Via*,” *New Scholasticism* 54 (1980), 463–64, 463 n. 26, 470 n.33, and 472–73 n. 38.

4 Professor Knasas quotes scholars on the difficulty of satisfactorily explaining the Third Way and himself takes up the challenge of metaphysical refurbishment. John F. X. Knasas, “Making Sense of the *Tertia Via*,” *New Scholasticism*, 54, no. 4 (1980), 476. While his argumentation may be accurate, it does not render the Third Way obvious in the fashion of the other four Ways. Already in 1954, Father Connolly observed, “For quite some time the debate has raged in the school concerning the basis and nature of the demonstration which St. Thomas says is taken from the notion of possibility.” Thomas Kevin Connolly, “The Basis of the Third Proof for the Existence of God,” *The Thomist*, 17, no. 3 (July 1954), 281. He also notes that the problem is a modern one derived from the reading of John of St. Thomas (d. 1644) who recasts the Third Way in terms of metaphysical contingency. *Ibid.*, 284–85.

5 Father Brian Davies makes this point. Brian Davies, “Aquinas’s Third Way,” *New Blackfriars*, 82, no. 968 (October 2001), 463, n. 1.

whether we can discern as obvious what was obvious to St. Thomas.<sup>6</sup> Otherwise, we are left with the absurdity proposed above.

While the direction of my own interpretation of the Third Way proceeds differently than that of Father Joseph Owens—a different direction, but not discordant with his conclusions—I aim to implement some of the same exegetical principles. Father Owens says of his own methodology, “The meaning they [the arguments of the Third Way] take on when thought out against the background of Aquinas’ own metaphysical tenets may be gauged.”<sup>7</sup> To develop that point, what St. Thomas says in the text of a given passage must be read in the context of the metaphysical principles he held in general. Further, Father Owens opines, “All his ‘ways’ of proving God’s existence appear rather as parallel developments of the one basic demonstration... Accordingly they should be used to elucidate one another. Just as Aristotle is to be interpreted *ex Aristotele*, so Aquinas, correspondingly, from his own work.”<sup>8</sup> A basic principle of exegesis is that a text is its own best interpreter, and the second best is the corpus of which the text is a part. There are exceptions, but the rule has firmly stood the test of time. That is exactly what I propose to do by invoking the metaphysics of *pros hen* analogy in which possible beings are understood as secondary analogates contingent upon the first uncaused necessary being as the primary analogate. This is a principle which Aquinas knows and employs in other texts and, significantly, in his *Commentary on Aristotle’s “Metaphysics”* which is contemporary with the *Summa Theologiae*.<sup>9</sup> I suggest that this explanation is not generally obvious today because *pros hen* analogy is largely relegated to the status of a species of equivocation, rather than a third kind of predication which bespeaks the structure of reality.<sup>10</sup> I shall argue, first, for the centrality of *pros hen* analogy to the Third Way, and, second, that *pros hen* analogy, for St. Thomas following Ar-

6 Father Dewan makes a similar point in trying to resolve the problems associated with understanding the Third Way, “One of the difficulties in reading *TW* [the Third Way] is, on the one hand, to include in one’s understanding of those conceptions which it makes sense to presuppose.” Lawrence Dewan, “The Distinctiveness of the Third Way,” *Dialogue* 19 (1980), 207. Similarly, Father Owens sets the parameters for further investigation, “On the philosophic plan the thrust should be strictly to *understand* the argument as it was developed in the thought of Aquinas. For this purpose the terms used in the *via* have to be taken in the meanings current for them at that time.” Owens, “*Quandoque*,” 449.

7 Owens, “*Quandoque*,” 450.

8 *Ibid.*, 450, n. 3.

9 Eleonore Stump and Brian Davies, *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 553ff. Oxford Handbooks Online: <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195326093.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780195326093-miscMatter-46>.

10 This is adjacent to a point made by Father Dewan in his article in which he uses St. Thomas’s Third Way to explain why the question, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” is a meaningful question: Discovering its meaning “requires strict adherence to the viewpoint of the ontological primacy of substance, a viewpoint to which few are habitually inclined.” Lawrence Dewan, “‘Something Rather Than Nothing’ and St. Thomas’ Third Way,” *Science et Esprit*, 38/1 (1987), 71. In other words, an obvious explanation can often prove elusive to those who do not practice the necessary habits of thought. As a further note on the history of philosophy, Father Dewan, in effect, argues that only a Thomist—using the Third Way—can answer the question of “something rather than nothing.” To put it the other way round, his article implicitly uses that question to show how the Third Way is valid.



istotle, does in fact bespeak the structure of reality. Before proposing a solution, however, it is essential to set forth the problem.

### The Third Way and Its Problems

Here are the steps of the Third Way:

1. In nature, there are possible beings, subject to generation and corruption.
2. Possible beings cannot always be because what can not-be at some point in time (*quandoque*) will not-be.
3. If there were only possible beings, then at some point in time (*aliquando*) nothing would be.<sup>11</sup>
4. If that were the case, then even now (*etiam nunc*) nothing would be because what-is-not begins to be through something which-is.
5. If, therefore, there had been no being, it would have been impossible for anything to begin to be, and thus there would be nothing now—a *reductio ad absurdum* conclusion.
6. Therefore, not all beings can be possible; there must be necessary beings.
7. Everything necessary either has its cause from another necessary being or it does not.
8. There cannot be an infinite regress in necessary beings as has already been established regarding efficient causes (i.e., the Second Way).
9. Therefore, it is necessary to postulate something which exists by *per se* necessity, having no cause from any other necessary being, rather is the cause of other necessary beings.
10. Which all call “God.”

I have followed Monsignor Wippel in emphasizing the temporal aspect to this argument.<sup>12</sup> St. Thomas begins the Third Way empirically, as he does in the other four ways. As a matter of human experience, there are beings which come into existence and go out of existence. The argument seems to run that if there were only such beings which can go out of existence, then at some point in time they would all go out of existence, in which case nothing would exist now, but things do exist now, so there must be something other than beings which come into and go out of existence. But, we are quick to respond, maybe it has simply not happened yet. It might be that in precisely five seconds from now, the remaining possible beings will go out of existence. But, no, not yet, you are reading this sentence. But it still might happen in a few billion years, a good run by all accounts, but like the best Broad-

<sup>11</sup> Although in this paper, I make use of Aristotle's writings, as one considers the genealogy of the argument itself, it is interesting to note that Socrates says something very like this in his case for the immortality of the soul: “If everything that partakes of life were to die and remain in that state and not come to life again, would not everything ultimately have to be dead and nothing alive? Even if the living came from some other source, and all that lived died, how could all things avoid being absorbed in death?” Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. intro. and notes by John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1997), 63; *Phaedo* 72c-d. Father Dewan affirms Father Renatus Arnou's inclusion of the *Phaedo* 72c-e “in his collection of passages ancestral” to the Third Way. Dewan, “Distinctiveness,” 208. Renatus Arnou, *De quinque viis sancti Thomae* (Rome: Universitas Gregoriana, 1949), 17.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 464. Monsignor Wippel surveys the attempts to remedy the difficulty raised by this temporal aspect. *Ibid.*, 464, n. 57. Monsignor Wippel and Father Owens agree—something that does not always happen—on the intransigence of the temporal aspect of this argument. Owens, “*Quandoque*,” 447.

way shows, the realm of possible beings must come to an end. Or perhaps—and Monsignor Wippel describes this possibility, albeit more soberly than I shall do—there is a kind of cosmic relay race of possible beings.<sup>13</sup> One possible being does not go out of existence until another comes into existence, and then another, and then another, and, thereby, the universe is always well-stocked with possible beings. There is actual considerable empirical evidence for this view. If what St. Thomas meant was no more than that, then he was just having an off-moment, and we should scrap the Third Way. As I suggested above, that is its own kind of *reductio ad absurdum* argument.

Before beginning to propose my solution to the problem of the Third Way, it will be useful to examine *Summa contra gentiles*, 1.15, 5 which one might regard as a kind of first draft of the argument which will become the Third Way.<sup>14</sup> The *Summa contra gentiles* was written c. 1259-1265 and the *Summa Theologiae* c. 1266-1273.<sup>15</sup> Understanding some of the differences between the two may help to illuminate the Third Way.

1. As in the Third Way, St. Thomas begins empirically. "We find in the world," he observes, beings "subject to generation and corruption which can be and not-be."
2. "What can be has a cause because, since it is equally related to two contraries, being and non-being, it must be owing to some cause that being accrues to it."
3. There is no infinite regress of causes.
4. Therefore, there must be some necessary being.
5. "Every necessary being ... either has its necessity in an outside source or ... is necessary through itself."
6. There is no infinite regress of necessary beings.
7. Therefore, there must be "a first necessary being, which is necessary through itself."
8. "This is God ... the first cause."
9. "God, therefore, is eternal, since whatever is necessary through itself is eternal."<sup>16</sup>

Overall, the argument from *SCG* 1, 15, 5 is straightforwardly causal. The necessity of a first necessary being is to avoid infinite regress, the kind of move St. Thomas makes in the First and Second Ways. The argument against infinite regress is entirely missing from the first half of the Third Way, presumably because St. Thomas has already used that argument in the Second Way, as he explicitly says in point six of the Third Way. That there is no infinite regress is invoked only in the second half of the Third Way about the causation of necessary beings. The temporal aspect of the Third Way is completely absent from the argument in *Summa contra gentiles* where St. Thomas affirms that there is no infinite regress with re-

<sup>13</sup> "Why not suggest rather that one possible being has come into being after another, and that after another, extending backwards into a beginningless past? Under this supposition, some possible being or beings will have existed at any given point of time, although no single possible being will have existed from eternity." Ibid., 465.

<sup>14</sup> In the literature, there is a standard set of texts one or more of which is examined in order to try to find a reasonable explanation for what St. Thomas meant: *Summa contra gentiles* 1.15, 5, *De potentia* (various passages), *De ente* 4-5, *The Commentary on "De caelo"* 1.12, and *Compendium theologiae* 6.

<sup>15</sup> Stump and Davies, *Handbook of Aquinas*, 553ff.

<sup>16</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles, Book One: God*, trans. with an intro. and notes by Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 98-99.

spect to possible and necessary beings. Also absent in *SCG*—and in which the temporal terms are embedded—is the entire argument about the inevitable void if there were only possible beings. This suggests that St. Thomas deemed addition of the segment of argumentation, i.e., steps 2-5, in the Third Way as significant to the argument. While the temporal aspect of the Third Way is absent in *SCG* 1, 15, 5, there is a word applied to God in *SCG* 1, 5, 5 which he does not use in the Third Way, namely “eternal” which St. Thomas uses twice in the last sentence of *SCG* 1, 15, 5. One additional consideration is relevant, namely that in the second point of *SCG* 1, 15, 5, St. Thomas argues that the reason a possible being must have a cause is that every possible being “is equally related to two contraries, being and non-being.” The equal relation between contraries is part of Aristotle’s argument for *pros hen* analogy as shall be seen below. My hunch is that either *pros hen* analogy contributed to the way St. Thomas thought about the proof already in *SCG* or that the connection occurred to him while subsequently reflecting on this equal relation, and thereby St. Thomas realized the more elaborate argument in the first half of the Third Way. Thus, the ways in which the two proofs are like and unlike may also serve as clues in resolving scholarly puzzlement over the Third Way.<sup>17</sup>

It is necessary now to turn to Aristotle’s development of *pros hen* analogy and to examine St. Thomas’s comments on Aristotle’s discussion as well as to see how St. Thomas himself uses *pros hen* analogy in other texts.

### Aristotle and St. Thomas on *Pros hen* Analogy

For St. Thomas Aquinas—and on his account following Aristotle—there are three kinds of predication: univocal, equivocal, and analogical, which is clear from St. Thomas’s *Commentary on Aristotle’s “Metaphysics”* as shall be seen below. Univocal predication is the use of the same word with the same meaning; equivocal, the same word with different meanings; analogical, the same word with partly the same meaning and partly a different meaning. The re-categorization of analogical predication seems to have begun with John Duns Scotus who held that a science is only possible if a reality can be spoken of univocally. Therefore, according to Scotus, analogical predication is not a third kind of predication at all, rather only a form of equivocal predication.<sup>18</sup> The triumphal march of analytic logic in modern philosophy has made the demotion and even banishment of *pros hen* analogy more or less complete. As an example of the occlusion of analogy from philosophical discussion, in the “Introduction” of *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, Professor Jonathan Barnes as editor acknowledges that there are “Thomist ... and ‘continental’ interpretations of Aristotle” to which his “*Companion* ... does not address itself.” Professor Barnes is explicit, “The term ‘philosophy,’

<sup>17</sup> On this point, I depart from the view of Monsignor Wippel who finds no clue in the dissimilarity of arguments in *SCG* and the Third Way. I stand much closer to the view of Father Owens: “The *tertia via* elucidates the *Contra Gentiles* version by making explicit the temporal facet contained in the notion of the possible... . In essence it coincides with the argument in the *Contra Gentiles*.” Owens, “*Quandoque*,” 466. See also 474.

<sup>18</sup> “Il n’y a pas, en effet, d’intermédiaire entre l’univocité et l’équivocité, et toute tentative d’introduire un troisième terme qui serait l’analogie ne résiste pas à l’examen.” Bernard Montagnes, *La doctrine de l’analogie de l’être d’après Saint Thomas D’Aquin* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1963), 151 and 119-26.

so far as the *Companion* is concerned, refers to what is sometimes called the analytical tradition of philosophy."<sup>19</sup> The paronymy of Aristotle's *Categories* "with reference [his emphasis] to some one item," Professor Barnes calls "a focal meaning" which he applies not only to the paronyms of the *Categories*, but also to what I—following Aquinas—would call the primary analogate of a *pros hen* analogy, "health" of the *Metaphysics*, for example.<sup>20</sup> Thus, in Professor Barnes' account, there is no ontological dependence of the diverse entities upon the one thing; they merely refer to the one thing. The diverse entities do not relate to the one with respect to being; they merely refer to the one with respect to meaning. Professor Barnes reads Aristotle's text through a nominalist lens. Of course, he might well riposte that I read Aristotle's text through a Thomistic (i.e., realist) lens. *Concedo*. I remark, however, that St. Thomas was a careful enough reader of Aristotle's texts to distinguish not only his own view from Aristotle's, but also Aristotle's view from the interpretations offered by, for example, Avicenna and Averroes. My point here is that for most analytic philosophy, analogy—denoting an ontological relationship—simply does not come into consideration.

Before leaving Professor Barnes' analysis, however, it is interesting to compare his position with that of Father Owens on analogical predication and on the relation of the paronyms of the *Categories* to *pros hen* analogy of the *Metaphysics*. Professor Barnes and Father Owens agree that there are only two kinds of predication, univocal and equivocal. Father Owens says what I call "*pros hen* analogies," are "equivocals" that "are expressed in reference to one form."<sup>21</sup> This not so different from Professor Barnes' "focal meaning." They disagree, however, on the relationship of the paronyms and *pros hen* analogy. According to Father Owens, paronyms do not stand *between* univocals and equivocals, rather they "cut across the first two classes [i.e., equivocals and univocals]; they are differentiated entirely on grammatical distinctions."<sup>22</sup> My own position is that analogy is a legitimate and for metaphysics essential form of predication. With Professor Barnes against Father Owens, I read the paronymy of the *Categories* as—at very least—the ultimate antecedent in Aristotle's thought of what becomes fully developed as *pros hen* analogy in the *Metaphysics*.

The three kinds of predication are first principles of Aristotelian philosophy. Aristotle begins the *Categories* by distinguishing the homonymous, the synonymous, and the paronymous. The homonymous, commonly called "equivocal," applies to two or more beings with the same name, but in each case there is a different definition. The synonymous, commonly called "univocal," applies to beings with the same name and which have the same definition in each case. The paronymous, commonly called "analogical," applies to beings

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Barnes, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), x.

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Barnes, "Metaphysics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 75-77.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian "Metaphysics": A Study in the Greek Background of Mediaeval Thought* with a preface by Etienne Gilson, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), 121.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

with the same name, but with a difference.<sup>23</sup> Aristotle expands the notion of the paronymous in his *Metaphysics*. There are three principle passages in the *Metaphysics* where Aristotle elaborates *pros hen* analogy. Although he says much the same thing about *pros hen* analogy itself in each passage, he distinguishes it in three different ways. In 4.2, he explains how *pros hen* analogy differs from equivocal predication. In 11.3, he elaborates what he states in 4.2 and, further, explains how *pros hen* analogy differs from the genus-species relationship. In 12.3-5, he explains how *pros hen* analogy is like univocal predication, but not identical to it.

Aristotle, son of a physician, is fond of noting that one may predicate “medical” or “health” of things in many different ways (e.g., 4.2). In 11.3, very much in parallel to 4.1-2, he affirms that the philosopher—in distinction to the mathematician, natural scientist, dialectician, or sophist—uses the term “being” in a way which is neither univocal, nor equivocal:

Since the science of the philosopher treats being *qua* being universally and not of some part of it, and “being” has many senses and is not used in one only, it follows that if it is used homonymously and in virtue of no common nature, it does not fall under one science (for there is no one class in the case of such things); but if it is used in virtue of some common nature, it will fall under one science. The term [i.e., being] seems to be used in the way we have mentioned, like “medical” and “healthy.” For each of these also we use in many senses; and each is used in this way because the former refers somehow to medical science and the latter to health.<sup>24</sup>

Aristotle is resolving the problem of how metaphysics—for him “philosophy” in the unqualified sense—can be a science since we use the term “being” in many different ways: substances, accidents, principles, conceptual beings, even non-being. If there were no common term, science could not be possible. Aristotle argues that though the use of being is not univocal, it is also not equivocal because there is a commonality to the various uses of “being,” but it is not a univocal commonality, rather a *pros hen* analogical commonality, in the way that drinking orange juice and urine can both be healthy (my example), but healthy in ways it is best not to confuse.<sup>25</sup> He concludes at the end of 11.3:

Therefore it remains that the *philosopher* [rather than the mathematician, natural scientist, dialectician, or sophist] studies the things we have named, in so far as they are being. Since all that is is said to be in virtue of one common character though the term has many meanings, and contraries are in the same case ... and things of this sort can fall under one science, the difficulty we stated at the beginning is solved,—I mean the question how there can be one science of things which are many and different in genus.<sup>26</sup>

Explicit here is that “being” is not a genus, because different species relate to genus in the same way. The special character of *pros hen* analogical predication is that the term in question, in this case “being,” has many things relate to it in ways partly the same and partly

<sup>23</sup> Aristotle *Categories* 1a1-15.

<sup>24</sup> Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, 2 vols., ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 2.1676; *Metaphysics* 11.3.1060b31-1061a2. Hereafter, Barnes 2.1676. *Metaphysics* 11.3.1060b31-1061a2.

<sup>25</sup> *Metaph.*, 11.3.1061a2-1061b10, Barnes, 2.1676-77.

<sup>26</sup> *Metaph.*, 11.3.1061b10-16; Barnes, 2.1677.

different. Thus analogy stands between univocity and equivocity. Analogy is fundamental to Aristotle's resolution of the problem of the one and the many. *Pros hen* analogy has the character of unity which it shares with univocity and of difference which it shares with equivocity. To develop Aristotle's point a little further, the relationship described in *pros hen* analogy is that of secondary analogates to the primary analogate in which the secondary analogates are contingent upon the primary analogate. Thus, table, greenness, "act-potency," unicorn, and non-being each in some sense "is." That "is-ness" is the way in which each thing relates to and is contingent upon the primary analogate, "Being." To take away the primary analogate is to take away secondary analogates contingent upon it. Aristotle explicitly discusses the problem of contraries, in specific being and non-being; this relates to point two in *SCG* 1, 15, 5. If the primary analogate of Being is eliminated, then all secondary analogates are eliminated even the secondary analogate of non-being. Let this be clear through emphasis: non-being cannot exist—even as a conceptual category—except as it is contingent upon being.<sup>27</sup>

In *Metaphysics* 12, Aristotle accounts for the cause of all motion and kinds of motion culminating in the First Unmoved Mover.<sup>28</sup> In 12.3, he lists three kinds of causes of motion: art, nature, and chance.<sup>29</sup> These three kinds of causes, however, can account for this motion or that motion, but not for motion itself. He considers various possibilities including Platonic Forms which he rejects yet again, but he also sees that the kind of *pros hen* analogy which he has employed before, e.g., health, does not provide an adequate explanation, because to the degree that health causes urine and drinking orange juice alike to be healthy, health is simultaneous with the urine and with the drinking of orange juice.<sup>30</sup> He concludes at the beginning of 12.4: "The causes and the principles of different things are in a sense different, but in a sense, if one speaks universally [*katholou*] and analogically [*kat' analogian*, i.e., proportionately analogical]<sup>31</sup> they are the same for all" (1070a31-32).<sup>32</sup> Aristotle discusses a range of different kinds of causes of motion which are diverse and yet which relate to some first, and he concludes 12.4, "Besides these there is that which as first of all things moves all things" (1070b28-35).<sup>33</sup> In other words, the First Unmoved Mover is the primary analogate upon which all things moveable are ontologically depen-

<sup>27</sup> Though this is not the occasion to argue the point, it is clear to me that for Aristotle *pros hen* analogy describes the foundational nature of all that is and that the first and unmoved mover is the primary analogate of absolutely everything else directly or indirectly.

<sup>28</sup> Aristotle *Metaph.* 12.7.

<sup>29</sup> Aristotle *Metaph.* 12.3 (1070a4-6).

<sup>30</sup> My examples, but in principle Aristotle *Metaph.* 12.3 (1070a9-30).

<sup>31</sup> An important question is how Aristotle regards the relationship "*kat' analogian*," to which he refers here, and those things which are *parōnuma*, to which he refers in *Categories* 1. That, however, is a question beyond the scope of this article. I also acknowledge that my argument here begs the question of the relationship of the paronymy of the *Categories* 1 and the proportionate analogy of *Metaphysics* 12.3-5. I recognize that my conclusion in what follows here requires much more argument and evidence; I state it here as a summary of my interpretation of the referenced passages.

<sup>32</sup> Barnes, 2.1691.

