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## International Journal for Philosophy and Theology

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## The Husband of Philosophy: A Few Observations regarding the Interpretative Tradition on Odysseus and Abraham

*Abstract:* The paper highlights some related features of allegorical interpretations of Odysseus and Abraham. Both figures were interpreted as souls on a quest. The affinity between exegetical depictions of these quests may have prompted the later synthesis of ancient readings regarding Odysseus' intellectual pursuits. The comparison of Penelope and her maids to philosophy and lesser disciplines influenced Philo's image of Abraham as the husband of wisdom, and the mirror image of Philo himself as the husband of philosophy. There are grounds to question whether Philo's exegesis subsequently formed a background against which Odysseus' pursuits were expounded. Among the similarities between his Abraham and Eustathios' Odysseus the philosopher, the portrayal of these characters as stargazers is the most conspicuous.

*Keywords:* Odysseus, Penelope, Abraham, Eustathios of Thessalonike, Philo of Alexandria

The twelfth-century archbishop of Thessalonike Eustathios<sup>1</sup> sums up ancient allegorical interpretations of the Odyssey in his monumental Commentary on the poem (*Parekbolai*, 1396.27–35<sup>2</sup>), stating that Odysseus was interpreted by the ancients as a philosopher, and that Penelope, who was pursued by him, was for that reason understood to be philosophy. The description of Odysseus' wife as *the one being pursued* (διωκομένην) by him is followed by a clarification. She is *the woman desired* (ποθουμένην) by him. Her maids represent inferior arts which have philosophy, the art of arts, as their mistress (δέσποινα). She is the most beautiful, the one in supreme command (ἀρχιτέκτων), reserved for Odysseus alone, that is for the true philosopher (τῷ ὄντως φιλοσόφῳ). With Penelope being unavailable to them, the suitors pursue another relationship (ἄλλης συνουσίας), consorting with the maids, that is they engage with some of the other arts. Prior to this passage we do not see the exegeti-

1 He was a professor of rhetoric in Constantinople before his appointment to the metropolitan see of Thessalonike. His work on Homeric commentaries span over many years, both in Constantinople and later in Thessalonike, see Cullhed, *Commentary*, 4\*–9\*. For a general introduction to his life and work see Kazhdan, *Studies on Byzantine Literature*, 115–195, Schönauer, *Eustathios von Thessalonike*, 3\*–24\*. He is commemorated as a saint on September 20 according to the Orthodox liturgical calendar. About his veneration see Marković, Култ и иконографија and collection of papers Ἅγιος Εὐστάθιος, ed. Kontakis.

2 Edited and translated by Cullhed, *Commentary*, 122–123.

cal use of the ancient image of Penelope reflecting philosophy interwoven with Odysseus' unrelenting urge to come back home.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the background discussion that made Penelope into an image of philosophy in antiquity seems to dwell on her as the figure of authority surrounded by lesser figures and on her famous undertaking at the loom, not on her as the object of Odysseus' pursuit. The reception of both characters has been an object of extensive study<sup>4</sup> and in the following section we will briefly reflect just on those segments of the reception which are pertinent to Eustathios' outline of ancient exegesis. The discrepancy between the outline and extant ancient sources is then discussed in light of peculiar features of Odysseus the philosopher found in other passages of *Parekbolai*.

### Philosophy without a Husband: Figurative Analogies pertinent to Eustathios' Outline

The image of the relation between philosopher and philosophy as a kind of love affair goes back to 5th century BC, as Plato's dialogues show. There Eros is identified as a philosopher, defined as being neither ignorant nor wise, but scaling somewhere in-between, and desiring the good and the beautiful that he does not possess<sup>5</sup>. Inclination to, love of, devotion to or striving for wisdom as implications of the compound word *philosopher* may be conceived in different ways, and Plato's influence on the solemn tone of it looms large.<sup>6</sup> The correlation between consorts and educational pursuits comes up in Plato's work too. The pertinent passage has a negative lover constraining the one he desires. This lover prevents the boy's other relationships (ἄλλων συνουσιῶν) in order to prevent the development of his faculties and above all, he keeps the boy apart from the one that would most enhance the powers of his mind, that is he keeps him far away from the divine philosophy (ἡ θεία φιλοσοφία).<sup>7</sup> In a related image philosophy lacks a fitting consort. Ineligible men engage in unworthy intercourse with her and produce bastards.<sup>8</sup>

As for the figure of Penelope herself in Plato's dialogues, her weaving activity is compared to the toils of a soul which is unlike the soul of a philosopher. Rather it is a soul who after disentangling itself from the ties of the body by means of philosophy seeks to indulge in bodily experience again tangling itself up anew.<sup>9</sup> Eustathios comments extensively on

3 Cf. Buffière, *Les mythes d'Homère*, 389-391, Mactoux, *Pénélope*, 169, Helleman, *Personification of Wisdom*, 45-47, Cullhed, *Commentary*, 380-382 (notes on 1437.18-31 in the apparatus).

4 Buffière, *Les mythes d'Homère*, 365-521; Stanford, *Ulysses Theme*; Mactoux, *Pénélope*; Helleman, *Personification of Wisdom*, 33-59; Montiglio, *From Villain to Hero*; García, *El silencio*.

5 *Symposium*, 202 d; see also *Respublica*, 490a-b. Cf. Helleman 2009: 42-45 on these and other relevant passages.

6 Cf. Burkert, *Platon oder Pythagoras? Zum Ursprung des Wortes "Philosophie"*; Moore, *Calling philosophers names*, 246-256; he examines the early use of the word philosopher in light of similar compounds and concludes it was originally used to dismiss a person as a "sage-wannabe", *Calling philosophers names*, 1-106.

7 *Phaedrus*, 239a-b.

8 *Respublica*, 496a. Cf. Lucian (2nd c. AD), *Fugitivi*, 9-21, where Philosophy complains about the abuse she suffers comparing her toils to those of Penelope at the loom.

9 *Phaedo*, 84a-b.

Penelope's weaving as reflecting reasoning through syllogisms.<sup>10</sup> It has been suggested that he preserves an older interpretation that goes back to 3rd c. BC.<sup>11</sup> While that is a possibility, the history of that image seems to involve primarily the notion of *weaving a syllogism*, i.e. it has to do with figurative thinking about this kind of structured reasoning. A thought process was conceived as weaving (ὠφάλλω) already in Homer. Arranging premises according to different patterns (figures) was correlative to entwining of threads; argumentation was an act of interweaving (πλέκω). Therefore, both the web of a spider and that of Penelope could represent the fabric of logic, and both were used to express doubts about its merit.<sup>12</sup> For present purposes it suffices to note that this branch of imagery is likewise independent of Odysseus' figure. It relates to Penelope's activities alone.

To come back to her early reception, Penelope's character received significant attention from another member of Socrates' social circle. Antisthenes of Athens (5th-4th c. BC) is credited with two works which seem to have discussed her: *On Odysseus and Penelope* and *On Helen and Penelope*.<sup>13</sup> Neither of the two works survives, but references to Antisthenes in Homeric scholia likely derive from these. One of the references explains Odysseus' choice for Penelope over Calypso with the fact that Penelope excelled in regard to her endowments of mind<sup>14</sup> and not those of body, since no one could be superior in appearance to the goddess Calypso. Odysseus' devotion to his wife because of her intelligence is a testimony to his preference of the mind over the body, but in this interpretation Penelope is still a virtuous woman of flesh. Prince suggests a possibility that Antisthenes' treatment of the marriage of Penelope and Odysseus might have included a proposition of a marital union which would entail an attraction going beyond procreation, a bond more sublime and "consummated through philosophy".<sup>15</sup> Her supposition has to do with a differentiation between bodily attraction and the attraction of one soul to another. The attraction between souls implies a union which in Socrates' circle was usually forged between a youth and a senior male seen as capable of empowering the mind of his consort. Socrates himself though describes a female character, Diotima, in the supposed act of broadening his own mind.<sup>16</sup> The teaching

<sup>10</sup> *Parekbolai*, 1437.19–27.

<sup>11</sup> Helleman sees Chrysippus as its author, *Personification of Wisdom*, 48–49. She holds that Chrysippus, contesting the views of Ariston of Chios who denigrated the role of logic and preparatory subjects, depicted Penelope at the loom as a symbol of workings of logic that one must understand in order to enter the quarters of mistress Philosophy. Buffière supposes that the source of the interpretation predates Ariston, see *Les mythes d'Homère*, 391. Eustathios' description of Penelope's syllogistic web however echoes terms used in the Late Antique commentaries on treatises on logic and the views on logic found in subsequent Byzantine commentaries on rhetorical textbooks, cf. footnote 57.

<sup>12</sup> Stobaeus, *Anthologium*, 2.2.22 (Ariston); Cicero, *Academica* II, XXIX 95. πλέκειν συλλογισμόν comes up as a common phrase in later commentaries.

<sup>13</sup> Prince (*Antisthenes of Athens*, 158) points out that his focus on Penelope stands out since Helen was in the foreground at that time. Lost tragedies titled *Penelope* are ascribed to Aeschylus and Philocles.

<sup>14</sup> *Antisthenes of Athens*, T. 188, ed. Prince, alluding to Od. verses 5,216, cf. Montiglio 34–36.

<sup>15</sup> Prince, *Antisthenes of Athens*, 18, 136, 159.

<sup>16</sup> The bibliography on the character is significant, cf. Sier, *Die Rede der Diotima*. Socrates identifies her (rather playfully) as a woman with a prophetic background who taught him about love, i.e. about the nature of philo-



she imparts to Socrates assimilates a philosopher to a lover in pursuit of a beauty that never fades. This pursuit unfolds as a quest for knowledge that ultimately leads upward towards the contemplation of beauty itself.

However, the *comparison* through which Penelope came to personify philosophy is not inspired by Penelope's union with her lover, nor by his famous return, but by the futile pursuit of the ones who desired her and failed, settling for her maidservants instead. The comparison rests on Penelope's commanding presence as a sought-after but unattainable female. There are many attributions of the comparison<sup>17</sup>, but in all cases it solely involves the relation of the suitors to Penelope; the figure of the husband who attains her is beside the point, unlike in the *Parekbolai* passage. Penelope parallels philosophy as opposed to her maids who stand for inferior disciplines. Diogenes Laertius (3rd c. AD) comments on the use of this comparison<sup>18</sup> and attributes it to Aristippus (5th-4th c. BC). Those who are introduced to the usual fields of higher studies (τῶν ἐγκυκλίων παιδευμάτων<sup>19</sup>), but remain ignorant of philosophy are said to resemble (ὁμοίους) Penelope's suitors. They get the handmaidens, but they are not able to marry the mistress herself. The reports about Ariston of Chios (3rd c. BC) further support the idea that this comparison presupposes a sole focus on the female hierarch and her subordinates (to reflect the relation of philosophy to types of lesser education). He is said to have used the same simile<sup>20</sup>, but Diogenes in the cited passage on Aristippus ascribes to Ariston an analogous remark in which the role of the one who fails to accede to philosophy corresponds to none other than Odysseus himself. He is said to have seen and met with nearly all the dead in the underworld, but he did not behold the queen herself.

In Pseudo-Plutarch's treatise *On education of children*, usually dated to the beginning of the 2nd c. AD, the same comparison is credited to Bion of Borysthenes (4th-3rd c. BC). There suitors mingling with the maids correspond to the students who bring themselves to rot away (κατασκελετεύουσι) lingering with unworthy disciplines, because they are

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sophical pursuit, while in another of Plato's dialogues *Aspasia* (*Menexenus*, 235e) figures as his supposed teacher of rhetoric. Both women are in a way depicted to reflect a form of art: Diotima - the art of mediating between gods and men which has much in common with Socrates' views of philosophy, and Aspasia - the art of rhetoric.

**17** The comparison appears as a saying ascribed to Gorgias (*Gnomologium Vaticanum*, 166), Aristippus, Ariston, Bion. See analysis of the chronological layers in the "saying" in its different renderings by de Rijk, 'Ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία', 83-84, who takes note on variations in wording.

**18** Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*, II 8.79 2.8.79-80: ...τοὺς τῶν ἐγκυκλίων παιδευμάτων μετασχόντας, φιλοσοφίας δὲ ἀπολειφθέντας ὁμοίους ἔλεγεν εἶναι τοῖς τῆς Πηνελόπης μνηστῆρσι: καὶ γὰρ ἐκείνους Μελανθῶ μὲν καὶ Πολυδῶραν καὶ τὰς ἄλλας θεραπαίνας ἔχειν, πάντα δὲ μᾶλλον ἢ αὐτὴν τὴν δέσποιναν δύνασθαι γῆραι. τὸ δ' ὁμοίον καὶ Ἀρίστων: τὸν γὰρ Ὀδυσσεῖα καταβάντα εἰς ᾗδου τοὺς μὲν νεκροὺς πάντας σχεδὸν ἑωρακέναι καὶ συντετυχηκέναι, τὴν δὲ βασιλίσσαν αὐτὴν μὴ τεθεῶσθαι.

**19** The development of the concept of a specific general program of education (including basics of different disciplines usually enumerated as grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, music, geometry, arithmetic and astronomy) is dated in the 5th century, but the relating terms probably came to be used at a significantly later period, see Fuchs, *Enkyklios paideia* (RAC); Christes, *Enkyklios paideia* (NP).

**20** Those resembling suitors are committed to general studies, but disregard philosophy, Stobaeus, *Anthologium* 3.4.109: Ἀρίστων ὁ Χίος τοὺς περὶ τὰ ἐγκύκλια μαθήματα πονομένους, ἀμελοῦντας δὲ φιλοσοφίας, ἔλεγεν ὁμοίους εἶναι τοῖς μνηστῆρσι τῆς Πηνελόπης, οἱ ἀποτυγχάνοντες ἐκείνης περὶ τὰς θεραπαίνας ἐγίνοντο.

incapable of attaining to philosophy (μὴ δυνάμενοι κατατυχεῖν).<sup>21</sup> The wording<sup>22</sup> brings to mind the heap of bones of rotten men around the Sirens (Od. 12.45-46). In Plutarch's treatise concerned with education guidelines are given on how to approach the study of poetry without endangering the students' goal of attaining to philosophy. A stance that poetry should not be shunned but engaged with discerningly is illustrated by the image of Odysseus who found a way to expose himself to Sirens to his advantage.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, both the suitors and the skeletons around Sirens might be taken to represent students that do not reach philosophy out of their own ineptitude or through misguidance.

A philosophy textbook from 6th c. AD also ascribes the use of analogy between Penelope and philosophy to Aristotle.<sup>24</sup> The testimony is usually linked to the passage in which he discusses the hierarchy of branches of knowledge and the one discipline that is above all others, but without specific reference to Penelope and the Odyssean setting.<sup>25</sup> At one point, wisdom is described as the knowledge with the most power and authority (ἀρχικωτάτη καὶ ἡγεμονικωτάτη), whose position other kinds of knowledge, like bondwomen (ὥσπερ δούλας), cannot rightfully contest. An engagement with a subordinate discipline is portrayed more respectfully than the tone of the allusions to Penelope's maid-servants would allow for. Eustathios' outline which has Penelope as an "architect" betrays a firm connection to the reception of this description of the supreme knowledge by Aristotle. In later commentaries on *Metaphysics* wisdom, the mistress of the other disciplines (δέσποινα τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιστημῶν), is "the most architectonic" (ἀρχιτεκτονικωτάτη), the one whose supremacy comes from the understanding of the whole through the understanding of the ultimate end.<sup>26</sup> Thus a commentary on Gregory of Nazianzus, probably written towards the beginning of the 12th century<sup>27</sup>, refers to Aristotle for the use of the adjective *architectonic* for philosophy in the sense of its supremacy over other disciplines. In the Alexandrian introductions to philosophy from the 5th and 6th c. Aristotle is also credited with a definition of philosophy as *the art of arts and the discipline of disciplines*.<sup>28</sup> The first of the two phrases applies to Penelope in Eustathios' outline, and the first recorded use of it describes wisdom in the work of Philo of Alexandria.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *De liberis educandis*, 10.7.

<sup>22</sup> It is uncertain whether this choice of words is made by the unknown author of the work (Pseudo-Plutarch) or possibly by Bion himself. Kindstrand deems that κατασκελετεύουσι fits Bion's expression, *Bion of Borysthenes*, 188-189.

<sup>23</sup> *De audiendis poetis*, 15d.

<sup>24</sup> Elias, *In Porphyrii isagogen*, 21.6-10.

<sup>25</sup> *Metaphysica*, 982a1-19, 996b9-26 (in the preceding lines he mentions Aristippus' derogation of mathematics); the turn to philosophy ensues as a flight from ignorance; philosophy is the only knowledge that enjoys freedom (μόνην οὖσαν ἐλευθέραν τῶν ἐπιστημῶν) in the sense that it is free from serving a need, 982b19-27. Cf. Helleman, *Personification of Wisdom*, 43-45.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander of Aphrodisias, *In Aristotelis metaphysica commentaria* (2nd-3rd c. AD), 14.3-15.5; 184.14-27. The phrasing appears in later 6th c. commentaries too.

<sup>27</sup> Macé - Andrist, *Elias of Crete's Commentary*, 201-205, 216-219.

<sup>28</sup> φιλοσοφία ἐστὶ τέχνη τεχνῶν καὶ ἐπιστήμη ἐπιστημῶν, e.g. Ammonius, Elias, David.

<sup>29</sup> *De ebrietate*, 88-89. Cf. Hofer - Piper, *Retracing the "Art of Arts and Science of Sciences"*.

## The Husband of Philosophy and his Pursuits: Exegetical Background of Eustathios' Outline

From these well-known instances of such imagery it is clear that Penelope corresponds to philosophy in relation to her maids who reflect the inferior arts, with the aim of highlighting those who miss out on the opportunity to commit to philosophy. All of it though appears as part of figurative expression in the extant texts and remains at the fringes of the discussions, which do not deal with the interpretation of the *Odyssey*. The point in which it crosses from a level of productive reception into Homeric exegesis has not been established. However, the derivative treatment of these motifs which reshapes them into an exegesis is found in the interpretation of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar by Philo<sup>30</sup> whose writings belong to the first half of the 1st c. AD. There we have the focus on the prominent figure of the husband, and a positive reading of the engagement with the maid, Hagar, to whom his wife sends him (Genesis 16:3). Through Abraham both of those he pursues are defined. Sarah stands for wisdom defined as knowledge of all divine and human things, and their respective causes. For Philo wisdom and philosophy are not synonyms<sup>31</sup>, but the definition of wisdom he alleges is treated as a definition of philosophy in the cited 6th c. philosophy textbooks of which Eustathios is aware<sup>32</sup>. Hagar is interpreted as a positive figure, a symbol of ancillary intellectual pursuits<sup>33</sup>, with which one should engage for a limited time out of obedience to philosophy. In Philo's interpretation one has the sense that it is not a person, but marriage (the assiduous commitment to wisdom) that portrays philosophy. In any case, the marital union stands here for the pursuit of philosophy and unlike in the older comparisons of philosophy to Penelope, the husband is not peripheral to the discussion, but central. Philo's interpretations of Abraham's migrations, as well as the explicit and implicit self-references distinguishing his exegesis, may be more significant for the image of Odysseus in the *Parekbolai*, as will be noted below.

The extant writings on Homer's poetry and on Homeric problems (relating to the allegorical accounts of the gods), composed after the time of Philo and before the end of 2nd c. AD<sup>34</sup>, do not interpret Penelope as philosophy. In these works Odysseus is celebrated for the disposition of his mind, of course, but not in quite the same way as in *Parekbolai*. The ingenuity of Odysseus is of a kind that provokes diverse readings of his character. Antisthe-

<sup>30</sup> *De congressu eruditionis gratia*. esp. 1-14, 71-80. Cf. Helleman, *Personification of Wisdom*; Bos, *Hagar and the Enkyklios Paideia*. The above highlighted Aristotelian colouring of the *Parekbolai* passage seems all the more pertinent, since Bos suggests that Philo's exegesis likewise might be taking cues primarily from Aristotle. Cf. Borgen, *Exegete for his time*, 163-165, on how the tension between paganism and Judaism reflects on Philo's view of preliminary studies and how it differed from the stance of his stoic contemporary.

<sup>31</sup> He compares the marriage of Abraham and Sarah to his marriage to Philosophy, but in another sense philosophy is a maidservant of wisdom, *De congressu eruditionis gratia*, 79-80.

<sup>32</sup> *Parekbolai*, 1421.31-32.

<sup>33</sup> Phrasing varies, cf. *De congressu eruditionis gratia* 11: γραμματικῇ, γεωμετρίᾳ, ἀστρονομίᾳ, ῥητορικῇ, μουσικῇ, τῇ ἄλλῃ λογικῇ θεωρίᾳ πάσῃ; 20: τῆς μέσης παιδείας, 23: ἡ ἐγκύκλιος μουσικὴ πάντα, etc.

<sup>34</sup> Pseudo-Plutarch, *De Homero*, cf. Hillgruber, *Die pseudoplutarchische Schrift*, 75-76; Heraclitus, *Quaestiones Homericae*, cf. Pontani, *Eraclito*, 9-13.

nes, mentioned earlier, commended the intelligence of Odysseus, denounced by many as self-serving, and argued for his virtues. He is the figure that chooses the next life most wisely and mirrors Socrates in Plato's myth about the after-life. His actions in the *Odyssey* come up as paradigms in discussions of different philosophical concepts, types of knowledge and ways of living.<sup>35</sup> Different thinkers opted to invoke some of his traits or deeds as either positive or negative examples. Homeric exegesis appropriated the figural content from these debates. Teachers of grammar and rhetoric were content to portray Odysseus' demeanour as anticipating (or inspiring) notable teachings of various philosophers, while disregarding their often conflicting tones. In such writings Odysseus is a rational man, the wisest and the most prudent, a man whose virtues lie in his soul and not in his appearance or status,<sup>36</sup> a man of learning and exploration.<sup>37</sup> However, the role of a philosopher is not attributed to Odysseus but rather to Homer.<sup>38</sup> The poet was understood to have had his own philosophy<sup>39</sup> which he conveyed through his verse. He is presented as the source of doctrines which later philosophers expounded, and as the first to philosophize (φιλοσοφῶ) about issues belonging to physics and ethics.<sup>40</sup> Hence, the poet is seen as outdoing those who profess to be philosophers, and Odysseus is depicted as the instrument of his philosophy.<sup>41</sup> Although Homer and his versatile hero were often fused together as an object of either criticism or praise,<sup>42</sup> the explicit appellation of Odysseus as a philosopher still escapes notice prior to Eustathios' vast synthesis of previous Homeric scholarship.

In summary, it is only in *Parekbolai* that we finally see the full implications of the Penelope/philosophy parallel, where it is developed into an interpretation of Homer's verse which links it with the whole of Odysseus' quest to return home. Apart from Penelope's commanding presence as a sought-after but hardly attainable female, her web seems to have been another important attribute that made her a suitable personification of philosophy. The image of her weaving and unweaving the web was an image influential in its own right, instigating an independent line of reception. We may conclude, that these discern-

<sup>35</sup> Montiglio, *From Villain to Hero*.

<sup>36</sup> *De Homero*, 1401 (ἐμφρων ἄνθρωπος), 1610 (σοφώτατον καὶ φρονιμώτατον), 1622-1629.

<sup>37</sup> Heraclitus, *Quaestiones Homericae*, 70.6, 70.8, 70.9.

<sup>38</sup> E.g. Heraclitus, *Quaestiones Homericae*, 24.1, 26.3, 34.8, 35.9, cf. Pontani, *Eraclito*, 27. On the other hand see Heracles as ἄνθρωπος φιλόσοφος in *Quaestiones Homericae*, 34.3.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. esp. Heraclitus, *Quaestiones Homericae*, 48.5, 60.1.

<sup>40</sup> *De Homero*, 1738-1739. Unlike Heraclitus who emphasizes the allegorical nature of Homer's expression which needs to be interpreted accordingly in order to understand Homer's idea, the unknown author of this treatise has a wider focus. In the section concerned with philosophical theories, his primary intent is not to interpret those of Homer, but to trace the seed of every imaginable theory in Homer. The text also lacks the enmity towards philosophers which seem to provoke the bitter reaction of Heraclitus. On that and other peculiar features of Heraclitus' *Homeric Problems* see Pontani, *Eraclito*, 32-40.

<sup>41</sup> That would be the part of his philosophy which concerns virtue, Heraclitus, *Quaestiones Homericae*, 70.2.

<sup>42</sup> Montiglio, *From Villain to Hero*, 124-126, to the examples cited one may add Proclus, *Ad rem publicam*, 110.18-21, who takes Odysseus and Nestor to be mouthpieces of Homer. Montiglio thinks that "idealized image" of Odysseus, recognizable already at the beginning of the Imperial period, made him into a philosopher (p. 124), with Plutarch being the significant patron and promoter of that image (pp. 128-146).

ible influences on the interpretation of Penelope as philosophy do not corroborate the view that the ancients defined *what was pursued* (τὸ διωκόμενον) in relation to *the pursuer* as Eustathios notes in *Parekbolai*.<sup>43</sup>

He suggests that τὸ διωκόμενον is a term used in this example. The object of the pursuit (τὸ διωκόμενον) and the agent of the pursuit (τὸ διώκων) appear as terms in Aphthonius' textbook. They characterize a relationship rather more questionable than that of a husband going back to his faithful wife, that of Apollo and Daphne. The famous mythical episode was an example used for exercises in *refutation* and *confirmation*.<sup>44</sup> Apollo's longing for a woman introduces an aspect that does not add up with his godly status. The *confirmation* of the story was thus more complicated than its *refutation*. Certain meanings are attributed to different parts of the story with no particular regard to the way they fit together. The following motifs seem relevant and they form parts of a rather incoherent whole: the poet who said that Daphne was the beloved of Apollo was 'philosophizing' (φιλοσοφῶ); Daphne is a supreme beauty; since beauty is the gift of the gods, one can say that beauty has a god as a lover; Apollo loving Daphne stands for the pursuit of virtue<sup>45</sup>; his experience of longing, of pain and toil speaks to the nature of the seemingly endless pursuit, not to the nature of the god himself. The object of the pursuit is reassessed because it reflects unfavourably on the god to chase a girl. Nonetheless, the agent of the pursuit loses his singular character and is depicted as the generic pursuer of virtue.

As previously noted, the ancient testimonies point to two separate strands of imagery – the one referring to Odysseus' ordeals as emblematic for paths in life, and the other comparing the failure to win Penelope with the misguided choice of not pursuing philosophy. The two strands were tied together for the purpose of the interpretation of the broader Homeric storyline. The linkage in the *Parekbolai* follows the pattern of remodelling the object of a pursuit when it reflects badly on the pursuer. The case of Odysseus and Penelope alone does not quite fit the pattern. Its use in that instance, presumably, has more to do with the synthesis and elaboration of the ancient tradition in a way which allows for a story about Odysseus' marital and extramarital intellectual pursuits.

The end result in the *Parekbolai* has the husband, the philosopher, pursuing his wife, philosophy, and during the pursuit spending time on other exploits *as a philosopher*, meaning that he always overcomes the challenges they pose to the main pursuit. He engages with poetry and turns to contemplation (Sirens) but as a political philosopher (πολιτικὸς φιλόσοφος) he knows not to disregard the betterment of his community.<sup>46</sup> He tackles, phil-

<sup>43</sup> "... they characterize what they call the object of the pursuit from the pursuer (... χαρακτηρίζοντες ἐκ τοῦ διώκοντος ὃ φασὶ τὸ διωκόμενον)." Cf. footnote 2.

<sup>44</sup> Aphthonius, *Progymnasmata*, 5, 6. Apollo's chase of Daphne appears also in exercises in *narration* and in *speech in character* (Libanius, *Progymnasmata*, 2.17; 11.11).

<sup>45</sup> The verb διώκω implying a vigorous seeking after something difficult to attain or reluctant to be caught makes good sense in the Apollo story. It suits well the ancient idea about a lover praying on the object of his yearnings. The motifs evoke Plato's philosopher - the lover of beauty and there are traces of other philosophical concepts in what seems as a halfhearted attempt at allegorical interpretation.

<sup>46</sup> *Parekbolai*, 1707.42–1709.30.



osophically, cosmic observations and theories about the celestial spheres and their motion, and overcomes them (Cyclops).<sup>47</sup> He engages with celestial phenomena and their effects (Calypso) as a stargazing philosopher (*ἀποτελεσματικὸς φιλόσοφος*) but prefers to come back to a philosophy that conforms to rules and methods (Penelope)<sup>48</sup>. The interpretation of the Sirens episode in *Parekbolai* has an almost essayistic character. It elaborates on the ancient reflections on Sirenic lore of poetry, lore of learning and lore of contemplative life on the whole. The exegetical background is extant and well known.<sup>49</sup> The antecedents of astronomical interpretations of Cyclops and Calypso are however obscure.<sup>50</sup> An etymology that takes the compound *Cyclops* as meaning ‘eying circles’ rather than ‘circular eye’ supports the reading according to which his character stands for observing the circular forms of the celestial order (such as the zodiac belt, the celestial equator, the tropic circles and the rest). The names and nature of his mythological ancestry is taken to point to the features and nature of celestial motions. Odysseus, we are told, tackles such theories philosophically and prevails. The source of the Calypso interpretation is also unclear. Her name in this reading references the heavenly cover enclosing the earth from above and holding everything together, the shell of the universe. As the offspring of Atlas – that is of the axis which “holds” the heavens and which is inferred from contemplation and study of the heavens, she represents the speculations that such observations and concepts bring forth. The inspiration could have come from the involvement of a different hero, on a philosophical route of his own, with the daughters of Atlas (the Hesperides).<sup>51</sup> This involvement had earlier made Heracles into an authority on celestial matters. His dealings with Atlas were subject to rationalizations early on<sup>52</sup> and notes on Calypso in *Parekbolai* include these too.<sup>53</sup> The encounter was explained as one of gaining knowledge. The heavy weight put on Heracles’ shoulders by the barbarian Atlas was the weight of knowledge about stars, heavens and ways to predict happenings on account of it. The ancient tradition of explaining mythical narratives as naïve or corrupted descriptions of natural phenomena and historical events gained new momentum with the broadening of the interest for astronomy and the transmission of the new knowledge through an enormously popular hexameter poem by Aratus.<sup>54</sup> However, widespread interpretations of mythical narratives in light of astronomical speculations are one thing, while similar interpretations of Homer’s poetical intent are quite another. The latter seem to have been in circulation by 1st c. AD.<sup>55</sup> But apart from

<sup>47</sup> *Parekbolai*, 1392.58–1392.62.

<sup>48</sup> *Parekbolai*, 1389.63–1390.6.

<sup>49</sup> Buffière, *Les mythes d’Homère*, 382–386; Wedner, *Tradition und Wandel* (chapters dealing with ‘reproduzierende Rezeption’, esp. 157–165).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Pontani, *Speaking and concealing*, 51–52; Cullhed, *Commentary*, 99, notes in the apparatus.

<sup>51</sup> Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, 4.27.

<sup>52</sup> Herodorus of Heraclea, Fr. 24a (Clem. Alex. Strom. 1.15.73.2), cf. Moore, *Heracles the Philosopher*.

<sup>53</sup> *Parekbolai*, 1390.23–28.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Mastorakou, *Aratus*.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Broggiato, *Interpretazioni antiche*, 66–70. Demo, a known name of an unknown biography usually dated to 4th or 5th c. AD (Ludwich, *Die Homerdeuterin Demo*, Pontani, *Sguardi su Ulisse*, 87–88), was already active by then according to Savio, *I frammenti dell’erudita Demo*. The interpretations ascribed to her concern

the question of the individual astronomy- and astrology-related interpretations of Cyclops and Calypso, the question remains when did they get tied up in this way with Odysseus' homecoming. There are different ways to weave in the interpretations in the fabric of the poem. If these indeed stem from interpreters prone to astrological tradition and astronomical theories<sup>56</sup>, it is doubtful that persons of such inclination would be likewise responsible for the shadow of the inimical and belittling stance towards such speculations that can be discerned in the *Parekbolai*. When did the sublime image of Odysseus gazing at the stars become a side-pursuit with ominous overtones signifying a dalliance to be ended for the sake of the only true philosophy? The *Parekbolai* depicts Odysseus immersed in the heavenly beauties in the place where he has arrived, yet striving to return back to the philosophy from which he set out and without whom there is no philosophizing (οὐκ ἔστι φιλοσοφεῖν). The philosophy he most desires (ποθεῖ) is said to be methodical and rigorous (μεθοδικὴν καὶ κανονικὴν). The characterization of Penelope as philosophy distinguished by methods and rules is reminiscent of a curious description of rhetorical exercises. Namely, according to an introduction to Aphthonius' *Progymnasmata*, his textbook has its place in the domain of philosophy.<sup>57</sup> It does not pertain to either the theoretical or to the practical part, but rather falls between the two, since it pertains to the methodological and instrumental (μεθοδικὸν καὶ ὀργανικόν) part, i.e. the part concerned with logic. For it teaches rules and methods (κανόνας γὰρ καὶ μεθόδους διδάσκει). Eustathios taught rhetoric and logic and, apparently, from the students' records one would be led to believe that his students were instructed by Aristotle himself.<sup>58</sup> It is also worth having in mind that the rhetorical treatment of the model story for reinterpretation of the *pursued* and the *pursuer* – that of Daphne and Apollo – was subject to syllogistic analysis in the Commentary on Aphthonius written by John of Sardis.<sup>59</sup> Aphthonius' refutation of the storyline is described in terms of *weaving syllogisms*.<sup>60</sup> This ninth-century guide implies that teachers of rhetoric were supposed to be proficient in the famous art of Penelope. In like manner, Eustathios deemed that this art constituted the fabric of philosophical achievements, including his very own.<sup>61</sup> Understanding

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astronomical and cosmological motives in Homer among which is the interpretation of Otus and Ephialtes as natural philosophers (φυσικοί φιλόσοφοι, *Scholia in Lucianum* 2.4.23.) engaged in astronomical calculations, cf. Savio, *I frammenti*, 254, 430–448.

**56** Cf. the extolling tone of Heraclitus' remark about Odysseus astronomical knowledge indispensable for sailing with regards to the Aeolus episode, *Quaestiones Homericae*, 70.6. Cf. also Palaephatus, *De incredibilibus*, 17, where Aeolus is an astronomer (ἀστρολόγος) who explained to Odysseus matters related to seasons and celestial movements on account of which the winds blow.

**57** *Prolegomena in Aphthonii progymnasmata*, 79.18–24. As for dating, Kennedy notes that the text indicates that its author is "a Christian who lived no earlier than the fifth century after Christ and perhaps much later", *Progymnasmata. Greek Textbooks*, 90–91. On the nature of these introductions which follow certain patterns of systematization typical for the Neoplatonic introductions to philosophy see Kennedy, *Greek Rhetoric*, 116–120. Cf. MacDougall, *John of Sardis' Commentary*, 740–741.

**58** Cf. Choniatēs, *Orationes*, 16.24–31.

**59** On the commentator who was bishop of Sardis see Alpers, *Untersuchungen zu Johannes Sardianos*, 39–43; about his recourse to Aristotelian logical tradition see MacDougall, *John of Sardis' Commentary*.

**60** *Commentarium in Aphthonii progymnasmata*, 82.3–8. Cf. MacDougall, *John of Sardis' Commentary*, 735–740.

**61** Cf. Eustathios' note on his own exegesis as syllogistic weaving, *Parekbolai*, 1437.27–31.

logic appears to be a prerequisite for understanding Penelope and those who do not are not fit to be the husband of philosophy. Eustathios' fitness for the task is not the only likeness between him and Odysseus that he is willing to disclose. This affinity has already been noted with regards to his reflections on his own occupation with Sirenic voices of the past.<sup>62</sup> The passages on Odysseus facing the Sirens, like a philosopher mindful of his responsibility for society, mirror his own engagement with the erudite voices of his scholarly endeavours, undertaken while abiding by the obligation to oversee and address contemporary issues and affairs. The extent to which his personal inclinations and literary experience may have influenced his account of the earlier exegetical tradition<sup>63</sup> remains to be explored.

