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Determinism or Vanity? A Proposed Close Reading of the Book of Ecclesiastes

Abstract: This exegetical article seeks to offer a close reading of Ecclesiastes that would allow us to surmount the difficulties associated with its exegesis. The book's text is widely known to be replete with contrasts and antinomies that introduce a certain vagueness to its writer's intentions. The article suggests that the reader should approach the book as if it was written as a first-person logbook which appears, superficially, to have been written in no logical order, at random, and at different times according to the order of the writer's experiences and meditations. Such an approach would reduce the readers' expectations for a logical order and would direct them to a deeper examination of the logical contexts scattered throughout the book. The article also presents the determinist contexts of reality and their association with a wise person's perspective as opposed to the randomness associated with a fool's perspective. The writer's sceptical descriptions of his encounter with reality and his first-person thoughts about this reality express an explicitly critical view of reality. The writer's pre-reflexive doubt is thus nothing but a methodical doubt akin to Descartes' pre-*cogito* doubts. An attentive reader will identify that the book's text encompasses a reflexive/critical perspective on a sceptical view of reality. As such, the writer's critical view voids the fool's non-reflexive sceptical perspective (which is reflected in a superficial reading of the book's text). The article's close reading of the book thus posits a fool's vanity which is a "vexation of spirit" (KJV) [*re'ut ruah*] among those who view reality as being coincidental. Conversely, it also posits a wise person's vanity, which is a "vexation of spirit" [*ra'ayon ruah*], which critiques the fool's pre-reflexive random view of reality as vanity and as a vexation of spirit [*re'ut ruah*]. This view of the wise person, whose "eyes are in his head" (2:14), is the true free will the writer is alluding to.

Keywords: Ecclesiastes, Determinism, Double-Vanity, Events, Fools, Semicolon, Wise

Foreword

An everyday reading of the book of Ecclesiastes may cause the reader to experience difficulties in understanding the book's content due in no small part to the contradictory messages and ostensible contradictions that arise from it. The book's unique style depicts its writer as a leader in control of a ship's rudder and as managing its logbook. The 'logbook' reading proposed in the present article might appease the reader's mind with respect to the contradictions, at least insofar as the book's existential and educational messages are con-

cerned—these being the main focus of the present article.¹ The present article does not intend to state a position in the academic discourse concerning whether the book was written in whole or in part by King Solomon or that it was supplemented or completed after being written by another person.²

A close reading clearly reveals that the lion's share of the logbook text is written in the first person. Considering the logbook as a point of origin neutralizes any reader expectations for a logical order of events and thus helps the reader to penetrate the depths of the text as she or he keeps on reading. Indeed, when we read a logbook we are clearly aware at the outset that any logged event does not have to be logically related to the event logged before it or after it. The logbook-like nature of the text arises from its content and especially from the presence of contradictory statements and dichotomous messages. Such a random connection indicates that—as is the case with events along a timeline which follow no logical order, and as is apparent from the meditations scattered throughout the text—the text was not written in any continuous order, but rather randomly and as its content arose from the author's experience and conscious mind. Indeed, and ostensibly, it does not appear that the author is attempting to present a logical order of events, nor that he is attempting to present a methodical cohesion between his statements, a state of affairs that is opposed to what we find in other parts of the biblical canon as well as in the apocrypha.³

Adopting the perspective of a logbook, therefore, makes it easier to dispel the vagueness arising from the contradictory statements and the internal contradictions that appear in the text. After all, the logging of day-to-day events in a diary or logbook which also describes meditations and thoughts that occurred to the writer in various circumstances will naturally be ordered randomly in the same way a jigsaw puzzle is made of random pieces before it is assembled. As such, and if we remove our expectations, we remain with nothing to do but to decode contexts and construct the framework containing the complete picture.

1 The close reading proposed in the present article is concerned with the text as a whole. Given its approach of reading the book as a logbook, I see no reason to state a position with respect to the exegetical discourse claiming that the book contains addenda written by more than one author or addenda made by a later editor (see, e.g. Kang, 2016). A 'logbook' reading, and the assumption that the book was written as a logbook, shall serve us as a point of origin that will allow us to explain and settle such debates.

2 See, for example, Ernest Renan (1882), one of the pioneering critics concerned with the author's identity. Renan believes Ecclesiastes to be a codename for King Solomon, which the author places in the mouth of a man named Ecclesiastes. Renan goes further and also provides the opinions of Krochmal and Graetz in order to suggest that the book was written at some point between the Persian Achaemenid and Alexander the Great's control of the Land of Israel.

3 Over and above the debate concerning the identity of the writer of Ecclesiastes and the book's dating, there is also the debate concerning the issue of the book's inclusion as a book of wisdom in the biblical canon—a debate which began as early as in the time of the Jewish sages (ḤAZAL) and is still ongoing. In this respect, see, e.g. Burkes, 2002. The present article does not intend to engage this question on account of its goal of focusing on directing the reader toward understanding the book's messages via a close reading of the book's text.

1. Structure and Style

Like a ship's captain noting his observations in his logbook, Ecclesiastes also begins his logbook in the first person: "I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem" (1:12 [KJV]), and continues to say, "And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven..." (1:13 [KJV]).

The maintenance of a logbook as a day-to-day report of events is meant for allowing, should it be necessary, the tracking of a vessel's long voyage across the ocean. Ecclesiastes' goal in writing his "logbook" is manifestly pedagogical and suggests that the reader should be the one to decode the particulars of Ecclesiastes' records throughout the voyage of her or his life and to learn from Ecclesiastes' meditations.

Ecclesiastes is an empirical thinker who observes the comings and goings of the world around him, who learns from experience, who processes his experiences in his conscious mind, and who makes his statements according to his experiences and thought. His role as captain is to look ahead as his vessel sails, to examine his vessel's course and to look toward the horizon. As he lives his daily life, Ecclesiastes observes the great metaphysical questions and attempts to understand where the world begins and where it ends in space and in time, the nature of eternity in space and time, the part played by mortals in eternity, how the world conducts itself, the underlying rationale of the world's conduct, the chain of causation and the existence of a first cause, the purpose of all creation, and the meaning of being human. These questions also give rise to existential and moral questions that go beyond the horizons of a person's understanding. Ecclesiastes stresses that he cannot see beyond the horizon, but knows that he will always return to the same place if he keeps on sailing. This, in turn, leads him to conclude that, insofar as his senses can observe, it appears that "all is vanity" (1:2 [KJV]); that is to say, that there is no purpose to existence.

Even at the most superficial level, it is possible to observe that:

1. The goal of logbook writing is to record the writer's voyage of discovering unknown horizons.
2. The writer is a person that not only relies on his own experiences of the world, but also one that writes his thoughts, which—as far as he is concerned—are also empirical experiences. According to the writer, thought, reflection, criticism, and the correction of conscious awareness are all types of empirical experiences.
3. Writing serves an educational purpose—that of directing humans to meaning within the domain of everyday life, be the meaning of their existence as it may.
4. God is not mentioned explicitly by name (such as by using the tetragrammaton) throughout the entire book, but rather referred to by the title "God" (in the KJV, *Elohim* in the original Hebrew). This might lead us to assume that the work's educational purpose is universal and not merely meant for Jews, but for all humans—wherever they may be (see Shinan (2021), 29).
5. The text does not use time expressions. Ecclesiastes' words are meant as a timeless message which is always relevant regardless of their time of writing or a particular point in time. The text incorporates the concept of "time" in a nebulous fashion—in its indeter-

minate form. At times, it relates time to “forever” [*olam*], as in “...but the earth abideth forever...” (1:4 [KJV]), and in others to the purpose of humans as transient or as conscious minds associated with an indeterminant duration.

6. The text is concerned with the relations between polar opposites: life and death, anger and calmness, jealousy and mutual support, wisdom and stupidity, labour and idleness, justice and evil, riches and poverty, faith and apostasy, as well as with the relations between what is good for people and what is bad for them. All, as noted above, within the scope of the empirical horizon Ecclesiastes is familiar with from his lived experience and from his critical deductions following his reflective meditations on his impressions.

2. Antinomies, Emotions, and Doubts

The first chapters of Ecclesiastes are full of statements in the first person. For example: “I the Preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem” (1:12 [KJV]), “And I gave my heart to seek and search out...” (1:13 [KJV]), “...Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom...” (1:16 [KJV]), “And I gave my heart to know wisdom...” (1:17 [KJV]). The verbs used include I knew, I said, I built, I planted, I tried, I went about to cause my heart, I laboured, I got me [I bought], I saw, I praised, I made me, I made me great works, [I] have gotten more, I looked on, I hated, etc.—a total of more than thirty statements and verbs in the past tense and in the first person.

Each of these statements describes an individual case which the writer conveys as a universal message to the reader. For example: “...Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom... And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow...” (1:16-1:18 [KJV]) and “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun” (2:11 [KJV]). Later on we find “Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness” (2:13 [KJV]) and even later we find “...I myself perceived also that one event happeneth to them all...” (2:14 [KJV]).

It is clearly apparent that the logbook-like writing in the first person and in the past tense describes impressions from the writer’s part experience. These impressions are combined with the doubts or the conclusions he raises in his thoughts. The lack of methodical writing creates a tension between the messages that should arise from his life experiences and the meditations relating to his experiences. In any case, the writer presents the reader with conclusions that are occasionally—and ostensibly—contradictory, and it is these that give rise to a vagueness pertaining to the intention of the writer’s messages.⁴

⁴ In spite of the contradictions and the vagueness, Renan (1882) describes Ecclesiastes as a calm person whose emotions are his own private domain and as a person who has no patriotic or Messianic interest with respect to the Jewish people.

2.1 Free Will

The work prominently exhibits an antinomy pertaining to free will, which appears to subvert the requirement of doing good and avoiding evil. After all, what is the point of making an effort if fate is predetermined?⁵ This kind of thinking undermines the assumption that humans have free will, since if everything is predetermined, it necessarily follows that that even the actions humans “chose” to carry out were predetermined. Ecclesiastes goes even further and implies that even a person’s faith in God is predetermined, a position which is opposed to the commonly accepted position, phrased by the Jewish sages as “everything is in Heaven’s hands—apart from the fear of God”. Determinism thus leads to nihilism. Is this in fact the case?⁶ On the surface, the book of Ecclesiastes presents a determinist position suggesting that everything is predetermined, absolute, and unchanging. Therefore, and ostensibly, human existence is meaningless compared to eternity, and it is in this sense that the negative meaning of the concept of “vanity” is clearly presented in the book of Ecclesiastes as a whole.

The negative impression of the 38 appearances of “vanity” is almost absolute. The text does not contain a value-laden concept that opposes “vanity”, one that would leave a positive impression and that would balance the impression created in the reader’s conscious mind by the appearances of “vanity”.

2.2 “Vexation of Spirit” [*re’ut ruah*] vs. “Vexation of Spirit” [*ra’ayon ruah*]⁷

A close reading will reveal that there are “vanities” that end with the words “vexation of spirit” (e.g. 1:14 [KJV]), others that end with “a great evil” (e.g. 2:21 [KJV]) and one case where the “vanity” ends with “vexation of spirit” (4:16 [KJV]), which is different since the Hebrew original, *ra’ayon ruah*, is not the same as the Hebrew original for 1:14, which is *re’ut ruah*). There is also a case (1:17 [KJV]) where “vexation of spirit” [*ra’ayon ruah*] appears on its own. An even closer reading will note that “vexation of spirit” [*ra’ayon ruah*] is associated with a reference to a positive activity such as “know wisdom” (in 1:17 [KJV]).

⁵ Davis Hankins (2015) claims that Ecclesiastes makes a distinction: on that one hand, humans possess a material aspect, with respect to which humans are indeed limited [which accords with the concept of vanity]. However, humans are still imbued with something that is beyond the material on the other hand, something that connects them to an infinite dimension. This dimension, Hankins argues, is not affected by humans’ material conditions in a word and it is the latter which may be referred to as vanity.

⁶ Peterson (2019) claims that the range of values presented by Ecclesiastes is far wider than the nihilism that ostensibly arises from the passages that speak of the supremacy of death over life (4:1 - 4:3 [KJV]) and of the fact that aborted fetuses are better than live deliveries (6:1 - 6:6 [KJV]). More specifically, Peterson considers these statements as a point of origin from which it is possible to proceed with a critical philosophical discussion of the book’s text.

⁷ The KJV—chosen for this article on account of its popularity rather than its accuracy—uses the same English phrase to translate both phrases in the Hebrew original. As can be seen, for example, in <https://www.biblestudytools.com/ecclesiastes/1-14-compare.html> and <https://www.biblestudytools.com/ecclesiastes/1-17-compare.html>, and without engaging in a discussion of the many issues associated with translating the bible from its original languages—which is way beyond the scope of the present article—other translations use slightly different phrases and often translate *ruah* as ‘wind’ though it also means ‘spirit’.

The same applies to the statement suggesting that “Better is a poor and a wise child than an old and foolish king...” (4:13 to 4:17 [KJV]).

On the other hand, Ecclesiastes’ “vanity and vexation of spirit” is associated with a negative human emotion. The difference between these constructions is not coincidental. The words “vanity and vexation of spirit” (4:4 [KJV]) also end the passage concerned with “...a man is envied of his neighbour...” that follows a description of “...the tears of such that were oppressed...” (4:1 [KJV]). The same applies to “vanity and vexation of spirit” following “...I hated life...” (2:17 [KJV]), as well as to “vanity and vexation of spirit” with respect to “...this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith...” (1:13 [KJV]) and with respect to “That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered” (1:15 [KJV]). “Vexation of spirit” is an evil spirit, an uncontrollable emotion that attacks humans as result of such negative feelings as despair, hatred, jealousy, and anger. We are familiar with this emotion from the story of King Saul in the case of his jealousy, hatred, and anger toward the future King David. See, for example, “...that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul (1 Samuel 18:10 [KJV], my emphasis), as well as “And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul” (1 Samuel 19:9 [KJV]).

Ecclesiastes does not present a concept to oppose vanity apart from the concomitant concepts that express an opposition between the concepts of vanity as “vexation of spirit” (*re’ut ruah*) and vanity as “vexation of spirit” (*ra’ayon ruah*). This textual fact describes a foundation for the existence of two types of vanity. The *re’ut ruah* type is the result of the sense of nullity in our forced determinist reality and leads us to an understanding that “all is vanity” (1:2 [KJV]).⁸ The positive aspect of “vanity” is context-dependent in relation to the positive/rational determinist perception of reality. Put differently, it is the *ra’ayon ruah* of reason observing beyond experience.

3. From a Logbook of Experiences to Pedagogical Conclusions and Guidance toward Life-Appropriate Behaviour

The “Captain”’s view to the end of the horizon sees “...vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever...” (1:2 – 1:4 [KJV]). The 38 “vanity” statements conceptualise something empty, something frustrating which voids all value. The logbook-like reading thus forces us to locate the opposite of the book’s “vanity”, and to search text for an opposing concept that would balance it.

The Captain attempts to predict what to expect during the voyage. As noted above, he sees no change: “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be...” (1:9 [KJV]), “All

⁸ Meek (2016) offers an extensive discussion of the concept of “vanity” from an ideational, religious, and historical perspective. The present discussion does not expand, but rather focuses on a close reading-based interpretation, of the concept and concludes that it possesses two opposing textual aspects. Zer-Kavod (1990) finds that “vanity” possesses eight meanings: transience, lies and falsehood, uselessness, non-reality, foolishness, darkness and gloom, despair and pain, and something that cannot be understood or perceived by the rational mind (Introduction, 14). At a later point in the present article, we shall focus our examination on reflexive “vanity” as a positive concept pertaining to the last meaning offered by Zer-Kavod (1990).

go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again...." (3:20 [KJV]), etc. He therefore concludes that this voyage's destination is "vanity". It is readily apparent that the three sentences above also express the concept of "vanity" in the sense of the passage of time.⁹ Vanity also serves as an expression of time that passes in an instant, which has pride of place here in the sense of pointlessness given the transitory nature of human life: "...the days of my vanity..." (7:15 [KJV]), "...the days of the life of thy vanity..." (9:9 [KJV]).¹⁰ The appearances of "vanity" in the text create a "smokescreen" that makes it difficult to find the opposite and balancing pole of the concept of vanity. Indeed, it seems that indeed "all is vanity," and it is vanity that leads the ostensible message of pointlessness.

3.1 The Double Vanity

In an attempt to find the logical sequence that connects the randomness of the logbook's sections, I wish to focus on a number of central concepts that form the core of this sequence, these being "wise person", "foolish person" (wisdom and folly), "coincidence", as well as such emotions as "anger", "hatred", "jealousy", "despair", "sadness", "happiness". A close reading of the relation between these concepts might, to a great extent, clarify the vagueness that surrounds the book as a whole.¹¹ A more focused reading surrounding these concepts allows us to notice that the book's antinomies surround a double vanity. There is a wise person's vanity and there is a fool's vanity, and these accord with these people's association with these concepts in the sense of positive and negative. In other words, the type of vanity applied is not merely based on these people's view of reality as transient and limited creatures but rather on their view of themselves as creatures who understand their place within this determinist reality (the voyage).

4. The Determinist Background

A close reading of the text reveals the vague, and possibly deliberately vague, determinist framework forming part of the writer's logbook-like writing.¹² It does not require much effort to reveal the statements ruling that everything is predetermined, absolute, and necessary. A methodical logbook-like reading, however, removes the outer layer covering the determinist message which cannot be found in a superficial reading of the book.¹³ Identi-

⁹ Haim Shapira (2011) interprets the concept of "vanity" as being "an instance that passes immediately", and supports his interpretation with a verse from the Psalms: "Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away..." (144:4 [KJV]).

¹⁰ See note 10.

¹¹ In this spirit, Zer-Kavod (1990) offers a review of commentaries ranging from the medieval to the contemporary which are aware of the fact that Ecclesiastes does not possess a methodical editorial arrangement. Each passage is thus its own ideational division in the spirit of Ancient Egyptian poetry, which possesses no order and where no single topic is concentrated in a single location (Ecclesiastes, Introduction, p. 11, notes 8-11).

¹² Zer-Kavod (1990) argues that Ecclesiastes was not originally written as a book intended for a general audience, and that it was most likely some esoteric scroll which was partially meant for the author's personal use as a kind of outline (Introduction, 13).

¹³ In the spirit of the following verse, which is traditionally attributed to the present text's author (King Solomon): "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing..." (Proverbs 25:2 [KJV]).

fying the book's ideational depth thus reveals the existence of humans as meaningful in the very conscious internalization and identification of the predetermined order of things. According to this reading, it is precisely "vanity" that is the point of origin for the meaning of existence. The "vanity" perceived in the text's outer layer as a leading concept conveying despair and helplessness will later be revealed as the cornerstone of the *ra'ayon ruah* and of the rational understanding of determinism as the wise person's advantage over a fool. The superficial perception of "vanity" as nothingness gives rise to a kind of vagueness pertaining to the positive context of the idea of "vanity" in the book's determinist framework—a kind of "wise person's vanity".

4.1 Sedimentary Determinism in the Book of Ecclesiastes

The "Captain" uses the entries in his "logbook" in order to attempt a prediction of what to expect in the vessel's course, whether other vessels, islands, continents, weather, etc. Based on the contrasts between the transient and the finite compared to the existent, he sees no change: "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun..." (1:9 [KJV]) (and a similar spirit can be found throughout 1:6 – 1:10 [KJV]), "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again..." (3:20 [KJV]), "...there is one event unto all..." (9:3 [KJV]), "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth..." (11:2 [KJV]), etc. This is what the Captain finds in his gaze toward the horizon and thus, as the horizon changes as the vessel proceeds in its course, the view remains the same and this applies to every destination. Just as the vessel's destination is vanity – nothingness, there is no destination to a person's life course (2:14 [KJV]). This vagueness, in turn, makes it difficult for us to understand the message stating that the voyage's destination is in fact the voyage itself. The voyage itself is also necessary, and—despite its changes—forms part of an eternal totality: "...but the earth abideth for ever..." (1:4 [KJV]) since "...He hath made every thing beautiful in his time..." (3:11 [KJV]).

4.2 Determinism, Time, and Eternity

The temporal dimension referred to by Ecclesiastes is also indeterminate in terms of a specific period, but—like the text as a whole—it is relevant for all time – as if it was written yesterday. The temporal dimension of duration, which is familiar to any person whatsoever, appears in Chapter 3's opening verses: "...A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal..." (3:2 – 3:3 [KJV]), etc. There is a total of twenty-eight action verbs that end with a conclusion: "...He hath made every thing beautiful in his time..." (3:11 [KJV]). Here we have a new concept which was not included in the range of the twenty-eight action periods detailed previously. We are concerned with a third-person verb referring to a constitutive entity, to which the author also ascribes all the human endeavours described previously. If everything made by human hands is context-dependent with respect to that hidden entity, and if this entity is the cause for these actions, then we are concerned with a necessary (determinist) dependence according to which any human action is associated with that hidden entity.

The message arising from these words leads us to the metaphysical plane and goes beyond the temporal dimension we are familiar with. After 28¹⁴ actions and times, Ecclesiastes concludes with a manifestly determinist statement suggesting that not just what has been done is beautiful, and that our yardsticks of what is beautiful and ugly as well as good and evil bear no weight. To us they appear to be vanities so long as they were carried out by human hands. But the author emphasizes that, once they had been done by that hidden entity which is both omniscient and omnipotent, they are no longer vanity since that entity has made them “beautiful” and “in his time”—at the right time. It therefore follows that human actions, too, after being done by us, are part of the necessary reality that leads via the chain of causation to that entity that “...hath made everything beautiful in his time...” (3:11 [KJV])¹⁵.

5. Events and Vanity

Upon reading his logbook, the “Captain”’s experimental observation notes that there is one **event** for all: for the wise person and for the fool, for the righteous person and for the scoundrel, and it thus—apparently—appears that vanity is uniform and sweeps everyone—consciously—into an infinite and pointless void. If everything is random, it necessarily follows that everything is vanity. Ecclesiastes uses the Hebrew stem for “happen” (*krh*) nine times throughout the book. For example: “one *event* [*mikreh*] happeneth to them all” (to the wise person and to the fool, to the righteous person and to the scoundrel, to the good, to the pure, to the profane, etc. My emphasis). The stem *krh* appears three times in this respect (2:14-2:15 [KJV]): “Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool [death], so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? [;] Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity...” In other words, when he uses “I said in my heart” the author refers to critical reflexive thought on learning from his own experience that he describes in this verse up to the *etnah* cantillation mark as coincidental, and it is based on this evidence that he determines that his own experience is vanity.¹⁶ The “Captain” uses this “event” as a baseline for processing what he received from his senses and noted in his logbook in his conscious mind and adds (randomly), and, as is his custom, his thoughts, his meditations, and his conclusions to the same logbook in the first person and past tense. He states that there is a “vanity” for the wise, and a “vanity” for the fools, and all according to their perception of reality. It is in this spirit that Ecclesiastes proceeds continuously with an atmosphere of vanity suggesting despair and hatred up to the chapter’s last verse (2:26 [KJV]). The same occurs in 3:18 - 3:22 [KJV].

¹⁴ If we use the Jewish alphanumerical cipher (*gematria*) then 28 is kaf-ḥet, and kaf-ḥet spells the Hebrew word for power (*koah*), i.e. the power of this hidden entity.

¹⁵ Parenthetically speaking, it is worth noting that the statement here which makes a determinist connection between the temporal dimension and actions in space is expressing a principle that would be stated three millennia later in Einstein’s theory of relativity (which itself followed the footsteps of Spinoza’s determinism) and which establishes time as the fourth spatial dimension.

¹⁶ For more about the *etnah*’s role in the book see below [an *etnah* is a cantillation mark that looks like this: ֿ (beneath the Hebrew letter *bet* used here), and which can be found in Masoretic printings of the Old Testament].

It is readily apparent how the concepts of “coincidence” and “vanity” combine here and are accompanied with the description of negative emotions.¹⁷

5.1 The Vanity of Wise People and the Vanity of Fools

A considerable part of the (inbuilt) vagueness of the book arises from the lack of a positive and value-laden concept that is the polar opposite of the negative “vanity”. If we examine the text more deeply, we will identify the fact that the book’s text describes a “vanity” with two faces. The associated difficulty reminds us of a coin whose two sides cannot be seen at the same time. If we tried to view both sides of the coin at the same time, we would see nothing. The difference between a determinist perception of reality, which is the advantage of wisdom, and the perception of reality as coincidence is the difference between “The wise man’s eyes are in his head...” (2:14 [KJV]) and “...the fool walketh in darkness...” (2:14 [KJV]). The “vanity” that results from a random world view is a vanity that leads to a hatred of life, to despair, to jealousy, to anger, to “a vexation of spirit” (*re’ut ruah*), and to “vanity and a great evil” (2:21 [KJV]), while the determinist perception of “...he has made every thing beautiful in his time...” (3:11 [KJV]) is the “vanity” associated with “vexation of spirit” (*ra’ayon ruah*), with knowledge, meaning, and understanding a person’s place in the eternity associated with that force or that hidden entity that “has made every thing beautiful in his time”. This same verse proceeds to state that “...also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end...” (3:11 [KJV]), with this work being taking part in the determinist eternity hidden from fools’ eyes. Even wise people will not find this work through experience, but—being wise—will notice, understand, and sense that “he has made every thing beautiful in his time” [...] “...from the beginning to the end...”.