<sup>33</sup> Barnes, 2.1691.



dent secondary analogates and is, therefore, the first which causes movement in diverse entities. In his *Commentary*, Aquinas observes that this is the first of three proofs for the necessary existence of the First Unmoved Mover by Aristotle (the second is actuality and potentiality 1070b35-1071a16, and the third is substance and accidents 1071a17-1071b2). In each case, the First Unmoved Mover is the principle and cause in ontological relation to which all moveable entities move insofar as they do move (and, therefore, exist).<sup>34</sup> Aristotle's argument here is diffuse, as it often is when he is thinking through new material. The reader must do his or her share of work, gathering the points made with a view of the conclusion to which Aristotle is headed which, in this case is 12.7 and his exposition of the First Unmoved Mover. When one notes that in developing what I denominate "*pros hen* analogy," Aristotle does so in three different passages, as noted above. Again, in *Metaphysics* 4.2 (1003a33-1003b1), he distinguishes *pros hen* analogy from equivocal predication (*homōnuma*). In 11.3 (1060b31-36) he elaborates his distinction in 4.2 in relation to equivocal predication and adds the distinction in relation to genus. In 12.3-5 (1070a5),<sup>35</sup> he distinguishes *pros hen* analogy in relation to univocal predication (*sunōnuma*) and how *pros hen* analogy is like univocal predication but not identical to it. St. Thomas reads the material as a comparison of analogical predication with univocal which he indicates in the conclusion to his commentary on 12.5: "Hence we cannot say that they [i.e., principles] are the same without qualification," that would be univocal predication, "but only analogously."<sup>36</sup> Thus, analogical predication can serve as a language of science because there is a common and ontologically prior primary analogate, but it also encompasses the diversity of the world because the secondary analogates relate to the same primary analogate. Aristotle preserves the ability to know the world scientifically, and at the same time because things in the world relate to that same primary analogate in different ways, Aristotle preserves the real diversity of the world. Reading *Metaphysics* 12.3-5 this way, one sees that *pros hen* analogical predication is central to Aristotle's resolution of the problem of the one and the many. St. Thomas's work on the *Metaphysics* commentary was roughly contemporaneous with his writing of the *Summa Theologiae* which is also to say after completion of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps working through Aristotle's argument in *Metaphysics* 12 led Aquinas to re-think his argument for the existence of God in *SCG* 1, 15, 5. In any event, it is clear that Aristotle's God was the primary analogate, the one absolutely necessary and ontologically prior being that caused motion, whether proximately or remotely, in all other entities as secondary analogates. Aquinas's doctrine of God differs from Aristotle's in many ways, but it is clear he found the causal nature of the *pros hen* analogical relationship in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

<sup>34</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the "Metaphysics" of Aristotle*, trans. John P. Rowan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961), 872-75; XII.L4:C2474-2487.

<sup>35</sup> With respect to Aristotle's account of *pros hen* analogy in 12.3-5, I am indebted to Mr. Joseph Foster for calling my attention to this line of argument in the paper he wrote for my course, PHIL 305 "Metaphysics (for non-majors)," Winter-Spring Semester, March 15, 2017.

<sup>36</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary*, 875; XII.L4:C2486.

<sup>37</sup> Stump and Davies, *Handbook of Aquinas*, 553ff.

St. Thomas presents a clear statement of the doctrine of analogical predication, and specifically *pros hen* analogical predication, in his *Commentary on Aristotle's "Metaphysics."* He states:

It is evident that terms which are used in this way are midway between univocal and equivocal terms. In the case of univocity one term is predicated of different things with absolutely one and the same meaning; for example, the term *animal*, which is predicated of a horse and of an ox, signifies a living, sensory substance. In the case of equivocity the same term is predicated of various things with an entirely different meaning. This is clear in the case of the term *dog*, inasmuch as it is predicated of a constellation and of a certain species of animal. But in the case of those things which are spoken of in the way mentioned previously, the same term is predicated of various things with a meaning that is partly the same and partly different—different regarding the different modes of relation, and the same regarding that to which it is related; for to be a sign of something and to be a cause of something are different, but health is one. Terms of this kind, then, are predicated analogously, because they have a proportion to one thing.<sup>38</sup>

While this is a commentary, and thus it can always be argued that St. Thomas is merely explicating Aristotle's view, it is also clear that this view of Aristotle's is also his own.<sup>39</sup> It is also clear that Aristotle, followed by St. Thomas, understood *pros hen* analogy as a general principle and in no way exclusive to being. After all, Aristotle, and again followed by St. Thomas, begins his discussion of *pros hen* analogy with the subject of health or medical. He also discusses it in relation to justice.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, *Nicomachean Ethics* 5, for example, is illuminated by understanding Aristotle's discussion of the various states of justice and injustice as secondary analogates to the primary analogate of justice itself. This applies equally to his account of other moral virtues as well, for example of courage, non-courage, and semi-courage in *Nicomachean Ethics* 3. For Aristotle followed by St. Thomas, *pros hen* analogy is a foundational structure of reality. I shall argue that this structure is implicit to the Third Way. Without recognition of the underlying importance of *pros hen* analogy, the Third Way appears "ambiguous" or even "enigmatic,"<sup>41</sup> precisely as has been the case for the past four hundred years.

### St. Thomas on Possibility and Necessity

Before arguing my case, I want to adopt in part arguments advanced by Father Brian Davies for the soundness of the Third Way. To begin, Father Davies makes some nice distinctions about possibility and necessity. The necessary is what cannot not-be, or what cannot be other than it is. The possible is what can not-be, or what can be other than it is. Possible beings are those subject to generation and corruption, i.e., they were generated by other possible beings and they will perish. Such beings are material and moveable. An oak tree

<sup>38</sup> Aquinas, *Commentary*, 778; XI.L3:C2197.

<sup>39</sup> Monsignor Wippel develops St. Thomas's teaching from *De principiis naturae*, c. 6, but also correlates that material with *De veritate* q. 2, a. 11, *De potentia* q. 7, a. 7, *Summa contra gentiles* I, c. 34, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 13, a. 5 as well the *Commentary of Aristotle's Metaphysics* 4.2. Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 74-83.

<sup>40</sup> *Metaph.* 11.3.1061a19-27.

<sup>41</sup> Father van Steenberghen calls the phrase, "quandoque non est," "ambigu," and the phrase "aliquando nihil fuit in rebus," "tout à fait énigmatique." Fernand van Steenberghen, *Le Problème de l'existence de Dieu dans les écrits de S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Editions de l'institut supérieur de philosophie, 1980), 194.

produces acorns which can become oak trees, but every oak tree shall eventually perish. By “generate” and “perish,” St. Thomas means substantial change. When an oak tree falls to the ground, no longer a living being, it becomes a log and accessories to a log; the oak tree is no more.<sup>42</sup> To refer to the oak log and accessories as the “oak tree” is an homonymous designation. The log etc. used to be an oak tree, but part of the definition of oak tree is that it is living; when it ceases to live, substantial change occurs, and it ceases to be an oak tree. Such are possible beings. Such beings are naturally contingent upon one another. “This” oak tree is generated from “that” acorn; if that acorn had not existed, then neither would this oak tree. This oak tree is naturally contingent upon that acorn, but that acorn is naturally contingent upon yet another oak tree, which is contingent upon another acorn, etc. Such a line of argument leads to an infinite regress. St. Thomas, following Aristotle, distinguishes between two kinds of infinite regress. The first is *per se* infinite regress which—both say—is impossible. The second kind of infinite regress is *per accidens* which is possible according to both Aristotle and Aquinas.<sup>43</sup> Father Davies discusses St. Thomas’s teaching on *per accidens* infinite regress, quoting *ST* I, q. 46, art. 2, ad 7:

It is not impossible to proceed to infinity accidentally as regards efficient causes; for instance, if all the causes thus infinitely multiplied should have the order of only one cause, while their multiplication is accidental... It is likewise accidental to this particular man as generator to be generated by another man.; for he generates as a man, and not as the son of another man. For all men generating hold one grade in the order of efficient causes—viz., the grade of a particular generator. Hence it is not impossible for a man to be generated by man to infinity.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, humans generating humans and oak trees generating oak trees can go on to infinity. If there can be a *per accidens* infinite series, why would that not be sufficiently explanatory of the world’s existence? That is to say, *per accidens* infinite series works against the text of the Third Way in a way very like Monsignor Wippel’s argument of what I have characterized above as an unending relay race in which one possible being, before expiring, hands the baton onto the next possible being. St. Thomas could not mean what the text says at the most literal level, namely that if there were only possible beings then at some point in time nothing would exist and, therefore, nothing would exist now. The counter-factual in his own philosophical system is the *per accidens* infinite series which he acknowledges as possible. It is clear from this analysis that St. Thomas must have *meant* something in the Third Way which he does not *say*. My argument is that what he meant he regarded as self-evident and that he expected it to be self-evident to his readers, and finally, that what he meant is, in

<sup>42</sup> Davies, “Third Way,” 457.

<sup>43</sup> Though Sir Anthony Kenny gives evidence that he is aware of the distinction between *per accidens* and *per se* infinite regress (Kenny, *Five Ways*, 33), and his arguments seem to relate more to *per accidens* infinite regress. *Ibid.*, 24–33. His argument would clearer had he made explicit which form of infinite regress he means, and, if both, then when the one and when the other.

<sup>44</sup> Davies, “Third Way,” 458. Repeatedly while reading Father Davies’s article, I found myself expecting him to conclude—as I have—that St. Thomas is thinking of *pros hen* analogy and assumes that we are thinking of it too. Father Davies’ arguments seem to lead to the conclusion which he does not draw which is why I make use of his arguments so heavily.

fact, no longer self-evident even to sophisticated philosophical readers. To put this another way and to further my reframing of how to understand the Third Way, I suggest that the Third Way can and should be read as St. Thomas's explanation as to why a *per accidens* infinite series of possible beings is not an adequate explanation of the existence of the world. A *per accidens* infinite series can, in fact, be the case, but it does not explain how such an infinite series itself came into existence.

In search for this explanation, it is helpful to examine a distinction made by Father Lawrence Dewan in his discussion of *De potentia* 7.7, namely between "coming-to-be" versus "being." "Coming-to-be" is the natural contingency of those living beings in which the principle of cause is intrinsic. The causality of coming-to-be is univocal, thus "one having the same form as the effect." Oak trees cause oak trees; humans, humans. *ST* 1, q. 46, art. 2, ad 7, just quoted as cited by Father Davies, provides support for Father Dewan's observation that this coming-to-be of living things is univocal. St. Thomas refers to "the order of only one cause" and "one grade in the order of efficient causes—viz., the grade of a particular generator." "Coming-to-be" is according to the univocity of cause and effect. The cause of "being," by contrast, requires a cause in which the cause and effect are analogically related. This is true of artifacts in which there is nothing which necessitates their creation. The cause is disproportionate to its effect. That is equally true of beavers and their dams and humans and their skyscrapers. The human, however, having had a hard day at skyscraper building, goes home and then bakes a cake or writes a poem. The diversity demands an explanation of analogical causation, and, in fact, *pros hen* analogical causation, because what the skyscraper, cake, and poem have in common is that they are related to one and the same maker. The classes of natural artifacts (i.e., made by animals by instinct, such as beaver lodges and bird nests) and human artifacts both stand within the category of possibility and the cause of their "being" is still not absolute because neither animals nor humans make from nothing, rather from something. There remains the question of existence itself, i.e., not why there is a skyscraper or cake or poem, but why anything whatsoever exists. Analogical cause-to-effect can explain this fact of being-at-all, what I call "foundational thatness." Father Dewan wants to use this distinction to help resolve the Third Way by way of proportional analogy (i.e., one-to-another).<sup>45</sup> I do not find his account adequately explanatory because, to begin with, the one-to-another relationship of substance-accident explains the categorical causal relationship (i.e., the category of substance as cause of the category of accident), but it does not account for the diversity of accidents in their contingency upon substance in the way that *pros hen* analogy does.<sup>46</sup> I think he is right in arguing that the distinction of these two kinds of causality, "coming-to-be" and "being," helps explain the Third Way. Possible beings can explain each other's existence in the here and now, i.e., temporally, but possible beings—even an infinite series of them—cannot explain each other's foundational thatness.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Dewan, "Something, Rather Than Nothing," 73

<sup>46</sup> See again, Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 83.

<sup>47</sup> Father Owens makes this point, as it were, from the other side, "If all things are possibles, they are all preceded individually and collectively by the condition of non-existence" (Owens, "*Quandoque*," 462) and

Necessary beings are, by contrast, immaterial and immovable; they are not generable or corruptible; they cannot perish. Nevertheless, as Father Davies observes, “Even if something is ungenerable or imperishable, it is still something which exists. So how come it exists?”<sup>48</sup> To this question, he notes St. Thomas’s two possible replies: either it is in its nature to exist or it is caused by something else.<sup>49</sup> Here we see that generation and corruption are functions of materiality; causation is not. He makes the same distinction as made by Father Dewan but by another approach and with different vocabulary; it is the difference between “coming-to-be” and “being.” An immaterial immovable being can be caused, but it is not subject to generation or corruption. Thus, necessary beings may be caused or uncaused.<sup>50</sup> Immaterial intellects (e.g., angels, archangels etc.) and the human rational soul after death are examples of caused necessary beings.<sup>51</sup> They are necessary in relation to generation and corruption (i.e., not subject to generation or corruption), and thus they cannot not-exist. They are not, however, without potentiality in that they came into existence through the divine will and in that they can go out of existence by the divine will. They are not possible in the course of nature, but they are possible with respect to the divine will.<sup>52</sup> In their radical contingency upon the divine will, we find a hint that St. Thomas is, indeed, thinking about *pros hen* analogy because absent God who wills their existence, they cannot exist in any way whatsoever. All of reality is subject to this radical contingency, but only material beings subject to generation and corruption are also subject to natural contingency. Thus beings subject to natural contingency are possible only. Those necessary beings still subject to radical contingency are necessary in relation to those beings subject to natural contingency, but possible in relation to the first and uncaused necessary being, called God. Thus, the necessity of immaterial intellects and separate souls is a relative necessity, while the necessity of God is an absolute necessity.<sup>53</sup>

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again, “A cause was demanded to bring the things into existence, just as a cause would be required to destroy or annihilate them” (Ibid., 471).

<sup>48</sup> Davies, “Third Way,” 461.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 461.

<sup>50</sup> Father Davies uses the terms “derived” and “underived.” Ibid., 461. Father van Steenberghen traces the Neoplatonic roots of this argument, and distinguishes between the dependence and contingency. When a necessary being emanates from another, it is dependent but not contingent upon the being from which it is an emanation. He regards this stage of the argument as “purement théorique” because that component of Neoplatonic metaphysics does not have a place in the thought of St. Thomas. Van Steenberghen, *Le Problème*, 128-29 and 202-03. While van Steenberghen’s point is historically illuminating, I adopt the view, which seems to be standard in the literature, that St. Thomas is referring, preeminently, to the heavenly hierarchy (angels, archangels, etc.), possibly also to the human soul and celestial bodies.

<sup>51</sup> I am not taking up the issues of heavenly bodies which, according to St. Thomas following Aristotle, are material, but not subject to generation and corruption. Father Davies does briefly discuss them. Davies, “Third Way,” 452.

<sup>52</sup> I have advanced an argument implicit in Father Davies’s article: “Aquinas certainly believed that every created thing (including what he called ‘matter’) can be annihilated by God (as simply ceasing to sustain its existence, whereupon it would fall into nothing).” Davies, “Third Way,” 457.

<sup>53</sup> On the face of Father Connolly’s argument, it would seem that I disagree with his assertion regarding immaterial intellects, “Though their necessity is received, it is yet absolute.” Connolly, “Third Proof,” 307. On



Another way to put this is that immaterial intellects are analogically necessary, i.e., the term "necessary" has a meaning partly the same and partly different in this context relative to the absolute necessity of God.<sup>54</sup> This difference in the nature of necessity itself becomes clear by applying the distinction of what a thing is in itself and what it is to some other reality, a distinction St. Thomas explicitly invokes at the end of the Third Way. Possible beings are both possible with respect to themselves and to other beings. Immaterial intellects are necessary with respect to possible beings and with respect to themselves,

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closer reading, though my position and his emphasize different aspects of immaterial intellects' necessity, it is, indeed, a matter of emphasis rather than real difference, for my position is in agreement with his when he writes, "For example we may say that even necessary beings have a logical or objective potency to not-exist inasmuch as it is in the power of God to cease sustaining them in existence. But there would be such a contradiction were we to say that a necessary being had a real, subjective potency to suffer non-existence." *Ibid.*, 308.

<sup>54</sup> Sir Anthony Kenny misses this point. His 1969 *Five Ways* was a landmark publication as an analytic reading of the Five Ways and, indeed, for the philosophical challenges he raised to the Five Ways. It is valuable at this point to understand why from his analytic stance he was unable to discern the validity of the Five Ways. One such point is that because analogical predication is not available to him as anything other than a form of equivocation he errs by reading the term "necessary" as univocal when applied to both God and immaterial intellects. Sir Anthony writes: "In his early writings, St. Thomas utilized this notion of necessity, according to which only God is a necessary being, and all creatures are contingent, since only in God does essence entail existence (*De Veritate* 10, 12c). This is not the sense of necessity used in the Third Way... [He considers] 'necessary beings who have the cause of their necessity outside themselves' a description which could not apply to God" (Kenny, *Five Ways*, 48). One can also see this quotation that Sir Anthony also fails to distinguish the distinction between natural and radical contingency. Sir Anthony cites the work of Father Guy Jalbert that Aquinas had been converted to a different definition of "necessity," such that the word only meant simply "it cannot cease to exist." (*Ibid.*, 48.) Taking on the arguments of Father Jalbert goes beyond the scope of this article. It is sufficient to point out that even on that account, there is a clear difference between the necessity of a being which has always existed (necessity="could not ever have not existed") and the necessity of beings which once did not exist and then came into existence and thereafter could not cease to exist. He does acknowledge the work of Father Adrian Pattin who distinguishes between physical and metaphysical contingency which corresponds to the distinction I make between natural and radical contingency (Adriann Patin, "La structure de la Tertia Via," *Doctor Communis*, 18 (1965): 253-58). That does not lead Sir Anthony to reconsider his understanding of what St. Thomas means by "necessity" (For example, see Kenny, *Five Ways*, 50-51). He does, however, manage to arrive at the distinction between beings subject to corruption and those not but which can be annihilated, again the distinction I make between natural and radical contingency (*Ibid.*, 49-54). Even when he distinguishes between "caused and uncaused necessary beings," upon which he says "the concluding stage of his [St. Thomas's] argument turns," he still treats "necessity" as a univocal term (*Ibid.*, 68). Though he does not make reference to Father Connolly's article, his view is consonant with that of Father Connolly (Connolly, "Third Proof," 338). Sir Anthony comes closest to understanding the analogical character of "necessity" with respect to immaterial intellects when he distinguishes logical and natural necessity, but still his understanding of "necessity" remains univocal (Kenny, *Five Ways*, 69). It is not merely, he observes, that necessary beings are caused or uncaused, rather that the cause of its necessity is either with respect to itself or to something else ("Omne autem necessarium vel habet causam suae necessitatis aliunde, vel non habet."). Because there can be no infinite regress, he concludes that there must be one and only one being whose necessity is "*per se*." It is not only that a necessary being is either caused or uncaused, but whether, in addition, the necessity itself is derived from another being or is *per se*. He does not distinguish, however, between natural and radical contingency. Indeed, he cannot, because such a distinction would require understanding "contingent" analogically, a possibility not available to him because analogy is considered only a form of equivocation. There is a sense in which Sir Anthony's analysis is an exercise in exploring the limits of analytic philosophy. Without the metaphysics of analogy, he simply does not have the requisite tools to explain the meaning of the Third Way.



but possible beings with respect to God. God, however, is necessary with respect to himself and with respect to all other beings. God is absolutely necessary, i.e., necessary in an unqualified way. Immaterial intellects are necessary only in a qualified way; they are contingent upon God, but contingent in a way partly the same and partly different to the way that beings subject to generation and corruption are contingent. This analysis demonstrates again that the relationship of possible and caused necessary beings to God is that of secondary analogates in a *pros hen* analogical relationship to God as primary analogate. The ways in which possible and caused necessary beings are contingent upon God are partly the same and partly different, thus the relationship is analogical rather than univocal or equivocal. The difference between radical and natural contingency is implicit throughout Father Davies' article, but it only occasionally becomes explicit and never, in my view, as much as would be helpful to explain his resolution of the problems of the Third Way.<sup>55</sup> I suggest that this distinction between radical and natural contingency was, indeed, obvious to St. Thomas, and he expected it to be obvious to his readers.

Once the issue of radical contingency comes into view, so must the *pros hen* analogical relationship of caused necessary beings to the one uncaused necessary being, called God. At this point, I return to point two from St. Thomas's *SCG* argument: "What can be has a cause because, since it is equally related to two contraries, being and non-being, it must be owing to some cause that being accrues to it." For example, a cup of coffee is either hot or not-hot, sweet or not sweet, black or not black. Of course, there are multiple possible causes of the various qualities, but none of the qualities is possible without the substance in relation to which the qualities exist. The "cup of coffee" is the primary analogate in relation to which there is hotness or not, sweetness or not, blackness or not. Substance is the primary analogate which causes the accidents which are secondary analogates. Eliminate the primary analogate, and the secondary analogates are eliminated. What are primary analogates to their secondary analogates can themselves be secondary analogates to other primary analogates, and they in turn to still other primary analogates, and because there is no infinite regress, there must be a first.<sup>56</sup> Given that naturally contingent beings are ul-

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<sup>55</sup> In fact, I have brought together material from two different parts of his article. Davies, "Third Way, 452 and 459-62. For all his careful arguments, in the end, his conclusion, i.e., that the Third Way works, is not convincing. In order to arrive at a conclusion which satisfies him, he has to ignore or, at least, diminish the significance of the temporal aspect of the Third Way. That is quite something to do, given the marked repetition of signally temporal words. As Monsignor Wippel observes, not with respect to Father Davies's argument, but in general, "One might then doubt that one was still dealing with Thomas's third way, for the temporal references in the first part would now lose their temporal significance." Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 466.

The other problem I have with Father Davies's conclusion is that it depends upon extensive and complex arguments. That the Third Way works is still not obvious. It may be reasonable and consistent, but it is not obvious. My own argument is that the Third Way is intended by St. Thomas to be as obvious as the other four ways. I further contend that if one assumes *pros hen* analogy as an unstated metaphysical premise of the Third Way then the way it works is obvious. By "obvious," I mean something very different from, as an example, "regarded as sound by an analytic philosopher."