In this respect, a closer examination of the parallels between Eustathios' Odysseus the philosopher and Philo's exegetical portrayal of Abraham<sup>64</sup>, which here can only be sketched out, might be fruitful. It should be noted that in both exegetical bodies of work, which relate to the texts they interpret in significantly different ways<sup>65</sup>, the allegorical exegesis does not preclude the historicity of the characters (Odysseus and Abraham respectively), nor does it pertain to the entirety of the narrative related to the characters. The allegorical readings, as was usual for the approach in the antiquity, reflect on images of a certain story line and may show no regard for the complexity of the whole story. Likewise, the allegorical readings of both husbands of philosophy are not given as a single, unified account. Their portraits appear in scattered passages, brought about by a certain part of the text that the exegetes are elaborating on. Notwithstanding the personal inclination to these "philosophers" of their exegetical making, both authors are more concerned with various facets of the text they are interpreting in light of their (differently) set out goals than with individual characters of the text.

Philo's interpretation of Abraham as a soul<sup>66</sup> similar to platonic readings of Odysseus as a soul<sup>67</sup> (appearing in later platonic texts and in *Parekbolai*) has drawn atten-

<sup>62</sup> Cesaretti, *Allegoristi*, 224-226; *Echo of the Sirens*, 257-261; Lovato, *The Wanderer*, 225-228.

<sup>63</sup> The reshaping of the tradition often proceeds inadvertently. See for instance an example of Eustathios' misrepresentation of Aristarchus' polemics in Nünlist, *Aristarchus*, 106-110; or the case pointed out in Šijaković, *Κυκλον γ' ὁμοῦ*, 150-159, where the ancient interpretation of the inner Cyclops acquires new layers through unobtrusive rephrasing. Principal features of his rather unpredictable approach to sources are surveyed in Pagani, *Eustathios' use of Ancient Scholarship*.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Sandmel, *Philo's Place in Judaism*; Runia, *The Place of De Abrahamo*; Adams, *Movement and Travel in Philo's Migration of Abraham*; Adams, *Abraham in Philo of Alexandria*.

<sup>65</sup> Philo was interpreting Moses who for him stands at the summit of philosophy which he expounds through his exegesis, cf. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria*, 528-546. Unlike Philo, Eustathios is not interpreting the central text of his worldview. The songs of Homer and all the wealth of knowledge the songs subsumed over the centuries before and after Homer could be described in the context of his *Parekbolai* as the scriptures of the art of rhetoric. The main purpose of the vast undertaking is to provide full access to the ancient epics as to a venerable treasure chest and offer authoritative guidance on how to master the use of its inestimable and unfailing treasures for future compositions.

<sup>66</sup> Philo makes a distinction between his explanations of Abraham's migrations (ἀποικίαι) as migrations of the wise man and as migrations of the virtue loving soul, *De Abrahamo*, 68, 88. Cf. Tobin, *The Beginning of Philo's Legum allegoriae*.

<sup>67</sup> Buffière, *Les mythes d'Homère*, 419-520.



tion to the question as to who came first to be viewed as a soul on a quest.<sup>68</sup> Whatever the answer, from around 2nd c. AD those two soul pilgrims have a steady presence in extant exegesis, and Eustathios was acquainted with both. Did the resemblance of these journeys in their ancient exegetical depictions influence the synthesis of Odysseus' intellectual pursuits in *Parekbolai*? With Philo's exegesis of the migrations of Abraham we see the first elaborate exegetical use of the philosophical tenets concerning the road of knowledge and virtue employed to interpret a narrative.<sup>69</sup> The inquisitiveness about the nature of the world and cosmos was in general conceived as a natural philosophical tendency of humans. From this questioning the philosopher proceeds to a kind of higher inquiry regarded as more fundamental.<sup>70</sup> The way Philo reflects on this and many other concepts of Hellenic philosophers while expounding Moses is a novelty owing to his personal mastery of Alexandrian scholarship and the specific nature of the task he envisioned. His exegesis on the whole is deemed unprecedented with regards to the intricate and elaborate allegorical interpretations which discuss both the author's intent and textual problems.<sup>71</sup>

For the discussed *Parekbolai* passages, the representation of Abraham's relationship with Sarah and Hagar, to which Philo gives the parallel of his own marriage to philosophy and extramarital engagement, is most pertinent.<sup>72</sup> Like Abraham, he too consorted with the handmaidens of philosophy. A captivating account of his personal relation with literature, mathematics and music serves to clarify that all the knowledge he acquired through these handmaidens and all the works he produced with them he put to the service of *his legitimate wife, philosophy*. As long as the husband is not enticed by the charms of the handmaidens to neglect the vows he made to his true mistress (δέσποινα), i.e. as long as he does not allow for the intricacy (γλαφυρότης) and attractive powers of an art (τέχνη) to subdue him (and lead his soul away from her), these pursuits can provide a proper service to philosophy. The experience with other arts in Philo's self-portrayal resonates with the lures imperilling Odysseus' journey home to Penelope. The philosophical pursuit he ascribes to Abraham presents the earliest extant version of the story about a husband of philosophy and his troublesome engagement with astronomy and astrology prior to eagerly attaining to his wife - the legitimate philosophy.

<sup>68</sup> It is often supposed that Abraham the soul reflects a preexisting interpretation of Odysseus which did not reach us, cf. Boyancé, *Echo des exégèses*; Alekniené, *L'énigme de la « patrie »*.

<sup>69</sup> The exegesis is understood to contain a critic of relevant Stoic views, cf. Alekniené, *L'énigme de la « patrie »*, 28-29; Joosse, Philo's *De migratione Abrahami*. For the exegetical scholarship of his age and social circle see Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship*.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Socrates' philosophical route according to *Phaedo*, 96a-97b; Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, 1.982b10-20.

<sup>71</sup> Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis*, 144-145; *Philo of Alexandria*, 2018: 173-191. Cf. Bréhier, *Les idées philosophiques*, 35-60; Pépin, *Remarques*; Dawson, *Allegorical Readers*, 83-126. The mentioned Heraclitus' Homeric commentary which ascribes allegorical design to Homer is far more modest and limited in its approach, cf. Pontani, *Eraclito*, 35-38. Porphyry's treatise on the cave of Nymphs in the *Odyssey* (3rd c. AD) is the earliest sophisticated work of Homeric allegoresis to reach us.

<sup>72</sup> *De congressu eruditionis gratia*, 74-78.

Philo's allegoresis starts from the passage in which Abram is called upon by God to depart from his land, kin, and the house of his father to a land that will be shown to him (Genesis 12:1-3). Different places on this journey are then presented as phases of preoccupation with different kinds of pursuit, choices between virtue and vice and a commitment to sublime virtue, which he in the end possesses in a way that makes him recognized as the sage king whose majesty comes from the highest virtues he demonstrates and inspires in others.<sup>73</sup> He is a lover of learning and an ardent student of celestial phenomena (ὁ φιλομαθῆς καὶ μετεωρολόσχῃ<sup>74</sup>). He inquires at length about the celestial bodies, their motion and influence, but then he turns away from contemplation of the cosmos to devote himself to knowledge about the creator of the cosmos.<sup>75</sup> He thus becomes the philosopher, or rather the sage (ὁ φιλόσοφος, μᾶλλον δ' ὁ σοφός)<sup>76</sup>, fully committed to contemplation of God. The pursuits of Abraham as depicted by Philo correlate with philosophical occupations of different kinds, and the supreme kind, which he full-heartedly pursued, presupposes logic.<sup>77</sup> His preoccupation with the study of heavenly bodies, which he overcomes and leaves behind<sup>78</sup> is a prominent theme reappearing in many different exegetical treatises which relate to Abraham.<sup>79</sup> Philo writes about Abraham's receptiveness to God's word which he follows without hesitation when he leaves behind his family residence in the land of the Chaldeans 'like as if he was returning from a foreign land to his own country, not as though he was about to depart from his own.'<sup>80</sup> The decisive turn away from the attractiveness of theorizing on the universe ensues upon realizing that the beauty and powers of the heavenly bodies perceived by the sense of sight amount to nothing when compared to the truly sublime perceptions of the mind alone.<sup>81</sup> The motifs of the (inner and outer) eye, eyesight, gazing, blindness and

<sup>73</sup> *De Abrahamo*, 260-261; *De mutatione nominum*, 151-2.

<sup>74</sup> *De mutatione nominum*, 70.

<sup>75</sup> The change in him and in the nature of his pursuit is, according to the given interpretation, denoted by the name change from Abram to Abraham. For the seriousness and stakes involved in these interpretations at Philo's Alexandria see Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis*, 122-129.

<sup>76</sup> The appropriateness of the designation philosopher for a man who contemplates the visible and invisible, virtues and vices, as well as the truly philosophical disposition are discussed in *De specialibus legibus III*, 190-192.

<sup>77</sup> When comparing the route of Abraham's pursuit with the ancient image of philosophy as a garden (in which the trees and plants, planted for the sake of the fruits, correspond to philosophy of nature, the fences guarding the fruits to logic, and the fruits of the garden to moral philosophy), Philo explains that Abraham turned to the fruits. He refers to the image again in *De Agricultura*, 14-16, where he stresses the importance of logic in terms of destroying seductive false theories.

<sup>78</sup> By leaving Chaldea.

<sup>79</sup> E.g. *De gigantibus*, 62-4; *De mutatione nominum*, 69-76; *De cherubim*, 5-7.

<sup>80</sup> *De Abrahamo*, 62. One might hear in this an echo of a possible reading of Hermes (interpreted as God's word by authors treating Jewish and Greek texts as part of a wisdom canon) coming down to Odysseus at the island of Calypso.

<sup>81</sup> *De specialibus legibus I*, 20. From *De congressu eruditionis gratia* it follows that he studied astronomy for a limited period again later, presumably, in a different fashion keeping in mind the Creator to whom he was previously blind. The engagement with celestial bodies is dismissively described in terms of focusing on the perceptible, worship of it and attributing power to created things as oppose to the Creator of all. Still there exists an affirmative tone in terms of understandable infatuation with the beauties of the cosmos and the order within it since they are

coming out of the darkness feature prominently in explanations of Abraham's relinquishing the science of the Chaldeans. To accommodate the challenge of astrology among Odysseus' philosophical pursuits is not an obvious choice, while in the case of Abraham that is not too much of a stretch. His enmity with the Chaldeans because of their subservience to astrology was a developed theme in historical accounts stemming from Jewish-Hellenistic tradition, and Philo makes exegetical use of it.<sup>82</sup>

His Abraham is thus a lover of learning who managed to turn away from the celestial beauty and uprightly engage in all studies conducive to his capacity to reach the summit of virtue with Sarah. The philosophy this Alexandrian scholar married Abraham off to was the philosophy of his own teachings. Penelope and her maids, as well as Odysseus, who indulges in erudite sirenic voices with no peril for his main pursuit, undoubtedly dwell in the background of Philo's exegesis. The present analysis of Eustathios' outline of the Odyssey raises the question whether Philo's exegesis subsequently formed a background against which Odysseus' pursuits were tied together as those of a husband devoted to his marriage with philosophy. This might also be relevant for the place given to Odysseus' struggle with stargazing. Moreover, it is interesting that, according to *Parekbolai*, Odysseus abandons theorizing on the sublime heavenly shell, eager to go back to his wife described in terms of the philosophy taught by Eustathios.

### The Marriage and the Outward Gaze

In principle, any exegete who knew both bodies of work could have been responsible for interpreting Odysseus' exploits in light of Philo's (auto)biographical account of the marriage with philosophy. Such a one may have even concluded from Philo's Abraham that a similar line of exegesis regarding Odysseus predates him, as some modern scholars are inclined to think. Philo's exegesis of the books of Moses had a wide Christian reception. Excerpts of his work appeared in the Biblical commentaries. Notable writers of the Byzantine era showed appreciation for his intellect, and admiration for the style of his prose, irrespective of their stance on his interpretation of Moses.<sup>83</sup> The graphic autobiographical recapitulation of Philo's own philosophical route is echoed in the writings of Eustathios' older contemporary and predecessor at the see of Thessalonike, Basil of Ochrid. He was highly regarded as an intellectual during his lifetime,<sup>84</sup> and Eustathios likewise praises his works

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created to inspire one to wonder and through wondering one becomes a philosopher. Compare e.g. *De Abrahamo*, 57-58 and 69-70. Cf. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Creation*, 111-112. A similar distinction may be found in Eustathios. He denounces the reliance on astrology of a kind which was extremely popular in his age and which ascribed determining powers to the stars and planets (cf. Kazhdan, *Studies on Byzantine Literature*, 180-183; Bourbouhakis, *Not Composed in a Chance Manner*, 108-109), but he appreciates the celestial beauties (e.g. *Epistolae*, 19.267-271, where he likens a dear addressee submerged in the heavenly beauties of books to Odysseus the stargazer) and the profound structure of the cosmos (e.g. *De emendanda vita monachica*, 11-12, where he admires the holy fathers who named the monastic orders to reflect the order of the universe).

<sup>82</sup> Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria*, 220.

<sup>83</sup> Runia, *Philo in Byzantium*.

<sup>84</sup> Vasilievsky, *Василия Охридскаго неизданное надгробное слово*, 55-76; Messina, *Basilio Achrideno*, 41-42.

and his personality.<sup>85</sup> When Basil was asked to clarify the seeming precedence of Hellenic learning over the Gospels, he referred to “Philo the wise” with regard to Abraham who first produced offspring with Hagar and afterwards, nearing his old age, with Sarah, stating that “we first beget offspring from the outer learning and at last and not without toil from the true philosophy, sound and free”.<sup>86</sup>

Philo spoke of the intricacy and attractiveness of Hellenic education, and of his devotion to philosophy practiced through interpretation of the books of Moses. His accounts of the life of Moses<sup>87</sup> and the life of Abraham both resonate with his own views on the value and purpose behind labouring to acquire knowledge from secondary sources, posited as inferior and foreign to the source of the higher truths honoured in one’s own community. That issue remained relevant for Christians in the Roman Empire too. Many *vitae* of Christian saints tell of the saints labouring to acquire the knowledge amassed in other cultures and excelling in Hellenic higher education and pagan philosophy, all the while remaining true to Christian philosophy.

Eustathios was a monk and one fully aware of the Christian tradition, which saw the monastic pursuit as the pursuit of the true philosophy and Abraham as one of its precursors.<sup>88</sup> It is in the context of exhorting those who dishonoured their vows and have gone astray from the path of their monastic forefathers that he himself mentions “the sweet Hebrew rhetor”<sup>89</sup>. Like Philo and many Christian authors afterwards, Eustathios too contemplated Abraham’s journey as one of redirecting the outward gaze inwards and pursuing the ultimate destination abounding with blessings beyond the sand of the sea and every heavenly constellation (πᾶν οὐράνιον ἀστροθέτημα).<sup>90</sup> He assimilates the words Christ uttered to his disciples “Rise, let us go from here”<sup>91</sup> with God’s call upon Abraham that marks the outset of his journey. These words open and pervade the first part of his oration delivered at the beginning of Great Lent – the period which calls upon all Christians to come back to the prime pursuit of their life. It is hard to imagine that Eustathios was unaware of the similarities between Abraham and Odysseus viewed as archetypes of philosophers. Whether this might have influenced his reception of Odysseus and possibly even his account of the related ancient exegetical tradition appears to be a question worth considering.\*

<sup>85</sup> *Sermo* 5. 9-19 (ed. Wirth), cf. Wirth 21-22\*.

<sup>86</sup> *Dialogi Anselmi Havelbergensis episcopi*, 375-10. Cf. Aristotle’s description of philosophy cited in footnote 25.

<sup>87</sup> His portrayal of the life of Moses includes Moses excelling at every subject of *enkyklios paideia* and studying with Egyptian philosophers, Greek teachers and Chaldean astronomers among others while demonstrating the doctrines of philosophy through his actions every day (*De vita Mosis* I, 20-24; 29).

<sup>88</sup> E.g. *De emendanda vita monachica* 3; 12; 30; 142.1-6.

<sup>89</sup> *De emendanda vita monachica* 195.13. He refers to Philo’s account of the Essenes, viewed by Christians as akin to monastic communities; cf. Runia, *Philo in Byzantium*, 274.

<sup>90</sup> *Sermo* 1. 60-64 (ed. Schönauer), dated to the year 1176 (Schönauer, *Eustathios von Thessalonike*, 66\*).

<sup>91</sup> John 14:31: Ἐγείρεσθε, ἄγωμεν ἐντεῦθεν.

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## Descartes' "Lumen Naturale": Reflecting on the Mind's Light

*Abstract:* The *lumen naturale* plays an important role in the philosophy of Descartes, particularly in the *Meditations*. Yet, while its analysis has not been completely neglected, the *lumen naturale* has hardly received the philosophical examination it deserves. While it is not possible in so short a paper to entirely remedy this deficiency, I do hope in this article to provide some insights into Descartes' understanding of this concept. In this light, I will seek to examine Descartes' understanding of the *lumen naturale* in terms of how it functions and its object(s) in order to understand what, if anything, the *lumen naturale* tells us about the world around us.

*Keywords:* Descartes, lumen naturale, light of reason, knowledge, deduction, intuition

While it would be false to say the field of research covering Descartes' *lumen naturale* is a desert, it is nevertheless true that much room for cultivation remains. Boyle states, "English-speaking commentators on Descartes have said little about the natural light, and although French commentators have paid slightly more attention to this topic, they have nonetheless provided no detailed analysis of the concept of the natural light and the role it plays in Descartes' *Meditations*."<sup>1</sup> Menn, in *Descartes and Augustine*, mentions "natural light" often, even quoting Descartes' assertion that it is "the standard of truth" and what it reveals is "indubitable", but he goes no further, failing to investigate the nature of the "natural light" and how it functions.<sup>2</sup> And although Jacquette discusses the *lumen naturale* and has some significant insights, as we will see, his commitment is to discussing the *lumen naturale* as it is related to the Cartesian Circle rather than an in depth discussion of the *lumen naturale* itself.<sup>3</sup> One reason there is not more discussion on this critical concept may be because Descartes himself offers little in the way of explanation for what he means by "*lumen naturale*", leaving philosophers to piece together what little can be found in his writings. Here we will examine Descartes' understanding of the *lumen naturale*, how it functions, and its object(s) in order to understand what, if anything, the *lumen naturale* reveals about the world around us.

1 Deborah Boyle, "Descartes' Natural Light Reconsidered," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 37, no. 4 (1999): p. 601.

2 Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 273.

3 Dale Jacquette, "Descartes' Lumen Naturale and the Cartesian Circle," *Philosophy and Theology* 9, no. 3 (1996).

*Lumen naturale* appears most predominately in the *Meditations*, where Descartes relies on it as the basis for what cannot be doubted. In Meditation III, we find, "For whatever is shown me by this light of nature [*lumene naturali*], for example, that from the fact that I doubt, it follows that I am, and the like, cannot in any way be doubtful."<sup>4</sup> In the process of doubting everything, it is the *lumen naturale* which establishes the first principles – in this case the *cogito* – which cannot be doubted and which can further be used to ground all other knowledge. Thus, this passage reveals two important features of the *lumen naturale*: 1) what it reveals is certain, indubitable, and 2) it reveals first principles. But this is not as clear as it seems. Two questions arise: First, how is the certainty of what is revealed by the *lumen naturale* established? It is clear in the *Meditations* that Descartes is seeking to find a solid basis for knowledge, but what does it mean to "know" for Descartes? That knowledge must be certain is obvious, but how is this certainty attained? Simply to say it is revealed by the *lumen naturale* is uninformative. And second, what, precisely, is revealed by the *lumen naturale*? To say it reveals First Principles is also somewhat uninformative. What are these First Principles? Are they ideas, concepts, propositions, things?

To answer the first question, we will examine how reasoning works in Descartes and what the role of *lumen naturale* is in this process. The paradigm of rational investigation for Descartes is mathematics. Descartes makes this clear in *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, "only arithmetic and geometry are free from every taint of falsity and uncertainty."<sup>5</sup> It is deduction which renders these disciplines certain. There are two paths by which we can come to knowledge, namely experience and deduction, but while experience can be deceptive, "deduction or a pure inference of one thing from another, though it may be passed over if it is not noticed, can never be erroneously executed by an intellect even minimally rational."<sup>6</sup> But deduction requires principles from which deductions can be made, and

4 René Descartes, *Meditations. Objections, and Replies*, trans. Roger Ariew and Donald Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2006), p. 21. ["nam quaecumque lumine naturali mihi ostenduntur, ut quòd ex eo quòd dubitem, sequatur me esse, & similia, nullo modo dubia esse possunt" (René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: A Bilingual Edition*, ed. George Heffernan (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), p. 126.)]

5 René Descartes, "Rules for the Direction of the Mind," in *Philosophical Essays and Correspondence* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2000), p. 4. ["ex disciplinis ab aliis cognitis solas Arithmeticam et Geometriam ab omni falsitatis vel incertitudinis vitio puras existere" (René Descartes, *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, ed. Artur Buchenau (Leipzig: Verlag der Dürr'schen Buchhandlung, 1907), p. 6.)] It should be noted that it is not only in the *Rules* that geometry is exemplified as a paradigmatic form of investigation. The *Meditations* also make this clear, as can be seen in the Dedicatory Letter to the Sorbonne in which Descartes compares his method to that of the geometers. (Descartes, *Meditations. Objections, and Replies*, p. 2.) So, while the *Rules* may be an unfinished work that Descartes ultimately abandoned, this should not preclude us from referencing the work, especially those parts which are consonant with other aspects of Descartes' thought. My own methodological preference is to seek unity in the thought of the philosophers whenever possible, rather than rejecting trains of thought that might be early and appear contradictory to later statements. I will do that here unless there is good reason for thinking that earlier statements are not reflective of Descartes' later thought.

6 Descartes, "Rules for the Direction of the Mind," p. 4. ["deductionem vero sive illationem puram unius ab altero posse quidem omitti, si non videatur, sed nunquam male fieri ab intellectu vel minimum rationali." (Descartes, *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, p. 6.)]

these are given through intuition: “intuition is the indubitable conception of a pure and attentive mind arising from the light of reason alone;” and further, “it [intuition] is more certain even than deduction, because it is simpler, even though, as we noted above, people cannot err in deduction either.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, it seems that Descartes is establishing a very simple method of establishing truth: we intuit principles, which are revealed by the *lumen naturale*, and then deduce conclusions from them. So knowledge requires two things for Descartes: intuition and deduction.<sup>8</sup> It is this method, laid out in the *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* and applied in the *Meditations*, which gives us knowledge.

It seems, then, that we can distinguish two elements in the method of acquiring knowledge: one active, deduction, and one passive, intuition. As the above quote shows, intuition “arises” [“nascitur” – literally “is begotten” or “to be born”] from the *lumen naturale* and then the process of deduction is applied to these intuitions to derive further conclusions. Both Morris and Boyle identify *lumen naturale* with a passive faculty of the intellect;<sup>9</sup> however, the situation is not so simple. If the *lumen naturale* were purely passive,

7 Descartes, “Rules for the Direction of the Mind,” p. 6. [“Per intuitum intelligo [by intuition I understand],... mentis purae et attentae non dubium conceptum, qui a sola rationis luce nascitur, et ipsamet deduction certior est, quia simplicior, quam tamen etiam ab homine male fieri non posse supra notavimus.” (Descartes, *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, p. 8.)] I might be making a small leap in equating “rationis luce” with the *lumen naturale*, but this does not seem unwarranted to me, given that the *cogito* is precisely such an “indubitable conception” and is clearly revealed by the *lumen naturale* for Descartes.

8 Nolan reduces deduction to intuition: “A Cartesian deduction, then, has nothing to do with formal relations between propositions or with valid argument forms; it is simply a concatenation of self-evident intuitions. It depends on intuition in the strong sense that there is nothing more to a demonstration than the individual intuitions, and the movement of thought between them, that compose it. Its only purpose is to induce an intuition that is not immediately attainable.” (Lawrence Nolan, “The Ontological Argument as an Exercise in Cartesian Therapy,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 35, no. 4 (2005): p. 524.) And later, more succinctly, he states, “Cartesian deduction...is just a series of intuitions  $a \dots n$ , where  $n$  is not immediately evident.” (Nolan, “The Ontological Argument as an Exercise in Cartesian Therapy,” p. 525.) This, however, fails to take into account the full complexity of how the *lumen naturale* functions for Descartes.

9 While both agree that the *lumen naturale* is passive, they disagree on what it does. Morris argues that it leads to knowledge in the sense of “acquaintance or recognition” of truth (John Morris, “Descartes’ Natural Light,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 11, no. 2 (1973): pp. 186–87.), while Boyle denies that it is a recognition of truth, rightly noting that this is a function of the will through judgment, instead claiming that *lumen naturale* functions when the intellect “perceives some proposition particularly clearly and distinctly”. (Boyle, “Descartes’ Natural Light Reconsidered,” p. 612.) If we follow Morris, then one must ask what am I acquainted with when I have knowledge? To recognize truth entails there be something to recognize the truth about, something that could possibly be false. This acquaintance and recognition cannot refer to things external to the mind of the subject, since the external world is founded upon what is revealed by the *lumen naturale* in the *Meditations*. And to say that the *lumen naturale* recognizes the truth of external things is to render the *lumen naturale* useless apart from an external world, and so it would be impossible to ground the external world upon it (the problem is worse with the concept of “acquaintance”). If this recognition refers to “things” in the mind of the subject, then what is meant by “truth”? To say the idea I have of a unicorn is true is meaningless unless I mean to say there is a real unicorn external to my mind. To say it is true that I have an idea of a unicorn or that my idea of a unicorn is a true unicorn is trivial. Boyle seems to me correct in denying that the *lumen naturale* is a perception of truth. Truth is a process of judgment for Descartes, and judgment is distinct from the *lumen naturale*. I hope this becomes clear later.

then there would be no work to do; it would simply reveal things from which deductions can be made. But this is not the case.

In the *Meditations*, the first thing revealed by the *lumen naturale* is the *cogito*. But this is not arrived at passively. It is through an active process of doubting that one comes to see that "I think" and therefore, "I exist". The second principle revealed by the *lumen naturale* – from which is deduced the principle that God exists and doesn't deceive – is that "there must be at least as much [reality] in the efficient and total cause as there is in the effect of that same cause."<sup>10</sup> There is a contrast here. The second principle seems to be received completely passively while the first is discovered actively. In the *Rules*, Descartes identifies two faculties of the mind, "perspicacity" and "sagacity", which correspond to intuition and deduction respectively.<sup>11</sup> It seems that these correspond to a passive and active faculty of the mind, especially when Descartes links the intuition of the *lumen naturale* with vision, traditionally viewed primarily as a passive faculty. However, Descartes adds that one must learn how to use this faculty, and one learns this precisely by comparing it with vision:

whoever wishes to look at many objects at one time with a single glance, sees none of them distinctly; and similarly whoever is used to attending to many objects at the same time in a single act of thought, is confused in mind. But those artisans who practice delicate operations, and are accustomed to direct the force of their eyes attentively to single points, acquire by use the ability to distinguish perfectly things as tiny and subtle as may be.<sup>12</sup>

And further, in a letter to Mersenne (October 16, 1639), Descartes points out that all men have the *lumen naturale* but they make poor use of it, and that there are many things knowable by means of the *lumen naturale*, but many have not been "reflected on."<sup>13</sup> Thus it seems clear that we cannot simply identify the *lumen naturale* as a passive faculty. It is linked to vision, but vision must be directed properly in order to function. Further, as we have seen, intuition *arises from* the *lumen naturale* and thus is not the *lumen naturale simpliciter*.

If it is not appropriate to strictly understand the *lumen naturale* as passive intuition with the process of deduction as active, how then are the three (intuition, deduction, and the *lumen naturale*) related? In the *Rules*, Descartes states that intuition has two conditions: "that the proposition [propositio] be clearly and distinctly understood, and, further, that it be understood in its entirety at one time and not successively."<sup>14</sup> Deduction, on the

<sup>10</sup> Descartes, *Meditations. Objections, and Replies*, p. 22. ["Jam verò lumine naturali manifestum est tantumdem ad minimum esse debere in causâ efficiente & totali, quantum in ejusdem causae effectû." (Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: A Bilingual Edition*, p. 128.)]

<sup>11</sup> Descartes, "Rules for the Direction of the Mind," p. 20.

<sup>12</sup> Descartes, "Rules for the Direction of the Mind," p. 20. ["nam qui vult multa simul obiecta eodem intuitu respicere, nihil illorum distincte videt; et pariter, qui ad multa simul unico cogitationis actu solet attendere, confuso ingenio est; sed Artifices illi, qui in minutibus operibus exercentur, et oculorum aciem ad singula puncta attente dirigere consueverunt, usu capacitatem acquirunt res quantumlibet exiguas et subtiles perfecte distinguendi"] (Descartes, *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, p. 26.)]

<sup>13</sup> René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, 3 vols., vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 139. (AT II, 598 – "auxquelles jamais personne n'a encore fait de reflexion.")

<sup>14</sup> Descartes, "Rules for the Direction of the Mind," p. 23. ["nempe ut propositio clare et distincte, deinde

contrary, is a successive movement of inference in the mind. What this reveals is that the *lumen naturale*, as intuition, is an immediate non-discursive grasp of some idea. While it does depend on the proper direction of the mind, intuition itself provides an immediate passive understanding. That this is also an *a priori* understanding is clear from the passage in the *Rules* noted above, where Descartes distinguished deduction from experience as a source of knowledge. Once this immediate intuitive understanding is passively disclosed, then we can move through the deductive process of inference to actively draw conclusions.

This explains the relation, at least partially, between intuition and deduction, and the relation of intuition and the *lumen naturale* seems clear. But what is the relation between deduction and the *lumen naturale*? Jacquette raises this same question when he states, “The relation between logic and the light of nature raises an interesting problem about Descartes’ validation of reasoning.... The assumptions might be directly justified by the light of nature. What about the deduction of conclusions from assumptions? Descartes is relatively silent about the epistemic status of logical implication.”<sup>15</sup> The process of deduction is a logical process, but what sort of logical process? A distinction must be made between logic as it is generally understood and the type deduction Descartes has in mind.<sup>16</sup> As Descartes states in the Preface to the French Edition of *Principles of Philosophy*, there is a kind of logic which “corrupts good sense rather than increasing it”, but what he has in mind by logic is that “which teaches us to direct our reason with a view to discovering the truths of which we are ignorant.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, what logic primarily does is teach us to direct our mind appropriately. How does it teach us this? As Descartes goes on to note, primarily through practice. From the following passage in *The Search after Truth*, we can further see that Descartes does not have a “traditionally” logical process in mind:

if you simply know how to make proper use of your own doubt, you can use it to deduce [deduci] facts which are known with complete certainty — facts which are even more certain and more useful than those which we commonly build upon that great principle, as the basis to which they are all reduced, the fixed point on which they all terminate, namely, ‘It is impossible that one and the same thing should exist and at the same time not exist.’<sup>18</sup>

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etiam ut tota simul et non successive intelligatur” (Descartes, *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, p. 30.)] It needs to be noted that the Latin “propositio” is not confined to linguistic statements. A proposition in our sense is one possible understanding of “propositio”, but the Latin meaning is broader. Literally, the word means “put before”, so any form of representation is a “proposition”. Later, in the *Meditations*, Descartes uses the Latin “idea” for what is “clearly and distinctly” understood. I believe this latter term better expresses what the *lumen naturale* reveals, as I hope to show.

**15** Jacquette, “Descartes’ Lumen Naturale and the Cartesian Circle,” p. 302.

**16** Hereafter, I will use the term “traditional” logic or “traditional” deduction to distinguish Descartes’ understanding from other more common understandings of logic or deduction. The term might not be perfect, but it should suffice for our purposes.

**17** René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 186. It should also be noted here that, as he explicitly states, the logic he is reacting against is Scholastic logic. But it remains to be seen what the logic he has in mind consists of.

**18** René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch, 3 vols., vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 415-16.

If the principle of non-contradiction is revealed by the *lumen naturale* and so is certain and indubitable, and if in a valid logical deduction the conclusions are as certain as the premises upon which they are based, then how can anything be more certain than the facts deduced from the principle of non-contradiction, since this principle, as revealed by the *lumen naturale*, is certain and the facts deduced from it must be equally as certain? There must be degrees of certainty.

But how are we to understand degrees of certainty? If one thing is only certain because of the certainty of some other thing upon which it depends, then the former is less certain than the latter, since its certainty is dependent and therefore derivative. In other words, if the conclusion of a deductive argument depends on the premises for its certainty, i.e. it is not certain in itself, then the conclusion is less certain than the premise(s) upon which it is based. But there is another way to understand deduction in which deduction simply unfolds what is contained in the "premises". In this case, the "conclusion" is already contained *in* the "premise" and so the certainty of the "conclusion" is not dependent upon that of the "premise" but is as certain as the "premise" by virtue of implicitly being nothing other than the "premise" more fully disclosed. This is Descartes' understanding of deduction, and in this conception, Descartes is distinguishing his form of deduction from "traditional" deduction in which the conclusions depend for their certainty on the original principles. So we can see that the dependent certainty of "traditional" deduction cannot be the case for Cartesian deduction which merely unfolds what lies within the principle. Dependent certainty is, then, an aspect of "traditional" deduction, since in "traditional" logic, new information is discovered in the conclusion. The distinction between these two forms of deduction, i.e. what we have called "traditional" deduction and Cartesian deduction, lies in the methodology. "Traditional" deduction *applies* logical rules to principles and thus *derives* new information through the application of these rules, while Cartesian deduction *unfolds* what is already implicit in the principle *revealing* its content more clearly.<sup>19</sup>

But is it correct that deduction for Descartes simply unfolds what is revealed? The answer becomes evident if we pay attention to the process by which the *cogito* is discovered. When Descartes finally concludes that because he thinks, he exists, it is not because he has followed logical rules and applied them to some principle; rather it is simply by drawing inferences from the one fact, i.e. that he doubts, that the conclusion that he exists unfolds. No logical rules are applied to principles, he simply "sees" what follows from the fact of doubting.<sup>20</sup> However, on the one hand he passively sees the *cogito* and on the other it is

<sup>19</sup> I do not see a problem should someone wish to argue 1) that not all logical systems operate this way or 2) that all logical systems in reality simply unfold what is contained within the premises and those which seem to reveal new knowledge simply unfold what is contained by multiple premises. In the case of the former, I would simply argue that either there is some other methodology by which that system derives new knowledge from principles and so is not what Descartes has in mind, or if it does not offer any new knowledge in its conclusion, it is simply an instance of what Descartes has in mind. In the latter case, I would simply argue that all logical systems operate in the way Descartes describes and so deduction in these systems too is an aspect of the *lumen naturale*. Descartes, however, clearly does not think the latter is the case.

<sup>20</sup> One might argue that the reason he "sees" this is because it is logically contradictory, based on the principle



actively unfolded. How is this to be understood? The process of deduction does not reveal anything new. The *cogito* was already revealed passively and immediately by intuition in the fact that “I” doubt. It becomes explicit in the deductive process of directing the mind onto the fact that “I” doubt and unfolding what lies within that fact. This is no new revelation; no new knowledge. It is revealed intuitively *by* the Light and unfolded deductively *into* the Light. Here, by the fact that nothing new is revealed by deduction, we can further see that deduction and intuition are two aspects of the same *lumen naturale*.

