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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION



The great upheavals at the beginning of 20th century began the spiritual regeneration of Russia. People turned to mysticism and religion, or even to the occult and magic, an ailment that might be seen as analogous to contemporary fascinations with the New Age, Scientology and the fictions of Paulo Coelho. Works of Gogol and Dostoyevsky, and, to a lesser degree, books of Tolstoy, steadily absorbed by the public, had to wait for several decades to be discovered, that is, to be read *properly* – through religion. In other words, in Russia at the turn of the century, God once again became *en vogue*.

With the religious renaissance came what may be called in the broadest terms cultural renewal which was exemplified in the popularity of Dmitry Merezhkovsky, a second-rate writer who managed to collect in his works all the anxieties and spiritual concerns of his times. His groundbreaking book on the religious foundations of the works of Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy prepared the way for the numerous creative interpretations, including the literary criticism of Shestov, Bakhtin, Moczulski and Leonid Grossman. “But nevertheless,” – writes Berdyaev, – “one does not find in Merezhkovsky that same extraordinary love of right. In him everything is two-sided; he plays with combinations of words and takes them for reality. (...) Merezhkovsky (...) was a man of letters to the very marrow and lived in literature, in the collecting and distributing of words, more than in life. He had great literary talent; he was an extraordinarily prolific writer but he was not a notable artist; his novels make interesting reading and give evidence of much erudition, but they are immensely lacking in artistry; they (...) were a mixture of ideology and archeology.”¹ Thus, the cultural Russia of the beginning of 20th century was Merezhkovsky’s Russia – deadly serious, pompous, insincere, fabricated. And yet, one may not deny the truth of its reality originating in the authentic religious experience.

In the 19th century, next to the writers of the stature of Gogol and Dostoyevsky, there was a sprouting of various leftist tendencies, or, more broadly, fascination with the democratic and modernizing ideas. Chaadayev, Belinsky, Chernyshevsky – these names symbolize the beginning of the end of the era of enchantment. We may add that Marxism at the time was a movement entirely marginal, considered as an element of a wider Westernizing project. At the beginning of the 20th century, the leftist tendencies among the Russian intelligentsia have all but vanished. We could say that they were gradually passing out of circulation under the influence of the spiritual turn effected at the time. Vladimir Solovyov, Dmitry Merezhkovsky, Leo Mikhailovich Lopatin, Prince Sergei Trubetsky were defining totally different directions of thought and charting out

¹ N. Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), 220, 224.

new reflective undertakings. In theology as well as in literature or literary criticism, thinkers were searching for the synthesis of soul and body (Rozanov), of Christ and Antichrist (Merezhkovsky), of theology and philosophy (father Florensky and father Bulgakov); Third Testament and Fifth Gospel were being drafted; a reform of the Orthodox church was being designed. Still, an average member of the Russian intelligentsia preferred to find inspiration in somewhat more doubtful, and therefore “easier” sources. They would succumb to the atmosphere of pseudo-religious hysteria which accompanied the sensations of spiritualism and collective readings of Rudolf Steiner's works (Biely) with far more readiness, than when reaching towards serious works of theology or simply to good literature. Cultural and religious renaissance, it should be remembered, did not, in fact, make the religious experience more profound, but rather and above all turned it into aesthetics. There was an attempt – inspired by Nietzsche's writings (simultaneously discovered by the Young Poland artists) – to make Orthodox Christianity appear more refined, to fuse it with Dionysian passion “born of the spirit of music.” Father Florensky advanced in a similar direction of broadly understood aestheticization of religious experience, though his beautification of Christianity was much better structured theologically.

Suffice it is to say – and this is the theme of the presentations in this issue – that there is no such thing as “pure” Russian philosophy, and in general – speculative thought as such. The most profound thoughts are constructed by multiple superimposed layers – philosophical, poetic, or, finally, theological. It seems then that the close affinity or even internal kinship of philosophy, literature and theology, rooted in the conjoint exploration of the fundamental anthropological categories such as goodness, sin, suffering, love, injustice and so on, should be taken for granted. And yet, this is not so. Most commonly, the protagonists of one of these domains are committedly engaged in circumspectly separating themselves from other spheres of thought. They say: let us not confuse one thing with another, for what may we arrive at once everything is confounded together, what will be the result of it all? In the present issue of *Kronos*, the multilayer spheres of the spirit were deliberately mixed together, using various pretexts. This is because I am convinced that good literature is also good philosophy. And vice versa: philosophy, that is, the pure, disinterested reflection on the anthropological categories, adds depth to literature, making it better, “more complete,” while theology grants them both the seriousness peculiar to things sacred.

Piotr Nowak
Deputy Editor in Chief

Vladimir Varava

PHILOSOPHY BORN FROM THE SPIRIT OF LITERATURE: THE EXPERIENCE OF RUSSIAN CULTURE

The relationship between literature and philosophy is one of the questions which cannot be solved unambiguously, once and for all. Both literature and philosophy are creative living organisms which exist according to their own inner laws, characterized by eternal openness, dialogue and metaphysical questions. They often interact, forming an amazing intricate pattern which adorns the “body of culture.” This interaction holds particular fascination for philosophers, writers and researchers.

In the Russian culture this interaction is especially meaningful, since it is directly connected with the question of the *status of Russian philosophy*. The search for Russian philosophical, and hence cultural, identity, initiated by Peter Chaadayevev, is far from being complete. It is still an open question, heuristically powerful. While the status of Russian literature as a phenomenon of world culture is unquestionable, the condition of Russian philosophy is different, and its condition is a subject of heated debate. We believe that it characterizes a nationally specific topic of Russian philosophy (no self-exaltation intended), not its weakness, as some opponents would argue.

Even though there is a wide range of opinions and, often conflicting ideas about Russian philosophy, there is one belief that seems the most constructive and well-grounded: Russian philosophy is essentially characterized by a strong inherent

connection with Russian literature. Here we need to warn against the temptation to equate philosophy with literature. What we suggest is that Russian literature, in its genre specificity, is a uniquely valuable source of philosophical ideas.

This idea has been voiced by numerous eminent researchers and we can quote a few opinions to illustrate this. V. V. Kozhinov writes: “The aim of Russian literature in its best works was never limited to artistic recreation of the world, however full and profound this recreation might have been. It is “philosophical literature” in its essence.”¹ This is literature, but it is philosophical literature – this is a significant argument of the famous literary scholar. Consequently, we can suggest that Russian literature sets philosophical goals, solving them by its own aesthetic method. Svetlana Semenova argued, quite expressively: “philosophy in Russia develops and ripens within literature.”²

These words of the renowned scholars describe genuine understanding of the problem, since they rely on their personal research experience and significant results, highly recognized by humanity scholars. Hence, we can suggest that Russian philosophy is born out of the spirit of literature in the Russian culture. This formula of the German philosopher (birth of something out of the spirit of something) provides a good description of metaphysical genesis of different cultural layers. While anthropologically philosophy is born out of awe before the wonder of being, in the Russian cultural tradition literature is an ontological recipient of being.

Here it would be logical to refer to Mikhail Aksenov-Meerson’s essay “The Birth of Philosophy from the Spirit of Literature in Russian Personalism,” which shows how personalist philosophy emerges from the anthropocentric experience of Russian literature, and, primarily, from Dostoyevsky’s world.³ This claim, including the title of the essay, sounds quite close to ours, yet the author only describes the personalist philosophy of Alexey Kozlov and Pavel Florensky, which was inspired by Dostoyevsky’s anthropological views. Conversely, we believe that not only personalism, but the whole native Russian philosophical tradition is connected with the spiritual and moral experience of Russian literature.

Yet, Vasily Rozanov would hardly agree to call this Russian philosophical trend “native.” In his review of Shperk’s book he divided all Russian philosophy into two types: the academic type, connected with university and theology academy, and «sectarian philosophy,” which he defined as follows: “dark, meandering philosophical search, which, emerging about the middle of the last century, has continued till now.”⁴ Notably, Rozanov connected this “sectarian philosophy,” i.e. “gnomic and unsettled philosophy,” with literature, referring to the context of its origin. This idea proved to be quite viable

¹ В. Кожин, *Немецкая классическая эстетика и русская литература: О русском национальном сознании* [V. Kozhinov, *German Classic Aesthetics and Russian Literature: On Russian National Identity*], (Москва: Эксмо, Алгоритм, 2004), 138.

² С. Семенова, *Метафизика русской литературы*, том 1 [S. Semenova, *The Metaphysics of Russian Literature*, v. 1], (Москва: Издательский дом Порог, 2004), 5.

³ М. Аксенов-Меерсон, “Рождение Философии из Духа Литературы на сцене русского персонализма,” *Достоевский и XX век* [M. Aksenov-Meerson, “The Birth of Philosophy from the Spirit of Literature in Russian Personalism,” *Dostoevsky and the 20th Century*], т. 1 (Москва: ИМЛИ РАН, 2007), 125.

⁴ В. Розанов, “Две философии (критическая заметка),” *Собрание сочинений. Природа и история (Статьи и очерки 1904-1905 гг.)* [V. Rozanov, “Two Philosophies (a critical review),” *Collected Works: Nature and History (Articles and Essays 1904-1905)*] (Москва: Республика, 2008), 149.

and productive, since it reveals truly distinctive and original traits of Russian philosophy, which are culturally convertible, in other words, can be of interest outside Russia.

In the light of Rozanov's model, many beliefs of Russian researchers become clear. For example, Sakulin's definition of Odoyevsky as "the creator of philosophical short novel" is well justified. His words about the writer's work are quite significant: "Odoyevsky, a writer, doesn't stop being a thinker. He would want to see a synthesis of art, ideas and society in literature. (...) Odoyevky belongs both to Russian literary history and the history of Russian philosophical thought, which is still lacking prominent names."⁵ Kozhinov's words about Russian literature as philosophical literature are in tune with Sakulin's observations.

This tradition of literature-philosophy synthesis, which represents the most precious part of Russian spiritual culture, began with Vladimir Odoyevsky and Dmitry Venevitinov. Indeed, the most significant cultural achievements of Russia lie in this area. Yet, the issues of differences between literature and philosophy in terms of genre, semantics, style, etc. are still valid, and the answers proposed may at times appear quite radical, as it is often the case with important issues. First, there is a tendency to reduce all philosophy to literature, thus neutralizing both, and in the second place, there are attempts to separate them, create a chasm between them, thereby destroying and voiding Russian philosophy, demoting it to a secondary role, as a derivative of the Western philosophy.

We believe that Russian philosophy is genuinely original, and its originality rivals with the highest achievements of the world philosophical thought. To understand it, one should keep exploring the relations between literature and philosophy, which is where this particular originality belongs. The presence of philosophical content in a literary work is not sufficient to regard a literary text as a philosophical one. It is important to capture a certain *philosophical substance* in the literary text, which makes it primarily philosophical. We suggest that this substance be considered "idea-centered text," which has characteristics that reveal its uniquely philosophical quality alongside its literary properties.

The concept of the "idea-centered text" emerges as a result of dividing texts into two categories, according to their plot types. Obviously, the presence of a plot is one of the primary defining characteristics of the literary text. Therefore, it would be inaccurate to refer to certain types of fiction as "plotless." Without plot, a literary work cannot be called fiction: then, we would be dealing with literary essays, non-fiction, etc. The plot, in its turn, can be of two varieties: an event-driven plot and an idea-centered plot.

The event-driven plot is the most common literary form, with its exposition, development, suspense, (happy or tragic) resolution. This is a conventional storyline, and most literary texts use this structure. An event in which the character is involved is the crucial part of such fiction. This is a story told by the authorial narrator. The major elements of such literary text are: development of the hero's/heroes' personality, description of his/her/their appearance and the setting. A literary text of this kind can

⁵ П. Сакулин, *Из истории русского идеализма. Князь В.Ф. Одоевский. Мыслитель. Писатель*, т. 1, ч. 1-2, [P. Sakulin, *From the History of Russian Idealism: Count Odoyevsky as a Thinker and a Writer*] (Москва: Издание М. и С. Сабашниковых, 1913), 457.

contain philosophical digressions as thoughts of the author or elements in the characters' dialogue. Yet, everything serves one purpose, which is the development of the plot.

Events are rigidly connected with time. Leonid Lipavsky argues: "In reality we never witness time which is entirely devoid of events."⁶ Even a prisoner kept in a deep cellar with no light or sound still experiences events in the form of knowledge, imagination, and human bodily functions. The time flows. If there is time, there is eventuality. Time is a progression of events, while events are a progression of time. Time is a mode of event existence, and vice versa. Therefore, a following chain is formed: eventuality – temporality – historicity. This particular connection builds the basic structure, a semantic niche of the classic event-driven literary text. The event always unfolds in time, which essentially creates the storyline of a short story, novella or a novel.

In addition, the writer proper is concerned with his language, that is, his work's plane of expression. This preoccupation is so strong, that it can outshine the plot, subordinating it to the language. In his *Diary*, Yuri Nagibin gave a vivid description of this writing maxim: "The major concern is not *what* to write, but *how* to write. One can be false in the plot – it is not too dangerous, one can be false in the idea – that is no big deal; but it is fatal to be false in expressing one's perception of the world. One may serve any idea, however questionable, but whatever one serves, it should be with one's own weapon, by one's own means."⁷ In any case, this language invariably serves the plot, remaining a *plot language*. Consequently, it does not matter what the plot is, it could be anything at all, however far-fetched or lacking in ideas. When a plot is formed, "one's own means," i.e. one's own language, will be found as well.

The presence of the event-driven plot in a literary work is the most serious argument against considering literature as philosophy. There can be no event-driven plot in philosophy. This is indisputable. A philosophical text, by definition, does not have any characters with their personal traits, inner worlds and individual destinies, with their personal private life stories. Philosophy discovers the universal human values, revealing the existential essence of a particular human situation. The major strength of philosophy lies in seeing fundamental things behind a multitude of empirical details, while the plot-driven fiction is primarily concerned with just such trifles of life.

Ultimately, literature is based on the event-driven plot as a temporal phenomenon, while philosophy explores timeless issues. From a philosophical angle, life is plotless, but it is not meaningless. Literature is indifferent to the meaning of life, a writer is concerned with other, mostly aesthetic issues. Literature constructs a plot which is artificial in its essence, and philosophy explores a living meaning. A literary plot is not equal to meaning in philosophy. Is it at all possible to incorporate a search for the meaning of life in a literary work – essentially artificial, contrived, and deceitful?

We are moving towards the second type of literary plot, which can be defined as the (*philosophical*) *idea-centered plot*. Essentially, its narrative structure is not determined by events, it is determined by *ideas* and *state of mind*. It is also a plot, but one of the soul's inner life which is determined by its destiny, not the external circumstances. It reveals

⁶ Л. Липавский, *Исследование ужаса* [L. Lipavsky, *Investigating Terror*] (Москва: Ад Маргинем, 2005), 67.

⁷ Ю. Нагибин, *Дневник* [Yu. Nagibin, *Diary*] (Москва: АСТ, ОАО ЛЮКС, 2005), 101.

the universal character of the human situation which is found in a combination of random facts. These facts are merely a background, not a principal structural element which they would be in the plot-driven literature.

The idea-centered plot generally influences the structure of the text, which exemplifies a philosophical mystery. A plot-driven text is one-dimensional, linear, transparent, rational, and predictable. It cannot disappoint the readers' expectations, since it is encoded with particular, thoroughly familiar genre-specific composition. A text with an idea-centered plot, in contrast, is multi-dimensional, obscure, irrational and unpredictable. Language experiments, breaking semantic, stylistic and textual rules and expectations play a major role here. Text deformatization is a formal characteristic of idea-centered plot literature.

Gilles Deleuze's essay *Literature and Life* seems to have described this type of literature:

To write is certainly not to impose a form (of expression) on the matter of lived experience. Literature rather moves in the direction of the ill-informed or the incomplete (...). Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any livable or lived experience. It is a process, that is, a passage of Life that traverses both the livable and the lived.⁸

Ultimately, Deleuze claims, the goal of literature is "a passage of life within language that constitutes Ideas."⁹

Thus, an idea is the main "character" of the text with an idea-centered plot. The idea can be embodied in a certain person, it does not matter which one. The main thing is the life of the *idea* since it represents the universality of the human situation as such. This universality has biblical and Greek spiritual archetypes which develop in the historical context, populated with countless human destinies. But all of them can be traced to patterns which are defined by the biblical faith and Greek philosophy. In his analysis of Russian metaphysics represented in literature, Pomerants suggested: "Tutchev, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky were all united by the open question which a human mind cannot find an answer to, by Job's question."¹⁰

This open question (also, the "accursed" question) becomes a major structural enzyme of the idea-centered text, defining its spirit, style and form of expression. The accursed questions not only encourage philosophical thinking on the given topic (e.g. about love and death, happiness and suffering, etc.), but also organize the text turning it into a philosophical work, since it is not the character who discusses these problems, but it is the Idea that has its voice to speak about the eternal. In such cases the writer stops being a literary artist and becomes a philosopher.

⁸ G. Deleuze, "Literature and Life," trans. D. W. Smith, Michael A. Greco, *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 2 (1997), 225

⁹ *Ibid.*, 230.

¹⁰ Г. Померанц, *Открытость бездне. Встречи с Достоевским* [G. Pomerants, *Openness to an Abyss: Meetings with Dostoyevsky*] (Москва, Санкт Петербург: Центр гуманитарных инициатив, 2013), 305.

If we apply the formal distinction between the plot-driven and idea-centered plots to literature, we will find that Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenev, Tolstoy and Chekhov belong to the first type, and Dostoyevsky, Bely, Platonov, Pilnyak and others belong to the second type. This distinction is not very clear-cut, and there is no strict borderline between plot-driven and idea-centered texts; a traditional plot-driven text would have at least a minimal presence of idea-centered text quality, and conversely, an idea-centered text may have some formal characteristics of a traditional literary text. The goal is not to divide texts strictly into two separate categories, but to identify “idea-centered text” in the literary discourse.

As we have noted, a major element creating an idea-centered plot, is the presence of accursed questions. Of course, these questions are universal, but we have reason to believe that in Russian literature they become the most acute, the most global in character, making the philosophy distinctively Russian. In his article “Ivan Karamazov as a Philosophical Type,” Sergei Bulgakov described it with utmost clarity:

Ivan belongs to those exceptional people, who treat the most important problems of existence, the so-called metaphysical questions about God, soul, good and evil, world order and meaning of life as the most acute questions of the day, not unimportant issues of dry theory. Such personalities cannot live without raising and solving these questions. From a psychological point of view, it is not important what conclusions and answers are offered by any particular person. Significantly, the questions themselves cannot be ignored and left unanswered.¹¹

In a similar tone Nikolai Berdyaev wrote: “The Russian longing for meaning of life is a major motif of our literature, and this is the most intimate essence of the Russian intelligent soul, which is always restless, thinking, meandering, working anxiously at the accursed questions, which have become the questions of one’s own individual destiny.”¹² “This Russian intelligent soul” is mainly a true Russian soul, seen at its existential crisis. In a sense, the “restlessness” and “meanderings” which Berdyaev describes are inherent to the Russian world view. He was prone to this state himself, trying to solve the accursed questions throughout his life.

It is important to understand that these questions are not caused by any dramatic life situation of a particular person, but they represent a human situation as such. Man exists as long as he is ultimately able to ask these accursed questions. It is evident that nobody can ever answer them at all. But it does not make these questions mundane or pointless. There is little pragmatic point in them, but there is a lot of human meaning. This is an ethical and metaphysical test of one’s humanity.

In the Russian culture these questions emerged for almost no reason. There was no sign of them in the old Russian patriarchal family piety, Orthodox coziness, and austerity

¹¹ С. Булгаков, “Иван Карамазов как философский тип,” *Сочинения в двух томах*, т. 2, *Избранные статьи* [S. Bulgakov, “Ivan Karamazov as a Philosophical Type” *Works in Two Volumes*, v. 2, *Selected Articles*] (Москва: Наука, 1993), 20.

¹² Н. Бердяев, *Subspecie aeternitatis. Опыты философские, социальные и литературные* [N. Berdyaev, *Subspecie aeternitatis. Philosophical, Social and Literary Experiments*] (Москва: Канон+, 2002), 180.

of the absolute monarchy. The spiritual topic of “Holy Russia” did not suggest anything metaphysical. And yet we are dealing with more than metaphysics, with some ultimate purely biblical outcry and appeal. Gogol was severely troubled by cruel antinomies of beauty and evil, faith and doubt, death and God, creativity and austerity, sin and life. In Dostoyevsky’s works it was amplified many-fold, mounting to a cosmic scale. We are not dealing with language, or plot, or belles-lettres, but life itself, at the breaking point of its being/non-being.

Thus, an idea-centered text, based on the idea-centered plot, is characterized by the following: the presence of the “accursed” questions, incompleteness, language experimentation, life of ideas. The task of the scholar can be defined as identifying the presence of the idea-centered text in literature, rather than classification of texts into two types. The idea-centered literary text is a philosophical substance, characterized in Russian philosophical culture by certain metrics, including those of the most importance: non-academic, non-scholastic quality and the emphasis on ethics.

This philosophical substance is at the center of a philosophical discourse aimed at comprehending the message which the idea-centered text includes. In its format it resembles literary reviews, literary criticism, but in its essence it is *philosophy on the subject of literature*. Vasyli Rozanov and Lev Shestov are, arguably, the most prominent representatives of this type of philosophy, based on the idea-centered literary text. Georgi Adamovich gave the following description of Lev Shestov’s objective in a philosophical paper:

he was especially drawn to thinkers who were painfully searching for answers to the questions which were traditionally called “accursed” in the Russian literature of the past. The world, Shestov insists, is infinitely more mysterious than people in their innocence tend to believe, more mysterious than even the most courageous and advanced mind can imagine, and the goal of his argument was not to prove a certain truth, but to demonstrate that the truth, so to speak, the *truest* truth – is unfathomable and incomprehensible.¹³

For Shestov, such thinkers were represented by Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, and this view was shared by Rozanov, Merezhkovsky, Berdyaev, and a great number of other Russian thinkers. Spiritual revelations of great writers, including revelations of death as a major human issue, formed a foundation for mature ethical and philosophical reflection. Such reflection on Tolstoy’s and Dostoyevsky’s ideas enabled Shestov to describe *true philosophy*: “Philosophy must not, then, be a looking around, a turning backward (*Besinnen*) (...) but it must go forward fearlessly, without taking account of anything whatever, without turning around to look at anything whatever. (...) Philosophy is not *Besinnen* but struggle. And this struggle has no end and will have no end.”¹⁴

¹³ Г. Адамович, *Одиночество и свобода* [G. Adamovich, *Loneliness and Freedom*] (Москва: Республика, 1996), 155.

¹⁴ L. Shestov, *Athens and Jerusalem*, trans. B. Martin, ed. R. Fotiade (Ohio: Ohio UP, 2016), 330.

This view of philosophy is inherently Russian, characteristic for such thinkers as Nikolai Fedorov, Nikolai Berdyaev, Vladimir Solovyov, Andrei Platonov, Sergei Bulgakov, Boris Vysheslavtsev, and many others. If we understand philosophy as a struggle, a struggle against determinism of the present state of things, it does not mean that it lacks contemplation, reverence, amazement and delight before the wonder and miracle of being. All of this is fully present in the idea-centered text of Russian literature and philosophy.

To conclude, Russian philosophy is a complex structure, organized around the idea-centered literary text (philosophical character of Russian literature) at its core, around which the literature-centered philosophical discourse is dispersed. The idea-centered text is concerned with being, including being a human, while literature-centered philosophy deals with the idea-centered text. Being – Word – Idea: this is the way Russian philosophy goes in search of truth and meaning.

THE CONCEPT OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL CHAOS IN TWO RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHICAL MANIFESTOS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

There are two literary works in the Russian literature of the first half of the 20th century which cannot be discussed independently from one another. These are Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky's short story "Red Snow" (1930) and Georgy Ivanov's confessional story "The Atom Explodes" (1938). Each of the works has its own artistic, socio-political, historical and existential meaning. And in these dimensions the texts resonate with each other. They exist like literary brothers. More importantly, they are parallel to each other on the metaphysical level, which refers to the ultimate questions about man and his origins. "Red Snow"¹ develops and counterpoints the logic of "The Atom Explodes."²

Both works are essentially philosophical manifestos, proposing a new view of the human being. Placing their heroes into the world without the Other, they manifest that the primeval human condition is chaos which precedes reflection, consciousness and subjectivity. The Other provides ready meanings and context of perception and experience. In a world without the Other, a human being is confronted with an absence of original wholeness. He is fragmented into splinters of feelings and thoughts, facing the major question of a possibility of reintegration into an organic whole.

1. GEORGY IVANOV: THE ATOM EXPLODES

Georgy Ivanov's text is an intimate discourse. Its intimacy is not related to eroticism, but to its confessional character. "The Atom Explodes" is an attempted confession, i.e., a speech without the presence of the Other. The Other is an appropriator of personal meanings, an entity that deprives one of immediacy. In a discourse addressed to oneself

¹ S. Krzhizhanovsky, "Red Snow," *Memories of the Future*, trans. J. Turnbull, N. Formozov (New York: The New York Review of Books, 2009), 109-124.

² G. Ivanov, "The Atom Explodes," trans. J. Doherty, *Slavonica* 8, no. 1 (2002): 42-67. All further references to this edition are given in brackets in the body of the text.

and not the Other (a fragment that elicited bitter criticism from Vladislav Khodasevich³ and Vladimir Nabokov⁴), Georgy Ivanov attempts to express the most intimate aspect of a human being; and this innermost particle appears in the idea of man as an infinitely divisible atom.

What is a human being? Traditionally, man is considered as a part of some entity – nature, cosmos, society, being. If man is a part, the world is a whole. Yet the tragedy of man, Ivanov would argue, stems from his withdrawal from the world; he is a defect in the world's texture, a deviation, an aberration. The world without man is lovely, the humanized world is hideous. "Christmas at the North Pole. Radiance and snow. The pure shroud of winter, spread over life" (50). Harmony. Peace. And against the background of this inhuman beauty appears a human world of ugliness – "disturbed, doomed soul who understands nothing. Jars holding cancerous growths (...). Pallid fetuses in greenish spirit" (49). The human being only craves harmony and beauty, but he is not part of it.

Man is not an atom within the social whole. What is an atom? An atom is indivisible, an elementary monolith whole. What does it mean to be an atom in the society? It means to be assigned by the social unit new properties, characteristics which one did not previously possess, to find one's place inside the unit and rely on the cultural mechanisms. To be a social atom means to identify with one's social role, to be an entity without inner properties, entirely defined by the external. That is, for example, to be respectable, to be impressive. Ivanov would say:

In my opinion this sort of well-to-do old fellow ought to be eliminated. You're old. You're sensible. You are the head of a family. You have lived a bit. Well, take that, dog! He cuts an impressive figure, this gentleman. Which is something to be valued. But what rot: 'impressive', indeed. If it were handsome, pitiful, frightful, anything at all. But no, it has to be impressive (44).

What does it mean to be imposing? It is something that exists in the sphere of presentation, but not in the sphere of being: a pose, a facial expression, a gesture, the social surface – merely that much. And that is hideous.

Normally the atom is dormant. On the outside, it is smooth, calm, unobtrusive, respectable, providing an illusion of order and regularity: "All is smoothly walled in, not a single bubble can penetrate life's surface. An atom, a single point, a deaf-mute genius" (48). Yet, what is beneath this shell? What essence is concealed in a deaf-mute genius? What is inherently his own, if he is stripped of all the imposed characteristics? Ivanov suggests diving into the depths of life: "But if we were to dig into it, to stir its dormant heart. Catch hold of it, shake it, split it apart. Send a million volts through the soul" (58).

³ В. Ходасевич, "Распад атома," *Собрание сочинений в 4 т.* ["The Atom Explodes," *Collected Works in 4 Volumes*], т. 2 (Москва: Согласие, 1996), 414-418.

⁴ В. Набоков, "Литературный Смотр. Сводный сборник. Париж. 1939," *Собрание сочинений русского периода в 5 т.* [V. Nabokov, "Literary overview: An Anthology, Paris 1939," *Collected works of the Russian Period in 5 Volumes*], т. 5 (Санкт-Петербург: Симпозиум, 2003), 593.

And then, exploding, the atom exposes the chaos and insupportability that it had managed to conceal before. An atom is a temporary illusion of order and endurance. To deprive man of this cover means to reveal, before its due time, this temporality, leaving the human perplexed, for he has no regulating nucleus. Ivanov writes:

A man, a little man, a nonentity distractedly looks in front of him. He sees black emptiness, and in it, like a brief lightning flash, the impenetrable essence of life. A thousand nameless, unanswered questions, illuminated for an instant by a flash of light and immediately engulfed in darkness. Trembling, exhausted, the consciousness seeks an answer. There is no answer to anything. Life poses questions and fails to answer them. Love poses... God posed a question to man – through man – but gave no answer. And man, doomed only to ask, unable to answer any question. An answer – the eternal synonym for failure. How many glorious questions have been asked throughout the history of mankind, and have any of them been answered... (58)

But being present in this situation of perplexity is a human privilege. Because experiencing this perplexity, asking these questions, man faces himself for the first time. They give birth to the realization that “the clarity and finality of the world are but a reflection of the chaos in the brain of a gentle lunatic” (47), that there is only chaos and only the insane see order in chaos. The world is ambiguous, incomplete. And the human being is uncertain and incomplete as well. Placing oneself in the condition of primeval chaos, without affirmation or negation, without questions and answers, is what is called the beginning of the soul history.

Under the cracked surface of the atom there are wounds and pain, torment and dreams, continuous thought of God, the black hole of loneliness. There is “the absurdity of life, the pointlessness of suffering, loneliness, torment, nauseating sticky terror” hiding within (52). To split the atom means to liberate the inner unsociable human dimension, stifled by the social unit. And then the “nucleus, enclosed in the impenetrable armour of his loneliness” will release “a limitless monstrous complexity, a terrible explosive force, secret dreams which are as corrosive as sulphuric acid” (58, 61).

This “limitless monstrous complexity” is on the other side of “filth, tenderness and sadness” (Vasily Rozanov). Compared with this complexity, the surface of “filth, tenderness and sadness” is a superficial shell, concealing a more fundamental difference and a more powerful diversity of the humankind, since it incorporates the minutest manifestations of the humanity and reestablishes them in their significance. What does it mean? It means that the human soul exists without hierarchy. The surface of life is constantly assailed by the waves of sentiments, emotions, sensations – a kaleidoscopic variety of sensual perceptions, linked by random illogical associations. Ivanov writes:

I walk along the street. I think about the most varied things. A salad, gloves... Among the people sitting in the café on the corner one will die first, one last, each at their allotted precise moment, determined to the last second

(...) I think about various things and, along with them, think incessantly of God. (...) I walk along the street, think about God, look into women's faces. (45-46)

The human world is cut out like a patchwork quilt into units of internal and external feelings. If we try to translate these feelings into the language of painting, it will be even more discordant than the world of Kandinsky or Klee, since there is still a harmony of color and shape, a unity of the mood in their paintings. Ivanov depicts subjectivity as a complex phenomenon, which combines the incompatible, with the presence of concurrent layers of pain, indifference, confessionalism, mundane curiosity, nonsense, fantasy, observation, dreams and delirium:

A man wanders about the streets, thinking different things, looking into other people's windows. His imagination operates in spite of him. He doesn't notice its operation. He sits in a café, drinks beer and reads the paper. Proceedings from the *Chambre des députés*. Car purchase by instalments. He dozes off, visited by absurd dreams. Ink spilled on the tablecloth. A fish swimming past – the ink has vanished. He needs to lock a door, but the key does not fit. English public opinion. A cyclone. The fish turns out to be the key, that is why it didn't fit. (56-57)

Ivanov challenges the idea of the one-dimensional linear humanity. Man is multidimensional. He comprises a sense of color, fascination with the form, questions about the meaning of life, impressions of the lovely pale girl passing by. These spiritual events coexist, without subordination, without hierarchy. The absence of hierarchy makes it possible for the states to be disconnected from each other. Disengaged, they are united by the laws of chaos. In this case, man becomes subject to fragmentation.

This fragmentary nature of man brings into question the very possibility of discussing the human "in himself," as an entity that is capable of opposing the world, since that would presuppose the idea of the human as a unified whole. The primeval anthropological chaos is more likely to be a whirlpool of subjectivity, gravitating to passive states, while man barely differentiates sleep from awareness, while his life develops according to the laws of imagination which are "beyond him." As Ivanov would say, "soul is like a churned-up waste-bucket – a herring tail, a dead rat, spat-out bits of food, cigarette ends, diving into the murky depths, then appearing on the surface, chasing each other" (45). The soul turns out to be a container of unfiltered states of being.

But chaos makes the development of soul history impossible. Chaos does not allow man to make a step, since any step would be disconnected from the previous one. That is, it would not matter in the total mass of perceptions. The atom would fully decompose. There would be nothing left to unite its sensations and experiences. And only single vacant moments sinking into oblivion would remain. And then we would be forced to admit the necessity of a unifying agency, of something that would bind everything into a single core, of something that could uphold the co-existence of anthropological worlds, rather than atoms without an interior content.

Consequently, man quivers with desire for order, which is part of the world beauty: "I am, fundamentally, a happy person. That is, a person disposed to be happy. Which is something relatively rare. I desire the simplest, most ordinary things. I desire order" (45). Happiness is merely order. Order is the simplest, the most fundamental condition of existence, of imposing form over chaos. The human desire for order, for firm foundation is so strong, that the order appears to be where it is absent; it haunts one like a shattered dream: "Fanfares. Morning. A magnificent theatre curtain. Of course, there is no curtain. But the desire for firmness, for solidity is so powerful that I can feel its heavy woven silk" (48). Instability strives for solidity and structure.

But what may be the origin of this order? How may a man, like a tightrope acrobat, walk over his life, what wire can he stretch above the chaos below? If the atom is preconditioned by wholeness, and yet is, in fact, a pseudo-totality, that is, chaos posing as a complete whole, then what unity can possibly remain when the atom explodes? If the human world is hideous as a pseudo-order, as the absence of internal order, if the external social order is illusory, then an inner dominant must exist to impose structure over the floating subjectivity.

This dominant is connected with the presence of meaning. There are personal meanings and supra-personal meanings possessed by a given congregation, such as tradition, religion, idea. Personal meanings are conditioned by supra-personal meanings. For only a supra-personal structure can introduce landmarks within the infinity for finite beings and allow their co-existence by offering them common reference points. Ivanov tells a story of a soul which takes place during a tectonic shift in meanings, when meanings are exhausted and lost, and the new ones have not been created as yet. The soul finds itself in the conditions typical of primeval chaos. In a sense, it is doomed to this chaos, since personal efforts to impose order are inherently insufficient. Ivanov says: "It is not my fault if order has collapsed" (45). Pavel Florensky and Nikolai Berdyaev called this condition "a twilight." A contemporary philosopher Vladimir Martynov sees a similar "gap between the times" in today's world, when the old meanings are worn out, and new meanings are about to be born from chaos. But until the shift in meanings takes place, the soul is condemned to restlessness. One may try to make use of the old meanings, but then, instead of living in the present, one is embedded in the past, ceasing to be a contemporary, with an order that is doomed to be incomplete. The meanings are discarded when they lose their completeness and universal clarity:

Blessed are the sleeping, blessed are the dead. Blessed is the connoisseur before a Rembrandt, with his pious conviction that the play of shadow and light on an old woman's face is an immense triumph, before which the woman herself is a nonentity, a speck, a zero. Blessed are the aesthetes. Blessed are the ballet lovers. (...) Blessed are the shades of a world in the process of vanishing, slumbering through its final false, saccharine dreams, which for so long have lulled humanity. (52)

But whoever cannot afford to be amused with "lacklustre great ideas" has to face meaninglessness and absurdity (49).

The departing world withdraws its meanings. Nonsense pierces the soul. Nonsense is released into the world. Ivanov speaks of life thus: “I would like to add the following, paraphrasing the words of the newly-wedded Tolstoi: It was so absurd that it surely cannot end with death” (65). Ivanov describes a person without a dominant, confused in his “tedious complexity” entangled in his thoughts and sentiments, a man who still tries to thread everything together, to spin a yarn of meaning (58). Splitting the atom, such man has sunk within understanding that the chaos at the bottom of the soul may be reduced to order only by a superior meaning. Whoever realizes this, reaches “corkscrew-like” towards God:

Our deaf-mute souls, all indistinguishable, all different, have sensed a common goal and, corkscrew-like, through superficial, visible reality, are twisting, twisting down towards it. Our revolting, wretched, lonely souls have fused together into one and, corkscrew-like, twisting through the overwhelming hideousness of the world, struggle on towards God. (63)

But God is silent. Either that, or man’s hearing has become so impaired that he fails to hear God:

The spiral was thrust deep into eternity. Through it everything flew by: cigarette butts, sunsets, immortal verses, nail clippings, dirt from under those nails. Universal ideas, blood spilt for them (...) All hopes, all spasms, all pity, all pitilessness, all bodily fluids, all malodorous flesh, every mute triumph... And a thousand other things. (64-65)

Thrust into eternity, the spiral, in effect, is thrown into nowhere. The answer the hero receives is not God, nor the meaning of life, but the “treasured, heartless, forever lost” face of his imaginary beloved he has been addressing throughout the confession (65). Man has been abandoned by meanings. They seem merely a painful dream, like the dream of the “forever lost” beloved face.

A man without a dominant is forced to function in the world according to the logic of his sensibilities and sensations. He lacks the substance that could connect them into a single whole. The only thing left to him is the awareness of the necessity of the whole. This is what binds together “the bundle of perceptions” – the pain caused by the realization of the absence of unity. This awareness is that very “impossibility,” around which whirl the “wavering, uncertain, musical, masturbatory (...) consciousness”; this awareness is the means through which consciousness fulfils itself (46).

2. SIGIZMUND KRZHIZHANOVSKY: SPOTS OF SUBJECTIVITY

If Georgy Ivanov writes about the atom in the process of explosion, Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky describes the atom already exploded. While Ivanov is fascinated by the man missing the Other, Krzhizhanovsky observes man without the Other.

His short story character’s name is Shushashin. All we know about him is that he is employed by unemployment, in other words, he is not occupied with anything.

He has dropped out of the social order and looks at the world in an asocial, aimless way. The asocial lens works as a magnifying glass. It reveals the nonsense, which the organizational forces of the society are attempting to install. Shushashin is surrounded by the world of changes, where everyone feels like a tree stump from a destroyed wood, where philosophers beg for money, and this world overlaps with a particular case of escape from the meaningful and demarcated world.

Shushashin is a person in whose subjective structure the figure of the Other is missing. His subjectivity is not only repressing the Other, but is forced to radically reject him. The world without the Other is deprived of ready meanings, it looks uninhabited and unrecognizable. Things lose their names, functions, outlines and sides invisible from a single perspective. The Other provides great insurance to the self. He bears all the risks of the unknown and the invisible. He sees what the self does not see. He knows what is unknown to the self. Without the Other, the world is shattered and one moves as if in the dark. This is the story in the text, a narrative of someone who moves through the world like a blind man, “with the look of an inexperienced ghost who had strayed by mistake into the daylight.”⁵

The narration covers one day of Shushashin’s life. The character wakes up, performs an “exercise” of surrendering to his fate, leaning against the wall in “an attitude of utter resignation,” and goes out (109). The rest of the story is seen through his eyes. Disconnected auditory and visual impressions, thoughts and phrases follow one another. The plot of the short story is difficult to summarize, since it is simply missing altogether. We only have a shorthand report of Shushashin’s subjectivity and images of his life contained therein.

The short story is roughly divided into two parts: the story of the hero when he is awake and when he is asleep, yet the division may be detected only upon close reading. In the transition from one state of consciousness to the other, the narrative style, the hero himself, or the logic of his behavior do not undergo any conspicuous changes. His waking consciousness does not differ from his sleeping consciousness. In both cases it is incoherent, nonsensical and illogical. The “day” world, similar to the “night” world, appears to be unpredictable, dangerous and hostile. All the character can do there is trust to chance, and that is frightening. The hero constantly displays his fear. But this is more than objective fear producing the feeling of submission, more than the fear of objects such as “red snow” or “window”; it is fear as such. Shushashin represents pure emotion of objectless fear, because he finds himself in the world of the totally unknown.

In the sphere of his subjectivity, uninsured by the presence of the all-seeing Other, he is utterly spontaneous. He sees only what he sees. He knows only what he knows. Seeing “occasional squares of paper showing white on the wall,” he fails to recognize in them casual advertisements (110). He has no ready patterns, which would enable him to deal with pre-established entities and diversities. In Shushashin’s world things do not differ from people, and people do not differ from things. Thus, while walking, he “nearly knocked into these words emanating from the fog,” next “rising to meet Shushashin was a gloomily familiar outline with grand granite steps leading up to it” (110), then “a door

⁵ S. Krzhizhanovsky, “Red Snow,” 114. All further references to this edition are given in brackets in the body of the text.

flew open and a shriek rang out: ‘I’ll break your legs in so many places you’ll never put them together again!’” (111); later he encountered a wall threateningly approaching his eye, “a porch whose three steps leapt out onto the sidewalk” (122) and at another instance, “the nearest bench offered a cold back” (113). People do not have eyes, but an automobile dashing from around the corner flashes its “yellow lamp eyes” (117). In his world it is not people who speak, but heads, necks, headphones, briefcases, hats, caps, backs, shoulders, “worn and withered plush” (113), thick English woolen, moustaches, collars and fur coats. Thus, when he asked the “thick fur coat under a Cossack hat” a question: ‘Excuse me, what is this line for?’” it snapped back: “For what-for” (120). In the canteen, “above the soup plates hung steam and a burble of voices,” as if these were things of the same order (115). In Shushashin’s world, it is not man who laughs – laughter is its own agent: “From across the narrow board came an explosion of merry laughter” (115). Speech is produced by a voice, rather than a man: “from behind a pot containing a paper palm, a muzzy voice muttered.” The chairs, “legs scraping the floor,” move away on their own (116). This world is inside-out, it is soulless. The problem of the Other does not exist for Shushashin. The Other, as a subject who is different from him, is absent from his perception.