<sup>56</sup> Monsignor Wippel explains: "Thus Thomas writes that something may be predicated analogically of two things by reason of their relation to some third thing, as when being is predicated of quality and quantity be-

timately contingent upon the same uncaused primary and eternally necessary being, then the same argument holds for them.

### St. Thomas's Neoplatonic Addition to Aristotelian *Pros hen* Analogy

While St. Thomas regards Aristotle as "the philosopher," he is not merely an Aristotelian, rather he also fully embraces the Neoplatonism of St. Augustine, Boethius, Proclus, and (Pseudo) Dionysius. As a Neoplatonist, he incorporates the doctrine of participation. Monsignor Wippel explains the relationship of participation to *pros hen* analogy: "Analogy by reference to a first implies a priority and posteriority on the part of the primary analogate and the secondary analogate(s). This also means that a secondary analogate such as an accident may be regarded as sharing in or participating in being from its primary analogate, its substantial subject."<sup>57</sup> The *pros hen* analogical relationship is, therefore, ontological and not merely logical.<sup>58</sup> The primary analogate causes the secondary analogates. Therefore, secondary analogates are ontologically contingent upon the primary analogate. Father Bernard Montagnes, in summarizing work by Father Cornelio Fabro, writes about St. Thomas's philosophy of being, "Participation, causality and analogy are the three aspects under which philosophy grapples with being. The first two concern the reality of being itself. The third refers to the concepts by which being is represented. Thus analogy is presented by the author as the semantic expression of participation."<sup>59</sup> This is a point from which one can view St. Thomas's originality. He takes an Aristotelian principle, *pros hen analogy*—and a principle which Aristotle employs repeatedly—and loads Neoplatonic content into the principle, namely Platonic participation which Aristotle explicitly rejects.<sup>60</sup> For example, according to Aquinas, the nine accidental categories of being *participate* in the primary category, substance. Thus, in a sentence, Aquinas has synthesized Aristotelian and Neoplatonic metaphysics. He may have done so because he saw—if only implicitly—that Aristotle made claims regarding *pros hen* analogy which had no cor-

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cause of their relationships to substance. Here, therefore, we have the analogy of many to one [*pros hen*] once again, but as applied to predicating being of two accidents because of their relationships to substance." Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 83.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>58</sup> On this point, I follow Monsignor Wippel in agreement with Father Bernard Montagnes. By contrast, Monsignor Wippel distinguishes his own position from that Professor Ralph McNerny. Ibid., 87, n. 79.

<sup>59</sup> "Participation, causalité et analogie sont les trois aspects sous lesquels la philosophie aborde l'être, les deux premiers concernant la réalité même de l'être ; le troisième se rapportant aux concepts par lesquels l'être est représenté. Ainsi l'analogie est-elle présentée par l'auteur comme la sémantique de la participation." Montagnes, *Doctrine*, 10 (my translation).

<sup>60</sup> Father Montagnes calls the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic aspects, "les éléments de la doctrine thomiste de l'analogie," the title of a chapter in which he discusses at length the substance-accident relationships with respect to those "elements." Montagnes, *Doctrine*, 23 and 31-35. E.g., Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.1096a12-1097a13. It may be that Aristotle formulates *pros hen* analogy in response to the *aporia* which he uncovers in Plato's doctrine of the Forms. Part of the problem in Plato's doctrine is that things participate univocally in the Form when, in fact, things have a relationship to some primary reality which is at one and the same time common and diverse. This thought can only serve as a suggestion here since it goes far beyond the scope of this article.

respondent principle in Aristotle's broader metaphysics.<sup>61</sup> St. Thomas's use of the Neoplatonic doctrine of participation allows him to assert the reality of the nine accidental categories' ontological dependency upon substance which is the cause of those accidental categories. That is a statement of real being. But how can categories as diverse as quantity, quality, habitus, etc. all be caused by and dependent upon substance? *Pros hen* analogy provides the logical and semantic explanation: the causal dependence of the nine upon the one is simultaneously common and diverse. Participation and causality state the reality; analogy provides the language statement which explains how that reality works.

It would be difficult to over-estimate how important *pros hen* analogy was to St. Thomas's metaphysical thought. It was central to his understanding of reality's structure. At the same time, it is difficult for the typical twenty-first century philosopher to grasp that fact because analogy, in general, and *pros hen* analogy, in specific, is discredited as a mere form of equivocation, as has been noted above. What I suggest is that this chasm between what was obvious to St. Thomas, on the one hand, and the presuppositions of twentieth and twenty-first philosophers, on the other, present a special challenge to understanding the Third Way.

### ***Pros hen* Analogy as Implicit Principle in the Third Way**

My argument is supported by but not dependent upon the correspondence between the argument of *SCG* I, 15, 5 and the Third Way. I have shown that the language in *SCG* is consistent with language in which Aristotle—and Aquinas following him—explains *pros hen* analogy. I have also argued that the first half of the Third Way should be read as replacing the argument in the first part of *SCG* I, 15, 5. Further, I have demonstrated the importance of *pros hen* analogy in St. Thomas's thought. One might counter that my argument regarding *pros hen* analogy has focused on predicamental analogy—accidents are united in the unified being of a substance—without showing that the same analysis applies to transcendental analogy—diverse substances and non-substances too, for that matter, which participate in higher order reality. For the purposes of my argument, I point out that my discussion of *pros hen* analogy begins with transcendental analogy, e.g., how drinking orange juice and urine relate to health.<sup>62</sup> It might be further asserted against my position that "health" does not exist in the way that, say, Traveller the horse existed. Here again, one sees St. Thomas's synthesis of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophy: he needs Platonic participation to make *pros hen* analogy work transcendently with respect to really existing entities. The synthesis is one he appropriates from Averroes, as Father Montagnes explains, "This reference to a first as St. Thomas understands it—following Averroes who himself gives precision to the theory of Aristotle—as an ontologically causal relation joining the analogues to the first."<sup>63</sup> The primary analogue causes the secondary analogates. While St. Thomas rec-

<sup>61</sup> This idea was suggested to me in a conversation with Professor John Rist in which he asserted that Aristotle made claims which he had no metaphysical right to assert.

<sup>62</sup> For a complete treatment of this question, see Montagnes, *Doctrine*, 65-114.

<sup>63</sup> "Cette référence au premier, S. Thomas l'entend, à la suite d'Averroès qui lui-même précise la théorie d'Ar-

ognizes that Platonic participation is necessary to explain Aristotle's assertion, nevertheless the assertion is Aristotle's and not merely a later Thomistic (and Averroist) projection onto the Aristotelian text, as has been shown above in relation to *Metaphysics* 12.4.

To summarize, the first half of the Third Way is meant to show that there cannot only be possible beings in the world, because if there were only possible beings, in fact, there would be no beings which is patently absurd since there are now and at this very instant things which exist. We have already seen that there are major problems in the text of St. Thomas's argument when taken literally. Let us try a thought experiment, namely to suppose that as St. Thomas dictated the first half of the Third Way, he was, in fact, thinking of *pros hen* analogy and that he—presuming us to be reasonably good metaphysicians—supposed that we too would be thinking of *pros hen* analogy.<sup>64</sup> Does the argument now work? I suggest that his argument is that there cannot only be secondary analogates in the world, because then there would only be contingent beings—and here is the essential point—without a necessary being as primary analogate for the secondary analogates to be contingent upon. Eliminate the primary analogate, i.e., the first necessary being, eliminate the secondary analogates, i.e., all possible beings. As Father Dewan puts it: "There must exist a substance which is not a possible vis-à-vis being and not being. There must exist some *necessary being*, which precisely explains why there is something (the actuality of possible beings) rather than nothing (nothing whatsoever)."<sup>65</sup> Possible beings can explain each other in terms of their being "this" rather than "that," their existence in this form rather than in some other form, but not of their "foundational thatness," the fact of their existence at all.

The strong temporal aspect in the Third Way also suggests that points two through five are intended as a philosophical expansion of point two in the *SCG* I, 15, 5 argument. Thus the temporal aspect is key.<sup>66</sup> His *reductio ad absurdum* argument is, on this point, that if there were only temporal beings, i.e., possible beings, none would now exist. That makes sense, if those temporal beings are secondary analogates. There must be an eternal being as stated in *SCG* I, 15, 5, which is the primary analogate, thereby reading the temporal aspect of the Third Way with the eternal aspect of the *SCG* argument. Implic-

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istote, comme un rapport de causalité ontologique reliant les analogués au premier." Montagnes, *Doctrines*, 28 (my translation).

<sup>64</sup> Monsignor Wippel makes a similar suggestion regarding the Fourth Way, there in regard to a Neoplatonic metaphysical principle: "One writer has suggested that perhaps his [St. Thomas's] powers of penetration were such that he immediately saw that varying degrees of transcendental perfection require a subsisting maximum to account for their imperfect realizations in the beings we experience. Within a Platonic and Neoplatonic framework, the self-evidence of such a claim might be more readily granted. But within Thomas's distinctive metaphysical approach, even though a considerable Platonic and Neoplatonic influence must be recognized, today's reader of his text may protest: the principle in question is not self-evident to him or her." Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 475.

<sup>65</sup> Dewan, "Something Rather Than Nothing," 75.

<sup>66</sup> Here I follow Monsignor Wippel. Father Davies argues that the temporal aspect of the Third Way need not be read in a strong way. Davies, "Third Way," 456-57. Further, Father Owens' arguments are dispositive on this point: "The possibility is essentially conditioned by time. Time is metaphysically required for it." Owens, "*Quandoque*," 453. See also 455, 457-60.

it is that time is contingent upon eternity. If eternity were not a reality, time would simply not be possible.

## Conclusion

I have argued for *pros hen* analogy as the key to resolve the apparent problems in St. Thomas's Third Way to prove the existence of God. To that end, I have correlated the arguments of Fathers Dewan and Davies in support of my argument and also showing where I use their arguments as a basis to advance my own, namely that the Third Way can and should be read as St. Thomas's explanation as to why a *per accidens* infinite series of possible beings is not an adequate explanation of how the world comes to exist at all. While Father Dewan does make reference to one-to-another analogy, unique to my argument is the use of Aristotle's development of *pros hen* analogy as a legitimate form of predication in his *Metaphysics*, observing how he contrasts *pros hen* analogical with equivocal predication in Book 4, with genus in 11 and with univocal predication in Book 12.

In developing my argument for *pros hen* analogy as the key to resolving problems in the Third Way, I have distinguished between the natural contingency of possible beings in their temporal coming-to-be in contrast with the radical contingency of not only all possible beings but of all necessary beings as well save one, that first, uncaused, and eternally necessary being upon which all else is radically contingent, called God. There are then the completely possible beings of both natural and radical contingency, the relatively necessary beings not subject to natural contingency but subject to radical contingency, and the absolutely necessary being, upon which all other beings are radically contingent. There must be a necessary reality which is absolutely and eternally prior to all possible beings in time to all other necessary beings in eternity. All possible beings and all other necessary beings must be radically contingent upon that eternally prior necessary reality. Thus, that eternally prior necessary reality, God, is the primarily analogate upon which all other beings both necessary and possible are ontologically dependent. Without that eternally prior necessary reality no other being could exist. That is the point on which the Third Way turns, and it is only with respect to the metaphysical principle of *pros hen* analogy that that claim can be considered obvious. This investigation sets the principle of *pros hen* analogy in its rightful place as a legitimate and valuable philosophical principle and—at very least—to be acknowledged for its importance in the thought of both Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas.

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## Trauma und Transzendenz. Zur Existenzphilosophie Kierkegaards

*Abstract:* Sören Kierkegaard gilt als „Vater der Existenzphilosophie“. Durch Schwermut bzw. Melancholie „zuinnerst in die Frage nach sich selber geworfen“ (Wilhelm Weischedel), habe er das Thema der Existenz philosophisch entdeckt. Tatsächlich, dies versucht der vorliegende Artikel zu zeigen, war Kierkegaard traumatisiert. Ein Trauma ist, anders als Schwermut oder Melancholie (modern gesprochen: Depression), keine psychische Erkrankung, sondern eine „gesunde Reaktion auf eine kranke Situation“, die die Verarbeitungsmöglichkeiten des Individuums überfordert. Das Selbst wird dabei gefährdet oder gar zerstört. Der Versuch, „für sich selbst durchsichtig zu werden“ (Joachim Garff), auf den Kierkegaards Denken hinauslief, kann entsprechend als philosophische Traumabewältigung gelten – jedoch nicht so, dass dabei ein psychisches Problem, sondern Existenzielles verarbeitet wird. Denn: Im Trauma erfährt man die „Abgründigkeit des Seins“, es führt „direkt in die Tiefenstruktur der Existenz“ (A. Längle). Dass Kierkegaard dabei Halt in der Transzendenz gefunden hat, erweist sich als immanent konsequent.

*Keywords:* Trauma, traumatische Erfahrung, Angst, Ohnmacht, Verzweiflung, Sünde, Schuld, Existenz, Transzendenz, Selbst, Gott, Seele, Leid, Krankheit, Tod, Endlichkeit, Ewigkeit, Christentum, Ethik.

„Was ist ein Dichter? Ein unglücklicher Mensch, der tiefe Qualen in seinem Herzen birgt, dessen Lippen aber so geformt sind, dass, indem der Seufzer und der Schrei über sie ausströmen, sie klingen wie eine schöne Musik.“ (Kierkegaard 1975, 27). Schöner, treffender kann man die Kunst des Schreibens nicht beschreiben – Kierkegaard beherrschte sie perfekt. Allein das Wort, vor allem wenn es dem Ausdruck des (eigenen) Inneren dient, „tendiert dazu, dass man Pointen sucht – es rutscht häufig ein wenig von der Wahrheit weg“ (Armin Müller-Stahl). Und diese minutiöse Verschiebung, das, was die Qual, die Verletzung, den Schmerz im dichterischen Ausdruck zur schönen Musik werden lässt, ist das *wahre* Elend des Leids. Sie macht es zu etwas „im Prinzip Unsagbaren“ (Gottschlich 2007, 134) und die Leidenden zu Verlorenen. Kierkegaard war so ein *Verlorener*. Er war, wie er selbst sagte, „die Ausnahme“

„Mein Leben ist ein großes, andern unbekanntes und unverständliches Leiden; alles sah aus wie Stolz und Eitelkeit, war es aber nicht. Ich hatte meinen Pfahl im Fleisch (...). Am Tage ging es in Arbeit und Anspannung, und am Abend wurde ich beiseite gelegt“ (zit. n. Weischedel 1997, 237).

Dass Kierkegaards Denken, mit dem er versuchte, „das Leiden an der eigenen melancholischen Befindlichkeit mit Einsichten in wesentliche Aspekte der menschlichen Existenz zu verbinden“ (Horst 2003, 363), einen traumatischen Hintergrund hatte, ist fast

schon ein Allgemeinplatz. Kierkegaards Werk – wie mittlerweile selbst in Zeitungsartikeln oder Rundfunk-Features nachzulesen/hören – gilt als „philosophische Traumabewältigung“<sup>1</sup>. Zumindest war es von „traumatischen Erfahrungen“ stark geprägt, wie Kierkegaards dänischer Biograf, Joakim Garff<sup>2</sup>, feststellt. Und zwar in einer besonderen Art und Weise: „Der literarische Gestus, mit dem sich Kierkegaard (...) die traumatischen Erfahrungen (...) vom Leibe zu halten vermag“, sei, so Garff, „von einer (...) beinahe lyrischen Leichtigkeit“ (Garff 2005, 37). Bis zu seinem Spätwerk waren Abwehr und Kompensation dieser Erfahrungen, die „schöne Musik“, formvollendet: „Kierkegaards Werke sind eine vorzügliche Verdrängung, ein Ablenkungsmanöver, eine Übersprungshandlung im Folioformat“ (Garff 2005, 617). Erst in *Die Krankheit zum Tode* (1848), die vom *Selbst* handelt, kann er „sich“ nicht mehr „beiseite legen“. Kierkegaard schreibt sich darin „dicht an sein eigenes existenzielles Problem heran“ (Garff 2005, 616): „für sich selbst durchsichtig zu werden“ (Garff 2005, 617). „Es rührt sich etwas in mir“, notierte er in einem zeitgleich erschienenen Text. „Ich werde mich deswegen jetzt ruhig verhalten, keinesfalls zu angestrengt arbeiten, ja kaum angestrengt (...), sondern zusehen, daß ich zu mir selbst komme (...)“ (zit. n. Garff 2005, 617).

### Das Unsagbare

Was (zunächst) unsagbar ist und wie „unzugängliche“, „rätselhafte Räume im Selbst“ (Garff 2005, 613) Kierkegaard den Zugang zu sich versperrt, sind die „traumatisierenden Übergriffe des Vaters“ (Garff 2005, 38). Sie sind abgespalten, verbunden mit dem für ein Trauma typischen Gefühl der *Leere*: „Die ganze Frage nach dem Selbst in tieferem Sinne wird eine Art von blinder Tür im Hintergrund seiner Seele, innerhalb deren überhaupt nichts ist.“ (Garff 2005, 613f.). Es sei „entsetzlich“, schrieb Kierkegaard im Herbst 1848 rückblickend, wenn er „an den dunklen Hintergrund denke“, den sein Leben „von frühester Zeit an“ gehabt habe: „Die Angst, mit der mein Vater meine Seele erfüllt hat, seine eigene furchtbare Schwermut, das viele, was man in dieser Hinsicht nicht einmal aufzeichnen kann“ (zit. n. Garff 2005, 37); „furchtbares Unrecht“ habe sein Vater wider ihn getan – „ein Greis, der seine ganze Schwermut einem armen Kinde auflädt, um nicht von dem noch Entsetzlicheren zu sprechen“ (ebd.). Was Letzteres betrifft, so Garff, suche man „vergeblich nach dem konkreten Inhalt in des Vaters vermessenen Übergriff“ (Garff 2005, 38). Nur so viel deutet Kierkegaard an: Er habe sich „verhoben an den Eindrücken, unter denen der schwermütige alte Mann, der sie auf mich gelegt hatte, selber zusammensank – ein Kind, auf

1 Deutschlandfunk 03.05.2013: „Traumabewältigung eines Philosophen“.

2 Viele Belegstellen zu Kierkegaard sind in diesem Artikel Garffs Kierkegaard-Biografie entnommen (im Text kenntlich gemacht als „zit. n. Garff“), die an Detailkenntnis alle anderen Kierkegaard-Biografien überragt – nicht zuletzt, weil sie sich auch auf Neben-Werke Kierkegaards bezieht, in denen die lebensgeschichtlichen Bezüge seines Schreibens deutlicher hervortreten als in den „offiziellen“ Schriften. Gerechtfertigt ist ein solches Vorgehen durch Kierkegaards eigene Diktion: Nicht nur, weil bei ihm wie keinem anderen Philosophen Leben und Werk nicht voneinander zu trennen sind, da Kierkegaard „immer auch auf sich selbst bezogen“ dachte (Garff 2005, 16) (*implizite* Evidenz). Sondern weil Kierkegaard auch *explizit* davon überzeugt war, dass er vor allem „wegen der Interessantheit seiner ‚Existenz‘ – ausdrücklich *deshalb* – ‚in Zukunft gelesen und studiert‘ werden würde“ (Garff 2005, 16).

wahnsinnige Weise dazu verkleidet, ein schwermütiger alter Mann zu sein. Fürchterlich!“ (zit. n. Garff 2005, 38). In innere Kämpfe sei er „gestoßen worden“ – Kämpfe, „an die niemand denkt, geschweige denn darüber spricht“ (ebd.). Sein Leben sei ihm „von Kind auf“ (Weischedel 1977, 231) „furchtbar verwirrt worden“ (Garff 2005, 38); das „ganze Dasein“ ängstige ihn, alles sei ihm „unerklärlich“ – am meisten eben er selbst (Weischedel 1977, 231).

## Einblicke

Will man verstehen, was Kierkegaard nur andeutet, will man ihm „die Geheimnisse entlocken“, dann ist man darauf angewiesen, seine Schriften „abzuhorchen“ – „argwöhnisch, beharrlich und unaufhörlich“ (Garff 2005, 39).

*Entweder-Oder* (1843), das bereits eingangs zitierte Werk, das Kierkegaard über Nacht berühmt machte und auf die Grundproblematik seines philosophisch-literarischen Schaffens hin deutet, beginnt mit einer Klage: „Die erste Frage in dem ersten (...) Unterricht, in dem ein Kind herangebildet wird, ist bekanntlich diese: Was muß ein Kind haben? *Haue – Haue*. Mit solchen Betrachtungen fängt das Leben an...“ (Kierkegaard 1975, 27f.; kursiv WT). Es folgen Vorhaltungen an die Täter: „Und wem hat das Kind denn die ersten Prügel zu verdanken, wem anders als den Eltern?“ (Kierkegaard 1975, 28). Selbst das erste *Lachen* eines Kindes wird als *Schmerz* gedeutet – als ein „entstehendes Weinen, welches durch Schmerz erregt wird“ (Kierkegaard 1975, 29). Gedanken über Einsamkeit, Selbstentwertung und Ohnmacht folgen (Kierkegaard 1975, 30ff.), Ansätze zu einem „krankhaften Reflektieren über das Ich“, das in eins gesetzt wird mit einem „Sich-Melden“ – „wie dem des Säuglings, wozu wir (...) abgerichtet“ (sic!) werden (Kierkegaard 1975, 30f.).

Nach Weischedel resultiere aus eben diesem „ungewöhnlichen Grad von Selbstbezogenheit“ (Weischedel 1977, 231) Kierkegaards Schwermut, die gemeinhin als dessen wesentlicher Charakterzug gilt; doch ist jene, wie man aus der modernen Traumaforschung weiß, oft selbst wiederum nur Resultat – einer Traumatisierung (hier nun offensichtlich auch physischer Gewalterfahrung). Geradezu klassisch werden deren Folgen beschrieben: sich „fremd“ fühlen „im Leben“ (Kierkegaard 1975, 32; kursiv WT); „Seele“ und „Geist“ „immerfort gepeinigt von (...) qualvollen Wehen!“<sup>3</sup> (Kierkegaard 1975, 32f.): „Dieses Leben ist verkehrt und grauenhaft, nicht auszuhalten“ (Kierkegaard 1975, 33); es „ist ganz und gar sinnlos“ (Kierkegaard 1975, 33), „gleichet einer ewigen Nacht“ (Kierkegaard 1975, 46).