This process is precisely what Descartes is demonstrating in *The Search after Truth*. Eudoxus has brought Polyander to the point of the *cogito*, and is attempting to demonstrate to Epistemon that Polyander can now, following only common sense and his reason, proceed to unfold greater truths. Eudoxus states, “So let us hear what he [Polyander] has to say; let him tell us about the things which, so he told us, he saw to be *contained* in our first principle.” To which Polyander replies, “So many things are *contained* in the idea of a thinking thing that it would take whole days to *unfold* them.”<sup>21</sup> [emphasis added] So we can see that the process which Descartes has in mind is one in which what is contained in the idea revealed intuitively by the *lumen naturale* is unfolded and disclosed through deduction to reveal fuller truth. The process of deduction is an essential part of what is entailed in the mind’s grasping of what is revealed by the *lumen naturale*. The mind recognizes what is entailed within the idea passively revealed, and it does this actively through deduction. Thus, there is a clear relation between the *lumen naturale* and the process of deduction, i.e. what we have called Cartesian deduction, which might be called logical, although it would not be a logical process in the traditional sense in which logical rules are used to draw inferences.<sup>22</sup> And if we are correct in our analysis, then this deductive process, as a logical process which, through practice, “teaches us to direct our reason with a view to discovering truth”, is precisely the activity of directing the mind of which we have already spoken. But how is deduction to be understood as “directing the mind”, especially in the sense of directing the mind the way vision must be directed in order to function? The process of deduction directs reason toward the idea, and precisely by focusing reason toward this idea, discovers truth by actively drawing inferences out of the idea. So intuition passively and immediately reveals an idea, and deduction actively directs the mind toward the idea and unfolds what is contained within it. We can grasp what this means if we imagine a premise which is revealed intuitively, but until deduction turns toward the premise to draw inferences from the premise, the meaning of the premise is not truly grasped.

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of non-contradiction, for one to doubt and not exist, but I don’t think this is Descartes’ view, and I don’t think it is correct to view the argument this way.

<sup>21</sup> Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, 2, p. 420. [“EUDOXUS—...Audiamus itaque ipsum loquentem, et res, quas in vestro principio *contineri* se percepisse dixit ipse, exponere finamus. POLIANDER—Tot sunt res, quae in ideâ rei cogitantis *continentur*, ut integris diebus ad eas *explicandas* opus effiet.” (René Descartes, *Oeuvres de Descartes*, 12 vols., vol. 10, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery (Paris: Leopold Cerf, 1996), p. 527.) – emphasis added]

<sup>22</sup> If one wishes to argue that it could be such a logical system in which the logical rules are revealed by the *lumen naturale*, I will not argue the point. This would simply entail that the logical rules are derivative of and subordinate to this Cartesian deduction.

So deduction focuses the mind on the premise and actively unfolds the premise to reveal its meaning. We can now see that the *lumen naturale* is an immediate and deductive *a priori* understanding that has both active and passive elements, like sight.

Now we must examine the question regarding the object of the *lumen naturale*. To what is it directed, what are those things which it illumines? What precisely does *lumen naturale* do? Morris, along with Daniel, claims that the *lumen naturale* recognizes truth.<sup>23</sup> Boyle claims that what the *lumen naturale* does is perceive propositions, asserting that to claim it recognizes truth confuses the *lumen naturale* with judgment, whose function is to determine truth.<sup>24</sup> However, judgment, which belongs to the will, is not altogether independent of the *lumen naturale*. Boyle states,

some proposition is perceived so clearly and distinctly that it is as if a great light has illuminated the proposition in the mind, and the will immediately grants that the proposition is true. The 'light' occurs only in the intellect, as the idea is perceived, but the action of the will cannot be separated from the light; it is impossible, Descartes would say, for someone to perceive the idea and not assent.<sup>25</sup>

And Descartes notes,

For example, during these last few days I was examining whether anything in the world exists, and I noticed that, from the very fact that I was making this examination, it obviously followed that I exist. Nevertheless, I could not help judging that what I understood so clearly was true [non potui quidem non judicare illud quod tam clare intelligebam verum esse]; not that I was coerced into making this judgment because of some external force, but because a great light in my intellect gave way to a great inclination in my will and the less indifferent I was, the more spontaneously and freely did I believe it.<sup>26</sup>

Thus the will, and along with it judgment, cannot be separated from the *lumen naturale* insofar as once the *lumen naturale* reveals, the will is immediately inclined to judge what is revealed as true.

Boyle is correct, then, in stating that the *lumen naturale* does not recognize truth. While judgment, and thus recognizing truth, is inseparable from the action of the *lumen naturale*, it is not constitutive of the action of the *lumen naturale*. In the passage just quoted, Descartes distinguishes the judgment of the will and the understanding of the intellect, but as he also notes, this understanding comes from the "light in my intellect". The point of the passage above is that whenever the *lumen naturale* acts, the will is immediately inclined to judge what is revealed to be true, but the action of the will in judgment and intellect in understanding is distinct. The *lumen naturale*, however, does not simply understand, it reveals. What does it reveal?<sup>27</sup> The object revealed by the *lumen naturale* is not

<sup>23</sup> Stephen H. Daniel, "Descartes' Treatment of 'Lumen Naturale,'" *Studia Leibnitiana* 10, no. 1 (1978): p. 99.

<sup>24</sup> On Boyle's and Morris' view, see n. 9. What Boyle means by "propositions" is an interesting question and one which she fails to clarify. Since she seems to use "idea" and "proposition" interchangeably, I will not spend time on examining the possibilities here. For Descartes' use of the Latin "proposition" cf. n. 14 above.

<sup>25</sup> Boyle, "Descartes' Natural Light Reconsidered," p. 610.

<sup>26</sup> Descartes, *Meditations. Objections, and Replies*, p. 33.

<sup>27</sup> For Boyle's claim that it is propositions which are revealed, cf. n. 24.



some entity, if we understand entity as something existing external to the mind, since entities as external to the mind are derived from other things which themselves would need to be revealed by the *lumen naturale*. In other words, since an entity is derived from other entities, the *lumen naturale* cannot reveal the entity itself without revealing the other entities which are its source, so all things must be revealed together.<sup>28</sup> Or more simply, entities exist apart from the mind to which the objects of the *lumen naturale* is revealed. In the *Meditations*, Descartes calls the objects of the *lumen naturale* “clear and distinct ideas” [*clara et distincta idea*].<sup>29</sup> Significantly, in the Latin, “idea” means “archetype” and is closely identified with the Platonic ideas.<sup>30</sup> It is difficult to believe Descartes was unaware of this association and its implications. Given this association, could the object of *lumen naturale* be essences? In addition to the principles noted above, i.e. the *cogito* and that no effect can have more reality than its cause, some of the clear and distinct ideas that Descartes claims are revealed by the *lumen naturale* are size, shape, extension (length, breadth, depth), position, motion, substance, duration, and number.<sup>31</sup> That the *cogito* is an essence is clear. Descartes claims that what it reveals is my essence as a thing that thinks.<sup>32</sup> Are these other “ideas” essences?<sup>33</sup> We can see that what is revealed in the causal principle, i.e. that no effect can have more reality than its cause, is the essential nature of causes and their effects; the principle

<sup>28</sup> This is because if the entity is revealed but not its source, then something about the nature of the entity is left unrevealed. And so the entity itself is not revealed. Part of knowing an object is knowing how it is caused or how it arises. I cannot truly know an object without knowing its cause. If this seems controversial, it is enough to note that entities exist apart from the mind and *lumen naturale* reveals things to the mind, so whatever is revealed to the mind is distinct from the entity as existing in the world.

<sup>29</sup> E.g. Meditation IV (Descartes, *Meditations. Objections, and Replies*, p. 29 and 33.) While it is true that in the *Rules*, Descartes talks about propositions in such a way that it seems as though they are the objects of the *lumen naturale*, as we noted above (see n. 13), “proposition” is a broad term. Given that Descartes is discussing the *lumen naturale* much more explicitly in the *Meditations*, and he uses the term “idea”, which is quite specific in Latin, it would be wrong, it seems to me, to understand “idea” in the common English sense. For the broad English word “idea”, the Latin “propositio” would seem much more appropriate.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Lewis and Short’s Latin Dictionary

<sup>31</sup> Descartes, *Meditations. Objections, and Replies*, p. 24.

<sup>32</sup> “Yet I am a true thing and am truly existing; but what kind of thing? I have said it already: a thinking thing.” (Descartes, *Meditations. Objections, and Replies*, p. 15.) [“Sum autem res vera, & vere existens; sed qualis res? Dixi, cogitans.” (Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: A Bilingual Edition*, p. 104.)]

<sup>33</sup> It needs to be noted that to identify propositions with essences, e.g. the proposition “I am a thing that thinks” simply is my essence, causes problems. Obviously, the English phrase “I am a thing that thinks” is not my essence, and neither is the formal structure of the English phrase. So if we identify essence with proposition, what are propositions? In this case, a proposition must be something other than the simple linguistic formula “I am a thing that thinks”. The proposition must be something beyond the specific letters and grammatical structure, since these are merely accidental qualities as evidenced by the fact that the same proposition can be expressed in multiple languages with different grammatical structures and different letters. If we refer to the sense or reference of a proposition, we have still distinguished between the proposition and its reference/sense, and so have made a distinction between the proposition and the essence of that which is “meant” by the proposition. If we identify the proposition with the sense/reference, as distinct from the things referenced, then we still have a gap between the proposition and the thing whose essences is revealed. If we mean “proposition” in the Latin sense (cf. n. 14 above), then the identification of proposition with essence is possible,

of non-contradiction can be seen to reveal the essential nature of things in that they cannot be and not be at the same time in the same manner. And in size, shape, etc., what is revealed is the essential nature of size, shape, etc. What is not revealed, as Descartes makes clear, is their existence apart from the mind. Neither are they, as revealed in themselves, revealed as qualities of some other thing.<sup>34</sup>

So it seems safe to say that the object of the *lumen naturale* is essences, and this is what is revealed or perceived by the *lumen naturale*. These are certain because as essences, they simply are. There is no room for falseness. "Now as far as ideas are concerned, if they are considered alone and in their own right, without being referred to something else, they cannot, properly speaking, be false. For whether it is a she-goat or a chimera that I am imagining, it is no less true that I imagine the one than the other."<sup>35</sup> This is not as trivial as it seems. It is not simply the case that it cannot be doubted that I have this idea; the idea itself, as an idea of some thing, cannot be doubted as that thing of which it is an idea. In other words, it may be the case that there are no chimeras, but that my idea is the *idea* of a chimera cannot be doubted. A chimera is constituted by certain qualities, and that these qualities constitute my idea of a chimera can no more be doubted than that I have an idea. And since it is these qualities which constitute what a chimera is, whether it exists in reality or not, that this is the essence of a chimera cannot be doubted. It is important to note, the fact that this essence is essentially in the mind (or soul) of a subject shows the domain of the *lumen naturale* to be the realm of the subject. What it reveals is revealed to a subject, which signifies that what is essentially revealed is the subject itself. In other words, the fact that the idea of a chimera is revealed to a subject reveals, in addition to the essence of a chimera, the fact that the idea revealed *belongs to* the subject, i.e. it is *my* idea of a chimera, and so with the essence is revealed the subjectivity of the subject.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> They can, however, be revealed as part of the essence of something which has, as an essential property, a certain size or shape, e.g. elephants or triangles. So insofar as "size" is revealed by the *lumen naturale*, it is not the size of something. *Lumen naturale* can reveal "size" or "shape" along with some other thing it reveals. e.g. elephants or triangles, but insofar as it reveals "size" or "shape" itself, it reveals these as they are in themselves. This is clearly seen when Descartes talks about "matter". What is revealed "extension". not the extension of something but simply "extension". From "extension", the reality of the material world is revealed. Because "extension" is a clear and distinct idea, it cannot be false, therefore, there must be extended (material) things. Thus, the material world is revealed in the clear and distinct idea of "extension". And henceforth, matter can be unfolded as an essential property of things. (Cf. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditation 5) Thus, while size, shape, etc. do sound like Aristotelian categories, they do not primarily function as Aristotelian categories, if we understand Aristotle's categories to be accidental qualities of other substances, which, I think, it is clear that they are for Aristotle. They can be revealed, unfolded, as qualities of things, but they are not immediately revealed by the *lumen naturale* as such. I am grateful to an anonymous reader for pointing out the need for clarification here.

<sup>35</sup> Descartes, *Meditations. Objections, and Replies*, p. 20. [Jam quod ad ideas attinet, si solae in se spectentur, nec ad aliud quid illas referam, falsae proprie esse non possunt; nam sive capram, sive chimaeram imager, non minus verum est me unam imaginari quam alteram.] (Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: A Bilingual Edition*, p. 122.)

<sup>36</sup> Dr. Rene Jagnow argues that to claim that the *lumen naturale* exclusively reveals essences is too strong a claim and that while essences are revealed by *lumen naturale* accidental properties are also revealed by *lumen*

But just as an idea cannot be false, there can also be no judgment by the *lumen naturale* regarding its truth. Judgment regarding true and false belong to the will. As Descartes notes, "Through the intellect alone I merely perceive ideas, about which I can render a judgment."<sup>37</sup> And it is the will which renders judgments: "I should not complain because God concurs with me in eliciting *those acts of the will, that is those judgments*, in which I am mistaken."<sup>38</sup> [emphasis added] So Boyle is correct in pointing out that in claiming that the *lumen naturale* recognizes truth, "Morris attributes to the natural light a function which Descartes himself attributes to the will."<sup>39</sup> But as active, is the process of deduction not a function of the will? When I draw inferences, I must judge that this inference is contained in this idea; thus, since inference is a process of judgment, then truth and falsehood seem to arise in the deductive process. This might apply to what we have termed "traditional" deduction, but as we have seen, the deductive process for Descartes is one of unfolding what is already contained in the idea. Thus, to claim that deduction involves judgment would be a mischaracterization of the active deductive aspect of the *lumen naturale* as Descartes see it. Descartes' process of deduction does not "judge" that inferences are contained in the idea; rather it recognizes and unfolds them. This does not entail an activity of the will or judgment. As has already been noted, it is closer to the activity of "seeing" what is inherent in the idea revealed, rather than the activity of "judging" what is in the idea.<sup>40</sup>

So in short, the *lumen naturale* in Descartes is a capacity of the subject by which essences, including the subject's essence as a thing that thinks, are immediately revealed. It is passive in that it intuitively receives what is illumined but active in the sense that the mind must be appropriately oriented in order to "see" what is illumined, and in this directing of the mind, deduction actively unfolds what is contained in the immediate revelation of intuition. The being both of the subject and of the things is disclosed.

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*naturale*. Given the Latin meaning of "idea" as "archetype" and its association with Platonic "ideas" (as noted above), I would disagree, unless we might possibly understand this in the sense that accidental properties are *essentially* accidental, i.e. that their essence is to be accidental. Nevertheless, all that is essential for my paper is that *lumen naturale* reveal the essence of the subject as a "thinking thing", and this is clear in Descartes.

<sup>37</sup> Descartes, *Meditations. Objections, and Replies*, p. 31. ["Nam per solum intellectum percipio tantum ideas de quibus iudicium ferre possum" (Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: A Bilingual Edition*, p. 156.)]

<sup>38</sup> Descartes, *Meditations. Objections, and Replies*, p. 34. ["Nec denique etiam queri debeo, quod Deus mecum concurrat ad eliciendos illos actus voluntatis, sive illa iudicia, in quibus fallor" (Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: A Bilingual Edition*, p. 164.)]

<sup>39</sup> Boyle, "Descartes' Natural Light Reconsidered," p. 612. (Cf. also n. 8 above)

<sup>40</sup> It is not accidental that Descartes uses the term "perceive", which is both active and passive, when talking about the mind understanding things. "For since I now know that even bodies are not, properly speaking, perceived by the senses or by the faculty of imagination, but by the intellect alone, and that they are not perceived through their being touched or seen, but only through their being understood, I manifestly know that nothing can be perceived more easily and more evidently than my own mind." (Descartes, *Meditations. Objections, and Replies*, pp. 18-19.) ["nam cum mihi nunc notum sit ipsamet corpora, non proprie a sensibus, vel ab imaginandi facultate, sed a solo intellectu percipi, nec ex eo percipi quod tangantur aut videantur, sed tantum ex eo quod intelligantur aperte cognosco nihil facilius aut evidentius mea mente posse a me percipi." (Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy: A Bilingual Edition*, p. 116.)]

What, however, is the relation of the *lumen naturale* to the subject for Descartes? As Jacqueline notes,

The real foundation of Descartes' system is not the *cogito*, but his commitment to the light of nature as an infallible source of epistemic certainty. It might therefore be said, contrary to Descartes' assertion, that the certainty of the light of nature rather than the *cogito* is the real Archimedean point on which the whole of his philosophy rests.<sup>41</sup>

He supports this claim by quoting Descartes' letter to Clerselier, June or July 1646, I will only add that the word 'principle' can be taken in several senses. It is one thing to look for a *common notion* so clear and so general that it can serve as a principle for proving the existence of all the beings, or entities, to be discovered later; and another thing to look for a *being* whose existence is known to us better than that of any other, so that it can serve as a *principle* for discovering them. In the first sense, it can be said that 'It is impossible for the same thing both to be and not to be at the same time' is a principle which can serve in general, not properly speaking to make known the existence of anything, but simply to confirm its truth once known.... In the second sense, the first principle is *that our soul exists*, because there is nothing whose existence is better known to us. I will also add that one should not require the first principle to be such that all other propositions can be reduced to it and proved by it.<sup>42</sup>

What is important to note here is that Descartes makes a distinction between the *cogito* as a principle revealed by the *lumen naturale* and other principles revealed by the *lumen naturale*, e.g. the principle of non-contradiction. That the *cogito* is revealed by the *lumen naturale* might seem inconsequential, but it has significant ramifications. The *lumen naturale* for Descartes is the foundation of the subject's self-revelation. That the *cogito* is fundamental to all further revelation by the *lumen naturale* is clear from the *Meditations*. It, the *cogito*, is the ground upon which all further revelation is based not only as a paradigm for the type of thing revealed by the *lumen naturale* but also as the realm in which the revelation occurs. What is revealed by the *lumen naturale* is revealed *to* a subject and *in* a subject. This indicates that the *lumen naturale* is foundational to the subject, i.e. it grounds the subject's subjectivity by revealing the subject's subjectivity, i.e. the *cogito*, to itself. As Jacqueline points out, this indicates that the central point of Descartes' philosophy is actually the *lumen naturale* as opposed to the *cogito*. The *cogito* is grounded in the *lumen naturale* in that the *lumen naturale* discloses the being of the subject to itself. Further, since all revelation of the *lumen naturale* is revealed *in* the subject, i.e. what is revealed is in the mind of the subject, and the essence of the subject for Descartes *is* thought, all revelation of the *lumen naturale*, even such things as the essence of a chimera and the principle of non-contradiction, is essentially the self-revelation of the subject insofar as it reveals the subject to itself as that which *thinks* these ideas. Even the revelation of God's existence is subjectively grounded in the ideas of causal relations and perfection which the subject has in its mind.

<sup>41</sup> Jacqueline, "Descartes' Lumen Naturale and the Cartesian Circle," p. 301.

<sup>42</sup> Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, 3, p. 290. One might here ask how does the last sentence of this quote square with our claim that deduction unfolds what is within the principle revealed, but it is important to remember that the *cogito* is not the only principle revealed by the *lumen naturale*.

Insofar as what is revealed by the *lumen naturale* is essences, through this self-revelation the world, as what *is*, is also revealed. *Whether* the world is, however, remains a mystery to the *lumen naturale*.

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## **Freedom: Created or Uncreated**

### **Sergius Bulgakov and Nikolai Berdyaev on the Creatio Ex Nihilo and the Third Kind of Non-Being**

*Abstract:* There are two reasons why Christian theology introduces the concept of the absolute nothing into its doctrine of creation. Firstly, unlike platonic non-being, the absolute *nihil* is not eternally co-existent with God and it does not limit His creative freedom. We notice that God's freedom is identified with the freedom to create. Platonic non-being represented a necessity. To create, therefore, means to be able to overcome every form of necessity. The concept of the absolute nothing, therefore, needs to provide an ontological ground for the creation of the absolute *novum*. Sergius Bulgakov and Nikolai Berdyaev, the authors I am quoting in this essay, agree that the apology of the world is inconceivable on the level of monistic ontology, for which substance or *ousia* is the main category. They are aware that simultaneous communion and otherness between God and the world is imaginable only on the level of the person or *hypostasis*. Christian theology introduces absolute nothing to secure God's creative freedom. God is free if He can overcome givenness and create a newness in being. But Bulgakov stresses that to "create out of nothing" means that God creates out of Himself. God can create only what is already given in Him. Berdyaev's God does not create out of Himself but out of uncreated freedom. Berdyaev explicitly confirms uncreatedness of freedom by stressing that this freedom is outside of God. This is why God can break through the givenness of the world and create an absolute newness.

There are two reasons why Christian theology introduces the concept of the absolute nothing into its doctrine of creation. These two reasons are closely intertwined. Firstly, unlike platonic non-being, the absolute nihil is not eternally co-existent with God and it does not limit His creative freedom. We notice that God's freedom is identified with the freedom to create. What does it mean to create?

Platonic non-being represented a necessity. To create, therefore, means to be able to overcome every form of necessity. How do we define necessity? Necessity is the existence of a given reality that prevents us from creating newness in being. The concept of the absolute nothing, therefore, needs to provide an ontological ground for the creation of the absolute novum. God is free insofar as He can create that, which is different from what already exists. This implies that He also needs to create something other than Himself. To be God's other means to be different from Him as well as to be new to Him. So, secondly, by



empowering God to bring forth His other, the concept of the nothing also creates a possibility for ontological alterity of the world. But if we depict the “nothing” as the absolute nothingness, this would imply that there is another form of necessity for God - the necessity of His being which is incapable of providing room for the world.

Neither platonic relative non-being nor Christian absolute non-being could serve as the ground for divine and creaturely freedom. Can we imagine a third kind of non-being, nothing that would help us overcome the external necessity of the co-eternal matter as well as the internal necessity of God’s being?

Sergius Bulgakov and Nikolai Berdyaev, the authors I am quoting in this essay, agree that the apology of the world is inconceivable on the level of monistic ontology, for which substance or *ousia* is the main category. They are aware that simultaneous communion and otherness between God and the world is imaginable only on the level of the person or hypostasis. As John Zizioulas writes, “It is a person that makes this possible because it is only a person that can express communion and otherness simultaneously...”<sup>1</sup>

So it is only the Personal God who can create the alterity of the world without causing separation. But what is the quality of the person that allows for simultaneous communion and otherness, a quality that the impersonal divinity of the ancient philosophy lacks? And how is this question related to the problem of “nothing”? Maybe the fundamental difference between the person and the substance is that the former overcomes monism thanks to its binary structure in which there is a space for the “nothing” and the world’s ontological integrity?

However, there are different understandings of the “nothing” and not all of them are fit to be the foundation of the world. It seems reasonable that the inauguration of a revolutionary concept should require a ground-breaking ontology. The ancient Greek ontology is not adequate for ontological freedom of the world described as “absolute ontological otherness”. This ontology supports solely modal freedom: the world is only God’s modality. So pantheism is supposedly “evaded” because, although God creates out of Himself, He first creates the “nothing”, and only then out of this nothing does He create the world. It seems that God can create His other only if He first denies its existence.

### **Bulgakov on the Nothing and Modal Freedom**

A good example of the concept of modal freedom is to be found in the work of Sergius Bulgakov. During the last decade, we have been witnessing a renaissance of the scholarly interest in Bulgakov’s work.<sup>2</sup> There is little doubt that the Russian émigré theologian has been one of the most influential Orthodox thinkers, despite his somewhat controversial teach-

<sup>1</sup> John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, ed. Paul McPartlan (New York, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2004), 29.

<sup>2</sup> This year Sergii Bulgakov’s Research Center, Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, and Volos Academy for Theological Studies co-organised an international conference *Building the House of Wisdom*, which was hosted by Fribourg University in Switzerland. Some of the prominent Orthodox thinkers in the West, such as David Bentley Hart, for example, see traces of genius in Bulgakov’s work and rank him far above any other Russian thinker of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

ing of the Divine Sophia.<sup>3</sup> So what is Bulgakov's view of the "nothing" and is it capable of supporting the ontological alterity of the world?

In the Christian understanding of the relation between the world and God, it is first necessary, reminds us, Bulgakov, to exclude two opposites: pantheistic monism, on the one hand, and ontological dualism, on the other. For pantheistic monism, the world is self-enclosed and self-sufficient. This worldview is fundamentally atheistic because it denies the existence of a divine being that is above the world or in the world.<sup>4</sup>

Dualism, by contrast, is characterised by the recognition of the world's createdness. However, the world is not created by one creator but by two. The second divinity is sometimes described as the original mother-matter or Tiamat, or as a "place" for the world similar to Plato's *chora*. *Chora* is a space where the world finds its existence alongside God's absoluteness.<sup>5</sup>

Bulgakov stresses that it is legitimate and even inevitable to strive to find an ontological place for the world to protect it from the fullness of the divine being and to avoid pantheism.<sup>6</sup> He explains that the idea of the *creatio ex nihilo* was introduced precisely in an attempt to distinguish ontologically God and the world.<sup>7</sup> Are we to understand that the "nothing" has an ontological status independent from God? Can we say that the "nothing" is "something" in the sense of an autonomous ground for the world, for how else are we supposed to distinguish ontologically the world and God? Bulgakov's answer is negative.

There is no place and can be no place of its own or independent ground for the world which would belong to it alone. If there is such a place, it must be established by God, for there is nothing outside of or apart from God and that in this sense is not-God.<sup>8</sup>

The "nothing" should not be conceived as something existing before the creation of the world as its indispensable material, argues Bulgakov. The formula that the world was created out of nothing has, first of all, a negative meaning: no extra-divine ground for creation exists. According to Pseudo-Dionysios, reminds us, Bulgakov, God also created nothing. We can distinguish two kinds of "nothing": first, the precreaturely nothing or pure ontological zero, which is only a result of a logical deduction. Second, the ontic, creaturely nothing or *me on*, which permeates creation.<sup>9</sup> The first kind of nothing is the *ouk on* or the absolute non-being of Christian theology used instead of the platonic *me on* or pre-ex-

<sup>3</sup> Because of his teaching on the Divine Sophia and creaturely Sophia, some scholars would probably argue that Bulgakov is not the best representative of the Orthodox understanding of the "nihil". I would contend, nonetheless - without further elaboration in this essay - that Bulgakov's idea bears a strong resemblance to the Maximian concept of the *logoi* which, as Divine Sophia, are the part of God's mind, but as creaturely Sophia are similar to the *logoi* that dwell in the created things.

<sup>4</sup> Sergius Bulgakov, *The Bride and the Lamb*, trans. Boris Jakim, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2002), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 6. Emphasis mine.

<sup>9</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 7.



istent matter. But this absolute non-being is a “pure ontological zero”, an abstract notion, which is a result of logical hypothesising and it does not exist.

“The nothing out of which the world is created is precisely a not-something, the pure not of ontological emptiness.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, Christian theology has been claiming that the world was created out of a not-something, an absolute nothing that does not exist, instead of simply saying that the world was created out of God. Bulgakov acknowledges the legitimacy of striving to find a special place for the world, but only to conclude that such a place does not exist. He is, however, aware that if there is no ontological place for the world - there is no world.<sup>11</sup>

### Static and Dynamic Plane

Having escaped dualism, are we not returning to divine monism, which is the antipode of pantheistic monism? While the latter claims that all is the world and there is no supreme Being above the world, the former proclaims that all is God and that there could be no place for being outside of God. The solution, argues Bulgakov, is to transfer our inquiry “from the static to the dynamic plane.”<sup>12</sup> What is it that Bulgakov entails by the static and the dynamic plane?

The world relates to God not as equal to Him, not as a mode of being coordinated with Him, but as a heterogeneous mode of being. The world is created by God; it is His creation. The world's existence is a special modality of being. This being is one; it is precisely the divine being. And for the world, there is no other ground, or “place” of being except this createdness by God, except this special mode of the divine being. And the fact that the world is created out of nothing means only that the world exists in God and only by God, for the world does not have in itself the ground of its being.<sup>13</sup>

Instead of a special place for the world, what Bulgakov offers is the problem of creation. Creation determines both the being of the world and its relationship with God - createdness is precisely this relationship.<sup>14</sup>

How do we overcome divine monism by moving from “the static to the dynamic plane”? How can the world be distinguished from God and prove that it has an ontological reason for its existence? Firstly, Bulgakov seems to be more concerned about preserving God's absoluteness than establishing the world's difference. We read this in the quoted paragraph, where Bulgakov writes that the world is not “equal” to God. Perhaps for its ontological otherness, the world does not need to be equal to God but simply to be different? Bulgakov answers that the world belongs to a heterogeneous mode of being; the world's existence is a special modality of being. In other words, since there is only one being - divine being - the world can be different only in terms of the modality of that being. This in other words means that God created the world out of Himself. But to endow

<sup>10</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 6.

<sup>11</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 7.

<sup>12</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 7.

it with something of its own, He first created “nothing”. Consequently, out of this “nothing” God created the world.

Only the relative non-being, *me on*, exists. This nothing is included in the state of the relative being of creatures, in the context of this being, as a kind of half-shadow or shadow in the latter. In this sense, one can, following Pseudo-Dionysius, say that God also created nothing. And the analysis of the idea of creation necessarily includes this notion of the “creation of nothing” as a characteristic feature of the creative act.<sup>15</sup>

Bulgakov acknowledges that it is not possible to distinguish God and the world on the ontological plane, so he introduces the plane of modality. How is the inauguration of modality supposed to help us avoid divine monism? Not only that the world needs to be ontologically different, but it also must not be separated from God. How can we conceive of a simultaneous communion and alterity of God and the world? According to Bulgakov, this is possible only if we introduce the idea of creation and createdness. “Is the world created by God, or does it have its being and thus does not need to be created?”<sup>16</sup>

The idea of createdness was relatively alien to ancient philosophy.<sup>17</sup> It plays no role in Plato’s theory of ideas. Ideas represent the world of the genuinely existent of which the world is a duplicate. In Bulgakov’s terms, the world of ideas is the Divine Sophia while the world is the creaturely Sophia, “the same ideas but submerged in nothing.” How can we overcome the ontological hiatus separating the ideal realm from the creaturely one without abolishing the possibility of communion? This is what Aristotle had in mind in his critique of Platonism.<sup>18</sup> Platonism has no solution for this problem because the fundamental question of the connection of ideas and the world in God is not posed. In Plato, there is only Sophia, divinity without God. The problem, we shall see shortly, is that Sophia or divinity is an impersonal principle and it should be identified with the divine nature, while Bulgakov’s God is a Person. Bulgakov is saying that our problem cannot be resolved on the level of nature or substance, but only on the level of the person. The natural level is static, personal level is dynamic.

Aristotle understood that platonic ideas do not exist in things but above and outside of them, which made them only abstract shadows. To the extra-mundane ideas Aristotle opposes the same ideas but connected to the concrete things of the world as their entelechies or goal-causes. But the main problem with Aristotle’s philosophy, in Bulgakov’s opinion, is that God and the world merge to the point of indistinguishability. Aristotle’s system is marked by the limitations of antiquity. This means, firstly, that it does not contain the idea of creation and createdness; secondly, this system is essentially impersonalistic, since the lack of the idea of the person is generally absent from Hellenism. Aristotle describes God not as a Person but as the Prime Mover. “The unmoved mover is identical with the world, though it differs from the world in the mode of its being.”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 44. Emphasis mine.

<sup>16</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 8.

<sup>17</sup> In Plato’s *Timaeus*, of course, the idea of creation is present, but the creator is a demiurge and not God. Bulgakov 2002, 9.

<sup>18</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 11.

Since Aristotle's prime mover is not a person, we can only speak of a causal relation between God and the world: God is the cause of the world and the world is God's effect. This idea was later adopted by Thomism. According to Bulgakov, however, if we bring the Personal God into play, the world is no longer God's effect but creation. We need to postulate the Personal God without whom Sophia is inconceivable because Sophia needs a personal mode of existence in order to be.

But Sophia, as well as sophianicity, cannot be conceived outside of a relation to the One to whom this Sophia belongs as His self-revelation... i.e., to the Personal, Trihypostatic God. Divinity belongs to God, who has divinity and in this sense is divinity. But, in itself, divinity is not yet a personal God. Divinity is different from Him, although it is contained in Him, inherent in Him. But this connection of God and Sophia, without separation but also without identification (just as hypostasis and ousia are indivisible but not identical), was not known outside of revelation, in paganism... The chief defect... of Aristotle's religiophilosophical system lies in this identification of God with divinity or Sophia... Its main difficulty as well as its inconsistency consists in the fact that it is equally incapable of really connecting or distinguishing God and the world.<sup>20</sup>

The primary problem of Aristotle's philosophy is that he identifies God with divinity, i.e., not with the hypostasis or personal principle but with ousia or (impersonal) being. Aristotle attempts to distinguish God and the world, but he cannot achieve this because of the lack of the personal God who is connected to His world as the Creator with his creation. "It is precisely this connection that simultaneously unites and separates God and the world."<sup>21</sup>

The mystery of the person, therefore, becomes central to solving the problem of communion and otherness. John Zizioulas is also acutely aware of this as he explains that for the Fathers freedom was not only the origin of the world, but the being of God was a result of a free person, the Father. Since the source of the divine being is the Father's person, the unity of God was no longer in the one substance of God, but in the free person of the Father.<sup>22</sup> "It is a person that makes this possible because it is only a person that can express communion and otherness simultaneously..."<sup>23</sup>

### Bulgakov on the Person

What is Bulgakov's concept of the person and exactly which quality of the person in his view allows for simultaneous expression of communion and otherness? We shall investigate this issue by looking into Bulgakov's critique of Thomism, which, in his view, is a continuation of the impersonal Aristotelian philosophy.<sup>24</sup> Just like Aristotle, Aquinas sees

<sup>20</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 13.

<sup>21</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 13. E. Gilson is making a subtle distinction between creation as an effect, to which has been accidentally added a certain similarity with its cause, and creation as analogue, which, in his opinion, is "much more than an effect." Etienne GILSON, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, p. 96. As Gilson explains, while the matter of Timaeus is simply informed by the Ideas in which it participates, the matter of the Christian theology receives its existence from God. The analogue, therefore, is different from the effect because it receives its existence and substantiality from its Creator. Gilson, 96. Bulgakov's distinction between the effect and the creation is not fundamentally different from the doctrine of analogia entis.

<sup>22</sup> Zizioulas, 2004, pp. 40-41.

<sup>23</sup> Zizioulas 2004, 29.

<sup>24</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 19.

the relation between God and the world as the relation between cause and effect. Typically, Aquinas fails to describe this relation in terms of the Creator and creation. Again, Bulgakov repeats without further elucidation that this relationship is defined statically and not dynamically. We can guess that the relationship between the cause and effect is “static” because it is mechanical and, confined to the circle of the divine monism, fails to produce otherness.

God in the world, or the world in God, is a gradation of images of being in the descending or ascending perfection of different steps of being, depending on the degree of nonbeing or imperfection that is added in. God sees himself in himself, but he sees what is other to himself not in this other but in himself... The multiplicity of creaturely being results from its imperfection, defectus.<sup>25</sup>

The purely pantheistic, Aristotelian definition of the relation between God and the world, continues Bulgakov, is further complicated by the introduction of the Christian doctrine of the *creatio ex nihilo*. These two ideas would not normally form natural unity, but Aquinas nevertheless unites when, defining creation, he uses the pantheistic term emanation.<sup>26</sup> Bulgakov also criticises Aquinas’ distinction between *Deus* and *Alia a Deo*, God and other than God. There is something in God that is “other” than God but at the same time belongs to Him. This could be only the Divine Sophia, argues Bulgakov, which is the self-revelation of God in himself.