Having repressed the Other, Shushashin, however, is not a subject himself. The subject should be whole and active. Shushashin is passive and pliant. He walks without direction, he thinks without reflection: “the spinning of wheels drove his steps to the curved white rim of a boulevard” (112). In his head, there is *нитоисетина* (Krzhizhanovsky’s nonsensical neologism, originating from the Russian expression *ни то ни се*, “neither this nor that,” and translated in the English text as “irrelevance”). Walking down the stairs he is thinking about the following: “if a man needed x amount of time to put his two legs together, then how much time would an octopus need to put its eight legs together or, say, a millipede” (111). His head is like an empty trashcan into which fragments of strangers’ conversations are dropped. Sitting in the canteen, he “tried to listen only to the clatter of his spoon against the earthenware, but the voices of his neighbors kept intruding” (115). Like a room with its door and windows open wide, he absorbs a draught of strange words, movements and sounds, making futile attempts to “wrest his ears from the hubbub” (116). In his own description, he is only too open to “the nonsense that flies into your head” (117).

His thoughts are no more than verbalized impressions. Watching the opposite window, he is irritated that “now the square was red-lit, now the light went out, then again,” like “a broken lighter” (117). Observing that “the bent man’s beard was becoming enfolded in the fog, and with every step he trampled himself lower and deeper into the stone,” Shushashin’s mind slips into a thought: “Will he last until the entrance or won’t he?” (111).

It is hard to speak about the “self” in Shushashin’s subjectivity. “I” is traditionally thought to be either empty or possessing content. The content-populated self is the “I” whose place is taken by the Other. The “sealed” heads Shushashin meets everywhere are a personification of this idea: the beggar, unscrewing his head like a light-bulb, a passerby, claiming to have been evicted from his head, as if it were an apartment, a man across whose “bony brow ran a tight cord from which hung a small lead fastening” (122). This includes the scribblers and philosophers, queuing for a helping of logic with coupons in their hands. But Shushashin’s figure does not belong to this category: he is neither

a content-populated self, nor is he an empty “I.” He cannot be called an empty self since he does not have the internal dimension. “There isn’t a soul in Moscow,” as a chance passerby says, a fitting comment on the dark times (110). Nobody has a soul. And neither does Shushashin. A soul is the interior sphere which has unity. Shushashin’s internal aspect does not manifest itself. There is nothing that may be considered internal, except for the sensation of fear. Shushashin has neither soul, nor thoughts, nor meanings. He has only fear and desire for solitude, yet this longed for solitude would not be a personal space, a shelter or metaphysical homeland, but simply oblivion: “Shushashin walked passed lights and faces and longed to be back in his room, lying face down in the dark” (117).

Shushashin can hardly have a consciousness, since consciousness presupposes unity. His consciousness consists of spots of subjectivity, random associations, tinted with the shades of the present mood: “Seven turns of the stairs, the rusty whine of the door spring, the courtyard, the long vaulted passage from courtyard to courtyard, the gate, the street” (109).

Yet, it would be unfair to describe Shushashin in terms of the external. Shushashin is hardly physical. His body seems to be lagging behind the movements of his subjectivity, as a chance fellow traveler enmeshed in the hero’s adventures. For example, he discovers that he has not eaten since the morning only after his legs begin to fail him, and he has to grab on to something in order not to fall down. Shushashin is not a sum of imprints of his bodily sensations, since his states are caused not by physicality, but roused by fear. Fear is his functional organ of sight. The world for Shushashin is something that assaults and suffocates him, and in response, he elects the strategy of escape. Thus, coming home, he tried “with flagging thoughts” to “untie and throw off his day.” Though “the crowded day” continued to “bear down on his brain” and “the neighbors voices grated” behind the wall, yet “he could burry at least one ear to his deaf pillow and pull the darkness up over him” (117). Lacking the internal and failing to belong to the external, Shushashin seems to represent the borderline between the two worlds. Without depth, however, he is transcendental to the world, since he is represented by his subjectivity – by the sensation of fear.

3. CONCLUSION

What is the essence of the two philosophical manifestos?

1. If we try to imagine the anthropological space in its purity, to conduct an experiment by deleting the figure of the Other, then not reflection, consciousness, or subjectivity will emerge as the primary essence for man, but something that may be most fittingly called spots of subjectivity.
2. Spots of subjectivity are nothing but chaos of sensations, non-reflex reactions in which man is revealed in fragmentation. An extreme case of fragmentation is manifested in Shushashin, described as a bundle of parts: his head thought; his “hand dropped; his feet finished counting the stairs” (112). This fragmentation shows that the man’s hands and legs exist entirely on their own, and vision, thoughts and sensations are independent as well. In Khlebnikov’s play “Mrs. Lenin,” this disintegration becomes even more vivid: the heroine is represented as a number of separate speaking characters, such as the voice of Sight, the

voice of Hearing and of Touch, of Mind, Attention, Memory, Fear and Will. Mrs. Lenin is a mental institution patient, yet only these shattered multiple personalities indicate her madness. Shushashin's figure as a deconstructed unit tells us that there is latent insanity in every man.

3. Spots of subjectivity cannot be described in terms of surface or depth. This is a reality which is transcendental to the world, since its being is determined not by the body or logic of the world, but by the illogicality and nonsense, whose source can only be attributed to the anthropological aspect.
4. We cannot consider this anthropological aspect as internal, since it develops not as a unity, or a story, or a painting, but as separate momentary disconnected impressions. In extreme cases, such as Shushashin's, the entire internal dimension is limited to the sensation of fear, the primary human emotion.
5. Arguably, unreasonable fear is the anthropological minimum, the primary and necessary criterion of the human being. Fear is a threshold of the internal, from which the interior originates into the infinite chaos of subjectivity.
6. Consciousness is established by the inner dominant, or meaning, which can be represented by God and tradition.
7. Dominant idea is understood as a two-level entity, comprising the supra-human and human levels. The personal dominant idea is possible in the presence of the supra-personal dominant. Transformation of subjectivity into consciousness is a way of internalizing the supra-personal dominant into the personal one.
8. The dominant may be represented by the Other or by society. Yet, this dominant does not solve the problem of structuring the unsocialized, i.e., emotions, dreams, apprehensions, metaphysical loneliness, ultimate death experience, questions of God, reveries and whims.

THE ADVENTURES OF THE RUSSIAN SOUL

The earth will bulge and crumble to the side. The coffin will emerge from the grave and the cover will open. People will wake from their torpor and their tears will dry. So little time has passed and people have once again returned from the cemetery to the city. The plain, noisy, pulsating city...

Andrey Tarkovsky, "The Mirror"¹

1.

In a letter to the editor of *Kultura*, dated April 1952, Jerzy Stempowski vehemently refuses to preoccupy himself with such an insignificant person as Emil Cioran, who was probably Romanian.² "I'm sure he annoyed beggars and mocked cripples in his young age," he wrote, explaining the reasons for his refusal. Nevertheless, two years later, he wrote *Rubis d'orient*, devoting the first three parts of the essay to the cutting and polishing of precious stones, and the fourth, final section to Cioran. Stempowski merely copies seven aphorisms (in the original) from two books by Cioran, only to state authoritatively at the very end that the reader would undoubtedly find the writer to be an outstanding literary stylist and "polisher" of the French language. Such is the entire reception of the *oeuvre* of a writer who provided the contemporary world with a great and entirely new thrill; a record of powerlessness in the face of a new and unprecedented philosophy, one that craftily covers the tracks of its own genealogy. Stempowski's blunder is but one of many instances of the helplessness that intelligent and erudite – even educated – people display in the face a phenomenon that (yet) lacks a good "handle," in the face of an event that requires one to possess not just a strong mind, but also a good ear, and – let's be honest – the courage to pose uncomfortable, ostensibly preposterous and irresponsible questions.

The greatest works of Russian literature and theological philosophy that took as their subject the throbs of the collective soul of the nation almost invariably stepped outside the boundaries of rationality, in the narrow sense of the word, due to their broad scope and the irreverence of their authors. Their power stemmed from their creative invention or confabulation, without which the intricacies of Nikolai Fyodorov and Fyodor

¹ А. Мишарин, А. Тарковскийб "Зеркало" [A. Tarkovsky, "The Mirror,"] *Kinoscenarii* 94, no. 6: 2-46.

² J. Giedroyc, J. Stempowski, *Listy 1949–1969. Część pierwsza* [Letters, 1949–1969. Part One], ed. A. S. Kowalczyk (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1998), 187.

Dostoyevsky's "eschatological energeticism" would sooner or later dissolve into the slush of the absurd or take the form of a scientific truism. To define the "Russian idea" requires more than just critical consideration; what is needed is an "ear," or rather (as will soon become apparent) a nose. Great minds have already attempted to grasp Russia in passing, "on the threshold"; they have written about Russia as a "survivor," about lands and people cleaved in two, living with slim chances of ever reassembling their lives into a meaningful whole.

2.

To better understand the "nature" of the frenetic chaos into which life casts Russians, we must first explain the peculiar nature of the Russian *Raskol* (*раскол* – split, schism). *Raskol* was a direct result of the reforms initiated in the Russian Orthodox Church by Patriarch Nikon four hundred years ago. From today's perspective, the changes could be regarded as minor, certainly not ones that would encroach upon the fundamental tenets of the faith: they involved only liturgical matters, in other words, the actual form of Orthodox worship. To Russians – who immediately split into two mutually hostile worlds: the reformed and reforming, and the steadfastly traditional and irreformable – it was precisely the matter of form, a manifestation of that which is godly, which turned out to be fundamental. Its modification – and this was sensed by everyone who was opposed to change – directly encroached upon the sacred by introducing *ambiguity* where everything was supposed to be clear and simple. Ambiguity is not in the least desirable, particularly in the sphere of liturgy. The gestures, ritual, and prayer through which goodness reveals to man its divine provenance must be unambiguous. The protagonists of both hostile worlds, therefore, were not concerned with whether some chose to gesture with two fingers in prayer while others chose three and were unable to come to an agreement on this plane. The conflict was over something else. If both of these gestures, one of which was considered to be the gesture of the usurper, the "Antichrist," referred to the same God, then one of them – but which one? – cursed His Name. It turned out that the devil could actually be in the details.

In contrast to the reforms taking place at the time throughout Europe, the schism within Orthodoxy did not bear the fruit of religious pluralism, nor did it bring people freedom in matters of faith. It did produce divisions and new, hitherto unknown forms of abstinence. Generally speaking, seventeenth-century Russia split into two parts: the visible one, represented by the official church, and the invisible one, which stored its own spiritual substance in the darkness of *подполье* (underground). Many researchers, hardly concealing their fascination with the inventiveness displayed by the founders of the underground, catalog the diversity of the Russian *Raskol* with the "sadistic" precision of an entomologist: *скопцы, капитоновцы, жидовствующие, поморцы, федосеевцы, бегуны, немоляки, молоконе, шалопуты, дырники, бессмертники, воздуханцы*, and so on.³ Though there were significant differences among the schismatic groups listed above –

³ I refer here to the writings of Aleksandr Panchenko which have been translated into Polish: "Szaleństwo Chrystusowe jako rodzaj widowiska" [Foolishness for Christ as Spectacle], trans. A. Prus-Bogusławski, *Teksty: teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja* 1, no. 31 (1977): 48–67; *Staroruskie szaleństwo Chrystusowe jako widowisko*, in *Semiotyka dziejów Rosji* ["Foolishness for Christ in Old Russia as Spectacle" in *The Semiotics of Russian History*], ed. and trans. B. Żyłko (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1993), both essays are practically

дырники, for example, worshiped God in the form of the nothingness they perceived in a hole (*дыра* in Russian), while *скопцы* revered God in the form of the hole they perceived in themselves – they all converged upon a “mantra” that was repeated *ad nauseam*: the “Latinization” of the Orthodox rite, they claimed, was the Antichrist taking control of the visible world. “The Apocalyptic dimension of *Raskol*,” Wodziński writes in his book, “most fully and accurately reveals the essence of the controversy: the Antichrist assumes his place *at the top*, while Christ descends *under ground*. (Many generations later Dmitry Karamazov, who remained faithful to the spirit of *Raskol*, would say: ‘If they drive God from the earth, we shall shelter Him underground.’)” Haunted by the powers of evil, deprived of all holiness, the visible reality – where an Orthodox priest celebrates a “black mass,” and followers of Satan congregate at church – forces the followers of the “old faith” to assume the trappings of piety, often in a direct fashion. On the outside, *Раскольники* obey the religious rules favored by the Orthodox majority; they bow their head before newfangled idols, while imprecating them in secret, calling out to their *own* God for help. “In the wake of *Raskol*,” Wodziński writes, “the religious underground in Russia grows invisibly and so expansively that it begins to threaten the foundation of the above-ground Church.” Despite persecution, *Хлыст* movement spreads unchecked in the underground, becoming the “third largest denomination in Russia, after Orthodox Christianity and Old Believers’ in the 19th century.”⁴ He continues: “The *Хлыст* faith is an iconic experience of the nondifferentiation of that which is ‘under’ the feet and that which is ‘above’ the head. It is not a backwards world as much as the experience of the impossibility of anchoring oneself unambiguously in any position, including the ‘backwards’ one.” The schism in Orthodox Christianity caused significant confusion. Everyday people no longer knew what to follow, what to believe in and what beliefs would bring punishment with curses; where was up and where was down, where was left and where was right. They behaved in their relationships with God as if they were drunk, stumbling, shaken by an unknown force, babbling; in short, their minds were in the sort of disarray typical of *бабушки* poisoned by moonshine. This state of confusion was additionally encouraged by the growing contemporary plague of impostors.

An impostor is a person who claims to be someone who he is not. The phenomenon of usurpation, which is likely present in all cultures, spread with particular intensity in Russia, where any *Хлыст* who had grown impatient with stomping his feet and practicing self-mortification could call upon the Son of God, thus giving Him the sign to finally emerge from beneath the floorboards. These pretenders often professed themselves to be prophets, but it was more common for someone to claim to be the tsar. In the latter case, “it was the pace at which these events unfolded that was the most surprising. A rather

identical. See also S. A. Ivanov, *Holy Fools in Byzantium and Beyond*, trans. S. Franklin (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007). Cezary Wodziński, whose contributions to the popularization of Russian philosophy in Poland cannot be overstated, also wrote a history of foolishness for Christ – *Św. Idiota. Projekt antropologii apofatycznej* [*St. Idiot: A Project for Apophatic Theology*] (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2000). Nevertheless, I cannot recommend this particular book by Wodziński to the reader, as it is irreparably derivative of Sergey Ivanov’s magnum opus (originally published in Russian in 1994), which the author himself points out in the English translation of *Holy Fools* 3, n. 3.

⁴ C. Wodziński, *Trans, Dostojewski, Rosja, czyli o filozofowaniu siekierą* [*Trance, Dostoyevsky, Russia: On Philosophizing with an Axe*] (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2005).

young man (probably born in 1582 and a peer of Tsarevich Dmitry) appears and takes over the throne in Moscow within a year and a half. His rule lasts just short of eleven months, after which he dies and his ashes are launched westward out of a cannon. ‘Like a blinding meteor, he suddenly illuminated the darkness and disappeared without a trace.’⁵ There were a few reasons for this turn of events. At the time, it was not generally common to question the obvious fact that power is bestowed by God who sanctions the post by his own authority. It was not at all uncommon, on the other hand, for the person of the ruler himself to be questioned, the suggestion being that he was the devil or simply a pretender who stole the royal regalia from the hands of the Prince of this world. This stance was encouraged by the “stunts” of the unbenevolent rulers who, like Peter the Great and Ivan the Terrible, experimented with traditional customs. The latter made a particularly significant contribution to the ambiguation of his position by turning the period of his reforms into a reign of terror. “The phenomenon of *samodurstvo* [willful tyranny] is akin to that of *yurodstvo* [divine folly]”⁶ find their apogee in the epithet “the Terrible.” Unpredictability, consistent violations of the law and customs, probing the boundaries that can be approached by a ruler with unlimited power, fluid navigation between the sphere of the sacred and the most disgusting and savage excesses, the lack of any logic in his actions – this is a terse characterization of Tsar Ivan the Terrible’s style of rule. “The very meaning he ascribes to authority is that it is infinite,”⁷ Lotman writes. The ruler experimented with this limitlessness in many ways. Likely the most spectacular among them was instituting the *опричнина*, a system of enforcing obedience to the tsar. To this end, Ivan the Terrible employed death squads, exclusive “secret police” units that quelled all signs of rebellion, but also (!) obedience. In Russia no one could be certain of his fate. The *опричнина* functioned as a blind sword of nature, unpredictably, without any calculation. Questions such as “what have I done to bring this tragedy upon myself?” or “why does it hurt so much?” were simply inappropriate. Under the reign of Ivan the Terrible, not only were people uncertain whether they were being ruled by a saint meting out fierce punishment for their sinful lives or by the blackest of demons; most importantly, they didn’t know whether they were still alive or whether they had long ago been buried alive. But life is a game in which roles can be – and usually are – suddenly reversed. In a world of complete pandemonium, even the “dead” could shake the very foundations of reality.

The subversiveness of Ivan the Terrible’s “devilish” idea is based on the fact that the internal boundary separating the two worlds [of the living and the dead – PN] is fluid. Due to its mobility, both territories exist in a state of dynamic imbalance: not only did the *опричнина* increase its territorial range

⁵ М. Я. Геллер, *История Российской империи* [M. Heller, *A History of the Russian Empire*] (Москва: “МИК,” 1997), 275.

⁶ Ju. Lotman, *Culture and Explosion*, trans. W. Clark, ed. M. Grishakova (Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2004), 82.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

at the cost of the *земщина* [ordinary people – PN], but the *опричники* could at any moment lose their “alien” privileges and join the ranks of the “dead.”⁸

The phenomenon of the “masquerade,” in which the tsar occasionally participated with his people, was discussed exhaustively by Bakhtin, who wrote about the carnivalization of everyday life. The *опричнина*, meanwhile, constituted something more than just a simple reversal of the poles of human action and the sense of the world. It abolished the ostensibly “established” differences between us and them, good and evil, living and dead; it made them fluid in an ongoing, “trance-like” reversal. Subjected to constant pressure from the dictatorial, unlimited, and often capricious rule of the tsar, ordinary people, as could be expected, lost their bearings, their point of support, the measure that had already been undermined by Nikon’s reforms.

Raskol was the experience of the *unrecognizability* of the difference between good and evil. Hypothesis: Russia is *Raskolian*, meaning that it became the field of the historical experience of the loss of the ability to differentiate between good and evil. It is the chronic possibility of confusing salvation with damnation, graciousness with sinfulness, the heavenly with the infernal, in short: Christ with the Antichrist.⁹

In other words, *Raskol* and its “political” complement in the form of the *опричнина* permanently warped and destabilized the structure of Russian statehood and customs, while, in the religious realm, abolishing the difference between good and evil that is fundamental to Christianity. Russian land gradually became a desert, axiologically fallow earth where Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s “cruel talent” at first blossomed and then spread.

3.

Russia has not produced an original work of philosophy in several hundred years. An examination of the canonical textbooks of the history of Russian philosophy by Vasyli Zenkovsky, Nikolai Lossky, and Leonid Stolovich reveals myriad names more closely associated with ideology and theology than with the kind of philosophy that is by definition universal. The converse is true, as well: the great theologians produced by the West – St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, John Scotus Eriugena – have predominantly been philosophers. It is they, and later their successors, who drew the ultimate conclusions from European metaphysics and thus led to its peculiar fulfillment. By making each of its constitutive differences, one after the other, fluid, particularly the moral difference, they fulfilled the historical task that was undertaken at more or less the same time in Russia by “prophets” such as Nikolai Fyodorov and writers such as Gogol, Dostoyevsky, and later Andrei Platonov.

In Russia the language of axiological difference serves rulers: ultimately it is they who decide what is righteous and what is sinful. It so happens that this type of situation

⁸ Wodziński, *Trans, Dostojewski, Rosja, czyli o filozofowaniu siekierq.*

⁹ Ibidem.

can be referred to as the “inquisitor’s paradox.” The Christ of Dostoyevsky’s “legend,” as we remember, is brought before the Grand Inquisitor, who proceeds to explain to Him that he is currently pursuing the goal of moral renewal, the work of reestablishing the difference between right and wrong, which was profoundly shaken in the time of *Raskol*. Morality with its stabilizing effect on feelings and passions is necessary if one is to reign over the awakened hearts of Christians. Miracle, mystery, and authority: these are the pillars upon which it is built. The Son of God has nothing to do here; the office of the head of all Christians can manage perfectly well without his intercession, the Inquisitor says. And what does Christ have to say? Nothing: he remains silent. He is silent because, unlike rulers, he does not speak the language of the axiological difference. This is also Dostoyevsky’s position: if every attempt to return to early Christianity, to its initial state before *Raskol*, has ended in failure, and Christ’s return passes unnoticed (by all except the Inquisitor), then in the matter of salvation – the only one that counts, after all – one must act at random, outside the rules, “beyond good and evil.” And this is precisely how all of Dostoyevsky’s characters behave, including their prime mover, i.e. Dostoyevsky himself. For example, when General Ivolgin tells Myshkin a preposterous tale about how he had lost his leg fighting in the Napoleonic Wars and had it buried with a gravestone on top, we laugh and think to ourselves, “people say the stupidest things, how do they even come up with them?” But when we discover that the epitaph on the leg’s grave – “Rest, beloved ashes, till the morn of joy” – is identical to the epitaph inscribed on the tombstone of Dostoyevsky’s mother, the discovery of this coincidence stirs us from the realm of comforting hierarchies; we cease to be “at home” and our mood sours. We are overcome by an aura of dread and the absence of light that cannot be translated into categories that make sense to the mind. Though we might not have done anything wrong, our encounter with the writing of the author of *The Brothers Karamazov* “leaves us with the feeling of emerging from a grave in which we breathed the atmosphere of cadaveric poison,”¹⁰ Vasily Rozanov mercilessly observes.

Along with general Ivolgin’s leg, among many other instances of equally eccentric behavior by characters such as the younger Verkhovensky, Stavrogin, Smerdyakov, and Myshkin, Dostoyevsky buried the difference between good and evil. Yet, though he blurred the “edges” of both these values, he retained the actual movement between one and the other, there and back again. This nervous shuttling, this traversal of a space devoid of frames, landmarks, and road signs was described by Nikolai Berdyaev as “active eschatology.” According to this concept, human beings are incognizant of the meaning of their own actions in terms of the economics of grace and salvation. The only way to attract God’s “interest” is to engage in blind, arbitrary action in which God “incidentally” converges with man in the act of co-creating his (His?) fate.

In Dostoyevsky’s view, the Apocalypse is not the fatalistic culmination of a Plan for the suffering of many human beings, a Plan containing a happy ending, a “heaven” to which we all get sent in return for living a good life. The end, its inevitable arrival,

¹⁰ В. Розанов, “Ф. М. Достоевский (Критико-биографический очерк)” в *Полное собрание сочинений Ф. М. Достоевского* [V. Rozanov, F. M. Dostoyevsky (A brief biographical essay)] in *Complete Works of Dostoyevsky* (Санкт-Петербург: Нива, 1894), т. 1, III-XXXIV.

depends on the person. In a sense, one is always one's own "apocalypse." "Man constantly performs acts that are eschatological in nature; he finishes this world, leaves it, and enters another world."¹¹ This traversal of human beings *between* foreign and mutually repelling worlds, the implantation of key events "на пороге" (on the threshold),¹² "in the interval," the paradoxical and ambiguous nature of the situations in which they find themselves embroiled, wisdom and foolishness constantly switching places: this is a regular day in the life of a Dostoyevsky character. "Hellish" activity, excess, and the constant probing of new limits allow such a hero to understand one thing: there are no firm boundaries in the world around them. None. Nor are there any between God and man, between life and death.

Most people, regardless of their confession, cling to the delusion that a new life awaits them after death. How then do we convince ourselves of its newness, Dostoyevsky asks, if we find it so hard to believe that we have died once and for all? Some might say: nonsense, these are childish questions. However childish they may be, they cannot be simply dismissed. The town drunk, a connoisseur of funeral wakes, falls asleep on a grave and later awakes in the midst of a Menippean tumult. The freshly-buried corpses, unable to sleep, are astounded at the fact that despite death, they have not died, but continue to live. What do they do? They do nothing: under ground, Dostoyevsky explains, the same things happen as here above ground. These corpses – and they are no ordinary corpses, but *сливки настоящего хорошего общества*¹³ – constantly bicker amongst themselves, insult each other, and compete in a game of one-upmanship over who was the greatest villain and scoundrel in their past life. The calm, almost ludic nature of their conversations is muffled by the stench, one familiar to us, the living, as well. It is the odor of decomposing bodies, a warning that, at the end, we will all see the "bottom": death and decay. "Death is a fetor that will nevertheless dissipate when the sun of faith rises high above the horizons," writes Dostoyevsky in the draft manuscript of *The Brothers Karamazov*. Thus the stench emitted by a sinful body is more than just a sign of damnation, a harbinger of irreversible and ultimate death. It is also the promise of grace, the promise of a truly transformed life, free of any traces of decomposition or violent ends. In Dostoyevsky's world, one can do without a heart, but the nose, which allows us to sense death in time and even discern between life and death, must always be in its right place.

4.

The image of the schism in Orthodoxy, a split that triggered the apparatus of Russian nihilism by destroying the world of "simple values," is worth juxtaposing with Dostoyevsky's writing, a seismographic – in a sense – record of the event itself. And if we examine both of these realms, life and literature, in the light of *Философия общего дела*, a book that was in a sense prophetic, that asked more questions than it answered, and was a call to action

¹¹ Н. А. Бердяев, *Самопознание: Опыт философской автобиографии* [N. Berdyaev, *Self-Knowledge: An Essay in Autobiography*] available at: <http://vehi.net/berdyaev/samopoznanie/011.html>, accessed January 06, 2017.

¹² М. Бахтин, *Эстетика словесного творчества* [M. Bakhtin, *The Aesthetics of Verbal Art*] (Москва: «Искусство», 1986), 336.

¹³ Russian: "the cream of really good society," *crème de la crème*, the elite (ed. comment).

for a “common task,”¹⁴ a paradoxical image of existence is revealed. Its author, Nikolai Fyodorov, the illegitimate child of a prince and a Circassian, considered it the “common task” of all people to strive to overcome the power of death, to liberate the entire universe from its stigma. If Jesus Christ freed humanity from the consequences of original sin, then the redemptive energy that flowed from salvation did not dissipate, but must have remained somewhere among us, here on earth. “Now, i.e. *after Christ*, the accomplishment of salvation, according to Fyodorov, depends wholly upon men.”¹⁵ Meanwhile, the history of philosophy has proved that while there is much that man understands, he does not understand what he is to do. That is why actual reflection must be thought incorporated into matter: incarnate, materialized thought. Only such a thought has any relevance to the future salvation of the world. But who is to “reinvent” immortality? Who is to be tasked with “imitating” Christ in the struggle between life and death? Philosophers? Inventors? Or perhaps poets? No: this is the “common task” of *all people*. “When the idea of immortality is lost,” Dostoyevsky writes, “suicide becomes an absolute and inescapable necessity for any person who has developed even slightly above the animal level.”¹⁶ Why? Because, from the perspective of the economics of active *salvation*, he has become useless.

First of all, man should take charge of organic processes by changing his attitude towards time. The past must become a future task to him. It will involve finding and gathering the ashes of our dead fathers, and subsequently resurrecting them. Death is purely negative and incidental in nature; it is, as Kierkegaard observed, a sickness. The permanent foundation for this new reality should be provided by life, which we instinctively sense on bright, happy, sunny days when the world around us is in bloom and it just feels good to be alive.

And yet humanity has been dying of death for thousands of years. The ashes of its victims rest in the ground. Man has thus far lived a selfish life, focused only on himself; or he has lived the life of an altruist, thinking of nothing but others – the result is essentially the same. It is about time that man learned to live among and with the shadows of the dead, to move the center of our lives into the cemetery. It is precisely there, at the cemetery, that the debt to our parents will be repaid by returning to them the exact amount of life that they gave us. Let the dead become alive, north become south, the past become the present. Extant technology should be harnessed for this purpose. Fyodorov was legendary throughout Russia for his Renaissance erudition. His knowledge of theology and philosophy complemented his interests in the technical and scientific fields. Fascinated by the discovery of the lightning rod, Fyodorov recommended that it be used in experiments involving “resurrection.” If the lightning rod, despite its undoubted benefits, were to prove to be a device that was of little use in the resurrection of the dead, researchers should turn to other inventions, for example dynamite. The point was to enable the living to finally dig up some life in this dead and abysmal earth, so that they might meet there someone who would not be dead and would not be a shadow, either.

¹⁴ Translated in part in N. Fyodorov, *What Was Man Created For? The Philosophy of the Common Task: Selected Works*, trans. E. Koutaissoff and M. Minto (London: Honeyglan, 1990).

¹⁵ V. Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, vol. 2, trans. G. Kline (London: Routledge, 2003), 593.

¹⁶ Ф. М. Достоевский *Собрание сочинений в 15-ти томах* [F. Dostoyevsky, *Collected Works in 15 volumes*] (Санкт-Петербург: Издательство «Наука», 1994), т. 13, 390-391.

Fyodorov forged old antinomies into new anxieties. To him, the drama of existence was not death, but the technical obstacles associated with resurrection. In ancient times the promise of eternal life was sufficient to breathe spirit into a moribund religion; today, we must rather marshal our scientific resources, spark our technical imagination, put our hopes in inventions. In many ways the notion of “active Christianity” that Fyodorov strived to carry out resembled the gnostic concept of salvation through knowledge: yes, faith is necessary to resurrect the dead, but what is needed above all else is *knowledge* about how to do so. This remains clear in Fyodorov’s philosophy: the resurrection of the dead rests exclusively on the shoulders of men. Neither God nor any “cosmic force” will replace man in performing the task of their resurrection. There is no heaven other than earth. It is earth that must finally be demystified by bringing to the surface the ashes of our ancestors that lie beneath it, awaiting salvation. The day of resurrection will at once be the moment in which the hand of man completes the wheel of time. Man will be reborn in a new body, one that no death can take away. That day cannot be found in any calendar known to us. Thus, if it cannot be predicted or located, we must certainly accelerate its coming.

5.

By European weights and measures, Nikolai Fyodorov was mentally deranged. Yet in Russia he continues to be considered an uncanonized saint to this day. Vladimir Solovyov, a sort of “apostle” of Fyodorov’s, wrote the following in a letter to him:

I have read your manuscript with spiritual greed and pleasure, devoting an entire night and part of the morning to it. I accept your project unconditionally and unequivocally. (...) Your project is the first forward movement of the human spirit along the path of Christ.¹⁷

A problematic issue emerges in light of Solovyov’s fawning proclamations, one which Cezary Wodziński mentions in his book:

From the Orthodox perspective, the issue of the extent to which Fyodorov’s collective “son of man” assumes and carries out the tasks assigned to him by the Son of Man, and of the degree to which he replaces Him in his resurrective activities, remains an uncomfortable question.¹⁸

Does he commit the sin of pride by exploring the arcana of resurrection, or, conversely, does he fulfill his calling? Another question pertains to essentially the same matter, though the emphasis is shifted somewhat. What is the constitutive element of the human condition: immortality or human finiteness? What is it that brings us closer to God in a meaningful way: human faith or a superhuman knowledge of the secrets of time and death? These questions, however, are external to Fyodorov’s concept. The ones

¹⁷ Quoted in Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, 590.

¹⁸ Wodziński, *Trans, Dostojewski, Rosja, czyli o filozofowaniu siekiera*.

that appear much more relevant are those that stem from the tensions and inconsistencies within the concept itself.

Fyodorov promises to give man eternal existence, albeit an existence that is devoid of any meaning (a play can only have meaning if it also has an end, not when it drags on endlessly). In that case, will it not be a punishment to those who already don't know what to do with themselves on winter evenings and Sunday afternoons? Or to those who, like Borges, pray for nothingness; or who, like Kierkegaard, are terrified by the horror of eternal life? Does not the notion of universal salvation remain at odds with our most fundamental sensibilities: decency, justice, compensation? Does not the universality of salvation abolish the individual differences between the killer and the victim, between those who like to live and those who don't particularly feel like it? "But what would the return of the dead of Vorkuta look like? Would columns of wretches driven by guards appear suddenly in the streets of the town? Starved human shadows covered with rags? A procession of skeletons? Nikolai Fyodorov dreamed of restoring them all to life. But – to what life?"¹⁹ The author of *Philosophy of the Common Task* would likely evade these questions, arguing that his teachings were being infused with subversive meanings. But he could just as well state that while death and resurrection *were*, for a time, the internal affair of the individual person, they would *become* the common affair of us all once a certain level of technological advancement had been reached.

The Greek myth of Antaeus tells of a certain type of beings that regain their power once they have touched the ground. Nikolai Fyodorov was undoubtedly one of their kind. Daydreaming and thoughts of the afterlife were, in his understanding, the sidetrack of the mind and evidence of its erosion. The earth "itself seeks a 'master,' and not simply an 'investigator,' in man."²⁰ Resurrection, this miracle of future technology, this fulfillment of man's metaphysical calling, is expected to transform the face of this earth. While it will no longer be the same earth, it will certainly be no less real. It was in this spirit that Dostoyevsky perceived resurrection.

Does your thinker [Fyodorov – PN] straightforwardly and literally imagine, as religion suggests, that resurrection will be real, personal, that the abyss separating us from the soul of our ancestors will be bridged, will be vanquished by vanquished death, and that they will be resurrected not only in our consciousness, not allegorically, but actually, personally, really, in body" (from a letter to one of Fyodorov's friends).²¹

Fyodorov and Dostoyevsky both emphasized that the rebirth of all the dead would be an event of this earth. This is precisely the aspect of their vision that I see as problematic, the Achilles heel of the concept of earthly resurrection. Man, after all, is more than just skin and bone, those "ashes" gathered, down to their very last speck, in all corners of the farthest galaxies. Man is a complete life, one lived in peace or adventure; a man exists in

¹⁹ R. Kapuściński, *Imperium*, trans. K. Glowczewska (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1994), 161.

²⁰ Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, 592.

²¹ F. Dostoyevsky, *Fyodor Dostoevsky: Complete Letters*, vol. 5, ed. and trans. D. Lowe (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1991), 21.

his relationship with a dog, a horse, a landscape; in rain that fills (as in the short story by Zygmunt Haupt²²) his entire existence to the brim. How, therefore, are we to resurrect man with all his habits: his love of horses, his aversion to gypsy caravans; how are we to recover rain that has long soaked into the ground? “Even the logical consequences of a world without death,” Elias Canetti soberly observes, “have never been thought through.”²³

6.

Contrary to popular belief, Russian imperialism is more than just a function of the foreign policy pursued by an aggressive world power. It is rather the result of the ongoing experience of the Orthodox schism, one that questions the need for such distinctions as “mine” and “yours,” “internal” and “external,” “good” and “evil.” Ad hoc political warnings may not – and, in fact, typically do not – have any connection to reality in Russia, particularly when they set aside the aspects of theology and literature in their calculations. Divination and prophecies thus should always be formulated with reference to such writers and theologians as Fyodor Dostoyevsky. His books tie in “by ear” to Nikolai Fyodorov’s philosophy which takes as its subject the “science” of resurrection. To be reborn in a new body man must learn to live on the surface, and he must understand that the earth is his home, a great stockpile of ashes that he must breathe life into. Human immortality is thus his primary task. There are no others, no other task matters. Make the resurrection of the dead an obsession of all mankind, the “common task” of all people: this is the slogan for the new century.

The human spirit will soon create itself anew.
 Just as it began by stealing fire.
 And will clearly perceive its goal, proportional to man’s greatness:
 To win victory over death and to become gods.
 The promise will be fulfilled, the dead will rise.
 We will bring back to life our fathers, thousands of generations.
 We will populate Mars, Venus, and other planets.
 No songs of mourning for man, happy and good.
 – Why good?
 – Because evil, in other words egoism, is due to the shortness of life.
 Whoever has limitless time, ceases to be predatory.

(Czesław Miłosz, “Beyond the Urals,”
 translated by Czesław Miłosz and Robert Hass)

²² Z. Haupt, “Rain” in *Perścień z papieru* [*The Paper Ring*] (Paris: Kultura, 1963).

²³ E. Canetti, “Aphorisms,” trans. D. Barnouw, *The Literary Review* 17, no. 4 (1974), 482.

PUSHKIN THROUGH THE EYES OF VLADIMIR SOLOVYOV

It may be said – if we choose to make use of somewhat grandiloquent symbolism – that the birth of Alexander Pushkin in 1799 launches the nineteenth century in Russian culture, the epoch of its extraordinary blossom in almost all areas of creativity and the time when it claimed its rightfully prominent position in the culture of humanity; while with the death of Vladimir Solovyov in 1900, the nineteenth century comes to an end, leaving the spectators of history to face the fascinating, urgent and troubling question of the coming twentieth century. Of course, beyond the symbolism of these dates and figures lies more than mere coincidence of the calendar – they suggest the extraordinary importance of these two artists in the history of Russian literature. Their work codified norms, measures and canons for the entire field of Russian poetry and artistic prose (Pushkin), as well as for the sphere of the philosophical, theological and social thought (Solovyov). The exceptional role of the nineteenth century in the development of Russian culture also contributed to their extraordinary position. Thus, Pushkin and Solovyev share the status of prominence among the creative luminaries, and are united in the way their works provide an inexhaustible source of inspiration and a measure of authentication to their various followers, both in the artistic and speculative pursuits.

The connection between Pushkin and Solovyov is not just a theoretical fact established post-factum by scholars. For Solovyov, this affinity was an important motif in the formation of his views and in the formulation of his outlook, and this will be the subject of the present discussion.

Solovyov's original and compelling personality transformed the image of Pushkin which we encounter in his works into a singular, striking and at times even shocking figure. A closer look at this image will illuminate some important properties for the Russian culture in its entirety, even if this comes at the price of destabilizing some generally accepted idea of Pushkin's life and works. Solovyov strove to examine Pushkin's oeuvre philosophically, rather than in historical or literary terms, and he did not hesitate to provoke even very serious criticism. We may add at once that he was not disappointed in this aspect of his expectations by the literary and philosophical establishment.

Yet, before those most controversial works on Pushkin were written by Solovyov (and this took place at the end of his life), the author of *Eugene Onegin* is mentioned by the philosopher in his analyses of Dostoyevsky's thought. The excellent "Pushkin Speech" delivered by Dostoyevsky in 1880 at the meeting of the Society of Lovers of

Russian Literature, dedicated to the unveiling of Pushkin's monument in Moscow,¹ created a great stir in the audience and was received with rapturous enthusiasm. One of such enthusiasts, who managed to channel his excitement into a language of suggestive mental argumentation, or even into a certain vision of the world, was Vladimir Solovyov.

In his summary, Dostoyevsky's argument ran as follows: "Even though he considered Russia as God's chosen nation, – chosen, however, not for rivalry with other nations, nor for dominance or primacy over them, but for a voluntary service to all nations and for the purpose of realization – in brotherly union with them – of the true omnium-humanity, i.e., the universal Church. Dostoyevsky never idealized the nation and did not worship it. He believed in Russia and he prophesized its great and manifest destiny, but to him, the main guarantee of this grand future lay precisely in the faintness of the national egoism, in the characteristic lack of the superiority complex in the Russians. Two Russian characteristics were especially dear to Dostoyevsky. The first of these was the incredible capacity to embrace the genius and ideas of other nations, the ability to adopt the spiritual essence of various ethnicities – a quality which was expressed particularly well in Pushkin's poetry. The second, even more important quality of the Russians perceived by Dostoyevsky was the awareness of their sinfulness, their inability to conceal imperfections under the cloak of law or custom and pretend that the issue has thus been solved once and for all. Hence, their longing for the better life, their constant need of purification and renewal."² The universalism preached by Dostoyevsky was understood by Solovyov as the conclusion of the dispute between the Slavophiles and the Westernizers, and as Russia's entry into a new stage of historical and spiritual development, appropriate to its essence. And Pushkin appears as one of the key supporters and champions of such universalism.