This statement is supported by the question in 3:21 [KJV]: “Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth[?]”. Ecclesiastes provides the answer to this question towards the end of the book, where he states “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it...” (12:7 [KJV]).¹⁸

6. Ecclesiastes’ *Cogito*

It is with respect to the concept of “vanity” that the difference between the wise person and the fool can be seen at its clearest. In this respect, Ecclesiastes precedes Descartes’ *cogito* by over two millennia.¹⁹ The very reflexive capacity to think of life and of the world, to doubt them, and to determine that “all is vanity” is a form of clear and distinct knowledge

¹⁷ In *Guide for the Perplexed*, Part Three, Chapter LI [51], Maimonides states that viewing reality as coincidental is an act of Satan. At the same time, Maimonides’ contemporary, Shem-Tov Ben Yosef, comments that viewing things as coincidental is a mental defect and “an act of Satan” that disconnects people from their creator, the exact opposite of human beings’ supreme intellectual faculties

¹⁸ In the spirit of Genesis 3:19 [KJV]: “for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return”.

¹⁹ René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Chapters I – II.

that goes above and beyond a “vanity” arising from a misunderstanding of reality. Manifesting the capacity to offer a critical view of the fool’s vanity and determining that it is the vanity with a capital V represents a capacity that is not vanity in and of itself but rather a contrasting value that perceives the fool’s random perception as vanity and rules it out as a vexation of spirit [*re’ut ruah*]. What we are concerned with is therefore a critical reflexivity that purified the fool’s layer of contaminated doubt and ruled her or him out using her or his own vanity against her or him in what is, in effect, a kind of Talmudic “disqualifies himself with his own flaw”.²⁰ This is therefore a capacity for wisdom and meaning and for partaking in the wisdom of that hidden entity “...that has made every thing beautiful in his time...” (3:11 [KJV]). It is this that forms the advantage wisdom possesses over folly. Examining the issue from this perspective will also make it easier for us to discern the ideational layer to which the author directs the balancing, positive, and critical “vanity”, and it is in this spirit that we must understand 4:16 [KJV] and 8:10 [KJV]. Distilled “vanity” is thus a reflexivity that voids the doubt expressed in the book’s first chapter. Foolishness is therefore nothing but a one-dimensional appearance of coincidence and chaos followed by “all is vanity”. In this respect, an analysis of the many statements which express the advantage of wisdom over folly in this spirit speaks for itself. See, for example, 2:13 [KJV], 4:13 [KJV], 5:5 [KJV], 5:13 [KJV], 7:5 [KJV], 7:9 [KJV], 7:11 [KJV], 7:12 [KJV], 7:19 [KJV], 8:1 [KJV], 8:5 [KJV], 9:10 [KJV], 9:13 [KJV], 9:15 - 9:18 [KJV], 10:1 [KJV], 10:2 [KJV], 10:10 [KJV], 10:12 [KJV], 12:9 [KJV], and 12:11 [KJV]. The kind of reflexive-critical knowledge that observes this fool’s “vanity”—viewed with sense-directed and superficial eyes—from above is what the Captain sees when he states “...so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast...” (3:19 [KJV]). Opening the book with the statement “...vanity of vanities; all is vanity...” (1:2 [KJV]) as well as the two subsequent verses expresses the doubt (in the Cartesian sense) that Ecclesiastes expresses towards the meaning of human existence in the world. His later conclusion states that this kind of sceptical perception of reality is in fact the vanity with a capital V.

7. The *Etnah* (Semicolon)’s Significance in the Text²¹

An examination of the punctuation marks (cantillation marks) in a Hebrew Masoretic printing of the book of Ecclesiastes reveals that “vanity” always appears after the *etnah* when it ends a statement. The *etnah* has been defined by Avraham Even-Shoshan’s *Dictionary* as “one among the cantillation marks, the long pause in biblical verses” (my translation).²² In a non-Masoretic printing, or in a digital text, it will often be replaced with a semicolon such that what appears after the semicolon will not necessarily bear a direct relation to what appears before it even if the content following the semicolon is included in the same statement. All the appearances of “vanity” up to 2:22 [KJV] link the concept of “vanity” with a superficial and one-dimensional view suggesting that the author’s intention

²⁰ Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Kidushin, Page 70, Side A and Page 70, Side B.

²¹ The *etnah* can be seen as the biblical equivalent of a semicolon.

²² Avraham Even Shoshan, *The New Dictionary* [Ha-Milon He- Hādash], s.v. “etnah”.

is the methodical ascription of doubt to the meaning of reality. Insofar as the author attaches the concept of “vanity” to disfavorable things later, such as “sorrows”, “grief” (2:23 [KJV]) and suffering, he is referring to a critical “vanity”, since these things are determinist.²³ This is the case for envy (4:4 [KJV]), folly (4:5 [KJV]), “...riches...bereave my soul of good...” (4:8 [KJV]), etc.

Another example is 8:14 [KJV]. The verse begins with the word “[There is a] vanity” and ends with the word “vanity”. The meaning of “vanity” at the beginning of the verse is associated with a fool’s vanity; “There is a vanity [as viewed by the fool] which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: [*etnah*]” [it is here, up to the location of the *etnah*, that the fool’s view of reality as coincidental prevails]. After the *etnah*, the verse ends with a first-person “vanity”: “...I said that this also is vanity...” These last words describe Ecclesiastes’ critique of the “vanity” established by the fool in the earlier part of the verse. “I said that this also is vanity” in the first person refers to what was previously stated in the third person (by the fool). In other words, Ecclesiastes states that the very view of the phenomenon of “the righteous suffer, the wicked prosper” (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakhot, Page 7, Side A) as vanity (i.e. as coincidental) is the very essence of vanity.

The superficial view of reality as **coincidental** causes vexation of spirit [*réut ruah*], anger, envy, and despair with life. Ecclesiastes states this from a determinist perspective that takes the limited nature of human beings into account in its holistic perception of the chain of causation which pre-determines reality as a prime cause. In other words, the wise person’s “vanity” expresses a critique of the fools’ thinking on “vanity”.

Another example is “a man is envied of his neighbour. [*etnah*] This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.” (4:4 [KJV]). Indeed, envy itself is a “vanity” that bodes ill for the envious person. The same is true for “...so is the laughter of the fool: [*etnah*] this also is vanity” (7:6 [KJV]). Indeed, the laughter of a fool is a “vanity” because “It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools...” (7:5 [KJV]). Insofar as we encounter a statement with “vanity” following an *etnah* or another biblical punctuation (cantillation) mark, we shall notice that “vanity” has two meanings: (1) doubt in the order of things in the world that leads to the fool’s conclusion of “vanity”, but, on the other hand, (2) a critique which disqualifies this doubt as “vanity”, and it is this critique that imbues the “vanity” that ends the verse with a desired positive value which contrasts with the previous “vanity” and forms the wise person’s advantage over the fool.

We shall end with 11:8 [KJV], where a remembrance of “the days of darkness” is “vanity”. The author’s reflexivity looks back (“...yet let him remember the days of darkness...”) and then—in the spirit of determinism which “...hath made every thing beautiful in his

²³ The Ladino anthology of Torah commentaries [*Yalkut Me’am Lóez*], citing the *Divrey Hefets*, comments that “what a person has attained with sorrows and grief and sleeplessness will become vanity and nothingness” (Ecclesiastes, p. 43 [my translation of Rabbi Shmuel Yerushalmi (Kreuzer)’s Hebrew translation of the original Ladino]).

time..." (3:11 [KJV])—will view the days of darkness of the coincidental view of reality (which is where fools tread), rather than reality as it is, as a "vanity".

8. Epilogue

The meeting of **determinist** statements with concepts of **coincidence** describes the two abstract poles of a person's view of the world. At the same time, the meeting of statements of **wisdom** versus statements of **folly** expresses two polar opposite world views as they apply to human beings. What joins these four concepts together is the concept of vanity. Vanity is the intersection where these four concepts meet and where free will manifests itself. As such, the person who understood where she or he lives is joined in her or his conscious awareness to a determinist eternity. The person who has joined her or himself to the universe and who had partook in the wisdom of that entity who "...hath made every thing beautiful in his time..." (3:11 [KJV]) is a wise person, and this person's "vanity", that rules out coincidence, becomes *joie de vivre* and meaning. On the other hand, the person who views everything as coincidental shall not be able to release her or himself from a sorrowful and angering "vanity" that is depressing because it suggests pointlessness; in Ecclesiastes' terms, "...an untimely birth is better than he..." (6:3 [KJV]). This quadruple encounter has led us to an exegetical conclusion suggesting that Ecclesiastes' "vanity" is a context-dependent concept which is associated with a wise person's advantage over a fool, and to the advantage of a "vexation of spirit" [*ra'ayon ruah*] over a "vexation of spirit" [*re'ut ruah*]. As a leading concept in the book, the fool associates "vanity" with coincidence and thus lives in chaos and dies like a beast. For a wise person, "vanity" is a point of origin for thought and criticism, for tough questions on the "concealed matters of the world"²⁴, and for a deep and rational view of reality as it is. A wise person's "vanity" links the freedom of choice to the freedom of knowledge, which in itself forms the spiritual partnership with the entity who "...hath made every thing beautiful in his time..." (3:11 [KJV]), and—as such—is the meaning of the wise person's existence and the wise person's part of eternity, and it is this that constitutes a wise person's advantage over a fool.

Just as it is not possible to ignore the significant appearances of the concept of "vanity" in the book, it is equally impossible to ignore the determinist statements made in the book which are no less prominent. We began our article with the concept of "vanity" as the leading concept requiring textual examination. Our close reading of the concept of "vanity" as it relates to other central concepts in the book and in context, in turn, allowed us to clarify the author's intention. The logbook-like reading that shed light on the messages enfolded randomly within the book, in turn, leads us to those pedagogical conclusions pertaining to a determinist worldview that the author of the book of Ecclesiastes seeks to convey to its readers.

²⁴ Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Haggigah, Page 13, Side A.

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Proclus' theoretical reconstructions on Plato's myth of Atlantis: To a synthetic approach

Abstract: In this article, we present a proposal for a synthetic theoretical approach of the myth of Atlantis, firstly presented by Plato in his *Timaeus*, and, subsequently, systematically approached by Proclus. This is first and foremost a literary subject which in Proclus' texts, involves many disciplines and causes general interest for research. The main question to deal with since Plato's era is whether this is a myth or a true story. In our view, Proclus' comments on the *Timaeus* appear to be quite important, for they constitute the most detailed and extended original source, which provides a number of interdisciplinary and interpretative approaches. In every case, four are the pillars according to Proclus for any research on the Atlantis hypothesis. Specifically, for Proclus one should approach the story from a historical, natural-scientific/geophysical, epistemological and philosophical point of view. That is to say, Syrianus' student perspective is as synthetic as possible. Methodologically, he combines the scientific-analytical with the philosophical-synthetic and the theological-hermeneutical aspect, in order to give answers to particular questions. In this way, he aims to avoid simplistic readings and scientific dogmatism and to show a new spirit with decisive axiological judgments. In our general approach which follows we mostly attempt to show how in his commentary Proclus brings together natural sciences with ethics and politics in a frame in which the natural world appears as an authentic reflection of the metaphysical level.

Keywords: Atlantis, Plato, Proclus, *Timaeus*, myth

Introduction

It was around 366 BC when Plato wrote his great –and, admittedly, one of the most intriguing philosophically as well as theologically and scientifically– dialogue, the *Timaeus*, very soon to be followed by the complementary *Critias*, which maybe has not been composed directly by him. Of all his most important works, it could be said that the *Timaeus* has been placed at the center of the scientific interest at least the past thirty years¹. So, this text, which has been considered until the last decades as possibly the most abstruse metaphysical dialogue in the history of Philosophy, and for that very reason with few interpretative approaches particularly moderate by scholars, finally has nowadays progressively ris-

¹ Robin Waterfield (trans.) and Gregory Andrew (intro-notes), *Plato, Timaeus and Critias* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

en the forefront of scholarly attention and resulted in more thorough readings, included those of W. Heisenberg's². It has been also considered that it could be associated with the field of natural science or that it is a revealing text of its similarities with Philosophy, and specifically the field of Cosmology. The discussion about the particular geometric –polyhedric– structure of the natural elements and the infinite fractional divisibility of matter as chora makes it an interesting text for the science of Mathematics as well.

The first question to be raised is what caused this scientific interest in a treatise which decisively dealt with the texture and the function of the natural world, following the scientific limited, mostly because there was no technological progress, criteria of a distant past? First and foremost, the *Timaeus* set great research goals, regardless of whether they could give answers to objective questions. Another major reason accounting for this explosion of scholarly interest rests with the myth of Atlantis, the notorious description presented in the dialogues *Timaeus* and *Critias* about an ancient civilization that had risen thousands of years before the Classical Times. The residents of the area of this civilization inhabited a disappeared continent, once floating in a not precisely defined geographical point, somewhere between Europe and America, after the Pillars of Hercules, namely in a not exactly located area of the Atlantic Ocean. Exactly with this sort of narrative strength, this myth constantly raises interest of both scientists and readers, who are fascinated by any abstract narration about it that has been presented in the past, which in fact is not found in any text and is not proved by validated events.

Under these scientific circumstances, we could actually contend that the myth of Atlantis has fascinated human imagination from Classical Times to our modern civilization. The myth of this lost civilization –according to Plato, this great precursor of the Ancient Classical Civilization– has been interpreted –and in some cases misinterpreted, due to the exercise upon imagination– from the time it was first presented to our times. In fact, the rigorous study of the Atlantis hypothesis has intensively captured scientific attention in the last decades, actually in an interdisciplinary level. Its mystery together with what Plato claims to be accurate historical evidence –which, though still unproved, seem to arouse the hope and challenge to be empirically validated³– have fascinated scientists, regardless of their nationality or cultural origin. The reason why a story composed 2500 years ago by the Greek philosopher Plato continues to fascinate public imagination surprises and is a mystery in itself, raising in this way psychological questions. It is a mystery fed by a number of books, articles, websites, scientific studies, philosophical investigations, movies and documentaries series, all of which confirm the challenge caused by this story in both the scientific community and the imagination of those who desire to gain some knowledge –who actually do not internally relate one another. It is certainly a multiform atmosphere of interests and intense imagination, which causes fertile assumptions, regardless of their objectivity.

² Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1958).

³ Stavros Papamarinopoulos, "Part V: Atlantis' location", *Bulletin of the Geological Society of Greece: Proceedings of the 12th International Congress* 43/1 (2010): 138-146.

1. Epistemological approaches of the myth of Atlantis

Undeniably, the myth of Atlantis itself is fascinating, not only because of the innumerable epistemological –and other– repercussions that will arise from the possibility that an unknown, unrecorded, past with a number of activities lies behind what could be considered for the 4th century B.C. as precise and accurate history, through however a general acknowledgement. It mostly challenges because Socrates insists, through the conversation with erudite interlocutors of that era, that the story of Atlantis is not a myth but a true story with a rational content⁴. Socrates and Plato, due to their reputation, are the main cause of this interest, since they would not discuss a simple fantasy. In any case, “digging” is necessary. Either way, the relevant description included in this dialogue presents this purportedly “historical event” with such narrative zeal and detail –often providing mathematical explanations, as well as rational natural evidence (including geological suggestions)– which can be classified into conceptual categories or can be proved, at least to a point, which do not allow a rationalist to escape the likelihood that the story presented could be actually considered as a historical event. There is a lot to doubt. To the modern scientific way of approaching things, this, at least, interesting combination of historical evidence and geological information with seemingly inventive figments of the Athenian philosopher's imagination render this story in the “twilight zone” between myth and reality, and, therefore, they should be approached thoroughly, in order the necessary and capable of making new theoretical combinations, if needed, conceptual schemata to be established.

Nevertheless, the motive for any investigation should be that the myth of Atlantis is presented by Plato as a historical fact. Regardless of whether this is true or can be proved, not acknowledging the status that could be easily ascribed to this “tale” by the philosopher –which also happens to be our sole available primary source on the subject matter– would undeniably mark a serious epistemological omission. Contemplating the story's possible truthfulness surely forces us to consider a scenario that admittedly excites our child-most imagination, at the same time as it seriously challenges the range of our epistemic horizons and choices. However, numerous knowledge gains follow from the fact that examining the proof of the possible falsity of the tale requires, inasmuch as challenges, to employ our rigour and in accordance with rationality sobriety to a most efficient scientifically speaking level. In this “no man's land” between logos –true historical fact– and myth, validated fact and fiction, reality and imagination correspondingly, the story of Atlantis appears to have been “resurrected” from the ancient texts to find a place at the very center of academic debate, a tendency that appears in many exegetical branches.

Indeed, the Atlantis story has recently appealed to a great number of diverse academic persons and teams, including perhaps mostly philosophers, but also archaeologists, historians, natural scientists, geologists, and so forth. Fed by evidence from all those diverse

⁴ About the role of myths in Plato's dialogues, cf. Jean-François Mattéi, «Les mythes dans le dialogues Platoniciens», *Platon* (Paris: PUF, 2013), 245-270.

areas of academic enquiry, the concise scholarly proposal to be presented, undoubtedly, becomes, from the very first moment, complex, multi-faceted and polyvocal, and very importantly, highly inter-disciplinary with regard to how one should approach the Platonic narration according to Proclus' texts⁵. In our view, any one-dimensional approach is not enough, for it will not result in complete conclusions and will not be able to open new perspectives. In addition, it will be far from Proclus' incomparable holistic way in which he investigates questions –and especially those included in his Commentary in Plato's *Timaeus*–, which makes him incomparable.

But what can we possibly be said to know objectively about the Atlantis civilisation and its destruction or what can we actually be said to be able to objectively prove according to the Neoplatonic approach? Generally judging from the limited amount of primary sources available on the subject matter, we could contend that even rational speculations are very few. As noted earlier, the only data coming from Plato himself –the primary source of the story– refer to two not so extended pieces –but with information that cannot be ignored– from the dialogues *Timaeus* (mainly 20d-25d) and *Critias* (108e-121c). Precisely because of this serious limitation in the amount of historical testimonies, the literature on the Atlantis speaks of the presence of an academic debate around the status of the possible objective description, a research which did not only develop in modern times, but also since as early as among Plato's immediate followers, including Aristotle. In the tradition formed after the founder of the Academy, the two contrasting views involve those commentators who argue for the historical accountability of his story, including mainly Crantor and Proclus, who have a difference of eight centuries. On the other hand, there are also those who claim that the story is pure fiction, perhaps solely of allegorical, symbolic and theoretical value, including, possibly, Aristotle, Posidonius, Strabo, Amelius and Origen⁶. However, “the only early thinkers whom we know to have commented in any detail upon the Atlantis section of the *Timaeus* were Porphyry and Iamblichus”⁷. Most evidence, however, describing different commentators' positions on the matter come mainly from Proclus, Plato's chief and apparently one and only ancient exponent. Thus, his commentary on Plato's Atlantis⁸ is the most detailed and extensive work of primary literature that has been preserved on the subject⁹.

5 Edwin Ramage (ed.), *Atlantis: Fact or Fiction?* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Kathryn Morgan, “Designer History: Plato's Atlantis Story and Fourth-Century Ideology”, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 118 (1998): 101-118; Stavros Papamarinopoulos, *Proceedings of the International Conference: The Atlantis Hypothesis: searching for a lost land* (Santorini: Heliotopos, 2005).

6 Harold Tarrant (ed./ trans.), *Proclus, Commentary on Plato's Timaeus, vol. 1, Book I: Proclus on the Socratic State and Atlantis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 60-62.

7 Harold Tarrant, *Proclus, Commentary on Plato's Timaeus, vol. 1, Book I: Proclus on the Socratic State and Atlantis*, 61.

8 Proclus, *In Timaeus*, 1: 75.27-195.30 [Andre-Jean Festugière (ed./ trans), *Proclus, Commentaires sur le Timée*, t. 1-5, libr. I-V (Paris: J. Vrin, 1966-1969)]¹.

9 John Dillon, *The Golden Chain: Studies in the Development of Platonism and Christianity* (Aldershot Gower, 1990); John Dillon, *The Heirs of Plato* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Proclus not only provides the most rigorous and well-argued essay available to us in the relevant existing academic literature, but he also includes it in a greatly historical and epistemological perspective. Building upon the exegetical grounds of Crantor, one of the first of Plato's students and interpreters, the Neoplatonic headmaster argues for a middle-ground position, attempting to reconcile the two contrasting views concerning Plato's Atlantis. His hermeneutical 'third way' effectively consists in arguing both that the Atlantis serves as an allegory, employed by Plato in order to demonstrate some of his theological, moral, and cosmological theories, as well as that the description, nonetheless, refers to a real natural and historical event. The former, he argues, does not necessarily undermine or contrast the latter. Thus, as he summarizes and notes in the relevant systematically and historically orientated part, which involves metaphysical and cosmological questions as well, we read the following:

Τὸν περὶ τῶν Ἀτλαντίνων σύμπαντα τοῦτον λόγον οἱ μὲν ἱστορίαν εἶναι ψιλὴν φασιν, ὥσπερ ὁ πρῶτος τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἐξηγητὴς Κράντωρ· ὃς δὴ καὶ σκώπτεσθαι μὲν φησιν αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τῶν τότε, ὡς οὐκ αὐτὸν ὄντα τῆς πολιτείας εὐρετήν, ἀλλὰ μεταγράψαντα τὰ Αἰγυπτίων· τὸν δὲ τοσοῦτον ποιήσασθαι τὸν τῶν σκωπτόντων λόγον, ὥστε ἐπὶ Αἰγυπτίους ἀναπέμψαι τὴν περὶ Ἀθηναίων καὶ Ἀτλαντίνων ταύτην ἱστορίαν, ὡς τῶν Ἀθηναίων κατὰ ταύτην ζησάντων ποτὲ τὴν πολιτείαν· μαρτυροῦσι δὲ καὶ οἱ προφηταὶ φησι τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ἐν στήλαις ταῖς ἐτι σωζομέναις ταῦτα γεγράφθαι λέγοντες. Οἱ δὲ φασιν αὐτὴν μῦθον εἶναι καὶ πλάσμα γενόμενον μὲν οὐδαμῶς, ἐνδείξιν δὲ φέρον τῶν αἰεὶ ὄντων κατὰ τὸν κόσμον ἢ γιγνομένων, οὐδὲ τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἐπακούοντες οὗτοι βοῶντος, ὅτι μάλα μὲν ἄτοπος ὁ λόγος, παντάπασί γε μὴν ἀληθής¹⁰.

Some say that all this tale about the Atlantines is straightforward narrative, like the first of Plato's interpreters, Crantor. He also says that [Plato] was mocked by his contemporaries for not having discovered his constitution himself, but having translated Egyptian originals. He took so little notice of what the mockers said that he actually attributed to the Egyptians this narrative about the Athenians and Atlantines, saying that the Athenians had at one time lived under that constitution. He says that the prophets of the Egyptians also give evidence, saying that these things are inscribed on pillars that still survive. Others say that it is a myth and an invention, something that never actually happened but gives an indication of things which have either always been so, or always come to be, in the cosmos. These people pay no attention to Plato when he exclaims that the account is very unusual, yet certainly true in all respects¹¹.

From a hermeneutical point of view, this primary position of Proclus and the analysis that follows are quite impressive for a number of reasons. First and foremost, the Neoplatonic philosopher offers a particularly innovative interpretation of the 'fact vs fiction' schema surrounding the Atlantis' tale, at the same time while providing additional arguments in

¹⁰ Proclus, *In Timaeus*, 1: 76.1-14 (Festugière). According to Tarrant, this is "an extremely important testimony, though its source is not clear. While it is unlikely that much information on Crantor had survived until Proclus' day, Plutarch may indeed have had access to an exegetical text of Crantor's when writing his *On the Procreation of the Soul in the Timaeus*. However, Plutarch does not give us reason to believe that there is a substantial difference between the form of exegesis coming from Crantor and the form that had already come from Xenocrates" (cf. Harold Tarrant, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus. Vol 1, book I: Proclus on the Socratic State and Atlantis*, 168).

¹¹ Harold Tarrant, *Proclus, Commentary on Plato's Timaeus, vol. 1, Book I: Proclus on the Socratic State and Atlantis*, 167-168.

an attempt to ground Plato's story historically and by making the appropriate references. In other words, Atlantis does not appear to be an invention of human fiction, but actually a true story; therefore, it raises particular research and methodological questions. Second, through this analysis, Proclus seizes the opportunity to put forward a unique theoretical synthesis, which aims at hermeneutically relating natural events to anthropological developments as well as philosophical axiologically structured categorizations and theological regulative principles. He actually sees the theological principles as becoming reflected in and through the philosophical mostly by means of Practical Reason, which in this description reaches one of its greatest points. Third, this theoretical exposition bears important historical and intellectual significance, for it serves as witness not only of the crucial cultural developments and ideational alterations occurring in the Platonic School of thought during the first centuries AD, but also the particular epistemological idiosyncrasies of the wider hermeneutical environment of his turbulent and, from any point of view, historically critical times transiting from the Ancient to the Christian world. It is topic that reflects holistic procedures and changes of great importance, which a historian of Philosophy has to detect as far as possible in an objective way. Finally, Proclus' exegesis of Plato's Atlantis reveals important information regarding the state of the natural sciences during his time and their relation to philosophical and theological thought. These pieces of information –and the extensions that result from their combination– provide further evidence that complements in a large scale Plato's relatively concise exposition of those natural and geological parameters involved in the Atlantis tale. Note that there is a distance of eight centuries between the two thinkers and, thus, new scientific data had arisen and, by consequence, new approaches of the natural phenomena have been adopted. Thus, the story is not only interesting for a historian of Philosophy, but also for a historian of Science. Anything described in this story can also be included in a broader sense in the field of philosophy of culture, since there are also hermeneutical approaches.