At this point, we detect a major problem of Bulgakov’s theology. How can God’s self-revelation be something “other” than God? As the nonhypostatic Divinity, the Divine Sophia is a different name for God’s nature. This is clear because Bulgakov stresses that Divinity never exists without being hypostasized. “The distinction between *Deus* and *Alia a Deo*, therefore, refers to hypostasis and hypostatizedness, to God and Divinity.”<sup>27</sup> Identification of the divine nature with God’s self-revelation, however, is an apparent example of monism: God has to prove His absoluteness by dominating even His nature. Clearly, for Bulgakov, there can be nothing alongside God, not even His nature.<sup>28</sup> The existence of the divine nature non-domesticated by God would imply a potency that still needs to be actualised. But God, being perfect, must be fully realised, must be an *actus purus*. This is why Bulgakov cannot accept Aquinas’ view of the never-realized possibilities in God.<sup>29</sup>

To the idea of different and manifold possibilities in God, actualised and unactualised, we must oppose the idea of the uniqueness of the ways of God, a uniqueness that excludes all other, unactualised possibilities.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 21. Emphasis mine.

<sup>26</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 22.

<sup>27</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 23.

<sup>28</sup> A similar misconception of the notion of nature is visible in the work of John Zizioulas. It is one thing to say that nature needs hypostasis to be realised, but something completely different than nature, left on its own, does not possess an ontology of its own. If nature did not possess a potency as its ontological status, there would be nothing to be enhypostatized. J. Zizioulas, ‘Person and Nature in the Theology of St Maximus the Confessor’, in: *Knowing the Purpose of Creation Through the Resurrection*, ed. Bishop Maxim (Vasiljevic), (Alhambra CA, 2013), 101.

<sup>29</sup> Bulgakov 2002, pp.22-23.

<sup>30</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 31.

In summary, Bulgakov claims that God created His nature/Divine Sophia, which in creation is duplicated in the creaturely Sophia. But creaturely Sophia is not simply the reflection of Divinity, because this would be pantheism. To discriminate between two realms, Bulgakov introduces the “nothing” - the world is created out of nothing and the seeds of the Divine Sophia are planted into this “nothingness”. What distinguishes the Divine Sophia from its creaturely counterpart is this “nothingness”.

This schema creates immense confusion because, in the final analysis, the creaturely Sophia does not differ from God. Firstly, the “nothing” which is the origin of the creaturely Sophia is both created by God and from God and cannot be His other. Secondly, the Divine Sophia, Divinity or God’s nature, is also created by God. So in the form of the Divine Sophia - which is His self-revelation - God is planting His seeds in the “nothing”. But this “nothing” as created by Him cannot be ontologically different from Him because this would create a bifurcation in being. Furthermore, what is the ontological status of the “nothing” created by God? Since it is God’s creation and does not co-exist with Him, we cannot identify it with the platonic *me on*. Neither could it be the *ouk on* or the absolute non-being because, as we have seen, to say that the world is created out of the absolute nothing is tantamount to claiming that God creates out of Himself.

Thirdly, Bulgakov does not explain how uncreated seeds of the Divine Sophia, once immersed into nothingness, become created seeds. For Bulgakov, this dialectic of uncreated and created seems to be happening on the level of nature. But nature is a non-relational category. Nature can only result in emanation, which precludes otherness. Since nature exists only as hypostasized, the problem of otherness needs to be transferred to the personal level.

Struggling with the same problem, Zizioulas concluded that, in its “terrifying ontological ultimacy”, the person needs to be “uncreated”, i.e., ontologically unique. In other words, we can claim that the person is created as long as this implies that it is not determined by God. It follows that the person is possible only if God creates it out of nothing, but it must not be determined by God. The person is conceivable only if God is the Person. But God can be the Person only if in the binarity of his structure He possesses something other than Him.

Bulgakov’s concept of the person is therefore unsatisfactory. He argues that the issue of otherness is resolved only on the dynamic or personal level, but his argument remains doctrinal. Bulgakov never explains theologically how the person achieves simultaneous communion and otherness.

Bulgakov was forced to deny the ontological freedom of the world and to substitute it with the concept of modal freedom. The idea of modal freedom is essentially monistic because it maintains that the world is God’s self-revelation in a different modality. Bulgakov is rejecting the cause/effect relationship between God and the world because it leads inevitably to the absorption of the second cause by the first cause.

A causal conception of the relation between God and the world does not leave a place for the being of the world and is not capable of justifying it... The world does not exist and therefore man with his freedom and his fate does not exist. There is, in general, nothing that differs from the first cause; the greyness of causal monism is triumphant.<sup>31</sup>

31 Bulgakov 2002, 220.

As a solution, Bulgakov suggests only a more subtle form of causation. In his attempt to break away with monism, he is employing new terms - Creator and creation. The difference between the cause and Creator is that Creator's productive act is not the mechanical causation of the world's being, but His going out of Himself and positing of the world as creaturely Sophia. The problem with the world's status in the scheme of causation is that the world does not have something of its own and is consequently absorbed by the first cause. But if we look carefully, the relation between Creator and creation terminates with the same outcome. As Bulgakov stresses, in the creation of the world, God repeats and doubles his being beyond the Divine Sophia in the creaturely Sophia. The creaturely Sophia nonetheless is not a second cause mechanically caused by a first cause. So, if the world is not a second cause, in what way is it different from it?

It is not, because the creaturely Sophia is only "the self-repetition" of the Divine Sophia.<sup>32</sup> The fact that the creaturely Sophia has in itself "the force of the divine being", that "it abides in becoming as the true substance, the entelechy and the mover of the world", does not necessarily entail that it is ontologically different from God.<sup>33</sup> We could argue moreover that the idea of the Divine Sophia is even more consistently monistic than the platonic concept of the Ideas. By saturating the world in its totality, the Divine Sophia leaves no room for the autonomy of the creation, while the platonic *prima materia* at least has the power to resist the union with the ideas.

Although the creaturely Sophia is endowed with sophianicity and the capacity of self-perfection, this does not mean that it will ever cease to be God's self-repetition - God in a different modality. Indeed, Bulgakov replaces the concept of the first cause with the notion of Creator, but his Creator is not different from an impersonal substance. The main characteristic of impersonal, mechanical causation is that it can achieve only an ontological repetition.

We see how the ontology of the absolute non-being fails to accomplish its main mission and to overcome divine monism. Since ontology of the relative non-being ends in dualism and ontology of absolute non-being collapses in pantheism, perhaps our quest for the sufficient ontological ground of the world is inevitably a failure? Can we imagine a third kind of non-being on which simultaneous communion and otherness between God and the world is grounded; a third kind of non-being that, despite being other than God, does not create division? To do that, we need to make an ontological paradigm shift and depict God not as a monolithic *actus purus* but as a *coincidentia oppositorum*. When I say *coincidentia oppositorum* I imply that God's being is characterised by binary structure and the dialectical unity of the opposites - divine nature and Hypostatic God. To preserve nature's alterity, however, we cannot define it as God's self-revelation. Nature has to remain outside of God, as something uncreated. Nature is outside of God as uncreated freedom, but since God constantly draws otherness from nature's potency, it is possible to postulate that nature is also in God.

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<sup>32</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 222.

<sup>33</sup> Bulgakov 2002, 222.



## Berdyaev and the Problem of the Nothing

With his notion of uncreated freedom, Nikolai Berdyaev breaks with the tradition of classical ontology and offers a third kind of non-being. This third kind of nothing is supposed to provide for the ontological apology of the world. The same motives are behind the Lurianic concept of *tsimtsum* or divine contraction, by which God leaves space of freedom for His creation. The Lurianic theory of God's contraction branched off in all possible directions: from Christian Kabbalah, via Jacob Boehme, German Pietism and German Idealism, up through Levinas, Derrida, Harold Bloom and many others. Through Boehme and his concept of the *Ungrund*, the theory of *tsimtsum* reached Berdyaev.

Some Jewish scholars have recently argued about the radical novelty of this concept, perceiving it as a breaking point in the emergence of the modern intellectual world.<sup>34</sup> The questions they have asked about the significance of *tsimtsum* are also applicable in the case of uncreated freedom. To what extent is Berdyaev's uncreated freedom innovative? Does it have the potential to reform modern metaphysics and liberate it from the Neoplatonic tradition? Has it realized its potential?<sup>35</sup>

Unlike impersonal causation, personal creativity generates a surplus in being. But to be able to enlarge being, the person needs to be in a dialectical union with bottomless and uncreated freedom. Berdyaev maintains,

Even at the beginning, before the formation of the world, there was the irrational void of freedom that had to be illuminated by the Logos. This freedom is not a form of being which existed side by side with the Divine Being... It is rather that principle without which being could have no meaning for God, and which alone justifies the divine plan of the world. God created the world out of nothing, but it would be equally true to say that He created it out of freedom. Creation must be grounded upon that limitless freedom that existed in the void before the world appeared. Without freedom, creation has no value for God.<sup>36</sup>

Several points in this paragraph require our attention. Firstly, irrational freedom is different from platonic co-eternal non-being. Berdyaev wants to say that platonic nothing is a medium that does not allow for unhindered divine creativity. To be an endless medium, platonic nothing would need to rest on bottomless freedom. This idea, however, was absent from ancient philosophy because, for the Greeks, the world is eternally completed.<sup>37</sup> Secondly, *primaeval* freedom is that principle without which the being of the world has no meaning for God and the principle that justifies the creation of the world. To be meaningful for God, the created being would need to be ontologically autonomous. Thirdly, God created the world out of nothing, but this is tantamount to say-

<sup>34</sup> Agata Bielik-Robson and Daniel H. Weiss, Preface, in *Tsimtsum and Modernity: Lurianic Heritage in Modern Philosophy and Theology*, eds. Agata Bielik-Robson and Daniel H. Weiss, (De Gruyter, Berlin, 2021), XVI.

<sup>35</sup> Bielik-Robson and H. Weiss 2021, Preface, XVI. As for the similarities and differences between Uncreated freedom and *tsimtsum*, we need to leave this investigation for a future essay.

<sup>36</sup> Nicolas Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit*, trans. Olivier Fielding Clarke (San Rafael CA, Semantron Press 2009), 165. Emphasis mine.

<sup>37</sup> "Socrates, and the Greeks in general, recognized only the existence of the second kind of freedom, which come to us through reason, truth and goodness." Berdyaev 2009, 125.

ing that the world was created out of freedom. Nothing, therefore, is limitless freedom. Fourthly, Berdyaev argues that

God is omnipotent in his relation to being. But God is not omnipotent in his relation to non-being.<sup>38</sup> In the beginning, was the Word, but in the beginning, also there was freedom. The latter is not opposed to the Word, for without it the Logos or the Meaning of the world does not exist...<sup>39</sup>

Bulgakov's God is the creator of nothing, which He uses to create the world. But the essential difference between emanation and creation is that after the act of creation there must be more being than there was before. Berdyaev claims,

The creative act does not create out of nature<sup>40</sup> of the creator ... but out of nothing... Every creative act, in essence, is the creation out of nothing: the production of new forces rather than the changing or re-arrangement of the old. In every creative act there is absolute gain, something added.<sup>41</sup>

Since in Bulgakov's creation nothing ontologically new is added to God, creation is not different from emanation and the Creator is not different from the mechanical first cause. But if God's creativity is not an augmentation of Being, how do we define it? If that which comes out of God does not make Him larger, it could only make Him smaller. Either creation is defined as expansion, or the distinction between creation and emanation is obliterated. Berdyaev argues,

The doctrine of emanation does not know the creative act in God, and hence it does not know the creative act at all - only an outflow. For an emanational consciousness of God and the world, power flows out and is variously dispensed but does not increase. God flows out in His emanation into the world. In Plotinus Divinity is not diminished in its power by the fact that its rays emanate into the world. But a consistent doctrine of emanation must lead to a doctrine of the diminution of Divine power... Divinity is powerless to create a world, but it may become a world. And the divine power emanating into the world must necessarily be diminished and decreased.<sup>42</sup>

Eradication of the difference between creation and emanation, we have seen, is due to the lack of the genuine concept of the person in Bulgakov's theology. The person has to be "uncreated" or created from uncreated freedom. The concept of the person is possible only if it is grounded on *primaeval* freedom.

By contrast, Berdyaev is suggesting that God did not create the non-being and cannot claim power over it. So in the beginning there was God, but there was also freedom. This freedom is not opposed to God but is the source of His power to create his non-determined other - the person.

At this point, Berdyaev is adding one final stroke to his picture of the non-being.

According to Boehme, this freedom is in God; it is the inmost mysterious principle of divine life; whereas I conceived it to be outside of God.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> The first two sentences are missing from the English translation.

<sup>39</sup> Berdyaev 2009, pp. 165-166.

<sup>40</sup> I take that here by "create out of nature" Berdyaev implies "to create out of God."

<sup>41</sup> Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, trans. Donald A. Lowrie (San Rafael CA, 2008), 128.

<sup>42</sup> Berdyaev 2008, 131. Emphasis mine.

<sup>43</sup> Nicolai Berdyaev, *Dream and Reality* (London, Geoffrey Bless, 1950), 179; *Samopoznanie*, (Moskva, Hranitel, 2007), 220.

This point is of paramount importance because it finally and unequivocally establishes uncreatedness and externality of freedom, without which ontological freedom is implausible. After we posit freedom outside of God, it is no longer possible to confuse Berdyaev's theory of uncreated freedom with the Lurianic *tsimtsum* and its ramifications. For Gershom Scholem, who deserves credit for bringing *tsimtsum* back to contemporary philosophy, *tsimtsum* is God's contraction or creation out of the void of nothing. In Scholem's view, by retreating into Himself and by positing a negative factor in Himself, God liberates creation.<sup>44</sup> However, there is no doubt that the void of freedom is created by God and therefore deprived of its alterity.

## Conclusion

The reason why Christian theology introduces absolute nothing is to secure God's creative freedom. God is free if He can overcome givenness and create a newness in being. But Bulgakov stresses that to "create out of nothing" means that God creates out of Himself. Thus, God can create only what is already given in Him. The notion of the person cannot rest on the ontology of the absolute non-being, which makes Bulgakov's God similar to the impersonal substance. We may conclude that introduction of the absolute nothing did not achieve its main goal.

Berdyaev's God does not create out of Himself but out of uncreated freedom. Berdyaev explicitly confirms uncreatedness of freedom by stressing that this freedom is outside of God. This is why God can break through the givenness of the world and create an absolute newness. Ontology of uncreated freedom accomplishes its main goal and liberates God from givenness. This, in my view, confirms that the idea of uncreated freedom - the freedom that is outside of God - is fundamentally innovative and bestowed with the potential to revolutionise modern metaphysics.

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<sup>44</sup> Gershom Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis. Selected Essays*, ed. Wener Dannhauser (New York, Schocken Books, 1976), 283. Cited in Agata Bielik-Robson, Introduction, in *Tsimtsum and Modernity*, 6.

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## **Creatio Ex Nihilo through the Prism of Father Sergei Bulgakov's Sophiology**

*Abstract:* Father Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944), directly influenced by Vladimir Solovyov and especially by Father Pavel Florensky, developed his sophiological concept which takes a central place in his doctrine of Trinity and God's economy. The main failure of the Russian sophiology is that the question of God's Wisdom is not Christologically founded in the spirit of the New Testament and patristic teaching. Bulgakov neglects the theology of God's uncreated energies. He thinks that it does not sufficiently explain the creation of the world as well as the relationship between God and the world. According to him, the creation of the world and its unity with God can be explained only through a mediator who acts as an "ontological bridge" between the Creator and the creation. Bulgakov, using the ontological mediation paradigms that are characteristic for certain ancient philosophical systems, especially Neo-Platonism, develops his doctrine of Sophia. She is immanent to both the nature of God and the creation. This attitude leads Bulgakov to the position of pantheism. In order to avoid this danger, he modifies his teaching introducing two models of Sophia: "Divine Sophia" and "Created Sophia". Unlike the patristic theology, Bulgakov's sophiological essentialism does not tend the antinomy of apophatic-kataphatic theology, and thereby he puts into question the ontological difference between the Creator and the creation. It is a failed attempt to interpret the dogma of the creation of the world ex nihilo, through categories and concepts that are alien to the church tradition.

*Keywords:* Sergei Bulgakov, Sophia, sophiology, creatio ex nihilo, Neo-Platonism, essentialism, pantheism'

The idea of an ontological mediator between the transcendent and the immanent, the eternal and the temporal, the one and the many, between the ontologically primary and the one derived from it, is often found in ancient philosophical systems of monistic or dualistic provenance in different ways. The mediator is on a lower ontological level than the supreme transcendent principle. It enables the emergence of the relative plural world, without making the transcendence of the one supreme being questionable.

The paradigm of ontological-cosmological mediation points to the basic trajectory along which the sophiology of Father Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944) moves, which, for example, in many ways reminds of Neoplatonist ontology, although it differs from it in terms

of content<sup>1</sup>. In his book *Unfading Light* (Свет Невечерний published in 1917), in which he develops his sophiological concept for the first time in a theological context, he states that the relationship between God and the creation cannot be explained as a cause-and-effect relationship<sup>2</sup>. In the author's own words, "the world is not an effect, and God is not its cause, not only because God, understood as the first cause, is already included in the causal chain, in the realm of the relative, but because the effect explains its cause only if is of the same order as its cause"<sup>3</sup>. However, between the Uncreated and the creation there is a radical ontological difference, an unbridgeable ontological chasm. Therefore, according to Fr Sergei Bulgakov's point of view, a mediator is needed. There must be something mediating between the order of the uncreated and the order of created existence, between the divine and the human. Conversely, neither the creation of the world nor the incarnation of the Logos of God would be possible. Such a mediator is the divine Sophia, because she

1 Sophiology is a syncretistic philosophical concept, which was established in the Russian religious philosophy by Vladimir Solovyov (1853–1900), and was accepted and further developed by Fr Pavel Florensky (1882–1937) and Fr Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944), as well as by other Russian thinkers. Unlike Solovyov, these two of his successors try to harmonize the sophiological concept with the teaching of the Church, or rather to interpret the Church doctrinal teaching through the prism of the previously adopted sophiology. Bulgakov distances himself from Solovyov's views. He writes: "I do not share his gnostic tendencies and I think that in his poetry he is very far from the orthodox understanding of Sophia, but I respect him as my philosophical teacher in Christ, at the time when I was moving from Marxism to Idealism, and then and to the Church". L. A. Zander: Л. А. Зандер, Бог и мир, Миросозерцание отца Сергия Булгакова, т. 1 [= *God and the world* (vol. I)] (Париж / Paris 1948), 107. A much stronger influence on Bulgakov, especially in the first period of his work, came from Florensky. Due to the syncretistic character of this teaching, modern critics recognize in it various philosophical elements from German Idealism, Platonism, Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism and Kabbalah. In the Decision of the Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (October 17/30, 1935) condemning Bulgakov's sophiology, accusations of the following heresies can be noted: 1) neochiliasm; 2) divinization of humanity; 3) neopaganism (Platonism and kabbalism); 4) Valentinian Gnosticism; 5) dualism; 6) pantheism; 7) сгупто-Арианизм; 8) Варлаамизм; 9) еунотизм and 10) antitrinitism. See: Bogdan Lubardić: Богдан Лубардић, "Хришћанска философија оца Сергеја Булгакова и учење о Софији: између Софије и софиологије" [= Christian philosophy of Fr Sergei Bulgakov and the teaching about Sophia: between Sophia and sophiology], Богословље: Часопис Богословског факултета Српске православне цркве [= *Bogoslovlje: Journal of the Faculty of Theology of the Serbian Orthodox Church*], 2 (2002), 210.

2 Earlier, Bulgakov had already established the beginning of his sophiology in the book *Philosophy of Economy* (1912). "Historical humanity, and every person in it, partakes of Sophia, and above the lower world floats the upper Sophia, shining in it as reason, as beauty, as economy and culture. Between the world as cosmos and the empirical world, between humanity and Sophia, there exists a living communion, which can be compared to nourishing a plant from its root". S. N. Bulgakov: С. Н. Булгаков, *Философия хозяйства, Сочинения в двух томах*, т. 1 [= *Philosophy of Economy, Works in two volumes*, Vol. 1], (Москва / Moscow 1995), 158. According to Bulgakov, economy is not only a social or gender process, but also a religious process, the purpose of which is to establish the lost connection between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* (nature that creates and nature that is created). In this work, written largely under the influence of Kant's methodology and language, the question of the transcendent subject of the economy is analyzed. A. P. Kozyrev: А. П. Козырев, "Софиология о. Сергия Булгакова: 'теологема' или 'философема'?" [= Sophiology of Archpriest Sergei Bulgakov: 'theologeme' or 'philosopheme'?] in: *Философия религии: альманах* [= *Philosophy of Religions, Almanac*], 2010–2011, 228.

3 Bulgakov Sergei: Сергий Булгаковъ, *Свет не вечерний: Созерцания и умозрения* [= *Unfading Light: Contemplations and Speculations*], (Сергиев Посад / Sergiyev Posad 1917), 176.



is immanent in both divine and human reality<sup>4</sup>. In the aforestated work, Bulgakov writes about the divine Sophia: “She is a subject. A person, or in theological terms, (she is) a hypostasis. Of course, she is different from the hypostases of the Holy Trinity, she is a separate fourth hypostases of a different order. She does not participate in the inner divine life – she is not God. Accordingly, she does not turn the three-hypostasis into four-hypostasis, the trinity into fourness, because after her the many hypostases (of men and angels), who are in a spiritual relationship with God<sup>5</sup>, follow in succession”. Bulgakov soon desisted from naming Sophia a hypostasis, then defines her as hypostatic, and later equates her with God's essence<sup>6</sup>. However, it is especially important to understand the initial identification of Sophia as a hypostasis, which is not of the same order as the Three Divine Hypostases, because it would largely explain Bulgakov's sophiological concept as a whole, as well as his interpretation of the Christian teaching on the creation of the world.

The term *ὑπόστασις* has a long and rich history in antiquity. In the classical period, it was initially used in the field of medicine, and later in philosophy<sup>7</sup>. It was introduced into

4 In the *Timaeus*, Plato says that God composed the universal soul “from the indivisible essence, which is eternally the same, and from the divisible essence, which pertains to bodies, in the middle of the two he made a mixture of a third kind of essence, that is, of the nature of the Same and the Other”: Платон [= Plato], Тимай [= *Timaeus*], (35a), translation from ancient Greek into Macedonian and foreword by Vitomir Mitevski, Скопје 2005, 26. The world soul is simultaneously divine and composed/physical/material. This doctrine was later developed in Neoplatonism and was the basis of some heretical teachings on Christian triadology. See: Georgy Zyablitsev: Георгий (Зяблицев), “Платон и святоотеческое богословие” [= Plato and patristic theology], *Богословские труды* [= *Theological Works*], 32 (1996), 243.

5 Сергей Булгаков, *Свет невечерний*, 212. Quasi-personal characteristics are ascribed to the divine Sophia. Namely, she loves, (reciprocates God's love), but in a passive way.

6 After fierce criticism directed at him regarding the naming of Sophia a hypostasis, Bulgakov had to clarify his position. He writes a special paper titled “Иность и ипостасность: Scholia к Свету Невечернему” [= *Hypostasis und hypostaticity: Scholia to the Unfading Light*], in: *Сборник статей посвященных Петру Бернгардовичу Струве к дню тридцатипятилетия его научно-публицистической деятельности* [= *Collection of articles dedicated to Pyotr Berngardovich Struve on the day of the thirty-fifth anniversary of his scientific and journalistic activity, 1890–1925*], (Прага/Prague 1925), 353–372. Here Sophia is no longer called a hypostasis, but a hypostaticity. It is a certain essence that does not exist independently as a separate hypostasis, but is ‘hypostatized’ inside something else, and that, according to Bulgakov, is the Holy Trinitarian divine life. “Sophia or the divine world is an organism of ideas, all for all and in all – All wisdom. She has life in herself, although not for herself, because she is hypostatized in God. [...] the divine Sophia, although not a hypostasis, nevertheless, is never non-hypostatic nor external-to-the-hypostatic, because she is hypostatized pre-eternally. At the same time, her immediate hypostasis is not the Father, even though He is also revealed in the divine Sophia, but the Logos Who reveals himself to the Father as a demiurge hypostasis”. Sergei Bulgakov: Сергей Булгаков, *Агнец Божий, О Божочеловечестве, часть I* [= *The Lamb of God, On God-manhood, part I*], (Париж/Paris 1933), 135–136. In his long-term work, Bulgakov constantly develops and modifies his sophiological doctrine in several directions in a way in which the ontological status of the divine Sophia is constantly upgraded to a higher and higher level (cosmological principle, hypostasis, hypostaticity, God's ousia), and to the highest when he finally identifies Sophia with God's essence. Although this identification is clear, Bulgakov inconsistently denies it. Such inconsistency can be explained as the duality of his overall thought, between his attempts to remain faithful to the doctrinal teaching of the Church, and at the same time to give a new interpretation of church dogmas through the prism of the sophiological concept.

7 The noun *ὑπόστασις* appears in the classical period in the Hippocratic Corpus (Liddell/Scott 1895a supp.

the philosophical dictionary by the Stoics, whose comprehension of *ὑπόστασις* is what is real and concretely exists, as opposed to what can be imagined. The Peripatetics adopted this term. For them *ὑπόστασις* is an actualized being, a single object that is a union (unity) of idea (form) and matter<sup>8</sup>. In the context of Bulgakov's understanding of Sophia, as a second-order hypostasis, one should take into account the Neoplatonist, or rather, Plotinus' understanding of hypostasis. Namely, contrary to the widespread notion that Plotinus teaches about the three hypostases of the One, the Mind and the Soul, modern research shows that he very rarely names the One *ὑπόστασις* and uses this term, above all, for the Mind and the Soul, as well as for the individual essences. In Plotinus' system, hypostasis means only the manifestations and appearances of the One in the other, in the multiple, that is, in the Mind, the Soul, and the Cosmos<sup>9</sup>. They are not so much independent principles, as they are principle manifestations in hypostasis of the higher principle, and in the first place it is the One<sup>10</sup>. From the first principle, (the One) "which remains (dwells) in its inherent state, i.e. from the fullness of its perfection and from the inherent energy (the first energy, i.e. the energy of the essence b. m.) energy was born that acquired a hypostasis (received, attained actualization, b. m.) from the great power, greater than all others, and came (passed) into being and essence (*εἶναι καὶ οὐσίαν*). That alone (the first principle, b. m.) remains on the other side of the essence *ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας* (that is, it is beyond, transcendent to the second derived essence, b. m.)"<sup>11</sup>.

303). Apart from medicine, it is found in various fields and disciplines (hydrography, meteorology, culinary, ontology). The semantic range of this expression is conditioned by the individual meanings of the verb *ὑφίστημι/ὑφίστηται* – leans, puts itself under (something), descends, falls to the bottom, conceals, opposes, realizes, assumes, expresses submission, commits, takes (something) on itself, stops, becomes permanent (stable), becomes present, exists. The ancient Greek word *ὑπόστασις* was primarily used in a physical (material) sense and signified: support, foundation, substratum, something that is the result of thickening, condensation or settling, sediment, something down at the bottom, under-lying. But *ὑπόστασις* can also denote reason, basis of reasoning, support of thought, plan or idea, basis of hope, confidence, determination, assurance, determination, essence, person. See: Jelena Femić Kasapis: Јелена Фемић Касапис, *Пореκло термина φύσις, οὐσία, ὑπόστασις и њихов семантички развој од првих помена до црквених отаца* [= *The Origins of the Terms Physis, Ousia, Hypostasis and their semantic development from the first evidence to the Church Fathers*], (Београд/Belgrade 2010), 79–92.

8 Methodius Zinkovsky: Мефодий Зинковский, "История термина 'ипостась' и его богословское употребление" [= History of the term 'hypostasis' and its theological usage] in: *Метанапарадигма, Альманах богословие философия естествознание* [= *Metaparadigm: theology, philosophy, natural science: almanac*], 4 (2014), 35–36.

9 The term hypostasis in the sense of Plotinus' One can only be used figuratively. He uses the term hypostasis for the One only when he wants to show that it is not a quantitative characteristic of being, nor a mental abstraction, but that it actually and independently exists. Plotinus says of the One that it is "like a hypostasis", because it is the cause of every hypostasis and therefore transcends all hypostases. See: Svetlana Mesyats, "Does the First have a Hypostasis?", *Studia Patristica* vol. LXII, *Papers presented at the Sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2011*, in: *The Geneses of Late Antique Literature*, ed. Markus Vinzent, Leuven–Paris–Walpole, MA 2013, 46.

10 Мефодий Зинковский, "История термина 'ипостась' и его богословское употребление", 40.

11 „μένοντος αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ οἰκείῳ ᾗθει ἐκ τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ τελειότητος καὶ συνούσης ἐνεργείας ἡ γεννηθεῖσα ἐνέργεια ὑπόστασιν λαβοῦσα, ἅτε ἐκ μεγάλης δυνάμεως, μεγίστης μὲν οὖν ἀπασῶν, εἰς τὸ εἶναι καὶ οὐσίαν ἦλθεν ἐκείνο γὰρ ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας ἦν". See: Ennead, 5, 4: 2. *Plotini opera*, t. II, *Enneades* IV-V, ed. P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzler, Leiden: Brill 1959.

According to Plotinus, hypostasis is synonymous with essence, but in a very limited and strictly precise philosophical sense. Namely, a hypostasis always stands in dependence on another *par excellence* essence from which it derives. Hypostasis is essence “number two” versus essence “number one”. The conceptual meaning of the term hypostasis implies something that is not independent, but dependent on the First. Each new hypostasis is on a lower ontological and value level than the previous hypostasis. Each hypostasis is the result of the emanation of the higher principle, which is inherent in its nature. In this way, the chains of hypostases form a cascading mediating ontology, which does not question the priority of ontological monism, and at the same time explains the manifoldness of the world. Such a metaphysical concept of Plotinus is conceivable from the aspect of his teaching about the double energy activity of all actualized beings<sup>12</sup>. Namely, he distinguishes two types of energy, energy that is of the essence and energy that arises from the essence<sup>13</sup>. “It is necessary to distinguish the energy of the essence (ἐνέργεια τῆς οὐσίας) from the energy arising from the essence. The energy of the essence does not differ from the essence to which it belongs, it is always the (same) essence itself. But the energy emanating from the essence is distinct from it as from its own cause. Each hypostasis has both the first and the second energy”.<sup>14</sup> The inneractivity of the energy of an actualized ousia (hypostasis) necessarily reflects (is transmitted) externally as an activity which, in turn, results in the emergence of a new hypostasis. The higher hypostasis emanates and self-reveals (self-expresses) through the lower hypostases.

In continuation, touching on certain aspects of the sophiological concept, we will see to what extent Plotinus' ontological matrix can serve as a hermeneutic key to understanding the basic coordinates according to which Bulgakov's sophiology moves, in the context of triadology and God's economy. Using the paradigm of intermediary ontology, he tries to explain the unity between God and the world. The basic task of sophiology is to explain the relationship between God and the world, that is, to arrive at a philosophical foundation for the concept of all-unity, or theanthropy (Solovyov). The main dilemma before Bulgakov is how to explain the transition from the absolute to the relative, but at the same time to avoid monism and dualism, which are not acceptable from the Christian point of view<sup>15</sup>. God is absolute and transcendent. But as Bulgakov notes, “The transcendent does not remain by itself in its transcendence; it has a *trans* behind which it hides, but also through which it determines itself. In other words, the Absolute is relative in its absoluteness and the Transcendent is immanent in its transcendence if it truly exists and has meaning (gilt), if it does not turn into a zero for both thought and being, into a void for both”<sup>16</sup>. The revelation of the absolute in the world presupposes the self-revelation of the

<sup>12</sup> Јелена Фемић Касапис, Порекло термина φύσις, οὐσία, ὑπόστασις, 97.

<sup>13</sup> About Plotinus' teaching on the dual energy see: Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, *Activity and Participation in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought*, New York: 2012, 21–23.

<sup>14</sup> *Ennead*, 5, 4:2.

<sup>15</sup> Сергій Булгаковъ, *Агнецъ Божій, О Богочеловечестве*, 7–10.

<sup>16</sup> “The Absolute and the Transcendent is deeper and more comprehensive than the relative and the immanent, therefore it is its source. The Absolute and Transcendent is Mystery, in relation to which the relative and

absolute in itself<sup>17</sup>. Through the self-revelation of God in a triadological context and in the context of God's economy, Bulgakov tries to ensure ontological continuity between God and the world created by Him. In order to see the specificity of Bulgakov's teaching about the divine Sophia, it is necessary to take into account how he interprets the dogma of consubstantiality (homoousion) of the Holy Trinity. Although he does not dispute the patristic understanding of *ὁμοούσιος*, he nevertheless believes that it does not fully explain the relationship between God and the world, and therefore that this dogma needs an additional philosophical interpretation which, in fact, leads to his sophiological concept<sup>18</sup>. Bulgakov identifies the Father as a kind of 'transcendent principle' in the Holy Trinity, similar to the One in Plotinus' triad, with the difference that there is no subordination in the Holy Trinity. The Father reveals Himself in the Son and in the Holy Spirit, and the content of the Father's revelation is all that is of God, i.e., all the fullness of God's nature (essence). The self-revelation of the Father is a pre-eternal act of God's love, in which there cannot but be a pre-eternal relationship (pre-eternal love) towards the world that is yet to be created in time<sup>19</sup>. The Divine Sophia, as a pre-eternal idea of the existence of the world, is inherent

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immanent is revelation, and in relation to itself it is self-revelation. The categories of *mystery* and *revelation*, in general, have an incomparably greater general and principled meaning than the categories of *cause* and *effect*'. Sergei Bulgakov: Сергий Булгаковъ, *Утѣшитель, О Богочеловѣствѣ, часть II* [= *The Comforter, On God-manhod, part II*], YMCA PRESS, 1936, 407.

**17** Sophia is a 'medium' through which the Divine Hypostases eternally reveal themselves and know each other. In the act of pre-eternal self-revelation, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit realize their divine nature and establish their hypostatic characteristics.

**18** According to Bulgakov's general standpoint, the dogmatic theology of the Church needs not only a contemporary philosophical interpretation, but also a philosophical refinement and elaboration. According to him, the dogmatic formulas are undefined, and the necessary philosophical implications are not completely derived from them. The Christian Hellenism of Father Georges Florovsky, to a large extent, was provoked precisely by the attempts of theologians-sophiologists to interpret church dogmas through modern categories and concepts (German idealism, romanticism). In the language of the Gospel, new wine should not be put into old wineskins (Matthew 9:17). The holy fathers, when formulating the Christian dogmas, radically rethought the terms borrowed from the ancient philosophy. The dogmatic teaching of the Church is based on God's Revelation. The clear theological expression and formulation of the said teaching also includes 'very intense philosophical work' as we see from the case of Cappadocians, St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Gregory Palamas. But after a truth of faith has been dogmatized (formulated at an Ecumenical or Local Council and as such accepted by the Church) it can be interpreted, but it no longer belongs to the 'sphere of philosophical competences'. See: Georgi Kapriev: Георги Каприев, "Аксиоматика, историчност, рецепция: византийската философия и нейните съвременни проекции" [= *Axiomatics, historicity, reception: Byzantine Philosophy and its Modern Projections*] in: *Християнство и култура*, бр. 2 (59) [= *Christianity and Culture*, no. 2 (59)], (2011), 25.