Solovyov remained faithful to this view of the poet's role in the Russian culture till the end of his life. In his greatest work, *The Justification of the Good*, written almost fifteen years after the "Three Speeches in Memory of Dostoyevsky" cited above, Solovyov claimed that "the Russian Universalism (...) is connected with the names of Peter the Great and Pushkin."³ Solovyov's view of Pushkin's role in Russian history and culture would be quite similar: Pushkin is perceived to be of crucial importance in the intellectual and historical perspective, seen as a tremendously positive figure in Solovyov's own philosophical scheme (Pushkin even appears as an ally of Solovyov "the universalist").

There is also another, more detailed and analytical perspective, in which Pushkin also plays a part. This refers to the three essays written at the end of Solovyov's life in which the author of *Tales of Belkin* features as the protagonist: "The Fate of Pushkin" (1897), "A Special Celebration of Pushkin" (1899) and "The Significance of the Poetic Element in Pushkin's Verse" (1899). It is worthwhile to note that all three texts were published in the *Vestnik Evropy* [Herald of Europe] almanac. "The Fate of Pushkin"

¹ F. Dostoyevsky, *Pages from the Journal of an Author*, trans. S. Koteliansky and J. Middleton Murry (Boston: John W. Luce, 1916), 47-68.

² В. Соловьев, "Три речи в память Достоевского" [Three Speeches in Memory of Dostoyevsky], in *Собрание сочинений в 10 томах* [The Collected Works in 10 volumes] (Санкт-Петербург: Просвещение, 1911-1914), т. 3, 201-202.

³ V. Solovyov, *The Justification of the Good: An Essay on Moral Philosophy*, ed. Boris Jakim, trans. Nathalie A. Duddington (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 368.

is the most important among the three. It was this essay that provoked the most heated controversy and antagonism among the critics and admirers of Pushkin's poetry alike.

The outspokenly outrageous key thesis of Solovyov's essay is as follows: Pushkin's death was, in fact, a suicide: "Pushkin was killed not by Heeckeren's bullet, but by the shot he fired at Heeckeren," moreover, "this death was not premature."⁴ Such opinion seems injurious, appearing to betray a prejudice towards the poet, as if it was spoken by someone who perceives Pushkin's life and work in the negative light. However, Solovyov's idea is based on the principle which is likely to suggest itself to anyone taking a closer look at the life history and creative output of the poet: "Pushkin's tragic death, at the height of his powers, seemed to me a glaring falsehood, a terrible injury," and "to my mind, the fate which dealt this blow had nothing in common with the forces of good."⁵ How may one become reconciled with such meaningless and such distressing injustice? Can a Genius of superhuman powers, a creator of immortal works, fall a victim to such banal chance, such a trivial intrigue? In Solovyov's opinion, this absurd situation may only be explained by finding the origin of the entire chain of causes and effects leading to the poet's death in Pushkin's own volition. "Any other view (...) would be demeaning" to the poet.⁶

Thus, Solovyov claimed that by accepting the concept of Pushkin's suicidal death, we thereby champion the divine power of his genius, without impairing in any way the perfection of his work. For this work originates not so much from the confused and fragile life of Pushkin, as from the inspired ability to liberate oneself in poetry from the pressures of that very life. Pushkin was a man split in two – the exaltation and idealism of his spirit radically conflicted with his quotidian life, and his soul was unable to restrain, dominate and transform this everyday reality. This was due to him "using up the entire store of the higher energy of ideas to forge the sounds and images of poetry, to divinely transform life into poetry, while for the mundane life, for the practical matters of living, he was left only with prose, common sense and a sense of humor."⁷ Under pressure, the latter may easily turn into a wounded ambition, which in its turn sours into contempt for others, alienation, and finally into hostility and ire. Solovyov writes: "Pushkin is torn between a lofty disdain for his milieu and pathetic resentment, which is expressed in rancorous allusions and spiteful epigrams. There is nothing either of genius or of Christianity in his attitude to his adversaries."⁸

We may, however, disagree: such inner split is not anything uncommon, and it is not even a peculiarity characteristic of the exceptionally talented people. True, the conflict between the inspired, philosophical or religious spiritual ideal, and the material reality seems something so universal for the human beings that it would hardly serve to explain through this inner split the extraordinary nature of Pushkin's genius. This inner discord is, indeed, a universal quality, and usually leads to a resolution of some kind. Solovyov indicated three possible ways to resolve the tension between life and ideals:

⁴ В. Соловьев, "Судьба Пушкина" [The Fate of Pushkin], in *Собрание сочинений в 10 томах*, т. 9, 55, 56.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

- a) skepticism and misanthropy, i.e., demoting ideas to the status of fiction and delusion;
- b) Quixotic escapism, i.e., negation of facts;
- c) practical idealism, i.e., seeing in that which exists, the true seed of that which should exist, namely, the ideal.

And thus, for Pushkin the essential quality was not so much the skill of observation, nor the particularly keen experience of the conflict between life and ideals, but his “easy acceptance of the split”: “a discord between his creative and practical motifs seemed to him something definitive and unavoidable, it did not jar on his moral ear, which, clearly, was much less sensitive than his poetic judgement.”⁹ The higher reality existed only in the moments of artistic inspiration and creation, it did not advance any postulates and demands in relation to the empirical world in the consciousness of the poet.

This peculiar dulling of the moral sensibility did not necessarily have any negative impact on Pushkin’s work. In the moments of inspiration he was the truest, the most genuine Apollo’s priest, quite capable of leaving the entire realm of the quotidian with all its conventions out of sight, beyond the horizon of creativity. And even though his consciousness was divided, neither this split, nor the trivial ire of his mundane life was the fabric of his poetry. This, in Solovyov’s opinion, was “the inspiration that came *from above*; not out of the chasm filled with the foul fumes of sulfur, but from the region where free, luminous, unchanging and eternal beauty reigned.”¹⁰

In Pushkin’s work – perhaps, mainly because of that spiritual rupture – we find “the very essence of poetry”; and in a measure far greater than in the verse of Byron and Mickiewicz, Pushkin’s ostensible rivals. Certainly, Solovyov conceded, Byron was superior to Pushkin in his power of concentration and self-awareness; undeniably, Mickiewicz exhibited far stronger religious and mystical sensibility, high seriousness and consistency in moral judgements; and yet “Byron and Mickiewicz brought into poetry content that, in all its excellence, was not essential for poetry as such: the first contributed his demonism, the second – religious mysticism. Pushkin lacks any such central predominant idea; yet, his soul is alive, free, incredibly receptive and responsive to all (...). The defining quality of his poetry is its independence of any pre-conceived idea, from any tendency or objectives of any kind.”¹¹

This predominant quality of Pushkin’s poetry may be easily seen as purposelessness, hollowness in terms of ideas or character, and yet this would be merely an attempt to reduce poetry to the status of philosophy, ethics or social program. When we attempt to define poetry in its proper element, its irreducible specificity, we perceive that such hasty accusations ignore the essential purpose of poetry in general, and of Pushkin’s poetry in particular: to capture the world in all the variations of color, in all its diversity, all its splendor; the purpose of poetry is to incarnate most fully and abundantly this vibrancy of

⁹ Ibid., 42-43.

¹⁰ В. С. Соловьев, “Особое чествование Пушкина” [A Special Celebration of Pushkin], in В. С. Соловьев, *Литературная критика* [Literary Criticism] (Москва: Современник, 1990), 219-220. This essay targeted the so-called “orgiasts” connected with the magazine *Mir Iskusstva* [World of Art], i.e., Rozanov, Merezhkovsky, Minsky and Sologub.

¹¹ В. С. Соловьев, “Значение поэзии в стихотворениях Пушкина” [The Significance of the Poetic Element in Pushkin’s Verse], in В. С. Соловьев, *Литературная критика*, 226.

colors and shades without attempting to force this brilliance into a scheme, idea, system, however lofty it might be. This is only possible outside the perspective of the quotidian practice of daily living, in the region of spiritual freedom, in the realm of higher reality of eternal beauty. And this has nothing to do with the projects of art for art's sake. In Solovyov's opinion, "poetry can and must serve the cause of truth and goodness on earth – but only in the way appropriate for itself, only through its beauty and in no other way (...). Authentic poetry needs nothing besides beauty: the fullness of its meaning and its entire usefulness is contained in beauty alone."¹²

Let us attempt – together with Solovyov – to observe more closely the creative process, seeking to define more precisely the nature of creative genius and of the spiritual split characteristic of Pushkin. According to the philosopher, "the so-called 'creative freedom' has nothing in common with the so-called 'free will.'"¹³ In his pursuit of the "free will," man is seeking complete independence, yearning to become an autonomic subject of his own actions; he is demonstrating aspirations to dispense judgements about values, about the nature of being – aspirations which are almost divine. The resistance he encounters from the world produces suffering, rebellion, urge to act, bitterness, anger and various forms of behavior rooted in such experience. "Creative freedom" is quite different – its first premise is "passivity, pure potentiality of the mind and will." "In the world of poetry the human soul is not the basis of its active self-constitution – rather, it is the soul which is inspired to act by the better part of itself, which is revealed to consciousness only through the process of creation, only through the experience of the poetic phenomena as something granted from above."¹⁴ The poet engaged in the creative act is not really intensifying, concentrating the aspects of his consciousness, but rather is striving, like a monk, to rid himself of the burden of his individual mind, his own needs and desires – "he must become poor in spirit, his soul must be desolate like a desert"¹⁵ calling out to him, and which must be crossed for poetry to yield fruit.

Thus, while the free will is defined as an act or a deed, creative freedom is about passivity, want of volition, empty potentiality. And while the activity of will must always meet the resistance of the material world, unconquerable in the final count, it is never able to achieve the divinity it longs for, can never claim to subordinate the world. And while the will is always destined for failure – either anticipated or unexpected – "creative freedom" encounters vistas astonishing in their novelty. Solovyov explains this as follows: "The soul of the poet as a man (i.e., his personal volition and mind) is passive in the sphere of poetry, silently waiting for the approaching inspiration, capable only of longing for it, desiring it and preparing itself to accept it. But when the inspiration does come, when it is received into the soul and takes possession of it, then the soul itself becomes the highest power in its world. In poetry, the inspired poet is the tsar."¹⁶ Pushkin, achieving the power and sway over the matters of ultimate stature in the world of poetry, attempted to transfer it to the world of quotidian existence, by the rules of that daily existence, without striving to view

¹² Ibid., 228.

¹³ Ibid., 234.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ Ibid., 248.

¹⁶ Ibid., 269.

it from a different – spiritual, moral, eternal – plain. Yet, it transpired that this daily reality could not be subdued and that the matters of ultimate stature were alien to it. However, it did not cause the poet to transform his moral attitude to the world, to enrich it with the spiritual substance, but instead led him into ire, anger, childish resentment, exasperation.

Pushkin expressed his disappointment with peculiar ingenuity: by complaining about the rejection and persecution he was suffering as a poet from the world, as well as by demanding that the rules of the world of inspiration be automatically applied to the world of quotidian reality. “Yet, – wrote Solovyov, – which part of him was rejected by the world, what was the object of hostility and harassment? Was it his artistic output? In fact, it would be difficult to find another example of a great writer who achieved general recognition and popularity in his own country as quickly as Pushkin. (...) No other writer in Russia was ever surrounded by a circle of admirers so distinguished and unified, made up of the people who understood him and sympathized with him,”¹⁷ – we may add, sympathized with him as a poet. Thus, what aroused hostility and resentment was not his poetry, but “the evil act of offense, for the purpose of which Pushkin misused his talent and debased his genius,” the passion of “anger and revenge, to which he succumbed unconditionally.”¹⁸

The quotidian world, unless it is enriched with the higher values, has only one way of pointing man to things eternal: through death, or rather through the fear of death. Death is the most durable bridge between the evanescence and banality of the everyday and the transcendental, metaphysical dimension. And this bridge, impossible to bypass by any means, raised for Pushkin the question of concord between his personality and the moral dimension of the world and artistic creativity. The whole chain of events leading to the duel proceeded according to the logic of ambition and passion principles. Pushkin “deliberately decided to push his hostility to its highest point, drain his wrath to its very dregs.”¹⁹ And when his rage was spent, his entire life was revealed in a new vision, and this was probably the only path which could have led Pushkin to this new vista. Thus, Solovyov does not see in Pushkin’s fate the cruel mistress who entangled him into a tragic and trivial intrigue (as the general opinion would hold); instead, he suggests that fate was watchfully kind to the poet as if he was the chosen one, even though this kindness was expressed in a manner both perfidious and perverse. “The last outburst of the evil passion which terminated the earthly existence of the poet left him with enough time and opportunity for a spiritual transformation. The agony lasted for three days, cutting him off from rage and pettiness of life, and yet allowing him to retain his clear and lively vision, liberating his moral forces and enabling him to resolve for himself, through an inner act of will, the problem of life in its true sense, once and for all. And his true spiritual regeneration, which took place before his death, was immediately noticed by his loved ones.”²⁰

Those who feel infuriated by Pushkin’s fate and death are frustrated by the mockery of his malice and resent the imprudence and extravagance with which he disposed of his genius: so many works that might have still been composed were left unwritten. But in this aspect as well Solovyov leaves no illusions, considering this opinion cheaply and

¹⁷ Соловьёв, “Судьба Пушкина,” 50.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

soppyly sentimental. Let us suppose that it was Pushkin, and not his adversary, to come out victorious from this duel. “With such ‘successful’ duel recorded in his heart, would Pushkin be able to serenely create new works?” Would he be capable of dealing with a split that now went much deeper than all that he had ever experienced, a rent caused by “the discord between the calling of the highest, most sacred and profound beauty and the act of murder caused by his personal anger?”²¹ In Solovyov’s opinion, burdened with such weight Pushkin could never be able to liberate himself from passions, ambitions and the banality of the quotidian existence, he would never again achieve the joy of life and the exuberance of spirit which characterized his work until now, he would not be able to elevate himself to the sphere of poetic inspiration; thus, he would not be capable of enriching literature with novel works. Viewed from this perspective, which for the genius dwelling in the timeless dimension is most crucial, Pushkin’s death was indeed in no way premature.

Thus, if the first natural reaction to Pushkin’s death is exasperation and anger with the pitiless, malevolent, perfidious and inexorable fate, the true admirer of the poet’s talent, wishing to remain constant and consistent in his adoration, and not merely moved by the initial impression, a momentary passionate compassion, such true admirer should, perhaps, be inclined to agree with Vladimir Solovyov’s thesis that the fate of Pushkin “should be, in all honesty, considered to be in the first place benevolent, since it lead the poet to the finest objective – to a spiritual regeneration, the highest value, uniquely worthy of the human being; in the second place, this fate should be seen as rational, since this loftiest objective was achieved in the simplest and easiest way possible in the circumstances, that is, in the best way possible.”²² In other words, only in the light of death (and in this case, of this particular kind of death) Pushkin’s poetry begins to shine with the genuine light, with the radiance of free creativity and its relation to goodness; goodness which had long been concealed in the personality of the poet beneath the power and spontaneity of inspiration, and which was exposed in the hour of trial like Socrates’s *daimōn*, revealing its unwavering care over its chosen one. Studying Pushkin’s destiny one may be tempted to conclude – both rashly and falsely – that the Muse of Pushkin was potent only under the condition of his personal antagonism towards the world, that therefore, beauty and goodness are not only autonomous, but also may easily fall into the state of mutual exclusion, producing a beautiful evil and ugly good. Yet, according to Solovyov’s interpretation, the appropriate context for the beauty of Pushkin’s poetry was not the trivial ire of life, or the weak personal morality of the poet, but the idea suffused with harmony, wholeness and liberty which would merge the poetic imagery of Pushkin and his life in its entirety, with the crucial role of death and dying which would assign the bile and the creative work of the poet to their appropriate places. Goodness and truth on the one side, and beauty on the other seemed to exist quite separately in Pushkin’s life, and yet in the end they revealed their connection, which would have been merely superficial and feeble if from the start, continuously goodness interfered with the beauty, and beauty was forced to reflect not the spirit of Pushkin-the-poet, but of Pushkin-the-courtier.

²¹ Ibid., 57.

²² Ibid., 59-60.

VVEDENSKY: THE POETRY OF CONSTRUCTIVE MISUNDERSTANDING

Russian philosophy of the first part of the 20th century found unexpected refuge in the literature of late avant-garde. The fundamental critique of reason and language was realized outside the boundaries of academic philosophy, where an idea of life as an absurd, not a logical process was established. Alexander Vvedensky's name became a symbol of avant-garde philosophy.

1. CRITIQUE OF REASON

In 1933 Vvedensky claimed: "Poetry produces only a verbal, rather than real, miracle. It is not clear how we can reconstruct the world. I dared to question concepts, basic generalizations that no one dared to question before. In this way I undertook a poetic critique of reason, more substantial than that other abstract one. I challenged the idea that, for example, a house, a country cottage and a tower are united by the concept of a building. Maybe a shoulder should be associated with number four. I have done it in practice, in poetry, and thus provided the proof. I got convinced that the old connections are false, but I cannot say what those new connections should be like. I do not even know if there should be one system of associations or a number of those. I have a strong feeling that the world is not cohesive and the time is fragmented. Since this contradicts reason, I conclude that reason does not understand the world."¹

In Vvedensky's quotation we can detect mistrust of the word itself, of what it says. Why is it defective? Because it lacks the present. For Vvedensky, the present is what opposes the word and is nonlinguistic in the language. The search for the nonlinguistic in the language forces Vvedensky to reconsider the role of the concept in human thinking. The concept makes us see connections where they do not exist. It forces us to oppose existence and essence, and predisposes us to see objects which are, in fact, nonexistent. As nonexistent as a "morning" which comes, or a "river" which flows.

Since human perception registers only multiple and disconnected things, we tend to think that unity and connections are established by a priori concepts of the mind. For instance, by a word "building." Actually, there are no buildings. There are multiple individual things: a summer cottage, a house, a tower. Yet these words, including "building,"

¹ Л. Липавский, *Исследование ужаса* [L. Lipavsky, *Investigating Terror*] (Москва: Ад Маргинем, 2005), 323.

synthesize the experiential and the pre-experiential. We do not experience the subject of the summer cottage, we have sensations of shape and color. Our mind organizes this sensory perception into a concept of a “building.” To make a “building” whole, one should have a whole mind first; in other words, postulate what Kant called a transcendental unity of apperception. What provides this unity?

Ultimately, poetic critique of reason concludes that we should not connect objects by rules of reason hypothesizing of the unity of apperception; we should connect them hypothesizing the absence of such unity, by to the rules of imagination. For example, we can associate “shoulder” and “four.” These words are connected neither by the subject matter, nor by reason, but they are linked by the sonorant “ou” sound. Which would mean that the reason for the object’s existence is not thinking. The object can be perceived by the senses irrespective of reason. Even though Kant, for example, had a different point of view. He believed that an object cannot be perceived independently from reason. What we invested in space and time is what we extract from it.

Vvedensky refuses to accept that a human is constantly thinking. And if the thinking process is not incessant, then between thoughts man behaves like an animal, relying on senses. At this moment imagination stops connecting sensations and reason, performing its constructive synthesis according to the poetry of senses, irrespective of what reason advises. In this, mind is freed from objects which would have been established in it according to reason, and is filled with connections, which are established by imagination. Vvedensky seems to be forcing Kant to agree that if the non-sensory influences human senses, then the sensory can be thought by a human. Metaphysicians perceive what is thought. A poet thinks that can be perceived. If the world were whole, if it were single and integrated, the human would have only one experience. And reason would reign in this world. But people have different experiences.

In transcendental rationalism, there can be no multiple experiences, there can be no multiple worlds. In Vvedensky’s transcendental irrationalism there are multiple possible experiences and possible worlds. The worlds are numerous, and God is one. Nobody can restrict God’s freedom in his creativity, even Kant cannot. Poetic critique of reason liberates God from Kant’s transcendental ideas. Reason does not understand the world, since it thinks that the world is one, and God is not free.

2. IMAGINATION

Imagination infects reason with its insanity and liberates it from experience which disciplines and punishes reason. Pure reason, liberated from the control of the mind, displays insanity. It constantly leaves the limits of experience and proves the improvable. It proves that God exists, and that the soul is eternal. Thanks to these tricks of reason we have metaphysics, the greatest human invention. According to Kant, people will return to metaphysics, as they return to the beloved with whom they have had a quarrel. Failing to find the borderline between the real and the imagined, Vvedensky, unlike Kant, does not look for invisible ether. In “World” he writes: “There’s a person on the wallpaper and a Thursday on a dish.”² How can we understand this? Perhaps, in the following way: in

² А. Введенский, “Мир” [A. Vvedensky, “World”], <http://brusl.ru/index.php?dn=article&to=art&id=1567>.

the world there is no place for a human, the world is not for a human, since it requires man to turn outward to the receptive plane of the external, and the human turns inside to the imaginary depth of the internal space. And this is the reason for him to exist on the wallpaper of the world. What is the wallpaper of the world? It is the wrong side of the world. So the human exists as the world's wrong side, where things are not organized the way they are in the world. In the world time flows, while on the wrong side it does not hurry anywhere, it is lying, like a fish on a dish.

People excel at simplification. To understand for them means to simplify. They can attribute meaning to the inconceivable and pretend they understood it. Vvedensky suggests that we should not understand. He is convinced that misunderstanding is an event alongside understanding. Misunderstanding is not opposite to understanding. In "Fact, Theory and God" Vvedensky writes: "if you start living backwards, you will understand it all."³ For Vvedensky understanding and living backwards seem to be connected. What does "backwards" mean? First, this is mirror reflection. Second, we can return to the same point in space, we can go back to the beginning and start doing something again. But can we return to a certain moment in time, like to a point in space? Perhaps, beginning to live backwards means to live upside down? There is one time on the dish, and right beside it there is a different time. And it is not lying, this time it is standing like a tree. In his "An Invitation for Me to Think" Vvedensky writes: "we see the forest walking backward, yesterday stands all around today."⁴ The forest is walking backward. How does it manage to do it? Because it did not drop its yesterday into oblivion. Within it, today's yesterday is still all around. It has not departed, today is right next to it, and the day before yesterday, and all this is around you. And this is a forest walking backwards. Thus, our future is ahead, while Vvedensky's is behind. Our ancestors live before us, not after us. And we live after them, we are their past, they are our future.

3. FROTHER

By the end of the 20th century philosophers began to pursue the essence that lies between the physical and metaphysical, experiential and pre-experiential, sensory and extra-sensory. The result of their quest was a centaur-like aspect of the world, enabling a transfer from one extreme to the other. In cosmology it was called *chaosmos*, and in ontology it was named *быть*. In the first case "chaos" and "cosmos" were united in one word, while in the second two words, *бытие* (being) and *становление* (becoming) were joined. Vvedensky, though, was the first to have started this philosophical work when he connected two Russian words: *отец* ("father") and *ном* ("sweat"). The result was *номету* ("frother" or, in other translations, "sweater").

What was his purpose? Evidently, he did not do it in order to please linguists; he did it to express something that is not directly expressed about a human. A human is not an object, the essence of which can be determined from without. But man is not an icon either. Russians do not like to bow to man, and neither did Vvedensky. "Frother"

³ А. Введенский, "Факт, теория и Бог" [A. Vvedensky, "Fact, Theory and God"], <http://e-libra.ru/read/333289-tom-1-proizvedeniya-1926-1937.html>.

⁴ A. Vvedensky, *An Invitation for Me to Think*, trans. E. Ostashevsky, M. Yankelevich (New York: New York Review of Books, 2013).

is a non-objective and, simultaneously, non-humanistic view of the human. Man is not a center of the world. The center of the world would belong to the world, and the human does not belong to it. Nothing human belongs to the human as his property. Man plus labor does not yet make a human. A frightening word “frother” controls everything that happens to a human between his death and birth. It strangely combines life and death, that which exists and that which does not exist, in itself. Since evolution never errs, it is possible that a human of “sweat” is God’s mistake, who thought that labor is a punishment and at the same time a way of establishing humanity.

Constructive synthesis does not occur through objective logic; instead, it is controlled by imagination. If it were controlled by logic, we would deal with one and the same thing. Yet we are dealing with novelty. This means that between all words there should be some logically heterogeneous continuous transition. But this transition does not appear without a third party. If the world consisted of objects, it would be impossible to transfer from one object to another by logically homogeneous transformations. Such a world would have to fall apart. If the transition is possible, there are no objects or no logic. But there is a third party, which makes the transition from a “wash basin” to “congregation” possible. Vvedensky intentionally substitutes the word “paste” by “congregation” (both sound very similar in Russian: *nacma* / *nacm6a*), in order to break the usual course of words. He raises a question: is there truly a logical connection between the paste and the wash basin to begin with? Isn’t this connection commonly nonsensical? Then, if this transition is merely habitual, it means that no unity of reason by itself can help to transform the multiple into the singular. Moreover, the reason itself would have to fall into numerous reasons, without any conceptual connections. And reason, approaching the transition border from the experiential sphere, would shift the experiential borderline, invading the a priori territory. And vice versa, if we approached from the a priori side, the borderline which delineates the a priori territory would begin to move away. And everything would turn out to be a priori, while the sphere of the experiential would never begin.

One of the problems Vvedensky faced after inventing the “frother” word, was the problem of meaning. Language meaning is not from the language. Vvedensky does not look for new connections between words. He does not trust language predication pattern, i.e. *S is P*. He does not believe in definitions. For Vvedensky, “day is night sweat-soaped,”⁵ and death is defined as follows: “death is the hedgehog of death.”⁶ The world is unstable and fluid. Words, syntax and semantics of the language do not match this fluidity. What do they match? They are necessary to fix the flaw, to fill the emptiness of the world with objects and meanings after the human withdrew himself from it. Communication and words do not speak about the world; instead, they speak about human disorientation in the world, which is caused by the production and consumption of reveries, which torture and console humans. What can we communicate to trees? Nothing. What objections do we have for a stone? None. We do not have any arguments for it. What can we tell water? There is nothing to offer it. We cannot communicate with water, which may be wishing to tell us something, but we do not know what. Is it not better to stop filling our

⁵ Vvedensky, “God May Be Around,” *An Invitation for Me to Think*.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

emptiness with words and turn into a statue, a stone, a tree? Like the father of the three sons turned into Frother.

What does “Frother” mean? It is not something that can be observed or perceived. Instead, “Frother” seems to be a mental construct, something that can be traced back to the Prologue, the words God said to the man: in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken (Gen. 3:19). Frother is both life and, simultaneously, a return to dust, i.e. death, and the cold sweat on the cadaver’s forehead is nothing but death dew. What can we learn about the world which we sense? Nothing, since there is something supersensory in it.

“Frother” is what destroys the transcendental unity of reason. Vvedensky tells a story of three sons asking the father what “frother” is: “Won’t you tell us dear father / What is this thing called Frother?” The father answers: “Blue, terrible and grizzled is Frother. / I am your angel. I am your father.”⁷ Yet the message does not contain any synthesis of perception and reason. The sons receive no direct answer to their question. Then the father suggests: “Go to sleep, sons. / There are dreams: watch some.” After watching their dreams, the sons persist in looking for an answer in a rhyme to *номец*: *свинец* (lead), *младенец* (infant), *венец* (wreath). Yet this search does not get them any closer to the meaning of *номец*. The story finishes with the sons conversing with a pillow (*подушка* in Russian), which, instead of being under your ear (*под ушком*) has become a spirit of the dead (from *душа* for “soul” in Russian).

The father and his sons do not understand each other. They need an interpreter. Language has stopped being a means of communication. It becomes a means of isolating oneself from the rest. Vvedensky discusses it in the last lines of the poem. “Dear God, the sons could have said if only they could. But we knew that already.” But they cannot say it this way, because they do not have the ready knowledge. Where did it go? We will not find the answer to this question in, for instance, Kant’s philosophy. Why not? The reason seems to be that his philosophy is limited to the expressed by man, rather than embracing the revealed by the world. *Помец* is not expressed, it is shown. It is not a rationally explained object, but a mystically experienced image. Vvedensky’s *номец* is an example of pure a priori synthesis of the nonsense, which does not belong to the transcendental reality. What cannot be said manifests itself in it.

Notably, language strategies of Vvedensky and, for example, Wittgenstein are radically different. If Wittgenstein suggests “to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. the propositions of natural science,”⁸ Vvedensky suggests saying everything, because nothing makes sense. “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent,”⁹ Wittgenstein claims. Conversely, Vvedensky argues that we should say what we cannot be silent about. “The star of meaninglessness shines, / it alone is fathomless. / A dead gentleman runs in / and silently removes time.”¹⁰ Nonsense expresses what analytical philosophy chooses to be silent about.

⁷ A. Vvedensky, “Frother,” trans. E. Ostashevsky, M. Yankelevich, *GERM* 6, <http://germspot.blogspot.com/2005/09/aleksandr-vvedensky-p2.html#top>. All following citations are from the same source.

⁸ L. Wittgenstein, *The Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1922), 90.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁰ Vvedensky, “God May Be Around.”

Номей does not contain knowledge. The rational discourse and the world do not match each other. The insane mind is right when it falls into antinomies, paralogisms and dialectics. In the 1930s Wittgenstein suggested that philosophy should be performed by poets, and the mistrust of grammar was, in his view, the first condition of conducting philosophy. *Номей* is such an experience of philosophy conducted by Vvedensky.

4. ABSURDITY

Life is not a logical process, it is absurd, and reason is not a tool for knowledge, but for suffering, for filling one's emptiness with hallucinations. What is absurdity? It is nonsense, illogicality. And this is true. Yet in Vvedensky's works absurdity is an object, a stone which reason throws at people. Or, rather, you throw it at yourself.

Tertullian said "I believe, because it is absurd." This formula, it seems, conveys the shade of absurdity which was lost by Camus, but had still been felt by Vvedensky. A believer is not someone without logic; it is merely someone who has not lost his sense of hearing. "We are not deaf" believers would say, "We can still hear God." Absurdity is a way of being able not to be deaf among those who have lost hearing. God's voice is obscured by all kinds of things, yet Vvedensky is able to hear it. "I regret that I'm not a beast / running along a blue path, / telling myself to believe / and my other self to wait a little..."¹¹

Let us look, for example, at Vvedensky's play "Christmas at the Ivanovs." Who is this play about? About us, the Russians. For we are the Ivanovs, even though Ivanov's family in the play does not have a single Ivanov. What is it about? About the world losing meaning. Yet the meaninglessness of the world cannot be expressed. We might be able to raise a question about this meaninglessness, but such a question would not entail an answer to it. There will not be a sufficient number of words. Rather, the reason which has lost its transcendental unity, the split reason, would always be short of words, substituting them with dreams.

Absurdity can be best shown in a play. What is Vvedensky's idea? It is very simple. Man does not live in the world, and thus cognizes it. Whoever wants to live should give up cognition, and simply live, the way animals do, without reflection and without the gap between what one says and what one does. Whoever cognates the world fails to live. His life is invaded upon by false images of a hallucinating mind. Absurdity and nonsense inform us that we are alien in the world. If we happened to lose the sense of absurdity, there must be something wrong with us, and we might be living like the characters of "Christmas at the Ivanovs." The Ivanovs live beneath themselves, without having to do anything in particular. All they need to do is to be lumberjacks, cut down fir-trees, go to one girl's room to end up in another girl's room, without taking the slightest notice. And sing. The lumberjacks sing, although, according to Vvedensky, they are unable to speak.

5. PRIMARY SELF-RESTRAINT

Vvedensky poetry tells us, "God forgot about us." And without God nothing human can happen in this world. Without him one cannot do anything. Without him there is no

¹¹ A. Vvedensky, "Rug Hydrangea," *An Invitation for Me to Think*.

foundation and everything falls apart. Why? Because we are not afraid of anything. We have no fear of turning out to be a dream illusion, something that does not exist. A human emerges not by adjusting to the world, but out of fear before the face of God. The heroine of the poem "God May Be Around" confesses "I am not afraid of anything, true. / I exist without fear."¹² But she exists like a phantom, like something nonexistent.

God is the man's primary self-restraint, which declares: either nothing is allowed or not everything is allowed. A human exists like an eternally renewable finiteness. Conversely, a modern human believes he is allowed everything, while God is not. God, like a man, must wait till sugar dissolves in the cup. Vvedensky proves that it is not true, that we misunderstand time.

6. TIME

The problem of time lies in the fact that there are things which are localized in space as things, and in addition there are ostensible images, which are localized in a person's views of the things. Man has to make endless decisions whether he is dealing with ostensibility or actual objects, whether he is asleep or awake. This choice forces him to invent consciousness, which enables one to overcome this duality. To see what is not present and not to see what is.

Where does the consciousness exist? Obviously, it does not exist in space. Consciousness is not a thing. It exists in action. The other is watching you. He does not see your self-observation. You see yourself in time. The other sees you in space. If you can influence the other in space and this action does not require consciousness, how can you influence yourself? Influencing yourself is possible in time. So the invention of time is connected with the human attempt to get established in relation to oneself, not the world. Which means that time is not a form of existence of things, but a form in which human subjectivity exists.

The modern society is a multitude of named others. But self with its subjectivity never has a place within it. The "I" is a rupture in society, a puncture in objectivity. Others can influence one's body, but not one's subjectivity, because one's selfhood lives in time, while the body lives in space. What is reality to one exists like a dream for others. You live in one world, and he, the other, always lives in a different world. And there is an infinity of misunderstanding between you. The language conditions you to treat oneself as the other, and in this sense the language turns into an observation of the observing observer. In reality the person becomes a spectator, and coincides with action only in a dream.

Time is born out of self-influence. Time is a way of dual human existence of the person who does not coincide with himself. Influencing ourselves we always create time, which contains hypothetical values and ghosts.

In "The Grey Notebook" Vvedensky writes: whoever understood time in a slightest degree would have to stop understanding the world. For we understand the world in time, and there is no time in it. Since the modern language is spatiotemporal, "space" prevents the language from understanding human subjectivity, and "time" prevents it from understanding world topology. "Our human logic and our language do not in any

¹² Vvedensky, "God May Be Around."

way correspond to time, neither in its elementary nor in its complex understanding. Our logic and our language skid along the surface of time.”¹³

Time is the only thing that does not exist beyond a human. Yet, nonexistent without us, it takes up everything that exists beyond us. This is the arrival of what Hegel called “the night of the world” or what Vvedensky calls “the night of the mind.”¹⁴ Time is a zero which turns everything into a zero. “Woe to us pondering time,”¹⁵ concludes Vvedensky. Woe to us, since time is a snake that swallows existence.

¹³ A. Vvedensky, “The Grey Notebook,” *An Invitation for Me to Think*.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

LEV SHESTOV AND SHAKESPEARE AUTHORSHIP QUESTION

Lev Shestov was not a Shakespearean scholar in the traditional sense of the word. However, his work “Shakespeare and his Critic Brandes” is far from being commonplace among the Shakespearian studies. The Russian philosopher was one of the few who brought up the problem of the great playwright’s creative origins and thus established a criterion for understanding his personality on the whole. In other words, he tried to substantiate the correlation between the methodology of biographical research of Shakespeare’s life and work and the so-called Shakespeare authorship question, suggesting that the proper study of the playwright’s biography automatically eliminates the question of authorship.

Lev Shestov took seriously the problem of historical existence of Shakespeare as a writer, and he was apparently deeply annoyed with Brandes’ manner of argumentation. In the philosopher’s opinion, the Danish scholar’s book provoked new questions leaving the old ones unanswered.¹ Shestov believed that Brandes’ historical and empirical approach – scrupulous reconstruction of Shakespeare’s daily routine in search for the sources of his genius – was an erroneous, though rather popular method. At the same time, he failed to find the grounds of correlation between Shakespeare’s talent, level of education and attitude towards his own creativity. According to Shestov, this was simply because Brandes sought the origins of creativity in the wrong place. The specificity of individual character cannot be explained through the objective circumstances of one’s milieu, yet that is exactly what the Danish thinker had attempted. However much we might know about the life of an individual, there always remains “an unclear... connection between his plays and his life as it appears in data recovered from the past, or, to be more precise, snatched out of the abyss, by the English scholars. It would be vain to seek a Shakespeare-ignoramus or a Shakespeare-usurer in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* or in *The Merchant of Venice*.”² One sphere of creativity may not be explained by the influence of another, however particular: “An attempt to substitute Shakespeare as a poet with

¹ I would like to add that the situation of Shakespeare authorship question resembles greatly the much later case of M. V. Lomonosov. He also seemed to have appeared “out of nowhere” and immediately became a luminary among the leading scientists and statesmen of Russia. Moreover, the more detailed his biography became, the more incredible his ascendance in social standing and public recognition seemed.

² Л. Шестов, “Шекспир и его критик Брандес,” *Сочинения в 2 томах*, т. 1 [L. Shestov, “Shakespeare and His Critic Brandes,” *Works in 2 volumes*, vol. 1] (Томск: Водолей, 1996), 31.

Shakespeare as an actor can only lead to unnecessary and false conjectures.”³ This seems quite true: while biographical context is constantly broadened, “the kitchen” of Shakespeare’s dramatic workshop still remains a mystery.

However, if not the facts of everyday life, than what may be the key to creativity? Let us proceed without haste. There is a much earlier point of view according to which objective circumstances can be regarded as a reflection of character, while objective conditions and meanings can be perceived as those formed under one’s personal impact. This rationalistic conception was formed at the beginning of the 17th century, slightly ahead of the time of its theoretical substantiation. It can be assumed that it defined or to some extent provoked appearance of Cartesian view on our dichotomic relationship to circumstances. There are two autonomous spheres of existence (two substances), i.e. human psychology and the surrounding world. It is far more likely that the psychological activity might change the world through its influence, than vice versa. Though, at first sight, it would not seem so, yet, nature is the realm of the merest necessity, while human being is the crown of God’s creation, the agent of rationalistic capacity. However, the moment of the impact is instantaneous, almost ungraspable; in general, these spheres are autonomous. In other words, the substances in themselves are eternal and invariable, yet, they are at the mercy of time as soon as they begin influencing each other. That is why it often seems that there is a discrepancy between the inert circumstances of the outer world and the volatile inner world of a person. In fact, this incongruity is fruitful, as it is resolved in the process of a person’s active influence upon the world. As mentioned above, this proves that “what is rational is real; and what is real is rational.”⁴

Thus, poetic genre apart, what emerges in the foreground is the concept first formulated by Descartes two decades later. In fact, Shakespeare in the field of artistic creativity predated the thought of the French philosopher – *raising the question of objective nature of mental ability and significance of one’s work*.⁵ Even though he concealed this idea in the rhetorical figures of speech, he was fully aware of it.

Why is my verse so barren of new pride?
So far from variation or quick change?
Why with the time do I not glance aside
To new-found methods and to compounds strange?
Why write I still all one, ever the same,
And keep invention in a noted weed,
That every word doth almost tell my name,
Showing their birth and where they did proceed?

³ Л. Шестов, “Шекспир и его критик Брандес,” 31.

⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. S.W. Dyde (London, 1896), XXVII.

⁵ Besides this, there is an analogous theme of *éxegi monuméntum* in literature as a symbol of personal services to the native land: the theme appears in Horace, Lomonosov, Derzhavin and Pushkin. However, Shakespeare stands apart because his point of view expresses extreme individuality and it is devoid of striving for public self-fulfilment. His concept of *éxegi monuméntum* is limited to estimation of personal talent and aesthetic perfection of poetry. Evidently due to its universal and abstract character it corresponds to the philosophy of individualism of Descartes as well as to the general individualistic mood of the 17th century.

O, know, sweet love, I always write of you,
 And you and love are still my argument;
 So all my best is dressing old words new,
 Spending again what is already spent:
 For as the sun is daily new and old,
 So is my love still telling what is told.⁶

In most cases, Shakespeare's personages were in the state of such inner conflict due to the influence of psychological peculiarities on the generalized human character, and, in the final count, the impact of the character on the exterior world. This was stated by the playwright repeatedly:

But to my mind, though I am native here
 And to the manner born, it is a custom
 More honour'd in the breach than the observance.
 This heavy-headed revel east and west
 Makes us traduc'd and tax'd of other nations –
 They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
 Soil our addition; and indeed it takes
 From our achievements, though perform'd at height,
 The pith and marrow of our attribute.
 So, oft it chances in particular men,
 That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
 As in their birth, wherein they are not guilty
 (Since nature cannot choose his origin),
 By their o'ergrowth of some complexion,
 Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
 Or by some habit, that too much o'erleavens
 The form of plausible manners – that these men,
 Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
 Being Nature's livery or Fortune's star,
 His virtues else, be they as pure as grace,
 As infinite as man may undergo,
 Shall in the general censure take corruption

⁶ W. Shakespeare, "Sonnet LXXVI," *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, ed. W. J. Craig and M. A. London (New York, Toronto: Oxford UP, 1916), 1116. The correspondence between Shakespeare's and Descartes' viewpoints was mentioned by some researchers, in particular by Hippolyte Taine, "Man is a nervous machine, governed by a mood, disposed to hallucinations, transported by unbridled passions, essentially unreasoning, a mixture of animal and poet, having no rapture but mind, no sensibility but virtue, imagination for prompter and guide, and led at random, by the most determinate and complex circumstances, to pain, crime, madness, and death" – H. I. Taine, *History of English literature*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, trans. Henry Van Laun (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1872), 340. Descartes also called a human being "an animated machine," thus implying the controlling power of mind over one's actions, a power which (by definition) cannot be overruled. In other words, the "automatism" is an expression of the relative nature of human freedom, a limitation of a kind; on the other hand, since it is recognized, it is not at odds with the human essence.