2. The goals of the research project

Despite the increasing academic interest in the Atlantis hypothesis and its various ramifications, and despite the great historical value and philosophical potential that Proclus' commentary bears for elucidating aspects of this key subject-matter, we need to mention that his Commentary on Plato's relevant story has not received the appropriate philosophical systematic attention in the academic literature to this day. In our view, any new proposal could argue that the discourse on the Atlantis can greatly benefit from a more in-depth and rigorous examination of Proclus' commentary, given that a) it constitutes the most valuable secondary –meaning mostly the temporal order– source on the subject-matter coming from the ancient literature; b) it is the most complete, prolific and engaged elaboration of the story, for it follows precisely what has been said in Plato's original texts and the following relevant tradition; c) it offers a multi-faceted and inter-disciplinary approach embellished by productive and innovative syllogisms and hermeneutical extensions that serve to stress a number of possible epistemological foundations of the Atlantis myth. Note that all these approaches rely on and are defined by Proclus' general principles, so, they follow a particular research direction and interpretation, which causes question on its objectivity.

Bear also in mind that the emerging –during the past decades– scholarly debate on the Atlantis hypothesis has actually formed around four key research pillars on the basis of criteria that both relate and differentiate one another, all pertinent to scholars' intentions of dissolving or decoding the thick air of mystery surrounding the status of the influential Atlantis myth to the interdisciplinary but also fed by imagination researches. Particularly, those key theoretical approaches (or axes of inquiry) can be broadly classified under the following four-partite division: a) Historical; b) Scientific/Geophysical; c) Epistemological; d) Philosophical, which will be analyzed in the next section. Nevertheless, in our view it is important to explore in a complementary sense to any research attempted how a thorough approach of Proclus' narration can contribute to enhancing our relevant knowledge of the past and of the exegetic perspectives to be explored in the present in the fields of History of Philosophy and History of Science.

Therefore, every proposed research project relating to these two fields –which were both Plato's and Proclus' main fields– we believe that should aim at filling certain gaps in the existing literature, by exploring in a rigorous and systematic way Proclus' commentary on Plato's Atlantis, in a manner that will contribute to the elucidation of aspects pertaining to all afore-mentioned axes of academic inquiry relevant to the debate about this island, and particularly axes c and d. The originality of a project like this will also rest in that, despite the significance of Proclus' commentary, from a philosophical, philological, theological, and historical perspective, this fascinating as to its theoretical ramifications treatise (*In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*) has not as yet received neither the adequate nor the analogous academic attention as regards its details, which constitute a holistic system of Cosmology that is closely related to the rest of the philosophical fields, including those related with Practical Reason. For instance, we should not ignore that Proclus contends that the natural world is full of virtues and holds a political role. Thus, we believe that the aspired original contribution of a proposed project should actually pertain to the formulation and fulfilment of the following objectives.

i) To explore a topic under the terms revealed by a fundamental historical and philosophical source, which, although at this period of time is testable with respect to what category it can be included in through a text, it can potentially be highly illuminating for the emerging Atlantis discourse. This theoretical aspect has not been adequately explored in the international academic literature. Thus, the case here is generally a matter of History of Philosophy, which has to be presented as continuity without any gap, regardless of which and how many questions are raised through a particular field of it.

ii) Therefore, to offer on how the commentary on *Timaeus* contributes to our understanding of the History of Philosophy and History of Science, by revealing important aspects of its evolution during the critical interpretative –and rather intriguing– period of 4th-6th century AD, comparing and contrasting the themes of synchronic philosophical and scientific interest with those of earlier historical eras and preparing all these that will follow for a long period of time.

iii) To provide a reading of the Atlantis myth in terms of rationality. Specifically, the project is to present, first and foremost, a possible theological decodification of the myth,

exemplifying how, through Proclus' innovative hermeneutic rekindling, he modifies and upgrades not only the theological, but also Plato's political and ethical theories. Relevant to this, the research additionally has to trace the ways in which the Neoplatonic philosopher presents the concept of 'divine intervention' in the physical world (an aspect rather widespread in his time, which in this hermeneutical approach had acquired a distinct meaning and existential tone as well). In addition, the possible reading-decodification of key natural events as –possibly intentional as well–moments of 'divine theophany' should be also taken into account. This is the peak of the debate on whether we can found here the field of Natural Theology.

iv) This research has also to seek to explore Proclus' general position of the relation and possible fertile inter-disciplinary exchanges between philosophy, theology, and the natural sciences, as well as whether this sort of interaction stems for him from his distinct rendering of Plato's Atlantis myth. Another perspective to be taken into account is Proclus' proposition regarding a possible introduction, as regards the synthesis mentioned before, of an ethical and political approach, and to explore his contribution to combining these diverse areas of knowledge into a unified theoretical paradigm. Specifically, the project should aim to demonstrate how exploring the general and exemplified philosophical ramifications of the myth of Atlantis according to how they are described in Proclus' commentary, the reader can be led to the formulation of a particularly exemplified physical-natural exegesis of the content of the myth, that is to say not only as a kind of literature. As well as, vice versa, how, according to the Neoplatonic philosopher, a natural phenomenon can be hermeneutically approached through the prism of philosophy and theology with open to new approaches and epistemologically fertile repercussions. All these are to be investigated in the following perspective: are they potentially enough to trigger a number of possible (and possibly original) patterns of interrelating philosophical thoughts and physical-natural researches into a mutually informing and fertile dialogue? Therefore, it should be also examined whether and to what extent Proclus proposes that one-dimensional approaches are not enough for the theoretical and interpretative goal that is to be accomplished at this point.

v) Moreover, this kind of project will aim at shedding light, as far as possible, upon Proclus' novel –and admittedly distinct– argument that the observation, study and categorization of natural phenomena entail effects upon the human consciousness that is interested in them. What occurs –or what should occur– to and within human self when experiencing or examining a particular natural phenomenon? How does a phenomenon trigger the tendency towards founded knowledge and the formation of particular cognitive patterns? These general questions involve two exemplified levels of interpretation: what were the effects of the demise of Atlantis engendered for human existential attitude or, at least, cognition? As well as, what are the cognitive repercussions of studying a posteriori the story of the Atlantis? What are its effects that result from the method of a widespread theoretical production? Or, more specifically, what will be the educational, cognitive, ethical, and political consequences that will emerge with the exploration of the myth and will affect crucially the readers' intellectual function-course?

vi) Finally, this historical and systematic project, relying exclusively in the general textual data, will attempt to utilize Proclus' actually fascinating –not only for that time– physical and particularly geological scientific breakthroughs. And the main goal will be to describe objectively –to the extent that is permitted by the writer's references and the appropriate disciplinary research methods that he follows– the myth from the perspective of these disciplines. The aim of this exposition is to inform our understanding of the level of evolution of the natural sciences in the 5th century AD, focusing on how the philosophical and interpretative 'centre of gravity' during the 6th century AD, which appears to be further expanding since Damascius and Philoponus, shifts towards a new point of equilibrium as regards these scientific fields and between them and philosophy. This shift –which sets free from dogmatic limitations– indicates a great historical momentum in the academic interest and the scientific decisions within the systematically organized Schools into the natural sciences –possibly unprecedented in the history of thought until that time– thereby also elucidating the gradual independence from stereotypes of the past that those areas of study begin to acquire during the crucial for what is to arise Neoplatonic "historical period". This independence, however, does not constitute an anarchic environment, for it is quite productive and maintains fruitful dialectic links with the theoretical disciplines, which anticipate a more in-depth and detailed approach.

3. Theoretical particular approaches of the myth of Atlantis

i) Historical: The historical interest in the Atlantis may not be, as expected, persistent and repetitive amongst academic researchers of the relevant field, as descriptive and explanatory of the human development, when they investigate Proclus' narration and the relevant argumentation on the topic discussed. Building upon the ancient debate regarding whether the myth of Atlantis refers to fact or fiction, the historical dimension of any existing research will be attempted, has to include the examination of the core question pertinent to the Atlantis hypothesis: is it true that this island existed as a specific region in the distant past? The Neoplatonist philosopher's historical investigation examines whether Atlantis is a myth or a real historical event –i.e. it detects what is the objective starting point of the island hypothesis and the possibility of its validity. Furthermore, does it assess historical data available, both from Classical Greece, but also later periods, such as the Hellenistic and early-Byzantine era¹²? Either way, in his view history as a science constantly seeks in general for validation or disproof from the science of archaeology in a general sense: that is to say, in the sense of principles coming from the sources and becoming necessary for any future project or for expressing scientific speculations and philosophical-theological explanations¹³?

ii) Scientific/Geophysical: Given that Plato's account presents a prolific set of data which, as the existing state of the art indicates, appear to be challengingly open to the

¹² Edwin Ramage, *Atlantis: Fact or Fiction?*; Eberhard Zangger (ed.), *The Future of the Past: Archaeology in the 21st Century* (London: Orion Publishing, 2003); Peter James, *The Sunken Kingdom: the Atlantis Mystery Solved* (Pimlico: Jonathan Cape, 1996); Cristopher Gill, *Plato: The Atlantis Story* (Bristol: Classical Press, 1980).

¹³ Cf. for instance, Proclus, *In Timaeus*, I: 75.30–76.17 [Festugière], trans. Tarrant I, 173, which we have already

methods of scientific verification or disproof, the myth of Atlantis has provoked researchers from the fields of the natural sciences (including mathematics, physics, geology, and engineering). Indeed, the very endeavour of locating the Atlantis on the geographical map has excited the imagination as well of numerous scholars with wider interests. The scientific investigations around the Atlantis, following Proclus' texts, can include a) the ordered articulation and investigation of geographical, chronological and geomorphological hypotheses stemming from Plato's narration and included in the specialized epistemological perspective of marine and geological research, which occupied the Neoplatonist headmaster; b) academic inquiry into the identification of precise location or actual geophysical topos of the Atlantis. Note that there have been expressed by contemporary research hypotheses that include the Atlantic ocean, Santorini and Crete, but also sites as diverse and distant as Scandinavia, Palestine and the Caribbean, perhaps due to some similarities to the coastal area); c) the decodification by Proclus of the information presented in the *Timaeus*, through the lenses of scientific 'data collection' in a manner that can possibly provide information regarding geophysical formations of the ancient environment¹⁴.

iii) Epistemological: The case here is as follows: Does the state of the Art in the academic discourse on Atlantis arisen from Proclus' texts involve an epistemological interest

mentioned in relation to the philological interpretation of the extract 20d of the Platonic *Timaeus* (cf. *ibid.* 80.8-22): "Of the diction under examination the word *hear* has a proem-like character, and is being used in the circumstances where one wishes to appeal for attention on the part of the reader. It is the equivalent of saying 'take note of things worth hearing'. The word *unusual* indicates what's illogical, as when it's said in the *Gorgias* (473a1) 'Certainly unusual, Socrates'; or what's unexpected as in the *Crito* (44b3) when he uses the expression 'What an unusual; dream, Socrates!'; or what's wondrous, as when he says in the *Theaetetus* (142b9-c1) 'Actually it's nothing unusual, but it would be a great deal more wondrous if he were not like this' [The term] has been adopted here as indicating 'worthy of wonder'. He shows this straight away while continuing with the same subject, saying that the ancient deeds of this city were 'great and wondrous'. The term *account* makes plain the truth of what is about to be said, for that was how myth was said to differ from an account in the *Gorgias*". The intention is quite obvious here: Proclus is about to investigate a question that has concerned the ancient world as a great historian and an eclecticist of both the past tradition and the Platonic extracts that contribute to the support of the view that this mythic for a number of thinkers dimension of the tale can be actually historically approached. Through a critical investigation, combinations shall provide a basis-direction, which, free from allegories and analogies, will lead the readers to the furthest past, if not of the prosperity of Atlantis, at least of those testimonies which cause doubts to a purely symbolic interpretation of the Platonic narration. Either way, the Neoplatonist philosopher seems to wobble between different approaches. However, his consistency while he comments on Plato's text opens a precise factual, at least approximately, horizon.

14 Cf. Proclus, *In Timaeus* 1: 187.21-188.23 [Festugière], trans. Tarrant 1, 287-288: "That what is said is consistent with physics is clear to those who are not entirely unversed in physical science. That an earthquake should occur of such a size as to destroy an island of that size, is not remarkable, since the earthquake that took place a little before our time shook Egypt and Bithynia in one day. And that an inundation should follow the earthquake is nothing unexpected, since this always accompanies large earthquakes as Aristotle reports, giving the reason for it at the same time. Wherever an inundation occurs along with an earthquake, a wave is the cause of this phenomenon. For sometimes the wind that creates the earthquake has yet to pass underground, while the sea is being set in motion by a wind opposed to it; [the wind] rushes on in the opposite direction, but is unable to push [the sea] back on account of the gale pushing it forward; yet by stopping and preventing its advance it becomes cause of a great upsurge being collected under pressure from the opposing wind. [Whenever this occurs,] then indeed, with the sea surging high under the counter-pressure, it plunges down into the earth itself with its

as well, which includes mainly synthetic investigation into the possible research methods and the relevant fields, such as history and geology available in the corresponding extracts for testing hypotheses relating to any verification or falsification of the 'Atlantis myth', including possible the field of archaeology (e.g. site excavations)¹⁵? Obviously, this kind of excavations could not have been performed by Proclus, but his narrations provoke, at least the specialists of his era, into an analogous initiative. Holism is here a fact and leads to a prolific combination or to a mutual reference and interaction of the relevant with the topic disciplines, so as general applicable research principles, as to the final cause, to be established. So, we need to investigate whether this sort of perspectives can easily be detected in the Neoplatonist philosopher's texts, which possibly also explain –or, more correctly, interpret– the terms in which a place was architecturally structured in a particular mode and not in a different one¹⁶. This question comes out of the field of History of Civilization and is placed in that of Philosophy of Civilization.

iv) Philosophical: Plato's tale of the Atlantis involves the exposition of a set of intricate, complex and hermeneutically inviting metaphysical premises, theological principles, cosmological implications and manners of philosophical syllogism or even adjustments. Thus, the following questions inevitably arise: What are the theological foundations and,

concentrated flow unleashed upon it and creates the earthquake, while the sea washes over the place. This is the manner in which the earthquake occurred in the region of Achaia at the same time as the onset of the wave that flooded the coastal cities of Boura and Helike. So an expert on physics could not discredit this account if he examined it correctly. Furthermore, that the same place could be passable and impassable or land and sea is one of the things agreed by physicists, as Aristotle too thinks and as the narrative shows. And the same man tells that there is mud in the outside sea beyond the mouth, and that that place is full of shoals, so if mud... just below the surface signifies 'full of shoals' it is not remarkable. For even now they call submerged rocks with water over the top 'surface-reefs'. It becomes clear that Proclus' approach to the Platonic story of Atlantis has also a clear scientific content. Anyway, it should not escape our notice that the Neoplatonist philosopher was a brilliant natural scientist and utilized extensively by means of a synthetic method and in a critical way the relevant tradition from the Pre-Socratic era to his time. In his text one can see the Aristotelian scientific knowledge almost in its entirety. For the scientific description of the destruction of Atlantis, which was mentioned before, he took into serious consideration, among other works, Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, a very important treatise for the study of natural phenomena. Following the founder of the Lycaum, Proclus argues that a natural phenomenon, apart from any other interpretation, should be examined on the basis of the true facts which caused it. Thus, as a criterion of scientific validity as well as of his own research he posits experience, i.e. whatever falls under sense-perception concerning the phenomenon itself. In this description he explains the causes of the earthquake and the phenomena under and above the sea which follow it. One of these is the big wave or "tsunami", as it is known today among the scientists. According to this estimation, the destruction of Atlantis was not caused only by the earthquake, but also from those huge waves which came out from the two opposing winds, since they influenced the motion of the sea respectively. The inundation which was caused resulted in the fact that Atlantis was covered by mud, so that the whole area became a marsh, while shoals were also formed. It should be noted that Proclus uses the method of scientific analogy, as he bases his explanations on the events of 373 B. at the Achaean cities of Boura and Helike, at a time period much later than the era related to the destruction of Atlantis.

¹⁵ Kathryn Morgan, "Designer History: Plato's Atlantis Story and Fourth-Century Ideology", 101-118; Gerard Nadaff, "The Atlantis Myth: An Introduction to Plato's Later Philosophy of History", *Phoenix* 48 (1994): 189-209.

¹⁶ Proclus, *In Timaeus*, 1: 177.10-30 [Festugière], trans. Tarrant 1, 277: "That there was such an island, and of this size, is shown by some of those who give the story of the region of the outside sea. For they say that there were even in their own time seven islands in that sea sacred to Persephone, and three other huge ones, that of

by extension, secular repercussions of the relevant text? What are the possible symbolisms of a historical approach of the story? What is the tale really about? As well as, what would be the anthropological implications if we accepted the Atlantis as the greatest expression of all civilisations? Could it be considered as a regulatory foundation? And, finally, how has the story been used by philosophers, archaeologists, historians, politicians and religious thinkers from antiquity to the middle and modern times? The systematic approach of this inter-historical and intertextual or interdisciplinary question, apart from the holism which it reveals, can actually meet hermeneutic horizons. This kind of approach not only could result in an examination of the story itself as it is presented in Proclus' relevant descriptions, but also could synchronize individual disciplines by discovering their possible common places. Note also here that the Neoplatonist philosopher generally never approached in a one-dimensional scientific way a goal of his¹⁷.

Despite the profound philosophical perplexity, but also potential –and not stable– insight, of Plato's inviting account, modern commentators still appear hesitant to explore

Pluto, that of Ammon, and in the middle of these another belonging to Poseidon, two hundred kilometers in length. Those living on it have kept alive the memory from their ancestors of the Atlantis that actually came into being, the hugest island there, which over many cycles of time was the overlord of all the islands in the Atlantic Ocean, and was itself Poseidon's sacred island. This is what Marcellus has written in his *Aethiopica*. But, even if this is right and some such island did arise, it is still possible to take the story about it both as history and as an image of something that arises naturally within the whole universe, both explaining this [island] in terms of what it resembles, and gradually accustoming those who hear of such spectacles to the whole study of encosmic things. For it is possible to study the same correspondences at either a more particular or a more encompassing level. So it is necessary for the instruction to proceed from totalities and to conclude its study with the detail of particular situations". The above passage is a typical example of the way in which Proclus places the epistemological question on Atlantis on how different scientific disciplines will be related or will define their limits and boundaries, including even the most opposing ones as to the principles of their research, at least according to the contemporary data. Thus, he invites natural sciences and archaeology as well as the leading –according to the Aristotelian tradition– theology to cooperate so as all together to contribute to a productive syllogistic process of drawing conclusions, which will proceed from a general point to the analysis of the details. These details will compose the exemplified content of the different sciences, and all the conclusions will be composed in a holistic way, so that the first general to be explained in particular and specific terms in the light of a possible eclectic scientific approach. In an interpretation like this, that is, of synthesis of conclusions coming from different scientific fields, the epistemological question of whether knowledge is possible changes into to what extent can a particular scientific field contribute upon the building of that knowledge and what is the point on which the next scientific field will undertake to form further knowledge by following its own criteria of validity and requirements.

17 Proclus, *In Timaeus*, I: 179.5-180.4 [Festugière], trans. Tarrant I, 278-279: "Since the procession of things is continuous, and nowhere is any void getting left, but an orderly lowering in rank is observed coming from the most universal things to the intermediates which both encompass and are encompassed, and from the intermediates to the furthest and most individual, on this account Plato too says that the passage for the people of Atlantis is from Atlantis to the other islands, and from these to the mainland situated on the far side. And Atlantis is one, the other islands are many, and the mainland is largest. For the monad befits individual members of the first kind, number and multiplicity befit the second – for multiplicity comes with the dyad – and largeness befits the third on account of the advance of largeness to the triad. And since the lowest stages of the inferior column of opposites are the most enmattered things, he showed that they are the furthest distant from the better through [the phrase] on the far side, and he did not rest content, as in the case of the Atlantines, with

the myth of Atlantis from a purely philosophical standpoint, let alone one that takes into account the theological and political ramification as presented by Proclus. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that with the exception of prominent Neoplatonic scholar John Dillon¹⁸ and Harold Tarrant's relatively recent and systematic-methodical study into the topic¹⁹, there have been, to date, relatively few research attempts to provide a more in-depth philosophical investigation into the Atlantis myth, giving also emphasis on both its theological-metaphysical as well as ethical-political dimensions, either autonomously or in a synthesis. It would be an unforgivable omission not to mention A. J. Festugière²⁰, who translated into French Proclus' commentary on *Timaeus* with particularly precise historical and systematic comments. Note also that his headings and subheadings of the subchapters provide to the reader the possibility to follow easily the development of Proclus' text.

Having in mind the above synthesis, any proposed project that is going to follow these terms should aim at contributing to a broader insight of the existing text data, possibly enriching and expanding our knowledge in innovative manners, by shedding light primarily onto the relatively less developed pillars of epistemological and philosophical inquiry into the myth of Atlantis. Specifically, any exemplified project to be undertaken should seek to systematically advance the level of sophistication –or even to change the direction– of the epistemological examination to date, by providing a new dimension in this inquiry. Namely, by studying the philosophical repercussions and underpinning assumptions of

calling it 'outside' only, [a term] which demonstrated that they were of the other sector, but he added on the far side so that he might give an indication of its extreme subordination. Through its ringing the genuine sea he signified its placement in relation to matter and the last of encosmic things. For the genuine sea corresponds to what is genuinely false or genuine matter, which he called 'a sea of dissimilarity' in the *Statesman*. Furthermore, because it is necessary that these two opposite columns should be divided off from each other, kept free from crosscontamination by the creational boundaries, he said that the Pillars of Heracles divided off the inside habitable world from the outside. For it was the strongest point of creational production and the divine division of the kinds in the All, ever remaining steadfastly and manfully the same, that he called Pillars of Heracles. For this Heracles is of Zeus' [series]. The one who is divine and precedes him got as his lot the post of guardian of the generative series. So one should assume that the creational division that keeps the two segments of the All apart stems from both". This is a typical example of a theological approach of the tale of Atlantis, which combines the natural interpretation with the metaphysical explanation. Proclus makes a great synthesis of any possible information with the theory of the "one-manifold" and the hierarchy of the metaphysical level, which is clearly ontologically different from the natural one. Making a quite risky extension, we could speculate the following: the origins of this theory can be placed in Plato's unwritten doctrines about "one-indefinite dyad", where he attempts to connect Parmenides' theory on the undivided integrity with Heraclitus' approach on the multiplicity of the world of becoming. Proclus follows exactly this direction, since, as a representative of Neoplatonism, follows the principles of a metaphysical approach of *Parmenides* whereas, in his comments on the Platonic Atlantis, he makes constant direct and indirect references to the theory of the Eleatic philosopher. Cf. for instance, *Theol. Pl.*, I, 44.25-45.18.

18 John Dillon, *The Golden Chain: Studies in the Development of Platonism and Christianity*; John Dillon, *The Greek Tradition: Further Studies in the Development of Platonism and Early Christianity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997); John Dillon, *The Heirs of Plato*.

19 Harold Tarrant, *Proclus. Commentary on Plato's Timaeus. Vol 1, book I: Proclus on the Socratic State and Atlantis*.

20 André -Jean Festugière, *Proclus: Commentaire sur le Timée*.

Plato's strategy and Proclus' explicit assurance of correlating socio-political events –i.e. the rise and fall of the Atlantis civilisation–, with philosophical developments –i.e. correlating the hermeneutic approach with the ethical status of the Atlantines–, as well as geological alterations, the relevant project will involve inquiry into the numerous and curious epistemological repercussions. These aspects will link, far more intriguingly, socio-political to geological events, under a perspective the epistemological basis of which will be an open but not easily defined interpretation.

Furthermore, a project like this should seek at expanding the dialectic boundaries of the present state of the art by re-articulating the possible problematic in terms of inter-disciplinary notions and methods, as those stem from the project of Neoplatonism (and represented by Proclus in a great systematic manner). This goal implies, providing a more detailed, possibly more wide-ranging and complete, hermeneutical approach into the various knowledge dimensions involved in the myth of Atlantis, through relating a meticulous reading of all the ancient resources to contemporary research on all four pillars mentioned above. This is a research endeavour which has not thus far been pursued, at least to the desired degree, in the existing academic literature to this day. Combining philological, historical and philosophical research, in light of considering current inter-disciplinary insights and evidence provided by the state-of-the-art the project will thus offer a plausible, well-grounded and potentially hermeneutically prolific interpretation of the myth of Atlantis, which could push theoretical apprehension of this intriguing account forward and beyond of what has been already investigated in an originally unpredictable openness as regards its performances. It is though clear that Proclus' comments will change, more or less, the direction of the contemporary research and the directions to be followed, since any of his syllogisms cannot be easily explained at the same time as it raises question on whether the methodology chosen is the appropriate. It constantly raises doubts –without being explicit– on a possible change of the methodological model.

4. Methodological synthesis of the theoretical particular approaches

The research methodology that we propose for future investigations of the Atlantis hypothesis based on Proclus' description covers three levels, which should be composed in order to show how any simplistic distinction and prejudgment related to whether it actually existed or not may be raised and how their mutual co-examination is possible in an actually open to –possibly constant– reconstructions prospect. Thus, one should develop his research on a scientific, philosophical and theological level, attempting a reading with broad exemplifications or synthetic ramifications. In the first case, analysis is the objective criterion which will soundly ground any subsequent conclusion drawn for a particular case –and that would be Plato's and Proclus' descriptions–, for it will be based upon tangible evidence. Considering the second case, interpreting and re-composing scientific results will reveal how human research combines the myth under examination to general questions about human existence, i.e. Anthropology as it appears in a complete and surprisingly multi-form way in Proclus' works. In the third case, we could contend that a –originally and mostly metaphysical– prospect arises as a methodological possibility, which results in

a mystical reading of the myths, as well as the exploration and interpretation of the highly stressed by the Neo-Platonists teleology of the natural world. Note that this universe is in this case considered to be constantly directed by the divine providence, in a way that –metaphorically speaking– can constantly study itself so as the procedures by which it will gain its plenitude to be understood.