**19** "The second Hypostasis is revealed in the divine Sophia through its own hypostatic character not only as Word and Wisdom, but also as Son. [...] Sonship, in itself, is some pre-eternal kenosis of the Son, self-absorption in love for the Father, hypostatic sacrifice of the Lamb. [...] The self-revelation of God is a work of sacrificial love, in which the Father is a priest Who loves, and the Son is a sacrifice Who loves": Сергий Булгаковъ, *Агнецъ Божій*, 134. The term *κένωσις* usually in church theology refers to the incarnation of Christ and His Self-sacrifice with the crucifixion for the redemption and salvation of fallen humanity. But Bulgakov, under the influence of the philosophy of Friedrich V. J. Schelling unjustifiably extends the meaning of *κένωσις* into the realm of triadology and into the whole economy of God. Namely, according to him, God's ego depletion is present in the pre-eternal relationships of the Holy Trinity, but it is also expressed in the act of creating the

to God's ousia. Moreover, Bulgakov speaks of the divine Sophia as the "revealed God's ousia". Therefore, according to him, the divine Sophia cannot be identified only with the Second Hypostasis of the Logos of God, but she belongs to all Three Hypostases<sup>20</sup>. Bulgakov's identification of the divine Sophia with God's essence violates the apophatic stance of the entire traditional Orthodox teaching about the absolute unknowability of God's nature, hypostatized by the Three Divine Hypostases<sup>21</sup>. God's thoughts, ideas, or logoi are 'infused'

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world, in the action of the Holy Spirit, and in the founding of the Church. Aidan Nichols, "Sergei Bulgakov and Sophiology", in: idem, *Light From the East, Authors and Themes in Orthodox Theology*, London 1995, 59. Κένωσις does not refer to the Divine Nature, which is eternal and unchanging, but to the Person of the Incarnate Logos of God, which willingly assumed human nature. Therefore, kenosis is a Christological term and cannot be applied in a triadological context. The intra-trinitarian κένωσις that Bulgakov talks about is actually in support of his teaching about the unity between the 'divine Sophia' and the 'created Sophia'. Divine Sophia as the 'content' of the kenotic self-revelation and self-giving of the Three divine Hypostases is a metaphysical basis and model for God's economy. But the affirmation of this analogy inevitably implies determinism in God's plan. Also, Bulgakov's sophiological (intrinsic) kenotism is permeated with emphasized psychologism and represents a neglect of the apophatic aspect of theology. Compare: Justin Popović: Јустин Поповић, Догматика Православне Цркве, књига друга, Богочовек и Његово дело (христологија и сотириологија) [= *Dogmatics of the Orthodox Church. Book II, Godman and His work (Christology and Soteriology)*], (Београд/Belgrade 1980), 146–148; Vladimir Lossky: Владимир Лосский, Боговидение, прев. В. А. Решикова [= *The Vision of God*, trans. from French by V. A. Reschikova], (Москва/Moscow 2006), 60–62, 539.

**20** According to Bulgakov, it can be said that Sophia is the Logos, but not that the Logos is Sophia; also, it can be said that Sophia is the Holy Spirit, but not the opposite. He does not accept the New Testament and patristic identification of the Wisdom of God with the Person of the incarnate Logos of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. According to him, Christological sophiology, or as he calls it "logosological sophiology", is a consequence of Christological disputes. About the Christological understanding of the Wisdom of God in the Bible and among the holy fathers, see: Zdravko Peno: Здравко Пено, "Софија и софијанизам" [= Sophia and Sophianism], *Теолошки погледи [Theological views]*, XLI No. 1 (2008), 25–55. With some of the holy fathers, one finds the understanding of God's Wisdom as a general characteristic of God. But this refers to the energies of God, common to the Holy Trinity. In patristic theology the kataphatic and apophatic names of God do not refer to God's supra-essence, which is unnamable, but to the essence which is manifested in the energies. God's essence is called essence only because it expresses itself in its own energies. The general names of God refer to what is *around* God. They signify the indivisible action of the transcendent Trinity and testify to the indivisibility of the Godhead.

**21** In this context, it is good to remember the famous words of St. Gregory Palamas: "The transcendence of God (τὴν ὑπερουσιότητα τὴν θεῖαν) can neither be named with words, nor understood, nor contemplated in any way, it surpasses everything and is beyond comprehension (ὑπεράγνωστον), it is unattainable even to the unlimited powers of heavenly minds, and for all it remains completely and forever (in all ages) unattainable and ineffable (ἀληπτὸν τε καὶ ἀρρητὸν). For there is no name for it by which it can be named in the present age or in the age to come, nor [is there for it] a word (λόγος) composed in the soul or uttered by the tongue, nor [is there for it] any sensation (touch) of the senses or the mind (ἐπαφή τις αἰσθητῇ ἢ νοερά); nor a representation at all (φαντασία); and is there anyone who, because of the renouncement, will not regard it as the most perfect unattainability, for it is outstandingly set apart from all that is or is named anyhow. This is why, recognizing this truth as higher than all truth, we should not, literally [in the strict sense] (κυρίως), call it either essence or nature. [...]; not the essence or nature itself is to be named, but the essential emanation and energy of God": *Gregorii Palamae dialogue qui inscribitur Theophanes sive de divinitatis et rerum divinarum communicabile et incommunicabile*, Migne, PG, 150, col. 937. For the holy fathers from the East the apophatic of the person is characteristic, and for the medieval scholastics – the apophatic of the essence (nature). The first apophatic model is an expression of immediate live experience, resulting from personal communion with God through



into the very essence of God. The distinction between God's nature and God's will, between God's intra-Trinitarian life and God's action in relation to the world, is broken. Bulgakov does not respect the distinction, characteristic of the patristic thought, between theology and economy<sup>22</sup>. It can be observed that Bulgakov's tendency is to make a projection of what belongs to the economic activity of God onto the inner life in God.

According to Bulgakov, God's essence, or Sophia, is not limited exclusively to the inner life of the Holy Trinity. According to him, the divine Sophia does not exist only for the mutual self-revelation and togetherness of God's Hypostases. She is both a transcendent condition for the creation of the world and an ontological foundation of the creation of the world, a prerequisite for the unity of the world with God. The pre-eternal Sophia is revealed in creation. However, if Sophia is God's essence, and the world was created through Sophia and is sophianic in nature, then God's relationship to God's creation is brought into relation to God's essence, not to God's energies. The world is identified with God. With this essentialist approach, Bulgakov involuntarily strays into cryptopanteism, and this is one of the most problematic points in his sophiology. He, in order to avoid accusations of pantheism, introduces the teaching of the created Sophia, which is, in fact, a kind of transposition (transfer) of the eternal Sophia outside of God, on the plane of nonbeing and creation. God, acting as Creator, allows His Wisdom to 'enter' nonbeing, i.e. allows what is 'outside' of God to appear as absolutely nothing (οὐκ ὄν), and then as a being (μὴ ὄν) that is not quite determined. Bulgakov's sophiological concept implies an intermediary structure through which the gradual transition from the absolute to the relative, from the Uncreated to the creation, is possible. Namely, the divine pre-eternal Sophia is a kind of hypostasis-essence (in the sense of a mediator) for the self-revelation (self-knowledge of God) in the Holy Trinity, and the created Sophia is the hypostasis-essence of the divine pre-eternal Sophia, for its revelation in creation as its entelechy<sup>23</sup>. In fact, Sergei Bulgakov, through the prism of his sophiological concept, makes an unsuccessful attempt to reconcile the matrix of mediating ontology with the Christian vision of the relationship between God and God's creation. Not coincidentally, various critics in his sophiology recognize elements from Platonism, Neoplatonism, Gnosticism and other philosophical systems, which, although mutually opposed, nevertheless, in a different way, are characterized by the idea of mediating instances.

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his uncreated energies, while the second apophatic model represents an intellectual renunciation of cataphatic analogies. See: Stefan Sandžakoski: Стефан Санџакоски, *Апофатичка философија на Corpus Areopagiticum* [= *Apophatic Philosophy of 'Corpus Areopagiticum'*], (Скопје/Skopje 2003), 122–123. Christos Yannaras: Христо Јанарас, *Хайдегер и Дионисије Ареопагит, или о одсуству и непознању Бога*, прев. С. Јакшић, [= *Heidegger and Dionysius the Areopagite, or On the Absence and Unknowability of God*, trans. into Serbian S. Jakšić], (Нови Сад/Novi Sad 2016), 72–74.

**22** This was precisely the basic problem of the pre-Nicene theology.

**23** In the context of the sophiological concept, it is much more appropriate to identify Sophia as hypostasis, rather than as ousia. Because, according to Bulgakov, it is revealed (actualized) ousia. But ultimately, the terms hypostasis and ousia that he uses can be understood as synonyms. It does not cause any substantial changes in his teaching at all. His reiteration in relation to the naming of Sophia with the term hypostasis occurs due to the pressure of criticism coming from the clearly and precisely theologically differentiated terms hypostasis (person) and essence (nature).



The problematic nature of the sophiological explanation of the relationship between God and the world can be seen from the aspect of the theology of God's uncreated energies, which is theologically most clearly articulated by St. Gregory Palamas. Primarily, one should keep in mind the distinction of God's essence from the energies, the source of which is God's essence itself. Their distinction does not imply separation. God's nature and its energies belong to the Three Persons. In the context of sophiology it is especially important to emphasize that God's energies are not some kind of hypostatic intermediary between God and creation. St. Gregory Palamas emphasizes that not everything originating from or being manifested by someone receives the quality of a being or existence from him by birth or origin, and it is not obligatory that it has its own hypostasis<sup>24</sup>. The energy of God, although existing, is not an independent substance.

"Since grace has appeared, it is no longer obligatory to do everything through mediators." In these words of St. Gregory Palamas, as noted by Sergei Khoruzhiy, is the simple Orthodox answer to sophiology<sup>25</sup>. Orthodoxy establishes an energy relationship between God and the world, which does not imply intermediary instances, as it is the case when the relationship between God and the world is explained in line with essence<sup>26</sup>. God's energies do not have a mediating role, they do not have their own hypostasis, nor a separate essence (substance) – they are the actions of God, in which God is fully present. God creates the world with His uncreated energies. Beings are not created from energies, but through energies from *ex nihilo*. Creations are not a continuation of God's energies, but are effects (results) of their action. According to the confession of St. Gregory Palamas, God allows the creation to be, but the created being is not given the essential properties of God's nature (ousia), nor does it come into any kind of immanent contact with it. What creation can partake in are the actions of hypostatic and uncreated energies of the essentializing will of God. Man communes with God according to God's energies, not according to God's essence. "The divine essence is hypostatized and in its innerness can essentially partake only and exclusively the Hypostases of the Holy Trinity, which together with the essence make up the one and indivisible being of God"<sup>27</sup>. The Divine Persons have (are carriers of) their own nature, and not its 'products', and in that sense they have the primacy over their own essence. They commune with the creation, albeit not through essence, but through the uncreated energies of essence.

One of the fundamental failures of Bulgakov's theology is the neglect (circumvention) of the theology of uncreated energies. He calls the theology of St. Gregory Palamas

<sup>24</sup> Георги Каприев, *Византийска философия*, 361. In this standpoint of St. Gregory Palamas, one can perceive the difference between patristic theology and the metaphysics of Plotinus. According to him, the energy activity of the higher hypostasis always leads to the emergence of a new hypostasis.

<sup>25</sup> S. Khoruzhiy: С. Хоружий "Перепутья русской софиологии" [= The Crossroads of Russian sophiology], *О старом и новом* [Of the old and new], (Санкт-Петербург/Saint-Petersburg 2000), 160.

<sup>26</sup> Here one should take into account the Christocentricity of the Palamite theology and the correction made by St. Gregory Palamas regarding the teaching of Pseudo-Dionysius on the hierarchy. See: Георги Каприев, *Византийска философия*, 374–375.

<sup>27</sup> Богдан Лубардић, „Хришћанска философија оца Сергеја Булгакова и учење о Софији: између Софије и софиологије”, 212.

as well as the overall patristic theology “incomplete, unfinished sophiology”. There is a certain reason behind Bulgakov's restrained attitude towards the patristic heritage. Namely, the ontological model of energies is inherent to the biblical-patristic theology, while, on the other hand, sophiology, promoted by Bulgakov and through which he perceives everything in theology and God's economy, is characterized by the essentialist model of ontology (essentia, οὐσία). Although he knows the oral teaching regarding the distinction between God's essence and its energies, he cannot accept it on the one side, and remain true to his sophiology on the other. The sophiological ontology of essence is incompatible with the patristic ontology of energy. Hence, numerous deviations of Bulgakov's theology from the theology of the Church arise. He does not use the terms hypostasis, ousia, and energy in their strictly defined dogmatic meaning because, according to him, everything is overshadowed by the essentialist ontology.

In the sophiological interpretation of the relationship between God and the world, a clear distinction simply cannot be drawn between God's essence and the creation. The pantheistic outcome of the sophiological doctrine, although not aimed for by Bulgakov, is nevertheless inevitable. He unsuccessfully tries to avoid pantheism (he calls his teaching panentheism *πᾶν ἐν θεῷ*, “all is in God”) by modifying his sophiology with the teaching of the two sophias: the divine Sophia as eternal first foundation of the world and the created Sophia as the divine power of the life of the creations. However, it is about the same Sophia in her two modalities<sup>28</sup>. This means that God's essence is both inside creation and outside of it<sup>29</sup>. The second created Sophia is the projection of the divine Sophia into the meonic reality of the divine *fiat*. “The physical Sophia arises from the divine Sophia. [...] The created Sophia, in a certain sense, does not repeat the divine one, but represents a set of creative variants of her theme”<sup>30</sup>. In the divine and the created world, everything is “one and identical in content, but not in being”<sup>31</sup>. As Nikolay Loski observes, according to this standpoint of Bulgakov's, it appears that “there was no real creation, but only a relocation or incarnation of the previously existing content in God took place. Also, man does not create any

**28** John Meyendorff: Јован Мајендорф, “Појам стварања у историји православног богословља” [= The Concept of Creation in the History of Orthodox Theology], *Тεολογικὴи погледи* [Theological views], бр./но. 1-4 (1994), 37–38: “Between the uncreated Sophia (or the essence of God) and her created duplicate, there is a difference, but also an ontological continuation, even identity”.

**29** “Sophia is the very nature of God, not only as an act, but also as a divine eternal fact; not only as a force, but also as a consequence. [...] In Sophia, God knows and sees Himself, He loves Himself, not with mutual personal love, such as the eternal love of the Three Hypostases is, but He loves His Godhead, His Divinity, His divine life, worthy of love. Sophia is the Deity of God or the Deity in God, and in this sense she is also the divine world before creation. For the created world, God is Sophia, because in her and through her He reveals Himself as a Person and Triune God and as the Creator. The world was created through Sophia and in Sophia, because there is no other principle and there cannot be. Consequently, the world is Sophia, but in creation, created, existent in time. The world was created on the basis of Sophia, therefore it is destined for a state in which God will be all in all – that is, to become completely sophianic”. Sergei Bulgakov, *Icon and icon veneration*, <http://ivashek.com/ru/our-books/e-books> (accessed on 02/13/2020).

**30** Сергий Булгаковъ, *Невеста Агнца*, 92, 94.

**31** Сергий Булгаковъ, *Агнецъ Божій*, 148.

positive new content, but only repeats the eternal content of the divine nature in the form of time. [...] According to Bulgakov, creative action can be new only in the modal sense, i.e. it can only turn the possible into the real. This teaching minimizes the creative abilities of both man and God<sup>32</sup>. Bulgakov's essentialism entails a certain deterministic understanding of history. Everything that happens in it is a part of an organic process that is sophiologically pre-determined.

Bulgakov understands God's energies in an essentialist sense. Aidan Nichols, commenting on the sophiological cryptopanthism, notes: "Bulgakov considers that the (created) world is an energy of the divine essence, and that it is an energy that God has placed outside of the Godhead, in the non-being, and which energy, permeating that non-being, acquires the form of a process or existence"<sup>33</sup>. From the point of view of Bulgakov's essentialist approach, the attitude that "the being of the world is a divine being"<sup>34</sup> is not at all surprising. "The world is 'created God'. It is a unity of the Absolute and nothing, the Absolute in the relative, and the relative in the Absolute: the Absolute stops, changes its actual absoluteness and makes it potential in order to give place to the relative, which thus joins the Absolute. Through the creation *ex nihilo* the Absolute seems to establish two centers: one eternal and one created; in the bosom of the most self-sufficient eternity appears the 'absolute that becomes' (Solovyov's expression, b. m.), that is, the second center. Together with the supra-essential being and the Absolute, being appears, in which the Absolute reveals itself as the Creator, reveals itself in it, realizes itself in it: itself partakes of being, and in this sense the world is God who comes into being. [...] By creating the world, God thereby also shows (introduces) himself in the creation, it is as if he himself becomes a creation. God self-empties into the nothingness, transforming it into his own image and likeness"<sup>35</sup>. Bulgakov, trying to emphasize the inner unity between God and creation, uses expressions and formulations that further strengthen the impression of his hidden pantheism: the world is "created by God", "God repeats himself in creation", "as if he himself becomes a creation", "the world is an emanation of God, plus something new".

We will briefly address another problematic point in the sophiological explanation of the creation of the world and its relationship with God. Namely, Bulgakov, from his own sophiological (pantheistic) position, could not help but come into conflict with the traditional doctrinal teachings of the Church about the free creation of the world by the Creator. God created it, but he did not have to create the world. The existence of creation is not an ontological necessity, but the fruit of God's freedom and love. This standpoint is unacceptable for Bulgakov, because according to him it implies the randomness of the creation of the world. He points out that God's freedom must not be evaluated from the

32 N. O. Lossky: Н. О. Лоский, *История русской философии* [= *History of Russian Philosophy*] (Москва/Moscow 1991), 262–263

33 Aidan Nichols, "Bulgakov and Sophiology", *Eastern Churches Review/Sobornost*, 13.2 (1992), 28; cited according to Богдан Лубарадић, „Хришћанска философија оца Сергеја Булгакова и учење о Софији: између Софије и софиологије”, 211.

34 Сергей Булгаковъ, *Свет не вечерний*, 192.

35 Сергей Булгаковъ, *Свет не вечерний*, 193.

aspect of created freedom which is related to potential possibilities. Therefore, according to Bulgakov, the claim that God could have not created the world is a consequence of excessive anthropomorphism. For Bulgakov, the view that God freely created the world is acceptable only from the point of view that there is nothing 'outside' of God that conditions the act of creation. God is the Creator of the 'nothing' and of that 'outside' of Him. But on the plane of the intra-trinitarian life of God, there is a necessity for God to be the pre-eternal Creator. The 'inner necessity' for the creation of the world has its basis in the inner self-revelation of God's Hypostases which takes place through the divine Sophia. "It is necessary to include the creation of the world in God's own life, to compare it with Him, to compare the creative act of God with the act of self-comprehension of God. One should be able to simultaneously connect, identify, but also differentiate, as it is possible in the teaching about Sophia, the divine and created, the same, but also different"<sup>36</sup>. The inner dynamics of the self-revelation of the Three Hypostases in and through the divine Sophia 'necessarily' implies the external self-revelation of God, that is, the very act of creation.

Once again, we will turn to the ontology of Plotinus, as to a hermeneutic model for interpreting Bulgakov's sophiological doctrine. John Rist, considering the question of whether the 'creation' ('birth') of the world is a necessity for the One, states that the will of the One and One's essence are identical. There is no difference between the activity of the One and One's will on which the activity itself depends. It cannot be said that the One is activated by virtue of One's will, because One is fully active. Emanation is a necessity for the One, because it is One's nature. One must necessarily emanate to be what it is in itself. One's emanation is One's will and essence. Plotinus uses the notion of will in relation to the One to show that the process of emanation is not arbitrary. One wills what is necessary; necessity, in fact, is One's will. "Creation is as free as One is free. Freedom is incompatible with pantheism"<sup>37</sup>.

It is precisely in this thought that it is revealed why Bulgakov finds it necessary to point out that God, according to His nature, is necessarily also the Creator. He writes: "God in himself is equally God and Creator, with perfect equality of the necessity and the freedom of His being. This thought can be expressed differently – God cannot not be the Creator and the Creator cannot not be God. The idea of the creation of the world is as co-eternal with God as God's own being in the divine Sophia, and in that sense and in that sense alone, God cannot be sidestepped without sidestepping the world, and the world is necessary to God's very being; the world, in a certain sense, is to be included in God (in God's being, b. m.), although this inclusion in no way means a crude pantheistic identification of God and the world, according to which God is the world"<sup>38</sup>. Bulgakov understands God's will in the spirit of Platonism and Neoplatonism. Namely, according to him, the concept of

<sup>36</sup> Сергей Булгаковъ, *Невеста Агнца*, 52.

<sup>37</sup> J. M. Rist: Джон М. Рист, *Плотин путь к реальности*, прев., И. В. Брестова, Е. В. Афонасина [= *Plotinus: The Road to Reality*, trans. from English I.V. Berestova and E.V. Afonassina], (Санкт – Петербург/St. Petersburg), 2005, 97–98.

<sup>38</sup> Сергей Булгаковъ, *Невеста Агнца*, 53–54.

will does not have a voluntarist, but an intellectual character. God's will is an aspiration that what God himself is pre-eternally by nature be realized on the plane of creation. God, in order to be what God is by God's nature, must also be a Creator. The creative striving is a work of the ontological necessity. As it is known, the patristic thought, facing the question of the alleged internal determination of God to necessarily be the Creator, has provided the teaching on the eternal ideas (paradigms) about the creation of the world which belong to God's will and not to God's essence. However, this patristic teaching is not acceptable for Bulgakov, because it cannot be explained through the prism of his sophiology<sup>39</sup>.

The truth about the creation of the world is a mystery, which, above all, is "the object of faith and the content of the Revelation" and "cannot be determined by the power of human thought"<sup>40</sup>. Despite this sound theological standpoint, however, Bulgakov, according to his intellectual temperament, in relation to the subject of the creation of the world, engages in rationalistic speculations, which are not in accordance with the teaching of the Orthodox faith. His sophiology represents an unsuccessful attempt to interpret the biblical teaching about the creation of the world out of nothing, through categories that are alien to the traditional teaching of the Church<sup>41</sup>.

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**39** According to him, the distinction between God's essence and God's will introduces a duality in God. He asks the question: do the ideas (paradigms) correspond to the divine Sophia or to the created Sophia? The criticism that Bulgakov directs to patristic teaching, in relation to this issue, should be the subject of separate consideration.

**40** *Сергий Булгаковъ, Невеста Агнца*, 12.

**41** Bulgakov's sophiological teaching was officially condemned twice, by the Decree of the Moscow Patriarchate (September 7, 1935) and by the Decision of the Bishop' Council of the Russian Church Abroad (October 17/30, 1935, No. 1651). The majority of theologians, direct or indirect participants in the sophiological dispute, clearly indicated all the explicit and implicit deviations of Bulgakov from orthodoxy. The list of Bulgakov's contemporaries who critically addressed his sophiological teaching is long. We will only mention Archbishop Antony Khrapovitsky, St. John of Shanghai, Archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev), Metropolitan Sergei (Stragorodsky), Vladimir Lossky, Father Georges Florovsky. According to Father John Meyendorff, the overall early phase of Lossky's and Florovsky's work can be characterized as a reaction against Bulgakov's sophiology: *Јован Мајендорф, "Појам стварања у историји православног богословља"*, 38. Father Sergei Bulgakov tried to defend his teaching on several occasions. But his attempts did not bear fruit. He, being under the threat of being defrocked and excommunicated from the church community, publicly renounced his sophiology as a false teaching and remained a faithful son of the Church of God until his repose in the Lord (July 13, 1944).



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## Neo-Orthodox Epistemology: Three Steps Away from Greece

*Abstract:* If there is one pivotal epistemological issue the Eastern and the Western Christian churches have agreed upon, this must be the understanding that God's essence is inherently and conclusively unavailable to humans. This settlement is based on the shared assumption that there is no possible mode of accessing this or any essence, other than either from objective or subjective knowledge. Neo-Orthodoxy has preserved the heritage of Pateric apophaticism and has built upon the shared assumption its own, ecclesial accessibility instead to God's existence. In this exclusivist orientation Neo-Orthodoxy has further proclaimed itself the only true heir to ancient Greece, cutting off the West and criticizing it as a bastion of rational alienation. A phenomenological investigation of Greek statuary art, however, addresses prosody as a third, hitherto unexplored mode of epistemological intelligibility for an access to the essence of "God." Through the implementation of suprasegmental theory in the phenomenological reduction of a certain statue, we revisit certain key concepts in the discussion between Christos Yannaras, whose works comprise the Neo-Orthodox manifesto, and Martin Heidegger, who claimed that the Greek statue "*is* the god himself." Amongst the conclusions emerging from this comparative hermeneutics is the idea that in fact the West may have remained all along more ready than the East to move into the next historical step of man's self-elucidation in the light of what is Holy.

*Keywords:* Orthodox Church, *Blonde Youth*, statuary art, Yannaras, Heidegger

"For an answer which cannot be expressed the question too cannot be expressed. The *riddle* does not exist. If a question can be put at all, then it *can* also be answered."

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* 6.4.

### 1.1. What Is the Neo-Orthodox Epistemology

Usually epistemology is kept apart from religion, or at most an epistemology may be inferred out of a certain deistic metaphysics. The Greek Orthodox Church, nevertheless, has distinguished itself from the West in having delineated an epistemology of its own as a counterproposal to the human alienation it sees procured by rationalism. The so-called Pateric Apophaticism has explored the possibility that our knowledge of the world and its origin sprouts as *physis* discreetly within the communal space opened in between believers who *trust* that God exists in the ecclesial experience of His *energies*. While apophaticism agrees with that part of the Western Church which has concluded that we have no access to the *essence* of God, it still detects the reality of the *Godhead* as this reality *hyposta-*



sizes, that is, energizes the community of interacting human *faces*. This discreet metaphysical-epistemological exchange is ontologically sanctioned by the linguistic phenomenon where whereas in English we have to distinguish between “person” and “face,” in Greek the two terms merge naturally and indistinguishably by default into one and the same word: “*prosopon*.” Thus we must always be ready to see “face” where we only read “person” or “personality,” and vice versa. In effect whereas in English, or in German, the task would require convoluted proofs and explanations, if possible at all, in Greek the knowledge of the world as world and of God as the world’s provenance is self-evident and naturally negotiable in the discourse of the divine face and the face of the mortals. We observe this confluence in programmatic proclamations of this epistemology, such as that: “The calling of God is hypostasized in the human face; the possibility for a personal relation *outside* of the holy Nature is the inaugural determination of the human face.”<sup>1</sup> The formulaic parameters of this, Greek Orthodox epistemology, are expressed as follows in Christos Yannaras’ 1967 book *On the Absence and Unknowability of God: Heidegger and the Aeropagite*, the early manifesto of Greek Neo-Orthodoxy:

[S]tudying God’s mode of being as manifest in his energies, we understand the reality of the divine personal Hypostases as a starting-point for a sound (fuller) knowledge of our own human personal existence as well ... The energy of the divine will ‘imparts being’ to the whole world of natural reality *outside* God, as a calling to loving relationship and erotic communion ... With the incarnation of God in the person of Christ there takes place the exact reversal of what took place in the first Adam: a human person *hypostasizes* (brings into existential reality) a new *mode* of existence for human nature.<sup>2</sup>

Apophaticism has its roots in the texts of early Christianity, Byzantium and the Capadocian Fathers, themselves versed in what is often referred to as “Neoplatonism.” Yannaras has acknowledged Pateric influences from Dionysius Areopagite, Gregory Palamas, Maximus the Confessor, John Climachus, Gregory Nazianzen, Joannes Damascenus, and Gregory of Nyssa, as well as from some modern Greek poets.<sup>3</sup> In tracing elements of apophaticism back to the pre-Socratics, such as Heracleitus’ dictum that “*kath’ o,ti an koinonismen, aleithevomen, a de an idiasomen, psudometha*”<sup>4</sup> (“once in communion we are in truth, but once in private in oblivion”), Yannaras attempted to bridge the Eastern Church with ancient Greece towards a unified and wholesome “Greek experience.”<sup>5</sup> This outstretching, emphasized by Yannaras but argued from as far back as some Pateric texts, I will argue in what follows from Greek statuary art, is untenable.

1 Yannaras, Christos, *To Prosopo kai o Eros*, Domos Publications, 1992, Athens, Greece, p. 325.

2 Yannaras, Christos, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God: Heidegger and the Aeropagite*, 1987, tr. Haralambos Ventis, ed. Andrew Louth, T&T Clark International, London-New York, pp. 85, 92.

3 Grigoropoulou, Evaggelia, *The Early Development of the Thought of Christos Yannaras*, diss., 2008, University of Durham, Department of Theology and Religion, pp. 1, 57, 132.

4 Diels-Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Vol I, pp. 148, 28-30.

5 Mitralaxis, Sotiris, *Prosopo, Eros, Critical Ontology: Recounting the Philosophical Works of Christos Yannaras*, 2012, University of Durham conference *A Celebration of Living Theology: Engaging with the Work of Andrew Louth*, *Sobornost*, journal, 34:1, p. 66; also in Evaggelia Grigoropoulou, *The Early Development of the Thought of Christos Yannaras*, diss., 2008, University of Durham, Department of Theology and Religion, p. 1, 129.

As an “empiricism of relatedness,” ecclesial apophaticism rejects the possibility of the *origin* of knowledge and the possibility of knowledge *per se* in the rational and conceptual constructs of scientific objectivism. The world does not begin as a thermodynamic expansion, nor does the knowledge of the world accrue and compile from the organic evolution of man from lower life forms. The same holds as regards to the dogma of cosmogony in the Old Testament. Apophatic knowledge as such and as knowledge of the world “... means that I start from the discovery that my existence and the knowledge that I have (the way that I exist and the way that I know) are facts of accomplished relationships – and relationship is not exhausted by conceptual analysis, but is a universal existent fact that is divided up into a multitude of faculties of apprehension,” we read in *Absence*. (*Absence*: 29) In the epistemology of relatedness, and since God is knowable not directly but only through His interventions or *emergemata*, the possibility for the knowledge of God reaches out like the arc that characterizes the symbolism of Byzantine architecture: from human face-through world-to-the Godhead.

Perception itself is an art. As we read in Yannaras’ mature manifesto, *Eleutheria tou Ēthous*, of 1970, “[t]he art of human – perception and utility of world – is constitutive requisite of living, either it procures the alienation of life or its incorrigibility and its letting it emerge into fulfilment of personal differentiation and freedom.”<sup>6</sup> The preoccupation of human perception to distinguish what is beautiful in a “world that became Ecclesia ... expressed in the byzantine architecture”<sup>7</sup> humanizes the object of perception, so that the “world” that precipitates from such perceptual biases is not an ontological, but primarily an aesthetic category (“*kategoria kallous*”).<sup>8</sup> This notion is proclaimed in Yannaras’ other main work, *Prosopo and Eros*, of 1970. We will revisit it to begin demonstrating how Neo-Orthodox epistemology is actually incompatible with ancient Greek art and the kind of world that this art discloses as a certain mode of knowledge.

The Byzantine arc that reaches out to access God begins from the aesthetic constitution of the person as the *hypostasis* (“substantiation”) of the Godhead. The noted equivalency between “person” and “face” is instrumental in our understanding of what Yannaras alludes to in his autobiographical monography *Ta Kath’ Eauton* (1995): “only the face [*prosopo*] is the causal beginning of what exists [*aetiodēs archē tou yparktou*].”<sup>9</sup> Thus it is not merely the “person” of the Westernized *individual*, as in Sartre’s existentialism, but *the face of the person* that determines world, and through world makes visible the face of God.

The ontological prioritization of the human face and the ecclesial summoning of human faces precedes the objectification of world beings, in a phenomenological modality. Beings objectify as what they are *only for whom they are* within “world” as the horizon of disclosure of beings opened by the relationships between persons as faces. The immediacy of the relationship between persons as faces always exceeds and precedes as the condition

6 Yannaras, Christos, *Eleutheria tou Ēthous*, 1979, second edition, Gregory Publications, Athens, Greece, p. 301.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 325.

8 Yannaras, Christos, *To Prosopo kai o Eros*, Domos Publications, 1992, Athens, Greece, p. 107.

9 Yannaras, Christos, *Ta Kath’ Eauton*, 1995, second edition, Ikaros Publications, Athens, Greece, p. 108.

for the disclosure of the essence of world beings: “No intellectual definition (whether conceptual or verbal) can ever exhaust the knowledge afforded us by the immediacy of relationship, consequently the logical definition of essence (as the common principle of examples of the same form) follows and does not precede the otherness of each existent, which I know in immediate relationship with it.” (*Absence*: 29) Yannaras rejects the personal as subjective, that is, individuated, source of the revelation of beings; such a “... person does not precede nature.” (*Prosopo*: 51) He also downplays the possibility for the disclosure of beings from the nullity of Being: “the interpretation of ousia by Heidegger is too distant from the ontological understandings of the Greek East.” (*Prosopo*: 54) Both the rudimentary Cartesian and the improved Heideggerian propositions for the disclosure of beings are dismissed *from the facial interpretation of the person* because: “With the ontological presuppositions of the East we must understand the *disclosure* [of beings] as a personal relationship ...” (*Prosopo*: 56) And again: “With the ontological presuppositions of the Christian East, we must understand the *disclosure* as personal relationship and the *nothing* as the absence of relationship, hence it is not temporality but the *relationship* that determines the unique possibility of understanding Being as *par-ousia* and *ap-ousia* ...” (*Prosopo*: 56)

The space cleared for world beings to disclose themselves in the ecclesial summoning Yannaras calls “kenotic love,” from the Greek *kenon* (“empty”) and the ability of the Orthodox Christian person to commit in self-denial in the erotic encounter with the “Ultimate Other.” We may note that the kenotic space cleared when humans come face to face is somewhat equivalent to Heidegger’s “clearing” (*Lichtung*), albeit here it is not the *nullity* of Being that discloses beings authentically in a temporal horizon *within* the constitution of selfhood, but the self-*denial* for an authentic existence in the relational, that is *exoteric*, contributive light of love, towards “true being and true knowledge.” Beings are knowable in their mystical hypostasizing of the Christian God, where what is “mystical” is *the way* that they appear: beings appear in human perception in a *personal* way to hypostasize the “energy” (intervention) of God. (*Prosopo*: 227)

The things of the world do not form into what they are “out there,” exoterically and independently of human perception; they have “... as ‘horizon’ of disclosure of beings (their emergence out of *lēthe* to *alētheia*) the human *prosopo*, so that knowledge is the experience of the appearance in the enframing of the *relationship* of the *prosopo* with beings.” (*Prosopo*: 226) Thus apophaticism rejects any objective assessment of truth and beings, including the persons themselves as faces. Beings reveal their essence in the act of *alēthevein* as *koinonein*, in communion, where language is the only medium through which the ecclesial experience is shared. (*Absence*: 59–60, 76) The horizon of the disclosure of beings is not temporal, as in Heidegger, but communal. In the encounter with the face of the other the senses are purified to perceive beings as they were prior to our falling into the sinful lasciviousness that individuates the body and the face out of communion with the other and with God. (*Prosopo*: 119–121)

Since world beings “incarnate the calling of God for the manifestation of the [human] relation with God *outside* the essence of God,” and since “only the human personal existence has the existential capacity to make this relationship manifest by energizing and

concluding the logical possibility of beings to also incarnate the logical *correspondence* to the dynamically energized calling of God into community and relation,” then “... if God exists, he is primarily known as a person (*hypostasis*) in the immediacy of relationship, and not primarily as an essence with its conceptual definition.” (*Prosopo*: 331; *Absence*: 29)

We know God from His providence and maintenance of the world’s beings, imparting Being into them and unifying them into world. “World” is the arena where humans meet with their creator. (*Absence*: 63, 67, 85) God can be the cause of world and still remain unseen, because, as Yannaras exemplifies, an effect does not necessarily reveal its cause, so that God can still remain unknowable if sought from His effects. (*Absence*: 68) Apophaticism distinguishes the essence of God from His existence in much the same way the late Heidegger distinguishes between earth and world, where the former resists disclosure and the latter clashes with and extracts beings out of this resistance. Similarly:

The distinction between essence and energies is the starting-point and presupposition for the apophatic knowledge of God. We know nothing at all about *what* God is – his essence. However, God’s *mode of being* is accessible to us in experience. And we can speak of the mode of existence of God, since we know the divine energies ... revealed with the absolute otherness in ec-static relationship ... in the logos of his creative, providential, loving energy, active in immediate dialogue. (*Absence*: 78, 83, 85)

The role ecclesial apophaticism gives to the *transcending* person – read *face* – of Christ, is that of the mediator who “re-capitulates” – i.e., re-faces – the relationship between the *transcendental* face of the Godhead and the human face. This mediation in the face of Christ is important for what will be argued in what follows against Yannaras’ attempt to connect Neo-Orthodox epistemology to ancient Greece. The face of Christ, as it were, restores within history a lost connection between the Creator and his creation accrued as the world unfolded out of its source. Christ is the *reiteration* of the originary essence, as existence: “We call Christ the ‘second Adam’, precisely because in his person the whole human nature is ‘recapitulated’ – the organic *body* of universal nature acquires Christ as its head; humanity is harmonized and summed up in a new mode of existence, incarnated in the personal hypostasis of Christ.” (*Absence*: 91)

## 1.2. Postmodern Influences in Yannaras’ Ecclesial Epistemology

If the idea that world obtains in *between* human faces *because* of the hypostasized God as the Ultimate Other in the human face already sounds awfully Levinasian, this is because it is. Despite his thorough scrambling through Western ontologies from Heraclitus to Saussure, Yannaras has not even mentioned Levinas in his outlining the empiricism of relatedness of the Eastern Church. Yet the observation that “Levinas provides a much better foundation for the positions Yannaras embraces than Heidegger himself” has been made without further comment by Andrew Louth in his Introduction of the first edition of *Absence*. (*Absence*: 8) The “foundation” is actually evident in Levinas’ *Time and the Other*, in *Totality and Infinity*, as well as in *God Who Comes to Mind*. Accordingly, by 1947 Levinas was already discerning that: “time is not the achievement of an isolated and lone subject, but it is the very relationship of the subject with the Other. ... The relationship with the Other, the face-to-

face with the Other, the encounter with a face that at once gives and conceals the Other, is the situation in which an event happens ...”<sup>10</sup> By 1961 Levinas had premised the primordiality of the face: “it is not the mediation of the sign that forms signification, but signification (whose primordial event is the face to face) that makes the sign function possible.”<sup>11</sup> And by 1982 Levinas was concluding that God is not an absolute power nor the object of mystical or dogmatic belief: “the wholly other, God, shines in the face of the Other.”<sup>12</sup>

Instead of the godly “foundation” attributable to Levinas, it is rather the godlessness of Sartre that has explicitly appealed to Yannaras because of Sartre’s existential, that is, *personal* engagement in doing philosophy in the public arena, and because “[Sartre is] maybe the most poignant theological thought of the century – theological like the negative of the photographic film – incomparably more metaphysic than the western theologians.” (*Kath’-Eauton*: 62, 69, 72) Sartre appealed to Yannaras because of his prioritizing existence to essence and because of his critique of the conceptual theologies derived from rationalism and empiricism. As Evaggelia Grigoropoulou notes in *The Early Development of the Thought of Christos Yannaras*, Sartre’s godlessness appealed to Yannaras inasmuch as this godlessness projected Nietzsche’s “death of God” in *the West*.<sup>13</sup> But there is more for Yannaras in Sartre’s existentialism. Since the empiricism of relatedness has no access to God’s essence, and since for Sartre humanity produces its essence only out of its existential choices, it is only through human existential choice that humanity may have access to God by the mode that God exists through his energizing the human freedom to choose. This derivation formulates the very appealing, that is, plausible, idea that the Godhead manifests itself in the human face when the head of the animal that is human chooses to be *a face that is human* and thus distinguish itself from the animals that cannot afford a face in their head. To the degree that Yannaras used Sartre to step his boot on Western theology, he did just the same with Heidegger albeit in much more intricate and engaging ways.