From that particular fault. The dram of evil
Doth all the noble substance of a dout
To his own scandal.⁷

Thus, it may be supposed that Shakespeare who really existed considered this attitude as the only possible and appropriate approach. There is nothing astonishing in such an assumption. This is why all the questions concerning his biography can probably be answered on the basis of his character, the essence of which means that the playwright was fanatically devoted to his poetic calling and regarded his work as an open book of his soul. At the same time, he considered objective conditions and events to be incidental, collateral, and of minor importance – consequently, his everyday life appears so ordinary.

But be contented: when that fell arrest
Without all bail shall carry me away,
My life hath in this line some interest,
Which for memorial still with thee shall stay.
When thou reviewest this, thou dost review
The very part was consecrate to thee:
The earth can have but earth, which is his due;
My spirit is thine, the better part of me:
So then thou hast but lost the dregs of life,
The prey of worms, my body being dead,
The coward conquest of a wretch's knife,
Too base of thee to be remembered.
The worth of that is that which it contains,
And that is this, and this with thee remains.⁸

However, Shestov did not accept this individual-oriented attitude and called it a “simplified approach.”⁹ His argumentation is curious but, upon careful consideration, far from irreproachable. Shestov’s critical approach comprises *two principal aspects* that prevent him from accepting this attitude. First of all, he was certain that in such psychologizing interpretation, Shakespeare’s characters are always seen as governed by their emotions irrespective of the nature and objective of these sentiments, or the degree of heroes’ awareness of their emotional dependence. For example, the philosopher criticized one of his contemporaries, French Shakespearean scholar Alfred Mézières,¹⁰ a supporter of the concept of character’s predominance over the surrounding world. He summarized Mézières’ arguments as follows:

If the innocent perish in Shakespeare[’s works] as everywhere in our world,
they are not struck down by chance. The causes of their misfortune may

⁷ W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2005), Act I, Scene IV, 208-211.

⁸ Shakespeare, “Sonnet LXXIV,” *The Complete Works*, 1116.

⁹ Шестов, “Шекспир и его критик Брандес,” 28.

¹⁰ See: A. J. F. Mézières, *Shakespeare: ses oeuvres et ses critiques* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1882).

be found in their characters. If they were more reasonable, more reserved, less passionate, or more resourceful, they would have escaped their troubles: there was a moment in their life when they decided their fate by committing an error.¹¹

Of course, Shestov could not agree with this: “it is hardly necessary to say that Shakespeare could never believe that offenders commit evil deeds because they want to become guilty.”¹² Here we see evidence of intentional or unintentional substitution of notions, because, firstly, the philosopher identified the external assessment of the deed with individual self-perception; secondly, he reduced the essence of the character to its objective manifestation in particular situations. In other words, he regarded the character not as the basis of one’s general lifestyle, but only as *behavior*, i.e., as a total of manifestations of specific causes in particular conditions. This is precisely what Shestov did when he stated: “Just as groundless would be the assumption that Shakespeare’s Othello kills Desdemona only because she deserves punishment for violating her duty toward her father.”¹³ However, Desdemona’s misdeed was not limited to impulsive disobedience of her father. When she married Othello, she neglected to observe that her husband came from a different cultural background and that his behavior under stress might be different from the predictable conduct of a typical European. She acted as an inexperienced, impulsive person, and in this sense she was indeed guilty of doing great harm to her family.

Thus, the philosopher could not accept a well-considered, rational choice as a cause of fatal error. And he thought that if this was what people tried to see it in the story of King Lear, Hamlet or Macbeth, such interpretation would be erroneous. And this may seem predictable: Shestov, after extensive and scrupulous study of the writings of Dostoyevski, Nietzsche, Tolstoy must have been thoroughly convinced in *the crucial influence of unconscious motivation of the mind on the process of creation*. Yet, this was not the case. *The philosopher came to the conclusion that everyday objective and incidental life played as crucial a role in the formative process of creative activity as individual talent*. His conviction that the essence of creativity may not be understood without taking into account the daily life of the subject was based on this principle. However, this attempt to reduce life to a sum of rational, object-directed events played a wicked joke on the Russian philosopher. We have already seen that Shestov was not satisfied with the existence of biography as such, he was interested only in a biography that would reveal the mystery of creative process, a biography that would serve as a workshop of a kind, an open book of creative forces. Biography that failed in this purpose was, in his opinion, a “wrong” life, or life inadequately read – existence, rather than life. This is why he reproached Shakespearean scholars not just for the missing biographical data, but also for failing to build a proper connection between creativity and everyday life, believing that the former entails the latter. He even suspected that this correlation was often deliberately ignored in an attempt to make the personality of the playwright appear more mysterious

¹¹ Шестов, “Шекспир и его критик Брандес,” 28.

¹² *Ibid.*, 29.

¹³ *Ibidem.*

or even mystical. In this aspect, Shestov's ideas are not entirely clear. It is uncertain what exactly seemed to him ungrounded in the official biography, or what aspects of creativity he would have liked elaborated through the medium of everyday life.

Apparently, it escaped Shestov's notice that he lived in the 19th and not the 17th century, when dichotomy of two substances defined the entire relation of the subject with the world. Therefore, he could not accept mutual autonomy of the two spheres or even opposition between creativity and daily routine as a reflection of this dichotomy. *Dichotomy can be based either in the field of the irrational (religious knowledge) or in the field of the unconscious impulses.* These were not yet taken into account in the times of Shakespeare, but already well known in the times of Shestov. Nevertheless, the Russian philosopher did not take into consideration that even logical rationalistic outlook cannot stand on its own without admitting the role of fate and chance in person's life. And it matters little whether a person's character determines the course of events or vice versa. It may function only until one character faces another of the same kind, or until his circumstances are entered into by another. As a result of such collision, all the regularity is broken down, and in its place a chain of unforeseen events, coincidences and fatal misunderstandings is produced. Shakespeare foresaw what would be the rationalistic (or rather mechanistic, to be more precise) reading of Fate as chance or ignorance, a formal idea of Fate. Such, for example, is the story of King Lear, whose lust for power, vanity and naivety clashed with his kinsfolk's lust for power, vanity and treachery. Such is the case of Romeo and Juliet, who became the victims of their own impulsiveness, or of Hamlet, who lost time in vain pursuit of truth.

The second aspect of Shestov's critique is as follows. The philosopher thought that the view of character's prevalence over destiny distorted the actual Shakespeare's treatment of his characters and himself, because the scholars unanimously agreed with the false conclusion of *author's self-identification with his characters.* The philosopher strongly objected to this:

On the whole, the clumsiest possible trope in dramatic work is to make one's characters into one's mouthpieces. Good writers create heroes who speak for themselves, and not for their authors who find another way to purge the foul stomach of the blighted world, if such childish activity holds any attraction for them. And yet, Brandes seeks to deduce Shakespeare from his heroes, persisting to see in Jacques the future Shakespeare, an embryo of Hamlet.¹⁴

Taine's approach suited Shestov even less, because the French scholar was absolutely straightforward: "Hamlet is Shakespeare, and, at the close of this gallery of portraits which have all some features of his own, Shakespeare has painted himself in the most striking of all."¹⁵

To prove his point, Shestov chose the most predictable and natural way, i.e., analysis of the plot texture in some of Shakespeare's works, seeking for statements which would

¹⁴ Ibid., 36. Jacques is a character of Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*.

¹⁵ Taine, *History of English Literature*, 340.

refute the arguments of Taine, Mézières, Brandes and others of the kind. At first sight, this approach appears just as faulty as it is sound: characters' thoughts too often contradict each other. Shestov's rejection of convergence of the author with his characters proposed by Brandes, seems to have been somewhat on the sly: in fact, he used it for his own ends. However, it is only initial impression. When Shestov was engaged in tracking down mutually exclusive thoughts in the opinions of Shakespeare's dramatic personas, his actual goal was to prove that fiction or scholarly composition cannot serve as the exclusive source for the study of the author's personality: "A man may be understood only if we live his whole life with him, if we fall with him into the abyss of his anguish – deep down into the horrible depths of despair, and if we ascend with him to the lofty heights of the ecstasies of artistic creation and love."¹⁶

Through the detailed analysis of *Hamlet*, the philosopher strove to prove that the image of the hero could not possibly be a self-portrait of the playwright. On the contrary, this character was so alien to him that throughout the play Shakespeare criticized him and fought with him. Hamlet is a very powerful hero, though this strength originates not from his own character but from the author's depiction of his faults, since Hamlet's activity is caused by supernatural spirit, mystical power, and not by moral sense. *He is the agent of pure reason and the whole play is a critique of pure reason:*

Take a closer look at Hamlet: all his virtues are negative. He is not greedy, he does not act in self-interest, he is not evil, cunning or devious, etc. There is nothing positive in him. There is nothing in his life for which he would be willing to lay down his soul. He cannot create anything, however small. He is one thing only: a thinker. Yet, we know from his own words that now is the time "to wipe away all trivial fond records, all saws of books, all forms, all pressures past" from the book of memory. These are now needless. But what substance may he live on then? This is why in his reflections he turns to death as final resolution.¹⁷

The death of Hamlet does not result from the coincidence of fate. It is initially predetermined by him; his own thought produces fateful circumstances that finally turn against him. In this interpretation, a pure thought is an enemy of life as such. According to Shestov, Hamlet could never be Shakespeare's reflection because

Shakespeare's ultimate objective, which may only be attained by the artist, is to explain the meaning of life in all its aspects. Not just to reject life as vain "blossoming," supplementary to external events and fundamentally defined by them, but to place life before and above everything, to see it as the origin of all. This objective is as natural for the artist, as striving to discover the law of causality for the scientist. Therefore, philosophy as an overview

¹⁶ Шестов, "Шекспир и его критик Брандес," 49.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 59–60.

and explanation of human life is open only to those in whom “the actor and the artist” play not a second fiddle to the thinker, but dominate over him.¹⁸

What gives us the reason to consider Shakespeare an upholder of “life” and what this “life” may represent? The evidence lies in the principle of the inherent opposition between creativity and quotidian aspect of the playwright’s life. Shestov reasoned that the playwright did not allow the thought “to enter” the real life because he realized what threats it represented to himself and his close environment: if Shakespeare were Hamlet in real life, his loved ones would suffer the same fate as Hamlet’s family. If he were Hamlet in reality, he could never become Shakespeare, fatally unable to see himself from the outside. For this very reason the playwright protected his everyday life from the intrusion of his work. And yet, he could not help dreaming of the possibility of true connection – *the time that would not be out of joint* – to be found one day... The task of Brandes as a Shakespearean scholar was to prove the existence of this unrealized intention. However, as Shestov stated, he failed, because he (and not he alone) studied Shakespeare without trying to learn something from him. As Shestov rightly pointed out:

Ever since Shakespeare’s fame as the greatest poet ever was established, people stopped learning from him. He is always left for the last. Only when one’s world views are fully shaped, one begins “to study” Shakespeare, i.e., to seek in his works for the confirmation of one’s own opinions on life and people, formed by one’s own past and personal tastes. Shakespeare is too great to leave him out. Every critic is obliged to reckon with him, doing everything in his power to adjust his own worldview to Shakespearean vision. That is why even those who “know how to read” Shakespeare quite often find in his books things never written by him, but written in their own books or hearts by their lives, which were, quite likely, tranquil, uncomplicated and narrowly confined, and thus decisively excluding any possibility of reaching Shakespearean ideal.¹⁹

Evidently, learning is only possible when one is aware of one’s own incompleteness, as well as of the incompleteness of one’s teacher, and this awareness enables a common progress to realization of truth. However, Brandes and others of his ilk addressed Shakespeare as an all-knowing interlocutor, expecting him to have ready answers to any question, – in which case, it would suffice to simply compare Shakespeare’s point of view with their own ideas. As a result, the Danish scholar came to the conclusion that Shakespeare was a great genius who managed to express himself completely in his work; others must perceive him as a miracle. It escaped Brandes’ notice that a great deal of lowly matters of life must have remained a mystery to Shakespeare, that his genius consisted above all in the ability to lucidly express his mental volatility, doubts and uncertainties.

¹⁸ Ibid., 68.

¹⁹ Ibid., 32.

This, apparently, is Shestov's answer to the question of what Shakespeare understood "life" to represent: it is an unequivocal connection between the work of the spirit and the everyday events. While it exists, it remains unnoticed. But if this link happens to break, through an imbalance of any kind (Hamlet's totalization of thought; Lear's totalization of the quotidian), we begin to seek for the way to restore "the joint." Shakespeare raised this question as a warning of the future; Brandes, as Shestov believed, misunderstood the question as the finished and complete answer.

MILLENNIUM AND APOCATASTASIS IN RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHY AT THE END OF 19TH – FIRST THIRD OF 20TH CENTURY¹

Russian philosophy, which reached its creative peak in the first decade of the 20th century, is characterized by what Nikolai Berdyaev, one of its daring creators, called “eschatological anxiety.” Reflections about history, its meaning, fate and pathways are closely connected to the question of the end of history. For Russian thinkers, history is religious, its spiritual, metaphysical plane is as real as the positive facts it describes. History is seen as a progression from the Creation of Adam and the fall of the first couple, to the Divine Incarnation and Atonement, and from Atonement to the Kingdom of God, from Paradise, nurtured by God and lost by man as a result of his willfulness, to “a new heaven and a new earth,” (*King James Version*, Rev. 21:1) where there will be no death or time, and God will reign among the “saved nations” (Rev. 21:24).

The connection between history and eschatology is ever present in the Russian mind. The end of history depends on the qualities of history itself, whether the human race will stay on the anti-god, erroneous track, worshipping “Baal,” or will it turn to God and “accept Christ.” The eschatology does not deprive history of its meaning; on the contrary, it establishes history. According to the archpriest Sergey Bulgakov, “History is not an empty corridor that we must come to the end of in order to escape from this world into the other world. It belongs to the work of Christ in His Incarnation. It is the apocalypse that is moving toward eschatological consummation. It is the divine-human work on earth.”²

Seeing history as a “work of salvation” is central to the Russian Orthodox historiography. Born in the works of early Slavophiles and Fyodor Dostoyevsky, formulated by Nikolai Fyodorov and Vladimir Solovyov, the idea entered the Russian philosophy of the 20th century, acquiring a new dimension in Sergey Bulgakov’s *Philosophy of Economy* and Nikolai Berdyaev’s *The Meaning of the Creative Act*, in the philosophical ideas of the

¹ The research was conducted at the Gorky Institute of World Literature (RAS), and funded by the Russian Science Foundation (Project No. 14-18-02709).

² S. Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, trans. B. Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 437.

Russian emigration (the Eurasians and thinkers associated with the periodicals *Путь* and *Новый Град*) as well as of the Soviet philosophers (Alexandr Gorsky, Nikolai Setnitsky, Valerian Muraviev). It is contrasted with historical pessimism expressed by Konstantin Leontyev who claimed that the world was irreversibly moving towards a catastrophe and a Christian should, first and foremost, cultivate his soul, without any “futile attempts” to establish “paradise on earth.”³ On the other hand, when seen as a “work of salvation,” history became a field for theandric cooperation, and man – God’s “co-worker,” whose mission is to become a tool for exercising God’s will in the world. The humankind that once fell apart from God into mortal and temporal existence is destined to “the work of restoring the world to the sublime incorruptibility it had before the Fall”⁴ and this restoration is the ultimate goal of history.

The idea of history as a work of salvation is closely related to the concepts of millennium and apocatastasis. The idea of millennium is based on Chapter 20 of the *Book of Revelation* which describes “a thousand-year reign of Christ:” it is established on earth during the final historical stage, after the fall of Babylon the great, the fall of Antichrist, who used to tempt and deceive tribes and nations, after “an angel come down from heaven” finally binds Satan and locks him in the abyss for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-2). The idea of apocatastasis is rooted deeply in Christian theology and is borrowed from Origen and St. Gregory of Nyssa, who postulated the idea of “universal salvation,” i.e. resurrection and purification from evil of every creature, even Satan, who will resume his original angelic nature, “that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28).

Before they acquired prominence in Russian historiosophy, the images of millennium and apocatastasis had been part of the Russian culture for hundreds of years. The image of God’s Kingdom on earth was reflected in *Sermon on Law and Grace* by Hilarion, metropolitan of Kiev, in the letters of Philotheus of Pskov who formulated the idea of Moscow as the Third Rome, in the literature of pilgrimage and legends of “holy lands,” in the symbols of the Russian Orthodox Church which portray “heaven on earth” and the enlightened godly material world. The theme of universal salvation, forgiveness to all – even the most wayward – emerged in the Russian Sainthood tradition. This practice started with veneration of Boris and Gleb, the humble princely brothers who prayed for their murderers, with theology of the icon and frescoes, and with classical works of church and secular literature. For example, the frescos of Saint Sophia Cathedral did not contain the Last Judgment scene, and the artistic and theological emphasis was put instead on the image of luminous Christianity, bringing universal salvation. Even in the scenes of the Last Judgment, the hellfire was often portrayed to devour sins – including anger, pride, heartlessness, fornication, deceit, devilry – but not the sinners. A note of universal forgiveness and love was heard at the end of morning prayer on Easter Day in the Homily of John Chrysostom, where an invitation to enter the “joy of Your God” is offered both to those who arrived at eleven and those who had been working from the first hour. The light of universal Christian salvation was seen in Andrei Rublev’s “Trinity” and in the

³ К. Леонтьев, *Собрание сочинений в 9 т.* [The Collected Works in 9 volumes] (Москва: 1912), т. 8, 189.

⁴ N. Fedorov, *What Was Man Created For? Philosophy of the Common Task*, trans. E. Koutaissoff, M. Minto (London: Honeyglen Publishing, 1990), 128.

multi-figured iconography compositions “In Thee Rejoiceth,” which were the symbolic presentations of the union of all creatures, the image of the transformed enlightened godly existence, which is already devoid of evil, division, and death. Virgin Mary, portrayed in the center of the multi-figured icons, is depicted in the Greek apocryphal story “The Journey of the Mother of God Through the Torments,” which was exceptionally popular in Ancient Russia; the story describes Holy Mother who, after walking through hell and seeing the sinners suffer, asks God to forgive all those plunged into the abyss of hell.

During the 19th century, the golden age of Russian literature, the millennium image started to emerge in literary works. The Russian Romantic poets, especially Fyodor Tyutchev, strove to reach wholeness and perfection not only in heaven but also here, on earth; so the empirical world had the first springs of the heavenly world, heard the sound of hope to transform the mortal into the immortal, the temporal into the eternal. Dostoyevsky’s materialism was intrinsically connected with the divine, transcendent reality, filled with its currents, and was nurturing the seeds of “other worlds.” The idea of God’s Kingdom on earth was represented by the writer in his novels; it entered his essays and letters, reaching its apogee in “Pushkin Speech” (1880), with its hope of “the great general harmony, of the final brotherly communion of all nations in accordance with the law of the gospel of Christ.”⁵ Simultaneously, the Russian literature, which inspired the rise of the Russian philosophy, was paving the way for philosophers and theologians who raised similar questions of apocatastasis in their turn. Painful thoughts of the idea of hell and eternal punishment, inevitability of hell fire for both people and fallen spirits, a hope of universal forgiveness and salvation, are present in works by both Alexandr Pushkin (“Extracts,” 1921; “Angel,” 1827; “Angelo,” 1833) and Mikhail Lermontov (“Demon,” 1929-1838).⁶ These ideas were also expressed by Nikolai Gogol who responded to European outburst of revolutionary fratricide in 1848 by a prayer “God, have mercy on Thy poor men and save them,”⁷ and designed his three-part novel *Dead Souls* as a symbol of regeneration and salvation of the humankind – salvation of all, including all the notorious characters of chichikovs, manilovs, plushkins, sobakeviches, nozdrevs, called upon to put off the “old man” and light up and restore the image of Christ in themselves. Also Dostoyevsky, understanding fully well that evil is deeply rooted in the world and that human nature is seriously flawed, was still looking for ways of “restoring the fallen man.” In his novel *Crime and Punishment* – about a criminal, who had gone through a fall, persisted in his evil and, finally repenting, transformed into a “reformed criminal” – the writer supported the Gospel notion of there being no greater joy in God’s Kingdom than from a repentant sinner, and of the salvation doors, open to everyone – only a will to enter is needed. The theme of universal salvation is present in *The Possessed*, *The Adolescent* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, where the writer directly contrasts the truth of Christ – forgiving, merciful, compassionate and loving, to the truth of The Grand Inquisitor, who transfers the Last Judgment from heaven to the earth, burning hundreds of heretics for the glory of God. The

⁵ F. Dostoevsky, *Pages from the Journal of an Author*, trans S. Koteliensky and J. Middleton Murry (Boston: John W. Luce, 1916), 67.

⁶ See: С. Семенова, *Метафизика русской литературы в 2 т.* [Metaphysics of Russian Literature in 2 volumes] (Москва: Порог, 2004), т. 1, 130-134, 184-187, 195.

⁷ Н. Гоголь, *Духовная проза* [Spiritual Prose] (Москва: Русская книга, 1992), 440-441.

major argument in favor of apocatastasis was the redeeming force of literature, endowed with the gift of knowledge of the heart, with the caring attention to human existence. Such literary works are able to reveal the human heart as it could never be revealed in daily life where it “lurks in darkness”; able to present the innards of any soul, be it the most base, self-conflicted, sinful hero, even the outright criminal or a villain (who is human, too), seeing into the motives of his evil actions, his inner struggle, pricks of conscience, pain and longing, in order to understand and, thus, forgive all.

The images of millennium and apocatastasis, deeply related to the idea of history as a “work of salvation,” were opposed in the Russian mind to other images of *Revelation to John*, which were, in contrast, connected to the idea of history’s failure, expressed the idea of evil, still waxing worse and worse until the end of times, about the future division of people into the saved and the damned. These images include “the Whore” on a beast, “Babylon the Great,” “Antichrist,” “locusts,” seven vials of God’s wrath, an axe, etc. Yet Fyodorov, Solovyov, Gorsky and Setnitsky stressed the indirect, open character of John the Apostle’s prophecy. The triumph of evil in history, manifested in the negative images of the Apocalypse, will only become reality if the humankind refuses to reject anti-God, the false ways and ideas. If there is a change, and the humankind, in Dostoyevsky’s terms, begins “to repent, creating themselves, creating God’s Kingdom,”⁸ then history, instead of falling into Satan’s abyss, will become a movement to the thousand-year reign of Christ and the further ascent to Heavenly Jerusalem, where everyone will be saved. The Prophecy of the world’s perdition, Fyodorov argued, was similar to Jonah’s prophecy: “forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown,” (Jonah 3:4) which was revoked after the city inhabitants repented.

The adherents of the idea of history as a work of salvation distinguished between the idea of “God’s Kingdom on earth” and secular utopias of “paradise on earth,” aiming to create a fair society with the imperfect mortal man. In their understanding of the thousand-year reign they were close to early Christian apologists – St. Papias Hierapolis, St. Justin Martyr, St. Irenaeus, St. Hippolytus of Rome, St. Methodius of Olympus, who considered God’s Kingdom on earth as a perfect, ideal epoch of history, when “all the tribulations and sufferings cease, even the mere opportunity of sin vanishes, and complete harmony between humanity and the new celebrated nature is reinstated.”⁹ Russian thinkers indicated that the thousand-year reign would establish a different order of the social relations, substantially shifting the balance between society and nature, transforming man both in flesh and in spirit. The state turns into Church, the human multiple unity becomes possible, similar to the Trinity in its “inseparability and distinctness” of the divine persons. Man stops devouring and killing, he achieves complete chastity (compare with Dostoyevsky’s intuition: “Millennium, there will be no husbands or wives.”¹⁰ “The light of transfiguration: the man will give up eating, blood – vegetation.”¹¹) The transfigured man

⁸ Ф. Достоевский, *Полное собрание сочинений в 30 т.* [The Complete Collected Works in 30 volumes] (Ленинград: Наука, 1972-1990), т. 11, 177.

⁹ А. Дживилегов, “Хилиазм” [Chiliasm] in *Христианство. Энциклопедический словарь в 3 т.* [Christianity. The Encyclopedic Dictionary in 3 volumes] (Москва, 1995), т. 3, 157.

¹⁰ Ф. Достоевский, *Полное собрание сочинений...*, т. 11, 182.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, т. 15, 245, 246.

will establish new relations with nature, based on the caring responsibility and “sacred labor.”¹² There is even a partial victory over death (the image of the first resurrection, where the righteous men rise from the dead). Yet, for the Russian thinkers, “God’s Kingdom on Earth” does not substitute New Jerusalem, though it is a step to it. This is the beginning of the move towards God, which only involves the earth, not the whole creation.

The advocates of the idea of historical justification have their own concept of the post-millennial epoch. This is not an epoch of the new triumph of the evil, when history, cleansed and washed by the construction of the holy City, slips into a catastrophe once again, when Satan is released and goes out to deceive the nations, gathering them to start a war against the saints. This is the epoch when the thousand-year reign of Christ grows into the Kingdom of God, and the earth transforms into the “new earth, lovingly engaged with the new heaven.”¹³

The idea of apocatastasis, closely connected to the concept of the work of salvation, the theanthropic principle and the theory of Unitotality, was a significant trend in the Russian religious philosophy from the late 20 to the first third of 20th century. It was advocated by Nikolai Fyodorov, Vladimir Solovyov, Vasily Rozanov, Nikolai Berdyaev, Sergey Bulgakov, Viktor Nesmelov, Georgy Fedotov, Nikolai Lossky, Vladimir Ilyin, Alexandr Gorsky, Nikolai Setnitsky and others. They provided various theological, philosophical, religious and ethical arguments in support of the idea of universality of salvation. They emphasized that the notion of eternal hell destroys the concept of God’s omnibenevolence, undermining the ideal of God’s Kingdom, deprives existence and history of meaning; it is the invention of the revengeful and malicious human heart, contradicting the idea of complete unitotality: the promise “God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28) is intrinsically incompatible with the concept of hell.

The supporters of the apocatastasis claimed that evil is not ontological; evil is not an essence, but merely a self-induced state of the creature, caused by its detachment, unwillingness to merge with God. Hence, hell is a property, not a substance; it is a *state* of the soul, not a part of the material world. Hell is subjective, not objective: it is not in God, but in man, not in the reality, but in the human soul; therefore it can be defeated by the soul’s spiritual enlightenment and growth, it can be conquered with the help of love and faith.

In *The Destiny of Man: An Essay in Paradoxical Ethics*, Berdyaev pointed out that defeating hell entails responsibility of the righteous for the sinners, the extent and measure of their love, and their morality: “Paradise is impossible for me if the people I love, my friends or relatives or mere acquaintances, will be in hell—if Boehme is in hell as a ‘heretic’, Nietzsche as ‘an antichrist’, Goethe as a ‘pagan’ and Pushkin as a sinner. Roman Catholics who cannot take a step in their theology without Aristotle are ready to admit with perfect complacency that, not being a Christian, Aristotle is burning in hell. All this kind of thing has become impossible for us, and that is a tremendous moral progress. If I owe so much to Aristotle or Nietzsche I must share their fate, take their torments upon myself and free

¹² Н. Бердяев, *Новое религиозное сознание и общественность* [New Religious Consciousness and Society] (Санкт-Петербург, 1907), 222.

¹³ В. Соловьев, *Сочинения в 2 т.* [Works in 2 volumes] (Москва: Мысль, 1988), т. 2, 731.

them from hell. Moral consciousness began with God's question, 'Cain, where is thy brother Abel?' It will end with another question on the part of God: 'Abel, where is thy brother Cain?'"¹⁴ This spirit of absolute universal responsibility for every man who comes into the world united the supporters of justification of history. The doctrine of eternal suffering was incompatible with this spirit, or with the understanding of Christian love, integrally complete and universal, intrinsically joined with compassion to every creature. This love is a condition of "universal restoration" with reference to both human beings and the diverse cosmos. Berdyaev emphasized the following: "My salvation is bound up with that not only of other men but also of animals, plants, minerals, of every blade of grass—all must be transfigured and brought into the Kingdom of God. And this depends upon my creative efforts (...). Man is the supreme centre of the cosmic life; it fell through him, and through him it must rise."¹⁵

¹⁴ N. Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), 276.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 294.

THE SILENT MALICE OF (IN)ANIMATE OBJECTS: NABOKOV'S THINGS

When we walk into a Nabokov novel, we expect to be quite at home there. After all, we may be certain to find familiar furniture¹: the motifs of chess and butterflies, blundering doubles, nostalgic descriptions of a lost homeland, the theme of the eternal recurrence of things, all arranged with the precision of a watchmaker. And yet, instead of feeling comfortably at ease, we immediately stumble over the threshold and fall headlong into the mesh of an invisible net, alienated from our own reality and sucked into a strange realm in which even repetition is startling.

Nabokov is famous for paying meticulous attention to material aspects of fictional reality. The tangibility of the textual spaces is ensured through the detailed description of solid objects – furniture, household items, articles of everyday use. It would seem that the purpose of such descriptions is to make the fictional space quite tangible, believable, thus immersing the reader into the textual world. This, however, is somewhat problematic: it is a critical commonplace that Nabokov consistently cultivates detachment, taunting the naïve readers who “sympathize” with the characters, deliberately exposing the artifice of the discourse at critical junctures. Therefore, his use of solid objects – described in such detail as to become almost palpable, and spaces – modeled with such care as to appear almost threateningly real – seems a part of a conspiracy of sorts. While we cannot resist the appeal of the writer’s reality, we also know that by allowing ourselves to be transplanted into the fictional world, we are walking into a trap, voluntarily surrendering our autonomy as readers to become fictional creatures embedded in the text.

MARY: THE ANIMATION GAME

In *Mary*, a novel featuring a group of Russian émigrés in a Berlin boarding house, we learn not only the floor plan of the pension, but also precisely how each room is furnished, where the building is located and what sounds the tenants hear in the middle of the night. Strangely, however, this self-conscious mapping of space creates an uncanny impression of an unearthly dimension, a kind of sub-reality. The rooms are numbered with pages torn out of an old calendar; the elevator keeps throwing tantrums, refusing to move or suddenly coming to life; the furniture seems to be frozen in a shock of displacement, with

¹ M. Amis, “The Problem with Nabokov,” *Guardian*, Nov. 14 2009, available on Martin Amis webpage: http://www.martinamisweb.com/commentary_files/MA_Nabokov_2009.pdf, accessed 8 January 2017.

“the inept, dejected look of a dismembered skeleton’s bones.”² The pension is located next to the railroad and each time the trains rush past, the building shudders, as if it was “slowly on the move,”³ as if it was about to disintegrate and dissolve.

The novel begins in the suspended elevator, with two characters getting acquainted in a rather awkward situation: in a suspended elevator, in utter darkness. This provisional setting – encapsulating to perfection the spatio-temporal suspension of the characters in the novel – in the second chapter is elaborated with a tediously detailed description of the boarding house:

The hall, where there hung a bleary mirror with a ledge for gloves, and where stood an oak chest so placed that people naturally barked their shins on it, narrowed into a bare and very cramped passage. (...) At the end of the first stretch of the passage was the dining room, with a lithograph of the Last Supper on the wall facing the door and the yellow, horned skulls of deer along another wall above a bulbous sideboard. On it stood two crystal vases, once the cleanest things in the whole apartment but now dulled by a coating of fluffy dust.⁴

There is a peculiar irony in the conversational arrangement of the dining room entrance and the picture of the Last Supper plus the dreary skulls with a “bulbous sideboard” underneath. This silent but very tangible dialogue seems not only to hint at the quality of the establishment’s cooking, but also to mark the under-worldly nature of the space we are entering. The narrator continues his survey of the furniture, applauding the landlady’s skill in arranging it:

Her late husband’s desk, an oaken monster with a castiron inkwell in the form of a toad and with a middle drawer as deep as a ship’s hold, found its way to room 1 (...), while the revolving stool, originally bought to match the desk, was parted from it and led an orphaned existence with the dancers in room 6. A pair of green armchairs was also severed: one pined in Ganin’s room, and the other one was used by the landlady herself or by her old dachshund, a fat black bitch with a gray muzzle and pendulous ears that had velvety ends like the fringes of a butterfly’s wing.⁵

Through this laborious description, the furniture acquires a quality of life that is slightly frightening. The desk is both a monster and a ship, the stool is an orphan in the midst of a carnival (the gay dancers’ room). The green armchair “pines” without its companion, so blurred through its sorrow that it blends with the sad dachshund, in its turn fused with a lovely butterfly. In fact, the objects appear more real than the people who use them. This peculiarity of description seems to echo and amplify the technique Tolstoy

² V. Nabokov, *Mary* (New York: Vintage, 1989), 6.

³ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

used in “The Death of Ivan Ilych.” As Nabokov explains in his lecture on this story, life for its characters is mere existence, devoid of any meaning or reality:

Egotism, falsity, hypocrisy, and above all automatism are the most important moments of life. This automatism puts people on the level of inanimate objects – and this is why inanimate objects also go into action and become characters in the story. Not symbols of this or that character, not attributes as in Gogol’s work, but acting agents on a par with the human characters.⁶

Things are real, people are unreal – and there is no need to become a political or historical Other in order to fall into this spectral disgrace, the dull self-centered life is quite sufficient to turn one into a shadow. Tolstoy’s aim in using this device is to illuminate the shallow, superficial nature of conventional life – not so much a life in sin, but a life “most simple and most ordinary and therefore most terrible,” a life limited to “animal survival and childish contentment.”⁸

Nabokov’s purpose is not quite the same. Neither is his space: it is tangible, animated, and yet transparently provisional, unstable. These carefully described objects are also fabulous creatures: they not only imitate life, like the objects in Tolstoy (we may remember the protesting sighs and moans of the pouf on which one of the characters sits),⁹ they actually *are* alive. We may see this in the recurring motif of the building elevator, a supposedly mechanical thing which yet functions as an important character, with an almost crucial role in the plot. The protagonist and antagonist of the story (Ganin and Alfyorov) are introduced to each other while they are stuck in the lift. Mysteriously, the elevator comes to life without any intervention from a human agent – a fact that Alfyorov insists is “symbolic” (4). Later, Alfyorov is seen by Ganin opening the lift with a key, which allows Ganin a chance to sneak into his room and reexamine the photograph of his neighbor’s wife, and supposedly Ganin’s first love, Mary – a key development of the plot (35). Alfyorov once again is stuck in the lift on p. 65, after which the elevator remains broken. This creates further difficulties for the old and frail Podtyagin, who returns home after a mild heart attack and has to take the stairs with Ganin’s help (84). On p. 106 the landlady apologizes for the elevator still being out of order – clearly, it is out of sympathy with the inhabitants of the place. Indeed, the lift has both character and volition beyond that of human characters.

Even more enigmatic is the green armchair. The narrator takes a lot of time in describing the distribution of the scarce furniture throughout the rooms of the pension. Of the two armchairs, we are told, one is allotted to Ganin and another is kept by the landlady. And yet, when Ganin happens to visit another room (the poet Podtyagin’s), he settles comfortably in an “old green armchair” (39). How did it happen to get here? Perhaps, this is really a fabulous beast who only camouflages itself as an inanimate piece of furniture, and

⁶ V. Nabokov, *Lectures on Russian Literature* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace, 1981), 239.

⁷ L. Tolstoy, “The Death of Ivan Ilyich” in *Collected Shorter Fiction*, vol. 2, trans. by Louise and Aylmer Maude (New York: Everyman’s Library, 2001), 120.

⁸ Nabokov, *Lectures on Russian Literature*, 241.

⁹ Tolstoy, “The Death of Ivan Ilyich,” 116.

it wanders through the apartment when no one is looking? The strangeness of its presence in the room of the poet is never commented upon, though the ponderous attention bestowed on it in the first pages of the book might have been motivated by the desire to make the reader notice these quiet shifts in the – supposedly stable – interior.¹⁰ There are also other things-vagrants: “Instead of standing at the desk (...) one of the two kitchen chairs seemed to have wandered off in the direction of the washbasin but had stopped halfway there, having obviously stumbled over the turned-up edge of the green carpet.”¹¹

Nor is this all. It is not enough that the boarding house is located next to the railroad tracks, and the noise of the passing trains is the constant background of its inhabitants' life. The tracks are located on both sides of the building, so that the protagonist “could never rid himself of the feeling that every train was passing, unseen, right through the house itself.”¹² When in the dead of night the movement of the trains is suspended, it appears that the house itself has come to a standstill.¹³ Another character feels that “she dwelt in a house of glass that was on the move, swaying and floating (...) her bed seemed to rise and sway.”¹⁴ The pension is a glass ship of the Flying Dutchman sort, drifting into an oneiric sea. And yet, as Leona Toker points out, this ghostly building is a direct opposite to Bachelard's “oneiric house”¹⁵ which shelters daydreaming, protects the dreamer, allows one to dream in peace.¹⁶ The walls in this house are so thin that there is virtually no privacy, no protection either from the other “inmates” or from the world outside. The pension itself is a dream, or rather a nightmare, and the constant noise and rush of the busy railroad seems as much a part of it, as its loony furniture:

The black trains roared past, shaking the windows of the house; with a movement like ghostly shoulders shaking off a load, heaving mountains of smoke swept upward, blotting out the night sky. The roofs burned with a smooth metallic blaze in the moonlight; and a sonorous black shadow under the iron bridge awoke as a black train rumbled across it, sending a chain of light flickering down its length. The clattering roar and mass of smoke seemed to pass right through the house as it quivered between the

¹⁰ Yankovski also notes the wandering armchair in *Mary*, but dismisses it as merely a blunder on the author's part – А. Яновский, “О Романах Набокова ‘Машенька,’” В.В. Набоков. *Pro et contra: Личность и творчество Владимира Набокова в оценке русских и зарубежных мыслителей и исследователей* [A. Yankovski, “On Nabokov's Novel *Mary*,” in V. V. Nabokov. *Pro et contra: The Personality and Work of Vladimir Nabokov in the Eyes of the Russian and Foreign Scholars and Thinkers*] (Санкт Петербург: Издательство Русского Христианского гуманитарного института, 1997), 842-850. Even though this is Nabokov's first novel, such mistake should be ruled out, if only because the situation is retained in the English translation, made years later (1970) by Michael Glenny and meticulously checked by the author. It is also very unlikely that having spent so much time and effort on detailed description of the objects and their disposition in space, Nabokov would simply “forget” about his early plan. As his *Lectures on Literature* attest, he made the study of the objective reality of fictional works an obligatory first step to any critical analysis, and this rule must be applied to his own works as well.

¹¹ Nabokov, *Mary*, 23.

¹² Nabokov, *Mary*, 10.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁵ G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 6-7.

¹⁶ L. Toker, *Nabokov: The Mystery of Literary Structures* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1989), 36.

chasm where the rail tracks lay like lines drawn by a moonlit fingernail and the street where it was crossed by the flat bridge waiting for the next regular thunder of railway carriages. The house was like a spectre you could put your hand through and wriggle your fingers.¹⁷

Bachelard writes that “real houses of memory, the houses to which we return in dreams, the houses which are rich in unalterable oneirism, do not really lend themselves to description.”¹⁸ When the narrative laboriously constructs the boarding house, the result is an anti-memory, a grotesque present that refuses to shelter the dreamer. The odd effect of the space at once heavily tangible and spectrally unreal creates a peculiar atmosphere of tedious suspension. This is a perfect purgatory – a shadowy world in which the lost souls wait to be transferred elsewhere. The characters themselves are just as spectral as their dwelling place. Nabokov would write later that “the émigré characters I had collected in that display box were so transparent to the eye of the era that one could easily make out the labels behind them.”¹⁹ There is the protagonist, Ganin – a dashing fellow with a secret, a former white soldier, or, perhaps, a spy (it is hinted that his name is false, and his Polish passport – forged²⁰). There is Alfyorov, the dull and philistine bourgeois waiting for his wife to arrive from the Soviet Russia. There is also the rather endearing couple of gay dancers and Klara – the kind and rather ordinary, slightly old-maidish girl in love with the protagonist; Mrs. Dorn, the widowed landlady who moves like a ragdoll and whom no one takes seriously. Finally, there is the old poet Podtyagin, most alive and spectral of them all, who dies while waiting for his exit visa, having lost his passport and with it – the last shreds of his identity.

This passport is a doubly ominous object: firstly, because it seems to possess a will of its own, like the other things in the novel, and secondly, because this apparently inanimate yellow paper thing claims a disturbingly real power over a human being to which it is attached. In the bureaucratic nightmare of Berlin between the wars, a creature without papers has no right to exist, it is less than a ghost, it is simply null. There is a peculiar irony in the dialogue between this episode in *Mary* and the famous citation from Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita*: “No papers, no person.”²¹ Different countries, different political systems – but nothing is really changed. Podtyagin was supposed to have escaped the horrors of Soviet Russia, and yet here he is, embedded in the very same circumstances of life, or, more precisely, of sub-life, with papers as superior beings.

His precious document is lost when Ganin half-jokingly divulges the secret of his false identity to the poet. While Podtyagin lies dying, preparing to cross the unassailable border, he murmurs to Ganin: “You see – without any passport,”²² and the protagonist is reminded of “these flickering, shadowy doppelgangers, the casual Russian film extras,

¹⁷ Nabokov, *Mary*, 95.