Sören Kierkegaard wurde als 7. Kind eines 56jährigen Mannes und einer 45 Jahre alten Frau im Jahr 1813 geboren. Seine Mutter war ursprünglich das Dienstmädchen des Vaters, welches dieser, nachdem er sie unehelich geschwängert hatte, heiratete. Über jene „sexuelle Entgleisung“ soll er sich trotz der Ehelichung „zeitlebens (...) Skrupel gemacht“ haben (Weischedel 1977, 231). Kierkegaard wird sie als „Verbrechen“, als „Schuld“, die auch ihn betreffe, bis zu seinem Tod begleiten.

Er wuchs in einem Haus auf, „wo Vergnügungen (...) selten waren“ (Garff 2005, 30);

<sup>3</sup> Vgl. dazu Onno van der Harts berühmte Trauma-Definition: „Traumatisiert zu sein bedeutet, verdammt zu sein zu einer geistigen Endlosschleife unerträglicher Erfahrungen.“

die permanent „gedrückte Stimmung“ wurde in den Jahren 1819-1822 noch lastender, als Krankheit und Tod zweier Geschwister eintraten.

Kierkegaards Vater war „von kräftigem Bau, die Gesichtszüge bestimmt und entschlossen“ (Garff 2005, 35). Er trat „mit einer Macht auf den Plan, die einem alttestamentlichen Patriarchen den Rang streitig machen konnte“ (Garff 2005, 34); „streng und berechnend“ war er, „von seiner Umgebung Gehorsam, Sparsamkeit und eine Sorgfalt für das Detail“ verlangend, „die bis ans Unerträgliche ging“ (Garff 2005, 34). Dabei verband sich sein „Konservatismus“ mit einem „umfassenden Respekt vor allem, was Rang und Glanz hatte“ (Garff 2005, 35) – er hatte (also) ein *Selbstwertproblem*.

Sören Kierkegaard war „schmächtig und blaß“ (Garff 2005, 43), das Gegenbild zum übermächtigen Vater. Er galt als „still, fremd, freudlos, gehemmt, zurückgezogen“ (Garff 2005, 43). Da von ihm kolportiert ist, dass er „immer an Mutters Rockzipfeln“ hing (Garff 2005, 29), dürfte er hier Schutz vor den Übergriffen des Vaters und der bedrohlichen Atmosphäre, die von ihm ausging, gesucht haben. Lieb- und wertlos wurde er gehalten: „Spielzeuge wurden als überflüssig angesehen“ (Garff 2005, 30), „anspruchlos, ja geradezu ärmlich“ war er gekleidet (Garff 2005, 35). Die *emotionale Vernachlässigung*, die darin zum Ausdruck kommt, trug mit zu jener „Selbstbezogenheit“ bei, von der bereits die Rede war: Da sein Zuhause „nicht viele Zerstreuungen (bot), und da er so gut wie niemals herauskam, wurde er es früh gewohnt, sich mit sich selber zu beschäftigen und mit seinen eigenen Gedanken“ (Garff 2005, 36).

Wilhelm Weischedel sieht in letzterem zugleich einen „Ausweg“ aus der „Schwermut“, da die Gedanken, die Kierkegaard später „unaufhörlich“ zuströmen, nach Ausdruck verlangten und Kierkegaard in der „dichterischen, philosophischen und theologischen Produktion“ seine „persönliche Problematik“ verarbeite, indem er sie *objektiviere* (Weischedel 1977, 232): „Aus dem in Schwermut und Reflexion umgepflügten Boden erwächst, was Kierkegaard als wesentliches Wort zu sagen hat. Wer, wie er, zuinnerst in die Frage nach sich selber geworfen ist, dem muß es, auch wo er philosophiert, entscheidend um den Menschen gehen. Und dies nicht so sehr im Sinne eines wissenschaftlichen Problems, das den Fragenenden unbeteiligt lassen könnte, sondern so, daß der Philosophierende *selber* in seinem Fragen *auf dem Spiel steht*. Denn alles wesentliche Erkennen betrifft die Existenz.“ (Weischedel 1977, 232; kursiv WT.) So wird Kierkegaard „im Nachsinnen über den Menschen ein existenzieller Denker“ (ebd.). Sein Philosophieren gerät zur radikalen *Selbsterkenntnis*; aus ihr, der „Selbsterfahrung“, soll der „Begriff des Menschen“ gewonnen werden, eine Aufdeckung dessen erfolgen, was menschliche Existenz *ist* (Weischedel 1977, 233; kursiv WT.).

## Angst und Verzweiflung

Selbsterfahrung ist für Kierkegaard in erster Linie die bereits erwähnte Erfahrung der „*Fremdheit zur Welt*“ und „zu sich selber“, aber auch der „inneren *Zerrissenheit*“. Und vor allem: der „*abgründigen Angst*“ und der „*Verzweiflung*“ (Weischedel 1977, 233; kursiv WT.). Sie ist somit der Prototyp *traumatischer* Erfahrung, die bereits als solche die „Grunddimensionen“ menschlicher Existenz berührt (Längle 2007, 110). Daher kann Kierkegaard auch sagen: Es handele sich hier nicht nur um sein „persönliches Schicksal“, sondern um

die „*Grundsituation des Menschen*“ (Weischedel 1977, 233, kursiv WT). Der Mensch, so Kierkegaard, lebe „unausweichlich in der *Angst* und in der *Verzweiflung*“ (ebd.).

Ein derartiges Leben war ihm von Kindheit an vertraut. Ergänzend zu den bereits zitierten Stellen findet man den knappen, aber deutlichen Hinweis: Die *Angst*, mit der der Vater seine „Seele erfüllt“ hatte, habe bewirkt, dass sein Leben „in der frühesten Kindheit schon verstört“ war, und zwar „in seinem tiefsten Grunde“ (Weischedel 1977, 235). Diese Angst war *religiös* gefärbt und von auffallender Ambivalenz: „Ich bin von einem Greis ungeheuer streng im Christentum erzogen worden“ (zit. n. Garff 2005, 38) – „Eine solche Angst bekam ich vor dem Christentum, und doch fühlte ich mich so stark zu ihm hingezogen“ (zit. n. Garff 2005, 37). Es ist diese Ambivalenz, die sich in Kierkegaards zweitem wichtigem Werk, *Der Begriff der Angst* (1844), nahezu 1:1 in der Reflexion des Phänomens selbst wiederfindet. Angst wird dort, wegweisend für ihr Verständnis bis heute, als „sympathetische Antipathie“ (Garff 2005, 319) gedeutet: „Angst ist (...) eine Begierde nach dem, was man fürchtet“; sie „ist eine fremde Macht, die den einzelnen Menschen faßt, und doch kann man sich nicht davon losreißen und will das nicht, denn man fürchtet zwar, aber was man fürchtet, das begehrt man.“ (Garff 2005, 320). Angst mache „den Menschen ohnmächtig, und die erste Sünde“ geschehe „immer in Ohnmacht“; insofern sei Angst zugleich die „eigentliche Bestimmung der Erbsünde“ (ebd.).

Die theologische Wendung kommt hier unerwartet, zumal *Ohnmacht* – neben der Angst zur Grundgestimmtheit eines Traumas gehörend – das Gegenteil von *Freiheit*, der Möglichkeit, *nicht* zu sündigen, ist, wie Kierkegaard den biblischen Sündenfall später deuten wird. Psychologisch verträgt sich beides jedoch; denn die Schuldzuschreibung an sich selbst („Möglichkeit, nicht zu sündigen“) ist eine imaginierte Möglichkeit, wieder die Kontrolle zu gewinnen und dadurch das unerträgliche Gefühl der *Ohnmacht* und des *Ausgeliefertseins* zu überwinden. Sie ist Ausdruck derselben „emotionalen Ambivalenz“, mit der Kierkegaard den Vater – in einer „Loyalität, die an die paradoxe Hingebung von Inzestopfern erinnern kann“ (Garff 2005, 37)! – in Schutz nimmt: „Barmherziger Gott, wie doch auch mein Vater in seiner Schwermut furchtbares Unrecht wider mich getan hat – (...) und doch bei all dem der beste Vater“ (Tagebuchaufzeichnung vom 9. Juni 1847; zit. n. Garff 2005, 37).

Kierkegaard konnte diese tieferen psychologischen Zusammenhänge nicht sehen, er schrieb zu einer Zeit, „in der die moderne Psychologie kaum in die Pubertät gekommen“ war (Garff 2005, 320). Daher löste er das Problem auf andere Weise – ausgehend vom Gefühl der *Verzweiflung*, dem er eine besondere Deutung gab:

„VERZWEIFLUNG IST: ‚DIE KRANKHEIT ZUM TODE‘ (...)“

Soll im strengsten Sinne von einer Krankheit zum Tode die Rede sein, muß es eine sein, bei der das Ende der Tod ist, deren Tod das Letzte ist. Und das ist gerade die Verzweiflung.

Doch in einem anderen Sinne ist Verzweiflung noch bestimmter die Krankheit zum Tode. Es ist nämlich weit entfernt davon, daß man, direkt verstanden, an dieser Krankheit stirbt, oder daß diese Krankheit mit dem leiblichen Tode endet. Im Gegenteil, die Qual der Verzweiflung ist eben nicht sterben zu können. Sie hat somit mehr mit dem Zustand des Todkranken zu tun, wenn er daliegt und mit dem Tode ringt und nicht sterben kann. So heißt also krank *zum* Tode sein, nicht sterben können, doch nicht so, als wäre noch Hoffnung auf Leben, nein, die Hoff-



nungslosigkeit ist, daß selbst die letzte Hoffnung, der Tod, nicht besteht. Wenn der Tod die größte Gefahr ist, hofft man auf das Leben; wenn man aber die noch schrecklichere Gefahr kennenlernt, hofft man auf den Tod. Wenn also die Gefahr so groß ist, daß der Tod die Hoffnung geworden ist, dann ist die Verzweiflung die Hoffnungslosigkeit, nicht einmal sterben zu können.

In dieser letzten Bedeutung ist nun die Verzweiflung die Krankheit zum Tode, dieser qualvolle Widerspruch, diese Krankheit im Selbst, ewig zu sterben, zu sterben und doch nicht zu sterben, den Tod zu sterben. Denn sterben bedeutet, daß es vorbei ist, aber den Tod sterben bedeutet, daß man das Sterben durchlebt; und läßt es sich einen einzigen Augenblick erleben, so ist es damit so, daß es für ewig erlebt wird.“ (Kierkegaard 1956, 184f.)

Nirgendwo in der philosophischen Literatur findet man treffender beschrieben, was Verzweiflung *ist* – so fühlt sich Verzweiflung an: „ewig zu sterben“ und doch nicht sterben zu können (i.S.v. „den Tod zu sterben“, wodurch man von der Qual erlöst würde) (Kierkegaard 1956, 184). Verzweiflung ist eine „Selbstausszehrung“, eine „ohnmächtige Selbstausszehrung“, da sie „nicht vermag, was sie selber will“ – „sich selber“ zu verzehren und damit zu beenden (Kierkegaard 1956, 185; kursiv WT); der „Verzweifelte“ möchte „von sich selber loskommen“, „zu nichts werden“ – aber er *kann* es nicht (ebd.).

Wieder steht hier im Zentrum das im Trauma *gefährdete* Selbst (Seidler 2013, 60). Und wieder spielt hier – wie bereits oben, im Falle der Angst – *Macht* eine zentrale Rolle: „Das Selbst, das er (der Verzweifelte, WT) verzweifelt sein will, ist ein Selbst, das er nicht ist“; das Selbst, *das* er ist, wurde von einer „Macht“ gesetzt, von der er es „losreißen“ will (Kierkegaard 1956, 187). Dies aber „vermag er trotz allen Verzweifeln nicht; trotz aller Anstrengungen der Verzweiflung ist jene Macht die stärkere, und sie zwingt ihn dazu, das Selbst zu sein, das er nicht sein will“<sup>4</sup> (ebd.).

## Die Wende

In *Die Krankheit zum Tode*, seinem dritten wichtigen Werk, gelingt es Kierkegaard nun, „für sich selbst durchsichtig zu werden“ und die traumatische Verstrickung in Angst und Verzweiflung zu lösen. Auch hier ist der entscheidende Aspekt wieder ein theologischer: Kierkegaard erkennt, dass sein bisheriger Gottesbegriff „eine Art Abwehrmechanismus“ gewesen sein könne, dessen er sich bedient habe, „um seine Schwermut zu bewahren und seine Verslossenheit, die er liebt und nicht aufgeben will, weil er damit auch sein Schreiben, seine Kunst aufgeben müßte“ (Garff 2005, 615). Er habe sich daher erlaubt, „Gott ein klein bißchen anders zu dichten“, als Gott, „ein wenig nach Art eines lieben Vaters, der allzusehr sich richtet nach des Kindes – einzigem Wunsche“: dass die Ewigkeit die Schwermut „fortnehmen“ möge (Garff 2005, 615). Dieser Dichter, der „Dichter der Religiosität“, so Kierkegaard, „liebt Gott über alle Dinge, Gott, welcher ihm der einzige Trost ist in seiner geheimen Qual, und dennoch liebt er die Qual, sie will er nicht fahren lassen. Er möchte

<sup>4</sup> Es war dies eben die Macht des Vaters, der „seine ganze Schwermut einem armen Kinde auflädt“ (Garff 2005, 37) und dazu brachte „auf wahnsinnige Weise (...) verkleidet, ein schwermütiger alter Mann zu sein“ (Garff 2005, 38). Diese „Nicht-Anerkennung des eigenen Seins“ wird als ein „Sterben“ erlebt, als ein „Ohnmachtsgefühl“, das „dem Sterben gleichkomme“, wie es typisch ist für eine „fremdbestimmte ‚Identität‘“, die aus traumatogenen ‚Introjekten‘ besteht“ (Gruen 2014, 36f.).



so gerne er selbst sein vor Gott, aber nicht in Hinsicht auf den *festen Punkt, in dem das Selbst leidet*, allda will er verzweifelt nicht er selbst sein; er hofft darauf, daß die Ewigkeit es fortnehmen werde“ (zit. n. Garff 2005, 615; kursiv WT). Hierin liege auch die tiefere Bedeutung der Sünde: „Sünde ist: *vor Gott, oder mit dem Gedanken an Gott verzweifelt nicht man selbst sein wollen, oder verzweifelt man selbst sein wollen*“ – „zu dichten anstatt zu sein“ (zit. n. Garff 2005, 614), das ist Sünde. Der Gott, den sich der Dichter *erdichtet*, ist „ein Gott, der ihm den Schmerz zu behalten erlaubt, den Schmerz nämlich, der schon immer die unergründliche Quelle für Kunst gewesen ist“ (Garff 2005, 615f.) – insofern sei der Schmerz auch ein „selbstverschuldetes Leiden“ (Garff 2005, 616). Dieses Manöver durchschaue er (der „Dichter der Religiosität“ alias Kierkegaard) nun (Garff 2005, 616): „Er versteht es dunkel, die Forderung an ihn sei, diese Qual fahren zu lassen“, d.h. „im Glauben (...) sie auf sich zu nehmen als mit zu seinem Selbst gehörig“ (zit. n. Garff 2005, 616). Tue er es nicht, „weil er nicht *will*“, so ende „sein Selbst in Dunkelheit“ (zit. n. Garff 2005, 615f.). Will Kierkegaard *wirklich* „für sich *selbst* durchsichtig werden“, dann muss er „von dem Liebesten, das er besitzt, absterben“ (Garff 2005, 617f.; kursiv WT): Er muss seine Schwermut und Verzweiflung „aufgeben“ (Garff 2005, 617). Und dann muß er „glauben, dass seine Schwermut und seine Verzweiflung vergeben worden sind.“ (Garff 2005, 618).

Philosophisch liest sich das so: In der „äußersten Verzweiflung“ erfährt der Mensch, „dass er nicht bloße Endlichkeit ist“, sondern eine „Synthese von Endlichkeit und Unendlichkeit“ (Kierkegaard 1956, 180). „Das Endliche in seinem Wesen ist es, das ihn in den Wirbel des irdischen Daseins wirft und darin festhält. Der andere Teil seines Wesens dagegen macht es ihm möglich, in unendlicher Sehnsucht mit einer anderen Welt in Verbindung zu treten. Von dort erhält er Trost in der Bekümmernis der Verzweiflung, zugleich aber auch die gültigen Anweisungen für sein *Selbstwerden*, sein Handeln und Entscheiden.“ (Weischedel 1977, 234f.; kursiv WT). Nämlich: jenen „festen Punkt, in dem das Selbst leidet“ (Garff 2005, 615) *ganz* anzunehmen – nicht nur als inspiratorische Quelle des künstlerisch-dichterischen Schaffens, sondern als seine *Existenz*, „als mit zu seinem Selbst gehörig“ (Garff 2005, 616). Dies ist für Kierkegaard zugleich der „Augenblick ethischer Erfüllung“ (Hübner 2006, 40); denn jene „Synthese von Endlichkeit und Unendlichkeit“ offenbart einen *ethischen Grundwiderspruch*, in den der Mensch gestellt ist und den er in seiner *Existenz* „aufzuheben sucht“ (Hübner 2006, 37). Diese Aufhebung geht nicht ohne transzendenten Sinn, ohne die Hoffnung auf Vergebung – auf Gnade: Nur, wenn es „sich im Unendlichen gründet“, kann das Trauma „zur Ruhe“ kommen (Weischedel 1977, 235).

### **„Dieses Lebens Bestimmung christlich“ (25. September 1855)**

Kierkegaards letzte Aufzeichnung lautete: „Dieses Lebens Bestimmung ist: „zum höchsten Grad von Lebensüberdruß gebracht zu werden. Wer dann, zu diesem Punkt gebracht, festhalten kann, oder wem Gott hilft, festhalten zu können, daß es Gott ist, der ihn aus Liebe zu diesem Punkt gebracht hat: der besteht, christlich, des Lebens Prüfung, ist reif für die Ewigkeit. / Durch ein Verbrechen bin ich entstanden, ich bin entstanden gegen Gottes Willen. Die Schuld, die doch in gewissem Sinne nicht die meine ist, wenn sie mich auch in Gottes Augen zum Verbrecher macht, ist die, Leben zu verleihen. Der Schuld entspricht

die Strafe: aller Lust am Leben beraubt zu werden, zum höchsten Grad des Lebensüberdrusses geführt zu werden.“ (zit. n. Garff 2005, 875f.).

Die letzten Wochen seines Lebens bestätigten all dies: Kierkegaards Ende war schrecklich. Dabei hat er den traumatischen Grund seiner Krankheit, die nun ihren Tribut forderte, klar gesehen (wenngleich auch nicht als solchen benennen können<sup>5</sup>): „Die Ärzte verstehen meine Krankheit nicht; es ist psychisch“ (zit. n. Garff 2005, 888). Und: Er sei an „Sehnsucht nach der Ewigkeit“ gestorben<sup>6</sup> (zit. n. Garff 2005, 890).

### Kritik und Einsichten

Kierkegaards Werk wird bisweilen mit Unverständnis begegnet. Er sei ein „Psychopath“ gewesen, ein „religiöser Fanatiker“, „ein Mystiker ohne die geringste skeptische Distanz zu seinen Überzeugungen“ (<http://www.philolex.de/kierkega.htm>). Aus „seinem subjektiven psychischen Zustand“ habe er – wie Rousseau und einige andere Denker auch – „eine Philosophie gemacht“ und zu Unrecht „von sich auf alle geschlossen“ (ebd.). „Seine auf das äußerste gesteigerte existentielle Subjektivität“ zerstöre „faktisch alles Gemeinsame“, schließe „intersubjektive Verständigung aus“ (ebd.).

Kierkegaards Vater gilt im gleichen Atemzug als Psychotiker, der „seine gesamte Familie verrückt“ gemacht habe – Kierkegaards Philosophie sei „ein Produkt dieser psychotischen Familienverhältnisse“ (ebd.).

Abgesehen davon, dass diese psychopathologischen Bestimmungen auf Kierkegaard nicht zutreffen (er war weder seelisch krank, noch ein Psychopath, sondern litt an einem Trauma<sup>7</sup>; auch an einem, wenn man so will, „transgenerationellen“ Trauma) – Kierkegaards Philosophie erwies sich durchaus als „verbindend“, „intersubjektiv“ teilbar. Heidegger, Jaspers, Sartre und Camus, um nur die bekanntesten Namen zu nennen, griffen seine Gedanken auf und machten daraus das, was man „Existenzphilosophie“ nannte. Als deren „Vater“ gilt Kierkegaard bis heute. Und er gilt dies zu Recht. Denn worum sich Kierkegaards Denken dreht, ist der Abgrund menschlicher Existenz, der sie als Schatten begleitet und jederzeit aufbrechen kann – *wenn man traumatisiert ist/wird* (auch seine Kritiker scheinen diesen „Schatten“ zu kennen – warum sonst jene massive Abwehr?).

Das Trauma, so zeigt sich bei Kierkegaard, ist eine *Seins-Möglichkeit*, es offenbart *Tiefenstrukturen unserer Existenz, die wir im „Normalfall“ nicht sehen*<sup>8</sup> – nicht ohne Grund bezeichnete er die „Krankheit zum Tode“ als „versteckt“ (Garff 2005, 612). Das Trauma verweist aber auch auf *Transzendenz*. Aus der „allgemeinen dialektischen Verfassung des menschlichen Bewusstseins“ (Hübner 2006, 14), wie sie sich im Zustand der Verzweiflung zeigt, leitete Kierkegaard die „Ewigkeit“ des *Selbst* als für das Ver zweifeln-*Können* a priori notwen-

<sup>5</sup> Trauma als psychisches Phänomen wurde erst gegen Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts erkannt (von Janet, Charcot und Freud).

<sup>6</sup> Diem (1956), 205f.: Kierkegaard wurde „über seinem Werk geopfert“.

<sup>7</sup> Ein Trauma gilt psychodiagnostisch nicht als seelische Krankheit, sondern als „normale Reaktion auf eine kranke Situation“ (Seidler 2013, 251).