Yannaras admires Heidegger’s clearing Western thought from objectivism. He also appreciates that Heidegger found no access to Being (Heidegger’s “Being” is at large equivalent to the Christian “Godhead”), although in this appreciation Yannaras wants to understand as an *accomplishment* what Heidegger himself regarded a *failure*, one that himself and his critics thought it undercut and derided his philosophy.<sup>14</sup> Grigoropoulou’s noting that

<sup>10</sup> Levinas, Emmanuel, *Time and the Other*, 1947, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, pp. 39, 78.

<sup>11</sup> Levinas, Emmanuel, *Totality and Infinity*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, 1961, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, p. 206.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>13</sup> Grigoropoulou, Evaggelia, *The Early Development of the Thought of Christos Yannaras*, diss., 2008, University of Durham, Department of Theology and Religion, p. 69.

<sup>14</sup> Heidegger’s failure to produce the essence of Being and thus connect Dasein with Being has produced criticism beyond incredulity, to borderline mockery. In *Heidegger and the Essence of Man* (1993) [Michael Haar, *Heidegger and the Essence of Man*, trans. William McNeill, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1993, p. 14] Michael Haar observed that: “The idea that it itself makes itself possible is incredible, no less remarkable than that of the *causa sui*. Would Dasein be like the Baron von Münchhausen, who took hold of his hair to lift himself into the air? Whence does the possibility – as it is not simply logical, but ontological – draw its power to make possible?” And in *Against Ethics* (1993), John Caputo wrote: “Though I wait daily by the phone,



Heidegger “refused to determine Being,”<sup>15</sup> is simply not true. Throughout his work, in interpreting Sophocles and Hölderlin and in exploring the cosmogonic potentiality of the Doric temple, Heidegger struggled to trace the *essence* and not the mere existence of Being. And in *The Origin of the Work of Art* Heidegger *kataphatically* shows us god in the clear-most of ways – arguably too clear for his own good – having claimed there that the Greek statue “... is the god himself.”<sup>16</sup> Not only Heidegger did not refuse to “determine” Being, he actually *regretted* he *could* not.<sup>17</sup> There are other critical misreadings and misconstruals Yannaras levies on Heidegger in order to make his “Greek case” against the West, some of which will be clarified in the argument from Greek statuary art we are to make in what follows. But ultimately Yannaras dismisses Heidegger’s nihilism for being “a typical consequence or conclusion of this historical development [of the West].” (*Prosopo*: 55) We may say in Heidegger’s hystero-phemy that the dismissal is mutual, since Yannaras did not succeed to disengage Greek apophaticism from the historical phenomenon Heidegger pointed to as the “Christian mythologizing.”<sup>18</sup>

Our recounting of the Neo-Orthodox epistemology and its eclectic assemblage from Greek, Byzantine, and post-modern theologies iterates the first main premise towards the conclusion of this essay: that this epistemology does not really describe the experience of the cosmogonic singularity event that was ancient Greece, as Yannaras argues, but only a *concealing* preservation of it as a mere aftermath in the New Testament. Yannaras counterproposes to Western Europe “Greece” as an apophatic perceptual contingency that contains both the Orthodox Christian and the ancient Greek cultures. He denies the possibility that ancient Greece and Western nihilism may be constitutionally linked in a katastatic and kataphatic coaxial manifestation. In other words, Yannaras tries to disconnect ancient Greece from the West and use it exclusively for his own Greco-Christian alternative world model. He sees the *choral* experience of ancient Greece as immanent only to the *ecclesial* experience of Orthodox Christianity, demoting the West to a runaway alienation from this lost immanency in community and communion. This is what Yannaras means when he writes that: “Heidegger ... failed to come close to the Greek understanding of *alētheia* as relationship ... *lēthe* as the absence of relationship.” (*Prosopo*: 11)

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though I keep my ear close to the ground, I cannot, for the life of me, hear the call of Being. I have been forsaken. I think Being has discovered that I am American and that I use a computer. I suspect an informer.” [John Caputo, *Against Ethics*, 1993, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, p. 2.]

**15** Grigoropoulou, Evaggelia, *The Early Development of the Thought of Christos Yannaras*, diss., 2008, University of Durham, Department of Theology and Religion, pp. 100-101.

**16** Heidegger, Martin, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell, 1993, HarperCollins, New York, p. 168.

**17** In the 1956 addendum to *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger writes that: “the relation of Being and human being, a relation that is unsuitably conceived even in this version has posed a distressing difficulty, which has been clear to me since *Being and Time* and has since been expressed in a variety of versions”; (commented by Sharin Elkholy in *Heidegger and a Metaphysics of Feeling*, 2008, Continuum, New York, pp. 9-10.

**18** See George Kovacs’ *The Question of God in Heidegger’s Phenomenology*, 1990, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, pp. 80-91.



Yannaras may be right to observe the rampant alienation of Western European societies, modern Greece included, but this alienation is evidently constitutional of what is human already in the *choral* declarations of *Antigone*, where ἄνθρωπος is defined as: “ἄπορος ἐπ’ οὐδὲν ἔρχεται το μέλλον / ἄπολις, ὅτω τό μή καλόν ξύνεστι.”<sup>19</sup> (“Unable to master his own destiny / Outcast to where he cannot gather goodness.”) The fact that the West is foundationally configured by ancient Greece despite Yannaras’ discrimination, is demonstrable from just about anywhere in the horizon of cultural evidence. The distinct and hitherto unexplored possibility that the epistemological dependence of the West to Greece may now also be *kataphatic*, where the kataphasis would *link existence to essence* by verifying Heidegger’s otherwise incomprehensible intuition that the Greek statue “is the god himself,”<sup>20</sup> this will be the subject further into our exposition. But before we get there, the second main premise towards our conclusion must showcase next how in his attempt to cut off the West from ancient Greece and appropriate ancient Greece exclusively for the Eastern ecclesial epistemology, Yannaras disconnects himself from ancient Greece as he miscues some basic concepts in Heidegger.

## 2.1. Yannaras’ Miscued Interpretations of “Dasein” and “Angst”

*Prosopo* translates Heidegger’s concept of “Da-sein,” where *Da* grammatically modifies the verb *sein* that follows it, either as “παρ-ουσία,” (*Prosopo*: 52) or as “ἐνθαδικότητα.” (*Prosopo*: 53) Ἐνθαδικότητα is the noun form out of a *spatial* adverb, ἐνθάδε, which means “here.” Παρ-ουσία is further explained as “Ἐκστασι ἐδῶ” (“ek-stasis-into-a-here”), where “ἐδῶ” is yet another spatial adverbial modification, again meaning “here.” In *Kath’ Eauton* the misconception gets even worse, as *Da* is now made to resemble the human body: “The human body is the spatial appropriation of the subject ... The *being* of our existence is approachable as the living of ‘ἐνθάδε:’ ἐνθάδε (*Da*) determines being (*sein*).” (*Kath’ Eauton*: 53) This is not right, to begin with. For Heidegger, quite the opposite is the case: not grammatically, but fundamental ontologically speaking, it is the *sein* of *Dasein* that determines the *Da* of *Dasein*. And the *Da* is never a locative adverb. As Thomas Sheehan cautions anyone trying to interpret Heidegger: “This word *Da* should never be translated as “here” or “there” but always as “openness” or “the open” in the sense of that which is thrown-open. ... Heidegger insists that the *Da* of *Da-sein* is not a locative adverb at all (“here,” “there,” or “where”).”<sup>21</sup>

Yannaras, however, ultimately modifies ἐδῶ to a *temporal* locative, further explaining that in *Da* the human being steps out of itself and elevates itself into the truth of Being as *temporality*. (*Prosopo*, 52-53.) Although in turning the spatial into a temporal modification of *sein* Heidegger initially seems to have alleviated the mistake of seeing the *Da* of *Dasein* as a spatial definition within the world, the elevation into temporality does not suffice to express the “clearing” (*Lichtung*) that *Dasein* is *in itself*, because what nullifies *Dasein* into

<sup>19</sup> Sophocles, *Antigone*: 360-361, 371-372.

<sup>20</sup> In *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art*, Julian Young finds Heidegger’s reference to the Greek statue as “the god himself” incomprehensible, surmising that Heidegger must have been there only “poetic.” [Julian Young, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art*, 2001, Cambridge University Press, UK, p. 97].

<sup>21</sup> Sheehan, Thomas, *What, after all, was Heidegger About?*, Continental Philosophy Review, vol. 47, No. 2, June 2014, section 5, p. 23.

a clearing is not finite temporality but an even *more primordial* structure, the originary mood Heidegger coins as *Angst*.

Yannaras' contextualizing Heidegger's "... *alētheia* of Being as the possibility for beings to appear for what they are is time," (*Prosopo*: 53) is an oversight of the fact that for Heidegger time, either vulgar or finite and horizontal, is dependent on *Angst* to "first" disclose the possibility of *world as world and prior to its worlding*. Heidegger may have said that, "[o]nly in terms of the rootedness of Da-sein in temporality, do we gain insight into the existential possibility ... of Da-sein as the fundamental constitution of being-in-the-world,"<sup>22</sup> but one must note that Heidegger talks here of *worldly* Dasein's *existential* possibility. Dasein never understands itself as a *primordial* being, but either primitive or worldly. In existing, Dasein is already thrown into world, where *the condition* for the possibility of world itself and prior to its worlding is not part of Dasein's existential experience of itself. *Angst* must be understood as: "a primordial kind of being of Da-sein in which it is disclosed to itself *before* all cognition and willing and *beyond* their scope of disclosure."<sup>23</sup> Dasein must experience its ground as absence, as the nullity that it is: "Being the ground for ... need not have the same character of not as the *privativum* grounded in it and arising from it. The ground need not acquire a nullity of its own from what is grounded in it."<sup>24</sup> Here Heidegger justifies Yannaras' apophaticism, yet without justifying Yannaras' miscue that what nullifies Dasein is time.

Perhaps it is easier to understand the higher primordially of *Angst* to horizontal temporality, if we consider that mood changes can alter how we experience time, the reverse notwithstanding. Several contexts in *Being and Time* clarify that primordial *Angst* never occurs isolated in the stream of experience, that it is covered up or distorted as fear by the they, that it is never objectively present in the world.<sup>25</sup> Finite temporality moves *into-world* the clearing that is *primitive* Dasein, where the possibility of that forward motion Heidegger calls "the overwhelming sway" is itself dependent on the nullity of Being first as a *backward-movement*, a withdrawal, a loss of world.<sup>26</sup>

Originary *Angst* nullifies Dasein already as a pre-temporal structure. *Angst* is not an existential structure of Dasein, and Yannaras makes another mistake in translating *Angst* into the Greek Ἀγωνία, which arguably has the same relation to *Angst* as Reticence has to silence: *Angst* and Reticence are more primordial structures than Ἀγωνία and silence. Ἀγωνία refers rather to the ontic concerns at hand Heidegger distinguishes from originary *Angst* in saying that: "That about which *Angst* is anxious is none of the innerworldly things at hand. ... *Angst* as a mode of attunement first discloses the *world as world*."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 322.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 262.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 179, 316, 175, 315.

<sup>26</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, revised and expanded translation by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, second edition, 2014, Yale University Press, New Heaven & London, p. 115.

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, 1996, State University of New York Press, p. 175.

Perhaps a more competent term to translate *Angst* into Greek is Ἀνησυχία (“Disquietude”) or Διαταραχή (“Disturbance”), since unlike Ἀγωνία these concepts express more of a definite attunement indefinite of specific concerns. Towards the same goal of elucidating Heidegger’s Being that nullifies and grounds Dasein into existence, I suggest that the constitutional expression of “Dasein” as *Lichtung* should be translated to Greek not as the misleading ἐνθαδικότητα and παρ-ουσία, but as Ξέφωτο. This term vividly and candidly visualizes in unaffected language, Heidegger’s original metaphor of the clearing as an opening in the canopy of the trees that lets the sunlight through to illuminate the floor of a dark forest.

## 2.2. “World” as Kenotic Perichoresis and Aesthetic Category

In the previous section we saw how Yannaras begun disconnecting the Christian *ecclesial* from the Greek *choral* epistemology by miscuing Heidegger’s concepts of Dasein and Angst. This was only the first step for further misreadings. It allowed the transferring of the clearing outside of Dasein as an individual, now *in between* Yannaras’ quasi-spatial version of Daseins as persons. Whereas for Heidegger the clearing is the individual because “*Angst* individualizes and thus discloses Da-sein as a ‘*solus ipse*,’”<sup>28</sup> Yannaras sees a consciousness-forming but individuation-dissolving clearing manifesting in the kenotic interpersonal, communal ἐνθάδε. In this transcending locative “here” the nullification and authenticity is not instigated by the primordial attunement, not even by finite temporality, as first claimed, but by the other and the Ultimate Other and in various ways. *Kenosis*, meaning “emptying,” is the “dynamic ‘self-concealment’ of the Godhead” where any element of existential autonomy and individuation is removed in the person’s abandonment into faith. (*Prosopo*: 324, 319) The Eastern Church’s version of Dasein is this vacuous, kenotic clearing with a name of its own: περιχώρηση. The term means “delineation,” a “fencing-in” to a communal plenum of possible communion where *apostatic individuation* transmogrifies into a *hypostatic personality* energized by the hidden essence of *Deus Absconditus* in the ascetic participation to His existential energies through the ecclesial empiricism and practice.

In this fencing-in, the individual as *poinnion tou Theou*, the “Lamb of God” (John 1: 29), is nullified by encountering *therein* the other and the Ultimate Other in an overlapping Triadic concealment of: Hagion Pneuma, behind God, behind Christ’s face as a historical person. Alternatively, in choosing to deny God as the Ultimate Other, the *individual* is nullified and the null appears in alienated societies as the *absence* of God. (*Prosopo*: 343) The individual is nullified now into a *person* also if he accepts God, since the face of God as the face of the Ultimate Other is always *hidden* behind this individual’s face, where the face hypostasized by God is the face of the person, as *prosopo* (“face”). “The hypostasizing otherness is disclosed in the ‘dynamic’ reference and ultimate communion of every godly Person with the other Persons of the Triad, with a way of self-concealment of every Person in the communal relation with the other godly Persons, in the perfect absence of any element of existential autonomy ...” (*Prosopo*: 319-320) The gaze of the other nullifies the individual into an object of perception, one individual’s autonomy being displaced in

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

the presence of the other. (*Prosopo*: 307) The individual is also nullified in the absence of erotic relationship, in ephemeral relationships maintaining the rift between individuals, (*Prosopo*: 311) where “the inability for personal relationship nullifies beings in the distanciation of individuation. ... Thus nullity emerges as the basic ontological category and the only existential reality, lived directly as the absence of relationship, as the *outside* of the personal reference.” (*Prosopo*: 289) In ecclesial epistemology primitive Dasein as the individual in itself is not knowable in the temporal horizon of disclosure, because “... the way to know the reality of the human person is not the study of the given temporal *ἐνθαδικότητα* (Da-sein) of man, because this may be consumed in the limits of the individual distance. We know the person only in the event of the relationship, and, thus, only as a response to the initial calling that ‘rescues’ it as gratified or failed relationship.” (*Prosopo*: 316)

Living in the ecclesial *alētheia* the faithful is fenced-in a plenum that transcends finite time and what finite time may reveal. Persons in ecclesial love are contained into world just like when we are suspended in “musical space” within the melody of a great composer. In this erotic ecstasis with the other the horizon of the disclosure of beings is not the Heideggerian finite temporality, because this eros is “... the cancelling of the temporal continuum and the inevitable decay.” (*Prosopo*: 188)

Yannaras’ epistemology begins to show its problems as it does not explain how the eidetic discernibility of beings is still possible in such an erotic world as plenum (Yannaras does refer to the Marcusean utopia here), since eidetic knowledge is “revealed” only in the absence of the communion with the other: “The null is the emptiness of the distance between things, [*anti-keimena*] revealed when the *relationship* is cancelled out and fragmented into things or into personal-dynamic enoeideia [eidetic knowledge] of the existent reality.” (*Person*: 288) In other words, where the nullification in the presence of the other allows the knowledge of the person, at the same time this nullification dissolves world beings that surround the persons and in this way the nullity that reveals the knowledge of persons dissolves at least the eidetic knowledge about other beings in the world. Yannaras does not tell if there is any other way for world beings to reveal themselves, other than the eidetic kind.

*Perichorēsis* entails world as a container much like the world of naïve realism in science, and very much unlike how Heidegger explained it. We see this in Yannaras’ talking of it as of “*ἀνθρώπινης ἐνθαδικῆς (κοσμικῆς) παρουσίας*” (“human presence in the here of the world”). (*Prosopo*: 289) But for Heidegger world cannot be a container where Daseins are fenced-in. World is instigated into worlding and hauled along each and every single Dasein while the being-towards-death *authentically* resists what resists its will to live and projects its existential interests to reify the *itinerant* being of beings in the disclosive horizon of finite temporality. For Heidegger *authentic*, that is, primitive Dasein, is world in itself as it is a clearing in itself, where in the nullification by Being beings first show up for what they are and for whom they are in the hermeneutical event (*Ereignis*) of appropriation (*aneignen*). The German verb *eignen-aneignen* is both phonetically and essentially relatable to the Greek *γινώσκω-ἀναγινώσκω* (“to know-acknowledge”), and it is rather Heidegger’s and not Yannaras’ conceptualization which closely adheres to the Greek understanding of “world” as appropriation towards the knowledge of things. For the Greeks

the essence of the noun κόσμος is derived from the energy of the verb κοσμεῖν, which *originally* means “to appropriate,” so that prior to the ontological contaminations in the concealment of Being in Christian interpretations, “κόσμος” is an epistemological category, an appropriation of beings in cognition. This is clear as early as in Thales, and it was still regnant in Plato’s *Phaedo*:

[ὦ]ν τὸ πρῶτον εἶναι ὕδωρ φαμέν καὶ ὥσανεὶ μόνον στοιχεῖον τίθεμεν, πρὸς σύγκρισίν τε καὶ πηγνυσιν καὶ σύστασιν τῶν ἐγκοσμίων πρὸς ἄλληλα συγκεράννυται.<sup>29</sup>

“(t)hat the first is water which we posit as if it is the only element, blended together with one another for the combination, solidification and formation of the things in the cosmos.”)

... καὶ ἡγησάμην, εἰ τοῦθ' οὕτως ἔχει, τὸν γε νοῦν  
κοσμοῦντα πάντα κοσμεῖν καὶ ἕκαστον τιθέναι ταύτη ὅπη  
ἂν βέλτιστα ἔχῃ· εἰ οὖν τις βούλοιο τὴν αἰτίαν εὐρεῖν.<sup>30</sup>

(“... and I reflected whether it is so, that mind in producing order sets everything in order and arranges each individual things in the way that it is best for it.”)

In her study of the Greek concept of “cosmos,” Viivi Lähteenoja concludes that: “... world as an ‘orderly’ system, a system κατὰ κόσμον, is what scholars regularly interpret as the standard meaning of the word κόσμος in the early Presocratic thinkers.” Also that: “the association of the derivative sense – ‘world’ – of κόσμος with its other derivative sense ‘adornment’, and with its primary meaning, ‘order’, has never been empirically proved ...”<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, the Eastern Church once again cuts itself off from ancient Greece in understanding “world” not as an epistemological, but as an aesthetic category. This deviance explains the aforementioned inability of ecclesial epistemology to maintain the eidetic knowledge of beings outside of the *mere possibility* of a kenotic relation between persons where individuals are nullified into a personal cognitive consciousness. Yannaras’ commentator Grigoropoulou is uncritical to have conceded with Yannaras that *the original* meaning of κόσμος is “ornament,”<sup>32</sup> and Yannaras himself echoes not Plato’s Greece but already what Christianity has made out of Greece. We observe this as Yannaras talks of the Christian God’s “... personal Energeia, the logos of the cosmioṭēta of cosmos, the beauty [κάλλος] as a-lētheia of beings ...,” (*Prosopo*: 117) and of “[t]he beauty [κάλλος] of the world, which appropriates beings as poesis and reasons of godly demiourgical Presencing ...” (*Prosopo*: 118)

Yannaras’ aesthetic understanding of world is anything but Greek. It derives from the Pateric understanding of world as perichoretic container and valued ornament. Gregory Na-

<sup>29</sup> Thales, Fragment DK 11 B 3, Galen in Hipp. De hum I 1 Θ.

<sup>30</sup> Plato, *Phaidon*, 97c, tr. Hugh Tredennick, The Collected Dialogues of Plato, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Bollingen Series LXXI, Princeton University Press, p. 79.

<sup>31</sup> Lähteenoja, Viivi, *The Concept of Cosmos in Milesian Philosophy*, 2017, diss., University of Helsinki, pp. 15, 11; quoting original research by Aryeh Finkelberg, *On the history of the Greek ΚΟΣΜΟΣ*, 1998, Harvard Studies in Classical Philology 98: p. 104.

<sup>32</sup> Grigoropoulou, Evaggelia, *The Early Development of the Thought of Christos Yannaras*, diss., 2008, University of Durham, Department of Theology and Religion, p. 149.



zianzen understood “the world having everything, earth and sky and sea” (“Ὡς δὲ τὰ πάντα Κόσμος ἔην, γαίη τε και οὐρανός ἡδὲ θάλασσα”) and of an “effeminate root of the world not beautified by gold nor by flower” (“Κόσμος ἀκοσμή, κάλλος ὁ θηλυτέραις. Οὐ χρυσός δειρήν κατεκόσμεεν, οὐδ’ ὑάκινθος.”)<sup>33</sup> And so did Damascenus in “κόσμος ἐν τέχνῃ ποιηθείς εἰς κάλλους περιουσίαν” (“world made as art to own as beauty”),<sup>34</sup> Basilus Caesariensis in “Κοσμεῖν ἑαυτάς, μὴ ἐν πλέγμασιν, ἢ χρυσῷ ἢ μαργαρίταις” (“to beautify themselves not in wreaths, gold, or pearls”),<sup>35</sup> and Joannes Chrysostomus in “καὶ παρεγγυῶντος ταῖς γυναιξὶ Κοσμεῖν ἑαυτάς” (“to approach and decorate the women”).<sup>36</sup>

### 2.3. Demoting of Greek Statuary to Eidolic Representation

If the transference of the clearing outside of Dasein by ignoring the didactic of the Greek tragic chorus allowed the further override of the Greek understanding of world as an epistemological category, the substitute aesthetic understanding of world further freed ecclesial apophaticism to now understand that genre of Greek art which most frankly addressed the issue of the *essence* of god, i.e., the statue, as eidolic representation. The kenotic beautification of world is not as innocuous as it may initially seem. It is this beautification that thwarts us from seeing how world is constitutionally connected to art, where as Heidegger argued and Greek art arguably attests, art is not about beauty but about truth. “The word *technē* denotes rather a mode of knowing. ... For Greek thought the essence of knowing consists in *aletheia*, that is, in the revealing of beings. ... *technē* never signifies the action of making,” we read in *Origin*.<sup>37</sup> This is where Heidegger’s conviction that art discloses world as a certain mode of knowledge becomes most potent to show how Greek statuary has been underplayed by the Neo-Orthodox epistemology.

Just as Heidegger *thought* of art, although with no further proof, the Homeric Greeks *experienced* the statue not as a representation of the god, *but as the god himself*. Deborah Stern Steiner observes in her book *Images of Mind – Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought* a paradigmatic section in *Iliad* where the statue of Athena is standing in the temple as the Trojan suppliant women arrive to ask for help, and where “Pallas Athena turns her head away” from them. “At no point in the episode does the poet distinguish between the deity and the statue standing in the temple,” writes Steiner, adding that theophanies and *agalmatophanies* are hard to tell apart, not only because the term *theos* and his ‘representation’ are interchangeable, but also because the behavior of the Olympians ‘spills over’ into the world.”<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, *Theologica Carmina dogmatica*, column 451 line 6; *Theologica Carmina de se ipso*, page 1379, line 1.

<sup>34</sup> Joannes Damascenus, *Scripta Ecclesiastica et Theologica, Sacra parallela, fragmenta Vat. Gre.* Vol. 96, p. 64: 43.

<sup>35</sup> Basilus Caesariensis, *Theologia Regulae Morales*, Vol. 31, p. 769: 26.

<sup>36</sup> Joannes Chrysostomus, *Scripta Ecclesiastica, in Epistulam ad Hebraeos*, (homiliae 1-34) Vol. 63, p. 198:46.

<sup>37</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell, 1993, HarperCollins, New York, p. 184.

<sup>38</sup> Tarn Steiner, Deborah, *Images in Mind - Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought*, Princeton University Press, 2001, p. 135.



Despite Neo-Orthodoxy claiming for itself a direct and exclusive lineage to ancient Greece, the understanding of the statue as an eidolic representation is a third step *away* from ancient Greece, inasmuch as Heidegger's interpretation of Greek statuary can be shown to make obsolete of the claim laid on this art by ecclesial aesthetics and epistemology. In fact the third step away from Greece has more of a potential to haunt ecclesial epistemology than the previous two deviant steps we examined. But before we get to what Heidegger thought of Greek art and how his understanding can elucidate the blanketing of Greece by the Pateric apophaticism, let us get a glimpse of the Neo-Orthodox understanding of art in general and of Greek art in particular.

Neo-Orthodoxy arrives to art *from* world. First there is world as a potentially beautiful container hypostasizing the essence of God, and only then there can be *in* this beautiful world beautiful art, artist, and the material to form and symbolically represent the world's beauty and the Creator's energies: "[T]he art of man [is] the immediate relation and the creative transformation of the materials of the world into the possibility of life," we read in *Eleutheria*. (*Eleutheria*: 302) Yannaras typically talks of "the descent of God into the world," (*Eleutheria*: 323) as if the world was a container, as well as of Christians "using the world." (*Eleutheria*: 113, 117, 302) For apophatic epistemology "world" is a containing entity distinguishable from the human being that only dwells in it. Although "the" world contains humans, the world can be "used" by the humans it contains to be optimally transmogrified ("*metousiosis*") "into a fact of ... godly communion." (*Eleutheria*: 118)

Neo-Orthodoxy also arrives to art *from* the artist. The artist brings to art his "ascetic technique," where he subdues his own life's attitudes to the catholic ecclesiastic experience (*Eleutheria*: 306, 336) In the artistic creation the artist absconds *individual* objectivism, the viewing of the world with his own eyes, and communicates through the artwork the *personal* mode of communion and empirical relatedness, where "personal" does not mean "individual" but "facial," in the sense of the whereupon of human faces encountering one another in a community of faces. The brushstroke of the iconographer and the blueprint of the byzantine architect *symbolize* the communal prototypes of the ecclesial consciousness. (*Eleutheria*: 335, 338)

Yannaras may have already stated that "[w]orld is a category of beauty and beauty means personal differentiation discerned only in the limits of relationship," (*Prosopo*: 107) but the unacknowledged dependence by ecclesial epistemology to aestheticism becomes clearer once we see that for ecclesial epistemology there is already "world" perceived apart of its laws being understood. A world that is senseless – still a world – up until the artist arrives: "... to demystify and reveal these laws to reveal them in the reasoning of the construction ... finally to teach how the given dysmorphia can be transformed into world ... the architect ... reveals and teaches the beautiful as symmetric perfection." (*Eleutheria*: 309-311)

For Neo-Orthodoxy the function of art is "symbolism," candidly invoking the original sense of the term from συν-βάλλειν ("to bring the wills together"). Ecclesial art, however, must retain the distance between the symbolon as the hypostatizing *energy* of the artwork and what is symbolized in it as God's otherwise inaccessible *essence*, which as such can only be hypostasized; that is, "sym-bolized." Thus Yannaras distinguishes from the West

“the theological symbolism of the Icons of the Orthodox East” and wants it connected to “mainly the ancient Greek roots, forming a technique that allows the abstraction of individual and circumstantial evidence ... towards the reduction of the concrete into the immediate view of logos or its ousia.” (*Eleutheria*: 329, 333) On this account and on the primacy of architecture over statuary, (*Eleutheria*: 308) ecclesial symbolism as communal will seems akin to Heidegger’s idea that *architecture* discloses world for this art’s *preservers*. Yet all kinship collapses once we consider that for Heidegger the Greek statue does not *re-present* and *sym-bolize* god’s *energies*, it outright *presents* for the preservers’ sym-bolization the *essence* of god.

Apophatic art as symbolic *abstraction* does presuppose the material used by the artist as its starting point of creating art in the world. Thus Neo-Orthodoxy arrives to art from *hylē* and from Aristotle’s hylomorphism otherwise already defunct by Heidegger’s phenomenology. Together with the possibility of the existence of humanity, the amorphous and alogous “matter” of the world remains an unproven and unprovable objective given for ecclesial epistemology; the belief that *hylē* has been already created and provided by a Creator is sustainable from surrendering to *faith* as self-evident truth (*sola fide*). Thus the eidetic suchness of the artist, also created by this God in unfathomable ways, takes over “... the using of *hylē*, that is, *art* [as] the creative transformation of *hylē* into an event of relation and communion.” (*Eleutheria*: 300-301) Within his *aestheticism* Yannaras distinguishes between two phases in the development of world statuary: first, the Western ways, where artists manipulate *hylē* implementing logic as *metrical* structuring to achieve verisimilitude to what is modelled; (*Prosopo*: 163, 239) second, the alternative ways of the Orthodox artist, who uses a different kind of logic, not “metric” but “personal:” “reasoning as existential fact, that is, the ability of the human to meet and reveal, with his own logic, the personal logic of the ‘things’ he encounters [*antikeimena*].” (*Prosopo*: 239)

Even prior to the problem of not further explaining what kind of “logic” is this “personal” one and why it is still “logic” in its qualifying as “existential” and “personal,” Yannaras has already succumbed to a critical self-contradiction. Although he has rejected the Western objective reasoning for being “metric,” his parallel ongoing agenda to hold Greece captive to Orthodoxy has him pressed to find the roots of Eastern Christian art to the Greek “*canon of symmetry*.” (*Eleutheria*: 333, 310) This ignores that this “canon” – presumably the Polykleitos Canon – is the patent definition of “metric reasoning” applied to statuary art.

Apophatic art arguably combines three of the “Six Basic Developments in the History of Aesthetics” Heidegger distinguished in his lectures on *Nietzsche*.<sup>39</sup> Apophatic art combines stages two, three, and five, respectively dependent on the Aristotelian-Platonic hylomorphism, on the historical content of Christ’s life story, and on the Wagnerian vision of the collective artwork as religious experience. Stages four and six pertain to Hegel’s notion of the end of art, and to Nietzsche’s understanding of art as a nihilistic cultural countermovement. As regards to the first stage, Heidegger prompts our own project here,

<sup>39</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Nietzsche*, Vol. 1 and 2, 1991, HarperCollinsPublishers, San Francisco, pp. 77-91.

having conceded that: “The magnificent art of Greece remains without a corresponding cognitive-conceptual meditation on it ...”<sup>40</sup>

Whatever the true roots of apophatic art may be, its “personal logic” is said to manipulate the material through: “a technique that allows the *abstraction* of the individual and accidental characteristics of the *represented* person or object, so that it can achieve the elevation of the particular into the immediate view of logos and its essence [my italics].” (*Eleutheria*: 333) Here one contradiction has led to another. Yannaras’ dependence on the concepts of representation and abstraction actually has as little to do with the Eastern Church as it has to do with Greek art. It only echoes eighteenth century European romanticism. That is, Winckelmann’s original argument of representational idealism in the inauguration of aestheticism as a science, as well as Lessing’s immediate follow up with the original rendition of the principle of abstractionism.<sup>41</sup>

Nevertheless, the idyll between ecclesial aesthetics and Greek art ends abruptly, as soon as there arises the possibility that Greek art may not be about the beautiful, but about truth. And what “truth” would that be? Is it the truth-as-error that Yannaras evidently borrows from Nietzsche’s aestheticism,<sup>42</sup> so that “a Byzantine blueprint is always a mistake”? (*Eleutheria*: 321) As we will see in what follows, Greek art rather justifies Heidegger’s distancing himself from Nietzsche’s idea that the essence of truth is error. In his lectures on Nietzsche, Heidegger notes that “upon deeper meditation it becomes clear that all appearance and all apparentness are possible only if something comes to the fore and shows itself at all;” and that Nietzsche’s idea is “inverted Platonism” (presumably things up in the skies and the Forms down to earth), having left “untouched the essence of truth itself.”<sup>43</sup>

In the audacious declaration that the statue is the god himself, and in the seemingly naive question also in *Origin*: “But by what and whence is the artist what he is?”<sup>44</sup> Heidegger not only breaks off from German aesthetics, he also tips over Western epistemology, the Neo-Orthodox version included. The implications from Heidegger’s bold (and insufficiently premised) declaration and unassuming question suggest that the artist, together with the artwork and the world as a whole and as a mode of knowledge to which artist and

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>41</sup> In his *History of Ancient Art*, Winckelmann makes the original argument that “[t]he shape of beauty is either *individual*, that is confined to an imitation of one individual, or it is a selection of beautiful parts from many individuals, and their union into one, which we call *ideal*.” (Winckelmann, Johann J., *The History of Ancient Art*, General Books LLC, Tennessee, 2009, p. 21.) Lessing followed up this idealism with his own conviction in *Laokoön* that “[t]he gods ... represented by the artist are not precisely the same as those introduced by the poet. To the artist they are personified abstractions which must always be characterized in the same way, or we fail to recognize them.” [Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim, *Laokoön*, translated by Ellen Frothingham, 1887, Roberts Brothers, Boston, p. 58].