¹⁸ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 13.

¹⁹ V. Nabokov, *King, Queen, Knave* (New York and Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1968), VIII.

²⁰ Nabokov, *Mary*, 80-81.

²¹ M. Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, trans. R. Pevear, L. Volkhonsky (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 289.

²² *Ibid.*, 109.

sold for ten marks apiece and still fitting, God knows where, across the white gleam of a screen.”²³ Spectrality imposed by history – alienation that may have still seemed temporal, reversible in 1925, when the novel was written, – is conflated with a different kind of self-compelled ghostliness which is viewed in the sinister metaphysical light as the selling of one’s shadow, or, more precisely, of one’s soul. Becoming a character in a film – or in any other kind of fiction – reduces the human being to a state of an image, simultaneously conferring disturbingly diverse qualities on that soulless object. It becomes an insubstantial, transparent thing, mechanical and pre-programmed in all its movements, devoid of volition. Yet, it is also deathless: the image will continue to flit from screen to screen, quite beyond the control of the “actor,” director or producer: “They would fire a barrage of murderous brilliance, illumining the painted wax of motionless faces, then expiring with a click – but for a long time yet there would glow, in those elaborate crystals, dying red sunsets – our human shame. The deal was clinched, and our anonymous shadows sent out all over the world.”²⁴ Acting as an extra in Nabokov’s rendering is a curious transaction which retains a distinct smell of sulfur: one is outwitted by a Mephistophelian technology to become the true undead.²⁵

The boarding house is simply a storeroom in which these “former people” are deposited, a warehouse of shadows. This is Nabokov’s first novel, and his game here seems to consist in sudden animation of one spectral shape after another – through a spark of memory, a chance gesture, or a fugitive flash of emotion. Objects have a role here: Ganin’s figure is animated through a photograph he chances to see, which activates his memories (generously bequeathed to him by his author) of the Russian countryside, through which he rushes with carefree swiftness on his bicycle, falling in and out of love, losing everything, and now remembering it with a sense of confusion:

Where is the happiness, the sunshine, where are those thick skittles of wood which crashed and bounced so nicely, where is my bicycle with the low handlebars and the big gear? It seems there’s a law which says that nothing ever vanishes, that matter is indestructible; therefore the chips from my

²³ Ibid., 110.

²⁴ Ibid., 9.

²⁵ Nabokov himself played as an extra in some German films, as he admitted to Alfred Appel (V. Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 161), though he claimed to disremember the titles of these productions. Scholars have tried and failed to locate the films. Some internet sources claim that Nabokov “played himself” in Pudovkin’s *Шахматная Горячка* [Chess Fever], filmed in 1925 – cf. <https://archive.org/details/1925VsevolodPudovkinShakhmatnayaGoryachkaChessFever>, accessed 8 January 2017. However, it seems rather to be a case of a hoax taken in earnest: probably the earliest attribution appears on Nabokov-dedicated website *Zembla*: “Sirin, his thin face and high forehead heavily waxed, his dark brows further darkened with greasepaint, appears briefly as an extra in an early scene in which a chess tournament is depicted (...) [we may see] very high up and to the left, nearly at the edge of the frame, an anomalously indifferent-looking Sirin, staring straight ahead as if posing for a portrait, seemingly unmoved by the rapturous ooh-ing and aah-ing and sleeve-tugging and pointing going on all around him” – <https://www.libraries.psu.edu/nabokov/silver9.htm>, accessed 8 January 2017. This very informative passage is attributed to Charles Kinbote, Nabokov’s mad character from *Pale Fire*, and was actually written by Jeff Edmunds, a wonderful impersonator and creator of *Zembla* website. Pudovkin’s comedy is undeniably one of the subtexts of *Luzhin Defense*, but Nabokov’s appearance in this Soviet film in any role is highly unlikely. Still, it is not impossible that one of these lost films may still reemerge from oblivion, with Nabokov’s own image animating the phantom of a character on screen.

skittles and the spokes of my bicycle still exist somewhere to this day. The pity of it is that I'll never find them again – never. I once read about the 'eternal return.' But what if this complicated game of patience never comes out a second time? Let me see –there's something I don't grasp – yes, this: surely it won't all die when I do?²⁶

The perpetual existence of the particles of matter is something that suggests to Nabokov's hero a hope of continuation – not only a possibility to recapture the lost happiness of the past, but also a vague but all the more precious hope of endurance beyond death. Objects, however insignificant their appearance, are parts of the universal puzzle, cards in a complicated game of patience. One should, therefore, take care of them because without their presence the puzzle may not be reassembled. But this also works in reverse: it seems that if by a strange chance one could somehow recover the insignificant trifles from the remembered past, the hourglass of time would be turned over once more, allowing a return of the precious moment to which these trifles belong. The passage seems to refer to the Nietzschean notion of eternal recurrence:

What if a demon crept after thee into thy loneliest loneliness some day or night, and said to thee: "This life, as thou livest it at present, and hast lived it, thou must live it once more, and also innumerable times; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and every sigh, and all the unspeakably small and great in thy life must come to thee again, and all in the same series and sequence – and similarly this spider and this moonlight among the trees, and similarly this moment, and I myself. The eternal sand-glass of existence will ever be turned once more, and you with it, you speck of dust!"²⁷

Nietzsche's repetition, unlike Ganin's, is a dark vision, a temptation of an insidious demon. The reappearing imagery (spider, moonlight, trees) in his projection is limited to organic life, part of nature that might be perceived as already animated. Ganin, on the other hand, seeks for the recurrence of inanimate, man-made objects – the bicycle, the wooden pieces used for a Russian game of *proxu* – things to which life was communicated by the human agency – the rider, the player. What seems wrong with his life now is the reversal of the process: the things are now dangerously alive on their own, and they animate the ragdolls and phantoms of the human characters. Moreover, in *Mary*, most of such "animations" are darkly grotesque: there is hostility, open or indirect antagonism between the inhabitants of the pension and its furniture and knick-knacks, which seem positioned to trip, hurt or mock the spectral humans.²⁸ The only exception from this rule seems to be the photograph of Mary which Alfyorov shows to Ganin, sending him off into

²⁶ Nabokov, *Mary*, 34.

²⁷ F. Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom, The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche* v. 10, ed. Oscar Levy, trans. by Thomas Common (Edinburgh and London: T.N.Foulis, 1910), 270-271.

²⁸ It is only too easy to find examples of such "behavior" on the part of the objects: the beginning of the first description of the pension includes "an oak chest so placed that people naturally barked their shins on it" (5).

nostalgic memories of the first love in the countryside. Yet, this impression may be false, for at least three reasons. Firstly, as Leona Toker indicates, the picture of Alfyorov's wife is not necessarily that of Ganin's first love.²⁹ Nabokov is careful to allow for the ambiguity of (mis)recognition in the description of the initial observation of the photographs by Ganin:

Ganin looked at the photograph in the open drawer without much interest. It was the face of a tousled young woman with a merry, very toothy mouth. Alfyorov leaned over his shoulder. "No, that's not my wife, that's my sister. She died of typhus, in Kiev. She was a nice, jolly girl, very good at playing tag." (...) "And that's Mary, my wife. Poor snapshot, but quite a good likeness all the same. And here's another, taken in our garden. Mary's the one sitting, in the white dress. I haven't seen her for four years. But I don't suppose she's changed much."³⁰

The picture is "a poor snapshot," it is seen in uncertain light (inside a pulled-out desk drawer), and Alfyorov uses some key words such as "typhus," "white dress" and, of course, the diminutive of the name "Mary," all of which has a special significance for Ganin. Therefore, he may be easily deluding himself about the identity of the girl in the picture. Nor is his attempt to examine the picture at leisure quite successful – it is interrupted by Klara at the crucial moment. In addition, before showing the photograph, Alfyorov also mentions a word he seems to misunderstand, "metempsychosis," which (though not in Alfyorov's rendering) means transmigration of the soul. This may be understood as a gentle hint from the author that the image of the girl in the photograph is a mere stand-in for the person Ganin was in love with all these years ago.

Secondly, it may be important to note the strange prominence of the drawer in which the photographs are kept. This is that very object which was earlier compared to the spacious ship's hold. Curiously, Alfyorov never seems to take the snapshots out of the drawer while showing them to Ganin, as if they had to be constantly kept in that dark underworld, like slaves chained to their benches. The order in which the pictures appear is also curious: the first image Ganin sees, before glimpsing the girl in the white dress, is the image of a toothy grin. Mikołaj Wiśniewski interprets this as a reference to the grin of the Grim Reaper: "Ganin's memory is lined with death, his beloved is no longer among the living, and his fantasy of Mary (the living Mary who has not changed and is soon due to arrive in Berlin) is a kind of defensive mechanism of the consciousness immersed in grief."³¹ Since Alfyorov is a very disorderly person (his room is in a state of desperate chaos when Ganin walks in), the order in which the photographs are arranged in the drawer is either completely random, or pre-arranged by some other agency. It is tempting to assign this agency to the special object in which the pictures are displayed – to that magnificently deep, obscurely ominous desk drawer.

²⁹ Toker, *Nabokov: The Mystery of Literary Structures*, 43-44. Mikołaj Wiśniewski also discusses this possibility – cf. M. Wiśniewski, "Na wół Mnemozynie: *Maszeńka* i problem pamięci w twórczości Vladimira Nabokova" ["Half-Mnemozynie: The Problem of Memory in the Works of Vladimir Nabokov"], *Kronos* 3 (2013), 203.

³⁰ Nabokov, *Mary*, 25.

³¹ Wiśniewski, "Na wół Mnemozynie," 204.

Finally, the daydream into which Ganin plunges makes him even less human, because less capable of empathizing with others and feeling any kind of emotion other than solipsistic delight in abortive fantasy. Vera Polishchouk points out that Nabokov is careful to separate the imaginary world of Ganin's recollections from the actual reality, signaling the split through one of the furniture objects – this time, a mirror:

In the hall mirror he saw the reflection of the inside of Alfyorov's room, the door of which was wide open. Inside that sunny room – the weather that day was heavenly – a slanting cone of radiant dust passed across the corner of the desk, and with agonizing clarity he imagined the photographs (...). In those photos Mary had been exactly as he remembered her, and now it was terrible to think that his past was lying in someone else's desk.³²

As Polishchouk notes, “the picture of the heroine is placed as if ‘beyond the borderline,’ through the looking glass, in the other world.”³³

Nietzsche's passage continues with his question to the reader: “Wouldst thou not throw thyself down and gnash thy teeth, and curse the demon that so spake? Or hast thou once experienced a tremendous moment in which thou wouldst answer him: ‘Thou art a God, and never did I hear aught more divine!’”³⁴ Clearly, Ganin belongs to the second category: he would rejoice in repetition, seeing it as divine, assuming, of course, that the recurrence would be short-circuited to exclude the colorless present. He would also seek to repeat the past as exactly as possible. His careful, dutiful restoration of memory in the novel is the result of a Faustian longing to arrest the moment.

And yet, as Deleuze insists, Nietzsche's idea of recurrence is not an expectation of endless repetition, which must bring back the old pain and bliss in its unaltered original form, but a vision of constant transfiguration of the past, which, upon its return, is unrecognizable in its novelty.³⁵ And, surprisingly, this may be also found in Nabokov's poetics. Alfred Appel saw “the transcendence of solipsism”³⁶ as Nabokov's artistic credo; in his view Nabokov's “art records a constant process of becoming – the evolution of the artist's self through artistic creation – and the cycle of insect metamorphosis is Nabokov's controlling metaphor for the process.”³⁷ Not simple repetition, then, but constant recreation of experience, transformation motivated through the artist's own peculiar poetics, metamorphoses of reality – which yet transcend the solipsistic self-involvement, perhaps because the reality becomes reanimated through this transformation. The true artist cannot repeat the past – however marvelous it might have been, the repetition would reduce it

³² Nabokov, *Mary*, 50.

³³ В. Полищук, “Поэтика вещи в прозе В. В. Набокова,” [V. Polishchouk, “Poetics of an Object in Nabokov's Prose”] (PhD diss., Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, St. Petersburg, 2000), 31.

³⁴ Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom*, 271.

³⁵ G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia UP, 2006), 48; G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2004), 374.

³⁶ A. Appel Jr., “Introduction” in V. Nabokov, A. Appel Jr., *The Annotated Lolita* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 18.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

to a lifeless cliché. As Mikołaj Wiśniewski writes, “central to Nabokov’s work is the concept of *memory / remembrance / repetition* – in all its ambivalence, that is, seen on the one hand as the heroic creative effort, resurrection of ‘the world that had perished,’ and on the other – as a dangerous obsession which deprives an individual of his autonomy, imprisons him in some spectral world, leads to madness, suicide or crime.”³⁸

In Ganin’s amorous adventure with the imaginary Mary, we see a hint of the double-nature of memory: Ganin ignores his reality, which may be quite as glorious, and possibly less clichéd than his past,³⁹ and predictably, his romance can never be consummated – the complicated game of patience does not work. The objects of the present that struggle to claim his attention fail in their effort, and as a result the objects of the past, of which he thinks with such tenderness, remain irrecoverable. All he can do is to board one of the trains that rumble through his daydream of existence and fall into a doze, “his face buried in the folds of his mackintosh, hanging from a hook above the wooden seat.”⁴⁰

The inanimate objects are inescapable: the last words of the novel return them to their properly prominent place. The mackintosh will serve to obscure reality for a time, the things in the train compartment will even “play dead” for as long as Ganin’s consciousness is still alert enough to take notice of them; but there is no telling what may happen once the sleep takes over.

DEFINING “THINGS”: “IN THE IMAGE OF MAN”

Nabokov’s attitude to inanimate objects is conceptualized in a short speech entitled “Man and Things”⁴¹ which he prepared for a meeting of a Berlin literary club. Written in January 1928, two years after the publication of *Mary* and just as Nabokov was beginning to write in earnest *King, Queen, Knave*, the sketch mocks the generalizing tendency one may perceive in his title and produces the following definition: “everything man-made is a thing.” It appears that Nabokov not only excludes from the category of objects anything that may exist outside human activity (i.e., Nietzsche’s spider, trees and moonlight), anything that belongs to nature, but he also rejects the very idea that man-made things may be perceived as inanimate, since the human agency always animates everything created or used by it:

A thing, something made by someone, has no independent existence. A seagull flying over a beach would not distinguish between a cigarette holder, forgotten there, and a stone, or sand, or a snippet of the seaweed, because in man’s absence a thing immediately returns into the bosom of

³⁸ Wiśniewski, “Na wóół Mnemozyne,” 196.

³⁹ For Nabokov, ability to observe the loveliness of the present is at least as important as the capacity of memory. This is evidenced by such early works as “A Guide to Berlin,” and such late writings as “The Vane Sisters” and *Transparent Things*.

⁴⁰ Nabokov, *Mary*, 114.

⁴¹ The Russian text of the speech has been published and glossed by Alexander Dolinin – А. Долинин, “Доклады Владимира Набокова в Берлинском литературном кружке (Из рукописных материалов двадцатых годов)” [Dolinin, “Vladimir Nabokov’s Presentations at Berlin Literary Club (From the Manuscripts of the 1920s”]; В. Набоков, “On Generalities / Гоголь / Человек и вещи” [V. Nabokov, “On Generalities / Gogol / Man and Things”], *Звезда* 4 (1999), <http://magazines.russ.ru/zvezda/1999/4/general.html>, accessed 12 December 2016. All further citations from this essay refer to the same source.

nature. A shotgun, lying in the thicket of the tropical backwoods, is no longer a thing but a rightful part of the forest; today the ginger current of ants trickles over it, tomorrow it will be covered in moss, or perhaps, it will break into flower. When a man leaves his house, it becomes a mere stone boulder. Should a man leave it for five hundred years, the house would immediately begin its imperceptible slide into nature, like a quiet, furtive beast escaping from captivity – and lo and behold – it is indeed nothing but a pile of stones.

The language Nabokov employs subtly contradicts his ostensible thesis. Thus, while he begins with the claim of patent anthropocentricity of objects, he is yet unable to deny them animated existence outside man's dominion. The lost cigarette holder seems even more forlorn when seen by a seagull flying by. The shotgun merging with the forest becomes part of the organic life not only in the passive sense (claimed by the busy ants as part of their territory), but in the active as well (*заплесневеет, зацветет* – literally, *will cover itself with mildew, blossom out*). A house is granted even more volition: it not only merges with the landscape, but it seems to yearn for the opportunity to do so, to escape from man. Things are not only animated through their affinity with their creators, existing as extensions of human activity. When they are left alone, orphaned in their creators' absence, their life seems only to gain in force, to become more confident, unembarrassed.

Whether or not Nabokov is aware of the contradictory nature of his definition of "things," he certainly sees their remarkable "liveliness" as sinister, threatening. The last paragraph of his speech inverts the positions: now humans who lose things appear as orphans, their life shrunk in proportion to the objects left behind, forsaken, set free to merge with nature:

At no cost do we wish to let our things return into nature from which they first came, it is something fearful to us. (...) A thing is made in the image of man, and, since we sense this resemblance, the death, obliteration of a thing is intolerable to us. The ancient kings went into their sarcophagi in full armor, with their tools and utensils, and they would have taken their palaces with them, if only they could have. Flaubert wished to be buried with his inkwell. But the inkwell would miss the pen, and the pen would miss the paper, and the paper would miss the desk, the desk would pine for the room, the room – for the house, the house – for the city.

The entire world of objects in one unending stream seems to be destined to be entombed with a dead writer, in that grand burial which bears testament to the attachment of man to things. Life longs to transcend death by grasping after everything tangible within its reach. Things themselves appear somehow linked together in conspiracy, each refusing to be detached from the others for the sake of a human being that desires their company in death. But Nabokov is not at ease with this state of things, and in the essay he tries to contradict it, insisting again and again on man's power over the objects. To make this claim, he tries to depict things as void of any meaning beyond that communicated to them by the human gaze: "There is no such thing as a single object, – though it is

singular in the mathematical sense, – instead, there are four, five, six, or a million of things, depending on the number of people observing the given object.” He speaks of a painting, a portrait of a woman, which different on-lookers fill with different content – one’s detached interest in art, or an interest in the material properties of the object, or one’s memories of the lady in the painting, or one’s personal pain, unrelated to the subject in any other way than through a conflation of momentary emotion and the act of looking. And yet, in Nabokov’s poetics the observer is never quite safe from the gaze of the observed: witness the strange power dynamics in such stories as “La Veneziana” or “The Visit to the Museum,” or Martin Edelweiss’s exploit in *Glory* which ends with him merging with the picture of a fairytale forest.

As Nabokov notes, this sinister nature of the objective, material reality is weirdly reflected in the language, that is, in the names we confer on things:

The same words which we used for naming various parts of our body are used to refer to the parts of objects, tools, machines, in a diminutive form, as if we were speaking of our children. “Зубчики, глазок, ушко, волосок, носик, ножка, спинка, ручка, головка” – „small teeth, an eyelet, a small hair, a tiny spout, a small leg, a little back, a little arm, a little head.” I feel as if I were surrounded by a crowd of tiny monstrosities, as if the diminutive teeth of the clock wheels were chewing up the hours, as if the teeny eye of the needle pinned onto the curtain were peeking on me, as if the kettle, with a drop suspended at the end of its baby-elephant snout/spout, were about to sniff, like a man afflicted with a cold. And in the larger objects, in houses, trains, cars and factories, the human element at times becomes exceedingly unpleasant. (...) No wonder, then, that in our fairytales and spiritualistic séances, things really do come to life.

Unlike Russian, English manages without the diminutive forms, but the “anthropomorphic zeal” is still present in the naming game. Language motivates imagination, human features appear exaggerated, magnified by the inhuman qualities of the things. Most curiously, the last sentence merges the concept of phantom life with animated objects: at a spiritualist séance, it is a round table that ostensibly comes to life, while the presence of the ghosts invited to communicate with the living remains rather theoretical.

Alexander Dolinin sees “Man and Things” as Nabokov’s exercise before writing *King, Queen, Knave*, an exercise in which he sketched the guiding principles of his future poetics.⁴² The novel, indeed, focuses on human beings that forfeit their right to humanity by worshipping material reality and objectifying everything within their reach. In such company, things, predictably, come to life – in a way quite similar to Tolstoy’s application of the same theme. The novel’s subject, then, is self-dehumanization: “Man is God’s image, a thing – an image of man. Man who makes a thing his God comes to resemble it. And thus we achieve the full circle: a thing – God – man – a thing, – and a full circle

⁴² Долинин, “Доклады Владимира Набокова...”

is lovely to the mind.” However, in *Mary*, Nabokov’s use of “inanimate” objects diverges from simple observation of a “full circle,” becoming a study of the fabulous creatures that, though man-made and though bearing disturbing resemblance to their masters, still exist outside the human gaze and, if ignored by the humans, may sabotage the life of their unwitting creators. The novel is an experiment in covert observation of the furtive life of things. It is tempting to see “Man and Things” as Nabokov’s attempt to put this disquieting subject to rest by denying the very idea of “objective” existence of objects, outside human subjectivity and motivation.

THE WASHED-OUT OUTLINE

The pension is not the only location described in *Mary*. Besides the phantom building, there is also the country house of Ganin’s memories, modelled on Nabokov’s own country estate. Unlike the Berlin boardinghouse, the Russian home is portrayed with aching tenderness, and it reappears in almost all Nabokov’s texts. When the writer was asked why he never purchased a house in America, his reply was symptomatic: “nothing short of a replica of my childhood surroundings would have satisfied me. I would never manage to match my memories correctly – so why trouble with hopeless approximations.”⁴³ The original, never to be matched by any approximation, was left behind beyond the forbidden border, both spatial and temporal. But the Russian frontier is now open, and a tourist-Nabokovian may be tempted to revisit Vyra and Rozhdestvenno, Nabokov’s childhood haunts.

The sentimental traveler will be able to admire the lovely house of Rozhdestvenno which Nabokov inherited from his uncle Ruka. Though he never lived there, the white-columned porch is described in *Mary* as the meeting place of Ganin and his beloved. The house that we now see, however, suffered from several fires and was rebuilt multiple times, and its appeal to authenticity is tenuous at best. Walking to Vyra, where the original house of Nabokov’s mother had stood, and being forewarned by Brian Boyd’s description of the site in his biography of Nabokov,⁴⁴ we expect to see ruins – a pile of bricks, perhaps an outline of the foundations, overgrown by the greenery, or, in Nabokov’s own words, we expect to find a house which managed to escape from humans, becoming “a pile of stones.” But we see nothing. Tall trees grow where the house had once stood, and not even its ghost troubles the tranquility of the glade. This is the essence of oblivion – not the gray stones, but the innocent green shadows, unaware of any past that lies beneath their roots. One is reminded of Nabokov’s dream poem:

Зимы ли серые смыли
 очерк единственный? Эхо ли
 все, что осталось от голоса? Мы ли
 поздно приехали?

Только никто не встречает нас. В доме
 роаяль – как могила на полюсе. Вот тебе

⁴³ Nabokov, *Strong Opinions*, 27.

⁴⁴ B. Boyd, *Vladimir Nabokov: The Russian Years* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1990), 46.

ласточки. Верь тут, что кроме
 пепла есть оттепель.⁴⁵

The one and only outline washed out
 By the gray winters, echo as the final
 Remaining splinter of the voiceless shout,
 Too late, we are too late with our arrival.

But no one's there to greet us. In the house
 Like North Pole grave – the silent grand piano.
 Try to believe by looking at the swallows
 That spring is here, despite the ashen shadow.

The translation, unfortunately, does not retain the disturbing auditory impression of the Russian original: the poem audibly moans, sobs and gasps. That grand piano, the central image of the poem, seems to encapsulate oblivion: an incongruous, absurd object in a ruined house, compared to the grave in some absolutely lonely, inaccessible spot, forgotten so long ago that it seamlessly merges with the landscape. Man left for a little less than five hundred years, but it was quite enough to obliterate his memory, to dissolve the line separating the thing from nature. Thus, the precious man-made objects which seem so necessary for one's return to the past – for that great game of patience – become silently ominous and disappear, only too glad to return into nature, and when they do, it is hardly possible to believe that everything that “had been turned into ashes or shot through the heart”⁴⁶ can still be somehow charmed back into life. This intimation, perhaps, is the source of Nabokov's obsessive restoration of the inanimate objects in his texts which comprise what he had called his “unreal estate”⁴⁷ – the corpus of lost items found in another dimension, sometimes transformed, and sometimes ideally intact, with their curious memories enclosed within their deceptively material shapes.

⁴⁵ В. Набоков, *Стихотворения и поэмы* [V. Nabokov, *Poems*] (Москва: Современник, 1991), 432.

⁴⁶ V. Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (New York and Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf), 88.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

Carl A.P. Ruck

SOMA AND THE GREEK MYSTERIES

ZOROASTER

The religion of the Persians was Zoroastrian Mithraism (Mazdaism, named for the solar deity Ahura Mazda, “Lord Wisdom”). It was clearly the religion of the Achaemenid Dynasty.¹ Zoroaster (Zarathustra) was traditionally dated to 258 years before the fall of Persepolis to Alexander the Great in 330 BCE.² Zoroaster, however, merely meant “astrologer” and was a title of a priesthood, with a mythologized eponymous founder, and hence there would have been a succession of claimants to the name. The religion is probably more correctly dateable back to the mid second millennium BCE,³ contemporary with the time of Moses and the heretical Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaten. It was the dominant religion of the Sassanid Empire until the Muslim conquest in 651 CE, and it still survives greatly diminished until today outside Iran as the religion of

¹ Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, 10.45, citing the fifth-fourth-century BCE Ctesias of Cnidus, a Greek physician at the Persian court Artaxerses Mnemon, and the fourth-century BCE historian Douris of Samos. Behistun Inscription, a multilingual inscription and large rock relief on a mountain cliff near Kermanshah in western Iran, an autobiography of Darius I, dated to sometime between his coronation in 522 BCE and his death in the autumn of 486. It contains the same text in three different cuneiform script languages: Old Persian, Elamite (the Pre-Indo-European language of Iran), and Babylonian (a variety of Akkadian). Like the Rosetta Stone for Egyptian hieroglyphics, it was crucial in the decipherment of a previously lost writing system.

² *Bundahishn*, an encyclopedic collection dating from the eighth and ninth centuries CE, reflecting ancient Zoroastrian and pre-Zoroastrian cosmological beliefs, with indications as well of post seventh-century CE Islamic Iran.

³ M. Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism, Volume I: The Early Period* (Leiden: Brill, 1975). Martin Litchfield West, *The Hymns of Zoroaster: A New Translation of the Most Ancient Sacred Texts of Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris and Co., 2010). Plutarch (*De Iside and Osiride*, 46) dated the religion to five-thousand years before the Trojan War, which should probably be corrected to five-hundred.

the Parsi, primarily in India and southern Asia, but also elsewhere. The religion of the ancient Scythians was an archaic version of this same Indo-Aryan tradition, reflecting the pantheon (like Vedic Hinduism) before the monotheistic solar revisionism attributed to Zoroaster. It is argued that the Greeks knew little about Zoroaster or the religion except as a fanciful construct.⁴

This is not true, nor is it likely that the Greeks had no curiosity about neighboring peoples with whom they had frequent contact. Central to the religion was a psychoactive sacrament called *haoma*, the Persian equivalent of the Soma of Vedic Hinduism in the Indus Valley of modern Pakistan and northwestern India, both representing the religious tradition of the Indo-European peoples who migrated south from the Pontic steppes of the central Asiatic plateau, starting in the fifth millennium BCE. Soma was the deified intoxicating drink derived from a plant, characterized by no describable flower, branches, or roots. This lack of defining attributes, other than its tawny red color, seems applicable to no botanical specimen other than a fungus, and probably the species *Amanita muscaria*, which is richly documented in the folkloric tradition.⁵ Soma became a generic designation and other plants were employed as analogues. The barsom originally composed of a bundle of twigs and branches as an emblem of priestly empowerment (later replaced with rods of brass or silver) may suggest Syrian rue (psychoactive *Peganum harmala*),⁶ although often composed of tamarisk, pomegranate, or myrtle. Similarly, traces of cannabis have been found in sanctuaries presumably where the Soma ritual was performed.⁷ Until just a few decades ago, however, among the Kurdish ethnic Yezidi, a people marginalized and persecuted by the dominant Islamic culture, the Zoroastrian rite was still being performed with *Amanita muscaria* as the sacrament.⁸

The Roman fasces may be a related Indo-European analogue of the barsom, implicating rituals of mimetic flagellation of the sacrificial victim or initiate, as in Dionysian cultic enactments.⁹ The fasces are etymologically derived from the *fascinus* (cognate with “fascinate”) as a “magical spell,” implying psychoactive potential. The *fascinus* was personified as the deity Fascinus and was commonly represented as the phallus, suggesting that the original botanical specimen might resemble the erect male member. The *haoma* was sometimes identified as the resinous exudation of a tree, which implicates many other surrogates, including mistletoe, but such gummy exudations were

⁴ R. Beck, “Zoroaster v. as Perceived by the Greeks,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, available only at: <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/zoroaster-iv-as-perceived-by-the-greeks>, accessed 5 November 2018.

⁵ R. G. Wasson, *Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968).

⁶ D. S. Flattery and M. Swartz, *Haoma and Harmaline, Near Eastern Studies Volume 21* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989). Critical response: J. Ott, *Pharmacothéon* (Kennewick, WA: Natural Products, 1993, 1996), chap. 6, especially note 11, 344-348. See C. A. P. Ruck, M. A. Hoffman, and J. A. González Celdrán, *Mushrooms, Myth, and Mithras: The Drug Cult that Civilized Europe* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 2011), note, 5, 242-244.

⁷ Gonur Tepe sanctuary in the Bactrian-Margiana archaeological site in Turkmenistan, dating from the second millennium: V. I. Sarianidi, “The Soma-Haoma Problem,” *Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies (EJVS)* 9, no. 1c (2003), <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/merv/sarianidi.htm>, accessed 10 November 2016.

⁸ Ruck *et al.*, *Mushrooms, Myth, and Mithras*, 235-238 (“The Mirgia Mushroom Among the Mithraic Yezidi”).

⁹ A. Piper, “The Milk of the Goat Heiðrun: An Investigation into the Sacramental Use of Psychoactive Milk and Meat”: 211-278, in J. A. Rush, ed., *Entheogens and the Development of Culture: The Anthropology and Neurobiology of Ecstatic Experience* (Berkeley, CA: Atlantic Books, 2013).

considered the source of all mushrooms.¹⁰ Mistletoe itself is named as the “urine twig,”¹¹ implicating the urinous metabolite as a sacred effluent, and the mistletoe and the *Amanita muscaria* are equally fruits of their host tree, both thought to be inseminated by the bolt of lightning. Since the drinking of urine offers opportunity for derogatory pejorative prejudice, it is often the most secret and strenuously denied ritual.¹²

The Greeks themselves were part of this great migration starting at the end of the third millennium; they mythologized this original homeland as the realm of the Hyperborean people. The Greeks spoke a version of the same Proto-Indo-European language (PIE) and shared similar theological motifs. Darius invaded Greece in 490 BCE, followed by the second invasion led by his son Xerxes ten years later. The Persian kings never entered battle without their Magi priests. Before these invasions, the Greek colonies of Anatolia and the shore of the Black Sea were in contact with neighbors controlled by the Persians, and interaction with their Asiatic culture was responsible for the Ionian Enlightenment of the sixth century.¹³ In addition, prominent aristocratic political refugees from the Greek cities often sought asylum with Persian satraps or provincial governors and were initiated into their *haoma* sacrament. The Athenian Themistocles, who had led the victorious forces against Xerxes, later fell from power and was banished from the city. He sought asylum with Xerxes’ son Artaxerxes, and was awarded the governorship of Magnesia-on-the-Maeander in Asia Minor, where he died. The grateful subjects of his province erected a statue of him in the marketplace as Mithras, the bull-slayer, standing nude in the act of pouring a libation over an altar, below which lay the slain bull.¹⁴ In addition, the Thracians were commonly engaged as slaves in the Greek cities, from the custom of selling off their unwanted children into servitude. The slaves portrayed in Attic comedy often bear Scythian names. Scythians, moreover, were frequently employed as mercenaries, and the Scythians as foreign residents in Athens comprised the public police force. They brought with them their religion and its observances.

The Greeks knew of *haoma* as [*h*]ómomi (ὄμωμι), the same word, with characteristic loss of the initial aspiration.¹⁵ It was apparently known as early as the Homeric tradition as μῶλυ,¹⁶ the moly of the sorceress Circe, Medea’s aunt, with which Odysseus fended

¹⁰ Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, 22.96.1: *origo non nisi ex pituita arborum* (“no source except from the pitch of trees”).

¹¹ “Mistletoe” (and German *Mistel*) is derived from Sanskrit *mehati* (“he urinates”) and is cognate with Greek *omeich-ein* (“to urinate”), cognate with English “micturate.”

¹² R. G. Wasson, “The Miskwedo of the Ahnishinaubeg”: 3-12, in *Entheos: The Journal of Psychedelic Spirituality*, vol. 1, no. 2 (winter 2001), presenting the “Sun Mushroom Tale,” as narrated by the shaman Keewaydinoquay (Peschal). Keewaydinoquay (Peschal) (with an introduction by R. Gordon Wasson), *The Miskwedo in Anishinaabeg Life* (Verona: Stamperia Valdovona, 1984), from the hand-corrected master proof of the unpublished printing, of which only five copies exist, sequestered from access in the Wasson Archives, Harvard Library).

¹³ W. Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1998, translated from the German, *Die orientalisierende Epoche in der griechischen Religion und Literatur*, Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1984).

¹⁴ Plutarch, *Themistocles*, 31; Diodorus Siculus, 11.58.

¹⁵ Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*, 36 (369d-e).

¹⁶ H. Rahner, *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery* (New York, NY: Biblio and Tannen, 1971, reprint of New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1963, translation from the German edition of Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1957), 179 *et seq.*

off her enchantment, and which figured in the Mystery religion tradition of the dwarfish ithyphallic crab-men grotesqueries known as the Kabeiroi (Κάβειροι).

The *haoma* sacrament of the Persians was associated with lycanthropy and the warrior bonding of their elite forces. In the funeral inscription of Darius at his grave in Naqsh-e-Rustam¹⁷ near Persepolis, at the end of the uppermost row in a list of twenty-nine countries that brought tribute appears the name *Saka Haomavarga*, which means the “Scythian *haoma*-wolves,” a confraternity of wolf-warriors bound by the sacrament.¹⁸ It is unlikely that they were unique in this regard. The lycanthropy is metaphoric for the state of altered consciousness induced by the *haoma* sacrament, probably suggested by the wolf’s fondness for ingesting the *haoma* plant. In this motif, other canines are interchangeable analogues. The Thracian/Scythian warriors customarily wore the pelt of foxes upon their heads.¹⁹ The metamorphosis of the warrior into a wolf upon the battlefield is documented as a literary motif in the Dolon episode of Odysseus’ encounter with the Thracian horseman Rhesus, as recorded in the Homeric tradition in book ten of the *Iliad*, and as staged in Euripides’ *Rhesus* tragedy.²⁰ For the Greeks, the metamorphosis was associated with Apollo. The fox pelt headgear was stylized as the red Phrygian cap, whose shape imitated the canine’s pointed snout. As the traditional headgear of the Thracian bacchants, who were called Βασσαριδες, for the βασσάρα “fox pelt,” it obviously was emblematic of ecstatic altered states of mind. The Thracian equivalent of Apollo’s twin sister Artemis was Bendis, and the deity was also often portrayed wearing the entire fox pelt as headgear. The bacchants were so costumed in Euripides’ *Bacchae* tragedy (405 BCE), and even earlier in the *Lycurgeia* tetralogy of Aeschylus, which makes it obvious that the symbolism was well known to the Athenian audience and was associated as well with Dionysus, the non-Olympian half-brother of Apollo and Artemis. A version of Dionysus among the Phrygians and Thracians was Sabazios, which merged his identity with Zeus and with the Thracian mounted horseman as deity, who is the model for Rhesus. Sabazios was worshipped with cultic Bacchic rites of ecstatic intoxication in the streets of Athens of the fourth century,²¹ and probably earlier as well.

The Athenian audience was also aware of *haoma* as the sacrament of the Persian military. In Aristophanes’ *Wasps* comedy (422 BCE), as the play opens, two Thracian slaves, posted on guard duty, induce a visionary sleep of Sabazios, designated by the metaphor of “tending cows,” which causes them to nod off, like a Persian military campaign

¹⁷ An ancient necropolis, about twelve kilometers northwest of Persepolis in Fars Province, Iran, with graves from both the Achaemenid and Sassanid periods, dating back to ca. 1000 BCE.

¹⁸ D. E. Gershenson, *Apollo the Wolf-God* (McLean, VI: *A Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph*, no. 8, 1991), 84.

¹⁹ Herodotus, 7.75.

²⁰ Homer, *Iliad*, 10; Euripides, *Rhesus*; Vergil, *Aeneid*, 12; C. A. P. Ruck, B. D. Staples, J. A. G. Celdán, and M. A. Hoffman, *The Hidden World: Survival of Pagan Shamanic Themes in European Fairytales* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2007), 87-124.

²¹ Demosthenes, *De corona*, 18.260.

marching across their eyelids.²² It is something they have done before, but never have the visions been so intense. The obscene routine is probably masturbatory.

- Hey, mother-fucker, what’re doing!
- I’m learning how to relieve the night watch.

The play ends with an obscene dance of children as Kabeiroi impersonating little pubic crabs around the gigantic erection of the carousing old juror, with the punning refrain of *μύκτηρ μυκᾶται*, the “snotty [so-called] nose is bellowing forth its ejaculate of mucus.” The mucus is the common descriptive attribute of the mushroom, as in the term mycology. The two Thracian slaves, and the Athenian audience, obviously know that the *haoma* sacrament of the Persian elite troops was metaphorically a bovine manifestation of their deity Sabazios.

In a similar scene in Aristophanes’ *Knights*, the two slaves bear the names of two Athenian politicians displaced from favor in the house of their master, Democracy. They attempt to relieve their suffering, first by fellatio, playing each other’s “flute,” then by perhaps “deserting” their duty, which in Greek is “come by yourself” or masturbation. Finally, they propose suicide, by a “manful” drink of bull’s blood, the way that Themistocles did it. Themistocles was, in fact, initiated by his Persian overlord as the Zoroastrian Mithras, but there is nothing lethal in a drink of bull’s blood, except in the scenario of initiation.²³ The two slaves drink the intoxicating drink straight, sucking off each other’s phallus “manfully.” A common metaphor for the male genitals was the wine sack. The drink again appears to nourish the mind with visionary inspiration.

In the *Clouds* (423 BCE), Aristophanes employed the Scythian cannabis fumigation tents,²⁴ which may represent the *haoma* ritual, as the paradigm for the parody of Socrates’ school for his pro-Spartan disciples.²⁵ Socrates was staged “high,” visibly dangling in a basket above the school, with his students identified as coals of burning resin, and above the chorus of *Clouds*, more exactly designated as “smoke,” with the obligatory comic phallus worn by these male dancers impersonating female deities identified as their “noses,” so that they get high by inhaling the smoky essence of their own nebulous state. When the Scythians emerge from the tents of their fumigation ritual, per Herodotus, they howl like wolves, and Aristophanes implies that the Spartan troops encircling and attacking the city in the Peloponnesian War are such packs of hostile wolves. It is likely that many members of the audience in the Theater of Dionysus had personally heard these ecstatically howling Scythians from those resident in Athens at their funeral rites. The lycanthropy induced by the cannabis may represent transposition from the tradition of the

²² C. A. P. Ruck, “The Great God Sabazios and the Crab Dance in Athens”: 193-220, in *The Stone Mushrooms of Thrace* (bilingual edition, English and Greek) (Alexandroupoli, Thrace-Greece: EKATAIOS, 2012).

²³ Ruck et al., *Mushrooms, Myth, and Mithras*, 77-86.

²⁴ Herodotus, 4.75.

²⁵ C. A. P. Ruck, “Aristophanes’ Parody of Socrates as a Pothead and the Spartan Warrior Cult of the Wolf”: 75-91, in J. H. Ellens, ed., *Seeking the Sacred with Psychoactive Sacraments*.

mushroom, perhaps reinforced by the resemblance of the fragrance of the resinous buds to the urine pheromone of canines.

The Spartan puberty indoctrination of their young men as wolves was an element in the organization of their government under their legendary lawgiver, Lycurgus, a name that designates him as “doing the work of a wolf.” The Scythians and the Dorian Greek tribal affiliation of the Spartans claimed a common mythical relationship through the legendary hero Heracles.²⁶ The Scythians maintained close affiliation with the Spartans,²⁷ and the Spartan king Cleomenes died *ca.* 489 BCE from his associating with Scythians and becoming accustomed to their manner of drinking what is called “wine undiluted with water,” which was termed the “Scythian style.”²⁸

Apollo was named for the Dorian word *ἀπέλλα*, designating the “assembly” of the people, the equivalent of the *ἐκκλησία* in Athens²⁹ (“group summoned together,” French *église*, which developed into the Christian “church,” the analogue of the Jewish “synagogue”), but *ἀπέλλα* implies the metaphor of a “herd” or “pack” of the herdsman. Νομός “pasturage, common feeding ground” as homonymous with νομός meaning “law, common usage” of civilized society provided the fundamental pun upon which Aristophanes constructed his *Birds* comedy (415 BCE).³⁰ The herdsman protects his flock from the predation of wolves. It is also the herdsman’s task, however, to cull his flock, and hence he is himself the wolf. Hence, Apollo’s name had the folk etymology that derived it from the verb to “destroy” (*ἀπόλλυμι*),³¹ and he and his sister Artemis were involved in traditions of human victims offered for sacrifice.