By synthesizing the above particular approaches into a single coherent methodological line, a research avoids the risk of simplistic interpretations and scientific dogmatism, i.e. that which becomes an inviolable principle. Thus, Proclus should be approached as a scientist, philosopher and theologian, who actually does not just refer to but combines the above aspects into one coherent methodology. So, a project should attempt a broader and more wide-ranging hermeneutical reading of his commentary, and, when appropriate, the relevant and plausible scientific, philosophical and theological extensions, which could bring to the fore the past interpretative information in a new perspective, should be also engaged. Through this methodological line, how the general epistemological issue is posed in Proclus' work will generally be investigated, that is to say, the subjects which according to the principles adopted by him can be considered in his perspective as the main points of view, through which any cosmological question can be elaborated. Even more: how spiritual concerns of the 5th century AD should be understood, during which Ancient Greek thought reaches great points of synthesis. We believe that through the Atlantis myth Proclus a) can easily be considered as the proponent of that modernist spirit which reveals axiological judgments in Philosophy as regards the directions to be followed at a specific time and b) presents natural world as thinking and functioning in a moral and political manner and, therefore, it becomes an authentic reflection of Metaphysics, even to a completely different ontological level, namely that of becoming, which also includes the historical one. Either way, Metaphysics of immanence is the leading theory in Proclus' commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*.

Epilogue

After what we investigated, the conclusion is that the lost civilization of Atlantis, as presented in Plato's *Timaeus* and mainly Proclus' relevant extensive and multidimensional comments, stands before the scientific community through texts related to many disciplines. Whether it is a myth or actually describes a lost land is an inviting question, which impels to the unknown or epistemologically inaccessible. Besides, human nature is constantly attracted by what cannot be verified, permanently experiencing and passing on to the next generations the intention to get appropriate answers. Even when there is no essential result, it never stops finding new ways for approaching the truth. In this case, the center of attention is a story which seems to be between myth and history, fiction and reality. Nevertheless, no researcher, regardless of his scientific discipline, appears on his own capable of satisfying the demand for complete verification of the truth about a developed and dynamic civilization, that of the Atlantines. What is the basis to consider it as one of the most important social and spiritual factors that contributed to the formation of the ancient civilization, which appears with clear different values compared to those of Ath-

ens, which illuminated the entire human civilization? If this civilization of Atlantis could be confirmed and any subsequent cultural form could be placed into axiological schemata, at least the origins of our modern civilization would have to move deeper into time. In that case, however, we would not question the value of risen civilizations after the fall of Atlantis. However, we would have to decode a different map of human spirit, which would reveal both the Atlantines' power and the Athenians' virtue. We need to mention that Proclus considers the Athenians to be superior in spirit and morality to the Atlantines and the leading expression of the cultural breakthroughs in the entire development of humanity. Following Plato, Proclus presents the Athenians as having preserved the global spirituality from the Atlantines' arrogance²¹.

Therefore, the question on whether it is a myth, or, else, an imaginary re-synthesis that serves other than historical purposes, or a lost link in the history of time and human evolution, is crucial not only for the way in which values are formed and interpreted but also for restoring the truth. In this case, the story of Atlantis would contain logical seeds, in the sense of both the philosophical and scientific elements that could contribute to a more precise understanding of the relation 'human-nature' but, mostly, to the existential relation of human with himself, both individually and collectively. Thus, the issue of objectivity and truth of the events develops into a way of existing, where the main question concerns the role of virtues, which for Plato and Proclus are crucial for the development of history²². In this sense, mythical consciousness, which describes the archaic era, could become, through the necessary transformations, logical and historical, not in the context of a non-applied Gnosticism but of a valid science-interdisciplinarity, which would at least accept the role of different literary forms in the process of evolution and would be capable of studying and understanding nature and human virtues. Therefore, this difficult process of decoding a myth would reveal its concealed capabilities.

As a final remark of our study, we shall quote the following extract from Proclus' comments on the Platonic text, which is a great example of how the content of the myth relates to the procedures of the natural world:

Διὸ καὶ χρήσιμον εἶναι φαμεν τόνδε τὸν μῦθον πρὸς τὴν ὅλην θεωρίαν τῆς φύσεως, ὡς ἐκ τῶν ἐνεργειῶν καὶ τῶν κινήσεων ἐνδεικνύμενον ἡμῖν τὴν ἐναντίωσιν τὴν κοσμικὴν· πάντες γὰρ οἱ περὶ φύσεως ἀναδιδάξαντες ἀπὸ τῶν ἐναντίων ἄρχονται καὶ ταῦτα ποιοῦσιν ἀρχάς²³.

That is why we say that this myth is useful also for the total study of nature, as, from activities and movements [depicted], it gives an indication of the cosmic rivalry. For all those who have taught about nature begin with opposites and make these principles²⁴.

From a cosmological point of view, the most interesting thing is that the opposing natural powers are not in conflict but in a dialectical relation that turns them into princi-

²¹ Proclus, *In Timaeus*, 1: 171.28-172.14 (Festugière)

²² Proclus elaborates historically and systematically this topic in his comments on the Platonic *Alcibiades I* and *Respublica*.

²³ Proclus, *In Timaeus*, 1: 132.16-21 (Festugière)

²⁴ Proclus. *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus. Vol 1, book I: Proclus on the Socratic State and Atlantis*, p. 228.

ples of the sensible world and, by extension, capable of teaching human being how to make the right choices, a perspective that is strongly supported in this Commentary²⁵.

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²⁵ Proclus, *In Timaeus*, I: 104.27-116.21.

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Apophatic philosophy Beyond phenomenology?

Abstract: An expression apophatic philosophy can be understood as an appropriate synonym for a more traditional expression apophatic theology. Traditional philosophical views on the mystery of God created besides its mere rational reflection also thought which is over-rational but definitely not antirational. It can be found in texts in the field of mysticism, both religious and philosophical. Classical Greek culture joined with Christian faith. Therefore, we cannot talk about it as an individual entity being separated by these two worlds. Athens can be recognized in Jerusalem – to use expression of Leo Shestov. A symbol joins the mind. Can anybody still follow its directness? Slovenian philosophical field has developed specific understanding for Christian mystical tradition in its high theoretical expression. Most credit can be given to the thought of Gorazd Kocijančič (born 1964), a philosopher, poet, translator and publisher since it confirms axiomatics of the reality of a spiritual world, which does not correspond to any other reality. Radical denial or negation (apo-fásko) as a modus vivendi of philosophy represents at the same time a relationship of a radical openness between mysteries of God and human being. This contribution will mostly focus on Kocijančič's synthesis from his philosophical trilogy: *Razbitje: Sedem radikalnih esejev* [Being broken apart: seven radical essays] (2009), *Erotika, politika itn. Trije poskusi o duši* [Erotics, politics etc.: three essays on the soul] (2011), *O nekaterih drugih: Štirje eseji o preobilju* [On some others: four essays on superabundance] (2016) and mainly on his relationship towards phenomenological thinking. As he stresses in his preface to his translation of Levinas' *Le temps et l'autre*, apophatics goes beyond the phenomenology.

Keywords: Apophatic philosophy, Gorazd Kocijančič, Slovenian philosophy, phenomenology, Christian philosophy, mystical tradition

Introduction

The expression *apophatic philosophy*, which is central to the following case study of a contemporary Slovenian philosopher (how nice it is to read philosophy in one's mother tongue!), is no novelty in the field of the post-modern critique of metaphysics. It should be taken as the faithful successor to the (still ongoing) turn that took place in French phenomenology and is best expressed in the books *Otherwise than Being, or, Beyond Essence* by Emmanuel

Levinas and *God without Being* by Jean Luc Marion.¹ The best-known spokesman for the apophatic character of philosophical thought in general is the American philosopher William Franke. In his work *A Philosophy of the Unsayable* from 2014, he set himself the task of posing apophatic thought as the answer to certain key questions in the contemporary philosophy of religion.² He sought the answer in at the intersections between philosophy, literature and theology, based on classical texts that still speak to contemporary theoretical quandaries concerning attempts to articulate the incomprehensible mysteries of existence. Based on a reading of the apophatic tradition that he conceptualizes as a *philosophia perennis*, Franke develops an original interpretation which has lately become the center of great interest and further interpretation.³ This means, in fact, that apophatic philosophy is not an *obscurum* in modern philosophy of religion. But this would be a flawed apology for the title of my paper, as apophatic philosophy actually has traditional roots.

This is why Gorazd Kocijančič (1964), the Slovene philosopher, poet, translator and editor whose system of philosophy will be sketched in the following, rightly warns in the first part of his philosophical trilogy *Razbitje* [Being broken apart] that there has been nothing to add to apophatic thought since the days of Plotin and Dionysius the Areopagite and that one only has to strive to grasp its meaning – which clearly is not easy.⁴ It is the *razbitjanje* [breaking apart] of the conditions for the mysteriousness of existence, torn between human and divine reality. “*Being broken apart, then, on the one hand signifies an extreme ‘anthropocentrism’ beside which the relativist tradition from Protagoras to Nietzsche appears moderate and circumspect, and on the other, an unconditional ‘theocentrism’, a losing oneself in the Unknowable, an awareness that the only serious topic of philosophical thought is the Absolute that precedes thought and being.*”⁵ It is thus fitting that the foreword to the last part of the trilogy, *O nekaterih drugih* [On some others], characterizes the philosophy of Kocijančič’s essays as profoundly rooted in theanthropological thought, which scrutinizes the experience of one’s own faith through the lens of radical intellectual reflection.⁶ Opposed to this understanding of philosophy we find the fundamental assumption of a modernity that only appears to be non-religious when it proclaims its apostasy from faith as traditionally understood. In the second part of the trilogy, *Erotika, politika itn.* [Eroticism, politics etc.], Kocijančič claims that this is an even more dangerous form of faith, “[...] namely a religion

¹ *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (1974), in English as E. Lévinas, *Otherwise than Being, or, Beyond Essence* (Pittsburgh, Pa: Duquesne University Press, 1998); *Dieu sans l'être* (1982), in English as J. L. Marion, *God without Being: Hors-Texte*, Second edition, Religion and Postmodernism (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2012).

² W. Franke, *Philosophy of the Unsayable* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 274.

³ I have in mind the collected volume *Contemporary Debates in Negative Theology and Philosophy*, ed. N. Brown and J. A. Simmons (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

⁴ G. Kocijančič, *Razbitje: Sedem radikalnih esejev* [Being broken apart: seven radical essays] (Ljubljana: Študentska založba, 2009), 14.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶ M. Gudović, “Raz-bití, ne razdrobiti. Hipostatična dekonstrukcija filozofije v delu Gorazda Kocijančiča”, in: Gorazd Kocijančič, *O nekaterih drugih: Štirje eseji o preobilju* [On some others: four essays on superabundance] (Ljubljana: Beletrina, 2016), 440.

unaware of itself, a visceral conviction of ontological truth that fails to reflect how its own investment, will and devotion transcend thought.”⁷ At issue, then, is the situation in a fanatically religious age of materialism, hedonism, naturalism and, ultimately, nihilism, all of which forget the obvious truth that we humans are after all metaphysical selfhoods. Unlike traditional ontology – and here we enter into Kocijančič’s system itself (or the introduction to it, as he stresses himself) – this core of every human being, classically known as the soul, is *nothing substantial, nothing like a thing, nothing reified or objectified*.⁸ Kocijančič calls this core the *hypostasis*,⁹ and it forms the fundamental category of his philosophical system.

Hypostatic phenomenology

Despite the title of the first volume, Kocijančič’s philosophy is not an endless deconstruction and breaking apart, as it is not an end in itself. The *hypostasis* itself is a good example. It is the beginning of everything, but only so that we might start at the only place that makes sense, with our own being. Then, this initial concept gradually fades away, yielding the stage to what precedes the *hypostasis*.¹⁰ In the wake of the modern critique of metaphysics, this means that apophatic thought is truly free of presuppositions, no matter how sophisticated their concealment behind the rhetorical labels of pure thought. With reference to the second *naïveté* of Ricoeur, Kocijančič describes his approach as follows: “The soul that emerges before us after recovering from the critique of metaphysics is identical with the soul spoken of in Tradition, except that it has become immune to naturalistic, scientistic, nihilistic, atheistic doubts – not because it has driven them out as a menace, but because it has let them inside itself and unmasked them in their argumentative impotence and their existential untruth.”¹¹ To this end, Kocijančič’s essays first offer an ontological foundation in hypostasiology, which is immediately negated in ethical reflection, which is about the *hypostasis* becoming lost in the *hypostasis* of the other (i.e., the *synhypostasis*). Then follow deconstructions of history, science, the sense of hermeneutics, the nature of poetry, the nature of love, the sense of politics and the conception of infinity, as well as – in the last volume – relations with animals and with our dreaming selves, concluding with reflections on nothingness. But let us return to the beginning, to the *hypostasis* and its phenomenological status, with which Kocijančič rethinks the sources of being.

Kocijančič seeks to find a scene for his ontology in what he holds to be the overlooked immediacy of one’s own being. Here, he seeks to bring together the nuances of he-

⁷ G. Kocijančič, *Erotika, politika itn. Trije poskusi o duši* [Erotics, politics etc.: three essays on the soul] (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 2011), 17.

⁸ Ibid., 29–30.

⁹ G. Kocijančič, *Razbitje*, 35: “I am what I am. I call this concreteness the ‘hypostasis.’” For a very concise and clear explanation of the hypostasis, see Vid Snoj, “O hipostazi in drugi hipostatiki. Ob knjigi Gorazda Kocijančiča *O nekaterih drugih*” [On the hypostasis and the other hypostatics: concerning Gorazd Kocijančič’s book *On some others*], available on the KUD Logos website, <http://kud-logos.si/2016/o-hipostazi-in-drugi-hipostatiki/#ft1>.

¹⁰ G. Kocijančič, *Erotika, politika itn.*, 31.

¹¹ Ibid., 32.

nological reduction (i.e. understanding being based on its grounding in the One) as well as of a radicalized metaphysics of subjectivity that finds its expression in phenomenological insights. The question of being is always my own and requires my experience. In many philosophical systems, being as something universal and abstract eludes the individual, or if it does touch me, this is only on the level of an equally abstract self that is equal for all. But in reality being, which requires my experience, becomes an “is” or an “am”, which indicates that being concerns me in my personal being. What is at stake is not only *depriving being of existence*, which forms the heart of post-modern thought, but *depriving existence of being* as being. Here we find a turn towards being, implied in the “am” as *hypostasis*. This hypostatic turn, as Kocijančič calls it, is the truth of ontological difference, which, unlike the classical couple existing–being, is now constituted between the hypostasis and the existent as an existent that is en-hypostasized.¹² To arrive at this insight, a phenomenological analysis of death must first be undertaken. “*In the death or birth of the other, which I try – feebly and without the possibility of logos – to understand as my own, there enters the horizon of my thought precisely that point where the question of this arché and telos of being gains its meaning and foundation.*”¹³ Kocijančič here recognizes more than just a call to change the understanding of being in ordinary consciousness and upgrade it; we are also required to reverse it. With reference to the above-mentioned phenomenologists Levinas and Marion, it is not here a question of thinking “the other of being” or “the one without being”, but conceiving the radical limit of being and its grounding. At stake is a *meta-ontology of radically conceived subjectivity*.¹⁴ To use the well-known definition of *Dasein* in *Being and Time*, the hypostasis does not only have its very being as an issue; as Kocijančič stresses for clarity, the hypostasis is its very being. The hypostatic nature of being has far-reaching consequences for all of ontology.

Kocijančič is aware that his system introduces a complete break with traditional and post-modern ontology. To him, namely, being is multiple and at the same time also always one and singular. This requires a few basic explanations to avoid confusion. Multiplicity does not imply a perspectivism that advocates different subjective manifestations of being in the singular. At the same time, it is not about a new ontology of multiplicity that would reintroduce a unitary logos. As stated above, it is the meta-ontological level that is at stake. This idea may be made clearer by the following quotation, which explains the notion mentioned above in connection with ontological difference – en-hypostatization – may serve to make this idea clearer: “*The ‘is’ that I ‘am’ is the only framework within which anything can appear as existent. And without which nothing can appear.*”¹⁵ What is taking place here is the *original ontological gesture*, which is about the *transfer of the other of being into being itself*. From this follows a truly far-reaching consequence concerning freedom, which is only conceivable in apophatic terms. But what is this freedom actually like? Kocijančič calls it the *reacting freedom of be-*

¹² G. Kocijančič, *Razbitje*, 42.

¹³ Ibid., 33.

¹⁴ Ibid., 36, n. 10.

¹⁵ Ibid., 42.

ing. It is true that, in the absolute sense, we are given to each other and – in accordance with hypostatic phenomenology – into our very selves, since being flows through me. Thus philosophy has to trace the mystery that precedes being. “*The conceptualization of ‘what truly is’ is but the tracing and description of my original ontological act.*”¹⁶ If there is no such tracing, if being frees itself from the hypostatic turn and thought is no longer a hypostatic trace, we end up with the logic that locks every other existent and its thought into the uniform whole of the phenomenology of spirit. This is why it is so very important to trace being, as something ever singular and at the same time multiple, with thought that does not abstract, but allows for the coincidence of opposites. Thus we arrive at the field of apophasis.

The phenomenology of apophasis

Key to apophatic thought is the rejection of the world as a reality given beforehand. Therefore, it strives for a world that is open to a pre- and supramundane dimension. This is the legacy of the Platonic and especially the Neo-Platonic vision, which comes with a critique and a renewal of our post-modern culture as well. The missing link that has often been overlooked is the Neo-Platonic theory of the infinite’s revelation in the finite, which was key to the monotheistic and especially the Christian adaptation of Platonism. Franke calls this to our attention when he writes: “*It was especially God’s transcendence of all discourses, as described by Plotinus and his followers, eminently Proclus, that enabled the graft of Greek philosophy onto Christian theology.*”¹⁷ In his essay on infinity Kocijančič, who has among other things translated Proclus’s *Elements of Theology* into Slovene,¹⁸ also devotes an annex to the theological explications of his philosophical reflection, and this becomes a constant feature of the last part of the trilogy.

At the beginning, he states that the present crisis of theology might be connected with its failure to take full cognizance of the implications of the concept of infinity. But the idea of infinity is first of all apophatic. “*The experience of infinity is not a matter of eros toward anything, but a matter of the erotic renunciation of every desire that can receive the totality. Of devotion. Of pístis.*”¹⁹ It should be explained that Kocijančič understands the meaning of eros, and hence of the erotic, as a para-logical tie to the other that is profoundly ethical.²⁰ It should also be explained that the ethos, in this philosophical system, symbolizes the suspension of the self in wide openness toward the other. In this, it differs essentially from the hypostasis, which is exclusive. The one and only being unfetters itself from the one and only other being (the *synhypostasis*) with a *sympathetic, kind, loving investment* that requires *a break with my own basic ontological structure.*²¹ This in turns requires an anticipation of the religio-mystical structure of reality, that is, faith (*pístis*). Now we can re-

¹⁶ Ibid., 44.

¹⁷ W. Franke, *Philosophy of the Unsayable*, 295.

¹⁸ Proclus, *Prvine bogoslovja* (Ljubljana: Nova revija, 1998)

¹⁹ G. Kocijančič, *Erotika, politika itn.*, 320.

²⁰ Ibid., 102.

²¹ G. Kocijančič, *Razbitje*, 67.

turn to the reflection on infinity. As in the ethical conception, the hypostasis also loses itself in the thought of the Infinite. Kocijančič says that this results from the givenness that makes me radically lose. There is no causality here, for in my relationship to the incomprehensible infinite, I am not any kind of subject with some definite object before me to define me in advance. *"It is precisely as hypostasis, as a being that in its one and only – non-existent – being essentializes the world, that I am the self-negation of infinity that gives infinity existence within myself."*²² This is now the site where divinity truly enters, and its evident reality appears as radical concealment. *"The site where infinity emerges from finite being is at the same time the site where finite being emerges from the infinity of the other being."*²³ This is where Kocijančič's phenomenology of infinity distances itself from making too quick a connection between the Infinite and the Good, as we see it e.g. with Lévinas, who, in the light of the posited reality of infinity does not really speak of the Infinite as such, but only of the phenomenological *conditio sine qua non* of the openness of ethos to the other, and thereby also points to the theological structure of the ethical act. Here phenomenology faces the merciless call of apophasis: *"Thought of the infinite never reaches the Good nor God, but – with the utmost exertion – only the unthinkable reality of the Infinite itself."*²⁴ The task is speculatively unsolvable; otherwise, there is not enough room for faith. The latter, however, in fact occupies the backdrop to Lévinas's thought. Kocijančič therefore sticks to what he calls *hypostasiology*, which he says is a *phenomenology of apophasis*, or the other way around, a (meta)ontology of the hypostasis.²⁵ He therefore says: *"Proof of the reality of the Absolute is possible only as an intimate adventure of the hypostasis. And intimacy is everything."*²⁶

The relationship between a hypostatically posited phenomenology and the ordinary kind is nicely explained in the last book of the trilogy, in the essay on the excess of language. Language is that window onto the other/Other – to the extent we take them as a living creature – that also extends to the spiritual field. All this is also reflected in the following quotation: *"Phenomenology begins with the Aristotelic primacy of that which is closer to us, since it shows itself to us (phenomenon), not with the primacy of that which is in and of itself (i.e., the aseity of things and of ourselves). Theology (may) begin(s) with the fallenness of existence, with its sinfulness. The former and the latter unite in the concept of internally experienced hypostaticity. The direct self-experience of life is connected with a folding into oneself, with egocentric solipsism. The intellectual, philosophical path from this 'for us' to this 'in and of itself' is therefore contrapuntally connected with a spiritual departure from our primary rigid tenseness toward Gelassenheit: a relaxed, wide openness toward the other and the Other."*²⁷ With this, deeper foundations open up for phenomenology, shaking the fundamentality of phenomenology itself.

²² G. Kocijančič, *Erotika, politika itm.*, 323.

²³ Ibid., 324.

²⁴ Ibid., 324, n. 129.

²⁵ Ibid., 317.

²⁶ Ibid., 320.

²⁷ G. Kocijančič, *O nekaterih drugih: Štirje eseji o preobilju* [On some others: four essays on superabundance] (Ljubljana: Beletrina, 2016), 337.

Post-phenomenology?

As Franke points out, namely, “apophatic awareness, as a form of critical consciousness, entails the negation of all discourses”.²⁸ Here a basic explanation is called for as to what it actually is that enables apophasis to take this stance of denial, and Kocijančič provides us with one: “*Apophasis denotes the mental ‘technique’ of renunciation and the stance of spiritual openness to the mystery of the Origin of all reality; it signifies an attitude toward the Absolute in which we experience and articulate that it ‘is’ infinitely different from all our words, conceptions and concepts, so that its difference is better expressed by denial than by any high-minded assertion: not denial as the opposite of assertion, but also denial of denial and and denial of the denial of denial etc. etc. The foundation of apophasis is the triple negation that precedes every differentiation of human theoretical practices: it is the feeling of the word’s inadequacy to thought, of thought’s inadequacy to reality and – on the deepest level – the inadequate reflection of these two inadequacies. This triple denial is the work of the word that is not a word, of thought that is not thought, of openness to a reality, that is not reality.*”²⁹ It results in a fundamental skepticism that renounces any gnostic, i.e., epistemic sympathies. Due to its cognitively uncontrolled and unjustifiable transitions, hypostatic thought is (post)phenomenological. Kocijančič thus adds to the arch of development of continental European thought. He has in mind the explanation given by Lee Braver in the book *A Thing of This World: A History of Continental Anti-Realism*. Analytical and continental philosophy, according to Braver, share a fundamental insight, they only apply different perspectives. In a kind of repeat of Kant’s project, Braver too attempts to unify this difference into a new vocabulary. The fundamental insight, as the title suggests, is the rejection of realism. Its conclusion, however, gives primacy to continental philosophy, which in his view has taken this rejection further. Apophatic philosophy, then, attaches itself to this trajectory; according to Kocijančič’s self-assessment, his thought “[...] in every area – except with regard to the necessity and speculative boldness of philosophy – opposes the modern materialist ‘speculative realism’, which is basically the capitulation of philosophy before the unreflected ontology and anthropology of the scientific-doxic Zeitgeist [...]”³⁰ Throughout the trilogy, therefore, we read a sharp, but still very understanding critique especially of the Lacanian and post-structuralist philosophical tradition, whereas traditional phenomenology fares rather better. For Kocijančič, namely, the allure of the phenomenological method lies in its being a contemporary variety of constructive skepticism, as its motto is not merely “back to the things themselves”, but also “think more (self-)critically”. The post-phenomenology of hypostatic thought is the radicalization of this extension of the original phenomenology, but with the twist that it also interrogates its problematic presuppositions: e.g. formal consistency, the metaphysics of subjectivity, the immortalization of the transcendental self. Kocijančič is also aware of the difference between that which shows itself (the phenomenon) and that which manifests itself (the mystery), and

28 W. Franke, *Philosophy of the Unsayable*, 148.

29 G. Kocijančič, *Erotika, politika itn.*, 286–287.

30 G. Kocijančič, *O nekaterih drugih*, 14, n. 5.

therefore hypostatic phenomenology “[...] opens up to paradox, to radical Transcendence and its manifestations, to different – not subjectively established or controlled – modes of being (in the plural).”³¹

Kocijančič already spoke of the limits of phenomenology in his companion text to his own translation of Lévinas’s essay *Time and the Other*, at a time when his philosophical system remained latent or in the middle of discovering the Traces, in a mode of devotion and relaxation (*Gelassenheit*) – what happens, happens. Phenomenology early on distanced itself skeptically from pretensions to being scientific and moved toward to the area that Kocijančič, in a Levinasian vein, calls witnessing. Phenomenologists, the French in particular, begin to take an interest in questions of an existential nature that belong, in Husserl’s terms, to the life-world, and in Heidegger’s, to being-in-the-world, such as temporality and corporeality, and freedom of the question of the other. “Witnessing itself was tried by thought as something evident.”³² As a result, a space opened up again for the field of religious or spiritual life. Its undefinable nature, namely, is organic, and it is very strange that some people today (in Slovenia too) endeavor to keep or make (!!!) theology an empirical science.³³ As the main representative of this movement, Levinas indicated a shift in the phenomenological project, as he sees the existential nature of man as the *epiphanous presence of the radically apophatic Absolute*.³⁴ The breakthrough out of closed *Dasein* into the openness of the Other forms the core of Levinas’s philosophy. Kocijančič sees in this a transfigured discourse of *negative theology*, which is criticized by Levinas as by his teacher Heidegger and later by Derrida. And yet, in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas writes that beyond all essence, the Good is the ultimate teaching of philosophy,³⁵ which distinguishes him clearly from the other two. In the above-mentioned work *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas expresses this criticism with the statement that the negative theologies that are known to Tradition are not radical enough. That is mainly to say that they are not philosophical enough, although Levinas paradoxically here and there understands his own philosophy as a metatheory that evidently goes *beyond phenomenology*.³⁶ The fundamental question, though, is whether this “beyond” represents Lévinas’s famous turn, his wish to make ethics the first philosophy.