<sup>42</sup> Martin Heidegger objects to this notion of “truth as error” in his lectures on Nietzsche, in *Nietzsche*, Volumes 1 and 2, 1991, tr. David Farrell Krell, HarperCollins, San Francisco, p. 149.

<sup>43</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Nietzsche*, Volumes 1 and 2, 1991, tr. David Farrell Krell, HarperCollins, San Francisco, pp. 215, 217, 149.

<sup>44</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell, 1993, HarperCollins, New York, p. 143.

artwork belong, are what they are “because” of *the Greek* statue. This, and foremostly this, is the long shot implication of the idea that *the Greek* statue “is the god himself.”

On the other hand, apophatic aesthetics deny any such epistemological and ontological dependency on the statue as the origin of truth as un-truth (*alētheia*). The defunct abstractionist and representational interpretations of Greek statuary which Neo-Orthodoxy tacitly borrows from German romanticism and blends it with ecclesial symbolism, is dependent on the assumption that art has no access to the essence, but at best only to the existence of God. Thus the Greek statue, as understood by Heidegger and experienced by Homeric Greece, for Yannaras and the Pateric tradition is nothing but an *eidolon*, an effigy irreverent to the true, Christian God. (*Absence*: 73)

Yannaras gives us four main reasons why the Greek statue is a mere *eidolon*, a semblance. It is an *eidolon*: if it reflects *the view* of the artist, if the representation is *conceptually necessary*, if it is *objectively intelligible*, and if it appears *in space and time*. Accordingly, in *Eleutheria* we read that the painter of the Byzantine Icon “does not represent reality as he sees it himself with his own eyes ...” (*Eleutheria*: 329) Regarding the second imperative, Yannaras refers in *Absence* to Basilios Caesariensis’ original objection to worshipping idols such as the Greek statue: “Theological apophaticism, as the abandonment of every conceptual necessity, defines the annihilation of all conceptual idols of God.” (*Absence*: 90) In *Absence*, in *Prosopo*, and in *Eleutheria*, Yannaras makes the case that “the face of God” and “the apophatic knowledge of divine truths cannot be expressed ... by objective definitions [and] analogical correlations.” Such artistic truths “must be “beyond objective considerations of static organisms.” (*Absence*, 109; *Prosopo*: 77-78; *Eleutheria*: 320) And in *Eleutheria* he further demands “... the natural material to reveal its ‘logical’ potentialities, to transform into the flesh of Logos, of the logos of life beyond space, time, corribility, death.” (*Eleutheria*: 333)

These four imperatives assemble and outline the condition that our access to God must be neither subjective nor objective. This, initially valid ecclesial condition, is nevertheless itself hinged on a number of unwarranted epistemological assumptions. First, the condition assumes that the artwork is created by the artist without having answered Heidegger’s question of the whence of the artist. Second, it assumes that both world and the world-material the artist uses to represent the Iconic hypostasis of God are already there and ready for the artist to use, although their origin and availability is indemonstrable because it is premised on mere faith. Third, the non-objective and non-subjective, *symbolic* condition for the artistic hypostatization of God remains dependent on the representational theory of art, which as we will next see, is invalid. Fourth, the condition is buoyed on Yannaras’ two aforementioned self-contradictions, namely that Byzantine art rejects metric reasoning while it remains rooted in Greek canonical symmetry, and that the East is supposedly distinguishable from the West, all the while the East is found to rely on Winckelmann’s idealism and Lessing’s abstractionism. Fifth, Yannaras undertakes only a selective reading of Heidegger and ignores the conclusion in *Origin* on which the validity of Heidegger’s entire opus depends, namely that we do not arrive from world to art, but the other way around, from art to world. Last, in having assumed the above, and thus having

unwittingly joined the Western alliance from Neo-Platonism to Luther's understanding of god as *Deus Absconditus*, Yannaras has precluded the possibility that actually the *essence* of God may still be intelligible, without that intelligibility being either subjective or objective.

To determine whether the epistemological and aesthetic presumptions of Neo-Orthodoxy can be alleviated, and to what degree this self-distinguished theological model can be salvaged for the human needs it is out to serve, let us further our case with *only the introduction* of the possibility for a comparative hermeneutics, one that while it hearkens to the validity of the aforementioned ecclesial condition, it stays clear of the ecclesial presumptions. In this informed hermeneutics two faces, the face of Christ and the face of the Greek statue, may have something new and important to say on the issue of the unknowability of God.

### 3.1. The Apophatic Face of Christ

The Neo-Orthodox counterproposal to the face of the Greek statue is the historical person of Christ and the apophatic mode that Christ's face is symbolized in Byzantine iconography. The two faces are patently comparable in our context, because the *theanthropic* interface is said to be fleshed-out in the face of Christ as God; this may also be the case with *some qualifying* Greek statue at least in how Heidegger saw it Homeric Greece experienced it. In the face of Christ humanity can virtually look back and regress into its own true origins, because: "With the incarnation of God in the face of Christ there takes place the exact reversal of what took place in the first Adam: a human person *hypostasizes* ... a new *mode* of existence for human nature." (*Absence*: 92) The face of Christ hypostasizes God, because: "only the Hypostasis of the Word assumes human flesh, yet the will and energy of the Trinity remains common even in the Incarnation – the simplicity of God is preserved, the unity of the divine life and energy, but also the 'hiddenness' of the divine essence." (*Absence*: 93) Christ is a bridge between God and humanity; He/he mediates into a historical existence the hidden essence of the Godhead. (*Absence*: 94, 93)

Yannaras seems to have seen that our gaze into the Christ's Icon crosses the bridge back to our origin; in this gaze we can: "Distinguish the Faces [*Prosopa*] of the Father, of the Son and of the holy Spirit in the phenomenal energy of the *summoning* of man to a personal communion with God ..." (*Prosopo*: 322) Thus eucharistic hagiography assumes the extraordinary task to disclose the Holy Trinity pictorially in an *intro*-Facial-totality ("*catholic alleloperihorisi Prosopon*"), where "the integral relation and order between them, in itself unapproachable and ineffable, that is, objectively indefinable, is expressed in our con-

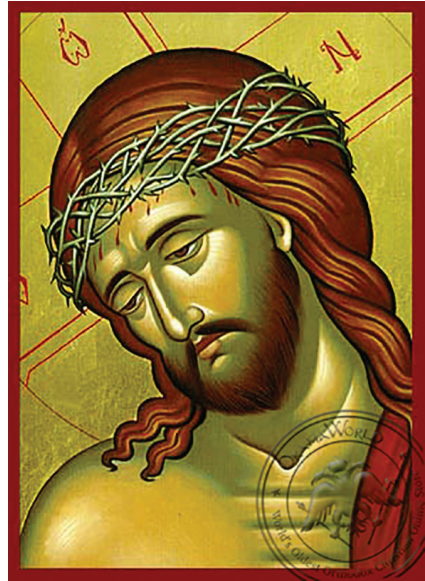


Figure 1: *Nymphios*, Holy Monastery of Osios Meletios, Oinoi, Greece



ceptual categories in the arithmetic expression  $3=1$ , which means that it obtains outside and beyond any arithmetic and ontic definition.” (*Prosopo*: 322)

Towards such an impossible task beyond objectivism, the hagiographer is seen to hearken Greek abstractionism (actually *Lessing's* abstractionism) and Aristotle's hylomorphism, where reason subdues and gives form to the material. (*Eleutheria*: 309) In this preponderance of the beauty of the symbolon over what it symbolizes, Greek art is seen to only “*prepare the way*” (my italics) for Byzantine hagiography. (*Eleutheria*: 334) The pivotal split between Eastern Christianity and the Greeks is said to begin from the fact that whereas the Greek statue as *agalma* (“shining”) had glorified the human *body*, ecclesial hagiography prioritizes and glorifies the *face*. By all accounts, and down to elaborate contemporary analyses of the human face by Levinas and Deleuze-Guattari,<sup>45</sup> the ecclesial apophantism is arguably right to have demanded “... the absolute prioritization of the ontological truth of the face ... For the byzantine hagiographer the only existent reality beyond corrigibility and mortality is the *face*, the dynamic transcendence of individuality which constitutes mutation of the *mode of being*.” (*Eleutheria*: 343, 335) The principles of Byzantine art are similar if not identical for both architecture and iconography. (*Eleutheria*: 329, 332) Both are said to “*respect the material of the construction*,” (my italics) out to answer the question: “[h]ow is it possible for the blueprint and the color for someone to picture not nature, the individual corrigible and mortal ontologies, but the hypostasis of the persons and of things?” (*Eleutheria*: 309, 333)

For apophatic epistemology the symbolic iconism of the face of Christ is the only possible mode for the hypostatization of God's essence as *the world's ultimate cause*. Yannaras retrieves this poetic license from the Areopagite, who conceded that: “the effects may have their causes beheld only into icons [*εικόνας*], because these causes are removed from and surpass the effects for our common reasoning.”<sup>46</sup> What differentiates the icon from a painting or picture of a human, is that in the icon Christ's face is lit by an ontologically different kind of light, an artistically-achieved hypercosmic glow. The iconographer tries to symbolize John Chrysostom's original account of the “non-created” (*aktiston*) “Light of Tabor,” the glow into which Christ was transfigured into god at the mount of Tabor.

Of course, even in our narrow context, there is much more to explore about what transpires inside the frame of the Orthodox icon. But for the economy of this probe we have stablished the necessary concerns to spur our comparative hermeneutics between ecclesial and Greek art. For we have now returned to where we began our review of Neo-Orthodox epistemology: from world to art and back to world. Just as ecclesial epistemology spun into aestheticism in interpreting world as an aesthetic category, so the art that hypostatizes the origin of this beautiful world is itself seen as the beautiful icon. Writes Yannaras: “We call ‘beautiful’ that which has a share in beauty, and we give the name of ‘beauty’ to that ingredient which is the cause of beauty in everything. ... Iconography ... make[s] ac-

<sup>45</sup> Emmanuel Levinas in *Totality and Infinity* 1961, and *Time and the Other*, 1987; Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 1987.

<sup>46</sup> Dionysius Areopagite, *On Godly Names*, 2; VIII, 645 CD; Yannaras, *Absence*: 84.



cessible to the senses this theology of the beauty, with the art of referential transition ‘to the archetype’ of personal immediacy with what is celebrated in icons ...” (*Absence*: 109)

### 3.2. *Blonde Youth*: 12 Steps for a Return to Greece

Regarding the origin and possibility of world, and after he broke off from Christian ontology, Heidegger still spoke of “Being” in some terms comparable to what Christianity understands as “God.” Heidegger did not, nevertheless, specify in *Origin* or elsewhere exactly which Greek statue “is the god *himself*” as the world’s origin. Arguably not all statues from the some 400 monumental works, copies and originals, that have survived on either side of the Archaic and the Classical/Hellenistic “styles,” are equally eligible to such a task of turning ecclesial apophaticism on its head and confirm Heidegger while disqualifying Yannaras. There is evidence, however, that three Greek works patently qualify for a direct comparison to the Iconic face of Christ, because these statues hearken to the demands set by either or both Heidegger and Yannaras so far outlined in our exposition. In satisfying these demands and at the same time challenge the validity of ecclesial apophaticism, such art would:

- i. Yield access to the *essence* of god.
- ii. Appear not as face, but as the *possibility* of face.
- iii. Be *katastatic* and *kataphatic*, not hypostatic and apophatic of the essence of god.
- iv. Anticipate *neither an objective nor a subjective* intelligibility of the essence of god.
- v. Appear *as the possibility* of space and time, instead of *in* space and time.
- vi. Assemble a *pre-rational* structure.
- vii. *Annihilate* the material it uses to make itself manifest.
- viii. Disclose the possibility of world *as a mode of knowledge*.
- ix. Manifest as nothing but the perceiver’s perceptual biases *themselves*.
- x. Show *the origin* of the artwork and the artist for what they are.
- xi. Be *neither an abstraction, nor a representation* of anything in the world.
- xii. Appear only *in concealment*.

The three surviving works most likely to satisfy the above qualifications, are the *Blonde Youth*, the *Euthydikos Kore*, and the *Kritios Boy*. For reasons we cannot discuss here, we will work only with *Blonde Youth*, which like his brethren, is considered an odd work relatively overlooked by art theorists, as it lingers wedged in between the busy realms of mythos and logos, at circa 490 B.C.



Figure 2: Blonde Youth, c. 485 BC, Acropolis Museum, Athens, Greece

Each one of our 12 qualifications has already procured vast scholarship by itself throughout the ages, so here we only present them as thematic possibilities under new light towards further contextual inquiries. The qualifications are assembled and based on the distinct case made for this particular statue by Michael Arvanitopoulos, exemplarily in his articles *The Face Behind the Fountain: What Heidegger Did Not See in Origin*, and *Seven Suprasegmentals for the Visibility of Being*, as well as his book *Blonde Youth, Lieutenant of the Nothing: Greek Art Responds to Heidegger*.<sup>47</sup> To introduce the potential of this comparative hermeneutics and conclude our assessment of Neo-Orthodox epistemology, we begin our cursory satisfying of the qualifications, in reverse.

(xii) *Blonde Youth* should appear as something other than itself, if it is first found to qualify the rest of the 12 conditions. Given that, pending possibility, the *possibility itself* is readily available because both Yannaras and Heidegger agree that God/Being appears in the world of its own making *under concealment*. For Yannaras the essence of God is concealed in its being always “hypostasized” (*ypo*+*stasis* = “standing underneath”) by and into the world’s beings, whether extant or existent, whereas for Heidegger also “what remains *concealed* ... is not this or that being but rather ... the being of beings.”<sup>48</sup> In Yannaras’ eyes, as well as for art theorists from Plato and Lessing, to John Boardman, the art historian who has educated generations of Oxfordians, *Blonde Youth* appears in semblance as an abstraction or a representation of something other than itself.<sup>49</sup> At worst it is an irreverent idol of God in Basilios Caesariensis’ understanding, or at best it is appropriated by Yannaras as a useful tool copying the beauty of a world bygone for the visitors at the museum: “Thus ‘the artwork, the statue, is useful as a measure of the beauty of the natural prototype, not the opposite.’ The artwork is *agalma*, because it offers the pleasure and the ... of the true view of the world,” we read in *Eleutheria*. (*Eleutheria*: 334) Heidegger on the other hand, may have, indeed, seen this work for what it really “is,” but aside of the Homeric Greeks, in this he was alone. What he saw in the statue is still concealed from him to the degree that his conclusion is not validly and soundly premised. The literal reading of *Origin* has been rejected even by Heideggerians themselves; Julian Young and Hubert Dreyfus criticized the idea of Greek art as the origin of world as incomprehensible.<sup>50</sup> The epistemological implication of *Blonde Youth*’s meeting the twelfth qualification, that if *Blonde Youth* is the god himself god appears under concealment, accords with Neo-Orthodox apophaticism. It is from this accordance that Greek art, and not Western apophaticism, can *directly* expose the weaknesses of Neo-Orthodox epistemology on the latter’s own, apophatic terms from inside.

<sup>47</sup> Arvanitopoulos, Michael, *The Face Behind the Fountain: What Heidegger Did Not See in Origin*, Politeia, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Vol. 1, No. 3; *Blonde Youth, Lieutenant of the Nothing: Greek Art Responds to Heidegger*, 2019, Crete University Press, in review.

<sup>48</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 31.

<sup>49</sup> Boardman, John, *Greek Sculpture - The Classical Period*, Thames & Hudson Ltd, London, 1985, pp. 20, 64-65, 168, 240.

<sup>50</sup> See cases made by Julian Young in *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art*, 2001, Cambridge University Press, UK, p. 31; Hubert Dreyfus’ *Notes to Heidegger’s Aesthetics*, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Dreyfus 2005, p. 412.

(xi) That *Blonde Youth* is neither a representation nor an abstraction, this can be cued by showing how *this particular work* defies both the verisimilitudinal and the generic models of the representational theory. *Blonde Youth* cannot be a representation because the *Euthydikos Kore* eerily bears *an identical face*, and for some reason two *human* faces cannot be *verisimilitudinally* represented in one and the same stroke. Art historians have tried to solve this puzzle by attributing both works to the same artist, but even if this was true it would not explain the phenomenon in terms of *a representation* by verisimilitude. Equally untenable is the alternative hypothesis, that *Blonde Youth* may be a *generic* representation of the human form. This theory, preserved for postmodernity by Rhys Carpenter in *The Esthetic Basis of Greek Art* and by Gisela M.A. Richter in *Archaic Greek Youths*, distinguishes between noticed and unnoticed qualities of the human body, and qualifies as a generic representation those qualities which belong to all human bodies but somehow lie dormant until they are noticed or “discovered.” “The human body in sculptural representation differs from its prototype, the living body, by calling attention to certain qualities which otherwise tend to pass unnoticed,” wrote Carpenter.<sup>51</sup> But whence the dormant qualities, in the first place? It is one thing to hinge the viability of a generic representation of the human form on whether these qualities are successfully represented, meaning that in this success something previously neglected is now first brought into presence, and *yet another* to have successfully warranted the assumption that these prototypical qualities were already *present*, i.e., they *were* somewhere prior to their *re*-presentation. The critical problem overlooked here is that the generic representational explanation of Greek statuary understands itself as *world-descriptive*, while in truth the claims it lays can only be premised as *world-disclosive*. The principle of the descriptive eventuality from which this theory operates can never include in the description the dormancy of the object from which the object is thought to have drawn its ontological status. Similarly, the argument from abstractionism is invalid as it is dependent on either of the two models of the representational theory: what is abstracted in the abstraction must still contain the residual essence of the representational concreteness the abstraction has departed. Lessing did not really advance the case German romanticism made on Greek art. He was only trying to resolve Winckelmann’s initial problem of trying to explain the otherworldliness of the Greek statue through worldly predications. The abstraction is itself based on the presumption of a representation, and Lessing was clear why: “The gods ... represented by the artist are not precisely the same as those introduced by the poet. To the artist they are personified abstractions which must always be characterized in the same way, or we fail to recognize them.”<sup>52</sup>

(x, ix) To have cleared *Blonde Youth* from the representational theory is to have “bracketed” it into a phenomenological reduction that frees this object of perception from factual objectivism, from historicism and psychologism, to let this art recast as an open

<sup>51</sup> Rhys Carpenter, *The Esthetic Basis of Greek Art, of the Fifth and Fourth Centuries B.C.*, 1959, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, pp. 92, 93; Gisela, M.A. Richter, *Archaic Greek Youths*, 1960, Phaidon, London. p. 148.

<sup>52</sup> Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim, *Laokoön*, translated by Ellen Frothingham, 1887, Roberts Brothers, Boston, p. 58.

question. In Husserl's typical reduction the object of perception is stripped from objective facts that inform any and all contingent modes of perception, human, animal, and what may lie beyond or in between, so that from this object may be distilled and extracted *any experience of it that is exclusively human*. In Arvanitopoulos' reduction, however, *Blonde Youth* surprisingly yields something far beyond what Husserl would expect from the reduction of innerworldly beings. Instead of an experience that is human, this object, previously understood as a mere representation, yields *no less than the conditions for the possibility of human experience together with the object of this experience, the material thingliness of the statue and the thatness of what it supposedly represents*. This doublefold yield bonds qualifications (x) and (ix) into the demand for just one proof, since the artwork and the artist are what they are only by means of the determining perceptual biases disclosed in concealment *as this art*. How this is possible, we will see as we further advance into our proofs, but for now it suffices to say that this is precisely how Heidegger thought the *world-disclosive function* of art would be. On the other hand, Yannaras' *symbolic function* of art is shown to pertain only to works that are copies of something. Yannaras' ecclesial epistemology cannot really explain *Blonde Youth*, since, for one thing, this is the art that makes artist and artwork what they are and for whom they are, and not the other way around.

(iix) Neo-Orthodoxy understands "world" as an aesthetic category, so that in the last analysis the "aesthetic epistemology" through which this world is said to become intelligible yields not what can be *known* in the necessity of the finite horizontal temporality, but what may be *believed* in the kenotic faith of the infinite ecclesial time. Here is not the place to account for the ontological and existential differences between knowledge and belief, and whether the latter claims to truth may be still entitled to an "epistemology" of its own validated by observation of the perceptual biases of people like you and me. But we can still prevue the epistemological implications from the essential difference between the symbolic and the world-disclosive understandings of art in the evidence from *Blonde Youth*. Greek art suggests that, while both Yannaras and Heidegger involve some kind of divinity as provenance of world-knowledge, it is only when the clearing of world as a mode of knowledge obtains *within* Dasein as *Lichtung* in itself rather than in *between* persons in *kenosis*, that *human* knowledge assembles *world as world* as a primordial necessity rather than a contingent convention *within the world*, where this latter world is merely assumed and ultimately of unaccountable origin. This is how *Blonde Youth* may satisfy the eighth requirement.

Heidegger fundamentally sets himself apart from Yannaras, in having distinguished that: "There is no such thing as the 'being next to each other' of a being called 'Da-sein' with another being called 'world.'"<sup>53</sup> Can the statue arbitrate who is right? To evince world as horizontal necessity, the face of "god himself" that may be *Blonde Youth* would have to disclose, albeit in objectified concealment, that the possibility of world *in itself* and prior to what this world may contain obtains *within* Dasein, as Heidegger argued, and not *in between* persons as human faces, as Yannaras and Levinas want it. Yannaras and Levinas have

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<sup>53</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 51.

argued that existential authenticity is vouched in the eternity of Christian love and won in between persons/faces in the *achievement* of communion (“*athlos*” for Yannaras); but for Heidegger the reverse is the case. Dasein is already thrown into world in being-with-others (*mit-Da-sein*) in inauthenticity, whereas in authenticity (*Eingentlichkeit*) Dasein is nullified by the primordial attunement whereby it loses world. Dasein is existentially authentic only in its being grounded in *finite* temporality, in the *individuation* of Angst, which “fetches Da-sein back from its falling prey” to the they.<sup>54</sup> Thus if the disclosure of world as a mode of knowledge is disclosed by the primordial mood that is Angst, then *the art that discloses world must “be” nothing but this primordial mood*. Arguably the human face, and that alone, is the one world phenomenon where any mood makes its original essential appearance. Thus despite of the foundational difference between ecclesial epistemology and the epistemology of the *solus ipse* in terms of the authentic truth that reveals world beings as what they are for whom they are, the relation between knowledge and world is still negotiable in terms that both sides endorse, either in the Iconic face of Christ or the face of the statue, in both cases as a discourse on the “person” that is face as *prosopo*.

(vii) We recall that for Yannaras art presupposes and respects *hylē*. “Of course, the byzantine Icon is not a creation ex nihilo,” he writes. (*Eleutheria*: 333) Yannaras regards the “respect of the material of the construction” as “the first characteristic” of byzantine art, (*Eleutheria*: 309) so that this art as ecclesial energy that moves the hand of the artist *respects* the material it manipulates to make manifest the hypostasized energies of God in the Iconic face of Christ. Yannaras understands *hylē* exactly the way Heidegger argues *hylē* is impossible to be in the world, having seen that: “The world does not mean beings, neither individual objects nor the totality of objects standing opposite a subject.”<sup>55</sup> And again: “Dasein does not exist at first in some mysterious way so as then to accomplish the step beyond itself to other or to extant things.”<sup>56</sup> For Heidegger the possibility of *hylē* is absolutely dependent *on the nullification* of Dasein, where Dasein is “... nothing other than the existent possibility for beings to gain *entry to world*.”<sup>57</sup> In this nullification, *the material* (“earth” for the later Heidegger) from and into which things are given form, is itself not “respected” but nullified, because in the possibility of world as a form of knowledge, and if things can be *known*: “innerworldly things ... must be encountered in just such a way that they are of *no relevance at all*.”<sup>58</sup>

We compare Heidegger’s high-pitched epistemology with Yannaras utterly begging the question in pronouncements such that “Byzantine architecture studies and reveals this reality of the cosmic flesh of Logos,” (*Eleutheria*: 319-320) and his vacant understanding

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 117, 120, 164, 167, 178.

<sup>55</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, 1984, tr. Michael Heim, Indiana University Press, US., p. 193.

<sup>56</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, translation, introduction, and lexicon by Albert Hofstadter, revised edition, Indiana University Press, 1982, p. 300.

<sup>57</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, translated by Michael Heim, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1984, p. 193.

<sup>58</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 315.



of “pragmatopoesis” where “every building is ‘subscription’ and ‘union’ of reasons revealing the godly energy,” (*Eleutheria*: 330-331) and we may realize the urgent need of that art which would demonstrate exactly how this question is begged. If *Blonde Youth* were to arbitrate in favor of Heidegger in disclosing the blueprint of perception for this art’s preservers, then the material from and into which this art discloses itself in concealment must itself be *patently* annihilated, not respected. How is this possible? Is this purported phenomenon discernible at all in, or rather, *as*, *Blonde Youth*?

(vi, v) Our next two qualifications mandate that if Greek art is fundamentally alien to Neo-Orthodox epistemology, then this art, being world-disclosive, must make itself manifest as a *pre-rational* structure and still avail itself into a kind of intelligibility that allows it to be understood as *the possibility* of space and time, instead of appearing *in* space and time like any other, ordinary art. While Yannaras is left to wonder whether byzantine iconography shared the problem of ecclesial architecture, of “How is it possible for the natural material to reveal its ‘logical’ potentialities ... Logos gives ‘eidos’ to *hylē*,” (*Eleutheria*: 332-333, 309) thus trusting the access to God’s existence to *rational* structures he otherwise says he despises, Heidegger had already shown in *Being and Time* (1927) that the possibility of world is grounded on a *pre-temporal* structure. As we already saw (section 2.1.1.) Angst, the primordial attunement that discloses world as world and prior to its worlding, is a structure even more primordial than horizontal temporality. And in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (1928) Heidegger further clarified from the *principle of grounds* that this world-disclosive structure (*Fügung*), besides being more primordial than horizontal temporality, is also *pre-rational*. Aristotle’s laws of identity ( $A = A$ ), and of non-contradiction ( $A \neq -A$ ), were through Leibniz and Fichte still held as the very first two laws of logic when Heidegger arrived to it wielding a phenomenological sledgehammer. Heidegger interjected the necessity of a third, conditional and determining, and thus prior law, the *potius quam* (“rather-than”), showing how the Aristotelian *primitive* laws that determine world as a mode of knowledge from logic, are themselves grounded on a *primordial evaluation* which in itself is not logical. Only after beings are *grounded* in the *new first law* of logic, are beings free to reveal themselves for what they are in the temporal horizon of disclosure: “[W]hen temporality temporalizes [*Zeitlichkeit sich zeitigt*], only then do beings have the opportunity to enter the world. Entry into world, furthermore, provides the possibility for beings to be able to be revealed.”<sup>59</sup> Unlike Yannaras, for Heidegger Logos as logic is a fundamental ontological *aftermath* for the existential possibility of a *primordially value-laden consciousness*. This consciousness not merely dies, like other life forms, but *understands* the *paralogism* of its own nullity *primordially*, and from this understanding as attunement it opens up the temporal horizon for the *itinerant* reification of the things in the world.<sup>60</sup> From these elucidations follows that if the art that discloses world as a mode of knowledge was no other than the phenomenon we otherwise so casually visit at the museum as “*Blonde Youth*,” then

<sup>59</sup> *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, translated by Michael Heim, Indiana University Press, Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1984, p. 193.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 211-219.



*Blonde Youth* would be nothing but this primordial attunement as a *pre-rational* structure. Because for Heidegger spatiality (*Räumlichkeit*) is an existential structure grounded in finite, that is, futural temporality – “Dasein is never here, but over there”<sup>61</sup> – it also follows that in assembling a *pre-rational*, and thus also a *pre-temporal* structure, the incarnation of the primordial mood that arguably is *Blonde Youth* should be *intelligible as the possibility* of space and time, instead of yet another appearance *in* space and time.

(iv, iii) We have thus arrived back to the problem of *the intelligibility* of the essence of the world’s provenance. In the Orthodox tradition, and before Yannaras’ discussing it in terms of hypostatization, the essence in question “is” a primordiality that discloses itself only from the mode Maximus the Confessor defined as the “Whence God is called God both everywhere and nowhere.”<sup>62</sup> This is the same sort of self-defying intelligibility Heidegger codified after Husserl as “*praesens*,” which means present-in-absence and absent-in-presence (*Anwesenheit*).<sup>63</sup> At this point Heidegger’s principle of the impossible intelligibility of the origin of world is not much different than the false dichotomy endorsed by the Pateric epistemology, where as we saw the essence of God cannot be either objectively or subjectively intelligible; both sides preclude a third kind of intelligibility that may arise beyond objectivity and subjectivity. The delusion of this dichotomy, however, does not reveal itself for what it is until Arvanitopoulos’ analysis of the Greek statue advances the issue of the *Deus Absconditus* well beyond both Yannaras and Heidegger, in suggesting the hermeneutic potentiality of a hitherto unexplored *third kind of intelligibility*, neither objective nor subjective, one procured by the theory of prosodic suprasegmentals.

Suprasegmental theory is used in linguistics to explain some basic aspects of the mystical phenomenon of *prosody*. To see why understanding prosody is absolutely necessary for the phenomenological reduction of the statue towards a hitherto unthinkable access to the *essence* of god, is to know how prosody is possible in the first place. Prosody is what turns prose into poetry, *manu-script* into art. The prosodic quality of a poem derives from its syntactic manifold of the so-called “suprasegmentals,” musical elements such as stress, pitch, timber, intonation, amplitude, harmonics, cadence, resonance, etc. These discernible effectuations, coined “pneumata” (“spirits”) in the early Christian attempts to preserve the prosody of ancient Greek in the implementation of the lower case alphabet, transcend the text, they intervene and carry the text’s segmental componentry beyond itself. They bind the segmental componentry into structures that, while intangible, ineffable, and unquantifiable, they do ring and shudder with *communicable* – read “ecclesial” or “symbolic” – meaning fully expressed without having been spoken of. Just like the human head arguably is not *caused* by the face it bears, the poem is not caused by its prosodic qualities; and just like the manuscript is arguably grounded on the poesis which turns it into a poem, the human head, if it is to be *human*, is itself *grounded* in face. Where in the poem its *segmental*

<sup>61</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 100.

<sup>62</sup> Maximus Confessor, *Scholia*: 189c, 204d, 205a.

<sup>63</sup> Inwood, Michael, *A Heidegger Dictionary*, 1999, Blackwell, Massachusetts, US, p. 175.

componentry is comprised by the concreteness of letters, words, syllables and phonemes, while its *suprasegmental* prosody obtains as the poem's ineffable *meaning*, in the statue the corresponding *segments* are the various discernible head parts such as nose, chin, eyes and hair. Heidegger defines meaning factically as "that wherein the intelligibility of something maintains itself."<sup>64</sup> So, if any, what are *this* statue's suprasegmentals that procure and maintain its meaningful intelligibility?

The prosodic meaningfulness of an art that is world-disclosive needs not be an objective or subjective intelligibility. Prosody does not depend on the *objective* segmental componentry that it arrogates, it rather subdues it toward its own ends. This phenomenon is patently clear in the summoning of face that is *Blonde Youth*. And if there is a prosody cast to determine the perceptual biases of the artist, as we have already begun establishing for *Blonde Youth* in (x, ix), then this prosody has the subjectivity of the artist depended on it, so what this prosody makes intelligible is not of *subjective* origin either. Finally, if this, third kind of intelligibility can still yield its object as an object that is *knowable* without being either objective or subjective, then this prosody that we understand as "art" is not anymore hypostatic and apophatic, but the opposite: outright *katastatic* and *kataphatic*. In the hermeneutic potentiality of prosody the old riddle of the *Deus Absconditus* has now hatched out of Being's inherent cocooning into a new, more user-friendly and forthcoming problem, the problem of *how to trace the suprasegmental componentry* that assembles this world-disclosive prosody Heidegger understood as art. We cannot recount here Arvanitopoulos' elaborate application of suprasegmental theory to the Greek statue in *Blonde Youth*, *Lieutenant of the Nothing*, but it suffices to ask and thus take us into our penultimate mandate the following question: what exactly is the componentry of that corresponding syntactic manifold of *suprasegmentals* that determines and configures into an intelligible and thus meaningful summons this statue's head into a head that is *human*, not in causal, but in grounding relations?

(ii) Arvanitopoulos scrambles through Heidegger's works and finds scattered therein seven otherwise disconnected suprasegmentals that do explain *Blonde Youth* not as a face, but as the singularity event of the disclosure into the world of what determines *the possibility of face*. These suprasegmentals are: Implosion (*Gegenwärtigkeit*), Deficiency (*Unzulänglichkeit*), Reticence (*Verschwiegenheit*), Detachment (*Wirklichen*), Awe (*Scheu*), Offence (*Verletzung*), and Uncanniness (*Unheimlichkeit*) in this order, from the more primordial ones to the more worldly. Of course Heidegger does not address these elementary effectuations he observes as suprasegmentals. He discusses them as discernible *modal structures*,<sup>65</sup> partaking the manifold that assembles the complex primordial attunement, the exocosmic mood (*Stimmung*) of Angst. In section 2.1.1. we saw how the primordial attunement never appears in the world it discloses; Heidegger expects to find it only as art, and he looks for it in all the wrong places. He somehow gets but a distant glimpse of it quite late in his life, strangely without further ado, upon entering the chambers where the Archaic statues were kept at

<sup>64</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 142.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273.

the Acropolis Museum in 1967, where he had: "... a view that halted the will to understand as it constituted something purely strange. However, this kind of strangeness was not frightening. It led to a world, which had been determined as the inception of a great destiny."<sup>66</sup>

Arguably all seven modal structures are observable in the complex prosodic intelligibility that is *Blonde Youth*, and Arvanitopoulos does provide the more comprehensive analysis which our limitations here cannot repeat. This prosodic intelligibility is "complex," because the primordial attunement it assembles is not a one-dimensional solid. It is comprised by the manifold of its seven modal structures, some more primordial than others, so that the consciousness that is nullified in the manifold sways back and forth in the "overwhelming sway."<sup>67</sup> In the overwhelming sway Dasein falls away from world into the most primordial modal structure, Implosion, then sways back towards world through all seven to the most worldly suprasegmental of all, Uncanniness.