<sup>8</sup> Vgl. Seidler (2013), 79.

dig ab. Während Sokrates die Unsterblichkeit der Seele daraus bewies, dass die Krankheit der Seele sie nicht verzehrt, wie eine Krankheit den Leib verzehrt, „kann man auch das Ewige in einem Menschen daran beweisen, daß die Verzweiflung nicht sein Selbst verzehren kann, daß das gerade die Qual des Widerspruchs in der Verzweiflung ist. Wäre nicht Ewiges in einem Menschen, so könnte er gar nicht verzweifeln“ (Kierkegaard 1956, 187). „Es gehört zum Wesen einer so tiefen Schwermut“, wie sie Kierkegaard „eigen ist“, resümiert Weischedel, „dass sie nicht im Bereich des Endlichen, auch und vor allem nicht im Umgang mit Menschen, behoben werden kann“ (Weischedel 1977, 235). Es sind exakt diese Erfahrungen, die macht, wer schwer traumatisiert ist.<sup>9</sup> Für solche Traumata gibt es in der Sphäre der „Endlichkeit“, im ganz konkreten, realen Leben, keine wirkliche Lösung. Sie geschieht nur dadurch, dass „das Ewige“ in die Zeit tritt, um „die zu erlösen, die sich selbst nicht erlösen können“ (Ward 2013, 187). Wäre die(se) „Transzendenz“-Vorstellung nicht in irgendeiner Hinsicht „real“ – wie sonst hätte Kierkegaard sein Schicksal, vor allem sein Ende, ertragen können?

„Wie geht es? – Nicht gut; es ist der Tod, bete für mich, dass er rasch und gut komme“ (zit. n. Garff 2005, 880). – *Zwei Wochen* später: „Kierkegaard ist sehr schwach, der Kopf ist ihm auf die Brust gesunken, die Hände zittern“ (Garff 2005, 882). – *Drei Tage* später: „Kierkegaard fühlt sich immer kraftloser und sinkt sichtbar im Bett zusammen. Seine Hüfte

9 Wie intensiv Kierkegaards Traumatisierung war, zeigt auch sein Umgang mit der sog. „Corsaren-Affäre“, die zentraler Bestandteil jeder Kierkegaard-Biografie ist. Es ging dabei um Folgendes: Der Herausgeber des Satireblatts *Corsaren* („Der Korsar“) veröffentlichte 1846 als Replik auf einen polemischen Seitenhieb Kierkegaards gegen sein Blatt eine Reihe von satirischen Texten und Karikaturen, in denen Kierkegaard auf sehr unvorteilhafte Weise dargestellt wurde (so wurde u.a. sein leicht verwachsener Körperbau in den Zeichnungen überbetont). Die Folge war, dass Kierkegaard, auf diese Veröffentlichung heftig reagierend, in Kopenhagen auf offener Straße – selbst von Schuljungen und Studenten – verhöhnt wurde. Die Affäre machte ihn zu einem „Märtyrer des Gespöts“ (Garff 2005, 433) und sozial zu dem, was sein dänischer Biograph Joakim Garff „ein toter Mann“ (Garff 2005, 482) nennt (ein „Totgewollter“ zu sein, aus der mitmenschlichen Gemeinschaft herauszufallen, gehört, wie Seidler (2013, 36) betont, zur Signatur jedes schweren psychischen Traumas). Für Kierkegaard war die Corsaren-Affäre eine „Schule der Qualen“ (Garff 2005, 477), das Jahr 1846 „ein *annus horribilis*“ (Garff 2005, 474). „Mit gebührendem historischem Abstand“, vermerkt Garff, „kann es einem merkwürdig (...) vorkommen, daß Kierkegaard, der 1846 mehr als die Hälfte seiner Schriften verfasst hatte, überhaupt Notiz genommen hat von den studentenhaften Späßen des *Corsaren*, die sicherlich nicht ganz harmlos, aber doch von der Art sind, die man (...) in die Kategorie ‚Spaß‘ einordnen konnte“ (Garff 2005, 468). Dass Kierkegaard dies *nicht* konnte und zutiefst verletzt reagierte, zeigt seine basale, seit frühester Kindheit bestehende Traumatisierung, für die jene Affäre als „Trigger“ und Katalysator wirkte: Kierkegaard, so eine Zeitgenossin, sei „nicht Philosoph genug“ gewesen, um sich über seinen Ärger hinwegzusetzen“ (Garff 2005, 481); die Affäre habe „Kierkegaards Hirn“ beherrscht, „Tag und Nacht“ sei er von „Ärger erfüllt“ gewesen (ebd.). Die Retraumatisierung durch die Corsaren-Affäre führte schließlich zu dem für ein sequentielles Trauma typischen Zusammenbruch des Weltbildes und zum Verlust tragender Grundüberzeugungen (vgl. Fischer & Riedesser 2009, 90): Kierkegaard fühlte sich „der allgemeinen Menschenrechte beraubt“ (Garff 2005, 478) und erging sich in radikaler Zeit- und Gesellschaftskritik: „Das Altertum vergnügte sich damit, Menschen mit wilden Tieren kämpfen zu lassen, die Niedertracht unserer Zeit ist abgefeimter (...), in der Zeit des Gefühls und der Leidenschaft wird man getötet“ – „in der Zeit des Verstandes“ „ausgelacht“ (zit. n. Garff 2005, 480). Ein weiterer Zeitgenosse verwies auf Kierkegaards fehlenden „Wirklichkeitssinn“, der dazu führe, dass er es „vermochte, gleichsam eine Bagatelle so aufzubauschen, daß sie eine weltgeschichtliche Bedeutung erlangt“ (Garff 2005, 481). Das „Martyrium des Gelächters“ war für Kierkegaard ein „Langzeit-Martyrium“, gleichsam wie ein „langsame(r) Tod“ (Garff 2005, 481). Nicht ohne Grund folgte zwei Jahre später die *Krankheit zum Tode* (1848) mit ihren existenziellen Analysen zum Gefühl der Ohnmacht und Verzweiflung.

schmerzt ihn, und das eine Bein hängt ihm aus dem Bett. Der Puls liegt bei 100. Er läßt unfreiwillig Wasser, insbesondere nachts. (...) Husten plagt ihn (...); im Krankenbericht wird notiert: „Die Exkorporation besteht aus purulenten Klumpen, einzelne davon durchsetzt mit hellrotem Blut.“ (Garff 2005, 885). – *Zehn Tage* später, es ist inzwischen bereits der nächste Monat: „In der ersten Novemberwoche versucht man mehrmals – kurz nach Einbruch der Dunkelheit –, Kierkegaards untere Extremitäten mit elektrischen Stromstößen zu behandeln. Die Wirkung dieser Stromstöße auf den in sich zusammengefallenen Mann ist äußerst gering“ (Garff 2005, 887). – „In der letzten Woche liegt er wortlos da. (...) *Am Freitag, dem 9. November*, notiert der Krankenbericht, daß Kierkegaard vor sich hin dämmert, er spricht nicht, nimmt nichts zu sich (...). Der Puls ist auf 130 gestiegen und unregelmäßig (...). Die Krankheit hat jetzt Teile des Gehirns erfaßt; Kierkegaard kann sich nicht länger der Umwelt mitteilen, wie gern er es auch immer möchte“ (Garff 2005, 888). Er „atmet schnell, lautlos. Seine Fähigkeit zu husten hat er verloren, der schnelle Atem und der beschleunigte Pulsschlag deuten darauf hin, daß er jetzt auch Fieber hat, vermutlich hervorgerufen durch eine doppelseitige Lungenentzündung (...). Er ist weiterhin bei Bewußtsein, jedoch völlig gelähmt“ (Garff 2005, 887f.). – Dann erst, am 11. November, die Erlösung: „Er liegt jetzt im Koma, der Puls ist schwach, der Atem schwer, kurz. Er erstickt langsam“ (Garff 2005, 888).

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## Leo Tolstoy on the Purpose of Art

*Abstract:* Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) was one of the greatest artists of all time, but also one of the harshest critics of the contemporary art. In the conclusion of his controversial book, *What is Art?*, Tolstoy claimed: “The purpose of art in our time consists in transferring from the realm of reason to the realm of feeling the truth that people’s well-being lies in being united among themselves and in establishing, in place of the violence that now reigns, that Kingdom of God – that is, of love – which we all regard as the highest aim of human nature.” In my paper I want to examine what Tolstoy means by that, and also how his understating of the purpose of art applies to his own works of art, as well as how it applies to some other contemporary works of art.

*Key words:* art, beauty, meaning of life, pleasure, science, religion

1. Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) was probably the only great artist who considered his own artistic works a failure, while the rest of the world admired him as one of the greatest novelists of all times. He furthermore claimed that many others who are regarded as great artists – Raphael and Michelangelo, Dante and Shakespeare, Beethoven and Wagner, to mention just a few – were also failures. Tolstoy’s condemnation was based on the conviction that Western art had split into two categories: the art of the masters (like those art masters just mentioned) and the art of the people. The so-called great artists of the West were failures in Tolstoy’s opinion insofar as their works missed – misunderstood, misrepresented, or even distorted – the true nature and purpose of art. The art of the people, he believed, stayed much closer and expressed more adequately the true nature and purpose of art.

Tolstoy argues that we should not attempt a definition of the nature and purpose of art by taking for granted what are considered the great works of art, as has been the standard procedure in aesthetics. This approach makes us biased toward certain works widely accepted as “canonical,” and obscures our understanding of what art should be about. Our approach to the proper understanding of art should be the other way around: first grasp the nature and purpose of art, then see what works fit into this conception.

Tolstoy’s second, and even more radical, deviation from the usual thinking about art is to divorce the conception of art from beauty. We almost automatically assume that beauty is the central aesthetic category – as the truth is the central cognitive category and as the good is the central category of morality. Tolstoy insists on virtually eliminating the concept of beauty from aesthetic considerations. In his controversial book, *What is Art?* (1897), Tolstoy outlines three reasons for his view. One of them deals with how beauty is understood in the



Western tradition; the second with an insight that the main condition of beauty is illusion; and the third that beauty is not intimately related neither to the good nor to the truth, and these two concepts (the good and the truth) are of crucial significance for our proper understanding of the nature and purpose of art. Let us briefly articulate these three reasons before we move toward Tolstoy's positive understanding of the nature and purpose of art.

2. Tolstoy maintains that in Western aesthetics there are two fundamental and opposing conceptions of beauty. One is most persuasively articulated by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), and it ties the experience of beauty to the feeling of *pleasure*. (In his book, *Critique of Judgment*, Kant defines beauty in terms of disinterested liking.) The second approach is made well-known by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), and it links the experience of beauty with the appearing of an *idea* through matter. (This approach is radicalized by Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling [1775–1854], and later “brought down to earth” by Nicolai Hartmann [1892–1950] in his *Aesthetics*.) Although Tolstoy's positive view actually has some semblance to Hegel's approach, he dismisses it as too metaphysical and believes that Kant's view is both more accurate and more representative of the Western approach to art. Tolstoy also sees Kant's view as a reason to exclude beauty from aesthetical considerations. The experience of beauty is indeed intimately linked with the experience of pleasure and the art of the masters is also about conveying pleasure; nevertheless, this is a wrong approach. Just as the purpose of food is not enjoyment but nourishment of the body, the purpose of art is not pleasure but nourishment of the soul. Since with the collapse of the Middle Ages people stopped believing in religion and the soul as its organ, since they turned decisively toward the body and its pleasures, the art of the masters has also followed this mistaken turn. Their art is supposed to please, rather than to convey the loftiest feelings related to the question of how we should live in order to fulfill our destiny as human beings.

3. However exactly this destiny is to be understood, it must be related to the ideals of the truth and the good. The idea of beauty is always based on some illusion; as Tolstoy puts it, an illusion of one kind or another is “the main condition of beauty.”<sup>1</sup> If so, the appearance of beauty is based on something that is directly opposed to the truth, and indirectly also to the good. The so-called art of the masters in the West – Tolstoy's own novels like *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* included – has become the art of the wealthy upper classes; it has become the art of pleasure, focusing on “the feelings of pride, or sexual lust, and the tedium of living.”<sup>2</sup>

The second of these obsessions is the most prominent, and Tolstoy speaks about the “erotic mania” of the Western world, the epidemic to which the art of the masters significantly contributes. This kind of art, unnatural and too sophisticated, has become a means of the entertainment of the idle wealthy classes, which turns the lives of its consumers away from the considerations of the most important questions of how to live and why. The art of the masters not only lacks any genuine religious and moral feelings, but it is artificial and

1 Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Penguin, 1995), p. 53.

2 Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, p. 61.



sensual (by being oriented toward pleasure and amusement). This is what our idea of beauty amounts to, and this is also why, according to Tolstoy, it should be eliminated from the aesthetical considerations proper. According to Tolstoy:

[This] concept of beauty not only does not coincide with the good, but is rather the opposite of it, because the good for the most part coincides with the triumph over our predilections, while beauty is the basis of all our predilections .... *The more we give ourselves to beauty, the more removed with are from the good.* I know that the usual response to this is that there exists a moral and spiritual beauty, but that is only a play on words, because by spiritual or moral beauty we mean nothing other than the good. Spiritual beauty, or the good, for the most part not only does not coincide with what is usually meant by beauty, but is the opposite from it.<sup>3</sup>

It is certainly problematic to think that “the good for the most part coincides with the triumph over our predilections,” as it is that “beauty is the basis of all our predilections.”<sup>4</sup> If the good deals with the triumph of our predilections – as in the case of chastity – this is only a negative conception of the good. Let it be so, and let us assume that Tolstoy would say that the positive conception of the good consists in brotherly love, which would be an extremely limited concept of the good. Even if this is so, is it really the case that “beauty is the basis of all our predilections”? Of course, Tolstoy closely connects the experience of beauty with the experience of pleasure, but there are several questions that remain. Is there nothing positive that can happen as a result of our experience of something beautiful? Why could not beauty predispose us precisely toward goodness, rather than to turn us away from it? What evidence could Tolstoy have for this claim? Is this a fact, supported by solid evidence? Or is this a fiction invented by an obsessive need to imposed moral standards on every aspect of life? Furthermore, if we reverse Tolstoy’s key statement, could we really expect that, if we do not give ourselves to beauty, then we would get closer to the good?

One of the most astonishing realization that emerges from Tolstoy’s conception of art is how he operates with an extremely narrow psychological, aesthetic, moral, and religious apparatus. He seems to recognize only one type of pleasure, and that is the kind of pleasure that arises as a result of releasing some physiological tension. Like Sigmund Freud, Tolstoy seems to believe that the essence of all pleasure is the feeling accompanying the relief from painful tension. But Tolstoy (and Freud as well) must have known the pleasure of a beautiful landscape, say of the birch trees forest through he which he liked to ride or walk near his estate at Yasnaya Polyana. He must have also known the joy of playing well one of Chopin’s nocturnes. And should we doubt that he knew well the joy of a well-written short story or novella? How, then, could he defend such a dubious view that “beauty is the basis of all our predilections”?

**4.** In the Western tradition, we associate with Plato (427–347 BC) the idea that the Good, the Truth, and the Beauty are intimately connected. We even assume that they overlap to a

<sup>3</sup> Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, p. 52; emphasis added.

<sup>4</sup> Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, p. 52.

significant degree, if they are not being identical. This view is never stated by Plato himself, and Tolstoy is right to ascribe it to Kant's predecessor and the founder of aesthetics, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–1762). Tolstoy reminds us that, in fact, Plato bans the considerations of beauty from his "Republic," and in this regard he follows his teacher Socrates (470–399 BC). Human life, and human society, must be directed toward more serious considerations than pleasure and amusement, which is why Tolstoy believes that the Truth and the Good are far more important ideals than the Beauty. Tolstoy does not equate the Truth and the Good, but considers their mutual relationship as linked in a similar way as the interdependence of the lungs and the heart: these organs are clearly distinguishable, but if the work of the lungs is perverted, the heart cannot function normally either.

Tolstoy compares science with the lungs, and art with the heart. He argues that in modern times the path of science gets misdirected, and that as a result of this the path of art also is lead astray. Science can examine any issue under the sky, but true science, according to Tolstoy, pursues the truths only with regard to the most important aspects of human life.

5. On Tolstoy's view, the task of religion is to determine the most important aspects of human life. Religion is above all a moral teaching about how human beings should live. Ultimately, only our religious consciousness can reveal to us the purpose of human life. Nevertheless, not just religion, but science and art are the spiritual activities the direction of which determines the direction of human progress. The key question of religion does not deal with the existence of God, or with the issue of life after death, or the actuality of heaven and hell. It properly deals only with the question of how human life should be arranged, with how we should live, in order to live like human beings. Thus, science should not bother with the examination of the questions dealing (for example) with the surface of the moon and the distant galaxies. Nor should it divert people's attention from the essential questions of human life by ever new technological inventions, the development of which is not only inessential, but often even harmful for human life. If for no other reason, it is harmful because it diverts our attention from the question of how we ought and ought not to live. Since art is an organ of life and progress of mankind as much as science, and since the direction in which art goes depends on the direction of science, if science diverts people's attention toward insignificant issues, so does art. In Tolstoy's words, "art is not pleasure, consolation, or amusement; art is a great thing. Art is an organ of mankind's life, which transmutes people's reasonable consciousness into feelings."<sup>5</sup>

6. We come now to the issue of the purpose of art. In the conclusion of his book, *What is Art?*, Tolstoy claims:

The purpose of art in our time consists in transferring from the realm of reason to the realm of feeling the truth that people's well-being lies in being united among themselves and in establishing, in place of the violence that now reins, that Kingdom of God – that is, of love – which we all regard as the highest aim of human nature.<sup>6</sup>

5 Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, p. 165.

6 Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, p. 167.

Our pondering over this definition must begin with the question: does art have a purpose? Tolstoy's answer is that, as a human activity, art must have a purpose, because everything that people do is done with one purpose or another. The question is to determine what that purpose is, and that is what his definition is about. According to Tolstoy's view, the purpose of art must be related to the essential questions regarding human life. Sometimes, he writes as if there are several of those questions, one of which deals with the meaning of life. Other times, as in the book on art, Tolstoy suggests that the key question is simply this: how should human life be arranged?

Tolstoy takes for granted that, in his era, the arrangement of human life is not done properly. It is not done in a way to enhance the human existence, individually or collectively. The goal in our time, and the purpose to which art should also be related, consists in establishing the brotherhood among human beings: their peaceful coexistence, their mutual understanding and support. Tolstoy expresses these ideas in terms of the traditional Christian vocabulary, by mentioning the Kingdom of God. It should be clear, however, that he does not have in mind any Biblical "Heaven" (or "Hell"), and also that he is not talking about any utopian re-arrangement of the world. Crucial for Tolstoy's approach is the distinction between an *externally* versus *internally* imposed arrangement. So far, the arrangement of how people live together has been mostly imposed from the outside; as such, it must be ultimately based on the threat of violence, and this is why it cannot work. Tolstoy believes that art (in collaboration with religion and science) can help us impose an internal arrangement that would be nonviolent and far more conducive toward a humane relationship among people. In his words, "The task facing art is enormous: art, genuine art, guided by religion with the help of science, must make it so that men's peaceful life together, which is now maintained by external measures – courts, police, charitable institutions, workplace inspections, and so on – should be achieved by the free and joyful activity of men. Art should eliminate violence." Tolstoy then adds: "And only art can do that."<sup>7</sup>

7. Before we continue to discuss how Tolstoy imagines that art, and only art, can do something like that, let us pause to notice just how unusual and original this conception of art is. Four points are crucial for Tolstoy's conception of art. First, art does not exist for the sake of art alone. Second, but neither is art some secondary, and for the most part irrelevant, aspect of human life; quite the contrary, it plays an essential role in the development and maintenance of our humanity. Third, art cannot fulfill its purpose alone, but only in an intimate collaboration with other significant areas of human experience (such as religion and science). Fourth, despite the collaborative nature of the effort, art plays a unique and indispensable role in this project. The purpose of art is to lead toward a more humane and internally imposed human arrangements, and only art can do that.

How does Tolstoy imagine that to happen? Does he not vastly overestimate the purpose and power of art?

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7 Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, p. 166.

Tolstoy's argument is divided into two parts. The first shows that, *if* art has played a significant role in establishing a wrong arrangements among people, *then* it also has a power to establish a correct one. He illustrates his conditional as follows:

*If* through art there could be conveyed the customs treating religious objects in a certain way, of treating parents, children, wives, relations, strangers, foreigners in a certain way, of treating elders, persons of higher rank, enemies, animals, the suffering in a certain way – and this has been observed by millions of people over generations, not only without the least violence, but in such a way that it cannot be shaken by anything but art – *then* this same art can evoke other customs, more closely corresponding to the religious consciousness of our time. *If* art could convey the feeling of reverence for icons, for the Eucharist, for the person of a king, of shame at the betrayal of friendship, of loyalty to a flag, the necessity of revenging an insult, the need of donating one's labor for the building and adorning of churches, the duty of defending one's honor or the glory of one's fatherland, *then* the same art can evoke reverence for each man's dignity, for every animal's life; it can evoke the shame of luxury, of violence, of revenge, of using for one's pleasure objects that are a necessity for other people; it can make people sacrifice themselves to serve others freely and joyfully, without noticing it.<sup>8</sup>

This is an idea that has been presented before, but perhaps never with such eloquence. *If* art can be used to install in people distorted moral ideals, *then* it can (and should) also be used to inspire in them far more adequate and elevated ideals as well.

**8.** The second part of Tolstoy's argument is to illustrate by what mechanism this could be done:

Art should make it so that the feeling of brotherhood and love of one's neighbor, now accessible only to the best people of society, become *habitual feelings, an instinct* for everyone. By calling up the feelings of brotherhood and love in people under imaginary conditions, religious art will accustom people to experience the same feelings in reality under the same conditions; it will lay in people's souls the *rails* along which the life behavior of people brought up by art will naturally run. And uniting the most diverse people in one feeling and abolishing separation, the art of the whole people will educate mankind for union, will show them, not in reasoning but in life itself, the joy of general union beyond the barriers set up by life.<sup>9</sup>

We can now understand better why Tolstoy eliminated beauty from aesthetic considerations, and also why he condemned much of great art (=the art of the masters), including his own. The purpose of art, according to his view, is not to please but to instruct and inspire. And it has to instruct and inspire not only the elites, who can afford to be exposed to the art of the masters, but the entire human population. Besides lacking the moral and religious ideals that Tolstoy considers to be of utmost importance, the art of the masters is too sophisticated and unnecessarily complicated for the masses of people to understand it. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century especially, such art of the masters is further elevated by the aura of an artistic genius who produces his or her artwork by some irrational, perhaps divine inspiration, regardless of what that inspiration may try to convey. The work of genius or not, argues Tolstoy, the production of a work of art has to be sincere and responsible; it has to be guid-

<sup>8</sup> Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, p. 166; emphasis added.