Kocijančič shows through an in-depth analysis that the answer must be sought in Lévinas’s unreflected bindingness of discourse, which is in fact based on an unjustified wish to *force agreement and be unquestionable*.³⁷ Lévinas simply demands too much from thought and thus, as already shown, seeks to use philosophy to measure out a space where

³¹ Ibid., 16, n. 6.

³² G. Kocijančič, “Drugi čas? Drugačen drugi? Fenomenologija kot hermenevitični problem” [A different time? A different other? Phenomenology as a hermeneutical problem], in: Emmanuel Lévinas, *Etika in neskončno: Čas in drugi* (Ljubljana: Družina, 1998), 145.

³³ Kocijančič too takes a critical view when he speaks of the psychologization of theology.

³⁴ G. Kocijančič, “Drugi čas? Drugačen drugi?”, 149.

³⁵ Ibid., 150.

³⁶ Ibid., 158.

³⁷ Ibid., 166.

spiritual experience can move in. Therefore, the impotence of phenomenology as a binding discourse – with which we in the final analysis need not agree – lies in its failure to admit its own impotence. Nevertheless, such a philosophy remains relevant, whereas its critique of apophatic thought is not radical enough – contrary to what Levinas himself believed. What is the alternative? The witnessing of spiritual experience, born from the horror of loneliness, as Kocijančič explicitly shows already by mentioning the *hypostasis*.³⁸ Here, thought retreats and leaves the stage to witnessing. “The power of the philosopher’s word lies in his attempt to conceptualize his profound personal experience in words in such a way that under certain – unspoken and only partly speakable – circumstances, he realizes a paradoxical ‘partial universality’, a ‘conditional unconditionality’ that characterizes the mediation of love-of-wisdom, with which one needs not agree.”³⁹ Has Kocijančič, then, succeeded in this mediation?

Conclusion

I think the question is adequately answered by Vid Snoj in his foreword to the second part of the trilogy, when he makes a distinction between mediated and mediating Christian philosophy, with reference to the book *Posredovanja* [Mediations], Kocijančič’s first work. Snoj writes: “*And when mediating Christian philosophy introduces a philosophically trained outsider to that which is mediated, due to the universal impossibility of mediating its spiritual experience it does not bring him directly into that experiencing, but at most to the threshold of experience. To the decision of the heart.*”⁴⁰ Kocijančič devotes the last essay in his philosophical system to the question of nothingness/Nothingness, that dark (*anhypostatic*) nothingness in which we annihilate ourselves as being and that bright (*apophatic*) Nothingness that we glimpse at the summit of spiritual ascent. Allow me to end with an attempt, based on the apophatic philosophy I have presented, to answer the question this conference poses, namely: in this light (or darkness?), what is the connection between philosophy and religions with their associated theologies?⁴¹

Nowhere in his trilogy does Kocijančič directly state that his system is a Christian philosophy. In any case it is a philosophy of Christianity, to use Michel Henry’s name for the penetration and mysterious transcendence of philosophy into the heart of religious experience – an experience that possesses the one who experiences it.⁴² This is evidenced by the concluding theological essay outlines that function as an invitation to Christianity, and with which Kocijančič introduces a difference in principle from the preceding philosophical part of each text. Although the author is a practicing Catholic, no less than three

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 167.

⁴⁰ V. Snoj: “Razbivajočenje, razbitje isl. O filozofiji Gorazda Kocijančiča”, in: G. Kocijančič, *Erotika, politika itn. Trije poskusi o duši* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 2011), 348.

⁴¹ This paper was presented on an international conference *Philosophy’s Religions: Challenging Continental Philosophy of Religion*, 5th–7th September 2018 in Ljubljana.

⁴² M. Henry, *C’est moi la vérité : pour une philosophie du christianisme*. English translation: *I am the truth: toward a philosophy of Christianity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

of the four theological postscripts touch on the world of Orthodox, *philokalian* spirituality, the spirituality of the Greek Church Fathers and other authors from the fourth century to the fourteenth. *Philokalia*⁴³ is *universal Christian wisdom*; far from being a thing of the past, it also speaks (or ought to speak) to modernity. As Kocijančič notes, this was shown some years ago (2008) by the phenomenologist Natalie Dépraz in her book *Les corps glorieux*, which is devoted to the thought of the Church Fathers and the Desert Fathers. The same year saw the publication of Jean Luc Marion's reading of Augustine (*Au lieu de soi*), which Kocijančič takes as an indication that his wish in the book *Posredovanje* is being realized, namely, that Christian philosophers might read the Church Fathers with the same philosophical intensity and unpredictability as Lévinas read the Talmud.⁴⁴ As befits the truly apophatic, the story does not end within an exclusively Christian horizon, as the philokalian wisdom and all the later spiritual outbreaks (e.g. German mysticism, Russian religious philosophy) "[...] opens up beyond any syncretism into a transcultural and transreligious mystical symphony with the peaks of Jewish and Islamic as well as Far Eastern spiritual tradition ..."⁴⁵ Not only is apophatic philosophy compatible with religious experience, it offers a space for the emergence of a new theology of religions or of different cultures with the awareness that the absoluteness of one does not at the same time mean the relativity of the other.⁴⁶

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⁴³ Kocijančič is also an editor and translator of *Philokalia* into Slovenian. First volume was published in 2020 and second one in 2021.

⁴⁴ *O nekaterih drugih*, 21, n. 9.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ W. Franke, "Apophatic Universalism East and West: Rethinking Universality Today in the Interstices Between Cultures", in *Contemporary Debates in Negative Theology and Philosophy*, 263–292. Kocijančič briefly discusses this in the theological corollary to his essay on infinity with a transposition of Cantor's theory of infinity to the issue of religions. See *Erotika, politika itn.*, 328.

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The “heartless heart” – the conflict of the mind and the heart

Reflections on the spirituality of the heart in the patristic tradition and Gregory Palamas

Abstract: The following account explores, the issues of the spirituality of the heart, understood as the central spiritual organ of the human being. We analyse the patristic tradition regarding the necessity of protecting the spiritual heart, against all possible attacks. Our main concern is to analyse the tension between the heart and the mind. To understand the dynamics of the relationship between the heart and the mind and to understand the relationship of the heart with love and other related concepts.

We discern two forms of spiritualities of the heart, which basically either give preference to the predominance of the heart over the mind or vice versa. If we understand love as being unpredictable and free, what is the consequence of this for the mind and its functions? If we understand the mind and reason to be operating on certain unchangeable principles and conditions how then can we understand the issue of the mind controlling the heart or the hearts relationship with the mind. The theme is important in our contemporary period where there is a clear separation between the mind and the heart, between freedom and love and data and information. The theme is highly relevant today not least because emotionality and love are being relativised or limited by the onset of mechanical processes related to information technology and the mind of the human being itself. In our humble contribution within the limits we have we refer to the thought of Basil the Great and Gregory Palamas

Keywords: Heart, spirituality, mind, Gregory Palamas

Introduction

The present contribution is a reflection on the spirituality of the heart linked with cognition/thought. The contribution is an assessment of the problem of the relationship between rationality/cognition and love as linked with the heart.

Any superficial encounter with the patristic tradition demonstrates the importance that love linked with the heart has in spirituality. In the more recent period, various more contemporary synthesis such as the work of Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and the Philokalia have popularised the theme of the heart and its role in spirituality. The deceptively simple theme of the heart and love has a complex background linked with the mind and thought, which is often left unexplored and cloudy, which can result in spiritual confusion.

To define love and its relationship with thinking/cognition or the *nous*, is not so simple as it may seem. The spirituality of the heart and prayer can be deceptively simple and obvious at first glance. When one reads the fathers one can perhaps discern a tension as to what to do with the heart and love in the often “brilliant noetic worlds” the fathers construct and live in.

Everyone seems to agree on the importance of love and the heart but often it is not so clear as to what is exactly the relationship at least on the causal plane between love and thinking really is. We obviously do not have the space here to go into the more complex details and complex discussions of the position of the heart and *nous* in the patristic tradition. But we can point to some ideas that can provide substance for further theological reflection. This is also important with reference to the biblical tradition itself.

The linking of the heart as a centre for love and emotion with the mind or cognitive realms is not so straightforward in the theological tradition as it may seem. A superficial glance at the Old Testament will also show a more “human” or “emotional” emphasis on the heart and love without the necessity of linking these with predetermined rational reflection or thought. God in fact is often portrayed as an emotional Being, who does not have “to think” before he does anything. Thinking is more or less linked with Providence in relation to God (*Pronoia*). God’s “heart” is not necessarily linked with God’s “mind”. We may also enquire as to the relationship between love, knowledge, and “control”. Does the heart and love imply freedom and consequently a “loss of control” or “predetermination”? Here we can speak of a certain theological metacognition.

Considerations regarding the heart and the noetic realm naturally bring the Hesychast tradition to the fore. Here we can assess the basic presupposition as seen in Palamas and other patristic writers that the *nous* is located in the heart. The basic question here is how exactly is the heart linked with the *nous*? What are the internal dynamics of the relationship between the heart and the noetic realm? Is the heart and thereby love “controlled” by the mind. Can the heart “think its love”? Is the heart free and if so, is rationality the result of freedom or limits this freedom? Is the heart a primarily noetic organ? The tension in the patristic tradition between the freedom of love and love itself (as presented in the heart) and the rationality or structuralism of the *nous* can be seen as a theological problem, especially as our own period has increasingly widened the gap between emotion and love and rationality.

The biblical literature about the heart is complex in its own right. One can draw attention to concepts of the “hardened heart” which Origen and even Paul had to tackle. There are other important biblical themes such as “gaining a new heart”, “healing one’s

heart" and other themes. However, we may ask, what does the heart exactly represent here? Is it the centre of love, thought etc.?

God is often portrayed as an emotional being in the Old Testament, and even has characteristics which perhaps would be viewed in the Neo platonistic patristic tradition as unacceptable. He is full of fury, jealousy, love. Given the overall impression of the later compilation of the *Philokalia*, one would perhaps "recommend to God" to guard His own heart.

Further the human being in the Bible is often in conflict with himself or herself and with God. There is a kind of internal schizophrenia between rationality, emotion, will and love. All this can lead to the necessity of "gaining a new heart". Thus we read in Ezechiel:

"A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezechiel 36: 26). Here we can also draw attention to the age-old controversial statements in Exodus about the "hardened heart" (Exodus 4:21, 7:23). Here in Exodus the heart of the pharaoh is hardened by God or by the pharaoh himself, both alternatives occur in the account. Whatever the case, the hardened heart leads to a particular decision, a decision based on thought. The hardened heart predetermines presumably one's decision and action.

In fact, the biblical "hardened heart" issue leads us to the important patristic concept of guarding one's heart so that it does not presumably "become a hardened heart". Importantly, the Exodus story speaks about the fact that God knows what the pharaoh will do in relation to the Hebrews (Exodus 3: 19). Here there is a relationship between "knowledge" and the "heart" a theme appearing elsewhere. In fact, many commentators on this story fail to realise that given the dynamics of the story, the hardening of the pharaoh's heart is related to the hardened hearts of the Israelis.

Israel is in bondage and has forgotten about God, even Moses has issues of self-confidence and the ability of his fellow countrymen to release themselves. The pharaoh appears prominent here as the one with the hardened heart but actually his hardened heart is linked to the Hebrews. The increased punishment of Egypt results in the consequent realisation of the power of God on both sides, amongst the Israelis and the Egyptians.

The Hebrews, see God's power and his love towards Israel. Just as the pharaoh realises who God is, so analogously at the same time the hearts of the Hebrews are softened. In other words the power of God shows his love and softens the hearts of the Hebrews and paradoxically of the Pharaoh. As some have suggested the words "became hardened" (Exodus 7: 13-14) in Hebrew in relation to the pharaoh can be explained in a revised grammatical sense as for example being not passive but stative, suggesting that God is not doing the hardening. Or that new grammatical information from other sources such as the Dead Sea Scrolls could suggest a new reading suggesting that God "permitted the pharaoh's heart to be hardened". Some commentators also note that such works as *Exodus Rabbah* (*Shemot Rabbah*) remind us, that the hardening of the pharaoh's heart was only the end process of his own hardening of the heart which built up until that moment. Therefore, basically it is the pharaoh who hardened his heart. The important thing is that a hardened heart leads to thought and thought leads to action. It is not "hardened thought" that leads to the hearts hardening or action but vice versa.

In any case as is well known Paul discusses the issue in Romans 9, where it is placed in the context of what we may summarise as saying: "You have no control over your hearts, but God is here to proclaim his glory and chooses all. The heart therefore must have an open disposition to the freedom of God. It is not the heart, which is free, but God is free to act on the heart".

Again, we must emphasise that the pharaoh and the Hebrews are one and the same cosmos, they are all part of one creation. The seeming destruction of the free will of the pharaoh is related to the free will exercised by Israel who choose to "cross to safety". The will or resolve of the Hebrews is enforced by the will of the Pharaoh and his hardened heart. It is also true that the Pharaoh did not harden the "will of the pharaoh" but his "heart".

Paul at first glance in Romans 9, seems to emphasise the action of God on people rather than the action of people towards God. The will in a way is divorced from the heart. In a sense it is as if Paul is claiming that the human being has no will (because it is so weak and relative) and is only a receptacle of Gods will and mercy. Paul contrasts the reception of mercy from God in Exodus on the part of the Hebrews with the reception of mercy on the part of the gentiles through Christ. All, the gentiles, and the Hebrews included, in a way do not deserve this mercy, and therefore the issue of will, or the hardened heart is relativised. Just as the the seeming negative image of the Pharaoh or Egyptians is relativised, since everyone is just "dependent on Gods decision". Similarly, Acts 16: 14 where the Lord "opened the heart" of a woman. The volition of God in terms of the heart is an important aspect to emphasise.

In any case the biblical literature has the advantage of being "liberated" from the strict and clear cut Greek philosophical categories where we would have to place issues of the heart. The heart thus at least on first appearances is associated more with emotion, and feeling than with a strict battle ground for opposing categories as in the philosophical tradition.

The works of Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain had undoubtedly contributed to a renewed interest into patristic theology and reflection. However, his works and the influence of the Philokalia has presented a perhaps illusionary impression of a clear cut and highly systematic classification of the theology linked with the heart, nous, psyche and so on. The heart in this modern compilatory systematic theology is like a motor with clear cut parts, linked with the mind. The spiritual process is then a matter of guarding and maintaining this mechanism.

For example, in his section on the heart in his well-known work "Handbook of Spiritual Counsel" Nicodemus immediately begins his chapter with the statement "Have you learned how to guard your external senses? Have you learned to guard also the internal and common sense of the imagination? Learn now also how to guard your heart from evil passions and thoughts."¹

It is obvious what Nicodemus means here. But the assumption immediately at the outset is that one has to have a "bird's eye" perspective of one's own self. How is this possi-

¹ See Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain, a Handbook of Spiritual Counsel, translation and foreword by Peter A. Chamberas, Paulist press, New York, Mahwah, 1989, pg. 153.

ble? There must be some sort of organ outside the heart, which somehow protects this organ like a casing protecting its contents. Or does the heart reflect on itself?

The underlining presumption is that the human person is a fully fledged independent being, which however can be or should be observed "from the outside". In other words, if one is to guard one's heart, the senses, the etc., this would entail an external "observing and guarding" organ "outside of the person". What if the heart and the soul are so destructed that they lose this "independent" quality of analysis and therefore guarding? Even biblical statements believe, that the heart is "beyond" return (Jeremiah 17: 9-10). Can we imagine a situation of such utter corruption of the individual, that there is a point of no return? Some fathers juggled with this notion of the utter or serious corruption of the heart (Pseudo Macarius, Messalians etc.).

Even more difficult is the next logical question. How does this "external" taxonomic organ "know" that this or that "imagination" is correct or not? Even more complex the situation is with the heart and passions. How does one discern that a particular emotion is bad or good, when usually it is not so obvious? Perhaps at first glance the seeming unity and relationship between the heart and other functions is not so easy to define. Even in Aristotle or Plato and other philosophers the exact dynamics of the relationship between the heart, nous, body etc. is a difficult issue of contention. The ontological role of the heart as being the centre of our communion with God is also related to these issues. The Christological implications are also important here.

The external reference point of the heart is in the biblical accounts often linked with love towards ones neighbour. Thus the heart "knows" because it either feels or does not feel something to ones neighbours. However, the monk sitting in his cell, regardless of an encounter with someone, has to "discern" the state of his heart. Ascetics living an isolated lifestyle could possibly have little interaction with others and presumably could not "test" their heart in terms of compassion.

Some Biblical references refer to what may be called a reflective intellectual quality of the heart in terms of at least faith. Faith in the heart presumably understood as an intellectual category moves mountains. In Mark 11:23 "Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea', and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him."²

On the other hand, in 1 John the heart is presented as an organ developed especially in love. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this love of God was made manifest amongst us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him." (1 John 7-9). The following passage in 1 John further links this with the Holy Spirit.

This brings us to our main concern. Needless to say, patristic anthropology displays a long-term tension between what may be termed the "noetic turn" and a more spiritually based anthropology. This is often demonstrated in discussions related to prayer and issues

² Mark 11: 23.

related to the union with God. We may further generalise and state, that this noetic philosophical emphasis in anthropology is perhaps related to Hellenistic theology more than to other Eastern Orthodox traditions. The influence of Evagrius of Pontus, Dionysius the Areopagite and others in emphasising the “noetic” perspective is often commented on. This “noetic turn” obviously leads us to consider what is the role of the heart. And this is precisely the problem. At first glance the “noetic turn” seems to negate the central role of the heart in other various forms of anthropology.

Perhaps an exemplary statement on “thought control” is by St. Hesychios who is quoted in the *Philokalia* (perhaps writing after the period of John Climacus). “3. Watchfulness is a way of embracing every virtue, every commandment. It is the heart’s stillness, and, when free from mental images, it is the guarding of the intellect”. 4. Just as a man blind from birth does not see the sun’s light, so one who fails to pursue watchfulness does not see the rich radiance of divine grace. He cannot free himself from evil thoughts, words and actions, and because of these thoughts and actions he will not be able to freely to pass the lords of hell when he dies. 5. Attentiveness is the heart’s stillness, unbroken by any thought. In this stillness the heart breathes and invokes, endlessly and without ceasing, only Jesus Christ who is the Son of God and Himself God. It confesses Him who alone has power to forgive our sins, and with His aid it courageously faces its enemies. Through this invocation enfolded continually in Christ, who secretly divines all hearts, the soul does everything it can to keep its sweetness and its inner struggle hidden from men, so that the devil, coming upon it surreptitiously, does not lead it into evil and destroy its precious work. 6. Watchfulness is a continual fixing and halting of thought at the entrance to the heart. In this way predatory and murderous thoughts are marked down as they approach and what they say and do is noted; and we can see in what specious and delusive form the demons are trying to deceive the intellect. If we are conscientious in this, we can gain much experience and knowledge of spiritual warfare.”³

Like with many passages quoted in the *Philokalia*, at first glance the passage may seem straightforward. However, the exact relationship between the heart and thoughts is not so clear. Of course, it is stated that one needs to guard the heart and so on. Even though we have quoted a passage without context here, we can state, that often in these accounts the relationship between thoughts/images and the heart is left undefined. Watchfulness or attentiveness here obviously entails a cognitive process. Deception of the intellect is an interesting process. One can obviously state here, that at first glance, it seems that the thoughts are something outside of the heart, since any cognition would presumably “disturb the heart’s life in Christ”. But does the heart “think” at all? Is it just a receptacle of love? Does love entail any reflection at all?

In some orthodox authors the tension between a heart and noetic centred spirituality is downplayed. Usually, it is pointed to the works of Gregory Palamas and other later writers who provided a more inclusive and developed theology of the heart and the human being, even though some critics would suggest otherwise.

³ *The Philokalia*, G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware, vol. I, London, Faber and Faber, 1979.

In any case one would expect a balanced theology, which would integrate both the intellect and the heart in any assent to God. However, it seems, that often one spiritual organ, the heart or the "noetic" mechanisms have a predominance over the other. The intellect can be seen as a device, which controls the heart or vice versa. This is related to "thoughts" which are governed by the intellectual aspects of the human being, but the question is who and what and how are the thoughts controlled and classified if this classification is based "solely" on the nous/intellect, without recourse to presumably other factors and organs including the heart. The greater the distance between the nous and the heart the lesser the possibility of mutual co-operation and presumably the greater the dominance of the nous. This again is related to the more complex philosophical question, of what are thoughts, and how do the various spiritual organs interact. We do not have the space here to even touch the complexity of the issues at hand, but our intention is to emphasise the perceived tension between emotion/love and cognition that we perceive in patristic anthropology.

As we have implied above, the Lord "touching the heart" could be the referential point here, which would provide for the "objective" formulation of one's correct decision-making process. The Syrian tradition emphasising the heart in the context of communion between God and man offers a rich possibility of how to integrate the noetic emphasis with the heart. This communion in the Syrian tradition is linked with the Eucharistic dimension, where the heart is seen as an altar, an altar being the centre for communion between God and man. In St. Isaac one has the indication of a positive attitude to thoughts in the sense that one does not have to sort them out or get rid of them altogether in the heart but simply has to make sure there is no evil. Thus we read: "Purity of prayer, O disciple of truth, and the recollection of mind that exist in it, consist in the exact reflection of virtue in which we carefully engage at the time of prayer. Just as purity of heart, concerning which the Father diligently exhorts, is not a matter of someone totally without thought or reflection or stirring, but rather it consists in the heart of being purified of all evil, and in gazing favourably on everything, and considering it from God's point of view, so it is the same with pure and undistracted prayer."⁴ This kind of gazing with allowance for thought is close to the vision of Gregory of Nazianzus. Here obviously we have some indication of the role of the thoughts, which have a proactive role. The thoughts purify the heart, presumably this spiritual cognition is a positive feature.

Other earlier fathers of the Church such as Gregory of Nazianzus carry in them the spirit of doubt in terms of the role of the intellect or thoughts. Gregory especially, fervently attacks an artificial "theology of thoughts" drawing the attention to the inadequacies of dialectics in theology.

The intellectualisation of thoughts is to an extent supplanted in Gregory by his emphasis on contemplation. Contemplation is an important concept in Gregory of Nazianzus and as understood by him provides for a more passive approach to "thoughts" and

⁴ Isaac of Nineveh, the Second Part, Chapters IV-XLI, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, vol. 555, trans. Sebastian P. Brock, Louvain, Peeters, 1995, 84.

images. For Gregory contemplation enables one to view things as they are without necessarily a taxonomic and interactive impulse or need.

Later the issue of “organising” thoughts and thinking gains a more pronounced role in spirituality. Without further expanding on these notions we have to acknowledge the existence of different types of thoughts, disconnected thoughts, images producing passion etc.

Whatever the case, the well-known concepts of Nipsis (Nῆψις attentiveness, sobriety), Penthos (Πένθος), have a bearing on thoughts and the heart. In an interesting discussion bearing on our theme, Basil the Great links “attentiveness” with the well-being of the heart. Again, we may ask ourselves whether this “observation” or “attentiveness” does not mean introducing a theme of “objectivity” outside of the heart. Whether again Basil is not going down the road of divorcing the heart from the nous or the cognition process.

In his homily on Deuteronomy 15, 9, “Be careful/attentive”⁵ Basil observes that if one was without sin, one would not need to speak words. Basil expands on the idea of clarity which stems from the purity from sin. The ancient theme of our minds and expressions being clouded by sin appears prominently. Of course, this is so difficult for the modern reader to understand given the fact that all is clear and understandable as “long as it is logical”. The ancient spiritual tradition believed that regardless of the logic of things and rationality, we do not see things “clearly”.

As Basil observes, due to the uncleanness of our lives, it is very difficult to discern the inner chambers of the heart. Just as it is difficult to communicate, so it is difficult to find truth in any word whatsoever. The truth is built or displayed in words even if in small amounts by the building activity of the Holy Spirit. Needless to say, this line of thought pre-supposes a kind of “external observation post”, be it the nous or anything else. It further pre-supposes the possibility of this external “observation post” to be an active force in the hearts improvement. In other words, the heart could be so destructed that it needs this observation and clarity from the outside. Of course, Basil does not expand on the notion, whether this external observation is automatically “clear” or objective in its own right. What if the human being is so corrupt that he or she does not have the ability to “discern” any wrong-doing?