As such, Apollo in the persona of the wolf-god played a beneficial role in overseeing puberty initiations into the tribal brotherhoods organized as “packs” of males, eliminating the weak and unqualified. The more ancient manifestations of his persona as predatory wolf were involved in lycanthropy and its metaphoric ecstatic intoxication of “ravidity,” as in the annual war that Sparta declared upon their resident slave populaces, and in the warrior cults attested among the Thracians. The rabid animal turns upon its master, as in the myth of the death of Actaeon. A vase painting depicts the “ravidity” personified as Lyssa, the goddess of “madness,” literally the “she-wolf,” costumed with Thracian boots and a wolf headgear.³² At Sparta, moreover, the puberty initiate was required to spend a year as an outcast, living by thievery, during which time he was considered a wolf. After

²⁶ G. Hinge, “Scythian and Spartan Analogies in Herodotus’ Representation of Initiation and Kinship Groups”: 55-74, in P. G. Bilde, J. M. Højte, and V. F. Stolba, eds., *The Cauldron of Ariantas: Studies Presented to A.N. Scegllov on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday* (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus UP, 2003): http://www.pontos.dk/research/ra_1/publications/books/bss-1-files/BSS1_07_Hinge.pdf, accessed 11 November 2016.

²⁷ Herodotus, 6.84.2.

²⁸ Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistai*, 10.29 (427b-c).

²⁹ Plutarch, *Lycurgus*, 6; Hecsyhius, *s.v. ἀπελλάζειν*; substantiated in inscriptions, first century BCE, from Spartan Glytheion.

³⁰ W. Arrowsmith, “Aristophanes’ *Birds*: The Fantasy Politics of *Eros*”: 119-167, in *Arion*, new series, vol. 1, no. 1 (spring 1973).

³¹ Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1085-1086.

³² Actaeon attacked by his hounds, Attic red-figure bell *krater*, *ca.* 440, by the Lykaon Painter, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Caskey-Beazley, *Attic Vase Paintings* (MFA), no. 110: <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/mixing-bowl-bell-krater-153650>, accessed November 12 2016.

that ordeal, he was admitted into the wolf packs that comprised the army, thus enacting the two aspects of their patron, the wolf-god.

FUNGAL ZOOMORPHISM

The mythical association of the Mycenaean Perseus with Perses, the eponym of the Persians, and of the Corinthian Medea³³ and her son Medos, the alternative eponyms of the Medes, relates to the tradition of the *haoma* as the sacred mushroom, and its four major mythical representations in Greek tradition. These are [1] as an anthropomorphized zoomorphism known as the Gorgon Medusa, [2] the Golden Apple of the Hesperides, [3] the analogous Golden Fleece of Jason, and [4] the divinatory liver of Prometheus. It is also a fungal additive to the undiluted Thracian wine that rendered it so potent. This wine was known to the Homeric tradition as the Apollonian wine of Maron that Odysseus used to intoxicate the Cyclops Polyphemus.³⁴ The legendary wine required dilution with twenty parts water,³⁵ and it still existed in the Roman period, and by the testimony of the proconsul assigned to the province, it still required eight-fold dilution to be drunk safely.³⁶ This wine was associated with the religious initiation into the Mystery of the Kabeiroi, as practiced at several sites. A fifth-century red-figure hydria found in the cemetery of ancient Thracian Ainos (modern Enez, Turkey) depicts a cultic scene, in which a mushroom is being added, along with other plants, to a $\pi\acute{\iota}\theta\omicron\varsigma$ of wine.³⁷ The wine from the sanctuary on the island of Samothrace dedicated to the Great Gods appears to have been responsible for the wine marketed as Maronian in the Roman period.³⁸ Hence [5], the grotesque creatures associated with the Mystery initiations are also anthropomorphisms of the fungal sacrament.

Although the mushroom in Greece is associated with the arrival of the Indo-Europeans and the tradition of the *haoma* sacrament, traceable throughout Europe as the common Celtic and Nordic heritage of berserker warriors and fairy creatures and similar gnomish beings, there were analogous fungal sacraments already practiced in northern Africa and Europe well before their arrival, and they probably figured in the shamanic inauguration of the early Egyptian pharaohs,³⁹ assimilated into Ptolemaic Mysteries of Isis and Osiris. The rock paintings of Tassili n'Ajjer in the mountainous plateau of southern Algeria and in southern Spain date from the Neolithic. Most notable is the Algerian depiction of the antlered bee-faced shaman whose body is sprouting with mushrooms;⁴⁰ and the rock shelter at Selva Pasquale in Catalonian Spain, where the natural relief of

³³ Medea was the daughter of Aeëtes, king of Colchis at the far eastern shore of the Black Sea (in modern-day Georgia), but he was an emigrant from his native Corinth, of the lineage of Helios in the northern Peloponnesus.

³⁴ Homer, *Odyssey*, 9.193-255.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.208-211.

³⁶ Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, 14.53; cf. Pollux (second century CE), 6.10.

³⁷ Museum of Edirne, ancient Adrianopolis, uncovered in the archaeological investigation of 2011. C. A. P. Ruck, ed., *Dionysus in Thrace: Ancient Entheogenic Themes in the Mythology and Archaeology of Northern Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkey* (Berkeley, CA: Regent Press, 2014), 257-262.

³⁸ Ruck, *The Great Gods of Samothrace and the Cult of the Little People*, 51-60.

³⁹ A. Puharich, *The Sacred Mushroom: Key to the Door of Eternity* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959).

⁴⁰ T. McKenna, *Food of the Gods* (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1992), 72-73. Jean-Dominique Lajoux, *The Rock Paintings of the Tassili* (Cleveland, OH: World Publishing Co., 1963), 71, 72-73.

a large bull has been enhanced by painting, at a sanctuary that apparently functioned as a solstice marker, with an additional painted chorus line of anthropomorphized mushrooms dancing.⁴¹ As the fruit of the tree in Eden, the mushroom figured in ancient Judaism,⁴² and was perpetuated as a sacrament in early Christianity,⁴³ surviving as a secret of the elite into the Renaissance.⁴⁴ The ubiquity of the mushroom cult is perhaps explicable by considering the psychoactive botanical agent as itself functioning as the common denominator in communication with shamans.⁴⁵ Thus similar metamorphic motifs appear apparently spontaneously among unrelated peoples. The wolf metamorphosis with *Amanita muscaria* is documented as well for an elite group in the shamanism of the Huichol of North America.⁴⁶

BELLOWING BOVINES

There is no name for the mushroom in English, only metaphors. This is characteristic of things too sacred to name. Mushroom is one of those metaphors, assimilated as early as the Elizabethan era from the French *mousseron*, itself derived from Late Latin *mussare*, to “moo/bellow,” from Greek *μυκάεσθαι*, to “bellow.” Mushroom is onomatopoeic for this bellowing sound which as early as the Classical period of Greece mushrooms emitted as they sprouted from the ground.⁴⁷ The words for “mystery” (*μυστήριον*) and “initiate” (*μύστης*) have the same *mu* syllable, which was written with the glyph for a bullhead in the Mycenaean syllabary. It represents the voiced nasal labial, made with the lips pursed, emitting no sound, for a secret well kept, like the English “mum’s the word.” Rainfall, moreover, was seen as the seminal milk of heaven, as well as the urine and ejaculate of deity, representing a kind of sacred wedding, milk and semen together, milked from the udders of the heavenly herd of cows in an action interchangeable with masturbation, and caught on earth in fungal cups carved into the megalithic mushroom monuments now documented in Alpine Europe⁴⁸ and throughout Thrace, identifying the rainfall obviously with a divine potion of a mushroom.⁴⁹ The fungal identity of the herd of cloud formations was known to the Homeric tradition as the cattle of the Sun.⁵⁰ As Odysseus’ starving

⁴¹ B. P. Akers, J. F. Ruiz, C. A. P. Ruck, “A Prehistoric Mural in Spain Depicting Neurotropic Psilocybe Mushroom?": 1-8, in *Economic Botany* 20, no. 10, 2011, <http://www.psilosophy.info/resources/562a1f5d08ae22b170316a67.pdf>, accessed 19 November 2016.

⁴² J. M. Allegro, *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross: A Study of the Nature and Origins of Christianity within the Fertility Cults of the Ancient Near East* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., 1970).

⁴³ F. Fabbro, “Mushrooms and Snails in Religious Rituals of Early Christians at Aquileia”: 69-80, in *Eleusis*, new series, no. 3 (1999).

⁴⁴ Ruck *et al.*, *The Hidden World*.

⁴⁵ W. M. Geniusz, *Our Knowledge is Not Primitive: Decolonizing Botanical Anishinaabe Teachings (The Iroquois and Their Neighbors)* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 2009).

⁴⁶ M. Hoffman, “Huichol Wolf Shamanism and *A. muscaria*”: 43-48, in *Entheos: Journal of Psychedelic Spirituality*, vo. 1, no. 2 (winter 2001).

⁴⁷ Aristias (fifth-century BCE tragedian), frag. 6, probably from his *Perseus* tragedy, quoted in Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, 2.69B.

⁴⁸ F. Gosso and P. Webster, *The Dream on the Rock: Visions of Prehistory* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, SUNY Press, 2013).

⁴⁹ V. Markov, “Archaic Mushroom Monuments and Bulgarian Folkloric Motifs”: 183-198, in Ruck, ed., *Dionysus in Thrace*.

⁵⁰ Homer, *Odyssey*, 12.303-419. Ruck *et al.*, *The Hidden World*, 256-268.

men roasted the pieces of flesh on the spits, it began to bellow with the lowing of cattle, but the men ate the repulsive writhing and mooing bits. Bovine metaphors are frequent in the Persian *Avesta* and Sanskrit *Rig Veda* in identifying the *haoma*-Soma sacrament. The repulsiveness of bits of mooing flesh in the Homeric account indicates the taboo upon eating the sacred bellowing herd. This repulsive food, with the same referent, figures also in the “mushroom tables” defiled with the white scabby white harpy droppings that served as inspiring food for the Greek prophet Phineas in the tale of the Argonauts, and in Virgil’s account of the curse of the harpies and the edible tables⁵¹ that would signal the site where Aeneas would found the new city of Rome.⁵²

It would seem obvious to connect this bovine zoomorphism to the fact that the cow pie (disk of cattle dung) commonly serves as host for the psychoactive *Psilocybe* mushrooms.⁵³ All entheogenic mushrooms are probably analogous and interchangeable. Thus, the dancing mushrooms of the Selva Pasquale rock shelter probably belong to the psilocybin species,⁵⁴ and the liberty cap mushrooms (*Psilocybe semilanceata*), commonly called the “magic mushroom,” have inherited the symbolism of the Phrygian cap, although they are not red. The folkloric tradition, however, is well documented that the sacred mushroom imparts enhanced stamina, is the mycorrhizal fruit of its host tree, is red, with a cap spotted with white scabs, and is associated with flies. The altered vision and intoxication it accesses is commonly described with metaphors of lycanthropy, as in the folktale of *Rotkäppchen* (“Little Red-cap”),⁵⁵ whose red, so-called “riding-hood” is a version of the initiatory Phrygian cap. Both Mithras and his twin torchbearers could be depicted as only their heads, with Phrygian caps, hanging as the fruit of the host tree.⁵⁶ Among the North American Anishinaabeg, the *Amanita muscaria* is known as the “tree-mushroom” (*miskwedo*).

The cows in Greek mythology are constantly mooing in estrus, on the model of the zoomorphism of the cow-maiden Io, whose herdsman Argo metamorphosed into the cow-fly *Tabanus bovinus*, which is called οἶστρος (cognate with English “estrus”). In this form, he stings her womb with his cow-prod (βουπλήξ), like the “wolf-man” Lycurgus in his attack upon the Thracian bacchantes celebrating the mountain revel of Dionysus,⁵⁷ the deity of intoxication. The rabid she-wolf Lyssa commonly materialized amidst the female vixens of the revel.⁵⁸ In Aeschylus’ *Prometheus*, Io describes her torment, troubled with sexual dreams, as she started to grow her horns and metamorphosed into a cow, “anointed” (χρισθεῖσα, cognate with “chrism”) with the madness of the sharp-mouthed cow-fly (μύωψ), driven, “estrus-smitten” (οἶστροπλήξ) by the “divine whip”

⁵¹ Vergil, *Aeneid*, 3.254-257.

⁵² C. A. P. Ruck and R. Larner “Virgil’s Edible Tables”: 387-449, in Rush, ed., *Entheogens and the Development of Culture*. Lycophron, Alexandra, 1250-1252.

⁵³ V. P. Wasson and R. G. Wasson, *Mushrooms, Russia, and History* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1957), 244.

⁵⁴ The identification is based on the crooked stipes, but that may represent instead an attempt to depict them as dancing.

⁵⁵ Ruck et al., *The Hidden World*, 126-130.

⁵⁶ Ruck et al., *Mushrooms, Myth, and Mithras*, 62-65, 164. Frankfurt-Heddernheim Mithraeum. Dieburg Mithraeum, Vermaseren CIMRM 247.

⁵⁷ Homer, *Iliad*, 6.129 et seq.

⁵⁸ Euripides, *Bacchae*, 977 et seq.

(μάστιξ θεῖα) into uncontrollable dancing.⁵⁹ The metaphors were obviously understandable to the Athenian audience. Μύωψ as an alternative name for the οἴστρος is cognate with “myopic,” literally “squint-eyed,” implying not only altered vision, but also the pursed lips of a religious “mystery” (μυστήριον). In the myth about the sisters of Perseus, as they turned into bacchanalian cows, they experienced a dermatological affliction, turning red, splotted with white scabs, and ran around in what seemed a lewd manner to everyone who saw them.⁶⁰ Dionysus himself could materialize as a bull among them.⁶¹

THE GORGON MEDUSA

The Gorgons of Greek myth moored like cows.⁶² This is totally expectable since their “Queen” called the Medusa is a zoomorphism of the sacred mushroom. The hero Perseus harvested her head with a pruning hook (ἄρπη), the same implausible⁶³ agricultural tool that Mithras employed to slaughter the Cosmic Bull; and Perseus then placed it in a special receptacle, the κιβισίς, a sack slung upon the arm, identifiable as what is still used today by people picking apples and other fruits. The ἄρπη and the κιβισίς are depicted in numerous vase paintings. It is also traditional to depict that the pruning of the monster occasions her botanical metamorphosis into an olive tree, a tree that requires annual pruning to tame it from its wild state as a useless thicket and induce it to fruit. It also is a tree that serves as host for the *Amanita muscaria*.⁶⁴ In the myth of the hero Heracles, he harvested it as the golden antler of a female reindeer among the Hyperboreans of the Scythian steppes, and it metamorphosed into the olive tree as he returned from that realm, whereupon he planted it as the first grove of sacred olives in the Altis at the sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia. The *Cervidae* are notably fond of mushrooms, including the Amanita’s metabolite in urine. The motif of the deer-hunt in medieval and Renaissance art probably always had the gathering of the mushroom as its referent. Both Saints Hubertus and Eustatius experienced a vision of the Christ suspended between the antlers of a stag while out on the hunt. In addition to the tauroctony, Mithras is depicted hunting deer.

From the severed neck of the Medusa emerged a flying horse, named Pegasus for the springs of magical, inspiring “fountains” (πηγή) that burst forth, analogous to the “water miracle” attributed to Mithras,⁶⁵ wherever it touches earth. The identity of the Medusa as a picked mushroom is explicitly recorded by the antiquarian second-century CE traveler Pausanias as a local version of the myth at Mycenae,⁶⁶ and it is so depicted

⁵⁹ Aeschylus, *Prometheus*, 674-682.

⁶⁰ Pausanias, 2.25.7. C. A. P. Ruck, “The Myth of the Lernaean Hydra”: 795-804, in S. Goffredo and Z. Dubinsky, eds., *The Cnidaria, Past, Present, and Future: The World of Medusa and her Sisters* (Switzerland: Springer, 2016).

⁶¹ Euripides, *Bacchae*, 918-921.

⁶² Eustathius, on *Iliad* 2.498; Stephanus of Byzantium, s.v. *Μυκάλη, Μυκῆναι*.

⁶³ The ἄρπη is not a scimitar, and its curved blade is not honed on its upper edge; it would be impossible to plunge it straight down into the back of the bull, as depicted in the Mithraic tauroctony.

⁶⁴ Wasson Archives, Harvard University; F. Angelis, Greek newspaper *Ἐλευθερία*, 1962: “On the pine trees and on the sacred olive there grow some big red mushrooms with a terrible poison.... The shepherds wonder how it comes about that the olive produces bad mushrooms.” D. E. Teeter, *Amanita Muscaria: Herb of Immortality*, chap. 11 (Ambrosia Society, 2007), <http://ambrosiasociety.org/ebook/download>, accessed 20 November 2016.

Confirmed by personal communications.

⁶⁵ Ruck *et al.*, *Mushrooms, Myth, and Mithras*, 67-76.

⁶⁶ Pausanias, 2.16.2-6.

on a fourth-century BCE amphora surviving from Southern Italy.⁶⁷ In picking the mushroom at the site of Mycenae, Perseus was supposedly instrumental in causing the Perseus spring to flow as the water source in the cistern below the citadel and in reinterpreting the name of the city as derived from the μύκης (“mushroom,” a metaphor as “mucous”), instead of its previous designation as the place of the Μυκηναί sisterhood, whose queen was the Medusa. Such a previous matriarchal culture is proclaimed by the symbolism of the citadel’s Lion Gate, and in the mythical tradition of Clytemnestra’s conflict with Agamemnon. Perseus thus marks the imposition of the Indo-European sacrament upon the pre-existent Minoan-Pelasgian citadel. The depiction of the decapitation on the Southern Italian amphora places the event in the Garden of the Hesperides and identifies the severed head as a Golden Apple harvested from the tree, clothes Perseus with the Phrygian cap, and further glosses the cap and the severed head as mushrooms. The vase survives since it was apparently sequestered in a tomb and suggests that the deceased was privy to its religious symbolism.

In 1975, the art historian Stella Kramrisch, a specialist in Indian art and Hinduism, who held the professorship of South Asian Art at the University of Pennsylvania and was a curator at the Pennsylvanian Museum of Art, demonstrated that one of the first surrogates for Soma was a mushroom, not a psychoactive variety, but chosen for its symbolism as a mediator between death and spiritual transcendence.⁶⁸ Its corpse-like putrid stench was transmuted into fragrance in the firing of a ritual clay vessel, which represented the decapitated head of the deity Makha, analogous to the fungal materialization of the Greek Gorgon. One of the earliest depictions of the Gorgons occurs on a colossal seventh-century πίθος urn that once served as a grave monument along the sacred road to the Mystery sanctuary of Eleusis.⁶⁹ It depicts them with pots for heads, suggesting that the pot-headed females were anthropomorphisms of the potion that was the original content of the vessel. From late antiquity (fifth-sixth century CE) survives an account that Perseus invented the Zoroastrian religion. He made a “skull-cup” (σκύφος) from the head of a hideous Libyan girl named Medusa and consecrated it with mystical power.⁷⁰

The decapitation of the Medusa represents an aspect of the transition of the goddess Athena to her pacified Olympian identity. She wears the Gorgon head as a commemoration of her former matriarchal role. For her rebirth as the daughter of Zeus, her father swallowed her pregnant mother when, during a succession of bestial metamorphoses, she materialized as a cow fly.⁷¹ When Jason and the Argonauts visited the Tree of the Golden Apples, on the

⁶⁷ Pergamonmuseum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antiken-Sammlung, inv. no. F. 3022, third quarter of the fourth century BCE. Ruck, “Documentation”: 85-136, in R. G. Wasson, A. Hoffmann, and C. A. P. Ruck, *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978; reprinted and enlarged 20th anniversary edition, Los Angeles: Hermes Press, 1998; 30th anniversary edition, Berkeley, CA: Atlantic Books, 2008), plate 7. A. D. Trendall, *The Red-Figured Vases of Lucania, Campania, and Sicily* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 67), chap. 16, no. 335. Strangely this vase is not discussed in S. M. Serfontein’s otherwise very informative survey of the depictions of the Perseus myth: *Medusa: From Beast to Beauty in Archaic and Classical Illustrations from Greece and South Italy*, MA thesis, Hunter College of the City University of New York, 1991.

⁶⁸ S. Kramrisch, “The Mahāvira Vessel and the Plant Pūtika”: 222-235, in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 95, no. 2 (April-June, 1975), reprinted 95-116, in Wasson *et al.*, *Persephone’s Quest*.

⁶⁹ Eleusis Museum, Greece.

⁷⁰ John Malalas, a Christian chronographer, whose source was probably the fourth century CE (?) historian Pausanias of Antioch. D. Ogden, *Perseus* (London/New York: Routledge, 2008), 111 *et seq.*

⁷¹ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 886, with scholiast, quoting a variant wording.

day after Heracles, who also fetched its fruit and slew the serpent guarding its trunk, they found the tail of the serpent still writhing from the toxins of the hero's arrows, but its head was dead, with flies dried up in the rotting wounds.⁷²

GOLDEN FLEECE

"Fleece" and "apple" are homonymous in Greek (μῆλον),⁷³ and the Golden Fleece of the sacrificed magical ram Χρυσόμηλος hung on the Tree in Medea's Colchis is an analogue of the Hesperides tree, traditionally located in the region of the Straits of Gibraltar and the Atlas Mountains of the northern African coast. It was an apple from that Tree which was also the first cause of the war fought at Troy.⁷⁴ In antiquity, Iberia was both the name for the Roman province of Spain (derived from the Celtic name for the Ebro River) and fortuitously also for the region at the far end of the Black Sea, inland from Colchis (modern Georgia, derived from an ancient Caucasian or Colchian word). Medea is an adjectival version of the same queenly designation as occurs as a verbal participle in Medusa (μηδοῦσα), and (with a different verb) as verbal participle in the name of Ion's mother at Athens as Κρεοῦσα (Kreousa, Creusa). Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece is an analogue of the exploit of the heroes Perseus and Heracles in the Hesperides.

Jason (Greek Ἰάσων) is a name like Ion, formed upon the homonymous word for "arrow" and "toxin" (ἰός), which yields also ἰατρός as doctor or "drug-man," and the name of Ἴαμος, the eponymous founder of the brotherhood of shamans who practiced at the sanctuary of Olympia.⁷⁵ Jason was named for the protective chrismation that Medea compounded to protect him from the serpent guarding the tree.

THE DIVINATORY LIVER OF PROMETHEUS

As Apollonius Rhodius narrated the episode of the chrismation in his Hellenistic epic, the *Argonautica*,⁷⁶ Medea picked a special plant for the compounding. It sprang from the earth, the primordial botanical growth (πρωτοφυής), sprouting from the ἰχώρ that dripped from the immortal liver of Prometheus, as it was gnawed by the eagle that visited him each day, chained to the mountain in the Caucasus, eternally in torment as the punishment demanded by Zeus for his creation of man. *Ichor* was the fluid that flowed in the veins of the gods instead of blood. Since the liver is essential for life, the largest and weightiest of the entrails and containing the greatest amount of the life force in the form of blood, it was considered the center of personal existence. The markings of the universe could supposedly be read off its surface, and thus it was a microcosm of the vitality of the celestial realm.⁷⁷ Prometheus is the mythical prototype of the clairvoyant seer, named for his "Fore-thought" or prognostication. The liver was considered the primordial organ

⁷² Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 4.1400 *et seq.*

⁷³ So acknowledged in Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 4.1390 *et seq.* The homonym is elaborated in Diodorus Siculus, 4.26.2, where the Serpent is the name of a herdsman who is guarding a flock of golden sheep. The serpent of the Hesperides and the one at Colchis are equated in Philostratus, *Imagines*, 2.17.

⁷⁴ Apollodorus, *Epitome*, 3.2.

⁷⁵ Ruck, "On the Sacred Names of Iamos and Ion."

⁷⁶ Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 3.838 *et seq.*

⁷⁷ Etruscan bronze liver, marked as a celestial map (*ca.* 100 BCE) labeled with the names of the gods controlling each area. Piacenza Museo Civico, Piacenza, Italy.

of the body, the part that developed first in the fetus, around which the rest of the person grew in the womb. It is the organ that functions in hemolysis, the cleansing of the blood from toxins, and thus it is a motif in botanical agencies for shamanic rapture. Although it is unlikely that the ancients knew of the filtering function of the liver, it was thought to be the organ through which the digested food from the stomach entered the bloodstream. The liver would have the highest concentration of psychoactive toxins, reabsorbing what the kidneys did not eliminate into the urine. The theft of fire, hidden in the narthex, involves the motif of root-cutters and herb-gatherers. The narthex was the emblem of the Dionysian bacchantes as the receptacle for the plants gathered, named as the “narcotic-storehouse.”⁷⁸ The narthex was interchangeable with the thyrsus. The latter in common culinary nomenclature was also the word for the stipe of the mushroom, which was an analogue of the drug repository.⁷⁹ In the case of the *Amanita muscaria*, the psychoactive chemical is confined mainly to the red rind of the cap, making it a perfect example of the toxic agent stuffed into the stalk of the narthex. Its redness, moreover, would suggest the glowing embers of the fire stolen from heaven, since the narthex was used to transport fire from one hearth to another. The bitter brownish or greenish-yellow secretion of the liver called bile or gall (Latin *bilis*, Greek *χολή*, both derived from the Indo-European root *ghel-* for “shine,” yellow like “gold,” with which it is cognate) is another element in this motif. It is listed as two of the basic humors of the body (melancholic, choleric) and was associated in Roman thought with rancor and madness. “Gall” was further implicated in the motif of psychoactive toxins by its association with the venom of serpents, which it was thought contaminate plants by contagion. Eating your enemy’s liver was equivalent to mastering his soul. The flesh of animals that have eaten toxins is contaminated with those toxins,⁸⁰ and the liver of Prometheus would encapsulate the essence of his visionary mentality.

The liver of Prometheus and the magical plant that sprouted from it is the fare of eagles. In indigenous North American tradition, the eagle is the thunderbird, nourished by the *Amanita muscaria*.⁸¹ In the case of quails, which are immune to many deadly toxins, the flesh can be fatal to humans, and it was recognized in antiquity as the source of “quail madness” (*ὄρτυγομανία*), considered the same seizure as the sacred disease of epilepsy.⁸² The motif occurs in the European and Arabic folkloric identification of the *Amanita muscaria* as “raven’s bread.”⁸³ The folk name was well-known and was depicted in works of Renaissance art,⁸⁴ and is recorded as the food that fed the prophet Elijah in

⁷⁸ Theophrastus, *Historia plantarum*, 9.12.2.

⁷⁹ Apicius, *De re culinaria* (third-fourth-century CE cookbook), 7.15.6. C. A. P. Ruck, *Sacred Mushrooms of the Goddess: Secrets of Eleusis* (Berkeley, CA: Ronin Publishing, 2006), 85 *et seq.* Ruck *et al.*, *Dionysus in Thrace*, 29-34.

⁸⁰ Piper, “The Milk of the Goat *Heiðrun*,” in Rush, ed., *Entheogens and the Development of Culture*.

⁸¹ Keewaydinoquay (Peschal), *The Miskwedo in Anishinaabeg Life*.

⁸² Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, 10.69.

⁸³ E. Klapp, “Raven’s Bread and Other Manifestations of Fly Agaric in Classical and Biblical Literature”: 333-342, in Rush, ed., *Entheogens and the Development of Culture*. Ruck *et al.*, *The Hidden World*, 32-44.

⁸⁴ Saints Anthony of Egypt and the hermit Paul of Thebes, fed by Raven’s bread, Grünewald’s Isenheim Altarpiece, innermost presentation, left panel (1512-1516 CE).

the desert.⁸⁵ Raven (*Corax*) was the initial stage in the seven personae of the initiation in Zoroastrian Mithraism. It represented the sin of incarnation, the soul's thirsty absorption of water like a sponge or fungus, imprisoning celestial fire in the wetness of matter. The Raven served as cupbearer at the final divine banquet, and he delivers the initial command to slaughter-harvest the cosmic "bull" for the final liberating sacrament of heavenly bread. Mithraic iconography identifies the so-called bovine flesh as Raven's bread, with the bird seen pecking at bits of the "bull," and equates Raven to the symbolism of the Phrygian cap.⁸⁶ The metaphor of bread involves the concept that heaven was something heaved up, expanding with its fungal leavening to create the outer crust of the cosmos. The crossed legs of the two Mithraic torchbearers symbolized the entrapment of matter (a pose that Perseus often also assumes in vase paintings), but the cross was also incised on the sacramental loaves of bread, signifying the intersection of the equatorial belt of the zodiac and the solar elliptic, which traced the retrograde precession of the equinoxes, as time moved toward the dawning of a new age every 26,000 years. Mithraic symbolism marked the end of the Age of Taurus as it moved into the Age of the Ram Aries. Astrology had as its basic premise that the worlds above and below were interconnected and reciprocally influenced, which is also the motif exemplified in the divinatory liver.

Medea cut the root of this Promethean plant amid the sound of bellowing and mooing from the earth, and it is described as growing with a double stem (καῦλος δίδυμος), not a branching stem. It is, more exactly, a "twin" stem. The epithet of the Dioskouroi was the "Twins," Δίδυμοι, and they became the constellation Gemini. This encodes a riddle since no plant grows from the earth with a twinned stem, side by side, except the Amanitas. As the subterranean nodule or egg that develops from the mycelium into the fruiting mushroom expands, the stem or stipe/trunk extends in both directions, pushing the base apart from the cap, shattering the eggshell, producing a shape like a dumbbell, easily recognizable when plucked from the ground. It is also the traditional shape of the sacred thunderbolt that inseminated the mushroom at its conception from the heavens, enmeshing celestial fire in the wet matrix of matter. The thunderbolt of Zeus in this dumbbell shape, often with conventional lightning flashes attached and sometimes with wings, is the Greek version of the *vajra* thunderbolt of Indra, and in Buddhism it is symbolic of the thunderbolt experience of *Bodhi* or "awakening."⁸⁷

When she cut the root, it was like "newly cut flesh" (σάρξ νεοτμήτος) and the Titan chained to the mountain groaned, as if she were harvesting him. It is further described as like the "Corycian crocus" (Κωρύκιος κρόκος). This implicates lycanthropy. The Corycian cave is Apollo's Wolf Cave on Mount Parnassus (identified by the rock formation resembling a wolf beyond its entrance) above the sanctuary of Delphi, where Xuthus believes he begot his son Ion, the eponym of the Ionian tribal group, in a bacchanalian revel, whereas Ion is actually his mother's son, conceived as the Queen Kreousa (Medusa) gathered petals of

⁸⁵ 1 Kings 17.6.

⁸⁶ Ruck *et al.*, *Mushrooms, Myth, and Mithras*, 119 *et seq.*

⁸⁷ C. A. P. Ruck, "Mushroom Sacraments in the Cults of Early Europe": 68-93, in *Neuroquantology*, vol. 14, no. 1 (March 2016): <http://www.neuroquantology.com/index.php/journal/article/viewFile/897/749>, accessed 16 November 2016.

crocus into her lap (vulva), flowers that materialized as her divine inseminator Apollo.⁸⁸ Ion was of autochthonous lineage, abandoned as an infant. Kreousa wears two drops of Gorgon blood, of opposite efficacy, suspended in vials from her bracelet, and she placed the infant in a basket with tokens of his autochthony, golden serpents and a tapestry she wove depicting the decapitated head of the Medusa. These details make clear that the playwright Euripides conceived of Kreousa as an analogue of the Medusa herself.⁸⁹

DIOSKOUROI (DIOSCURI)

The twin sons of Zeus called Δίδυμοι (Didymi), Gemini, and Dioskouroi (Διόσκουροι) hatched from a single egg and wore the half eggshells as their skull caps or pileus, the cap of the mushroom, which as a metaphor obviously implies a little creature below wearing it. In botanical lore, they were associated with this so-called crocus.⁹⁰ The Dioskouroi could also be depicted as two aniconic posts, representing the half eggshells of the curved red caps, joined by a crossbeam, as if they were conjoined twins, before their separation. In this configuration, they resembled their cousins, the Moliones, who were similarly hatched from a single egg, but joined at the waist as conjoined twins. They are the mythical prototype of the spherical primordial humans that were sliced in half like an egg in Aristophanes' fanciful tale of the Hermaphrodite in Plato's *Symposium*. The Dioskouroi were commonly identified as presiding in the Mystery religion of the Great Gods on the island of Samothrace, with its sacrament of Maronian wine. They were customarily imagined as idealized male adolescents, but there were other analogous and interchangeable versions of these patrons of the Mystery.

As the Corybants, they were still idealized as male youths, the warriors who clashed their shields to obscure with their din the cries of the infant Zeus at his birth in the cave on Crete. This is the myth that signals the birth of Zeus as the replacement for the divine child of Minoan tradition; it is the tale of his rebirth into his new identity, that will replace the Goddess with his family of evolving Olympian deities. Typically, the Corybants were depicted characteristically dancing, with one foot raised, and with their shields uplifted above their heads. It was a pose also used to depict Mithras.⁹¹ In the second-century CE Lucian's burlesque of a traveler's memoirs titled a *True History*, a fantasy account of a trip to the moon, these Corybants with uplifted shield were parodied, among various tribes of fantastic creatures, revealed in their fungal identity as tiny beings, the Καυλομύκητες, "Cover-stem Mushrooms."⁹² They are a tribe of mushroom warriors, whose cap is employed as the shield above their heads.⁹³ For weapons, they use stalks of asparagus, a botanical metaphor for their monstrous ithyphallic state. Asparagus is slang

⁸⁸ Euripides, *Ion*, 881.

⁸⁹ C. A. P. Ruck, B. D. Staples, and C. Heinrich, *The Apples of Apollo: Pagan and Christian Mysteries of the Eucharist* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2001), 54 *et seq.*

⁹⁰ Pseudo-Dioscorides, 1.26.

⁹¹ Ruck *et al.*, *Mushrooms, Myth, and Mithras*, 108.

⁹² Ruck and Hoffman, *The Effluents of Deity*, 278-283, on the caul, which in Latin was called *caput galeatum*, "helmet-head."

⁹³ Lucian, *Vera historia*, 1.16.

for “penis,” probably suggested by the odor it imparts to urine, as well as its obvious obscene shape. It was reputed to have efficacy as an aphrodisiac.

KABEIROI (CABIRI)

These obscene mushroom anthropomorphisms reveal the natures of analogous other creatures of the Mystery, where no attempt was made to idealize them as youths. Among them were the δάκτυλοι (dactyls), materialized as “fingers” as Rhea grasped the earth in birthing Zeus. They obviously were quite small creatures, but the dactylic metaphor implies the obscenity of their ithyphallic “fingers.”⁹⁴

Samothace is a volcanic island, implying the metallurgy of Hephaestus at the alchemical subterranean forge of spiritual transcendence at its molten caldera. The Mystery creatures were also identified as the deity’s assistants.⁹⁵ Among these were the Telchines, who were reputedly great wizards (θέλγειν “enchant”), but with bodies as seals, the equivalent of the selkies of Celtic lore.⁹⁶ They also were thought to have metamorphosed from Actaeon’s hounds and thus are involved in the motif of lycanthropy,⁹⁷ and certain of their names suggest that they were werewolves. Since the hind limbs of the seal are bound together, causing it to drag its way forward, rocking back and forth, leaving a zigzag trail like a serpent, they appear drunken. The Homeric seal-herder Proteus (designated as the “first-born”) was renowned for his clairvoyance.⁹⁸ His name is responsible for the adjective “protean” in English, and he could even metamorphose into a plant.

The Cyclopes (the tribal brothers of the Polyphemus whom Odysseus intoxicated with the potent Samothracian wine of Maron) were another grouping, characterized as great lovers of drunkenness, and with a single eye, another metaphoric fungal anthropomorphism. Although Polyphemus was monstrously huge, gigantism has its complement in miniscule creatures, indicative of the oscillating experience of macro and microscopic vision accessed with the *Amanita muscaria*, as popularized in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), with the key of the door to the fairy world beyond.⁹⁹ The giant Antaeus, whom Heracles defeated, had tiny pygmy brothers,¹⁰⁰ who are the referent for Jonathan Swift’s Lilliputians in *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726).¹⁰¹ In mythopoeia, the alternating gigantism and dwarfism is descriptive of the male erection.

These creatures were all interchangeable with the Kabeiroi, who were of both sexes, but equally obscene, the males with a gross erection, and the females tending the loom, whose “comb” (κτείς) that holds the threads apart to admit the oscillating penetration of

⁹⁴ J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1975), 114, 115, 138, 213.

⁹⁵ Statius (first century CE), *Thebaid*, 2.265 *et seq.* M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant, *Les ruses de l’intelligence: La mêtis des Grecs* (Paris: Flammarion, 1974).

⁹⁶ From Old English *seolh* meaning “seal.” L. Spence, *The Minor Traditions of British Mythology* (New York, NY: Benjamin Blom, Inc./Ayer Publishing, 1948), 55.

⁹⁷ Eustathius on Homer *Iliad*, 18.535.

⁹⁸ Homer, *Odyssey*, 412 *et seq.*

⁹⁹ T. A. Theis, *Legally Stoned* (New York, NY: Citadel Press, 2009), 22.

¹⁰⁰ Philostratus, *Imagines*, 2.22.

¹⁰¹ J. B. Marciano, *Toponymy: An Atlas of Words* (New York/London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 64. Giovanni di Lutero / Dosso Dossi (ca. 1486), *Hercules and the Pygmies*, Alte Galerie, Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz, Austria.

the shuttlecock, is the female counterpart to the phallus as a sacred replica of the vulva.¹⁰² The Kabeiroi were depicted as pygmies, no larger than a thumb, the dactylic finger people, popularized as the *Tale of Tom Thumb* (1621).¹⁰³ The dwarfish African grotesqueries of the Mystery creatures existed in Greek mythical tradition, named as the fingers as of the fist (pugilist), before reports of the actual tribe in Africa, and then applied to them, derived from the *πυγμή*, the length of a cubit. Hephaestus was considered their father by a selkie seal mother or at least their divine ancestor,¹⁰⁴ and they inherited their drunken gait from their metallurgist patron, who was maimed, with feet turned backwards.¹⁰⁵ The lameness was metaphoric of the difficulty in ambulation when impeded by the gigantism of the erection.¹⁰⁶ Aristophanes staged them as the doubled chorus of obscene males and females in his *Lysistrata* comedy (411 BCE).¹⁰⁷ The Kabeiroi were explicitly identified as “crabs,”¹⁰⁸ which walk sidewise. Hence, like the folkloric motif of the dwarfs and like figures from the land of the fairy people, they could be expected to display backward feet.¹⁰⁹ Hephaestus was traditionally depicted carrying the pincers with which he manipulated the metal in his forge,¹¹⁰ and the clawed arms of his Kabeiric assistants provided the name for the tool as the “crab” (κάρκινος).

THE PRIMORDIAL PLOWMAN

These fungal anthropomorphisms represented the pre-agricultural world, the wilderness where they are found growing spontaneously, without cultivation and with no discernible seeds, a totally wild growth. Mushrooms belong to neither the animal nor botanical realms, but they represent a unique category.¹¹¹ The intermediary status of the mushroom's classification is reflected in its abundant occurrences in folkloric tradition, where it functions as the ultimate mediator between oppositional forces and concepts. This dichotomy inevitably suggests the divide between the realms of life and death, and the mushroom lends itself readily to zoomorphism and anthropomorphic materializations as guides or modes of transport across the intervening frontier between realms of existence. Thus, they function like catalysts or henchmen in the service of the volcano's divine blacksmith for the alchemical ennobling of the baser metals of the soul,¹¹² symbolic of transcendence from primordial man to civilized modes of culture. The smelter's vessel,

¹⁰² A dwarfish, black Circe, abandoning her loom, presents the ithyphallic and black Odysseus, wearing the Phrygian cap, with the potion. Boeotian σκύφος, 450-420, British Museum,

¹⁰³ *The Cornish Thumb Chronicles*, the first collection of fairytales printed in English.

¹⁰⁴ Strabo, *Geographica*, 10.3.21; Stephanus of Byzantium, *s.v. Κάβειρα*.

¹⁰⁵ Hesiod, *Theogony*, 925: ἀμφιγυήεις. So depicted, riding an ass, both feet turned backwards, in a bacchanalian scene, Caeretan black-figure ὑδρία (ca. 530 BCE), Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, cat. no. 3577.

¹⁰⁶ Henderson, *The Maculate Muse*, 111.

¹⁰⁷ Ruck, *The Great Gods of Samothrace*, 209 *et seq.*

¹⁰⁸ Hesychius, *s.v. Κάβειροι*.

¹⁰⁹ C. De Ciantis, *The Return of Hephaestus: Reconstructing the Fragmented Mythos of the Maker*, PhD thesis, Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2005.