<sup>9</sup> Tolstoy, *What is Art?*, pp. 166-167; emphasis added.

ed by the most elevated ideals and aimed at the well-being of the entire human community.

**9.** When Tolstoy speaks about the good works of art, which should illustrate his approach to art, he singles out (among the works of others) his own stories: “God Sees the Truth but Waits,” and “Prisoner of the Caucasus.” These are solid stories, but they hardly deserve the special praise that Tolstoy bestows upon them. Nor would anyone ever claim that they are the works of genius, which is what is commonly said about his novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.

This comment is not intended to serve as a refutation of Tolstoy’s theory of art, but it is revealing. More to the point are the comments of Roman Rolland and Iris Murdoch. They were both artists and philosophers, and they argued that Tolstoy makes a number of important observations. However much it may strike us as strange, his book on art should not be easily dismissed. Both Rolland and Murdoch seem to believe that the value of Tolstoy’s thought is more negative than positive: it gives us better insights into what art is not, then what art is (and what it should be).<sup>10</sup> In the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, art has lost its sense of identity and purpose. Anything and everything could be considered as art, and anything and everything could equally be denied the title of art. The spirit in which art develops at that time reflects the general moral and spiritual disorientation in society.

One indication of that disorientation is that existentialism overthrows the centuries-long dominance of essentialism; according to the existentialist thinkers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, nurture (and the situational and subjective factors) is valued above nature. In fact, it is often denied that there is any such thing as nature – whether the nature of humanity, or the nature of art. And if there is no nature, then everything goes and all we have, strictly speaking, are our subjective feelings as to whether something – the works of art included – is valuable or not.

**10.** Despite the changing fashion of his time, Tolstoy remains unquestionably an essentialist – both with respect to art and other subjects as well. He believes in the unique nature of humanity (which religion reveals to us), and the proper nature and purpose of art. Even if we grant him this point of view, it is still possible to make two significant objections to his conception of art. One of them is that he expects too much of art, the other that what he expects of it is too little.

Tolstoy assigns a very important function to art – it has to lead humanity toward the path of universal brotherhood and love. The artistic values of the works of art is far less important than their moral significance. Despite Tolstoy’s insightful arguments about how art has impacted the past values and arrangements of society, the way in which art has done it is not as direct (and perhaps also not as important) as Tolstoy is inclined to think. Tolstoy seems to believe that, in combination with religion and science, art could almost develop a railroad tracks-like approach to how we should live, in order to realize our full

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<sup>10</sup> See Romain Rolland, *Tolstoy* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1911), especially chapters 12–14, pages 167–233; and Iris Murdoch, “The Sublime and the Good,” in: *Existentialists and Mystics*, ed. Peter Conradi (New York: Penguin, 1998), pages 205–220.

human potential. Any attempt to do so, however, would make art too directly didactic. In some cases, it would transform it into a tool of propaganda. Art does not and should function that way. At its best, art does not command but suggests; it does not refer but evokes. Art cannot turn the loftiest ideals into the objects to be inspected or dissected, programmed or imposed. The ideals that art deals with shine through a work of art, but they remain intangible – something to fathom and feel, appreciate and emulate. What Tolstoy wants of art threatens to turn art into something which it is not and should not be – at least not in the direct way that he would like it to be.

Tolstoy's mistake is not that he wants to relate art to religion, or even that he may think that there are related in an essential way. The problem is rather that he makes this relationship one-dimensional and too direct. Nicolai Hartmann can help us see both points more clearly. He argues that as much as art may need religion, religion may need art even more so:

[A]rtistic production tends to grow more readily where men are moved by great ideas, and the passion for ideas demands expression – one might rather say, demands objectivation. That is true for every highly developed spiritual life, once it is awakened. Religious life, more than all others, is dependent upon art as a means of expression, precisely because its content lies beyond what can be communicated directly. The arts have the magic wand that gives shape to what cannot be grasped; they achieve what mere words and formulas – for example, dogma – cannot; they bring close to the senses what is supersensible and incapable of being seen, and thereby bestow upon the hearts of men the kind of power that only what is felt as close and present can give. Religious life, once awakened, can do no other than call for art, and so it does, and fills it with its deepest impulses, its passion, its ideas.<sup>11</sup>

**11.** Tolstoy also makes the relationship of art and religion too direct, by expecting that art inspired by religious ideas must make an impact that is unambiguous and profound. Yet the influence of art must be more subtle, otherwise its effects may turn out to be the opposite of what Tolstoy predicts. To quote Hartmann again:

The leadership of humanity by the arts is no longer a real aesthetical problem. But from that problem a light falls back upon the fundamental problems of aesthetics, at least where art has not been falsified by “pedagogical ends,” which alter the proper “mood” of a viewer. For this kind of leadership has one advantage before all others: it is immediately convincing, in a way that only the living of our lives can otherwise do, and just for the same reasons: literature does not speak to us as a teacher, but in clear and concrete figures, which are enlightening as such. They awaken our feeling for values and open our vision to the profundities in the conflicts of life, and do so in a manner of which we are not capable in life itself. The inward growth and maturity fostered by such literary effects are not delusions. Everyone not badly educated who approaches great art experiences these effects in himself. How can we distinguish radically genuine art, which is always without bias, from contrived work, or even from work done at a moment's notice on order? For these latter seem inartistic, and affect us accordingly; they achieve, in the end, rather the opposite of what they were after: the intended beholder turns away from them. Only what the artist has genuinely beheld and bestowed from upon in concrete figurations achieves

<sup>11</sup> Nicolai Hartmann, *Aesthetics*, trans. Eugene Kelly (New York: de Gruyter, 2014), p. 26.



the power to move men, a power that convinces, reveals, and shows us the way, because it unintentionally forces itself upward and out of the depths.<sup>12</sup>

This is the secret force of literature, and of art in general, on which Tolstoy counts as well. Yet, this force can have the desired effect only when presented without any intentional design, without the firmly established tracks that a work of art must follow. Then, and only then, can art direct the human soul toward what is great; then, and only then, can it elevate it toward the aspirations and ideals that a pedantic message can only turn sour for us. **12.** While Tolstoy expects too much of art, he simultaneously expects too little of it. Although it is our human obligation to attempt to become as good as we can be and develop our human potential as much as possible, we cannot be preoccupied with such lofty goals all of the time. Just as there is time for work, there must be time for rest. Just as there are serious issues, there are also those that are light. Human beings are not the one-dimensional creatures that Tolstoy wants us to be, nor is art as one-dimensional as he makes it look. There is nothing wrong with being amused and pleased. There is nothing wrong with art being (sometimes) playful and imaginative, irresponsible and spontaneous. Turning art into the railroad tracks along which human lives must travel would destroy not only art but our humanity as well.

When we relax Tolstoy's attitude toward art (and human lives), we find plenty of room for beauty and pleasure. There are certainly pleasures of vulgar kind, and perhaps they dominate in our world today (as they did in Tolstoy's time). But there are also pleasures that are subtle and sublime, inspiring and elevating. Tolstoy wants humans to become loving beings, but hardly anything inspires love as much as beauty. Beauty does not have to be our obsession, nor the highest value that guides our lives. Yet, is it possible to live like a human being in the world deprived of beauty? Despite Tolstoy's objections, this world of ours, imperfect as it is, would be much poorer without the beauty of such great works of art as *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.

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**12** Hartmann, *Aesthetics*, p. 42.

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## Doctrine of Deification in the Works of Cardinal Tomáš Špidlík and His Pupils\*

*Abstract:* This article focuses on the work of Czech Jesuit Cardinal Tomáš Špidlík (1919–2010), continued in his pupils, both in Rome, where he taught for most of his life, and in the Czech Republic. It explores in particular how studies of hesychasm marked their understanding of deification. It asks in which sense their work can be seen as a Western attempt to rehabilitate the doctrine of deification in its experiential and theological complexity, where they contribute to the renewal of the communication between the Christian East and the Christian West, and what are the complications present in their attempt expressed against the background of uniatism.

*Keywords:* Tomáš Špidlík, Oriental Institute, deification, theosis, hesychasm, Slavic Spirituality

Fr Andrew Louth in his beautiful little study “The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology”<sup>1</sup> concentrates on the place of deification in the pattern of the whole of Orthodox theology. As examples he chooses three main emphases. (1) The doctrine of deification has its roots in the mystery of Incarnation. This emphasis safeguards Christ as more than a “car mechanic,” repairing the damage caused by the fall; and creation as more than just “a background for the great drama of redemption”. Christ in his becoming human takes on himself the goodness of created humanity, and the inherent links to the rest of the creation, and while restoring what has been damaged, unites the creatures with the Creator. (2) The doctrine of deification assumes the reality of human transformation – not becoming something other than human, but becoming deified through becoming fully human. The true purpose, for which we were created “to be companions of God through Christ in the Holy Spirit”, and to be “partakers of the divine life and the divine nature.” (3) Such transformation, such graced journey towards the union with God requires an “apophatic attitude”,<sup>2</sup> an ascetic reconstitution of who we are meant to be, an asceticism not only of body but also of mind, letting go of our images and control mechanisms, approaching the loving and active God through the “gates of repentance”.

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1 Andrew Louth, “The Place of *Theosis* in Orthodox Theology,” in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, eds. Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 32–44.

2 The phrase “apophatic attitude” comes from Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1978), 32–33; *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), 238–39; See Louth, “The Place of *Theosis*,” 41.

Deification cannot, thus, be fruitfully understood as “some isolated *theologoumenon*, but has what one might call structural significance”; it is related not only to other doctrines, but to the “Orthodox experience as a whole”.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, Louth argues, despite the fact that the doctrine of deification, if not the concept, had a continuing place among the western mystics, it did not shape the mainstream modern Catholic and Protestant theologies, and “Western attempts to understand it have consequently assimilated it to an alien framework... [where] it fits very awkwardly.”<sup>4</sup>

In this article we present a Western attempt to rehabilitate the doctrine of deification in its experiential and theological complexity. We focus on the work of a Czech Jesuit, Cardinal Tomáš Špidlík (1919–2010), and also on his pupils, both in Rome, where he taught for most of his life, and in the Czech Republic.

### 1. Cardinal Tomáš Špidlík

Cardinal Tomáš Špidlík's work, tied closely to the Pontifical Oriental Institute (PIO), combined the study of the sources of the Christian East and a desire to reinterpret their wisdom for Western Christians.

#### Cardinal Špidlík's Spiritual and Intellectual Background

The PIO, established by Pope Benedict XV in October 1917, just before the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, was a place where scholars and students from both Western and Eastern churches could study together the heritage of the Christian East. As the foundational document says:

This *house of studies* will be open as well to Orientals, whether those in union with us or those who call themselves Orthodox; to the former in order to complete the normal curriculum of studies...to the latter, that they might examine in depth the truth, laying aside any preconceived notions. *We wish, in fact, that in this Institute might advance together, and in equal measure, the exposition of Catholic and Orthodox doctrine...* such that each person might become aware from which sources each derives, whether from the preaching of the Apostles transmitted to Us from the enduring magisterium of the Church or from elsewhere.<sup>5</sup>

Špidlík continued in the teaching of the spirituality of the Christian East after his predecessor at the PIO, Irénée Hausherr SJ (1881–1978), a specialist in Oriental Churches, their monastic tradition and mystical theology, Greek patristic and monastic spirituality, and in particular in hesychasm.<sup>6</sup> With one exception, his first work, *Un pèlerin russe de la prière*

<sup>3</sup> Louth, “The Place of *Theosis*,” 35, 40–43.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>5</sup> Pope Benedict XV, *Motu Proprio “Orientalis Catholici”* (15 October 1917); the translation is taken from *Ordo Anni Academici 2018-2019, Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2018), 145–46. Given the historical period, the text is unusually open, even if it could be, and in the subsequent history was, interpreted in two ways, one as an opening up for a genuine rapprochement with the Orthodox, the other as their subversion towards unity with Rome.

<sup>6</sup> His vast work included editions of the texts and commentaries on St Basil the Great, Chrysostom, St Maximus the Confessor, Dionysios, Evagrius of Pont, Symeon the New Theologian, Theodore the Studite, on spiritual fatherhood in the Orthodox and Oriental Christianity, and comparative works, including understanding of prayer and of spiritual progress in Ignatius of Loyola, St John of the Cross and Thomas Aquinas.

*intérieure* (1926), Hausherr was not concerned with the Slavic form of hesychasm. Špidlík admired Hausherr as a “master of wisdom,”<sup>7</sup> and as someone who in the period when “conversion” of the Orthodox towards Roman Catholicism came into fashion,<sup>8</sup> represented the type of scholar focused on the sources rather than on ideologies. Špidlík developed his heritage in a new way, focusing on the specificity of Slavic spirituality, and studying hesychast spiritual anthropology, and with it the notion of deification in this new context.

Špidlík’s first encounter with Eastern spirituality predated his time at the Oriental Institute. It went back to his Jesuit formation during World War I. He was charmed by the small village of Velehrad, historically connected with the mission of Cyril and Methodius. In the second half of the nineteenth century Velehrad became a centre promoting the idea of Christian unity among the Slavic nations. And while the idea was not always free of the desire for the “return” of the Orthodox under the jurisdiction of the Roman Pope, it could not be reduced to it either.<sup>9</sup>

Špidlík took from there the vocation of bridging East and West in a mutually enriching relationship of unity. When he succeeded Hausherr at the Oriental Institute, and later when he took part in building the Centro Aletti in Rome<sup>10</sup> and helped towards building Centrum Aletti in Olomouc (Czech Republic),<sup>11</sup> he integrated the Velehrad experience and vision into his study of the Christian East.

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Regarding deification and hesychasm the most important works are *Un pèlerin russe de la prière intérieure* (1926); *La méthode d'oraison hésychaste* (1927); *Note sur l'inventeur de la méthode d'oraison hésychaste* (1930); *À propos de spiritualité hésychaste: Controverse sans contradicteur* (1937); *Variations récentes dans les jugements sur la méthode d'oraison des Hésychaste* (1953); *Les Exercices Spirituels de Saint Ignace et la méthode d'oraison hésychastique* (1954); *L'hésychasme: étude de spiritualité* (1956); *Noms du Christ et voies d'oraison* (1960); *Solitude et vie contemplative d'après l'hésychasme* (1962); *Hésychasme et prière* (1966). All published in Rome: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, in *Orientalia Christiana* (OC), *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* (OCP) or *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* (OCA), with the exception of *Solitude et vie contemplative d'après l'hésychasme* (Etiolles: Monastère de la Croix, 1962). Many books drew on his shorter studies; for example, in English, *The Name of Jesus* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1978).

**7** See Tomáš Špidlík, “In Memoriam: Irénée Hausherr S.I. (7-6-1891 – 5-12-1978),” *OCP* 45 (1979): 159–65, here 165.

**8** Here we refer mainly to the turn from an ecumenical vision of those who started the Pontifical Oriental Institute to the changes when in 1922 Michel d’Herbigny SJ, a vehement supporter of uniatism became the President of the Pontifical Oriental Institute and of the Pontifical Commission for Russia. The stronger turn towards uniatism came in 1928, when Pope Pius XI drew on the ideas and practices of Michel d’Herbigny SJ, at that time already a consecrated bishop entrusted with the mission to Russia to establish clandestine provisional Roman Catholic hierarchy. See Léon Tretjakewitsch, *Bishop Michael d’Herbigny SJ and Russia: A Pre-Ecumenical Approach to Christian Unity* (Würzburg: Augustinus Verlag, 1990), 183–85.

**9** The “Saints Cyril and Methodius Mission” organized three international union congresses in Velehrad (1907, 1909, 1911) and three other international congresses (1914, 1921, 1924). “Velehrad Academy” (Akademie Velehradská) was established, as well the scholarly periodical *Acta Academiae Velehradensis*. Later congresses became less about meetings of scholars and for Catholics only (especially the Congress in 1927). See Robert Svatoň, “Approaching Eastern Christianity: The Path of the Czech Jesuit Tomáš Špidlík,” *Communio Viatorum* 57:2 (2015): 158.

**10** Founded by Jesuits in 1991 to study the Christian East in the context of current spirituality.

**11** Founded by the Czech Jesuit Province in 1994 as a parallel to the centre in Rome, with a special focus on Christian unity and on dialogue between faith and culture in the Post-Communist society.

Špidlík's own approach included serious academic study with a great sense for the details. He took from his predecessor an attempt at a synthesis, inspired by modern Russian religious philosophy,<sup>12</sup> and a desire to participate in the spiritual knowledge he was acquiring and conveying further. Špidlík knew how to utilize and unite categories, symbols, tradition of cultures of the Christian East within the context of their cultural relations. This is visible in his most famous book *The Spirituality of the Christian East: A Systematic Handbook*.<sup>13</sup> In this encyclopaedic work condensing a variety of traditions under the category of the Christian East Špidlík sought a corrective to rationalizing and over-schematizing theology common in his time in the West. True tradition, he writes, consists of traditions<sup>14</sup> coming out of various conditions and contexts in which people have lived and where the Holy Spirit has manifested itself in a wide range of human experience.

### Špidlík's Interpretation of the Concept and Content of Deification

In the introductory comments to the *Spirituality of the Christian East* Špidlík explains where the doctrine of deification comes from, and what place it has and can have in a Christian life. He recognizes that while the words *theosis* or *theopoiesis* are of pagan origin, and roused suspicion in Christian history, they provided Greek Fathers with a possibility to express the newness of the conditions in which the Incarnation brought people to the adoptive sonship of God. He sees in the Church Fathers human deification as a consequence of the humanisation of God. This mysterious exchange, where each nature shares the qualities of the other, is for him at the heart of deification.<sup>15</sup>

The concept of deification itself does not occur very often in his writings, but the content of the doctrine is present often, when he speaks about spiritual life, its progress and its aim, about the divine-human synergy rooted in people being created in the image and likeness of God, about the christification and spiritualisation of the entire human life.<sup>16</sup> There is a common ground to these, which could be explained in terms of an ontological realism and a participatory epistemology.

Špidlík refers to Ignatius of Antioch's notions of Christians as *theophoroi* (God-bearers) and *theou gemete* (those who are filled with God).<sup>17</sup> Špidlík draws a difference, which may seem a bit too schematic, between the Old Testament thinking in which he appreci-

<sup>12</sup> He drew heavily on the notion of "integral knowledge" coming from Ivan Kireyevsky, and on its further development by Pavel Florensky. See Parush Parushev, "Going Forward to the Roots: Ivan Kireyevsky's Integral Knowledge and the Recovery of Human Wholeness," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 59:1 (2015): 79–90; Kateřina Bauerová, "Setkání hěsychasmu se sofiologií u Solovjova, Florenského a Bulgakova," in *Filokálie: Kniha, hnuttí, spiritualita*, ed. Karel Sládek (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2014): 118–31.

<sup>13</sup> Tomáš Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East: A Systematic Handbook* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publ., 1986). The English translation is from the French text published by the Pontifical Oriental Institute 1978.

<sup>14</sup> Špidlík, *Spirituality*, 2. See also Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: A Historical and Theological Essay* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1967).

<sup>15</sup> Špidlík, *Spirituality*, 45–46.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 47. He does not use inclusive language, so direct quotations are left as in the original, but elsewhere we adopt inclusive language.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 46. See Ignatius Antiochenus, *Epistola ad Ephesios* 9,2; *Epistola ad Magnesios* 14,1.

ates the great care with which God's radical transcendence is defended, and Greek philosophical thinking which works with the ideal similarity, even identification, with the divine world, and which assumes participation in the divine world in these lines. There are, according to him, dangers on both sides. On one side there is a danger that one does not cross the boundaries of one's humanity; on the other that participation in divinity would be seen as a sharing with an equal. Hence, he proclaims the necessity of integrating both insights and avoiding both extremes in approaching God. Perhaps we can see a similarity here to St Paul's famous speech at the Areopagus on the unknown God in whom we live and move, because we are his offspring.<sup>18</sup> Clement of Alexandria, according to Špidlík, kept the balance well, as he introduced the concept of deification into Christianity.<sup>19</sup> He became like us, so that we could become like him, a repeated theme in the Fathers. In identifying deification and sonship, Athanasius, Špidlík says, carefully avoids the full identification of people and God. God does not make us as true as he is, but what he would like us to be when he gives us grace. And, according to Špidlík, grace is in turn foundational for the realism of the experience of God and of the divine-human communion.<sup>20</sup>

Since the term deification was problematic, instead of saying that we are divine, the Fathers developed the idea of creation in God's image. Špidlík points out the role of the language they worked with. Most of the Greek Fathers read the Old Testament in the Septuagint, where in Gn 1:26-27 the preposition *kata* (Lat. *secundum*) was used. This, he explains, meant for them that the Creator looked on the original image of Christ and the people were created according to the first image (archetype) of Christ. The Hebrew text, according to him, does not distinguish between the image and the likeness, but rather proposes something like resembling image.<sup>21</sup> He further argues that the text in Genesis was read by the Fathers through the lenses of Wisdom 2:33, where people are not only created according to the image, but are truly the image.<sup>22</sup> Špidlík complements this realist ontology by a dynamic element he finds in Origen, who distinguishes between the stability of the image and the dynamic nature of the likeness as something that must be gained by an effort of following and imitating God.<sup>23</sup> Spiritual life is, then, according to Špidlík, a path from image to likeness. We can use an image of people being an artistic draft drawn by God Creator, but they must bring light and colours in order to finish the painting.<sup>24</sup> Thus, Špidlík accords with the realism of the bond between people and God that is present in the Eastern Christian tradition through the dynamic notion of *theopoiesis*.

As we have already seen, the patristic and the Slavic authors interplay in Špidlík's the-

<sup>18</sup> See Acts 17:22-31.