Heidegger implicitly endorses the translation of his seven originary modal structures into the prosodic suprasegmentals that ground face. From this endorsement and this translation we may "observe" the threefold staging – a staging corresponding to the Christian Trinitarian Godhead – of how these *primordial* modes ground and render face in the very same way the *primitivity* of face grounds and renders the *worldly* head. Accordingly, the *worldliness*, the *primitivity*, and the *primordiality* that manifest receding each-one-behind-while-within-the-other as the statue, and which as we saw earlier Yannaras anticipates in "the expression  $3=1$  beyond arithmetic," precisely correspond to the Trinitarian doctrinal faith of Christos, Theos, and the Hagion Pneuma. What was merely doctrinal in Neo-Orthodox epistemology, has now appeared as necessary in Greek art.

Heidegger sees that "the there" that we consider as Dasein's *originary* face blueprinted in the statue as the *possibility* of face, must have its own componentry cleared by the nullity that constitutes it in truth-as-untruth, because "Da-sein is its disclosure' means at the same time that the being about which these beings are concerned in their being is their 'there.'"<sup>68</sup> The statue's face, previously understood as a representation of the human head, is intelligible as *the originary* departure from the animal head, because this head is grounded directly on the nullity of Being itself without the intermediacy of face. The originary departure from the animal head in the statue appears as if "there being a unified someone 'behind' the face," an experience Deleuze and Guattari discuss as an effect of "Faciality," (*Facialité*).<sup>69</sup> Fundamental ontologi-

<sup>66</sup> It is really strange that, after having argued the world-disclosive function of the primordial mood, Heidegger never looked into the face of the statue he claimed to be "the god himself," to find there what he was in vain looking for in *Antigone* and in the Doric temple. This, especially in view of in his having entered the chambers in the Acropolis museum where the Archaic statuary was kept in 1967. [Martin Heidegger, *Sojourns – The Journey to Greece*, translated by Panteleimon Manoussakis, foreword by John Sallis, 2005, State University of New York Press, p. 45].

<sup>67</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, revised and expanded translation by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, second edition, Yale University Press, New Heaven & London, 2014., p. 115, 117.

<sup>68</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 125.

<sup>69</sup> Black, Daniel, *What is a Face?*, in *Body and Society* journal, vol. 17, 4: pp. 1-27, 2011, p. 8.

cally speaking, this is the one unique statue without a face that can still afford a head that is not an animal head. In disclosing the possibility of face, this work is the primordial where-upon where: "The essence of truth is, in itself, the primal strife in which that open center is won within which beings stand and from which they set themselves back into themselves."<sup>70</sup>

The manifold of the seven suprasegmentals – nothing more or less – is what constitutes this object which in our Cartesian delusion of the separation between subject and object registers as "*Blonde Youth*." The suprasegmental manifold is found through the reduction to have rendered this statue in a mode no other world object or being, either extant or existent, is assembled. Here the prosodic intelligibility that we understand as "art" into an object of perception *thoroughly annihilates the material it uses to make itself manifest by rendering the material absolutely dependent to what has made itself manifested in it*. The dependence of the material to what manifests in it and gives it form precipitates to such an overwhelming, katalytic exhaustiveness, that the material dissolves in this dependence. Were we to remove "the art" out of this ectoplasmic object, where the "art" is *no other* than the manifold of the concomitant suprasegmentals converging into what Heidegger explicated as the elusive primordial attunement, then *the object itself would vanish from perception, since the primordial determination through which the object is understood for what it is and for whom it is, would be what has departed. No other object in Dasein's world, including other objects we consider as art, Greek or otherwise, bears such a burden as a payback for its own constitution*. In the clearing of beings that is Dasein phenomena never carry along *as their own* ontological constituency the fundamental ontological exigency that instigates the possibility that they appear, *together with the determination of the existence of whomever they appear for*.

(i) Given all the above, and if there is some type of sentient consciousness for which the suprasegmental prosody that is *Blonde Youth* is intelligible, excluding animals, infants, the attitudinally eccentric, the insane, and the comatose,<sup>71</sup> we may say that such a consciousness now does have access to the *essence* of god. In *The Question of God in Heidegger's Phenomenology*, George Kovacs clarifies that a more genuine term to convey what Heidegger meant by his usage of the more neutral, non-capitalized word of "god," is the "Holy" (*das Heilige*).<sup>72</sup> Thus we may say with a phenomenological, less historically-laden language, that the essence of the Holy "is" Nullity per se. We now *know* this, because this Nullity, Νύκτα "of gods and mortals womb that gave birth to all" in Greek since the Orphic Hymns,<sup>73</sup> *das Nichts* in German, albeit disclosing itself in concealment is still intelligible for what it is *in itself and even prior to its energies*.

<sup>70</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell, 1993, HarperCollins, New York, p. 180.

<sup>71</sup> In his book *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*, Charles Guignon promptly discriminates that: "... we should not expect an account of what it is to be human which will encompass infants, the comatose, the insane, or even momentary eccentricities among normal adults." [Charles B. Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*, 1983, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, Indiana, p. 68].

<sup>72</sup> Kovacs, George, *The Question of God in Heidegger's Phenomenology*, 1990, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, pp. 78, 163-165, 167, 168, 215.

<sup>73</sup> Orphic *Hymns*, 3:1-2.

#### 4.1. Some Conclusions: Doric Νύκτα or Light of Tabor?

*Blonde Youth* vindicates Heidegger and challenges Yannaras in the same stroke that it undercuts Levinas, who also thought that the statue is a dud.<sup>74</sup> Even our mere skimming over Arvanitopoulos' phenomenological reduction suggests that both Yannaras' kenotic ecclesiasm and Levinas metaphysics of alterity mistake the *primitivity* of the human face as if it was a *primordial* transcendence that grounds the resistance that is reality.<sup>75</sup> This is more evident from the fact that some of the basic concepts Heidegger develops regarding the *primitive* moods attuning the clearing, which are equally instrumental for Levinas' two-structured face-to-face world expediency, in Heidegger they are structures the intelligibility and hence the possibility of which is hinged on a third, more *primordial* determination, equally absent in Levinas as it is in Yannaras. Just like Levinas, Yannaras provides no such grounding for the possibility of face. He totally ignores the role of the moods both in art and in perception, and henceforth mistakes the prosodic suprasegmentals of face to be a *transcendental* infinity between Daseins dwelling into an epistemologically unaccountable world, instead of a mere *transcending* exigency of world bestowal originally procured *within* Daseins. Just exchange the word "person" where you read "face" and vice versa, and the reader does not know whether it is Yannaras or Levinas who is talking, in pronouncements such as: "The epiphany that is produced as a face is not constituted as are all other beings, precisely because it 'reveals' infinity;" or, alternatively: "[b]ut, the ecstasis, of the face, as the consummation of being or nature in the fact of its self-transcendence, corresponds not to the conceptual (and thus ontic), but to the existential-ontological definition of totality." (Here it is actually Levinas in the first and Yannaras in the second take.)<sup>76</sup>

As an independent arbitration, Greek art suggests that Neo-Orthodox epistemology and the metaphysics of alterity are at best well-tooled conceptual workshops to explore and affirm the relation between art and its preservers the way Heidegger opened it up as an issue from his otherwise incomprehensible claim in *Origin*. Yannaras' extensive usage of Greek concepts such as *sym-bolism*, *ecclesis*, *hypostasis*, *perichoresis* and *methexis* ("dissolving-into-participation") and Levinas' concept of the Infinite Other, are fecund concepts to cast powerful and much needed light into the phenomenologically unexplored region between any world-disclosive art and the perceptual occlusion it imposes to its preservers.

None of the prosodic suprasegmentals that stream up to cast the dark Doric gaze that is *Blonde Youth*, is present in the byzantine Icon of Christ. This comparison begs for

<sup>74</sup> In *Totality and Infinity* Levinas writes that: "the gods immobilized in the between-time of art, left for all eternity on the edge of the interval, at the threshold of a future that is never produced, statues looking at one another with empty eyes, idols which, contrary to Gyges, are exposed and do not see." [Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, 1961, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, p. 222].

<sup>75</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, translated by Joan Stambaugh, State University of New York Press, 1996, pp. 194, 326.

<sup>76</sup> Levinas, Emmanuel, *Totality and Infinity*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, 1961, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, p. 207; Christos Yannaras, *Tò Prosopo kai o Eros*, Domos Publications, 1992, Athens, Greece, p. 47.



its own staging on the background we have set here, but in *Lieutenant of the Nothing* Arvanitopoulos does trace this misunderstood Doric rhythm back and beyond the superficialities imposed on it by historicism and psychologism, to its pre-rational and pre-temporal essence, to be seen as the primordial *a-rrhythmia* relatable to the mystical prosody of the Pythagorean *a-rithmos*. On the other hand, the sorrow that arguably consumes the face of Christ in the typical Eastern ecclesial brushstroke, is already an innerworldly mood. No matter Yannaras' obvious fervent love for humanity and his gifted rhetoric, often though reduced to parlance, the "Light of Tabor" remains a superficial glow dependent on innerworldly conventional values such as the gold leaf smearing the iconographer uses to achieve the halo effect around Christ's head. The proclaimed Byzantine art's respect on the material is in itself a counternarrative to the observable *katalytic* annihilation of the material the Holy imposes to *hylē* in order to let itself manifest into the world it determines from Greek art. Aside of this total *katalysis*, there is no more evident proof in a world for the relation between determinant and determined.

Finally, is the Eastern Church the one and only true heir of Greece? The statue says otherwise. The Pateric hatred to the idolatry it saw in the art that was Greece – Joannes Chrysostom presiding – still haunts Yannaras' forced attempts to reconcile with the soil he steps on, eyeing the Greek golden touch for his otherwise sterile Neo-Orthodox epistemology. The statue rather suggests that it is actually the West which, fundamental ontologically speaking, and at least in some important aspects, has preserved the dark, tragic, world-disclosive prosody which, *in the very last analysis*, is "Greece." Yannaras' core view that the *original* understanding of Logos *first* took place in Greece and was rightfully upheld by the Eastern Church before it was corrupted in what followed in the West, (*Absence*: 22) needs to be escaped by an *archae*-ology of Being that understands *archē* not in terms of age and precedence, but from its forgotten, originary meaning of *archē* as a *measured* beginning. The Doric arrhythmia that is *Blonde Youth* is this *prima vera*, the measure of all that "is," "was," and of all that will ever "be." Because of its ongoing existential alienation and sentient exposure to the nullity of Being, because of its idiosyncratic aversion to the retreatist Byzantine Hesychasm, and because of a less posturing connection to Greece, the West may have in fact remained better prepared to eventually recalibrate its currently vulgar chronology, and restart the world's clock from what is now year 490 B.C. towards what Heidegger anticipated as "the second beginning."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Heidegger, Martin, *Contributions to Philosophy*, Gesamtausgabe Vol. 65: *Beiträge zur Philosophie, (Vom Ereignis)*, ed. F.-W. von Herrmann (1989), manuscript of 1936-8, p. 411.



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## Catholic Theistic Evolution

*Abstract:* Going back to 1950, several Catholic Popes have stated that believing that evolution takes place in nature does not conflict with believing in God or the Catholic faith. Yet disagreement about theistic evolution persists among Catholics. Several popes have stated that to combine an evolutionary view with a Catholic view we must consider the methods used in various branches of knowledge. To do this, we must keep consciously in mind the distinctions between science, metaphysics, philosophy, and theology. This perspective about the branches of knowledge serves to rebut various charges that Catholicism is incompatible with evolution.

*Keywords:* Catholic faith; Evolution; John F. Haught; John Paul II; Theistic Evolution

Popes from Pius XII (1950), John Paul II (1996), Benedict XVI (2008), and Francis (2014), have stated that believing that evolution takes place in nature does not conflict with believing in God or the Catholic faith. Yet disagreement among Catholics regarding evolution and Catholicism persist.

In the Popes mentioned above we find a Catholic theistic evolution position that there is no real conflict between an evolutionary view and a Catholic view. As John Paul II puts it: “An appreciation for the different methods used in different fields of scholarship allows us to bring together two points of view which at first might seem irreconcilable” (1996: para 6). Since in this statement he is referring to the idea that evolution and Catholicism only at first seem irreconcilable, he clearly means that they are not really irreconcilable. I thus regard John Paul II’s address on evolution (1996) as an example of a papal statement on theistic evolution.

In the following statement of the International Theological Commission (2004), we can see how the International Theological Commission also envisions the integration and compatibility of biological evolution with Catholicism:

[T]he outcome of a truly contingent natural process can nonetheless fall within God’s providential plan for creation. (2004: para 69)

Yet some Catholic writers do not see evolution as compatible with Catholicism (Chaberek 2015), and do not even regard evolution by natural selection as a scientific discovery. Perhaps such a spectrum of views is to be expected in the Catholic tradition since the tradition has always had several different Christologies and theologies (Osborne 2003: 4).

At the other end of the continuum, some non-religious writers hold that blending Catholicism and evolution is not viable or truly legitimate, simply due to how biologi-

cal evolution is scientifically defined. A compatibilist view of Catholicism and evolution, then—a Catholic theistic evolution—must steer between two poles: a religiously based incompatibilist view and a non-religiously based incompatibilist view. This paper focuses on how Catholic theistic evolutionists can answer the charges made by non-religious critics who argue that evolution is incompatible with Catholicism.

Before turning to those critics, I first put John Paul II's (1996) statement on Catholic theistic evolution into context. John Paul II's position on human nature and evolution is unambiguously in line with what Pius XII said in his encyclical *Humani Generis* (1950), and in the address John Paul II explicitly acknowledges this.

In 1950, Pius XII wrote that:

the Teaching Authority of the Church does not forbid that, in conformity with the present state of human sciences and sacred theology, research and discussions, on the part of men experienced in both fields, take place with regard to the doctrine of evolution, in as far as it inquires into the origin of the human body as coming from pre-existent and living matter -- for the Catholic faith obliges us to hold that souls are immediately created by God. (Pius XII 1950, para 36)

Someone might claim that Pius XII's claims do not constitute a statement of Catholic theistic evolution, since he is merely stating that the Church does not forbid discussions about evolution. It is true that the encyclical was not a comprehensive statement of theistic evolution, but it did clarify that the human body could have evolved from matter, yet the soul could not have, because the soul is spiritual and must therefore be created and connected to the body directly by God. Pius XII's claims constitute an attempt to spell out how evolution and Catholicism can be integrated, and so in that sense, I regard them as an initial sketch of a Catholic theistic evolution.

In fact, the theologian John Haught (2013) calls Pius XII's *Humani Generis* "a watershed moment in the relationship between Catholicism and Darwin's science" because prior to that document, Catholicism had been resistant to and suspicious of evolution. Russell (2011) claims that another watershed moment occurred in 1987 when John Paul II initiated an international conference calling for dialogue between science and religion (John Paul II 1988).

Let us now turn to non-religious critics of Catholic theistic evolution. Regarding John Paul II's 1996 statement, the philosopher of biology David Stamos argues that there are "serious problems" with the pope's position and that John Paul II uses 'bad reasoning about evolution and God' (Stamos 2008: 204-205).

To begin, Stamos writes:

First, to call the history of evolution an 'unfolding' indicates a poor understanding of evolution. Evolution is not like the development of the adult from the embryo. (Stamos 2008: 205)

Stamos sees this as a serious problem. It is true that John Paul II refers to how science engages in "research into the origins and unfolding of living matter," but this is not a reliable indication that the pope has a poor understanding of evolution (1996: 383). With that phrase, John Paul II is only using the literal, etymological definition of the word 'evolve,' which, prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century *did* mean 'unfolding.' In 2008, Benedict XVI also addressed the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on the topic of evolution. There, Benedict said

that “To ‘evolve’ literally means ‘to unroll a scroll,’ that is, to read a book” (2008). Here again, reference is made to the original Latin meaning of the term *volvere*, ‘to (un)roll.’ It is not reasonable to claim, as Stamos does, that the uses of these phrases indicate that the popes do not understand the scientific sense of the term ‘evolution.’

Stamos further contends that John Paul II is mistaken in how he characterizes evolution. Writes Stamos:

The Pope ... employs the ultimate skyhook, God. Quite possibly this is why he refuses to call evolution a ‘fact,’ calling it, instead, not a ‘mere hypothesis’ but a ‘theory.’ He is dead on, of course, when he says the modern case for evolution is the result of a convergence of research from different fields ... But to call the sum of all this a ‘theory’ is simply mistaken, even antievolutionary. On the contrary, modern evolutionary biologists routinely call evolution a ‘fact,’ not a ‘theory’ ... and for the best of reasons: the evidence for evolution is so overwhelming that it is in the same category with the fact that the earth is spherical and orbits the sun, which began as a hypothesis, graduated to a theory, and is now a fact. (Stamos 2008: 205-206)

But simply because John Paul II did not use the phrase ‘evolution is a fact’ but chose to use the term ‘theory,’ does not indicate that he is mischaracterizing evolution. The term ‘evolution’ tends to be used in different ways; one way is ‘evolution as a fact,’ and another way is ‘evolution as a scientific theory’ (Pope 2009: 190-1). Actually, as Stamos even acknowledges, John Paul II shows an appreciation of what goes into recognizing a theory as well supported. About evolution, John Paul II says: “The convergence, neither sought nor fabricated, of the results of work that was conducted independently is in itself a significant argument in favor of this theory” (John Paul II 1996: 382). John Paul II certainly does not use the term ‘theory’ in its unscientific sense that means whim or hunch (Scott 1997: 402).

As mentioned above, in John Paul II’s 1996 address he explicitly refers to Pius XII. At one point in the address he states that Pius XII, “[t]aking into account the state of scientific research at the time as well as of the requirements of theology ... considered the doctrine of ‘evolutionism’ a serious hypothesis, worthy of investigation and in-depth study equal to that of the opposing hypothesis” (John Paul II 1996: 382).

To which John Paul II adds:

Today, almost half a century after the publication of the encyclical, new knowledge has led to the recognition of the theory of evolution as more than a hypothesis. (John Paul II 1996: 382)

If we consider the three-stage progression of an established scientific truth, to which Stamos refers—its first being suggested as a hypothesis, then graduating to a theory, and finally to an established fact—over time the Church leaders do seem to be acknowledging that the idea of evolution has traveled that path. And we can appreciate the Church leaders’ openness to the findings of science, even if a pope has not yet stated that ‘evolution is a fact.’

Another serious problem with John Paul II’s position, according to Stamos, is that Darwin gave the perfect reply to the claim that evolution undermines the dignity of the person. (2008: 205)

It is rather odd that Stamos says a problem with the Pope’s view is that Darwin has a different perspective about evolution and dignity. Stamos is not really pointing to a ‘problem’ with John Paul II’s position.

Let's clarify. In his address, John Paul II stated that "theories of evolution which ... consider the spirit as emerging from the forces of living matter ... are incompatible with the truth about man. Nor are they able to ground the dignity of the person" (1996: 383). John Paul II views the dignity of human persons as deriving from their being created in the image and likeness of God (1996: 383). He also states that: "It is by virtue of his spiritual soul that the whole person possesses such a dignity" (1996: 383). John Paul II thus has a traditional view about the source of human dignity.

If an evolutionist were to assert that we need not contend that human dignity has a spiritual source, that human dignity retains its significance even if we believe that all aspects of human beings are the products of a purely material and naturalistic process of nature, it is not surprising that John Paul II would regard that account of human dignity as falling far short of a dignity that is thought to be derived from a spiritual basis that is God-like.

Darwin, for instance, in reflecting on how all beings today are descended from a few beings that lived long, long ago, holds that under this evolutionary perspective all beings today "become ennobled," as Stamos points out, and evolution thereby raises the dignity of animals and plants (Stamos 2008: 205). This is what Stamos referred to above as Darwin's perfect reply.

What we have here, though, are simply two different accounts of the nature of human dignity: one framed in a supernaturalist metaphysics (John Paul II) and the other in a naturalist metaphysics (Darwin). This does not constitute a 'problem' with John Paul II's position, as Stamos characterizes the situation. We are merely seeing that there are different perspectives on human dignity.

Various popes have repeated the position that the physical human body may indeed be regarded as the product of the material and naturalistic process of evolution, but that the spiritual souls of human beings should be regarded as created by God. Given that John Paul II asserted that to have dignity one needs a spiritual soul, it makes sense for him to say that an evolutionary theory that postulates that the mind emerges from matter is not able to ground the dignity of the human person. Stephen J. Pope explains this point about dignity by saying that while an evolutionary account is necessary for understanding human dignity, it is not sufficient, however. Here is how Stephen J. Pope describes the matter:

Darwinian scientific accounts of the evolution of the human species are necessary but not sufficient for understanding the true dignity and inviolability of each human person. The church understands that our affirmation of human dignity requires a proper interpretation of evolution, not its repudiation. (Pope 2009: 192)

Metaphysical naturalists may disagree with John Paul II's position on human dignity, but that in itself does not reveal a problem with his theistic evolutionary view.

Let us consider one more criticism offered by Stamos, the one Stamos considers the most serious of all. Stamos states:

This leads us to the final and perhaps biggest problem with the Pope's message. The interposition by God in the evolutionary 'time line,' the 'moment of transition to the spiritual,' the 'ontological leap,' all of this is not only *not* suggested by science, but it goes flatly against it, especially evolutionary science. (Stamos 2008: 206)

Stamos is referring to how John Paul II summarizes many points about human nature with the phrases “ontological difference” and “ontological leap” (John Paul II 1996: 383). As we have seen, John Paul II holds that human beings: are made in the image and likeness of God, have spiritual souls, and have special dignity, while at the same time he allows that physical human bodies are the products of a naturalistic evolutionary process. For John Paul II, we can summarize this by saying there is a qualitative difference in the kind of beings that humans are, in contrast with other beings that are wholly physical. Hence, with “man, then, we find ourselves in the presence of an ontological difference,” as John Paul II puts it (1996: 383). Further, since John Paul II acknowledges that the physical human body is the product of naturalistic evolution, then somewhere in the process of becoming an existing human individual, a spiritual soul becomes infused into a physical body. Humans, in fully becoming what they are, undergo an ‘ontological leap.’

Now Stamos’ response to this position is that it is an account of human nature that is “*not* suggested by science,” thus Stamos thinks there is a problem with the position. But neither John Paul II nor any other pope has claimed that their full view of human nature was suggested by science. The part suggested by science is that the human body is the product of millions of years of naturalistic evolution; that part was never a Church teaching. Obviously, the part about being created in the image and likeness of God is not derived from science, it is derived from the Bible and the theology that followed.

Stamos also claims that the notion of an ontological leap goes flatly against science. Here is where distinctions between science, metaphysics, philosophy, and theology need to be kept consciously in mind. And immediately after John Paul II uses the phrase ‘ontological leap,’ he suggests as much. He writes:

Consideration of the method used in the various branches of knowledge makes it possible to reconcile two points of view which would seem irreconcilable. (1996: 383)

The branches of knowledge he speaks of here are “the sciences of observation,” “philosophical analysis,” and “theology” (1996: 383). As one commentator on John Paul II’s address puts it, John Paul II’s address “does not foreclose the truths science may uncover about nature, yet it maintains that man’s physical nature does not encompass the whole of his existence and that theology and philosophy are competent to grasp those other dimensions” (Pellegrino 1997: 385).

Earlier in the address, and quoted above, John Paul II alludes to how these branches of knowledge are distinguished from one another, for he says that the Church’s comments about evolution are made within the “framework of her own competence” (1996: 382).

The notion that the Church makes statements within her framework of competence fits with Stephen J. Gould’s idea that science and religion are non-overlapping magisteria (NOMA). Science and religion may conflict, Gould argues, but they are not necessarily incompatible. Gould advocates “respectful noninterference” between science and religion (1999: 5).

About John Paul II’s 1996 address, Gould writes that:

Pope John Paul II recently issued a statement that struck me as entirely unremarkable and fully consistent with long-standing Roman Catholic support for NOMA in general, and for the le-



gitimate claims of human evolution as a subject for study in particular. After all, I knew that the highly conservative Pope Pius XII had defended evolution as a proper inquiry in the encyclical *Humani Generis*, published in 1950, and that he had done so by central and explicit invocation of NOMA—that is, by identifying the study of physical evolution as outside his magisterium, while further distinguishing such Darwinian concepts from a subject often confused with scientific claims but properly lying within the magisterium of religion: namely the origin and constitution of the human soul. (Gould 1999: 75)

Gould captures what John Paul II says about branches of knowledge having different areas of competence. Gould describes how some “religious scientists today ... hold that ‘deep’ questions about ultimate meanings lie outside the realm of science and under the aegis of religious inquiry, while scientific methods, based on the spatio-temporal invariance of natural law apply to all potentially resolvable questions about facts of nature” (Gould 1999: 84). The large overarching NOMA approach does seem to work well with a Catholic theistic evolution; however, when Gould goes into more detail about *why* science and religion are non-overlapping, his view is that science ‘tries to document the factual character of the world’ but religion operates “in the realm of human purposes, meanings, and values” (Gould 1999: 4). It is true that religion operates in the realm of human purposes, but religion also makes claims about the world, claims that it understands to be factual, i.e., ontological and metaphysical. Because Gould defines religion’s area as being exclusively about values, he opens himself up to the legitimate criticism from Richard Dawkins that “it is completely unrealistic to claim, as Gould and many others do, that religion keeps itself away from science’s turf, restricting itself to morals and values” (Dawkins 1997: 399).

In an earlier lecture to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, John Paul II had stated that: “The collaboration between religion and modern science is to the advantage of both, without violating their respective autonomy in any way. Just as religion demands religious freedom, so science rightly claims freedom of research” (1979, 1988). Although the branches of knowledge are autonomous, they can collaborate. But we should bear in mind how a method that a particular branch of knowledge uses can limit that particular pursuit of knowledge. Science, as a naturalistic investigation, has its limitations. Theology has its own limitations, as do metaphysics and philosophy. John Paul II would appear to have this in mind with his phrase ‘the sciences of observation.’ The sciences of observation cannot observe: that humans are made in the image and likeness of God, that they have spiritual souls, or that they have special dignity. The sciences of observation *can* observe how the physical human body is the product of a naturalistic evolutionary process, though, by studying the body’s structure, its anatomy, and its genetic composition, etc. “The moment of transition to the spirit,” John Paul II points out, “cannot be observed” (John Paul II 1996: 383). The above spiritual truths about human nature must come to be known through theology. And the very idea that there is more to reality than the natural physical world is a metaphysical issue that can be subject to philosophical analysis.

If we bear in mind these kinds of distinctions between the different branches of knowledge, their differing methods, and their inherent limitations, what should we say

about Stamos' claim that the notion of an ontological leap goes *against* science? Is that an accurate statement? No, it is more accurate to say that science that proceeds in a methodologically naturalist fashion—as it should, given how its pursuit is defined—could not and would not make claims about ontological leaps. If we are discussing ontological leaps, we are either doing metaphysics or theology.

Richard Dawkins has also reacted negatively to John Paul II's use of the concept of ontological leap. Dawkins observes:

To do the Pope credit ... he recognizes the essential contradiction between the two positions he is attempting to reconcile ... Never fear. As so often in the past, obscurantism to the rescue. (Dawkins 1997: 398)

Dawkins does not take seriously how the pope distinguishes the different branches and methods of knowledge. For Dawkins,

The sudden injection of an immortal soul in the time-line is an antievolutionary intrusion into the domain of science ... Religions make existence claims, and this means scientific claims. (Dawkins 1997: 398-399)

The notion of an ontological leap can be considered antievolutionary, since evolutionary science could not predict such a leap and evolutionary science could not observe, predict, or explain an 'injection of an immortal soul.' But if we distinguish between science, metaphysics, and theology, we need not regard John Paul II's suggestion as an 'intrusion into the domain of science.'

When John Paul II discusses immortal souls, he is not making scientific claims. Dawkins is correct that religions make existence claims, but it is unwarranted for Dawkins to assert that all existence claims are scientific claims. For Dawkins to do so, is to collapse metaphysics into science, but those two branches of knowledge are distinct. Or, we can say that Dawkins is assuming that metaphysical naturalism is true, for if metaphysical naturalism is true then perhaps all existence claims would be scientific claims, i.e., a naturalistic scientific approach would in principle be able to ascertain the existence or non-existence of all aspects of a naturalistic reality.

But Dawkins is assuming that metaphysical naturalism is true. As a metaphysical position, it needs to be defended on philosophical and metaphysical grounds, not scientific grounds. Science itself cannot establish that metaphysical naturalism is true or false, neither can it show theism to be true or false, those are metaphysical views, and science as a naturalistic pursuit is self-limited to naturalistic explanations. For example, God is not a material being that is part of the natural world, so the fact that a naturalistic scientific investigation cannot detect God, cannot establish that God does not exist. Hence, science cannot establish that metaphysical naturalism is true, nor can it establish that theism is false.

To further help answer the charges made against Catholic theistic evolution, we can employ the detailed theistic model of evolution developed by John Haught in a series of books (2000, 2003, 2006, 2008, and 2010).<sup>1</sup> Consider Haught's suggestion of a "layered

<sup>1</sup> Karl Rahner has developed a different way of integrating evolution with theology. Putz (2012: 320) sketches Rahner's approach and calls it "a major achievement."

explanation,” a concept he employs in defending his version of theistic evolution (2003, 2006, 2010). Haught explains:

By layered explanation I mean simply that everything in our experience can be explained at multiple levels of understanding, in distinct and noncompeting ways. The idea that there can be a plurality of compatible explanations for a single event or phenomenon is an ancient one, endorsed by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Kant, and many other great thinkers ... Take, for example, the book you are holding in your hands at this moment. How many ways can you understand and explain the existence of the page you are now reading? ... This page exists because a printing press stamped letters in black ink on white paper ... This page exists because an author is trying to get some ideas about evolution across to his readers ... This page exists because a publisher invited the author to make a contribution about Darwin to its list of theological publications. (Haught 2010: 23-24)

Haught goes on to explain how the three levels he identified in his book example are noncompeting explanations. When one explanation is true, we need not say it is true *rather than* the other explanations being true. In fact, without conflict one can accept all three as true. A further point Haught makes with the example is that the scientific, chemical analysis of a printed page does not tell us of possible deeper explanations of why the page exists. In addition to the printed page example, Haught has also used the examples of ‘boiling water to make tea’ and ‘starting a fire to cook marshmallows’ as events we can understand as having layered noncompeting explanations.

“Analogously,” Haught argues, “Darwin and other scientists need not insist that it is natural selection rather than divine creativity that accounts for living design” (2010: 24). As Haught puts it: “Some evolutionists think that naturalism can give an ultimate explanation of everything” (2006: 15). In Haught’s view, taking things too literally affects not only religious fundamentalists but scientists as well (2003: xv). Haught thus describes different ways of reading reality. To be fully explanatory Haught says we ought to employ many different frameworks, only one of which is scientific. Haught denies that naturalistic evolutionists have told the *whole* story about how life evolves; he calls it a reading problem (2003: ch 2).

Interestingly, Benedict XVI, who has echoed what Pius XII and John Paul II have stated about evolution, writes that when discussing the ultimate origin of beings, “questions concerning the relationship between science’s reading of the world and the reading offered by Christian Revelation naturally arise” (Benedict XVI 2008).

Using Haught’s layered explanation idea, we could disagree with Dawkins’ objection that an ontological leap is an intrusion into science. Dawkins does not acknowledge that a metaphysical level of explanation is distinct from a scientific level of explanation. Using Haught’s way of distinguishing the levels of explanation, we do not have to refer to science *rather than* metaphysics, for they are noncompeting levels. Haught’s suggestion also helps to answer Stamos’ criticism that an ontological leap goes against science. Again, the metaphysical level and the scientific level are distinct and noncompeting, so the notion of an ontological leap does not go against science.

After all is said and done, are Stamos and Dawkins fair in characterizing John Paul II’s lecture on evolution as an exercise in ‘bad reasoning’ and ‘obscurantism’? I don’t think

so. It really isn't the *reasoning* of John Paul II that Stamos is disputing, but it is the Pope's claims. I have sought to elaborate on the claims of John Paul II so as to reveal the shortcomings of Stamos' and Dawkins' critiques. In his address, John Paul II also stated that "we should speak of several theories of evolution" (1996, para 4). Whereas John Paul II acknowledges several theories of evolution, Stamos and Dawkins obviously do not. They, like many others, collapse evolutionary science into metaphysical naturalism, and thereby foreclose the intelligibility of a model of theistic evolution. Throughout Stamos' criticisms, it is apparent that he demands that evolution be understood naturalistically and he thinks that is the only appropriate way to characterize it.

In their eagerness to critique theistic evolution, Stamos and Dawkins do not distinguish between scientific questions and metaphysical/philosophical questions. This was most obvious in Dawkins' assertion that all existence claims are scientific claims. One might get the idea that Dawkins believes that all meaningful questions are scientific questions, i.e., questions that scientific investigation can answer. But in the very paper in which he critiques John Paul II, Dawkins states that

The question, 'What is right and what is wrong?' is a genuinely difficult question that science certainly cannot answer. (Dawkins 1997: 397)

Dawkins is correct here. He is pointing to an example of an ethical question, a species of philosophical question. A characteristic feature of a philosophical question is that it cannot be fully and satisfactorily answered by empirical scientific research alone.<sup>2</sup> But there are many kinds of philosophical questions, not only ethical ones. What kind of government and society should we have? What is beauty? What is knowledge? What is God? How can a spiritual soul interact with a physical body? Will I survive my bodily death? These are all philosophical questions, i.e., question that cannot be fully and satisfactorily answered by empirical scientific research. This is a point to which John Paul II would agree, I think, since he was careful to distinguish between 'sciences of observation,' philosophy, and theology. Early in his address on evolution John Paul II asks:

How do the conclusions reached by the various scientific disciplines coincide with those contained in the message of revelation? And if, at first sight, there are apparent contradictions, in what direction do we look for their solution? (1996: para 2)

Immediately after which, he states:

We know, in fact, that truth cannot contradict truth. (1996: para 2)

It would seem that John Paul II is making a reference to an encyclical of Leo XIII (1893), where the phrase 'truth cannot contradict truth' appears. In that encyclical, Leo XIII discusses methods of interpreting the Bible, an issue prompted by scientific critiques of the Bible being made during that period. Leo XIII recommended that

scholars keep steadfastly to the principles which We have in this Letter laid down. Let them loyally hold that God, the Creator and Ruler of all things, is also the Author of the Scriptures and that therefore nothing can be proved either by physical science or archaeology which can real-

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<sup>2</sup> An interesting contrast to this is Harris (2010) who argues that ethical questions can indeed be answered scientifically, and they *should* be answered scientifically.

ly contradict the Scriptures. If, then, apparent contradiction be met with, every effort should be made to remove it. Judicious theologians and commentators should be consulted as to what is the true or most probable meaning of the passage in discussion, and the hostile arguments should be carefully weighed. Even if the difficulty is after all not cleared up and the discrepancy seems to remain, the contest must not be abandoned; truth cannot contradict truth, and we may be sure that some mistake has been made either in the interpretation of the sacred words or in the polemical discussion itself. (Leo XIII 1893, para 23)

The key issue here is how to accept the conclusions of science as true while continuing to affirm the truths about human beings that are drawn from revelation and the Bible. As we have seen above, to help clarify matters and carve out a space for Catholic theistic evolution we can carefully distinguish how different branches of knowledge have different methods, and utilize Haught's concept of a layered explanation.

As illustrated above, in various papal statements we find a Catholic theistic evolution position that there is no real conflict between an evolutionary view and a Catholic view. Additionally, it has also been illustrated that papal statements frequently acknowledge a legitimate plurality of methodologies for understanding reality. Pope Francis, in a recent encyclical (2020), has reiterated this larger methodological point. This broader point about branches of knowledge is crucial for our understanding of the coherence and intelligibility of Catholic theistic evolution.

I close with these words from Pope Francis.

Although reality is one, it can be approached from various angles and with different methodologies. There is a risk that a single scientific advance will be seen as the only possible lens for viewing a particular aspect of life, society and the world. Researchers who are expert in their own field, yet also familiar with the findings of other sciences and disciplines, are in a position to discern other aspects of the object of their study and thus to become open to a more comprehensive and integral knowledge of reality. (2020: para 204)

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