¹¹⁰ Attic red-figure σκύφος, ca. 430-420 BCE, attributed to the Kleophon Painter, Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH, cat. no. 1982.88, Beazley arch. no. 11777: The return of Hephaestus to Olympus.

¹¹¹ V. N. Toporov, “On the Semiotics of Mythological Conceptions about Mushrooms”: 295-357, in *Semiotica*, vol. 53, no. 4 (1985).

¹¹² Plato, *Republic*, 3.414e-414c, the “noble lie” (γενναῖον ψεῦδος).

which was the maternal womb of creation,¹¹³ links agricultural fertility and the warfare of soldiery since the two main products of the metallurgist's forge are the tools for farming and the weapons of war.¹¹⁴

Another of the creatures of the Mystery was the primordial plowman. In Etruscan tradition, he was customarily linked with the aged tiny oxymoronic child named Tages,¹¹⁵ who popped up in front of the primordial farmer's plowshare and taught him the art of divination by the markings on the liver.¹¹⁶ The plowman and the dwarfish creature who sprouts from the land in front of him not yet furrowed by the blade are complementary aspects of the same entity. Tages was either autochthonous or the child of the personified creative spirit called Genius,¹¹⁷ who was usually depicted with the wings characteristic of the Celtic fairies¹¹⁸ and who inspired the norms of civilization and its ritual procedures, linking them to the realm of nature and the cosmos. An early-third-century BCE small bronze figure of a child, presented as an antique treasure to Pope Clement XIV in 1771, is thought to represent Tages.¹¹⁹ It depicts him as an infant, seated on the ground, one thigh horizontal, the other with knee raised, exposing his penis, and with his head incongruously as a wise old man turned upward toward the heavens. He has a pouch or *bullā* suspended as a locket around his neck, of the sort that Roman male children customarily wore as a protective amulet, usually containing phallic symbols, until the age of visible puberty and then stored as a memento of the moment of access to male sexuality and brought out for display at special adult honorary occasions.

Thus, the idealized identity of Tages is nevertheless essentially ithyphallic, like the Kabeiroi. Virgil in the *Aeneid* developed an ancient arcane tradition that the Etruscans were Trojans, descended from Dardanus, who was cited as one of the founders of the Mystery of the Kabeiroi. Although the Penates of historical times were depicted as idealized young males, they were always figurines, not life-sized statues, miniature males, and the supposed antique originals that Aeneas carried out of Troy and were stored, probably as a pious forgery, in a temple in the Roman suburbs on the Tiber once in former times resembled the obscene grotesqueries of the Mystery. As guardians of the household, they fulfil the same role as the Dioskouroi at Sparta, alternating on successive days between the life and death that they vowed to share together as loving brothers.

At Samothrace and elsewhere that similar Mystery rites were celebrated, the primordial plowman had the name of Iasion or Iasos or Iasus (a doublet of Medea's Ἰάσων/Jason). He coupled sexually with Demeter in the plow field, and was killed by a thunderbolt from Zeus. It was claimed by male chauvinist sources that it was an outrageous indignant assault upon

¹¹³ S. Blakely, *Myth, Ritual, and Metallurgy in Ancient Greece and Recent Africa* (Cambridge, UK/ New York, NY: Cambridge UP, 2006).

¹¹⁴ M. Eliade, *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structure of Alchemy* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1978, reprint of Rider and Co., 1968).

¹¹⁵ N. Thomson de Grummond, *Etruscan Myth, Sacred History, and Legend* (Philadelphia, PN: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2006), 23-27.

¹¹⁶ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 15.553-559.

¹¹⁷ Festus, *De verborum significatu*, 359.14.

¹¹⁸ Red-figure *oinochōē*, ca. 320 BCE, from Magna Graecia, British Museum, London: winged Genius facing a woman with a tambourine and mirror.

¹¹⁹ Museo Gregoriano Etrusco, Vatican, Rome, inv. no. 12108.

her chastity,¹²⁰ but actually she appears to have been quite willing;¹²¹ and Calypso in the *Odyssey*, when she is forced to relinquish her beloved hero, cites the affair of Demeter and Iasion as an example of how the gods always begrudge the female deities the enjoyment of their lovers.¹²² There was also a tradition that Iasion never did lay sexual hands upon Demeter and that it was all a misunderstanding of his having merely received the rites of the Mystery from the goddess and her daughter Kore/Persephone;¹²³ Demeter merely taught him the art of agriculture. There was even a tradition that the lightning bolt, in fact, never did destroy Iasion, but they journeyed together forever teaching how to “plow the field.” Demeter/Ceres in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, complains about him growing old with gray hair.¹²⁴

Iasion was a brother of Dardanus, and the two are cited as the original Kabeiroi,¹²⁵ and hence they must have been characteristically ithyphallic and quite sexually attractive to the goddesses. The ceremonial plow was probably phallic in its shape or ornamentation. It was certainly that in its symbolism. The penetration of the ground with a sharpened object, originally just a pointed stick of wood pulled or pushed along by the plowman, replaced by the metallurgist’s improved implement, is suggestive of primordial copulation, and it was the custom to make the bridal bed in the plow field for the consummation of the marriage, still commemorated in the baking of the “wheaten” wedding cake, ornamented with the marriage couple in the flowering bower. The “plow” (ἄροτρος) was the penis and so recognized in the legal wording of the formal marriage contract in Athens for the “plowing of legitimate children.”¹²⁶

The sexuality of plowing is fully developed in Sophocles’ *Women of Trachis* (*Trachinae*). Heracles’ wife Deianeira describes herself as a field on the far margin of a farmer’s estate that he visits rarely, only to plow her and then reap the crop. She later admonishes the chorus of maidens for their sexual inexperience: they are a field that has never yet felt the impregnating fall of rain or the heat of the sun.¹²⁷ In Egyptian, the glyph for the phallus represents the hoe or the plow. In contemporary slang, “to plow her field” is an obscenity, and ancient comedy developed the theme of the husband with an erection who needs to strip and work the land. In Sophocles’ *Antigone*, Creon tells Ismene that his son Haemon doesn’t need his intended bride, but has other fields to plow.¹²⁸ The obscene f-word in English has a plausible etymology that traces it back to Germanic *Pflug* for “plow.” An antique vase discovered in an archaeological excavation near Florence, Italy, depicts a row of six males with erections carrying a plow.¹²⁹

¹²⁰ Hesiod, *Eoiae* (*Catalogue of Women*), frag. 102 (*Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 1359, frag. 2); Pseudo-Apollodorus, 3.138.

¹²¹ Pseudo-Hyginus, *Astronomica*, 2.22; *Fabulae*, 270.

¹²² Homer, *Odyssey*, 5.125-129.

¹²³ Eustathius, on *Odyssey*, 5.125.

¹²⁴ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 9.422-423: *queritur canescere...Iasona Ceres* (“Ceres complains that Jason is going gray”).

¹²⁵ Servius, on Vergil, *Aeneid*, 3.167; 7.207; Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*, 1.917. scholia.

¹²⁶ T. R. Martin, *Ancient Greece from Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1996).

¹²⁷ Sophocles, *Trachinae*, 31-33; 142 *et seq.*

¹²⁸ Sophocles, *Antigone*, 569.

¹²⁹ C. Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious: A Study of the Transformations and Symbolism of the Libido, a Contribution to the History of Thought* (New York, NY: Moffat, Yard, and Company, 1916), 514, citing A. Dieterich, *Mutter Erde: Ein Versuch über Volksreligion* (Leipzig/Berlin: Teubner, 1905), 107.

THE MEANING OF THE MYSTERY

Plato explicitly described that what was experienced in the Mystery initiation was a face to face encounter with deity.¹³⁰ As a Neoplatonist, the Christian Paul described his own mystical rapture in the same terms.¹³¹ As enacted in all the scenarios for such Mysteries, the initiate experienced a symbolic death as a preparation for enhanced living. At Eleusis, the initiate, in the words of Cicero, “learned the beginnings of life and gained the power not only to live happily, but to die with better hope.”¹³² The entire evolution of civilized modes of culture and the analogous hybridizing of primitive toxic plants into the foodstuffs upon which life depends became a personal experience in the vast expanse of limitless time. Life henceforth was lived with confidence in its antecedents and its cosmic projection.

¹³⁰ Plato, *Phaedrus*, 250e *et seq.*

¹³¹ Paul, *I Corinthians*, 13.12; *2 Corinthians*, 12.2-5.

¹³² Cicero, *Laws*, 2.14.36.

DIVINUS PLATO: IS PLATO A RELIGIOUS FIGURE?

INTRODUCTION

Should we view Plato not only as a philosopher, but also as a *religious* figure. This is not a mere theoretical question; it has important implications for *how* we read Plato and *what* we hope to learn from his works.¹ If Plato is only a rational philosopher – an ancient version of John Locke or Bertrand Russell – then we would expect his writings to contain logical arguments and theories, some correct and some incorrect, some interesting and illuminating and others perhaps less so. But if Plato is something more – an *inspired* sage or prophet – we might hope to find in his works more-than-ordinary wisdom and material of spiritual importance.

Certainly this is a question that modern philosophers and Plato scholars need to consider, since upon its answer depends our ability to properly understand his works. If Plato's motives are religious, and if our hermeneutical approach fails to account for that, not only will we fail to learn much of what Plato has to say, but we are also liable to misconstrue his meanings generally.

To suggest Plato may be a religious figure is scarcely new. Many ancient writers – especially in the Neoplatonist tradition – saw Plato as an inspired prophet and his works as carrying religious and mystical meanings. In the Renaissance, when Plato's complete works first reached Western Europe, and particularly in the writings of Marsilio Ficino, we often see a willingness to recognize Plato as a religious or semi-religious figure even by orthodox Christian thinkers.

¹ For example, if Plato is a religious figure it may affect how we read the *Republic*: is it a work on political science, a blueprint for the optimal government of a State, as has been the consensus opinion for many decades? Or is it an allegory for the governance of one's soul, a work comparable to, say, the Bhagavad-Gita, which we ought to approach as something sacred? There might be a possible objection by those who may wish to reserve a concept like divine inspiration to orthodox religious figures in, say, the Judeo-Christian tradition. We may avoid this issue here by simply allowing that "divine inspiration" is not necessarily an all-or-none principle. Rather than make an absolute distinction between works that are completely and purely the result of divine inspiration (say, the Bible), such that no element of human error could enter into its composition, we may grant different *degrees* or even *forms* of supernatural insight and inspiration. Thus to suggest that Plato may have been to some significant degree divinely inspired, we merely propose what, for example, the Roman Catholic Church allows as true of other religions; see Pope Paul VI, *Nostra Aetate* (Vatican City: 1965); Pope John Paul II, *Fides Et Ratio* (Vatican City: 1998), 72.

Here we advance arguments in favor of the hypothesis. The discussion will be brief and concise, as befits a tentative proposal. We wish more to open than to settle the question here; if Plato is indeed a figure with spiritual significance, this is ultimately best proven not so much by scholarly argument as by one's individual, experiential engagement with Plato's writings and ideas.

SOCRATES AS PROPHET

Clearly, whether Plato's teacher, Socrates, was a religious figure has some bearing on this question. The stronger the evidence that Socrates was not only a philosopher but a prophet, priest, or holy man, the stronger the case that Plato, his most eminent disciple, was also.

Modern scholars have in a general way addressed the religious *beliefs* of Socrates.² As helpful as this literature is, it is somewhat limited by its emphasis on the *rational* aspects of Socrates' religiosity. Less attention has been devoted to considering him as a *philosopher-prophet-shaman*, in the way that, for example, Kingsley has suggested we ought to see figures like Empedocles, Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Pythagoras.³

If divinely appointed prophets do exist (and we have no scientific reason to exclude the possibility), then it must be allowed that Socrates displayed many features consistent with this role.⁴ Socrates:

- a) was appointed to his mission by a Delphic oracle (*Apology* 20e-23c);
- b) took this as a divine command which must be obeyed (*Apology* 28e-29a, 30a-c, 33c);
- c) understood his work as that of "rebuking" the unvirtuous and exhorting them to moral reformation, and the "perfection of souls" (*Apology* 29d, 29e-30b, 30e-31b; 38a; cf. 41e);
- d) considered himself a "servant of Apollo," endowed with prophetic vision (*Phaedo* 85b);
- e) believed in oracles, divination, prophecy, and prophetic dreams (*Apology* 33c, *Crito* 44a-b, *Phaedo* 60e;⁵
- f) was utterly convinced of the soul's immortality and did not fear death (*Phaedo* 117a-118a);

² See, for example: M. L. McPherran, *The Religion of Socrates* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP 1996); M. M. Morgan, "Plato and Greek Religion," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, ed. R. Kraut. (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1992), 227-247; N. D. Smith, and P. B. Woodruff, eds. *Reason and Religion in Socratic Philosophy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2000); other relevant works are cited by these authors.

³ P. Kingsley, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic: Empedocles and Pythagorean Tradition* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995); P. Kingsley, *In the Dark Places of Wisdom* (Point Reyes Station, CA: Golden Sufi Center, 1999).

⁴ J. Bussanich, "Socrates the Mystic" in *Traditions of Platonism*, ed. J. Cleary (Farnham: Ashgate, 1999), 29-51; J. Bussanich, "Socrates and Religious Experience," in *A Companion to Socrates*, eds. S. Ahbel-Rappe and R. Kamtekar (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 200-213; H. Ghaffari, "Is Socrates a Prophet?" *Sophia* 50, no. 3 (2011): 391.

⁵ Xenophon confirms the importance that Socrates attached to divination, oracles, and dreams (*Memorabilia* 1.1.3, 1.1.6-7, 1.4.14-15).

- g) prayed frequently;⁶
- h) was warned of impending danger by a personal daemon or ‘sign’;⁷
- i) often experienced illuminative trances or ecstasies (*Symposium* 220c-d; 175b-d);
- j) was taught or initiated into “mysteries” by the mantic priestess, Diotima (*Symposium* 201d-212a);
- k) spent his last days composing a hymn to Apollo (*Phaedo* 60d); and
- l) pious to the end, his last recorded words requested the sacrifice of a cock to Asclepius (*Phaedo* 118a).⁸

Socrates’ famous martyrdom fits the prophetic pattern. His daily persecutions are less familiar; while the idealized Socrates of Plato’s works seems a man respected by all, even adversaries, Diogenes Laertius (2.5.6[21]) relates:

And very often, while arguing and discussing points that arose, he was treated with great violence and beaten, and pulled about, and laughed at and ridiculed by the multitude. But he bore all this with great equanimity. So that once, when he had been kicked and buffeted about, and had borne it all patiently, and some one expressed his surprise, he said, “Suppose an ass had kicked me would you have had me bring an action against him?”⁹

Concerning point (i), the nature of Socrates’ famous episodes of standing motionless are subject to some disagreement. The data are scant and much hinges on a few ambiguous terms in the original Greek. One view is that these were periods of intense intellectual activity – getting lost in thought as he grappled with a complex philosophical problem. The other alternative is that these were religious experiences. Plato describes two such episodes, both in the *Symposium*. They are so different in character, however, that we are possibly dealing with two different categories of experience. In the first (*Symposium* 174a-175d), Socrates is walking to a dinner party to honor Agathon, falls behind his companions, steps into a portico, and becomes lost in thought. The experience perhaps lasted no more than an hour, because he managed to arrive at the party before festivities began. Clearly this experience was not planned by Socrates beforehand.

The second experience is related by Alcibiades in *Symposium* 220c-d, and concerns Socrates’ actions during the siege of Potidea. Socrates was observed to stand motionless, rapt in meditation for a full day, from dawn to dawn. It is significant that at the end he “prayed to the Sun.” Here, there is the possibility of a deliberately planned spiritual exercise. According to Gellius (*Attic Nights* 2.1.1-3), this was a regular practice of Socrates:

⁶ B. D. Jackson, “The Prayers of Socrates,” *Phronesis* 16, no. 1 (1971): 14; R. Mayhew, “On Prayer in Plato’s Laws,” *Apeiron* 41, no. 1 (2008): 45.

⁷ *Apol.* 27b-e, 31c-32a, 40a-c; 41d; *I Alcib.* 103a-b, 105e-106a; *Euthyph.* 272e-273a; *Phaedo* 242b-d; *Theag.* 128d-129e; and minor references in *Theat.* 151a, *Euthyph.* 3b, and *Rep.* 6.496c. Also *Xenophon: Memorabilia* 1.1.3-5, 4.8.1; *Apol.* 12-13; *Symp.* 8.5. Cf. Plutarch *De Gen. Socr.*, Apuleius *De Deo Socr.*, and Plotinus *Enn.* 3.4.

⁸ The cock is sacred to Apollo; Asclepius, the god of healing and medicine, was considered Apollo’s son.

⁹ C. D. Yonge, *Diogenes Laertius: Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* London: Bohn, 1853), 65.

Among voluntary tasks and exercises for strengthening his body for any chance demands upon its endurance we are told that Socrates habitually practised this one: he would stand, so the story goes, in one fixed position, all day and all night, from early dawn until the next sunrise, open-eyed, motionless, in his very tracks and with face and eyes riveted to the same spot in deep meditation [*cogitabundus*], as if his mind and soul had been, as it were, withdrawn from his body. When Favorinus in his discussion of the man's fortitude and his many other virtues had reached this point, he said: "He often stood from sun to sun, more rigid than the tree trunks."¹⁰

As Bussanich (2013)¹¹ has noted, this is comparable to ascetical practices found in various oriental religions.

What was Socrates doing at Potidea and in his other day-long meditations? A poet's imagination suggests one possibility:

The famed Athenian, he who woo'd from heaven
 Philosophy the fair, to dwell with men,¹²
 And form their manners, not inflame their pride,
 While o'er his head, as fearful to molest
 His labouring mind, the stars in silence slide,
 And seem all gazing on their future guest,
 See him soliciting his ardent suit
 In private audience: all the live-long night,
 Rigid in thought, and motionless, he stands;
 Nor quits his theme, or posture, till the sun
 Disturbs his nobler intellectual beam,
 And gives him to the tumult of the world.¹³

Is it just possible that at Potidea or other such times Socrates pleaded with heaven that philosophy might "dwell with men" and save them? Why would he *not* do so? Such is the work of a holy man and prophet. Obviously we are not expected to take poetic fancy as fact here. But it does serve to remind us not be too limiting in our views of Socrates, and to allow that the modern rationalist stereotype of him developed over the last 100 years may be very incomplete and inadequate.

¹⁰ J. C. Rolfe, trans., *Gellius: Attic Nights*. Vol. 1. (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1927 [rev. 1946]).

¹¹ J. Bussanich, "Socrates' Religious Experiences," in *Bloomsbury Companion to Socrates*, eds. J. Bussanich, N. D. Smith (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 276-300; see 298-300.

¹² "*Socrates autem primus philosophiam devocavit e coelo, et in urbibus collocauit, et in domes etiam introduxit.*" (Socrates first called philosophy down from heaven, and gave it a place in cities, and introduced it even into men's homes.). Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.4.

¹³ E. Young, *Night Thoughts*, ed. J. Nichols (London: Tegg, 1854), lines 181-190, 192.

PLATONIC SALVATION

As in the case of Socrates, modern scholarship has similarly tended to neglect or avoid an authentic and full engagement with Plato's spirituality.¹⁴ Here we supply some reasons to question this.

Platonic piety. Throughout his works Plato reveals himself to be deeply pious,¹⁵ ever mindful of the perils of ὕβρις, and concerned with prayer.¹⁶ He is clearly familiar with Orphic and Pythagorean teachings and shows a deep interest in religious rites and mysteries.¹⁷ It is not known for certain, yet it would seem fairly plausible to suggest, that Plato was initiated into the Mysteries of Eleusis.

Salvation of souls. Both Socrates and Plato are explicitly concerned with the *salvation* of the human soul.¹⁸ This is a central theme in Plato's works, giving his corpus unity and coherence. Salvation of the soul is the *contest of contests* (*Gorgias* 526e). To this glorious venture all else should be subordinated. *Fair is the prize, and the hope great!* (*Phaedo* 114c-d).

The salvation of the soul is arguably the principal theme of the *Republic*. Near the end of the work in Book 10, after presenting the Myth of Er, Plato emphasizes the immense stakes: not just one's worldly happiness, but something far greater – the fate of one's immortal soul (10.618c-d). Socrates begins to sum up:

And here, my dear Glaucon, is the *supreme peril of our human state*; and therefore the *utmost* care should be taken. Let each one of us *leave every other kind of knowledge and seek and follow one thing only*, if peradventure he may be able to learn and may find some one who will make him able to *learn and discern between good and evil*, and so to choose always and everywhere the better life as he has opportunity. (*Rep.* 10.618c)¹⁹

Then in the work's very last paragraph Socrates concludes saying:

Wherefore my counsel is, that we *hold fast ever to the heavenly way and follow after justice and virtue always, considering that the soul is immortal and able to endure every sort of good and every sort of evil*. Thus shall we

¹⁴ Noteworthy counter-examples are P. E. More, *The Religion of Plato* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1921); R. E. Cushman, *Therapeia: Plato's Conception of Philosophy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1958); A. Avni, "Inspiration in Plato and the Hebrew Prophets," *Comparative Literature* 20, no. 1 (1968): 55.

¹⁵ Dodds cites Wilamowitz' assertion that "the memories of a pious childhood always lived in Plato," and even grew stronger with advancing years; E. R. Dodds, "Plato and the Irrational," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 65 (1945): 16. See also D. Dobbs, "The Piety of Thought in Plato's *Republic*, Book 1," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (1994): 668.

¹⁶ Mayhew, "On Prayer in Plato's *Laws*."

¹⁷ It is of often overlooked that the entire conversation in the *Republic* takes place during a night-long religious festival to Bendis, the Thracian Artemis (*Rep.* 1.327a-1.328b); on Bendis, see P. Janouchová, "The Cult of Bendis in Athens and Thrace," *Graeco-Latina Brunensia* 18, no. 1 (2013): 95.

¹⁸ V. Adluri, "Plato's Saving Mūthos: The Language of Salvation in the *Republic*," *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 8, no.1 (2014): 3.

¹⁹ B. Jowett, trans., *The Dialogues of Plato in Five Volumes*, 3rd Vol. 3. *Republic, Timaeus, Critias* (London: Oxford UP, 1892), 335; italics added.

live dear to one another and to the gods, both while remaining here and when, like conquerors in the games who go round to gather gifts, we receive our reward. And it shall be well with us both in this life and in the pilgrimage of a thousand years which we have been describing. (*Rep.* 10.621c-d).²⁰

These passages and many similar ones make it very clear that Plato's main concern in the *Republic* is the welfare of the soul, not the structure and activities of a physical city. The dialogue begins and ends with, and never loses sight of, the consideration of justice in the soul. Guthrie's summary bears repeating:

Essentially however the *Republic* is not a piece of political theory but an allegory of the individual human spirit, the ψυχή. The city is one which we may "found in ourselves" by directing the stream of ἔρως within us so that it flows most strongly towards wisdom and knowledge, under whose guidance the passions and appetites too can find fuller satisfaction. (...) Goodness and happiness (united in the phrase εὖ πράττειν, to do well) are found by carrying to completion the unfinished philosophy of Socrates (...) care only for the soul and its ultimate good, knowing that its best element, the philosophic, *is what unites us with the divine and lives for ever*. Act always in the knowledge that the soul's association with the body is only a brief episode, or series of episodes, in its eternal existence. In that faith Socrates died (...) *and the whole force of Plato's remarkable mind was directed at proving that he was right*.²¹

IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Plato is clearly concerned with the immortality of the human soul, and presents a dozen or more arguments and proofs for it in his dialogues. It is a central premise of his philosophy.

In *Republic* 10.608d, Socrates asks Glaucon, "Have you never perceived ... that our soul is immortal and never perishes?" Glaucon looks amazed and replies, "No, by Zeus, not I; but are you able to declare this?" Socrates responds, "I certainly ought to be (...) and I think you too can, for it is nothing hard."

Socrates seems not only fully convinced that the soul is immortal, but also that it is not difficult to see this. He then produces the *vitiating principle* argument for the soul's immortality (10.608e-611a): every thing has its own principle of destruction, unique to it and innate (e.g., for a body, disease); if a thing is destroyed, it is only by this unique, endogenous principle; the soul is subject to a destructive principle, namely vice; yet even the worst vice is not sufficient to completely kill the soul; and since nothing else besides a thing's internal destructive principle can make it totally perish, the soul must be immortal.

Plato advances another, more well known proof in the proem to the Chariot Allegory in *Phaedrus* (245c-246a): the *self-moved mover* argument. This asserts that, while the soul moves the body, and it moves itself, it is itself not moved by anything external to it. Since

²⁰ Ibid., 338; italics added.

²¹ W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy. Vol. 4, Plato: The Man and His Dialogues: Earlier Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986), 434-435 and especially 561; italics added.

being destroyed would imply movement of some sort, the soul, not moved by anything extrinsic, cannot be destroyed and must be imperishable.

The most sustained attention Plato devotes to immortality of the soul is in the *Phaedo*, which, in fact, is also traditionally called *On the Soul*. Here he presents four elaborate proofs, along with some lesser arguments. The proofs are as follows:

- i. *Cyclicity argument* (70c-72e). All things proceed from their opposites. Just as death proceeds from life, life must proceed from death. Therefore the soul cannot permanently perish.
- ii. *Innate knowledge argument* (72e-78b). It appears that we know things that we have not learned in this lifetime – as shown by the fact that when they are made salient, we grasp them immediately and they seem already familiar.²² This suggests to Plato that we have lived before in a pre-existence; and if our souls existed before this life, they will exist after it.
- iii. *Affinity argument* (78b-84b): there are two levels of reality – (1) the temporal and changing, and (2) the Eternal and immutable; the soul has an affinity for eternal things (e.g., Platonic Forms; Truth, Beauty and Moral Goodness; mathematical and religious truths); therefore it must in its own nature be eternal.
- iv. *Form of Life argument* (102b-107b). The soul is not only alive itself, but it gives life to the body. Therefore it is intimately connected with the essence or Form of Life. Hence it would be illogical or inconsistent for the soul to perish.

The famous speeches of Diotima in the *Symposium* 201-212 revolve around the subject of immortality. Several senses of immortality are pursued, such as the begetting of children and the imparting of ideas and virtue to other people, before addressing immortality of soul in the religious sense. The overall drift is that human beings seem exceptionally interested in immortality and orient much of their lives to striving for it. This would not be logical unless immortality was at least potentially possible.

Among the Plato's lesser arguments for the soul's immortality is an appeal to tradition and authority: honored and trustworthy figures of the past have taught it (*Meno* 81a-b). Another argument is that human beings seem to have a limitless capacity for knowledge, which would have no purpose if the soul did not outlive the body.

Finally there is an argument from justice in the tenth book of the *Republic*: unless there are rewards or punishment after this life, it would violate our innate sense of justice. For example, an evil man could avoid punishment for misdeeds by dying.

²² This is another favorite subject of Plato, discussed most famously in the *Meno*.

It's interesting that, although Plato insists we should be convinced of the soul's immortality, none of these arguments actually do, in a strict logical sense, entail the proposition, and we should not doubt Plato knows this.²³

Then why does he make these arguments, and how are we supposed to know the soul is immortal? Here we must recall Plato's epistemological method in the dialogues. This is to not impart a doctrine by force of rational argument so much as to elicit an intuitive insight (i.e., recollection or ἀνάμνησις). Rational arguments (dialectic) serve to focus the attention and heighten interest. Thus, by applying dialectic to the subject of the soul's immortality – perhaps in the process of seeing why an argument isn't fully convincing – we may catch a glimpse of our own soul.²⁴ And in that act we may also see that it is of such a nature that it could not perish.

We have another clue in the *Apology* 40-41. When Socrates decides to appear in court for his sentence – which was likely going to be death – even though he could have fled into exile, he says that he's not afraid to die. He is convinced the soul is immortal, and death is no harm. However, in explaining the source of the confidence he does not allude to any of his rational proofs. Rather, what convinces him is that his personal daemon or guide, which has often spoken and warned him of impending danger, was now silent. This suggests the involvement of a form of faith²⁵ or trust. In the past his voice has come and warned of danger many times, so it is reliable *evidence*. But to go from reliable evidence to complete *conviction* involves something more than inductive, probabilistic generalization.

Plato's message to us, then, is that (1) we should be convinced of the soul's immortality (2) by considering some of his rational proofs as a dialectical or spiritual exercise, and so perhaps getting a glimpse of the soul; and (3) following Socrates' example, trusting a certain implicit or innate knowledge – a kind of faith. Finally we have the *example* of Socrates' great calm and confidence in the face of death, such that he looked forward to it as something positive, his mission on earth having come to an end.

Finally, some mention should be made about the subject of reincarnation. In the Myth of Er and other Platonic myths, a *literal* reading would indicate that Plato believes in reincarnation: that the human soul may be reborn into this world again. It is true that many ancient commentators, both his advocates and opponents, understood these passages as meaning Plato believed in reincarnation. However these passages can also be very plausibly understood as allegorical (e.g., one is, in this lifetime, continually being reborn, as it were, and one's mental disposition now will determine one's mental disposition later).²⁶

²³ “That the supreme dialectician Plato was himself unaware of what is so readily perceived by every puny whipster who thinks to get his sword is to me unthinkable”; P. Shorey, “Review of *The Platonic Conception of Immortality, and its Connexion with the Theory of Ideas*, by R. K. Gaye,” *Philosophical Review* 14, no. 5 (1905): 590.

²⁴ Cicero *Tuscul Disp* 1.22: “Undoubtedly it is the highest possible exercise of our powers for the soul itself to see the soul.”; in A. P. Peabody, trans., *Cicero's Tusculan Disputations* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1866), 38-39. Book 1 *Tusculan Disputations* contains an extremely valuable and insightful presentation of many of Plato's arguments for the soul's immortality.

²⁵ Certain conviction without rational explanation is one operational definition of faith.

²⁶ For an extended discussion of this point and arguments in favor of the allegorical view, see J. Uebersax, “Did Plato Believe in Reincarnation?” available at <http://www.john-uebersax.com/plato/plato4.htm>, last modified January 24, 2007, accessed December 18, 2016.

LIKENESS TO GOD

Sedley²⁷ points out that if an educated Roman of the 2nd century were asked what the main aim of Platonism is – what is its *summum bonum*, such that it is distinguished from other philosophical schools – the response would be that the goal of its ethics is to achieve *likeness to God* (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ) insofar as this is possible (*Theaetetus* 176a-b, *Timaeus* 90c).

This is another important concept for Plato, and he refers to it often. We become like God by: *thinking thoughts that are immortal and divine* (*Timaeus* 90); stabilizing the revolutions of our thinking so that they match the celestial majesty and order of the heavens (*Timaeus* 47c); contemplating eternal verities through an ascension of mind effected by control of passions (*Phaedrus* 248a, 252d-e); developing a divine character by being temperate and virtuous (*Laws* 4.716c); and engaging in *sacrifice and communion with the gods continually, by prayers and offerings and devotions of every kind* (*Laws* 4.716d).

HAGIOGRAPHY

In the centuries following his death, many stories and legends about Plato arose.²⁸ While we may hesitate to take hagiographical evidence at face value, it is significant that Plato's reputation attracted it. Further, in the degree to which these stories resemble those told of accepted religious founders, prophets, and saints, they are evidence, albeit limited, that Plato was a religious figure.

One legend (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 3.2) concerns Plato's virgin birth (παρθενογένεσις).²⁹ It is said that Plato's father, Ariston, had a dream in which he was told to avoid relations with his wife, Amphictione. She subsequently gave birth to Plato, the father being supposed to be Apollo. As a mythic motif, parthenogenesis is relatively rare and in any case extraordinary. It is associated with Jesus, the Buddha, various gods and goddesses. It therefore indicates the exceptionally high esteem in which Plato was held, and his being considered a religious figure in the ancient world.

Another story tells that, the night before Socrates met the young Plato for the first time, he had a dream in which a cygnet settled in his lap, developed adult plumage, and flew off uttering a sweet song that charmed all hearers. The next day a companion brought Plato to him and Socrates remarked, "Here is the swan of my dream."³⁰

Yet another story (*Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* 6.8-13) relates how, after Plato's death, a woman inquired of an oracle whether it was appropriate to honor

²⁷ D. Sedley, "The Ideal of Godlikeness," in *Plato 2: Ethics, Politics, Religion and the Soul*, ed. G. Fine (Oxford and New York, Oxford UP, 1999), 309-328; see also J. Annas, "Becoming Like God: Ethics, Human Nature, and the Divine," in *Platonic Ethics, Old and New* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999), 52-71.

²⁸ A. S. Riginos, *Platonica* (Leiden: Brill, 1976).

²⁹ See also e.g., Apuleius *De Platone* 1.1; Olympiodorus *In Alcib.* 2.21-24; *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* 2.12-16; Origen, *Contra Celsus*, 1.37 & 6.8; Diogenes Laertius cites a work attributed to Speusippus, Plato's nephew, as one source).

³⁰ Diogenes Laertius *Lives* 3.5; Apuleius *De Platone* 1.1; Olympiodorus *In Alcib.* 2.83-86; *Anon. Proleg.* 1.22-29; Origen *Contra Celsus* 6.8 [in the same passage Origen seems to allow that Plato had a prophetic "third eye"]. The swan is sacred to Apollo; cf. *Phaedo* 84e-85b.

him with a stele or statue. The oracle approved, saying that by honoring such “blessed ones” as Plato one would gain one grace.³¹

We should also note that many renowned philosophers of antiquity, including Plutarch (himself a priest at Delphi), Plotinus, and Proclus (also a Greek pagan priest) took as axiomatic that Plato was a divinely inspired religious teacher of a very high order. Again, we are not required to accept these ancient opinions as true, but their testimony does add incremental evidence in support of the hypothesis that Plato was divinely inspired and communicated an authentic and profound religious message.

VISION OF THE GOOD

The Vision of the Good (Beatific vision). May we allow that Plato himself experienced, one or more times, a profound vision of the Source of All Good – or God – such as is described in the central section of the *Republic* (6.506d-509c and 7.515e-517c; cf. *Symposium* 211e-212a, *Phaedrus* 247c-e)? It might be odd to suppose otherwise, especially if we believe that the Neoplatonists Plotinus and Porphyry had such experiences, as Porphyry reports (*Vita Plotini* 23; *Enneads* 4.8.1).³² Though Plato founded no religion *per se*, if he did experience a profound mystical union with God, it might justify at least a qualified comparison of him with religious founders like St. Paul and others great illumined mystics who have reportedly attained, *Samadhi*, *nirvana*, *satori*, *moksha*, Enlightenment, Cosmic Consciousness, etc.

PLATO'S INFLUENCE

Finally, we have the evidence of the unprecedented unanimous approval granted Plato for over two millennia, and his pervasive positive influence on Western civilization. Once again this is not certain proof, but does *support* the hypothesis that Plato was a *bona fide* religious figure conveying extraordinary knowledge.

Plato's great and wholesome influence on Christianity and Islam must surely be reckoned in any consideration of his religious significance. It is said that Christianity has two parents, Jerusalem and Athens. While it would overstate things to substitute “Plato” for “Athens” here, nevertheless we cannot imagine this being true, were it not for Plato's influence on Christianity. This is so not only in terms of the development of theological doctrine, but also in personal spirituality and the Christian contemplative tradition.³³ Christian theology, ethics, and contemplative practice are saturated with Platonism. Many of the greatest theologians of Christianity were explicitly Platonists: Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Ambrose, Augustine, the Cappadocian Fathers, and Maximus Confessor, to name a few.

³¹ When an oracle was consulted about the fate of Plotinus' soul, it was reported that he, along with the souls of Plato and Pythagoras, enjoyed heavenly bliss and communion with Minos, Rhadamanthus and Aeacus (Porphyry, *Vita Plotini* 22; see A. H. Armstrong, trans., *Porphyry: On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of His Works*, in *Plotinus in Seven Volumes*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, 1966).

³² Compare with the Platonic/Plotinian mystical experiences of St. Augustine at Milan (*Confessions* 7.17.23; cf. 7.10.16) and Ostia (9.10.24-25); for valuable discussion, see: J. J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions. Volume 3: Commentary, Books 8-13* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1992 [repr. 2012]), 127-128.

³³ See, for example, A. Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983 [repr. 2003]).

Some degree of Platonist and Neoplatonist influence on Sufism may no doubt also be shown. The Western esoteric tradition also reflects a considerable degree of Platonic and Neoplatonist influence.

CONCLUSIONS

If Plato transcends modern notions of what a philosopher is, but instead is understood as also *religious* figure, what are the implications?

Paradigm shift. First, it may contribute to a paradigm shift in *how* we read Plato and what we try to learn from him. For over a century the dominant academic approach to Plato has been rationalistic and literal. He has been seen as an ancient analytical philosopher. This narrow perspective has led to there being only a subset of the themes present within Plato's works being carefully investigated (and even those, incompletely). It has also produced numerous, sometimes tedious debates amongst specialists, with loss of sight of larger and more important issues.

For instance, a virtually unchallenged tenet of modern scholarship is that Plato, as a contemporary rational philosopher might, underwent gradual changes and development in his basic theories. Corresponding arguments rage over the order in which his works were written. Clearly it is of some interest to consider how Plato's thought developed, but the subject has sometimes been carried to inappropriate extremes. Should we arbitrarily rule out the possibility that his leading ideas were inspired or intuited by personal religious experience, perhaps even early in his career? Is it possible Plato was guided by suprarational forms of knowledge, a characteristic attributed to great creative geniuses?³⁴ If so, then while his *style* may have undergone gradual changes, we might expect to see his important creative insights present even in his early works, at least in nascent form.

It is especially ironic that a narrow rationalistic approach sometimes verging on scholasticism has dominated academic Platonic studies, given that a hallmark of Plato's φιλοσοφία is precisely its view that there is a truer and higher level of knowledge than rationalism, namely νόησις.³⁵ The rationalist monopoly may, if Plato's significance as a religious figure is accepted, give way to a fuller and potentially more authentic engagement with his works and greater recognition of their scope and depth.

If Plato is a religious figure, we might not so much seek in his works explicit doctrines, but view them as inspired artistic or even devotional works, which use dialectic, myth, drama, and poetry as springboards to ἀνάμνησις – the awakening of intuitive insights into our own moral and spiritual nature.

The Republic. Commentators, both ancient and modern, have been puzzled (to say the least) by what appear to be certain implausible features of Plato's *Republic* if the

³⁴ P. A. Sorokin, *The Ways and Power of Love: Types, Factors, and Techniques of Moral Transformation* (Philadelphia and London: Templeton Foundation Press, 2002 [1954]).

³⁵ The *locus classicus* for the distinction between νόησις and ratiocination is, of course, the famous Divided Line of *Republic* (*Rep.* 6.509d-6.511e, 7.533c-7.534b); see: J. S. Uebersax, "Psychology, Philosophy, and Plato's Divided Line," available at <http://www.john-uebersax.com/plato/platol.htm>, last modified January 2007, accessed December 18, 2016; J. S. Uebersax, "Higher Reason and Lower Reason," white paper, Californians for Higher Education Reform, available at http://www.john-uebersax.com/pdf/Higher_Reason.pdf, last modified November 3, 2013, accessed December 18, 2016. Modern scholarship has also tended to discount Plato's own testimony concerning the importance of divine inspiration and μανία in writing.

work is understood literally (for example, a caste-system, common property and wives amongst Guardians, etc.).³⁶ Recently there has been growing attention to allegorical nature of Plato's ideal city in the *Republic*: that it is really a metaphoric vehicle for "writing in large letters" the structure and dynamics of the human psyche.³⁷ The present discussion has considerable relevance to this question. The more likely Plato is an inspired religious figure, then, arguably, the more likely the *Republic* is a magnificent and sublime allegory for the politics of the human soul, not a literal and quirky treatise on political science.

Cultural implications. Understanding Plato as a religious figure may also have wider positive cultural implications.

Here we should make an important distinction. To say Plato is a religious figure can be understood in either a *scientific* or a *religious* sense. At a scientific level – for example, if we are concerned with the *history* of religion – we may be interested in how his ideas have influenced and shaped later religious thought; his status as a religious figure would be a scientific *fact* or datum.

But the *religious* issue is whether we may approach Plato and his message as ourselves believers in things spiritual and supernatural. If there is a God, and if Providence does work in history, might we believe – as some have done in the past – that Plato was in some sense divinely appointed? Examining the complex history of Platonism, as it has periodically emerged and receded in Western history, one may well suspect a plan or design.³⁸ As if with perfect timing his works arrived in Italy in the 15th century, where, combined with other social and historical developments, they were instrumental in launching the Renaissance. Perhaps there is special significance to a renewed interest in Plato today. Might it signify the advent of a new Renaissance, or in the terms of Pitirim Sorokin's theories of cultural dynamics, a transition from a materialistic to an *Idealistic* culture?³⁹

There has been much recent talk about the contemporary social need for a secular spirituality or transcendent humanism. It is widely recognized that the current, dominant materialistic cultural mentality does not adequately reflect humanity's greatest hopes and needs, and is an insufficient foundation for a viable, much less a thriving, civil society. Somehow our common spiritual beliefs as human beings must find expression in our

³⁶ Most notoriously, K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies, Vol. 1: The Spell of Plato*. (London: Routledge, 1945 [repr. 1966]).