<sup>19</sup> "The Word of God became man in order that you may learn from man how man may become God". Špidlík, *Spirituality*, 46. See Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticos* 1, 8; [Tr. *Exhortation to the Greeks* I, 8; ANF vol. 2, 174]

<sup>20</sup> Špidlík, *Spirituality*, 46. See Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* 3,19 (PG 26:361C-364A); also Athanasius, *De decretis* 31 (PG 25, 473).

<sup>21</sup> Špidlík, *Spirituality*, 58.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 58. See Origen, *De principiis* III, 6, 1 (PG 11, 333c)

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Tomáš Špidlík, *Cesta Ducha* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 1995), 21.



ology. This is also true when it comes to his notion of deification. In his book on the “Russian idea” he traces how the Russians assimilated and further developed the understanding of deification inherited from the Greeks.<sup>25</sup> Špidlík notes that the expression of deification occurs there rarely. Rather other terms are employed in Russian, such as *bogočelovečstvo* (divinehumanity) and *oduchotvoreníe* (spiritualisation). These, according to Špidlík, better express the Christological character of what is at stake, and at the same time keep the dynamic aspect of the mystery of deification in place. *Bogočelovečstvo* is the leading idea of Solovyov’s theological thinking. There Christianity is not only faith in God, but also faith in humankind, in the possible realization of the divine in people. Špidlík takes from Solovyov the critique of a pure and abstract transcendentalism as something which disallows revelation, because it is not able to direct towards the path that leads to God. Furthermore, in Russian religious philosophy, according to Špidlík, the encounter of God and people is dialogical. Here he is particularly influenced by Berdyaev and his interpretation of Christianity as “a drama of love and freedom, which takes place between God and man, the birth of God in man and man in God, the arrival of Christ, Godman, perfectly joining the double movement, putting at work the unity in duality, the divinehuman mystery.”<sup>26</sup>

### Hesychast Overtones

The experiential content of the doctrine of deification is interpreted by Špidlík through his engagement with hesychasm. Like Hausherr, he studied hesychast sources, but also through his own spiritual practice of what he studied he came to understand *hesychia* as a way towards communion with God. The Holy Spirit, he emphasized, marks this way, but only people out of their freedom can embody this way. Špidlík defines hesychasm as “the form of spirituality based on hesychia with a focus on being essentially contemplative.”<sup>27</sup> His main attention is given to those authors for whom spiritual growth rather than doctrinal-intellectual elaboration was of prime interest, namely to the predecessors of Palamas, and then to the Slavic forms of hesychasm.<sup>28</sup> With their help he develops spiritual anthropology emphasizing the centrality of the heart, the divine-human synergy in the process of knowing oneself and through that experiencing also the Other in the self in a kind of meta-logical knowledge that goes beyond our natural predisposition, and the christification and the spiritualisation of all that we are.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Tomáš Špidlík, *Ruská idea: jiný pohled na člověka* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 1996), 35–39.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 36. See Nikolai Berdyaev, *Esprit et liberté* (Paris: Les Éditions «Je sers», 1933), 207.

<sup>27</sup> Tomáš Špidlík, *Spiritualita křesťanského Východu: modlitba* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 1999), 382. When speaking about the movement of Hesychasm, he *divides it into five historical periods*: Egyptian anachoretes – Sinai school – Symeon the New Theologian – hesychasts from Athos – Philokalic movement after 1782.

<sup>28</sup> Palamas is recognised by Špidlík as the main theoretician of hesychasm, but his role is not so central as in Modern Orthodox theology. See Špidlík, *Spirituality*, 12–13, 46, 339; cf. Fr John Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas* (London: The Faith Press, 1964); *St Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998).

<sup>29</sup> See Tomáš Špidlík, *Vnitřně zakoušet, eseje pro duchovní cvičení* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2009), 65–66.

Christification of all that we are comes from being created in God's image, the original and archetype of which is Christ.<sup>30</sup> We call on Christ's name for the renewal of who we are. Špidlík stresses this as he comments on the Jesus Prayer,<sup>31</sup> and on the psychosomatic practices surrounding its practice, such as adaptation of the surroundings, darkness, sitting position or rhythmic breathing. Špidlík avoids a mechanistic understanding of the method.<sup>32</sup> He stresses that who we are, and who we are becoming is expressed in the prayer that is both relational and dialogical. It is divine life in us and at the same time, it is deeply human, including all human freedom and creativity. As with the hesychasts, the heart is central for him.<sup>33</sup> It is the seat of prayer, of the encounter between a human person and God, and also with other people and the cosmos. Thus, against rationalism ignoring the heart, and sentimentalism reducing the heart to the emotions, Špidlík interprets what he has learned from the hesychast tradition to his Western contemporaries as a response to a growing desire for a lost centre of human life.<sup>34</sup>

Špidlík differentiates between two levels of the heart, the visible or outer and the invisible or inner. This was not unproblematic. The Alexandrians had already drawn on the Platonic doctrine of soul and body, polarizing the visible and the invisible, the inner and the outer.<sup>35</sup> The Biblical metaphors describing the tension between the outer and the inner person, according to them, corresponded to the distinction between the soul and the body, and the heart was identified only with the spiritual part of our being.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, the human relation to God was reduced to one element only, the soul. But this reductionist understanding, while stressing the spiritual/rational ascent to the divine did fit well with the Incarnation, as God's descent into all that is human apart from sin.

St Irenaeus's dictum: "The glory of God is the living human, and the life of the human is the vision of God,"<sup>37</sup> is interpreted by Špidlík in an anti-gnostic and hesychast manner, without opposition between the spiritual and the material, but also without reducing one to another.<sup>38</sup> All creation and all that is human is included into the process of salvation and deification. According to Špidlík, the human person is *pneumatikos* in all his

<sup>30</sup> Špidlík, *Spirituality*, 57.

<sup>31</sup> The prayer exists in various forms. See, for example, Une moine de l'Eglise d'Orient (Lev Gillet), *The Jesus Prayer* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987).

<sup>32</sup> Špidlík, *Spiritualita: modlitba*, 291.

<sup>33</sup> The heart features also in the motto on his cardinal's coat of arms: *ex toto cordo* (with all your heart). As Pope Benedict XVI said during the homily at his requiem (April 20, 2010), this motto expressed well how he strove to live the imperative of the first and fundamental commandment of the law found in the Book of Deuteronomy (Dt 6: 4-5), and confirmed by Jesus (Luke 10); in [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20100420\\_esequie-spidlík.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20100420_esequie-spidlík.html) [accessed November 5, 2018].

<sup>34</sup> See Špidlík, *Vnitřně zakoušet*, 288–300; Tomáš Špidlík, *Tradice Východu a Západu v dialogu*. (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2015), esp. "Lidské srdce ve spiritualitě křesťanského Východu," 201–203.

<sup>35</sup> See Špidlík, *Spiritualita: modlitba*, 310; Špidlík, "Lidské srdce," 202.

<sup>36</sup> Špidlík, *Spiritualita: modlitba*, 310.

<sup>37</sup> St Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 4.20.7 (SC 100.648). The translation is taken from Mary Ann Donovan, "Alive to the Glory of God: A Key Insight in St Irenaeus," *Theological Studies* 49 (1988), 283–297, at 283.

<sup>38</sup> Špidlík, *Spirituality*, 30. See Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* V, 9, 1–2 (PG 7, 1144–1145)

or her dimensions of being, the body, the soul and the spirit, thanks to God's *pneuma*. The Holy Spirit comes from above, he says, but at the same time it belongs to us, as the Spirit is joined to our spirit (which is the highest component of the soul), and makes spiritualization of the entire human person possible. This identity in the depth of who we are is our true nature: being created in the image of God, according to Špidlík.<sup>39</sup>

The Holy Spirit in our spirit, Špidlík says, paraphrasing Theophan the Recluse, is the soul of the human soul, who gives form to our being and spiritualizes all its elements. The Holy Spirit is part of our deified nature.<sup>40</sup> Špidlík underlines that in the hesychast tradition the Spirit was seen as residing in the heart, bringing integrity to the human person. This holistic integrity, a term Špidlík borrows from Ivan Kireyevsky,<sup>41</sup> can be approached from two sides. The first is static: all that I am participates in prayer; the second is dynamic: I become the prayer.<sup>42</sup> Thus the whole being is included into the process of change, of becoming. We move from prayer as an isolated activity to the defining feature of who we are, when the bond with God is strengthened.

Špidlík sees here a significant difference between the Eastern and the Western approach. While the Eastern spirituality focuses more on the state of the heart (which includes the gift of *kardiagnosis*, knowing the heart, vital charism of the Eastern starets) whereas the Western spirituality, because of the lack of this ontological perspective, is characterized by moralism that analyses the perfection (or non-perfection) of concrete moral acts. The rehabilitation of the Biblical and Patristic spirituality of the heart can help the Western Christians toward a more grounded and integrated understanding and practice of the life with God and in God.<sup>43</sup>

Spiritual life as a gradual process of spiritualisation that includes all that we are, is incarnational and Christocentric.<sup>44</sup> As such it has a decisive influence on our relationship to others, and determines our relationship to nature, to the cosmos as a whole, according to Špidlík. This is the only sense in which he sees a human person at the centre of the universe: as a being endowed with a spiritual goal that which is accomplished through cosmic

<sup>39</sup> Špidlík underlines that Eastern fathers insist on the personal presence of the Spirit, so that the Christian can become one soul with God. He utilizes here Pseudo-Macarius' and Aphrahat's understanding that we become "one soul with the Lord", and that the "Spirit of Christ is given so abundantly that it becomes what is most spiritual part in us, our true self." Špidlík, *Spirituality*, 31. See Pseudo-Macarius, *De caritate* 24 (PG 34:452ff); Aphrahat, *Demonstration* 6. 14 (Patrologia Syriaca I: col.293)

<sup>40</sup> Špidlík, *Spirituality*, 32. See Teofan Zatvornik, *Čto jest' duchovnaja žizn' i kak na nee nastroitsja* (Moskva, 1897), 49.

<sup>41</sup> For holistic mental vision and integral understanding of knowledge see Ivan Kireyevsky, "O neobhodimosti i vozmozhnosti novykh nachalah dlja filosofii," in *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenij I. V. Kireevskogo*, ed. Mihail Gershenson (Moscow: Put', 1911) I:223–64; cited in Parushev, "Going Forward to the Roots," 82.

<sup>42</sup> See Špidlík, "Lidské srdce," 203.

<sup>43</sup> Špidlík, *Spirituality*, 105.

<sup>44</sup> Referring to Theophan the Recluse, Špidlík writes: "The essence of the spiritual life, the life in Christ, consists in the transformation of soul and body and their translation into the sphere of the Spirit, that is, in the spiritualization of soul and body" (Špidlík, *Spirituality*, 33. See Teofan Zatvornik, *Pisma o duchovnoj žizni* (Moskva, 1903), 247.

spiritualization.<sup>45</sup> In this context Špidlík returns to the doctrine of deification.<sup>46</sup> It is synonymous to the all-embracing spiritualization: the Holy Spirit that is within us is a dynamic principle, leading us to a living union with Jesus Christ and with the Father, to one God's life, to a deification. The presence of Holy Spirit enables communication with Jesus Christ and with the Father and deifies us.

## 2. Špidlík and his Pupils

We need to be aware of the fact that Špidlík's pupils came as a result of his various activities, academic as well as pastoral. Here we will focus mainly on the academic activities, and even choosing only those people and approaches most directly relevant to our theme.

### Pupils in Rome

In 1991 three of Tomáš Špidlík's doctoral students, later among his closest colleagues graduated. Marco Ivan Rupnik SJ<sup>47</sup> and Michelina Tenace<sup>48</sup> graduated at the Gregorian University, and Richard Čemus SJ at the Oriental Institute.<sup>49</sup> Rupnik put his main energy to building up the Centro Aletti, and in particular the iconographic atelier there, while continuing to publish on the themes of theology, spirituality and art, and the new evangelisation in Europe, themes which were also dear to Cardinal Špidlík and on which they cooperated.<sup>50</sup> Michelina Tenace joined in these interests too, but she also further developed the hesychast strands of Špidlík's theological anthropology. In her work the theme of human deification is treated most explicitly.<sup>51</sup> Together with Richard Čemus and with their teacher Tomáš Špidlík, they also published joint works on Orthodox monasticism.<sup>52</sup> Čemus, then, dedicated much of his attention to hesychasm, and to the prayer of the heart in particular. He succeeded Tomáš Špidlík in teaching Eastern Orthodox Spirituality at the Ori-

<sup>45</sup> Špidlík, *Spirituality*, 33. He refers here both to Theophan the Recluse and to Solovyov. See Vladimir Solovyov, *Duchovnyje osnovy žizni* (St Petersburg, n.d., rept. Brussels: 1966), vol 3:353, English translation *God, Man and the Church* (London: 1938); Teofan Zatvornik, *Pisma k raznym licam* (Moskva, 1892), 376.

<sup>46</sup> See esp. Špidlík, *Spirituality*, 45–47; Špidlík, *Vnitřně zakoušet*, 181.

<sup>47</sup> See Marco Ivan Rupnik, *Il significato teologico missionario dell'arte nella saggistica di Vjačeslav Ivanovič Ivanov*, PhD (Roma: Pontifica Universitas Gregoriana, 1991); later published as: *L'Arte: memoria della comunione. Il significato teologico missionario dell'arte nella saggistica di Vjačeslav Ivanovič Ivanov*, (Roma: Lipa Edizioni, Pubblicazioni del Centro Aletti, 1994).

<sup>48</sup> See Michelina Tenace, *La beauté comme unité spirituelle dans les écrits esthétiques de Vladimir Soloviev*, PhD, (Rome: Pontifica Universitas Gregoriana, 1991), later published under the same title at Troyes: Éditions Fates, 1993, with an introduction by Olivier Clément.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Čemus, *Das Gebet bei Ignatij Brancaninov. Versuch einer Synthese*, PhD (Rome: PIO, 1991); the theme emerged in numerous articles and much later in the book, *Sulle tracce della Filocalia: pagine sulla preghiera esasta Ignatij Brjančaninov* (Milano: Paoline, 2006).

<sup>50</sup> See e.g. *A due polmoni. Dalla memoria spirituale dell'Europa* (Roma: Lipa Edizioni, 1999), in which all participated together.

<sup>51</sup> See Michelina Tenace, *Il cristianesimo bizantino: storia, teologia, tradizione monastica* (Roma: Carocci Editore, 2000); *Santia e divinizzazione nel cristianismo orientale* (Nyíregyháza: St Athanasius Greek-Catholic Institute, 2000); *L'uomo mistero di luce increate: pagine scelte* (Milano: Paoline, 2005).

<sup>52</sup> See Tomáš Špidlík, Richard Čemus and Michelina Tenace, *Questions monastiques en Orient* (Roma: PIO, 1999); *Il monachismo secondo la tradizione dell'Oriente Cristiano* (Roma: Lipa Edizioni, 2007).

ental Institute in Rome, but many of his activities impacted also on the Czech scene, so we will return to him when we speak about the influence of Špidlík's pupils there.

While teaching at the Oriental Institute, Špidlík supervised 26 doctoral theses of people from various cultural and confessional background. Among the themes we find frequently those types of Christology that emphasize strongly imitation of Christ and the new life in Christ, we could even say, becoming by grace what Christ is by nature in.<sup>53</sup> There are theses dealing with the works of the Church Fathers, in particular with their interpretation of the Scriptures and with the type of theology that arose out of prayer,<sup>54</sup> and those which would be more explicitly related to the Eastern Christian ascetic tradition and to hesychasm, both classical and modern.<sup>55</sup> Finally, there are examples of how the East-West split was or could be overcome,<sup>56</sup> as well as modern sophiological concepts working with notions of pan-unity.<sup>57</sup> These works are less known, hence we will offer some more detail as we use some examples of how the theological themes linked to the doctrine of deification emerge there.

First, it is interesting to note synonyms to deification employed in these works. Jacob Collins, while examining the work of Gregory of Nyssa, speaks about human "integration into the life of the Trinity,"<sup>58</sup> made again possible through Christ by the Spirit. Collins sums up: "This notion of the Spirit as glory and the idea of man's sharing in that glory suggests Gregory's rich doctrine of man's transformation 'from glory to glory,' his progressive deification."<sup>59</sup> Gregory's notion of sanctifying grace as the divine light continues to be present in Eastern Orthodox theology. Referring to Meyendorff and to Lossky, Collins accepts Palamas' essence/energy distinction as an extrapolation of the concept of

<sup>53</sup> See e.g. Stanislav Janežič, *Imitazione di Cristo secondo Tihon Zadonskij* (Rome: PIO, 1960); Mathai Mattathil, *The Christology of Philoxenos of Mabboug mainly based on his Ten Discourses against Habib* (Rome: PIO, 1984).

<sup>54</sup> Johannes Agulles, *Bienaventurados los puros de corazon. Mt 5:8 en la literatura greco-cristiana hasta Origenes* (Rome, PIO, 1962); Cyriac Medayil, *Purity of Heart according to the East Syrian Mystics (Seventh Century)*, (Rome: PIO, 1964); Dominicus Gil Baro, *El Primogenito de lo muertos en Origenes* (Rome: PIO, 1976); Jacob J. Collins, *The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Transformation of Man according to St Gregory of Nyssa* (Rome: PIO, 1968); Guido Innocenzo Gargano, *La teoria di Gregorio di Nissa sul Cantico dei Cantici. Indagine su alcune indicazioni di metodo esegetico* (Rome: PIO, 1978); John Levko, *Prayer in the Works of John Cassian* (Rome: PIO, 1994).

<sup>55</sup> George A. Maloney, *The Spirituality of Nil Sorsky* (Rome: PIO, 1962); Cuthbert Hainsworth O.Carm, *Paisij Velickovskij Staretz (1722-1794). Doctrine of Spiritual Guidance* (Rome: PIO, 1973); Marcello Garzanti, *Vita e Pellegrinaggio di Daniil Egumeno della Terra Russa* (Rome: PIO, 1990); Honorato Ros Llopis, *La Imagen del Hombre en el pensamiento del Obispo Ignacio Brjancaninov* (Rome: PIO, 1983); Čemus, *Das Gebet*; Lanfranco Rossi, *La preghiera esastica in Nikodemo Agiorita e la filosofia antica* (Rome: PIO, 2000).

<sup>56</sup> Louis Moolaveetil, *The Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios* (Rome: PIO, 1971); David Hester, *Italo-Greek Monastic Spirituality: The Monastic Life and Spirituality of the Italo-Greeks in Byzantine Sicily and Southern Italy from the 9th to the 12th Century* (Rome: The PIO, 1988).

<sup>57</sup> Costante Altissimo, *Gli elementi tradizionali della contemplazione nell'interpretazione filosofico-teologica di Pavel Florenskij* (Rome: PIO, 1979); Germano Mariani, *Il concetto di "Persona" nel pensiero di Sergej Bulgakov* (Rome: PIO, 1996); Maria Campatelli, *L'aspetto ecclesiale e sociologico della cultura in Sergej Bulgakov a partire dal libro "U Sten Chersonisa"* (Rome: PIO, 1998).

<sup>58</sup> Collins, *Work of the Holy Spirit*.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 56–57.



God's glory, both mysterious and active.<sup>60</sup> Sticking to Gregory of Nyssa's imagery, Collins speaks about deification in terms of "the Spirit's transformation of man into Christ," and also about "man's transformation into Spirit, or his becoming 'spiritual'."<sup>61</sup> The new human creature is not a static reality, but rather a fruit of perpetual transformation, having the image as the given and the likeness as an infinite possibility of growth.<sup>62</sup> The perpetual progress towards perfection (not only from the broken towards the good, but also within the good) is balanced by another image, that of the "spiritual marriage" of the purified soul with Christ.<sup>63</sup> The principle of a journey and of stability are thus not opposed to each other, while both in their difference remain valid at the same time.

John Levko, who wrote on prayer in John Cassian, also points out that there is a gradual growth, in his interpretation, both "into the image and likeness of God."<sup>64</sup> Levko's main interest lies in the "spiritual light", as that which "provides the illumination" and "channels our transformation into greater humility and patience through growth in prayer."<sup>65</sup> As Levko speaks about "a dynamic change of 'becoming'",<sup>66</sup> what exactly one is becoming is revealed gradually. The transformation has its ultimate *telos*, the image and likeness of Jesus Christ, and in that eternal life. The journey is guided by the interior light active in the inner life of prayer. This light comes from the Holy Spirit as the Spirit works towards the growth in imitating Christ.<sup>67</sup>

Then, there are two works dedicated to Slavic hesychasm, one by George A. Maloney SJ on Nil Sorskij, the other by Cuthbert Hainsworth OCarm on Paisij Velichkovsky.<sup>68</sup> Both place their research within the typology of hesychasm as drawn by Hausherr, but as they are the third generation of Western scholars engaged with hesychasm, it is already a natural part of their frame of reference. Hence Maloney could say that "Hesychastic spirituality has always been of interest to the Occidental mind",<sup>69</sup> even if, according to him, not always well

<sup>60</sup> See *ibid.*, 57.

<sup>61</sup> See *ibid.*, 166–67.

<sup>62</sup> See *ibid.*, 205–07.

<sup>63</sup> See *ibid.*, 429.

<sup>64</sup> Levko, *Prayer*, 2.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>67</sup> See Levko, *Prayer*, 108–113; 182. Levko appreciates here also Cassian's flexibility in his modification of the desert asceticism to other conditions, and his frequent "underlining the danger of an excessive and intolerant spirit", of "self-confident asceticism" for a "growing life of prayer." *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>68</sup> It is interesting that neither of them takes John Meyendorff's interpretative key on hesychasm. Hainsworth draws on other Orthodox sources. These include among others Basile Krivochéine, Elisabeth Behr-Sigel, Paul Evdokimov, and Lev Gillet. In Maloney Meyendorff is cited among the sources, but unlike the Orthodox scholarship of their period, he neither sees Palamas as a peak of hesychasm nor even less as an expression of a pure Orthodox identity as distinguished from the West that is being brought into Orthodoxy by Barlaam's embracing of Western categories of thought. See Hainsworth, *Paisij Velichkovskij Staretz*; Maloney, *Spirituality of Nil Sorsky*.