Basil chooses a Biblical text related to compassion the lack of which is considered as “sin”. The Biblical text is interesting in itself since, it attributes sinfulness not to some action but to a lack of compassion. Basil the Great speaks of the “sins of the mind”. The text of Deuteronomy 15, 9 states: “Be careful not to harbour this wicked thought: “The seventh year, the year for cancelling debts, is near,” so that you do not show ill will toward the needy among your fellow Israelites and give them nothing. They may then appeal to the LORD against you, and you will be found guilty of sin.” One may again wonder here how is one

⁵ There are various translations of this homily available. But there are differences in them and perhaps it is useful to consult the original. The English translation can be found in „On the Human Condition: Saint Basil the Great, trans., Nonna Verna Harrison, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, pgs. 93-105. The Russian translation in Творения иже во святых отца нашего Василия Великаго Архиепископа Кесарии Каппадокийския, часть V, Свято-Троицкая Сергиева Лавра, 1901.

supposed to gain compassion then? By simply observing the heart or discerning sin? Is the heart going to "improve" on its own accord without an external helping hand?

Basil partly answers this question by means of postulating the notion of full images in the heart. These images are produced in the heart but could be essentially "independent" in the sense of fully fledged "stories" and therefore in a certain way be external to the heart. It is similar to isolated monks who no longer live in the world, but are bombarded with past experiences which become as if entire stories and full images of a life gone, but which has no bearing or influence on the life the monk is leading now, except of being something passing through the heart. Psychologically one can form an entire story in his or her brain, but this can be separated as an "independent image" and rendered "harmless".

Basil speculates on the heart as the place where images are made. The images are complex and full and therefore can produce a certain reality. He does not expand on the idea we have mentioned that is on the exteriorisation of the internal imagery and its possible consequent "relativization". In other words the destruction of negative thoughts in the heart must entail, that some other thoughts or something else replaces them in the heart.

That this needs to happen is confirmed by Christ himself, when speaking about the lust for a woman occurring in the mind. If the simple thought of lust is already sin, this necessarily means that the heart has associated this thought as its "own image" and therefore naturally unites with this image which then becomes "real" through the energy of the heart. Imagination therefore has to be linked immediately with the substance it imagines.

Basil makes a reference to Psalm 33: 15. This is an interesting psalm in its own right speaking about the heart of God and men. "On all the inhabitants of the earth; He fashions their hearts individually; (Psalm 33: 15). A reference to 1 Cor. 4, 5 is also made. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." Basil builds on this "subjective" aspect of the heart of every individual by suggesting that this means and coincides with the inherent "subjectiveness" of our perception of reality. If the heart is a framework of our individuality, this must mean that all its contents are "irreplaceable". One may wonder if the heart contained only good things, whether this means that it has no individuality, if individuality also entails "difference".

This leads Basil to postulate an interesting observation. Basil elaborates on the fact, that each organ or spiritual organ has a limited subjective view of things. That one therefore needs a complex "vision" of things. This is presumably offered by the heart which can overcome the limitations of the "individual" organs and provide an "objective" insight into things. This insight equals the call to be "careful". There is a reference to Sirach 9, 18.

We have lost the ability to see things. Basil believes, that we have to gain the gift of discernment that we have lost. Our communication is not natural, comparted to God. There are two forms of how we can view things. Through the noetic contemplation of the bodiless reality and through the senses of the corporal reality. If the body feels good, the soul does not necessarily follow the good path and vice versa. There is a little tension between the soul and body here. Either the soul feels good or the body, but perhaps not both.

Basil insightfully states that one has the propensity to create phantasies. These become like some dreams that can never gain reality. We thus live in non-existing realities. The more one is attentive, one gains a new and beautiful perspective of one's self. Further, the more one comprehends himself or herself the better picture of God one gains. One can see God in himself or herself and one does not have to trace God through contemplating the universe. The body is a means of placing the soul in a concrete place. Basil touches here on the question of the role of the body in relation to the soul but does not expand on it. The problem of the relationship of the body with the soul was also a problem in Aristotle (Basil here references Gal. 5: 17 which deals with the relationship of the body and spirit; also a reference to 2 Tim. 2:26).⁶

Basil later reaches the conclusion in this small tractate that it is "reason", which helps us to guard ourselves. Reason is to sort out that which is essentially unreasonable. He implies that passion ruins reason. The passions struggle against reason. This brings us to conclude, that reason is the objective referral point to which even the heart has to have reference. In this case of course reason cannot be understood merely as a kind of rational way of thinking. It is above and beyond that. But we may ask here is love "reasonable"?

There is an inherent complexity here, since regardless of our mind control techniques or control of the heart and so on, our life experiences are there to stay, we cannot erase them from our mind, and whether we like them or not they form our own history and our individuality. Even if they leave only a psychological trace in the mind. Further all our life experiences are historically unrepeatable. For example, if one has good memories of his wife who died, this is an unrepeatable experience enclosed in the mind as a beautiful experience, which however cannot be repeated or continue. It is an enclosed image and reality. If it is to be erased this means a destruction of the individual.

We can be reminded of Climacus here, who argues that "To keep a regular watch over the heart is one thing; to guard the heart try means of the mind is another for the mind is the ruler and high priest offering spiritual sacrifices to Christ. When heaven's holy fire lays hold of the former, it burns them because they still lack purification. This is what one of those endowed with the title of Theologian tells us". (Step 28 on prayer).⁷

Later hesychast theology, with its more complex development also continued to deal with the relationship of the intellect, body and heart as well as other elements and spiritual organs. Palamas as every good patristic theologian would do, stresses the "goodness" of the body. Palamas also had to account for the movements of the intellect and other related issues.

The critics of Palamas from his own epoch argued, that the intellect cannot return so to speak into the body, because it is already in the body. Whereas at first glance Palamas believes, that the intellect so to speak has to return into the body in a spiritual process. The return of the intellect (to the body) is understood as a kind of renewal. The intellect wanders around and needs to be brought back. It is obvious that one immediately, wonders about

⁶ Basil as other fathers insightfully uses various linguistic techniques. For example the word *δορκάς* (deer) is perhaps from *δέρκομαι* (I see).

⁷ John Climacus *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Colm Luibheid, Norman Russel, SPCK London, 1982, pg. 280

the dynamics of discernment and control in the spiritual sense. For example, in the Philokalia excerpt from Palamas treatise "In the Defence of Those who Devoutly Practice a Life of Stillness" perhaps building on Paul, Palamas indicates that the intellect is not bad in itself, but can be corrupted through the body. Paul in Romans 7: 23 which is cited by Palamas writes "βλέπω δὲ ἕτερον νόμον ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου ἀνιστρατευόμενον τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντά με ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου". At first glance the dynamics of what Palamas is trying to say is not clear. The intellect/nous wandering around, cannot obviously control the heart, which presumably is wandering too. Or does it need to?

Obviously we cannot summarise the complexity of Palamas' thought on this topic in a few lines, but a general impression leaves the reader perplexed about how exactly do all these things co-operate with each other, that is the heart and the nous/intellect. This further is complicated by the issue of what is exactly *knowledge* for Palamas and what is the relationship between knowledge and the nous/intellect. This is further complicated by the fact that love wanders around by virtue of being free and being love. Movement is good and dynamic. Further is the heart also not denied its rightful place?

This centrality of the *nous* is interestingly also present and taken for granted in non-canonical writings. In the Gospel of Mary, the nous is characterised by Jesus himself "There where is the *nous*, lies the treasure." Then I said to him: "Lord, when someone meets you, in a Moment of Vision, is it through the soul [psychē] that they see, or is through the spirit [*pneuma*]?" The Teacher answered: "It is neither through the soul nor the spirit, but the *nous* between the two which sees the vision..."⁸

If we return to Paul, in Romans 7: 21-25 we read: "So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin" Paul here is deceptively clear. Without any further analysis one is led to believe, that the law of the mind is "perfect" knows what to do in all instances, whereas the law of the body is the problem. This categorical statement as if clearly establishes the infallible role of the spiritual intellects and senses in knowing the law. Palamas expands on Paul, believing that there is something evil in the body in the sense of some evil impulse which is associated with the Fall.

For the Fathers of the Philokalia tradition the way of how to bring back the intellect and renew everything is clear and obvious. Spiritual renewal. As we have implied above we may ask, whether our capacity of discernment and watchfulness cannot be corrupted itself. It is normal to state that through watchfulness and self control one attains the good, but the question is, how do we know that what we are doing is indeed watchfulness and self-control and not a deception itself. What if someone cannot feel love? What if the intellect or any capacity in our body is so corrupt it cannot discern what is good and right? We can ask, is it really the "prayer of the „heart,," or the "prayer of the nous" in Palamas and others?

⁸ Tuckett, C., The Gospel of Mary, Oxford, 2007, 10.

Paul's letters and thought can be judged in the context of other New Testament writings which have a strong emphasis on love, like for example 1 John.

Palamas interiorises the concept of the Kingdom of God from the Gospels. In Luke 17: 20 we read: „Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them. „The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, „Lo, here it is!„ or „There!„, for behold, the kingdom of God is the midst of you...„ Palamas refers to this paragraph in the excerpt of his work in the Philokalia when he writes: „...The kingdom of heaven, or rather the king of heaven- what an expression of a great gift! – is inside us (Luke, 17: 21). To it we owe cleavage always with works and repentance, with all our power loving Him, who loved us so much.⁹

We read further: „The love of God consists of the avoidance of passions and the possession of virtues. The hatred of evil, from which stems the absence of passions, introduces the desire and the attainment of the good. He who is a lover and the possessor of the good, how can he maintain this love apart from the Benedictory of these things the Lord, the only giver and guardian of all good? In a special way he lives in God, and at the same time through love bears God in himself, in accordance with the words of the Apostle: 'and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him' (John 1, 4: 16).¹⁰ We can observe, that not only love towards God stems from virtue, but virtues stem from love. That is why the Lord elsewhere in the Gospel states: „He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me„ (John 14: 21) and elsewhere: „If a man loves me, he will keep my word„ (John 14: 23).¹¹ But not even the works of virtue, are praiseworthy, and profitable, to him, who practices them without love, and either love without works. The first is clearly shown by Paul, writing to the Corinthians: „If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.“ (1 Cor. 13: 3). Literally: If I do this or that, but have not love, I do not gain nothing at all". Secondly from the loved disciple of Christ we hear: "Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in

9 Modern Greek Philokalia version: Γιατί η βασιλεία των ουρανών, ή μάλλον ο Βασιλιάς των ουρανών —ω ανέκφραστη μεγάλη δωρεά!— είναι μέσα μας (Λουκ. 17, 21). Σ> Αυτόν οφείλομε να προσκολλόμαστε πάντοτε με τα έργα της μετάνοιας, αγαπώντας με όλη μας τη δύναμη **Αυτόν που τόσο μας αγάπησε**, 57. Φιλοκαλία των ιερών νηπτικών, Απόδοση στη νέα Ελληνική: Αντώνιος Γαλίτης Εκδόσεις Το περιβόλι της Παναγίας, 1986 Δ. In the Philokalia, called "Topics of Natural and Theological Science"...

10 Ibid. 58. Την αγάπη προς το Θεό τη συνιστούν η απουσία των παθών και η αφθονία των αρετών. Το μίσος προς τα πονηρά, από το οποίο προκύπτει η απουσία των παθών, αντισταθεί τον πόθο και την απόκτηση των αγαθών. Εκείνος που είναι εραστής και κάτοχος των αγαθών, πώς να μην αγαπά ξεχωριστά τον αυτόαγαθο Κύριο, τον μόνο χορηγό και φύλακα κάθε αγαθού, μέσα στον Οποίο μένει με έξοχο τρόπο ο ίδιος και τον Οποίο έχει μέσα του με την αγάπη, σύμφωνα με τα λόγια του Αποστόλου: «Όποιος μένει στην αγάπη, μένει μέσα στο Θεό και ο Θεός μέσα σ> αυτόν» (Α' Ιω. 4, 16). Κεφάλαια εκατόν πενήκοντα, 58. Φιλοκαλία των ιερών νηπτικών, Απόδοση στη νέα Ελληνική: Αντώνιος Γαλίτης Εκδόσεις Το περιβόλι της Παναγίας, 1986 Δ.

11 Μπορεί κανείς να δει ότι όχι μόνον η αγάπη προς το Θεό γεννιέται από τις αρετές, αλλά και ότι οι αρετές γεννιούνται από την αγάπη. Γι' αυτό και ο Κύριος στο Ευαγγέλιο, άλλοτε λέει: «Όποιος κρατάει τις εντολές μου και τις τηρεί, αυτός είναι που με αγαπά» (Ιω. 14, 21), και άλλοτε: «Όποιος με αγαπά, θα τηρήσει τις εντολές μου» (Ιω. 14, 23). Ibid.

truth” Literally: “Let us not love in word, neither in speech, but in practice and trully”.¹²

Palamas is developing here a primacy of love. Love is the primary vehicle for our communication with God. This communication relates to our internal composition and is as we would expect the medium of “communion” between God and man and as communion is identical with the Kingdom of God. Perhaps in a way we see a dynamic of love here. The more one loves the more one eliminates passions etc., the more one loves God the more he sees things clearly and so on. The process seems to presume some form of “beginning”. We may ask if a person does not feel love, can the avoidance of passions and fulfilling the commandments in itself produce love? Palamas suggests that that is not possible. Analogously we may remember the Gospel with its stories of people fulfilling all sorts of commandments but still unable to feel love.

Palamas emphasis on love of course has to be linked with his perception of the intellect and noetic realms. Interestingly, Palamas begins his treatise on the Hesychasts by a reflection on the role of knowledge generally or the Greek *paideia*. The *Philokalia* did not incorporate this earlier section, regarding the introductory assessment of secular knowledge, which is strange, because in a way, one misses a perhaps, important reason for the writing of the treatise on the Hesychasts. The discussion of knowledge is missing and there is a direct jump into spirituality.

What is interesting in the introductory section is the reference to the opponents of Palamas who seem to argue, that even through secular knowledge or knowledge generally one may attain an assent to God. Palamas indicates, that his opponents argue, that secular knowledge is necessary even for monks in order to avoid heresy, and that through this knowledge one can even reach *apatheia* (*ἀπάθεια*).¹³ Knowledge leads to God according to these opponents.

Palamas indicates: “They speak as if with high language, as ‘not only do we simply concern ourselves with the mysteries of nature, or examine the measure of the circular heavens, or the order of the movement of stars, their entrance, distance, the appearance of the stars on the horizon and hunt for these things thinking about them boastfully, but since the laws are engulfed in the divine, the first and creative nous, the icons of those laws, are in each and every psyche of ours, we earn to study and learn about them, and through division, syllogism, and analysis, we get rid of the seal of ignorance, and during our life, and after life maintaining similarity with the maker’”.¹⁴ Whatever the purport of this statement

¹² Ibid 58. Αλλά ούτε τα έργα των αρετών είναι αξιέπαινα και ωφέλιμα σ' εκείνους που τα εκτελούν χωρίς αγάπη, ούτε πάλι κι η αγάπη χωρίς τα έργα. Το πρώτο το φανερώνει με πολλά ο Παύλος, γράφοντας προς τους Κορινθίους: «Αν κάνω αυτά και αυτά, αλλά δεν έχω αγάπη, δεν ωφελοῦμαι καθόλου» (Α' Κορ. 13, 3)· το δεύτερο πάλι, ο εξαιρετικά αγαπημένος από το Χριστό μαθητής, λέγοντας: «Να μην αγαπάμε με λόγια, μήτε με τη γλώσσα, αλλά έμπρακτα κι αληθινά» (Α' Ιω. 3, 18).

¹³ Ερώτηση πρώτη, Γρηγορίου του Παλαμά, Συγγράμματα, Εκδίδονται επιμέλεια, Παναγιώτου Κ. Χρήστου, τόμος Α, Θεσσαλονίκη 1988. Υπέρ των ιερώς ισχυαζόντων.

¹⁴ ...έπει και λόγον ύψηλότερόν τινά φασιν, ως «ούχ άπλώς τής τε φύσεως πολυπραγμονούμεν τὰ μυστήρια και τόν ούρανοῦ καταμετροῦμεν κύκλον και τὰς αντίτεταγμένας τών ἄστρον κινήσεις έρευνώμεθα, συνόδους τε και ἀποστάσεις και έπιτολάς τὰς τούτων και τὰ έκ τούτων συμβαίνοντα θυρώμεθα και μέγα φρονούμεν έπί τούτοις,

the interesting thing about it is, that it offers a static understanding of knowledge. The laws of nature are simply there to be discovered or rediscovered through some form of intellectual enquiry. Simply following this enquiry and its techniques leads us to understanding God's creation. Knowledge of a particular object is there to be revealed. On the other hand, we may argue that a more Eastern dynamic understanding of knowledge, would perhaps not see such a connection between each object and the knowledge of it. Knowledge is a more complex term than just a static imprint.

Palamas further continues arguing, that the heart is above intellectual speculation and that intellectual speculation does not guarantee Gods blessings. Thus no matter how much knowledge we have this does not ensure that we will be close to God. Pointedly he begins his treatise with a "have a heart" statement from Paul. (' Ἀδελφέ, «καλὸν χάριτι βεβαιοῦσθαι τὴν καρδίαν» ' Εββρ. 13, 9 1, 1¹⁵). Even more importantly he argues, that words are just words, arguments merely produce counter arguments and so on. Arguments and discussions do not miraculously produce elevation or results. We have to thank God for his mercy given to us.

Palamas at the outset of his defence of hesychasm clearly outlines his program which stipulates that true theology is a higher field than mere intellectual arguments and counter arguments. He is clearly a mystical theologian. Thus perhaps surprisingly he begins his treatise on the Hesychasts with a methodological analysis of intellectual knowledge. Perhaps within this thought, there is an idea, that God is supremely intelligent and that no matter how educated we are there is no way that we can reach this level of Gods intelligence and therefore any effort in this regard is doomed to failure. Rather we have to rely on God's grace and mercy to elevate us to him and thank him for it (Χρὴ τοίνυν καὶ κατὰ τοῦτό σε χάριτας /Russian благодать/ ὁμολογεῖν θεῷ χάριν παρασχόντι τοιαύτην, ἥ τοῖς τὰ πάντα οἰομένοις εἰδέναι περιουσίᾳ σοφίας οὐδ' ἐπὶ νοῦν ἔρχεται, 1, 1 *ibid.*). "That is why it is necessary to acknowledge this *charitas* from Gods mercy as a gift, and that it will not descend on the nous of those who think they have or are chose to have all the worlds' wisdom".

Secular knowledge if we may call it this way, is like bodily knowledge. More importantly Palamas states, that one cannot comprehend Gods laws and their imprint in our soul solely basing oneself on external knowledge. An interesting concept appears here "simple wisdom" as the goal. "Is it really good to believe, that in this are located or that we can find in it the laws of the creative nous? Since it is said by the apostle, "who has known the nous of the lord? (Rom., 11,34). Since they cannot be grasped in this way neither can we expect that we will find the icon of the soul through this external wisdom. Or that we will hunt

ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ τούτων μὲν οἱ λόγοι ἐν τῷ θεῷ καὶ πρώτῳ καὶ δημιουργικῷ νῷ, τῶν δ' ἐκείνῳ λόγων αἱ εἰκόνες ἔνεισι τῇ καθ' ἑμᾶς ψυχῇ· τούτων οὖν ἐν ἐπιγνώσει σπεύδομεν γενέσθαι καὶ διαιρετικαῖς καὶ συλλογιστικαῖς καὶ ἀναλυτικαῖς μεθόδοις τῶν τῆς ἀγνοίας ἑαυτοὺς τύπων ἀπαλλάξαι καὶ οὕτω καθ' ὁμοίωσιν, ζῶντές τε καὶ μετὰ θάνατον, εἶναι τοῦ ποιήσαντος». Possibly a referral to Barlam, *ibid.*, pg. 360 / Ερώτηση πρώτη, Γρηγορίου του Παλαμά, Συγγράμματα, Εκδίδονται επιμέλεια, Παναγιώτου Κ. Χρήστου, τόμος Α, Θεσσαλονίκη 1988. Ὑπὲρ των ιερῶς ισχυαζόντων.

15 Ερώτηση πρώτη, Γρηγορίου του Παλαμά, Συγγράμματα, Εκδίδονται επιμέλεια, Παναγιώτου Κ. Χρήστου, τόμος Α, Θεσσαλονίκη 1988. Ὑπὲρ των ιερῶς ισχυαζόντων.

this knowledge of Gods icon, through pseudo knowledge"¹⁶. This is important, because Palamas indicates, that even if the nous or intellect is associated with forms of rationality or generally knowledge this is necessarily of a different kind than secular knowledge.

Sin destructs the image of God in our soul, it needs to be renewed and taken to the archetype. (καὶ ἀνακαινίσῃ τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον ἐπαναγάγῃ, I, I, 5, 9). "And to renew according to the image and to elevate it to the archetype". Here as we have implied above knowledge is not automatic but can be distorted through sin. This "sin factor" seems to be missing from the intellectualists, who automatically assume the presence of objective knowledge.

Palamas elaborates on human wisdom, also relying on Paul. Further, if there is Christ and others what is the point of human wisdom. (Διατί δὲ καὶ τὴν σοφίαν αὐτῶν ἐμώρανε, (A, Kor. 1,20); Τίνος δὲ χάριν καὶ διὰ τῆς μωρίας τοῦ κηρύγματος εὐδόκησε (A' Kor. 1, 20) σῶσαι τοὺς πιστεύοντας (I, 1, 5, 24, A, Kor. 1, 21). "Since he overturned their wisdom into foolishness. Through the foolishness of his *kerygma* he was pleased to save the faithful." ... "Since the world did not know God through its wisdom (1 Cor. 1, 21); Why then the scholars you talk about, when Gods word dressed itself into the body, became for us the wisdom of God (A, Cor. 1, 30), and the light had risen, «enlightening all human beings coming into the world» (John 1, 9), and according to the summit among the apostles, «the day has shined through and the bearer of light has risen in the hearts of us the faithful, (2 Peter, 1, 19)."¹⁷ For them is it necessary to procure the wick (θρυαλλίδος type of plant/wick), from outside philosophical knowledge in order to gain knowledge of God, and lead others preaching this to them, who decided through silence, decided to control their thoughts and cleanse themselves, and through unceasing prayer, fix themselves to God, and lead them down, to sit down shedding smoke on the lamp?"¹⁸

Further: "Would it never occur to their minds, that we were driven to the plant of knowledge, and once eaten from it, we had fallen from that Divine area of pleasure? As was stated that we should work on it and build it and guard it (Gen. 2, 15), we did not obey the command, we have retreated to the advice of the evil one, who stole our entry through de-

¹⁶ Τὸ δὲ πιστεύειν εὐρηκέναι τινὰ τούτων δυνηθῆναι τοὺς ἐν τῷ δημιουργικῷ νῷ λόγους, μὴ καὶ λίαν πλημμελὲς ἢ «τίς γὰρ ἔγνω νοῦ κυρίου;» φησὶν ὁ ἀπόστολος (Ρωμ.11, 34). εἰ δὲ μὴ τούτους, οὐδὲ τὰς ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τούτων εἰκόνας ἐκ τῆς ἔξω σοφίας (my note: Can there be something as outside wisdom?) συνιδεῖν ἐστὶ. Ψευδογνωσία τοίνυν ἐστὶν ἢ ἐκ τῆς ταύτης τῆς σοφίας τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα θείαν θηρωμένη γνώσις, 1,2,5-10.

¹⁷ „Οὐκ ἐπειδὴ διὰ τῆς σοφίας ὁ κόσμος οὐκ ἔγνω τὸν θεόν (A, Kor. 1, 21); Τί δὲ καὶ μαθόντες οὓς φῆς, λόγου θεοῦ σωματικῶς ἐνδημήσαντος, δὲ ἐγενήθη ἡμῖν σοφία ἀπὸ θεοῦ (A, Kor. 1, 30), καὶ τοῦ φωτὸς ἀνασχόντος, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον, ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον (I' Io. 1, 9), ἡμέρας τε διαυγασάσης καὶ φωσφόρου ἀνατελειαντος ἐν καρδίαις ἡμῶν τῶν πιστῶν, κατὰ τὸν τῶν ἀποστόλων κορυφαῖον (B, Πέτρου 1, 19)“, Ερώτηση πρώτη, Γρηγορίου του Παλαμά, Συγγράμματα, Εκδίδονται ἐπιμέλεια, Παναγιώτου Κ. Χρήστου, τόμος Α, Θεσσαλονίκη 1988. Ὑπὲρ των ἱερώς ισχυαζόντων, 1, 1, 5, 5, 25, pg., 365.

¹⁸ „αὐτοὶ τε δέονται θρυαλλίδος ἐπισκευαστῆς, τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν ἔξω φιλοσόφων γνώσεως πρὸς θεογνωσίαν ὁδηγούσης καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους παραινοῦσιν, ἀφεμένους τοῦ καθ' ἡσυχίαν διὰ τῆς τῶν λογισμῶν ἐπιστασίας καθαίρειν ἑαυτοὺς καὶ δι' ἀδιαλείπτου προσευχῆς προσανέχιν τῷ θεῷ, καταγῆρᾶν μάτην, λύχνῳ τυφωμένῳ παρακαθημένους.“ Ibid., 1, 1, 5, 2-8, pg. 365.

ceit, and deceived us through the possibility of knowing the good and evil”.¹⁹ “It is obvious, that even now to those who refuse to work on and guard their heart, according to the leadership of the fathers, he offers knowledge about the heavenly spheres, their multiple movements, symmetry, the knowledge of the substance of evil and good²⁰, however it is not in the nature of this to acquire the good, but in our yearning disposition, through which this knowledge can change to any direction. Perhaps because of this I would call emphatically as either good or bad all experiences and charisms of multiple languages and dialects, the power of rhetorics, knowledge of history, the revelation of the mysteries of nature, complex forms and methods of logical thinking, difficult forms of calculative science, description of the multi-faceted immaterial forms,²¹ not only because all of this thought easily changes and transforms according to the goals it has, but also because even though these things have a good way of sharpening the spiritual eye, but studying them till old age makes no sense, however it is better if one transforms his struggles towards the good and to this devotes his struggle, therefore to greater and permanent things, and what happens is that even if he despises the sciences of the word, he is recompensated from God.²²”

This is a remarkably interesting statement, again confirming our observations about the dynamism of knowledge and love in Palamas thought. Knowledge is there, but it does not have a moral or spiritual quality to it. Whether knowledge is good or bad is determined by our relationship with this knowledge. In itself knowledge does not have a quality or virtuous beingness. On the other hand what we may call the spiritual intellectualists in the form of the opposition to Palamas, would argue that the pursuit of knowledge and the gaining of this knowledge can offer liberation on its own. If we apply this to the heart, we can state that if the heart had knowledge of any kind this would presumably offer the heart some form of goodness or love on its own, without any spiritual transformation or dynamism in love of the heart. This would be an obviously incorrect position. Knowledge without relationship is useless. But we may ask then, if the heart is to guard against thoughts un-

19 “Ἀρ’ οὐδ’ ἐκείνῳ ποτ’ ἐπῆλθεν ἐπὶ νοῦν αὐτοῖς, ὡς ἐφέσει τε καὶ ματαλήψει τοῦ φυτοῦ τῆς γνώσεως ἐκπεπτώκαμεν ἐκείνου τοῦ θείου χωρίου τῆς τρυφῆς; Ἐργάζεσθαι γὰρ αὐτὸ καὶ φυλάττειν (Γεν. 2, 15). κατὰ τὴν ἐντολὴν οὐκ ἐβελήσαντες, εἰζάμεν τῷ πονηρῷ συμβούλῳ τὴν εἰσοδὸν κλέψαντι καὶ τῷ κάλλει θέλξαντι τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ πονηροῦ“, Ibid., 1, 1, 6, 10-14, pg. 366.

20 “Τάχα δὴ καὶ νῦν οὗτος τοῖς μὴ βουλομένοις ἐργάζεσθαι καὶ φυλάττειν τὴν ἑαυτῶν καρδίαν (Βλ. Νικ. Στηθάτου, Περὶ ψυχῆς 51), κατὰ τὴν πατέρων ὑφήγησιν, οὐρανίων σφαιρῶν τε καὶ τῶν κατ’ αὐτάς ἀκριβῆ γνώσιν ἐπαγγέλλεται, πολυκινήτων τε καὶ ἀντιρρόπων, γνώσιν οὖσαν καλοῦ καὶ πονηροῦ“

21 “τῷ μὴ ἐν τῇ ἑαυτῆς φύσει κεκτησθαι τὸ καλόν, ἀλλ’ ἐν τῇ τῶν χρωμένων προαιρέσει, συμμεταβάλλουσαν ταύτῃ πρὸς ἑκάτερον. Πρὸ δὲ τούτου μικροῦ καὶ διὰ ταῦτ’ ἴσως, ἐμπειρίας τε καὶ χάριτας πολυγλώσσων διαλέκτων, δύναμιν ῥητορείας, εἰδησιν ἱστορίας, μυστηρίων φύσεως εὗρεσιν, πολυειδεῖς μεθόδους λογικῆς πραγματείας, πολυμερεῖς σκέψεις λογιστικῆς ἐπιστήμης, σχηματισμῶν αὐτῶν πολυσχήμενας ἀναμετρήσεις, ἃ πάντα καλά τε καὶ πονηρὰ φαίην ἂν ἔγωγε“, Ibid., 1, 1, 6, 18-26, pg. 366.

22 „μὴ μόνον πρὸς τὸ δοκοῦν τοῖς χρωμένοις μεταγινόμενα καὶ συμμεταμορφούμενα ῥαδίως τῷ σκοπῷ τῶν ἔχοντων, ἀλλ’ ὅτι καὶ καλὸν μὲν ἢ πρὸς ταῦτα σχολή, γυμνάζουσα πρὸς ὀξυωπίαν τὸν τῆς ψυχῆς ὀφθαλμόν, παραμένειν δ’ ἄχρι γήρως ταύτῃ προσανέχοντα πονηρόν’ πρὸς ἀγαθοῦ δ’ ἂν εἴη μετρίως ἐγγυμνασάμενον πρὸς τὰ μακρῶ κρείττω καὶ μονιμώτερα ματασκευάσασθαι τὸν ἀγῶνα, πολλὴν αὐτῷ καὶ τῆς τῶν λόγων περιφρονήσεως φεροῦσης τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ ἀμοιβήν“, Ibid., 1, 1, 6, 1-8, pg. 367.

derstood as the processing of knowledge, can it develop any meaningful relationship with knowledge and transform it or direct it to good goals? Or whether knowledge is altogether useless as the other extreme of the argument would seem to suggest?

Elsewhere Palamas observes “Those who practice a life of stillness” (found also in the *Philokalia*) we read: (3) Our psyche is one entity consisting of many powers, which also uses our body as its organ and lives in conjunction with this body. Which then, are the members which are used as organs and which energise the power of the nous that we refer to as the intellect - nous; Sure, nobody has ever exclaimed that the mind is located in the finger-nails, or the eyelashes, nostrils or lips.”²³ *“We all agree, that it is inside us, however we disagree, how inside it utilises the organs. Some think, that it is enshrined, as if in an acropolis in the head.”*²⁴ “On the other hand others believe, that the heart in its centremost area is its vehicle, the psychic spirit which is its most pure part. Now, we however know, with precision, that we locate the intelligence, in the heart as its organ, not in the sense, as its container, (in the English translation in *The Philokalia*, the complete text, the words “intelligence in the heart” are missing instead there is a general sentence “intelligence within us” I think it is important to stress the words that the intelligence is in the heart which has substantial import and meaning here. However, later in the sentence it is stated “it is located in the heart as its organ”)²⁵ because it is without a body, not outside, because it is united with it. This has not been taught by human beings, but the Creator himself, which according to the Gospels, stated that not that which enters the mouth defiles the human being, but that which comes out, since from the heart come the logismoi-thoughts (Math. 15: 11 and 19).²⁶ Similarly the great Macarios states: “The heart is the ruler of all that exists. And if grace rules in all the areas of the heart, then it rules over all thoughts and all its members. Since there the nous is located and all the thoughts of the psyche”. Our heart then is the treasury of thoughts-intelligence logismoi and the first bodily organ of the intellectual dimension or ability.”²⁷ Therefore, when we take care of and examine and check our intelligence-intel-

²³ “Η ψυχή μας είναι μία οντότητα πολυδύναμη και χρησιμοποιεί ως όργανο το σώμα που δημιουργήθηκε να ζει μαζί της. Ποιά λοιπόν είναι τα μέλη που χρησιμοποιεί ως όργανα για να ενεργεί η δύναμή της εκείνη που ονομάζουμε νου; Αλλά, βέβαια, κανείς δεν υπέθεσε ποτέ ότι η διάνοια είναι εγκατεστημένη στα νύχια, ούτε στα βλέφαρα, ούτε στα ρουθούνια ή στα χείλη. Ὑπὲρ ἡσυχάζόντων 1,2, 3, 16-25. Ibid.

²⁴ Ὅλοι συμφωνοῦν ὅτι εἶναι μέσα μας, διαφωνοῦν ὅμως μερικοὶ ὡς πρὸς τὸ πρῶτο ἀπὸ τὰ μέσα μας που μεταχειρίζεται ὡς ὄργανο. Ἄλλοι θεωροῦν ὅτι εἶναι εγκατεστημένη, σαν μέσα σε ἀκρόπολη, στον ἐγκέφαλο. Ibid.

²⁵ See *The Philokalia*, the complete text, compiled by St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth, volume IV, G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware, Faber and Faber, London, 1995, pg. 334.

²⁶ Ἄλλοι πάλι παραχωροῦν στη διάνοια σαν ὄχημα, τὸ κέντρο τῆς καρδιάς και τὸ ψυχικὸ πνεῦμα που βρίσκεται καθαρότατο ἐκεῖ. Ἐμεῖς τώρα, γνωρίζουμε με ἀκρίβεια ὅτι τὸ λογιστικὸ βρίσκεται στην καρδιά σαν σε ὄργανο, ὅχι ὅμως μέσα σ> αὐτὴν ὅπως σε δοχεῖο, γιατί εἶναι ἀσώματο, οὔτε ἔξω, γιατί εἶναι ἐνωμένο με αὐτήν. Καὶ τοῦτο δεν τὸ διδασχτήκαμε ἀπὸ ἄνθρωπο, ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ τὸν ἴδιο τὸν Πλάστη του ἀνθρώπου, που λέει στα Εὐαγγέλια ὅτι δεν εἶναι τὰ εἰσερχόμενα ἀπὸ τὸ στόμα, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἐξερχόμενα που μολύνουν τὸν ἄνθρωπο· γιατί ἀπὸ τὴν καρδιά βγαίνουν οἱ λογισμοί (Ματθ. 15, 11 και 19). Ibid., I, 2, 3, 1- 6.

²⁷ Παρόμοια λέει και ὁ μέγας Μακάριος: «Η καρδιά εἶναι ὁ ηγεμόνας ὅλης τῆς υπάρξεως. Κι ὅταν κυριαρχήσει ἡ χάρις σ> ὅλα τὰ μέρη τῆς καρδιάς, τότε βασιλεύει πάνω σε ὅλους τοὺς λογισμούς και σ> ὅλα τὰ μέλη. Γιατί ἐκεῖ εἶναι ὁ νους και ὅλοι οἱ λογισμοὶ τῆς ψυχῆς». Η καρδιά μας λοιπόν εἶναι τὸ ταμεῖο τῶν λογισμῶν και τὸ πρῶτο σαρκικὸ ὄργανο τοῦ λογιστικοῦ. Ibid, I, 2, 3, 7-10.

lect with precise watchfulness, how else, would we achieve this, without the concentration of the nous – (intellect) which is cut into pieces outside through the senses, and which we can bring back inside our heart, the treasury of thoughts?”²⁸

This statement offers us another side of the story. The heart is the organ gathering or producing knowledge and thoughts, and sifting through them “like some form of washing machine”. The mention of the Macarian tradition of the heart is also important, since we have an indication which is ever present in the patristic tradition, that there is a tension between the *noetic* and emotional emphasis on the heart.

But it is again not clear how the processes take place. The impulses and thoughts or knowledge, are they coming from the outside into the heart or vice versa? Does the heart produce thoughts and images throwing them so to speak outside? If the heart is the centre of all intelligible activity, why on earth would one keep a watch and guard towards the thoughts coming from the outside? In fact one would be excused for thinking that the passage betrays a tension suggesting that love and grace produce thoughts, which would make sense in relation to the Creator, who also through love and grace “produced” the world and creation. But since we are not perfect as God, and are marked by sin, how can we produce any good thoughts in the sense of them being perfect in all ways possible regardless of the state of our hearts?

Of course, we cannot draw conclusions based on a few lines. But we believe, that the theology of the heart has much to offer in terms of clarification. If we argue that God is love, and that love somehow precedes divine action and thought, one can perhaps understand how the heart can work along these lines. The heart is the centre of love and this love then in grace is truly the taxonomic mechanism for life, thoughts and knowledge. But the patristic tradition also sees external knowledge, impulses, coming and challenging the heart, just as it was in paradise, where external forces challenged the heart. In paradise the first people were not challenged by their own heart but by “external temptations” or imagery. Presumably, the heart of Adam and Eve failed the test and permitted external evil to abide in the heart. However, this would suggest that either the heart is subject to external forces beyond its control or at least does not have the capacity to sift through these external forces on its own. The hardening of the heart theology and Pauls theology would support the “weaker heart” proposition. Palamas seems to struggle with the issue of what to do with knowledge or thought at all. What exactly are the mechanisms of sifting and classification, watchfulness and guarding are left to ones imagination. At the extreme this line of thought can produce a spiritual schizophrenia of one constantly fighting anything and everything coming into his or her heart.

Palamas continues: ‘And if someone says: ‘Why are you saying, that the prayer mystically/secretly resounds in your inner parts, and that it also moves your heart’ and they will

²⁸ ‘Όταν λοιπόν φροντίζουμε να εξετάζουμε και να διορθώνουμε το λογιστικό μας με ακριβή νήψη, με ποιο άλλο τρόπο θα το πετύχουμε αυτό, παρά αφού συγκεντρώσουμε το νου μας που είναι διασκορπισμένος έξω με τις αισθήσεις και τον ξαναφέρουμε μέσα μας και μάλιστα στην καρδιά μας, στο ταμείο των λογισμών; Ibid, I, 2, 3, 10-15, (Βλ. Διαδόχου, Κεφάλαια 59, ‘ἀπόφραξις διζόδων νοῦ’, Διονυσίου Ἀρεοπαγίτου (ψευ.), Περὶ θεϊῶν ὀνομάτων 4, 9, ΠΓ 3, 705 Α, ‘συνέλιξις’).

again refer to the earthquake of Elias, which was the prelude of the essential visible theophany (Kings 19:13) of the intellectual (νοερός) god, and the exclamation of the inner parts of Isaiah (Is.16, 11):²⁹ And someone might ask, ‘what is the heat stemming from the prayer? They will show again on the fire, which is considered by Elias to be the sign of God, until the time of His appearance, and should appear as a light breeze, and once this fire took into itself the Godly ray, showed the one looking on, the invisible God (3 Kings, 19, 12), and this Elias himself, appeared and existed as fire (notice here the emphasis “existed” not only appeared) and embarked on the chariot in his bodily form (4 Kings, 2, 11). So also on another prophet they can point, who was burning inwardly (Jer. 20, 9), and the word of God as if a fire appeared in him. And if you should observe what mystically occurs in them, comparing them with similar spiritual things, as we have stated, they will show you things similar, and the common things always talked about; do you not hear human being, “that the human being has eaten the bread of the angels” (Psalm 77, 25):”³⁰ Have you not heard the words of the Lord, that he will provide the holy spirit day and night to those who ask for it? (Luke, 11, 13, 18,7).? What is this angel’s bread? Not the godly above heavenly light the apprehension or reception of which is by the nous and through which the thoughts are united, according to the great Dionysios? (Περὶ Θεῶν ὀνομάτων 1, 5, PG 3, 593 B). As was prewritten, this light was represented and lit in the human being in the form of manna, which fell for forty years, and was fulfilled in Christ, and who showed this enlightened body and offered it for consumption to those firmly believing in him and those united with the light of the spirit. And this is an advance offered for the future secret *koinonia* with Jesus. And if there is more prewritten (in the Old Testament), it is not surprising. Is it not obvious, that this symbolic enlightenment displays, some type of enlightenment of the intellect and other mysteries over and above common knowledge?³¹

29 Κἀν αὐθις ἔρηται τις τοὺς τοιοῦτους, ‘τί δ’ ὁ φατε μυστικῶς ἐνηχεῖν ὑμῖν τὴν εὐχὴν ἐν τοῖς ἐγκάτοις καὶ τί τὸ τὴν καρδίαν συγκινούν’, τὸν αὐτοῦ πάλιν τοῦ Ἡλιοῦ προβαλοῦνται συσσεισμόν, προοίμιον ὄντα τῆς ἐμφανοῦς νοεράς θεοῦ ἐπιφανείας, (Kings, 19,12), καὶ τὴν ἠχοῦσαν κοιλίαν Ἡσαΐου (Isaiah, 16, 11). Γρηγορίου του Παλαμά, Συγγράμματα, τόμος Α, Λόγοι αποδεικτικοὶ ἀντεπιγραφαὶ ἐπιστολαὶ πρὸς βαρλαάμ καὶ Ακινδύνον ὑπὲρ Ἰσυχάζοντων, ἐδκοσις β, Θεσσαλονίκη, 1988, 1,3 Τοῦ αὐτοῦ λόγος ὑπὲρ τῶν ιερῶς ἰσυχάζοντων τῶν προτέρων ο τρίτος περὶ φωτὸς καὶ φωτισμοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ιερὰς εὐδαιμονίας καὶ τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ τελειότητος, I, 3, 25, 15-20.

30 Τῷ δὲ προσερομένῳ, ‘τίς δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀπὸ τῆς εὐχῆς ἐγγινομένη θερμὴ’, τὸ πῦρ ὑποδείξουσιν, ὃ φησὶν αὐτὸς αὐθις ὁ Ἥλιος, σημεῖον μὲν θεοῦ, ὅσον οὕτω ἐμφανιζομένου, δεομένου, δ’ ἔτι τῆς πρὸς αὐραν λεπτὴν μεταποιήσεως, εἰ μέλλει ἐν αὐτῷ τὴν θεῖαν δεξάμενον ἀκτῖνα τῷ προσορῶντι δεῖξειν τὸν ἀόρατον, (I, βασιλ., 19,12), καὶ αὐτὸν δὲ τὸν Ἥλιον ὡς πῦρ τε ὄντα καὶ φαινόμενον καὶ πύρινον ἀναβαίνοντα ἄρμα μετὰ σώματος, (4 βασιλ., 2, 11), ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν ὡς ὑπὸ πυρὸς καίόμενον τὰ σπλάγχνα ἕτερον προφήτην, (Ιερ., 20, 9), καὶ ταῦτα τοῦ λόγου τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς πῦρ γενομένου ἐν αὐτῷ. Κἀν ἄλλοι τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς μυστικῶς ἐνεργουμένων ἐξετάζεις, ἐκεῖνοι τοῖς ὁμοίοις πνευματικοῖς συγκρίνοντες, ὡς ἔφημεν, τὰ παραπλήσιά σοι δείξουσι καὶ κοινῇ πρὸς πάντα φήσουσι· οὐκ ἀκούεις, ἄνθρωπε, ὅτι <ἄρτον ἀγγέλων ἔφαγεν ἄνθρωπος> (Ψαλμ., 77, 25). Ibid.

31 Οὐκ ἀκούεις τοῦ κυρίου λέγοντες ὅτι δώσει πνεῦμα ἅγιον τοῖς αἰτούσιν αὐτὸν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός (Λουκᾶ 11, 13, πρβλ. 18,7); Τίς οὖν ὁ τῶν ἀγγέλων ἄρτος; Οὐ τὸ θεῖον καὶ ὑπερουράνιον φῶς φ’ εἶτε κατ’ ἐπιβολὴν εἶτε κατὰ παραδοχὴν ὑπὲρ νοῦν οἱ νόες ἐνοῦνται, κατὰ τὸν μέγαν Διονύσιον; (Περὶ θεῶν ὀνομάτων 1, 5, PG 3, 593 B), Τοῦτου τοίνυν τοῦ φωτὸς τὴν εἰς ἀνθρώπους ἑλαμψὴν προὔπεγαψε μὲν ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ τεσσαρκονταετῇ χρόνον ἄνωθεν τὸ μάννα καθιείς, ἐπλήρωσε δὲ ὁ Χριστὸς, τοῖς βαββαίως εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεύουσι καὶ δι’ ἔργων τὴν πίστιν ἐπιδεικνυμένοις ἐνίει τὸν φωτισμὸν τοῦ πνεύματος καὶ τὸ φωτιστικὸν αὐτοῦ σῶμα προτιθέμενος εἰς βρώσιν· καὶ τοῦτο γὰρ ἄρραβὼν ἐστὶ τῆς ἀπορρήτου κατὰ τὸ μέλλον Ἰησοῦ κοινωνίας. Εἰ δὲ καὶ ἄλλο τι τῶν ἡμῖν ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ δεδωρημένων προὔπεγραψαν

In this passage Palamas offers a theology of communion. Prayer as a form of dialogue is a sure instrument of discernment. The issues of the corrupt or holy heart are relativised through the prism of relationship, dialogue or prayer. In fact, this seems to be the purport of the biblical tradition. The heart is formed and directed through relationship and communion. Knowledge and thoughts are relativised in dialogue and prayer, there are only objects of communion and testimony to this communion.

Conclusions

We would like to propose a solution to the imbalances suggested. If the heart is emphasised and understood primarily as the organ of love and emotion, which by its nature is irrational in the sense of the unpredictability of its movements of love (in the positive sense), it can never be subject and prisoner to the prison of “enclosed rationality”, meaning here an enclosed self-sufficient dialectical system of “rationality”. However, some patristic writings seem to be suggesting just that, that this “rationality” (call it the nous, intellect etc.) is controlling the heart and should control it. However, if improperly understood this intellect and nous which controls assumingly the heart if it itself presents a new “rational” dialectical prison only limits the heart and therefore love by creating impossible definitions of how the heart should behave. This does not mean that all these rational systems are bad or negative, but simply that they “limit” the expression of the heart and love by virtue of a preconceived or limiting function they have by virtue of being “rational”. Of course, this cannot have been the meaning of the patristic authors. This means that the patristic understanding of the nous/intellect is beyond a pure capacity of taxonomy and logic in the sense of controlling the heart, otherwise love would be limited. If the nous/intellect is identified with the heart in one way or another this problem is overcome but one needs a new definition of the intellect/nous which presumes a paradox of freedom and limitation at the same time. Perhaps a helpful explanation would deal more with a kind of traditional understanding of the nous in terms of “awareness” which would address more the “beingness of things and living beings”. If spiritual discernment or control of the heart means a liberation from the shackles of sin an understanding in the lines of patristic thought, the noetic would have itself have to have a predisposition of love towards any-thing or being which would provide the framework for understanding, awareness and discernment of the things involved. Knowledge would have knowledge of itself.

We can argue and postulate that love in the heart emerges through the opposition of thoughts (intellect). Here, thoughts are understood as limited expressions of beings and objects. The proper interaction or opposition if you will of thoughts creates love, since love overcomes the limits of each particular being.

As we have implied a misunderstanding of the balance between the heart and the intellect/nous can lead to misconceptions and also to a relativisation of the heart and the

ἐκεῖνα, θαυμάστον οὐδέν. Ἄλλ’ ὁρᾷς ὅτι καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν συμβολικῶν ἐκείνων φωτισμὸν ἀναφαίνεται φωτισμός τις νοερός καὶ μυστήρια ἕτερα παρὰ τὴν γνῶσιν; Ibid.

freedom of love. Perhaps an extreme consequence of this development can be seen in Luther who believes, that the heart is lost and needs to be touched by God.

The heart is primarily an organ of love and a bridge between Man and God. If "God is love" he has to love something. This seems to indicate the necessity of an external expression of this love. Here the discussion of love and self-reflection in the Trinity is not relevant. God loving himself through a Trinitarian framework is not an "external" expression of love. In a sense, only after creation there is an object of love and love in reality since creation is not the same as Gods essence. The heart cannot lose its capacity to love since the human being would cease to exist. A further avenue to explore this aspect and find balance with the noetic aspects is to emphasise the "noetic" aspect of God. Creation presupposes providence and "discernment" a process which is perfect in God linking love and *pro-noia*. Thus in a way what may be called "thoughts" in God are dynamic instruments of love. What is a perfect balance in God can be also projected onto the ideal relationship between love and the heart in the human being. The human heart cannot be limited by creation, but at the same time creation is its object of love. The noetic aspect of the heart is a bridge between beings and the invisible essential internal beingness, which cannot be expressed. Thoughts in the true sense can only be creators of love and this is the only acceptable role they can have in the discernment process if they are to be liberated from pure rationality. In a certain manner of speaking, creation was present in God in the manner of "thoughts" if thoughts are understood as linked to love. In fact the process of the intellect is not a process of decision between positions or other forms but a way of expressing the potentiality of love. God thinks his creation as his expression.

Palamas has an important role to play by associating the heart with the noetic aspect. The nous is located in the heart. This is important, because Palamas indicates, that even if the nous or intellect is associated with forms of rationality or generally knowledge this is necessarily of a different kind than secular knowledge. We also have to state that impressions are thoughts, in the sense that they require a reflexive turn in order to be identified.

In any case the patristic tradition would indicate a certain tension between an emphasis on love and the heart in terms of communion and the heart and love in terms of a static contest ground of diverging interests. The Biblical framework is clearly an emotional communal one, which already had to set the stage for a showdown with the noetic Hellenistic tradition. The patristic struggle to find a way and compromise between the various positions is evident.

The discussion also has implications for thoughts and knowledge as such. In any event it is difficult to divorce thoughts from their passionate contents. We have to postulate the fact that each and every thought has to be by definition "emotionally" charged, otherwise, a succession of thoughts would and could not lead to any harm or benefit whatsoever. In fact we have to posit the thesis that for the fathers generally there is an inherent link between thoughts and passion or emotion or feeling, which means that even our discussion is relative, since by virtue of fact there is no separation between thought and the heart.

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The Date of the Treatise ‘Contra Beccum’ of Gregory Palamas Revisited*

Abstract: In this paper we try to give some further evidence concerning the chronology of Palamas’ treatise *Contra Beccum*. Taking into consideration different parameters, external and internal, we incline to think that this treatise was composed – or, at least, reworked – in 1355, approximately at the same period when Palamas published the second edition of his *Logoi apodeiktikoi*.

Keywords: Gregory Palamas, John XI Bekkos, *filioque*, Triadology, datation, Augustine, Serbian Church Slavonic translation

1.