<sup>69</sup> Maloney, *Spirituality of Nil Sorsky*, 146. Among the Western scholars concerned with hesychasm he mentions Hausherr, whose work appears to be most influential on his research, but also the French Assumptionist Martin Jugie, known for his negative views on hesychasm and on Palamas in particular. Jugie characterised Palamas in the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* as "erroneous and verging on heresy". See Martin Jugie, "Palamas, Grégoire" and "Palamite (controverse)," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, vol. 11, part 2 (Paris: Letou-



understood. Maloney uses here a somewhat problematic distinction between the essence and the “mere accidental aids” of hesychasm. The essence lies in the realism of the experience of God, the accidentals in the psychosomatic practices and in the metaphysical theological explanations.<sup>70</sup> The Slavic expression of hesychasm, while integrating different facets of the earlier hesychast tradition, avoided over-emphasizing an impact of one at the expense of others.<sup>71</sup> Such ability, he claims, gave Slavic hesychasm in modern times a unique flexibility:

At a time when Russia was becoming a nation and a world power, when the official Russian church and the State both saw advantages in developing the doctrine of the Third Rome, Nil quietly preached a Messianism that was above chauvinism, that was universal, and that embraced all nations destined to be saved through the merits and grace of the one human and divine Messiah, Jesus Christ. When monks were obedient to the letter, but forgot to sacrifice to God their complete judgment, Nil stressed absolute obedience to the commands of God, as interpreted by the spiritual “Starets”. With his emphasis on the Kingdom of Heaven within man, he laid the foundation for the “Starets” tradition that in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries would produce saints like Seraphim of Rostov and the Startsi of the Optyna hermitage made famous by the writings of Dostoevsky and I. Kireevsky.<sup>72</sup>

A similar evaluation of Slavic hesychasm is given by Hainsworth.<sup>73</sup> In modern times, in and through Paisij Velichkovsky in particular, it became “socially conscious in its own way and attracted many of the laity of diverse classes”, with a “genius for balance in the spiritual life.”<sup>74</sup>

Hainsworth concentrates on a phenomenon that grew in importance, namely that of *starchestvo*. The staretz, according to him, was seen as a guide to Christian perfection bringing discernment and wisdom to the Christian experiences of his spiritual children.<sup>75</sup> The very

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zey et Ané, 1932), 1735–1818, here 1764; for an excellent analysis of Jugie’s background and his position, see Norman Russell, “The Reception of Palamas in the West Today,” *Theologia* 83:3 (2012): 7–21, esp. 7–9; “Inventing Palamism,” *Analogia* 3:2 (2017): 75–96, esp. 75–79. Maloney also refers to other less controversial figures, such as Georg Wundele, Louis Bouyer and Fairy von Lilienfeld.

<sup>70</sup> Thus Palamas, according to Maloney, “formed a theological and metaphysical explanation of what the hesychast Fathers tried to say down through the centuries but they had always couched it in Biblical or at least in highly metaphorical language. His metaphysical distinction of the essence of God and the divine energies ...adds nothing new to the hesychast method as such [while] his name is associated with the final form that hesychasm took.” See Maloney, *The Spirituality of Nil Sorsky*, 156.

<sup>71</sup> This is so, according to Maloney, greatly thanks to the impact of Nil Sorsky, who arrived at Mount Athos in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, was influenced by the hesychast renaissance, while “through the writings of the earlier hesychast Fathers was able to know all facets of this spirituality.” Maloney, *The Spirituality of Nil Sorsky*, 159. While Maloney examines the work of Nil Sorsky, he focuses on “(1) solitude and silence; (2) emptying of thoughts; (3) hesychia; (4) nepsis through observation of commandments of God.” Ibid, 160.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 394.

<sup>73</sup> Hainsworth argues that the Mount Athos played a less active role after the fourteenth century, until the end of the eighteenth century when Macarius of Corinth and Nicodemus the Hagiorite published the *Philokalia*. In the meantime, a unique form of hesychasm developed in the Slavic lands and in particular in Russia, inspired by Athos (through Nil Sorsky) and periodically nourished from its sources. See Hainsworth, *Paisij Velichkovskij Staretz (1722-1794)*, 76.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 271–272.

<sup>75</sup> See ibid, 4.

origin of understanding of who the staretz is and the role of the staretz in spiritual life, he points out, is related to the “ideal of the ‘divinization of man,’ i.e. the spiritual merging of human nature with Christ in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>76</sup> He speaks of the one who has reached a certain maturity in divinisation, and received spiritual gifts, especially that of discernment, which is vital for spiritual guidance, in terms of *christophoros*. He says: “In the fourth century the term *χριστοφόρος* spread to the pious ascetics after the era of the martyrs, who were the first exclusive bearers of the title. The Pseudo-Athanasius (PG 28, 273A), probably of Syrian origin, refers to Macarius as ‘God on earth,’ because he lives as an image of God for others.”<sup>77</sup>

Deification, in Hainsworth’s preferred terminology divinisation, is thus relational. It joins the staretz to Christ and at the same time to the disciple, and in its continuity creates a tradition both testifying and making one participate in the union that is seen as a “penetration of the physical nature by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>78</sup>

A slightly different example of developing Špidlík’s is found in the thesis of his Indian student Louis Moolavetil. He begins his thesis as follows: “Each age of human history has had its typical men [in the same page he says ‘saints’], the kind of man who sums up the spirit of the times in his interest and his goals.”<sup>79</sup> The type of sanctity that particularly interests Moolavetil is to do with finding again the lost unity of Christians. His figure of choice is an Indian uniate archbishop Mar Ivanios (1882-1953) whom he also calls a staretz. For Moolavetil Mar Ivanios links together the desire for “union with God”, without which nobody can “truly serve God”,<sup>80</sup> and serving in the church. This joining of the two is taken as an explanation of why unionism is good, as Moolavetil praises Mar Ivanios’ step towards union with the bishop of Rome, and how “Hundreds of separated brethren followed in his footsteps...”<sup>81</sup> Or elsewhere, “his Reunion with the Catholic Church paved the way for his working for the conversion of his Orthodox brethren.”<sup>82</sup> Seeing Mar Ivanios as an Indian Newman too strongly resembles the position of d’Herbigny rather than that of Špidlík.<sup>83</sup> Despite this highly problematic link of the unity with God and the unity with the Roman Pontiff, we need to pay attention also to the type of spirituality he brings to the Western church. The imitation of Christ stressing the unceasing prayer is expressed in a hesychast key, and as with previous students of Špidlík, Moolavetil, unlike in his ecclesiological views, holds here an open and yet rooted notion of what realism of the experience of God can be and of where it can be found.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>77</sup> He says further “The term ‘God on earth’ was also used even in the third century for those witnessing Christ in martyrdom. The monk, therefore, a martyr by slow process, must be divinized and become an image and ideal (Abbild) for others in quest of perfection.” Both citations are in Hainsworth, *Paisij Velickovskij Staretz (1722-1794)*, 10, n. 29. He refers to “Christophoros als Ehrentitel für Martyrer und Heilige im christlichen Altertum,” in *Antike und Christentum: Kultur-und Religionsgeschichtliche Studien*, Bd IV, ed. Franz Joseph Dölger (Münster: Aschendorff, 1934), 73–80.

<sup>78</sup> Hainsworth, *Paisij Velickovskij Staretz (1722-1794)*, 10.

<sup>79</sup> Moolavetil, *Spiritual Life of Mar Ivanios*, xix.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 191.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. footnote 9. For the comparison of uniatist attitudes with Newman, see Michel d’Herbigny SJ, *Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900) Un Newman russe* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1911).

### Impact on the Czech Scene

After the fall of Communism Cardinal Špidlík and his pupils from Rome could frequently visit his homeland, the Czech Republic, lead retreats and give lectures. Their work became known,<sup>84</sup> and they had also their first Czech students.

The most influential ones were Pavel Ambros SJ and Michal Altrichter SJ. Both studied in 1990s in Rome – Ambros at the Oriental Institute under the supervision of Rupnik,<sup>85</sup> and Altrichter at the Gregorian University under the supervision of Michelina Tenace.<sup>86</sup> While in Rome they closely collaborated with the Centro Aletti, and with Cardinal Špidlík, with whose support they brought into life the Czech version of the Centre, Centrum Aletti in Olomouc, founded by the Czech Jesuit province in 1996 for studying the relationship of faith, culture, art and spirituality, and for an engagement in the new evangelisation. Over the years the Centre and the publishing house Refugium brought into the Czech scene not only Špidlík's work, but also valuable translations of books on Eastern Christian spirituality and Modern Orthodox thinkers.<sup>87</sup>

The Centre also systematically reflected upon the work of Špidlík. Pavel Ambros, who became professor of pastoral and spiritual theology at the Palacký University in Olomouc, the author of Špidlík's monumental bibliography,<sup>88</sup> and of prefaces to almost all Špidlík's books published in Czech, paid special attention to Špidlík's theological method. According to him, Špidlík's relational and participatory approach to knowledge resembled the sources he studied and commented upon, both Slavic and hesychast.<sup>89</sup> Ambros sees Špidlík's method as indebted to Pavel Florensky, and points out that it could be summarized as follows: "Real knowledge of the Truth is conceivable only in love."<sup>90</sup> From here Špidlík takes the idea that true knowledge is not an objective concept but a living reality, communion of a shared life.<sup>91</sup> In this sense the 'truth' cannot be an abstract principle and the rational knowledge is not sufficient to reach it, but an intuitive knowledge is needed. In other words, contemplation of an

<sup>84</sup> Špidlík's work appeared in Czech already from the mid-seventies, but the first volume of his collected works was officially in the mid-nineties, see *Dílo Tomáše Špidlíka I* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 1996).

<sup>85</sup> See Pavel Ambros, *I vestige della spiritualità dell'Oriente Cristiano slavo e la loro attualità nella Boemia e Moravia di oggi*. PhD (Rome: PIO, 1995).

<sup>86</sup> See Michal Altrichter, *La religiosa di Leoš Janáček nel contesto del pensiero di Solov'ev e Il'jin*. PhD (Roma: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1999).

<sup>87</sup> Most of them came out in Refugium, Velehrad-Roma, the publishing house of the Centrum Aletti in Olomouc.

<sup>88</sup> See Pavel Ambros, *Kardinál Tomáš Špidlík SJ - stařec a teolog nerozdělené církve: kompletní bibliografie 1938-2011* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2012).

<sup>89</sup> Pavel Ambros, "Špidlík Tomáš SJ," in *Encyklopedický slovník křesťanského Východu*, eds. Edward G. Farrugia and Pavel Ambros (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2010), 883.

<sup>90</sup> Špidlík, *Ruská idea: jiný pohled na člověka*, 77.

<sup>91</sup> As Sr. Maria Campatelli, the personal secretary of Cardinal Špidlík writes, in his study of Eastern spirituality Špidlík did not focus on the analysis of the texts, but on the "inspiring illumination." See her contribution to the conference in Prešov 2011: Maria Campatelli, "Il cuore: Una rilettura dell'Oriente anche per l'Occidente," in *Prínos kardinála T. Špidlíka k poznání teologie a spirituality křesťanského Východu* (Prešov: Gréckokatolícká teologická fakulta), 28.

“object” is not sufficient, if Christians do not live through this relationship in it and with it. This has pastoral as well as spiritual consequences, according to Ambros.<sup>92</sup>

Ambros also mapped the work of the Velehrad centre which in a way could be seen together with the Rome Centro Aletti as a predecessor of the Olomouc Centre,<sup>93</sup> and wrote various studies on the relations between Christian East and West, and on the concept of unity.<sup>94</sup> Michal Altrichter, similarly to Marko Ivan Rupnik, engaged more with the world of arts, in Altrichter’s case, interpreting fine art and literature and writing poetry.<sup>95</sup> He included insights of the Eastern Christian tradition into his works on spirituality, both academic and pastoral,<sup>96</sup> and he also returned more specifically to the emphasis on the centrality of the heart in a Western key.<sup>97</sup>

However, in this area, perhaps the strongest influence came via Richard Čemus, a Czech Jesuit, Špidlík’s former doctoral student and later colleague at the Oriental Institute in Rome, who succeeded him in teaching Orthodox Spirituality. His booklet *Jesus Prayer and the Prayer of the Heart* combines the spirituality of *The Way of the Pilgrim*, the *Philokalia* and Špidlík in a synthesis.<sup>98</sup> The question of deification is joined there to that of what it means to pray without ceasing, as mentioned in 1 Thes 5:17. Čemus argues that neither of the questions can find answer by means of looking for general principles. Rather, one needs to take the path of prayer, and seek for understanding through participating in the descent into the heart. Solitude and community are both necessary, according to Čemus,

<sup>92</sup> See Pavel Ambros, “Pastorační činnost a zbožštění,” in *Duch Svátý* (Olomouc: Refugium, 2000), 49–73; “Duchovní antropologie v pojetí kardinála Tomáše Špidlíka SJ – vykročení k integrální antropologii?” in *Současné integrující přístupy k pojetí člověka* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2007), 11–12.

<sup>93</sup> See Pavel Ambros et al., *Velehrad na křižovatkách evropských dějin* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2016).

<sup>94</sup> See Pavel Ambros, *Mezi Východem a Západem* (Velehrad: Hlas Velehradu, 1994); Pavel Ambros, *Křesťanský Východ a Západ: Inkulturace a interkulturace* (Brno: CDK, 2017); Pavel Ambros, ed., *Vladimir Solovjov a jednotná Evropa*, (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2001).

<sup>95</sup> See e.g. Michal Altrichter, *Blížkost jediného* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2011); Michal Altrichter and Luisa Karczubová, *Povstání doteku. Uchopen v skrytu* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2008).

<sup>96</sup> See Michal Altrichter, *Příručka spirituální teologie* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2007); *Krátké dějiny křesťanské spirituality* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2013); *Spirituální teologie* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2017); *Životní styl a duchovní život* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2015); *Člověk a víra*, (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2015); *Nehlučné aforismy* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2016); *Hledání jinakosti* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2017).

<sup>97</sup> See Michal Altrichter et al., *Božské srdce: teologická reflexe* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2002).

<sup>98</sup> First edition: Richard Čemus, *Modlitba Ježíšova a modlitba srdce – hesychasmus* (Velehrad: Societas, 1993), the edition from 1996 had all the typographical mistakes and errors already corrected. It is Čemus’ best known publication in the Czech Republic, with many thousands of copies sold. The last edition was published together with the Czech translation of *The Way of the Pilgrim*: Richard Čemus, “Umění modlit se srdcem,” in *Upřímná vyprávění poutníka svému duchovnímu otci* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2001), 6–49. Note-worthy is his spiritual-theological interpretation of the movie *Ostrov* (Pavel Lungin, 2006), which not only starts with the Jesus prayer, but also draws on the sources of Eastern spirituality to such an extent that a basic knowledge of the main elements is necessary: repentance, kenosis, starets, fool for Christ, Jesus prayer, and others. See Richard Čemus, “‘Chtěl jsem ukázat, že Bůh existuje...’ Spirituálně-teologická interpretace ruského filmu Ostrov,” in *Všechno je milost*, ed. Vojtěch Novotný (Prague: Karolinum, 2008), 60–79.

if one is not to lose the path. Čemus in his works introduces his Czech readers to the Biblical and Patristic roots of the Jesus Prayer and to the hesychast practices of the psycho-physical form of this prayer.<sup>99</sup> Like Špidlík, he argues for the necessity of the ontological perspective, saying that for the Eastern fathers it was not so important what the person did, but what he or she was like. And like Špidlík he sees here a radical difference with Western spirituality, where the focus was on the deed and moral character.<sup>100</sup> The spirituality growing out of the Philokalic tradition, Čemus argues, includes all human potential into the work of prayer, giving each aspect of our being a symbolic meaning and eschatological orientation. In Eastern tradition, however, the symbolic means real, real and participatory.<sup>101</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

Paul Gavrilyuk, writing on how deification found its way back to Western theologies at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries,<sup>102</sup> observes two main typologies: “some emphasize that the meaning of deification in a given Western author is fundamentally identical or continuous with the patristic use of the concept”, while others “more cautiously speak of a distinctive Western re-interpretation of the theme of deification.”<sup>103</sup> Cardinal Špidlík and his school expand this typology towards an integrative employment of the content of the doctrine of deification inculturating Patristic, and especially Slavic Orthodox insights into the framework of Modern and Postmodern Western spirituality and theology. Or responding to Fr Andrew Louth, we could say that with regard to the content of the doctrine of deification, what has been on the margins of Western theology is becoming mainstream.<sup>104</sup>

This article has tried to show the development of Špidlík’s interpretation of the complex web of themes contributing to the “structural significance”<sup>105</sup> of the doctrine of deification, which then has continued in and been further developed by his pupils. These themes include the emphases spelled out by Fr Andrew Louth, as exemplary of a non-reductionist approach to the doctrine.<sup>106</sup> We have addressed the strong relation to the mystery of Incarnation, the reality of human transformation, including all that people are and have into a Christomorphic and spiritualised way of being, as well as respect towards God’s mysterious otherness in which we participate through a life of repentance and prayer, particularly as cultivated by the hesychast tradition.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Čemus, “Umění modlit se srdcem,” 8.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 27.

<sup>101</sup> See ibid, 46.

<sup>102</sup> More recently, see e.g. Michael J. Christensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung, eds., *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007); Paul Collins, *Partaking in Divine Nature: Deification and Communion* (London: T&T Clark, 2010); Vladimir Kharlamov, ed., *Theosis: Deification in Christian Theology II* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011); Christoph Schneider, ed., *Divine Essence and Divine Energies: Ecumenical Reflections* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2013).

<sup>103</sup> See Paul Gavrilyuk, “The Retrieval of Deification: How a Once-Despised Archaism Became an Ecumenical Desideratum,” *Modern Theology* 25 (2009): 647–59, here 655.

<sup>104</sup> See Louth, “The Place of *Theosis*,” 33.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.



While Špidlík and his pupils drew heavily on Orthodox spirituality and theology, and appreciated their potential for transforming their Western counterparts, they also appropriated these sources as theirs, as belonging to the Catholic experience as a whole.<sup>107</sup> In this sense, they tried to build a bridge leading from the Christian West to the Christian East and back. In conclusion, perhaps, it is the right time to return to ask who walks on the bridge.

The work of Cardinal Špidlík has been highly influential in Catholic circles. His pupils saw in him “a theologian of the undivided church”, and even a “staretz”, and saw him appreciated in these terms also by some Orthodox theologians and hierarchs,<sup>108</sup> especially for his vision of a spirituality and theology that “breathes with both lungs”.<sup>109</sup> This phrase was often used by John Paul II, who was influenced by Špidlík’s emphasis that “we are connected by the same faith”<sup>110</sup> in his attitude towards Eastern Christianity.<sup>111</sup> Špidlík was also appreciated by Pope Benedict XVI for “a lively and, in many aspects, original theological vision, in which the Christian East and West converge organically in a mutual exchange of gifts”.<sup>112</sup>

Understanding deification not as an isolated concept, but rather as impacting on the experience of the communion with God and on spiritual life as a whole, as well as on their theological articulation is representative of Špidlík’s approach of drawing on the common heritage of the Christian East and West, that continues in his pupils. We can be critical of the generalisations that happen along the way, whether in contrasting Hellenic and He-

**107** This is to complement Louth’s emphasis on the notion of deification being related to the “Orthodox experience as a whole”, see Louth, “The Place of *Theosis*,” 34.

**108** See the title of Ambros’s work, *Kardinál Tomáš Špidlík SJ - starec a teolog nerozdělené církve*, esp. 28–33.

**109** This phrase, dear to Cardinal Špidlík, comes from a Russian symbolist poet Vyacheslav Ivanov, and has been popular with Catholic theologians engaged with Orthodoxy. See also Špidlík’s small article on Vyacheslav Ivanov: Tomáš Špidlík, “Dýchat oběma stranami plíc” s básníkem Vjačeslavem Ivanovem,” in Novotný (ed.), *Všechno je milost*, 323–27. Ivanov had Vladimir Solovyov as his great example, and like him he professed union with Rome and was received in the Russian Greek-Catholic Church in 1937. After the Bolshevik Revolution he had emigrated to Italy and became a professor of Church Slavonic at the Russicum in Rome. His embracing of the uniatis vision made the metaphor of breathing with both lungs somehow more problematic for the Orthodox. For Ivanov’s turn to Catholicism, see László Puskás, *Theodore Romzha: His Life, Times and Martyrdom* (Fairfax VI: Eastern Christian Publications, 2002), 29–32.

**110** Tomáš Špidlík, *Duchovní cvičení s Janem Pavlem II* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2007), 181.

**111** It found its way even to his encyclical *Ut unum sint* (1995), 54. In the same year (1995) in March 5–11 Špidlík was invited to lead spiritual exercises in Vatican for John Paul II and whole Roman curia. The encyclical came out in May 25<sup>th</sup>. Stanisław Cardinal Dziwisz, Archbishop of Krakow said these were one of the best spiritual exercises they ever had in Vatican. See *Velehrad - Řím: modlil se tvář k východu: Tomáš kardinál Špidlík SJ* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2010), 13. When Pope John Paul II consecrated the Chapel Redemptoris Mater at the Centro Aletti, he said “this work... is offered as an expression of that theology with two lungs from which the Church of the third millennium can draw new vitality”. For the homily of pope John Paul II see *Velehrad - Řím: modlil se tvář k východu: Tomáš kardinál Špidlík SJ*, 17.

**112** Homily of Pope Benedict XVI at the Eucharist celebration with the community of “Centro Aletti” in Rome on the occasion of 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of cardinal Tomáš Špidlík (December 17, 2009), see [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2009/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20091217\\_90--spidlik.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20091217_90--spidlik.html), [accessed November 5, 2018]. A year later, in April 20, 2010, while celebrating Špidlík’s funeral mass, he spoke of him as of a *staretz*. See [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20100420\\_esequie-spidlik.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20100420_esequie-spidlik.html) [accessed November 5, 2018].



brew thought or in speaking about Christian East and West in singular generalised categories. But his monumental works reveal also a sense for details which not only support but also subvert too artificial distinctions. We can also be critical of an insufficient, and often largely absent reflection on the problem of uniatism in the vision of Christian unity, but we need to realize that he was not a proponent of such a vision, even if he belonged to the era and to the setting where it was considered as acceptable. Despite these criticisms, he and his school represent a unique model of engagement with the Christian East, and of integrating Patristic and Orthodox insights into mainstream Western tradition.

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