As is well-known, the first phase of the Hesychast controversy was undoubtedly determined by the issue of *filioque*. In 1334–1335 the legates of Curia were sent to Constantinople to negotiate about the union of the Churches.¹ The main representative of Byzantine Church was Barlaam the Calabrian, learned monk from Seminara, who was well trained in ancient Greek philosophy, Aristotelian theory of argumentation included. In order to answer the thesis of his Latin interlocutor, he composed his important work *Contra Latinos*. This treatise was reworked more than once before it reached its final form; namely, since some of his polemic tactics were misunderstood by the Byzantines, Barlaam was prompted to omit some parts of the treatise in its later edition, while some other parts of it he preserved as separate *opuscula*.²

Gregory Palamas, on the other hand, was not directly involved into negotiations. However, he was informed about what was going on and approximately at the same time he also wrote his famous *Logoi apodeiktikoi*. In contradistinction to Barlaam, who shows far more sensibility for different philosophical argumentative techniques, Palamas grounds his polemics in the traditional doctrine on the monarchy of the Father, support-

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1 Kakridis 1988: 34–35; Kakridis, Taseva 2014: 11. Cf. also: Sinkewicz 1980: 489–492.

2 Kakridis 2012: 108.

ing it with the respective views of Cappadocian Fathers. Contrary to the usual opinion, Palamas' *Logoi apodeiktikoi* weren't designed as an answer to the different theses and approaches of Barlaam the Calabrian.³ As a matter of fact, Palamas wrote this work before he was even acquainted with Barlaam's anti-Latin treatise, wishing in a way to recommend himself as a true representative of the Byzantine Church.⁴

However, apart from *Logoi apodeiktikoi*, Palamas wrote one more treatise dedicated to the triadological issues: namely, his *Contra Beccum*. In this short work he tries to refute some of the main presuppositions of John XI Bekkos, the unionist Patriarch of Constantinople, who was commissioned by Michael VIII Palaiologus to offer a theological ground to his political project of the reconciliation with the "Old Rome". Being anti-unionist at the beginning, John Bekkos later embraced unionist position⁵ and voiced some serious objections to the "Photian Orthodoxy".⁶ Although he was deposed in 1282, Bekkos' positions, we believe, continued to make some influence on Orthodox theologians, as confirmed by several treatises directed against him, especially those of Gregory of Cyprus and Gregory Palamas.

In fact, Palamas' *Contra Beccum* was designed to refute Bekkos' work *Epigraphae*, written around 1282.⁷ Through this work, which represents a *florilegium* of different Patristic quotations, Bekkos was seeking confirmation for his views on the procession of the Holy Spirit in Patristic writings (*dubia et spuria* included).⁸ Judging by the number of manuscripts, this is the most popular of all Bekkos' writings, in which he used an impressive number of sources,⁹ proving himself as "a diligent, painstaking researcher who cared about fact, because he cared about truth".¹⁰ The treatise was first published, together with Palamas' refutations (*Contra Beccum/Antepigraphae*) and Bessarion's answers to Palamas, by Peter Arcudius in 1679. Despite some views, it is clear that in this work Bekkos appears not as a mere "anthologist":¹¹ in all probability, he didn't deal simply with *catenae* or collections of quotations but actually studied complete Patristic treatises. This is apparent from his handling of and references to the sources, as well as from some careful and astute analyses he offers in the process.¹² This, in turn, means that he does not simply list different quotations from Patristic writings which corresponded to his interpretative intention,

³ Meyendorff 1959: 60, 342; Sinkewicz 2002: 133.

⁴ Kakridis 1988: 62–63, 81.

⁵ For the authenticity of Bekkos' Kehre, see our: Knežević, Stefanović-Banović 2021: 27–28, where one can also find references to the relevant studies on this topic. In this book we give a critical edition of Serbian Church Slavonic translations of Palamas' *Contra Beccum*, *Expositio stupendae multitudinis impietatum Barlaami et Acindyni* and *Epistula ad Annam Palaeologinam*, as well as of *Historia brevis* of David Disypatos.

⁶ Cf. Drew 2014: 62–186.

⁷ For the list of Bekkos' works and their editions, see: Xexakes 1981: 53–57; Riebe 2005: 123–129.

⁸ Xexakes 1981: 62–63.

⁹ For the list of Patristic sources used by Bekkos, see: Riebe 2005: 138–141.

¹⁰ Gilbert 2009: 304.

¹¹ Papadakis 1997: 50. For this, see: Gilbert 2009.

¹² Gill 1975: 264.

but tries to capture the internal logic of the writings in which they appear and to interpret them contextually.¹³

Palamas, on the other hand, refutes Bekkos' positions on two parallel streams. Firstly, he questions his hermeneutics and his use of Biblical and Patristic statements, and, secondly, he disputes various specific "Latinophrone" theses of the unionist Patriarch. Palamas states that Bekkos' interpretation is opposed to the spirit – and sometimes also to the letter – of the Holy Fathers, missing their very sense and intention.¹⁴ Bekkos' hermeneutics is all the more disputable, since he does not manage to discern subtle theological distinctions, such as the distinction between prepositions *ἐκ* and *διὰ* in the realm of Triadology.¹⁵ In this regard, of special interest is Palamas' view on the so-called "mediation" of the Son in the procession of the Holy Spirit. This "mediation", that Bekkos especially was insisting on, actually accepts "all of those who are prudent in divine things".¹⁶ However, according to Palamas, it is owed – and the same holds true for the existence of the "order" of divine persons – to the consecration of the "confession" (*κατὰ τὴν ὁμολογίαν*) or, again, to the limitations of our language.¹⁷ So, in contradistinction to Bekkos, for whom the term "order" has an essential meaning (*συστατική τις ἐστὶ τῆς ἐν τῇ τριάδι τάξεως ἢ φωνῇ αὐτῇ*),¹⁸ the "order" in God for Palamas depends from some "external" reasons and does not correspond to the intratrinitarian relations of divine persons.¹⁹ Also, Bekkos' favorite *loci* from Cyril of Alexandria's *Thesaurus*, according to which the Spirit proceeds "from both" (*ἐξ ἀμφοῖν*), and "all the natural properties of the Father pass onto his naturally begotten Son", in Palamas' view cannot refer to Spirit's "existence" (*ἀλλ' οὐ κατὰ τὴν ὑπαρξιν τοῦ πνεύματος*), since "natural and essential properties" of the Father pass onto the Son and not to his "hypostatic properties" (*τὰ τῆς πατρικῆς ὑποστάσεως*). Otherwise, the Holy Spirit, which, according to Cyril, also has "essentially and wholly the property of the Father and the Son" (*ὅλην ἔχον οὐσιωδῶς τὴν ιδιότητα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ*), would have consequently had also the "hypostatic properties of the Father and the Son" and, therefore, would have been "begetter and begotten one, and Father of the light, having also property of begetting and processing" (*γεννήμα τε καὶ γεννήτωρ ἔσται καὶ πατὴρ τῶν φώτων τὸ γεννᾶν καὶ ἐκπορεύειν ἔχον*).²⁰

Through a series of different *reductiones ad absurdum*, Palamas emphasizes how the Patristic passages on Son's "mediation" refer to the Spirit's origin from the Son's "essence"

¹³ This thesis is not accepted by Xexakes 1981: 91–92.

¹⁴ Gregorii Palamae, *Contra Beccum* 3, Syggrammata I [1962], 165.16–17: «ὁρᾷς ὡς αἱ μὲν τῶν ἁγίων ρήσεις ἔχουσιν εὐσεβῶς τε καὶ καλῶς, παρὰ δὲ σοῦ ἐκλαμβάνοντα κακῶς καὶ δυσσεβῶς;»

¹⁵ For this, see: Knežević 2015.

¹⁶ Gregorii Palamae, *Contra Beccum* 4, Syggrammata I [1962], 166.10–12.

¹⁷ For this, see: Knežević 2012.

¹⁸ Joannis Vecchi, *De unione ecclesiarum* 23, PG 141, 68CD.

¹⁹ Knežević 2012: 88–90; Alexopoulos 2011: 617: „Zuerst stellt Palamas eine sehr wichtige Beobachtung im Hinblick auf die Ordnung an, die sich innerhalb der Trinität findet. Diese Ordnung ist logisch und nicht ontologisch zu verstehen“. – For Bekkos' understanding of the "order" in the realm of Triadology, see: Drew 2014: 136–140, 144–145; Xexakes 1981: 142.

²⁰ Gregorii Palamae, *Contra Beccum* 9, Syggrammata I [1962], 170.8–17. For Palamas interpretation of Cyril of Alexandria, see: Knežević 2015a.

and not from the Son's *hypostasis*: for "none of them ever said the Holy Spirit proceeds from the hypostasis of the Son, but from [the hypostasis] of the Father".²¹

The point of the latent agreement of Palamas and Bekkos concerns the emphasis on the procession of the Holy Spirit from Son's "essence" and the divine *consubstantiality*. But while it is impossible for Bekkos to say that the Spirit proceeds from the "essence" of the Son without implying that he also proceeds from the "hypostasis" of the Son,²² for simple reason that for both the Father and the Son cannot be said that there is an "anhypostaton essence",²³ for Palamas, on the other hand, these two represent completely different modes of existence and not just "fictional difference" (πεπλασμένη διαφορά). In the same manner, the consubstantiality in Palamas is emphasized by the *direct* reference to the two "caused" persons to the Father, while in Bekkos it is structured so that the *mediated* consubstantiality of the Spirit with the Father comes to the fore, taking place by communicating of the Father's essence to the Spirit *through* the Son.

On the other hand, the emphasis on the consubstantiality of the Son and the Holy Spirit, which is much more characteristic for Bekkos' theological optics, is also present in Palamas. It is especially underlined in his *Logoi apodeiktikoi*, but the relationship between the Son and the Spirit in the realm of Triadology is emphasized in *Contra Beccum* as well. This is the case, for example, with those places where Palamas says that "the Holy Spirit rests upon the Son" (ἐν τῷ υἱῷ διαμένειν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον), that he "dwells in the Son" (ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ διήκειν), that he "accompanies the Logos" (ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς εἶναι καὶ τῷ λόγῳ συμπαρομαρτεῖν), and that he is "communion and love of the Father and the Son" (οἱ κοινωνίαν καὶ ἀγάπην εἶναι λέγοντες τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον). All these statements signify "that each person relates to the others no less than to himself", and that the Spirit, too, just like the Son, is "directly from the Father" (ἀμέσως εἶναι καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα [...] ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς) – which is actually the ground of the relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit.²⁴

2.

In scholarly literature it has been stated that Palamas' *Contra Beccum* does not offer any "internal indication" regarding its date of composition, which actually means that it is impossible to accurately determine its chronology.²⁵ However, since this work covers the same topics as his *Logoi apodeiktikoi*, some scholars presumed that both treatises were written approximately at the same time: around 1335/1336. The fact that in the manuscript tradi-

²¹ Gregorii Palamae, *Contra Beccum* 10, Syggrammata I [1962], 172.20–22: «διὸ οὐδεὶς οὐδέποτε τῶν ἀπάντων τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον εἶρκεν ἐκ τῆς ὑποστάσεως εἶναι τοῦ υἱοῦ, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς».

²² Joannis Vecchi, *De unione ecclesiarum* 29, PG 141, 88A. Υπ. Drew 2014: 151–155.

²³ Joannis Vecchi, *De unione ecclesiarum* 29, PG 141, 88D: «καὶ λοιπόν, εἴπερ ὁ ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς λέγων αὐτὸ ἐκπορεύεσθαι ἐκ τῆς ἐνυποστάτου, λέγει καὶ οὐκ ἀνυποστάτου, οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἀνυπόστατος ἢ τοῦ πατρὸς οὐσία· παντὶ που δῆλον ὡς ὁ αὐτὸς κρατῇ λόγος καὶ ὁπνήκῃ ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ υἱοῦ ἀναπηγάζειν τὸ πνεῦμα λέγεται καὶ ἀναβλύζειν, ὅτι καὶ ἡ οὐσία τοῦ υἱοῦ ἐνυπόστατος, ὥσπερ ἡ τοῦ πατρὸς». Cf. Joannis Vecchi, *Refutatio* 15, PG 141, 760B.

²⁴ Gregorii Palamae, *Contra Beccum* 2, Syggrammata I [1962], 164.18–19.

²⁵ Meyendorff 1959: 344; Chrestou 1962: 158; Lison 1992: 70; Sinkewicz 2002: 138.

tion these two works usually come together,²⁶ and the context which influenced their composition, could support this assumption. Namely, since it deals with anti-Latin (more precisely, anti-unionist) polemics, the composition of *Contra Beccum* could be related to the actuality of the negotiations led by Barlaam the Calabrian in 1334–1335, at least at the same degree in which these negotiations influenced the writing of *Logoi apodeiktikoi*. However, some other parameters confirm our assumption that the treatise *Contra Beccum* was written – or, at least, reworked – much later.

In his very influential monograph on Gregory Palamas, John Meyendorff suggested that Palamas might have written his *Contra Beccum* “environ 1336. (?)”.²⁷ However, regarding that dating, Meyendorff himself exposed some reservations. He indicated that one reference found in Philotheos Kokkinos’ *Encomium* could be of some importance for the exact chronology of this work. In that reference, the Patriarch of Constantinople informs us that Palamas, after his return to the “queen of cities”, has published two books on the procession of the Holy Spirit against Latins. Philotheos says that these books represent a “new and remarkable work” (καινόν τινα καὶ ὑπερφυῶ), which our Church hasn’t seen till now. Moreover, compared to this work, all other works against Latins seem to be like a children play.²⁸

Palamas’ return to the “queen of cities” took place undoubtedly the 1355, when the Archbishop of Salonica was finally released from Turkish captivity. Since Palamas’ *Logoi apodeiktikoi* were written in 1335, and bearing in mind that, apart from this work, the only Palamas’ anti-Latin treatise is exactly *Contra Beccum*, the aforementioned Philotheos’ reference could concern, according to Meyendorff, this latter work.²⁹ In this same year, according to Meyendorff, Palamas, gave a “wider circulation” to his *Logoi apodeiktikoi*, due to the actuality of the anti-Latin polemics of that period.³⁰

However, the problem seems to be the fact that Meyendorff wasn’t aware that there were actually two editions of Palamas’ *Logoi apodeiktikoi*. As Yannis Kakridis demonstrated more than 40 years ago,³¹ the version of this Palamas’ treatise that we know from the manuscript tradition and use today represents the second, revised edition of the treatise initially written in 1335. Kakridis bases his argumentation on the Serbian Church Slavonic translation, which preserves exactly the first edition of *Logoi apodeiktikoi*. This first edition is to be found in *Codex 88* of the Monastery Dečani and it is considerably shorter than the second edition. Kakridis’ thesis was further supported by some new scholarly discoveries.³² Therefore, the conclusion is that Philotheos’ reference from the *Encomium* concerns pri-

²⁶ Chrestou 1962: 158.

²⁷ Meyendorff 1959: 343.

²⁸ Philothei patriarchae Constantinopolitani, *Encomium*, PG 151, 627C.

²⁹ Meyendorff 1959: 344. On the other hand, taking into consideration this Philotheos’s reference, as well as the fact that Palamas mentions in his *Contra Beccum* both Barlaam and Acindynos as “unpious” (see below), Chrestou 1962: 158 concludes that both *Logoi apodeiktikoi* and *Contra Beccum* were written in 1355.

³⁰ Meyendorff 1959: 342.

³¹ Kakridis 1988.

³² Kaltsogianni 2009.

marily this “new” edition of the *Logoi apodeiktikoi* and not *Contra Beccum*.³³ Consequently, Philotheos did not “make a mistake” regarding the composition/reworking of *Logoi apodeiktikoi*, as Meyendorff claimed.³⁴

Be that as it may, Meyendorff’s assumption, although based on false text-evidence, must not *a priori* be dismissed. Let us describe shortly the context that was at work *also* at the time when Palamas “radically reworked”³⁵ his *Logoi apodeiktikoi*. At that period – twenty years after the negotiations in which Barlaam the Calabrian participated – the issue of Church union was actual again, as part of the project of the only Eastern Roman Emperor who was going to be converted to Roman Catholicism: John V Palaiologos.³⁶ After his return from the Turkish captivity, Palamas spent some time in Constantinople, where he had a public debate with Nicephorus Gregoras in the presence of Pope’s legate Paul. The “new”, reworked edition of his *Logoi apodeiktikoi* could have been caused not only by Palamas’ desire to improve and “polish” its first version, but also – as was the case with the first edition from 1335 – by the actuality of these (new) negotiations about Church union and, therefore, by the need to enter more readily into dialogue with Latins.

Therefore, Palamas could have written his *Contra Beccum* for the very same reason exactly in this period. Namely, since it was directed against different opinions of the unionist Patriarch Bekkos, by this work Palamas could have once more legitimized himself and openly declared his position regarding the question of the union of the Churches.

With these observations we have stated what we have already known; namely, that there are equally convincing reasons for dating Palamas’ *Contra Beccum* either in 1335/1336 or in 1355. However, for its more accurate dating the parallelism with *Logoi apodeiktikoi* is certainly helpful – not at the level of possible “external” inducements, but on the level of internal textual analysis. In this regard, we should primarily take into account the first version of *Logoi apodeiktikoi*, which is, as we have said, preserved only in the Serbian Church Slavonic translation.

a) Since there are places in the second edition of the *Logoi apodeiktikoi* that are similar or quite identical with the corresponding sections in *Contra Beccum*, it is important to consider whether this is the case when these sections are compared to the first edition of *Logoi apodeiktikoi*. This comparison reveals some visible differences. For example, while *Contra Beccum* 2 corresponds well to *Logoi apodeiktikoi* II, 59–60 in their later edition, and *Contra Beccum* 11 gives almost *verbatim* the same section that we find in *Logoi apodeiktikoi* II, 66, in Serbian Church Slavonic version of *Logoi apodeiktikoi* there are no such sections at all.³⁷ From this we could conclude that these (and many other) paragraphs were written later, during Palamas’ “radical reworking” of his first dogmatic writing, which took place in 1355. This would mean that Palamas was parallelly writing his *Contra Beccum* and working on the second edition of his *Logoi apodeiktikoi*. In this process, having acquainted himself

³³ Kakridis 1988: 74–75.

³⁴ Meyendorff 1959: 342.

³⁵ Kakridis, Taseva 2014: 11.

³⁶ Radić 2013: 392–397.

³⁷ Cf. also: *Contra Beccum* 2 ≈ *Logoi apodeiktikoi* I, 25, 28, 29; *Contra Beccum* 4 ≈ *Logoi apodeiktikoi* I, 33.

better with Bekkos' *Epigraphae* and trying simultaneously to refute it, he found it appropriate to import some passages from his new treatise *Contra Beccum* into the new edition of the *Logoi apodeiktikoi*. This thesis could be supported by the fact that in *Index locorum* of the "first" edition of *Logoi apodeiktikoi* one cannot find any reference to John Bekkos.³⁸ That would mean that Palamas actually dealt with (or even read?) his *Epigraphae* much later than 1335 or 1336. On the other hand, trying to convince his auditorium that his new edition of *Logoi apodeiktikoi* was basically the same as the previous one, Palamas, in all probability, deliberately avoided to mention Bekkos's name.³⁹

b) This hypothesis can additionally be confirmed by the fact that in the seventh paragraph of *Contra Beccum* Palamas characterized not only Barlaam but also Acindynos as "unpious" ([...] τοῦτο γὰρ τῆς Βαρλαάμ καὶ Ἀκινδύνου δυσσεβείας ἐστίν).⁴⁰ If we take into account that, on the one hand, Palamas' controversy with Barlaam did not start before 1337, while, on the other, his break-up with his former pupil and friend Gregory Acindynos did not occur until 1341 (after the first version of *Ad Acindynum III*),⁴¹ we can also state that *Contra Beccum* was either integrally written in 1355, or it was, just like the *Logoi apodeiktikoi*, retouched in that same year.

c) One additional textual evidence could be helpful in our attempt to finally determine the chronology of the *Contra Beccum*. As early as 1992, Jacques Lison pointed to "l'énigme que représente un passage du 'Contre Beccos', impossible à dater avec précision, où Grégoire Palamas considère orthodoxe l'idée de l'Esprit comme 'communion et agapè du Père et du Fils'".⁴² Five years later, Reinhard Flogaus unequivocally showed that Palamas borrowed, sometimes *verbatim*, in his mature writing *Capita CL* some ideas and passages from Augustine's *De trinitate*, which he read in Maximus Planoudes' translation.⁴³ These borrowings certainly included the image of the Holy Spirit as the "love" of the Father and the Son.⁴⁴ However, the "Augustinian" place from *Contra Beccum*, which equally identifies the Holy Spirit as a "love" (*agape*) of the Father and the Son, Flogaus did not notice on that occasion, having dated this treatise in 1335.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, taking into account the aforementioned reference of Lison,⁴⁶ Flogaus suggested ten years later that this "discovery might have consequences for the dating of this work".⁴⁷

³⁸ Kakridis, Taseva 2014: 513–521. However, this thesis could be challenged by the fact that even in the first edition of his *Logoi apodeiktikoi* Palamas comments upon the subject of the "order" of persons of the Holy Trinity, which is also the issue analysed by Bekkos. Cf. Kakridis, Taseva 2014: 110–118, 170–174.

³⁹ For example, in *Logoi apodeiktikoi* II, 66, where Palamas undoubtedly refutes some of the thesis from *Epigraphae*, he does not mention Bekkos name at all, using neutral «φῆσιν».

⁴⁰ Gregorii Palamae, *Contra Beccum* 7, Syggrammata I [1962], 168.21–22.

⁴¹ Nadal 1974. Cf. Heyden 2017.

⁴² Lison 1992: 70. Gregorii Palamae, *Contra Beccum* 2, Syggrammata I [1962], 164.14–15.

⁴³ Papatomopoulos, Tsavare, Rigotti 1995.

⁴⁴ Sinkewicz 1988: 116–124.

⁴⁵ Flogaus 1997: 447; Flogaus 2008: 67. This place, however, was found by Demetracopoulos 1997: 158–159.

⁴⁶ Lison 1994: 89; Flogaus 1998.

⁴⁷ Flogaus 2008: 67.

Now, if we take into consideration the fact that the year 1344 is the *terminus post quem* for Palamas' acquaintance with Augustine's *De trinitate*,⁴⁸ we will get another confirmation that his *Contra Beccum* was written much later than the date usually assigned to the composition of this work.⁴⁹

Of course, we should also consider the possibility suggested by Sinkewicz, according to which Palamas' "problematic reference" of Augustinian type on the Holy Spirit as "the communion and love of the Father and the Son" is owed to some "Latinophrone' *florilegium*",⁵⁰ or, again, Lison's claim that this reference is possibly to be found in Bekkos' *Epigraphae*.⁵¹ The latter suggestion should be rejected, since in *Epigraphae* the aforementioned idea cannot be located. As for the Sinkewicz's hypothesis, it still remains open. However, what is more than certain is that through another writing, which is not a "Latinophrone' *florilegium*", but, on the contrary, an eminently anti-Latin treatise, Palamas could have firstly acquainted himself – even before reading Augustine's *De trinitate* – with the idea of the Spirit as "the love of the Father and the Son". This is, as we have shown elsewhere,⁵² Barlaam's treatise *Contra Latinos*, where the learned Calabrian brings forth the Latin's thesis that the "Holy Spirit is love between the Father and the Son" (ἰακὸ ἀγαπῶν ἡ ἀγάπη).⁵³ This formulation was by all probability exposed by some of Barlaam's (Dominican)⁵⁴ interlocutors and, despite its obvious Augustinian origin, it should be related to the *Summa theologiae* of Thomas of Aquinas, whom Barlaam mentions directly more than once.⁵⁵ Be that as it may, it corresponds well to the formulation in Palamas' *Contra Beccum*, with the important note that the latter is nevertheless somewhat broader: namely, it says that the "Holy Spirit is the communion and love of the Father and the Son" (κοινωνίαν καὶ ἀγάπην [...] τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον).⁵⁶ Therefore, if we keep in mind that the Bishop of Hippo often refers to the Spirit as "community" and "love", and that in one place he even explicitly says that the Spirit is ἀγάπη and κοινότης,⁵⁷ we can conclude that Palamas' most probable source in this respect is nevertheless Augustine's work *De trinitate*. This would bring us back once again to our thesis, according to which the *Contra Beccum* was written (or at least completed) around 1355.

It turns out that Palamas challenged the Church union and the respective views of the unionist Patriarch John Bekkos by using the writing of an eminently Western author –

⁴⁸ Flogaus 1997: 103.

⁴⁹ Flogaus 2008: 67.

⁵⁰ Sinkewicz 2002: 163–164.

⁵¹ Lison 1994: 89.

⁵² Knežević 2020: 77–79.

⁵³ Kakridis, Taseva 2014: 349.13–14; Barlaam Calabro, *Tractatus A*, IV, 6, Fyrisgos 1998: 558.44–45.

⁵⁴ Cf. Sinkewicz 1980: 498–499.

⁵⁵ Thomae Aquinatis, *Summa theologiae* 1, q. 37, art. 1 et 2.

⁵⁶ Gregorii Palamae, *Contra Beccum* 2, Syggrammata I [1962], 164–14–15.

⁵⁷ Flogaus 1998: 22–23.

the one whom, despite openly advocating *filioque*, he elsewhere calls “a wise and apostolic husband” («ἐπεὶ καὶ τις τῶν σοφῶν καὶ ἀποστολικῶν ἀνδρῶν φησιν [...]»)⁵⁸

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⁵⁸ Gregorii Palamae, *Contra Gregoras* XLIII, Syggrammata IV [1988]: 296.10–11.

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