³⁷ For example: R. Waterfield (tr.), *The Republic of Plato* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1993), Introduction; J. Annas, "The Inner City: Ethics Without Politics in the *Republic*," in *Platonic Ethics, Old and New* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999), 72-95. More recently, Uebersax has written a series of articles on this topic; see J. Uebersax, "Psychological Correspondences in Plato's *Republic*," available at <https://satyagraha.wordpress.com/2014/12/01/psychological-correspondences-platos-republic/>, last modified December 30, 2015 accessed January 5, 2016 and items cited therein.

³⁸ Raine compared the Platonic tradition in western culture to "an underground river that from time to time sends up a spring," adding, "wherever its waters flow, the soul is reborn." K. Raine, "Thomas Taylor in England," in *Thomas Taylor the Platonist. Selected Writings*, eds. K. Raine and G. Mills (London: Routledge, 1969).

³⁹ P. A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*. Rev. and abridged in one volume (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1957 [repr. 1985]); J. Uebersax, "Culture in Crisis: The Visionary Theories of Pitirim Sorokin," available at <http://satyagraha.wordpress.com/2010/08/19/pitirim-sorokin-crisis-of-modernity/>, last modified March 11, 2015, accessed December 18, 2016.

institutions.⁴⁰ Yet there are good reasons why any such unifying spiritual and moral framework should not be too-closely equated with a particular religious denomination.⁴¹ Platonism (with greater attention to its spiritual dimensions) might help meet the need for a non-sectarian framework of transcendent values. Indeed, Platonism has already done so in Europe to a significant degree, infusing society with spiritual values and so influencing culture, philosophy, literature and religion.

One reasonable model might be to see Platonism as something like a yogic tradition. Yogic traditions are often distinctly religious, but do not generally contain canonical liturgies, sacraments, institutional authority, or even fixed doctrines – and therefore can be integrated into ones religious life as a Hindu, Catholic, Protestant, Jew, Muslim, etc. In a similar way Platonism could be understood as a native western form of wisdom yoga.⁴² But, unlike eastern spiritual disciplines, Platonism has been operating, at more or less obvious levels, within western and European culture for over two millennia. It pervades our literature, art, aesthetics, theories of government, and moral sense. A greater interest in Platonism – especially broadened to include its religious aspects – could serve to produce not only a more human society, but a more *culturally integrated* one.

⁴⁰ For example, traditional, shared beliefs in an immortal human soul, a Supreme Being, innate moral knowledge and a consequent moral responsibility, etc. Such beliefs have broad implications for human ethics, culture, politics, and education.

⁴¹ This statement is not meant to discount the view that sees Christianity as an enduring and authentic foundation of European culture. Platonism can be understood as supplementing, not superseding Christian culture. On the other hand, because not all of Europe is or has ever been Christian, Platonism may serve to help unite Christians and non-Christians on important moral and social issues.

⁴² A comparison between Platonism and *jnana* yoga suggests itself, in particular.

PLATONIC DISPLACEMENTS AND THE STRANGE APPEARANCE OF SOCRATES

Sokrates, ohne alle Frage der Lichtpunkt, die hellste Erscheinung des ganzen Alterthums...

(F. W. J. Schelling)¹

Dies ist die ungeheurere Bedenklichkeit, die uns jedesmal, Angesichts des Sokrates, ergreift und die uns immer und immer anreizt, Sinn und Absicht dieser fragwürdigsten Erscheinung des Alterthums zu erkennen.

(F. Nietzsche)²

...ποῖ δὴ καὶ ποθεν;
(Socrates)³

Where is place to be found? And how is such a question to be approached or situated? Are we not already *there*, as always? Have we not already arrived at the place where we properly belong, here upon the earth, beneath the heavens? Or do we have yet to arrive? Not knowing where we are now, even less where we have come from, are we not already on our way to somewhere else, to that “other place,” enigmatically referred to in the dialogues with a single word, ἐκεῖ – that is, simply elsewhere?

Place in Plato would be our topic. Yet addressing this topic with care would seem to require that it be first of all thematized as such, that is, set down or situated in a certain way, given or allowed its proper place within its own region, such that, in accordance with

¹ “Socrates, without question the most brilliant appearance in all of antiquity” – F. W. J. Schelling, *Initia Philosophiae Universae, Erlanger Vorlesung Winter Semester 1820/21*, ed. Horst Fuhrmans (Bonn: H. Bouvier, 1969), 56.

² “This is the monstrous misgiving that takes hold of us every time regarding Socrates, and again and again incites us to know the sense and intent of this most questionable appearance of antiquity.” F. Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988), 94.

³ “Where have you come from and where are you going?” See *Phaedrus* 227a. I am following the convention of citing the Stephanus pagination. For the Greek text of Plato’s writings, I am referring to the edition published in the *Loeb Classical Library*, ed. J. Henderson (Harvard UP). While a number of English translations of Plato were also consulted for this paper, cited throughout, on many occasions it has been necessary to offer my own retranslation.

this position, it may then be interrogated or inquired into. Addressing this topic would mean posing or placing questions within the limits of what has been set down or indicated in this way. By posing questions, such an address would seek to accomplish an exposition, even an *Erörterung*, that would delimit or demarcate its thematic concern, elaborating and clarifying how it shows itself within the region to which it properly belongs.

But then it is not at all clear how we are to ask about place “in Plato,” if place itself will always be first of all the *where* of whatever is, if place itself is where what comes to presence can first “belong” as what it is. Each place, according to the ancient sense of τόπος, must first of all be *distinct*, must be set apart as its own place – that is, as an actual somewhere, separated or separating itself both from that which is *in* it and from other places. According to this ancient sense of place, different places can be demarcated precisely as they each give place to different beings, as is evident in the difference between the earth and the heavens, those places that have the “power” to establish what is “below” and what is “above.” But it remains as yet unclear how place *as such* can ever show itself in its unplaceable, implacable priority, how it is itself to be placed or take place, precisely as it first allows for the appearance of anything.⁴ It is perhaps still not too late to ask whether or how place itself can actually *be* something, if we still assume that everything, insofar as it *is* at all, must already somehow be somewhere, must be in some place or have a place. In the attempt to discern what place is, we appear to find ourselves thrown back upon that ancient question, notoriously posed by Zeno, that concerns the very place of place [τὸ τόπου τόπος].⁵

Moreover, in asking about place “in Plato,” we immediately run up against a basic difficulty, namely, that the question of place – that is, place *as* τόπος – is never once made

⁴ This is meant as a reference to Heidegger’s interpretation of Greek τόπος, especially as he finds it developed in Aristotle’s *Physics*. What is most decisive, according to this interpretation, is the way in which this sense differs fundamentally from the modern conception of place. This historical shift marks, in fact, a decisive reversal, whereby space is no longer derived from place or the relation between places, but instead place itself comes to be subordinated to the infinite, isotropic space of mathematical construction, in its homogeneity and lack of differentiation. Heidegger writes: “Τόπος is the ποῦ, the “where” and the “there” of the belonging-somewhere of a determinate body [*das Wo und Dort der Hingehörigkeit eines bestimmten Körpers*]. What is fiery belongs above, what is earthy belongs below. The places themselves [*die Orte selbst*] – above, below (heaven, earth) – are distinguished [*sind ausgezeichnet*]: by way of them are determined distances and relations, thus, what we call “space” [*Raum*], something for which the Greeks had neither a word nor a concept. For us today space is not determined by way of place; rather, all places, as constellations of points, are determined by an endless space that is everywhere homogeneous and nowhere distinctive [*Für uns Heutige ist nicht der Raum durch Orte, sondern alle Orte als Punktstellen durch den endlosen, überall gleichartigen, nirgendwo ausgezeichneten Raum bestimmt.*].” M. Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, vol. 9 *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1976), 248-9; *Pathmarks*, ed. W. McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 190. This Greek experience of heterogeneous, distinct places is decisive since it retains an understanding of movement beyond mere locomotion or change of place: a being can move in place. Heidegger takes movement in this sense to be first of all an emerging into presencing; movement in its fullest sense is thus irreducible to a mere movement from one undifferentiated place to another but is always also configured by the way something “by nature” belongs to a place. According to Aristotle, place is not a matter of a mere “position” (θέσις) but also holds power, is a δύναμις.

⁵ Aristotle mentions Zeno’s impasse, stating that it demands a *logos*: “if every being is in a place, then it is clear that there will also be a place of place.” *Physics* Δ1, 209a23-25. But see, then, Δ3, 210b22-27. I am citing the Bekker pagination and line numbers. For the Greek text of the *Physics*, I relied upon *Aristotelis Physica*, ed. W. D. Ross (New York: Oxford UP, 1950). I also consulted and made free use of J. Sachs’ translation, although I depart from this translation on numerous occasions. *Aristotle’s Physics, A Guided Study*. J. Sachs (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers UP, 1998).

explicit in the dialogues as a sustained thematic concern, neither *in* Plato nor *by* Plato. We find neither Socrates nor Timaeus, nor anyone else – certainly not Plato *himself* – ever attempting to give an exhaustive account of place as such, that is, of *what* it is itself as itself, its τί ἔστιν, despite Aristotle’s well-known but puzzling claim to the contrary.

* * *

In his *Physics* – or, more properly, in Book Δ of the text ΦΥΣΙΚΗΣ ΑΚΡΟΑΣΕΩΣ, *On Natural Auscultation* – Aristotle claims not only that Plato did attempt such an account of place but that in making such an attempt he remains *the* singular exception. In undertaking to say what τόπος is, Plato is alone, utterly unique. This exceptional status becomes all the more remarkable as Aristotle begins his inquiry into place by emphasizing the extreme difficulties that inevitably confront any attempted topology, that inhere by necessity in any λόγος that would venture to say whether, how and what place is. In the first lines of Aristotle’s own thematic treatment of place, which comprises the first five chapters of Book Δ, we find the admonition that, while a knowledge of place is a *necessity* for the study of φύσις, such a knowledge is also riddled with numerous aporetic perplexities: “what it is to be place harbors many impasses, for it does not appear to be the same to those who behold all things belonging to it [οὐ (...) ταῦτον φαίνεται θεωροῦσιν ἐξ πάντων τῶν ὑπαρχόντων]” [*Phys.* Δ1, 208a32-34] This basic point is then underscored by the fact that the major part of Aristotle’s discussion, that is, the first three chapters of his treatment, refrains from venturing anything like a “positive” account of τόπος, but merely articulates and elaborates its intrinsically aporetic character, posing and exposing its riddling nature.⁶

Aristotle thus tells us that coming to know [γνωρίζειν] τόπος is both necessary [ἀνάγκη] and yet also exceedingly difficult, is a necessity utterly fraught with perplexities and impossibilities. It is, to begin with, necessary, both because “everyone assumes beings are somewhere [τὰ ὄντα (...) εἶναι ποῦ]” (and they assume that not being means being nowhere, not being anywhere) and also because the most common and prevailing sense of movement or change, the κίνησις of beings, is “with respect to place [κατὰ τόπον]” [*Phys.* Δ1, 208a27-32]. And yet, given just this prevailing *ontotopological* thesis – that to be is always to be in a place – a knowledge of τόπος is, then, utterly difficult, if not downright impossible, since, despite its necessity, place itself does not show itself *as* itself, does not appear to be “the same” at all, but instead appears as though it were lacking *ipseity*, as though it were not at all what “it” is. The necessity of becoming familiar with place, in such a way that one would fully attend to it or behold it, in a θεωρεῖν that regards everything that intrinsically and originally arises with it [ἐξ πάντων τῶν ὑπαρχόντων], requires a familiarity with “something” that presents itself, according to its own proper

⁶ We have to forego here a more thorough discussion of Aristotle’s complicated treatment of τόπος, not only in the *Physics* but also in the *Categories*, as well as the way in which τόπος appears in the *Rhetoric*. But for a discussion of the difference between the *Physics* and the text of the *Categories* as treatments of place, see H. Mendell, “Topoi on Topos: The Development of Aristotle’s Concept of Place,” *Phronesis* 32, no. 2 (1987): 206-231. For a general overview to the question, see the still helpful article by H. R. King, “Aristotle’s Theory of ΤΟΠΟΣ,” *The Classical Quarterly* 44, no. 1-2 (1950): 76-96.

self-showing, as inherently strange, differing from itself, thus without identity or self-sameness, showing *itself as other*, as other to what properly belongs to it as “the same.”⁷

The being of place, in its full, manifold appearing, thus appears to Aristotle, at least initially, to contradict itself, seeming both to be and not be itself, to not be the same. Yet Aristotle insists also that the entire preceding tradition offers no help in this regard, has bequeathed nothing as a way to resolve the inescapable but thoroughly aporetic demand the question of place presents: “we have nothing from anyone else, nothing at all that would open a way either into or out of such impasses concerning [place] itself [οὐδ’ ἔχομεν οὐδὲν παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων οὔτε προηπορημένον οὔτε προηπορημένον περὶ αὐτοῦ]” [*Phys.* Δ1, 208a34-b1].

Precisely in this context, Plato’s distinct accomplishment, as the only one who has attempted to say what τόπος is, appears to be all the more remarkable and significant. Still, if Aristotle can be heard praising Plato for this attempted topology, this reserved praise, with respect to how it is presented and what it actually claims, proves to be utterly misplaced,⁸ since it rests entirely on the assumption that χώρα is “the same” as τόπος – that the two refer to what is one and the same, and, on the basis of this gravely mistaken assumption, compounds its distortion by claiming further that Plato also took “place” (whether as χώρα or τόπος) to be matter, ὕλη. Yet it is clear, at a minimum, that, while Timaeus (but not Plato) does attempt to say what χώρα is in the dialogue named after him, he does not therefore attempt to say what τόπος is.⁹ While Timaeus does indeed speak of

⁷ It is worth noting how Timaeus makes a similar statement with regard to the cyclical exchange of earth, air, fire and water, which leads him to the necessity of a third kind: “since each of these individually never shows itself as the same, which of them can anyone firmly insist is any one thing and not another without putting himself to shame?” (*Tim.* 49c-d). *Plato, Vol. IX, Loeb Classical Library*, trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1929). See also *Plato’s Timaeus*, trans. Peter Kalkavage (Newburyport: Focus Philosophical Library, 2001).

⁸ Is it not ironic that Aristotle’s praise hardly masks his criticism, considering that, according to his own elegy of Plato, the wicked who censure Plato do not have the right to praise him? Is it not the case that praise already presumes the right to censure, which is why praising gods and kings proves to be such a dangerous affair? This concern, of course, haunts the *Euthyphro* from its beginning to its end, and returns explicitly in the *Apology* when Socrates recounts how he found it necessary to question the truth of the oracle.

⁹ Referring not only to the *Timaeus* but also to what is said in the unwritten teachings, Aristotle claims that Plato’s position is unmistakable, entirely evident. “Plato says in the *Timaeus* that matter and χώρα are the same, since what is receptive [of form] and χώρα are one and the same. Though he spoke in different ways there [in the *Timaeus*] and in what is said in the unwritten teachings about what is receptive [to form], still he made it clear that place and χώρα are the same [ὁμοῦς τὸν τόπον καὶ τὴν χώραν τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀπεφίνατο]. For while everyone says that place is something, he alone endeavored to say what it is” [*Phys.* Δ4, 209b11-17; compare also the passage at Δ2209b33-210a2]. Aristotle is not concerned primarily with an interpretation of χώρα but rather with substantiating the claim that Plato took τόπος as matter or material. He thus insists upon a number of problematic translations which, by saying “the same” (ταὐτόν), allow him to draw his intended conclusion, namely, that τόπος/χώρα and matter are the same: since what is receptive (τὸ μεταληπτικόν) and χώρα are the same, and since matter or material (ὕλη) is what is receptive to form, χώρα is matter. And since τόπος and χώρα are the same – that is, since χώρα simply “is” τόπος – both τόπος and χώρα are, according to Plato, matter or material. Not only does Aristotle insist upon these *tautological* assertions without any expressed reservations, but he also appears to take what is said in the *Timaeus*, said there in that dialogue by Timaeus, as locutions issued directly by Plato himself, from the mouth of Plato. What Timaeus says in that dialogue is what Plato says: in this way, Plato speaks “in” the *Timaeus*, in the place of that text. Yet what makes this Aristotelian interpretation of the Platonic text still more puzzling is that, even under the assumption that Plato speaks for himself through Timaeus, there is still no textual evidence for claiming that χώρα is matter, or even that it can be simply identified with τόπος. For a more elaborate account of this Aristotelian interpretation of χώρα as matter and its subsequent history, see Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato’s Timaeus* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1999), 146-167, but esp. 150-3. Simply put, according

place and places, this is still a far cry from a definitive account of place as such, does not amount to an exhaustive topology.

Perhaps it is to be expected that Aristotle's account here of "what Plato says" would enact such a fundamental distortion of the text, since it could be argued that prevarications of this kind belong to the very μέθοδος of dialectical inquiry, which begins by taking up the more superficial *endoxic* appropriations of earlier thought so as to render that thought *in one sense* clear, that is, by giving it a doctrinal and thereby reductive, if not utterly false, formulation: dialectic, as a way to truth, can begin and continue only by also speaking untruly, by presenting a truth that remains still concealed, a point which authorities on Aristotle only rarely and begrudgingly, if ever, want to concede.¹⁰ Nevertheless, while there would seem to be no textual basis for a simple identification of χώρα with matter in the *Timaeus*,¹¹ the relation between χώρα and τόπος, for necessary reasons, remains unclear. And this obscurity, its very necessity, is not at all incidental to the question of both χώρα and τόπος.

to Sallis, "For the identification of ὅλη with χώρα, there is no basis in the *Timaeus*" (Sallis, *Chorology*, 152). With regard to the more difficult question concerning χώρα as τόπος or place, see Sallis, *Chorology*, 115-121. George Claghorn, *Plato's Criticism of Plato's "Timaeus"* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954), who also takes issue with this identification of χώρα with matter and place. More recently, Johannes Fritsche offers a defense of Aristotle's reading of χώρα. J. Fritsche, "Aristotle on Χώρα in Plato's *Timaeus* (*Physics* IV:2, 209 B 6-17)," *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, Band 48 (Felix Meiner, 2006): 27-44.

¹⁰ In fact, we find Socrates doing the same thing throughout the dialogues, although such distortions are usually presented along with the proviso that they may be a mistaken. What is decisive, however, is always whether such reductive formulations merely shut down dialogical inquiry or open the way to a more original inception of its questioning. To give one example, in the *Republic*, when Polemarchus introduces what Simonides says justice to be – that is, giving to each what is owed – Socrates does not insist that such a λόγος is false, since Simonides is wise and godly, but only that he does not yet grasp it could be saying. Here Socrates remarks, even, that Simonides cannot mean what he appears to mean (*Rep.* 331e-332a). A few pages later, when Thrasymachus states that justice is what benefits the strong, Socrates replies that before he can praise Thrasymachus he must first learn what Thrasymachus means, since he does not understand. To suggest, however, that Polydamus' lunch would be justice has to be the pinnacle of absurdity. What Thrasymachus says here to Socrates would seem to apply no less to Aristotle's own *endoxic* clarifications regarding his predecessors: "You take hold of the λόγος in the way you can work the most harm" (*Rep.* 338d), *Plato, Vol. V – VI, Republic, Loeb Classical Library*, ed. & trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2013); A. Bloom, trans., *The Republic of Plato* (New York: Basic Books, 1991). To take yet another example, in the *Theaetetus* Socrates expresses a certain wariness of speaking on behalf of Protagoras, precisely because Protagoras himself is not present to defend his λόγος.

¹¹ It would seem that Aristotle's claim that χώρα is to be taken as an underlying or primary matter rests upon the example of gold being able to receive different shapes (at *Tim.* 50ab) or perhaps, even, the odorless oil which is able to receive other scents (*Tim.* 50e), which leads him to speak of a "maleable stuff," the ἐκμαγεῖον at 50c. According to the strictures of his own thinking, Aristotle is almost compelled to assume that, since the third kind has no form or is "beyond all form," it must therefore be matter. See the passage in *On Generation and Corruption*, where Aristotle identifies the "all-receiving" (πανδεχέειν) with ὑποκειμένον as primary matter by referring to the example of gold (329b13-24). As "the nature that receives all bodies" but which "never abandons its own power" (*Tim.* 50b-c), perhaps it can be said that χώρα bears a certain likeness with matter, as maleable stuff. But this is clearly still only a "likeness" of what has no likeness, that is, of what is not only not an image of something unimaginable which in its unimaginability must exceed the image (say, intelligible being, the first kind), but rather an image of what differs even from that of which there can be no images; every image or translation of χώρα is thus not simply "inadequate" to what χώρα properly is but rather χώρα, precisely in its utmost receptivity, must necessarily allow for while refusing every translation, every image, even every what. *Timaeus* also states that this third kind is "some invisible and shapeless form (εἶδος)" (*Tim.* 51a-b). Thus, χώρα remains "intrinsically untranslatable" (Sallis, *Chorology*, 115).

While this lack of clarity precludes any simple identification of *χώρα* with place in the *Timaeus*, neither does it allow us to insist thereby that there is nothing at all “between” the two, that the two, as if separated by a nameless void, do not overlap or make contact at all, that place has nothing at all to do with *χώρα* as it is presented by Timaeus in his chorology. Just before Timaeus names *χώρα* for the first time, as he takes up the need to introduce an elusive “third kind” or τρίτον γένος (*Tim.* 48e; 49b; 52a), he briefly again accounts for the first two kinds and tells us that the second kind, as sensible, generated and “swept along,” always comes to be “in some place [ἐν τινι τόπῳ]” and “then disappears from there [πάλιν ἐκεῖθεν ἀπολλύμενον],” such that, with regard to this second kind, it can be said that being “in some place” would mark the very difference between being and not being (*Tim.* 52a). In accounting for the second kind, as sensible, generated being, Timaeus thus invokes the same ontotopological thesis that will be repeated in Aristotle’s *Physics*, namely, the commonplace, prevailing assumption that to be at all is always a matter of being somewhere, in a place, and that not being anywhere must entail not being at all.

But, then, in turning to the question of how a third kind might be grasped, in distinction from the first two, to which now for the first time Timaeus gives the name *χώρα*, he makes reference once again to the same ontotopology that was just said to be operative in the appearance of the second kind:

a third kind, of *χώρα*, being always, not accepting destruction [φθορὰν οὐ προσδεχόμενον] and giving an abode to all that comes to be [ἔδραν δὲ παρέχον ὅσα ἔχει γένεσιν πᾶσιν], itself taken hold of through some bastard reasoning [λογισμῷ τινι νόθῳ] by means of insensibility, scarcely to be trusted [μόγις πιστόν], that which we look to when we dream and affirm [πρὸς ὃ δὴ καὶ ὄνειροπολοῦμενον βλέποντες καὶ φαμεν] that it’s necessary somehow for everything that *is* to be in some τόπος and inhabit some *χώρα* [ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι τοῦ τὸ ὄν ἅπαν ἐν τινι τόπῳ καὶ κατέχον *χώραν* τινά], that what is neither on earth nor somewhere under heaven is nothing [τὸ δὲ μήτ’ ἐν γῆ μήτε που κατ’ οὐρανὸν οὐδὲν εἶναι] (*Tim.* 52a-b).

Timaeus speaks here of a certain oneiric compulsion that, by taking hold of us, allows us to take hold of *χώρα*, doing so, however, by also forcing us to see it as a place, that is, by preventing us, in this dream-like, somnolent state, from “speaking the truth” (*Tim.* 52c). Subject to this compulsion or necessity, we are able to grasp *χώρα* only insofar as we also fail to distinguish it from what might be called, but not without extreme reservations, its mere likeness. Like the errant, untrustworthy calculations of a dreamer who remains oblivious to the dream itself, who does not know that they are dreaming, the bastard reasoning which apprehends *χώρα* follows the same phantasmatic necessity which imposes the ontotopological thesis on the second kind, thereby remaining incapable of seeing the third kind in its truth, the way in which it grants an abode or residence to the generation of beings, remaining unable to see, that is, *χώρα* in its difference from either the first or the second kind. Where there are (at least) two, distinct and separate from each other, as dreamers, we see instead only one “in” the other. Subject to the dream, we

cannot but take what grants a site or seat for all becoming in any way other than as an utterly encompassing place.

Under the spell of this dream and its illegitimate calculus, its errant counting, Timaeus even finds himself in this passage accounting for *χώρα* by referring to *χώρα* itself, by assuming it as something akin to *τόπος*, as if to suggest that the very word or name refers to something that has already granted a place for itself, as if *χώρα* itself would then have to be received as a mere image of itself, as something that we already know *χώρα* to be. Indeed, one of the great difficulties of interpreting *χώρα* in the *Timaeus* is that both in that text and elsewhere in the dialogues the word appears as though it had no relation to the displacement of (its) meaning enacted here.¹² And such a difficulty present itself even in this very passage, precisely as *χώρα* would also name that most elusive third kind, a “form difficult and obscure” (*Tim.* 49a). When he invokes the necessity of the ontotopological thesis, as it grounds our ability to grasp *χώρα*, while still not speaking the truth, he speaks of the necessity that everything not only be in some place but also “hold to some *χώρα* [κατέχων *χώραν* τινά],” thus holding to it by also *being held back from it*, remaining apart from that *in which* everything is.¹³ The oneiric, bastardly grasp of *χώρα*, its very *sense*, made evident in this remarkable reiteration, thus announces itself as already given, granted or placed, even before Timaeus would venture to say what *χώρα* properly would be: we already speak of *χώρα*, grasp it, as if by necessity, because we assume that everything is already occupying some *χώρα* that remains distinct, set apart.

Caught in the dream, *χώρα* appears to us both as if it were simply itself, that is, as it were “some” occupied *χώρα*, which it is not, and also, as if it were simply not itself, which it also is not. In this sense, it must be insisted that *χώρα* is beyond both earth and heaven and everything on the earth or in the heavens. But if we would then accept that we do indeed go through our lives as dreamers, as sleep-walkers caught within the necessity of this ontotopological thesis, whereby *χώρα* is taken simply as itself, as an image of itself, as just another *χώρα*, what then would it be to awaken from this dream, to speak the truth and distinguish the three kinds, precisely in their difference?

This difficulty – that we are, namely, already caught in such a bastardly reckoning, as it imposes its necessity and occludes the truth – is, however, immeasurably compounded by the fact that our way of accounting for this occlusion cannot be extricated from the occlusion itself, its very operation. The account given here of a concealed truth remains thoroughly entangled in the occlusion and its oneiric compulsion, finds itself inscribed within the same difficulty being addressed, already subject to its necessity. It is as if we always will have approached *χώρα* having granted the distinction between the first two kinds, even though, in our slumbering dullness, we proceed unaware of this distinction as such, and even though *χώρα*, as a distinct third, would somehow both precede and surpass the very order of such a distinction, as it asserts the unquestionable priority of the intelligible kind. For this reason, the difficulty of speaking the truth (*τάληθές λέγειν*), when it comes to *χώρα* *itself*, would not be resolved if we were to say instead that place

¹² See Sallis, *Chorology*, 115-118.

¹³ Sallis points out the “double meaning” of *κατέχων*, that it has the sense not only of occupying but also of being restrained. Sallis, *Chorology*, 120.

is only an image or likeness of *χώρα*, that *χώρα* is not just “some” *χώρα* but is in its own proper truth instead something else, no more than we are allowed to say that *χώρα* is simply place or a place. There is, of course, little sense in saying that *χώρα* *neither* is place *nor* is not place (is a non-place), no more than there is sense in saying instead that *χώρα* both is and is not place, is both a somewhere and a nowhere.¹⁴

It is, however, from just a dangerous place of contradiction that one must begin to interrogate the essential displacement of place that pervades the Platonic text, a displacement which, we hope to show, enacts itself far beyond the *Timaeus*.

Immediately after Timaeus insists upon the occlusion of truth effected by the bastard reasoning that grasps *χώρα*, he then elaborates this occluding operation by returning to speak of the second kind, doing so now by speaking of it as a likeness or image (εἰκόν).¹⁵ And here, once again, it is clear how such an occlusion is bound up with the necessity of the ontotopological thesis. That upon which likeness/image itself comes to be, he says, is not even itself, does not belong to the likeness/image. Always swept along, a likeness is rather only a “phantasm” of what is other to it (*Tim.* 52c). The sensible world, as a mere likeness of the intelligible, must always come to be *in* another as other, must either somehow take hold of intelligible being (being *in* it) or not be at all. And yet, the true λόγος, awakened from this dream, being able to discern one as one and another as another, insists that neither of the two can come to be *in* the other, that neither, *as the same*, can simultaneously become one and also two. (*Tim.* 52c-d).

Here, then, Timaeus tells us quite clearly that being *in* another, where one (as the same or as itself) appears as both one and two *at once* (ἅμα) – thus, grounding the ontotopological thesis and its necessity – is a claim that would find itself abrogated in the true λόγος which, awakened from the dream of a bastard reasoning, is able to separate or distinguish the first and second kind, by seeing the image as it is, as a mere phantasm, having no being without its participation in another. But it also follows from this that only with the introduction of *χώρα*, as an obscure, elusive third kind, does such a being *in* become possible. The mere distinction between the intelligible and the sensible thus already finds itself at a loss before the actual *being* of the second kind, the kind of being “proper” to the generated world, its way of actually presenting itself, that is, somehow *in* the intelligible, placed there. Without *χώρα*, without the appearance of the third, there would be, then, no counting at all, no plurality, since there would be only one (kind), never even two, let alone one *in* another.

It thus cannot be said that the untrue λόγος, which, as if in a dream, grasps *χώρα* as place, finds itself somehow “corrected” with the enunciation of the true λόγος, since such a correction would remain utterly incapable of addressing the very *necessity* of *χώρα*, which proves here to be indissociable from the necessity of dreaming. What is utterly decisive here, however, is that such a *true* λόγος *also finds itself unable to grasp*

¹⁴ Derrida speaks of an oscillation or alternation between exclusion and participation, “between two types of oscillation: the double exclusion (*neither/nor*) and the participation (*both this and that*).” J. Derrida, *On the Name* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 91.

¹⁵ According to Cornford, “in this passage Plato comes nearer than anywhere else in the *Timaeus* to the problem of the εἶδωλον.” F. M. Cornford, *Plato’s Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 196.

χώρα, as if χώρα is such that it must always withdraw from the truth of being itself and, as though it had no proper being, can only show itself in the very images which it both grants and utterly denies. In order to account for the appearing of the sensible, generated world, even the chorology itself, necessitated by χώρα – brought forth from χώρα – could be neither simply untrue, a mere phantasm, a mere likeness, nor simply true, but would also have to be both true and yet, *at once*, only an image, a mere dream. It would be, in other words, a μῦθος/λόγος that would first situate or place, while displacing, the very opposition between μῦθος and λόγος.

The third kind, that is, χώρα, is/not place, only appears *as if* it were a place while being neither anywhere nor being “something like” a place.¹⁶ It does not merely exceed the image, in the image of an unimaginable being that must stand apart as itself, like the intelligible one that is always itself, as the same, but rather necessitates the impropriety of the imagination, in a withdrawal which also grants a place to beings, thereby giving an abode, seat or residence to the sensible world. But this is to say only that, being utterly receptive to all things, even allowing one to be *in* another, χώρα remains a necessity which somehow grants place through its essential displacement of the propriety of place.

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To thematize the τόπος of this displacement, to speak *on* this topic or *about* it, thus appears to take for granted precisely what we would pose as a question. On the one hand, to pose or to place this question, is to announce that, from the beginning, we are already approaching that place where place itself would be found, that we know, in other words, what it is for something (or anything) to be in place or to have a place, that is, to belong somewhere, since only on this basis would we be able to seek the place where place itself appears or takes place, the place proper to place. Yet, on the other hand, to ask about the very emplacing of place, entails that we somehow still do *not* know where place would be found, otherwise there can be no question. It would seem, then, that place itself must always lack its own place, that there can be no place for place *as such*, since it is only by virtue of an elusive priority, its unplaceable emergence, that anything whatsoever can be in its place and so, appear at all, can come to be, take place. Place itself would always appear as if from nowhere, since it first grants a proper “where” to whatever is.

It is as if the place of place must remain essentially unthematized, if this topic only appears or take place from itself, must already assume itself as the place from which it can become a question, be first posed, set down or situated as a topic. All placing would then be grounded in an original unplaceability, the placelessness or lack of place from which anything at all as placed, including place itself, would also be displaced or out of place. As the generalizable “where” of whatever is, place as such could not *be* anywhere, and so would not be a “what” or even an “itself,” having no proper essence or place, except insofar as one might say, paradoxically, that the placing of place already belongs to its

¹⁶ Derrida speaks of the “anachrony of being,” as “the inevitable effect produced by *something like* the *khōra* – which is not something, and which is not *like* anything, not even like what *it* would be, *itself*, there beyond its name” J. Derrida, *On the Name*, 94.

own essential displacement, that τόπος *as such* must be inherently ἄτοπος, is grounded in an essential ἀτοπία. To undertake to think place itself, to consider its very appearance, would be possible, then, only as we find ourselves in a displaced and strange place, an ἄτοπος τόπος.

This topic, then, could not be any more unapproachable, could not be any stranger. It will always have been the un-approachable, if place has already granted every approach, is that which first of all would allow the appearing or self-showing of what is, in its place.

If we find ourselves between heaven and earth, still placed within this original, elemental separation, even so the expanse of this place is not entirely without bounds or limits, except in the sense that both earth and heaven, according to the recurring epithets of Hesiod and Homer, are “far-reaching” or “wide” – the “broad sky” [ὕρανος εὐρύς], “of the broad-wayed earth” [χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης]. Like a plateau or a plate, a plank, or even a blade, or perhaps the German *Blatt*, the leaf or a page, the English word “place” also speaks of breadth, a broadening or an opening, or, even, a “clearing” where something can be, or come to presence, like the πλατεῖα ὁδός, as *Platz*, *piazza* or *plaza*, that broad way wherein or through which things come to pass, that gives a place for their appearance. This sense of breadth suggests that “place” cannot be relegated to its mere stricture or confined containment. Referring not simply to an enclosure or a closet, the very breadth of place would first be the opening upon which something can be, the expanse through which beings not only end or cease to be, but also emerge, come to be, begin and continue. Place in this sense would not demarcate a mere location or a fixed point, but would refer instead to the open region that allows for the free movement of what is. Yet if places are also originally distinct or distinguished – if they are, as Heidegger says, *ausgezeichnet*¹⁷ – this very separation is what first grants their relation to each other, in the way that the sky or heaven is first of all distinct from the earth, by surpassing and overflowing all horizons, first appearing in this way, by being distinct, the sky detached for itself.¹⁸

* * *

Yet, in speaking on “the topic of place in Plato,” one also hears in our English translation a remarkable reiteration of the same, and not simply in the transition or shift from an elemental place to the thematic place of inquiry. The word “place,” that we inherit from the Greek πλατύς, meaning “wide” or “broad,” is, after all, also the word that gives Plato his very name. One often hears the story that Plato was given this moniker by his wrestling coach, and that, just as wrestlers today continue to take on exaggeratory nicknames, Plato was so dubbed, so the story goes, because of the breadth of his shoulders.¹⁹ According

¹⁷ Heidegger is perhaps referring to what Aristotle says at *Physics* Δ1, 208b18-19: ἐν δὲ τῇ φύσει διώρισται χωρὶς ἕκαστον, “in nature each [place] is marked off as separated, apart.”

¹⁸ More recently, Jean-Luc Nancy attempts to think this original separation as what grants all distinction, that first grants, even, a world. According to Nancy, the sky is always both detached from the ground and cut out from within it. See Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Image – the Distinct” in *The Ground of the Image* (New York: Fordham UP, 2005), 1-14.

¹⁹ In our world, driven as it is by cyber fantasy, there is even a website that generates a wrestling name for anyone who types in their given name (www.wrestlingname.com). I recently submitted my own name, Peter Warnek,

to Diogenes Laertius, however, it is uncertain whether “Plato” was given this name simply as a wrestling tag. This name may have referred instead to his resilient and abiding health, or perhaps to the physiognomy of his brow, or perhaps, more significantly, he was given this name “due to the breadth of his hermeneutics” – διὰ τὴν πλατύτητα τῆς ἐρμηνείας (*Lives* 3.4).²⁰

But is it not the case that “Plato” also refers to the *place* of the dialogues themselves, that is, the hermeneutic breadth of those texts that Plato signs as author, as when one speaks of what is found “in Plato,” what is said there, or put forward as a philosophical doctrine, even as Platonism?

We know Plato as the author who appears only once in the dialogues (*Apol.* 34a, 38b),²¹ and who throughout these dialogues remains utterly silent, whose *absence* from the scene recalled by Phaedo – that place where Socrates meets his end, namely in his prison cell – is even explicitly addressed, attributed there to a *lack of strength*, or to some undetermined sickness.²² In this context, one recalls how Diogenes Laertius emphasizes that Plato was known for his abiding and resilient health. This same silent and absent Plato, now weak and sick – while renowned for his strength and health – would then also be the one who, presumably, puts everything in its place, not unlike the demiurge who in the *Timaeus* arranges and orders everything that comes to be in the cosmos, while he himself remains emphatically un-placed, appearing, we might say, only *ectopically*, in the text but only by withdrawing beyond or at its margins, as if to make his absence only more emphatic and conspicuous. Plato thus does not simply remain absent; rather, his non-appearance takes place, precisely as he fails to show up where we most of all expect to find him. Plato thus appears not simply by appearing, but rather as one whose presence is withheld or withdraws, having no place, remaining without place. He thus speaks only in and through a resounding silence, his pervasive absence.

How, then, is the topic of place “in Plato” to be approached? What do we mean when we say, “in Plato,” for example, as if in referring to this *locus classicus* we mean a determinate site, the setting or position, the scene, region or circumscribed area? Where, one might even ask, does Plato’s text begin and end? How would one begin to demarcate what belongs to him, to separate what is properly his from what is not? How would one begin to extricate him from the history that both precedes and follows him?

which returned “Uncle Spartan.” Aristocles, Plato’s original name, did not yield “Plato” at all, but rather “Crazy Venus.”

²⁰ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers, Books 1-5, Loeb Classical Library*, trans. R. D. Hicks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1925).

²¹ One notes that, although Plato never actually speaks, Socrates does, on the occasion of his trial, relay something of what Plato wants, namely, that Socrates should offer to pay a more substantial penalty and that Plato and others will guarantee that payment. But it is as if in this way we only hear enough from Plato to know that he could have spoken, that he could have appeared within the dialogues as a “character” but does not.

²² Πλάτων δὲ οἶμαι ἡσθένει (*Phaedo* 59b). *Plato, Vol. I, Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Loeb Classical Library*, ed. & trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2017). Also, *Plato’s Phaedo*, trans. E. Brann, P. Kalkavage, E. Salem (Newburyport: Focus Philosophical Library, 1998). All that Phaedo says to Echecrates, in passing, is that he believes that Plato had fallen ill, that he was deprived of the σθένος, that is, the strength that would have been required for him to be there himself. See also P. Warnek, *Descent of Socrates* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2005), 15.

There is certainly no way to overstate the importance of this topic, that of place in Plato.²³ And yet, while it is abundantly clear that the place where each dialogue takes place, what we might call its dramatic “setting,” grounds what becomes manifest in it, this only points to the way in which the dialogical thinking that unfolds there – always *somewhere* – begins and proceeds first by finding itself situated or sited, such that what is insisted upon with the very placing or setting of the dialogues is that this dialogical thinking, as it remains a movement, always proceeds as a traversal, crossing somewhere, as a λόγος that moves *through or between*, while never being in a position to surpass or outstrip its way of being already placed, no more than Plato himself, utterly afflicted and weak with illness, cannot but remain absent from the place of his own text, is never able to enter the place or site of his own text.

Attending to the places of the dialogues thus puts into relief in a unique way the limits of human life, precisely as these limits refer us to movement or a journey from, within and toward places, but therefore also as this placed life finds itself within and before that of which it remains also *unknowing*. In this sense, human life never simply transcends or steps beyond the horizon of its actual place, even or especially in its transgressions. And yet, arguably, just this inexorable facticity – that human life only finds itself or finds its way always already placed, proceeding from somewhere – can be said to mark the singular or non-universalizable beginning of philosophy, both at its originary site and also as the impossible condition that sustains its ongoing questioning. To inhabit a place dialogically, that is, as a *dialogical* place, is to be in a place structured or placed according a logic of the δῖα. It is always to be in a place that is not first of all delimited by the identity of fixed boundaries but instead open to a movement of dislocation or displacement, in which a change of place is always also a matter of a displacement of place.²⁴

* * *

And yet, what about Socrates – that is, Socrates *himself* – who, according to both Schelling and Nietzsche, remains the most brilliant and most questionable *appearance* of antiquity and who, again and again, provokes the most monstrous misgivings, hesitations and question marks? If Plato, the author, must be regarded as the one who sets the dialogues in place, or even establishes their place, would we not then be justified in taking Socrates as the one who, most of all, comes to appearance in that Platonic place, who thus only appears, then, by virtue of a certain inscrutable Platonizing operation, such that he never will have appeared except by having been already so placed or *platonized*, never simply *as himself* but always already configured by the way he comes to appearance *there*, in Plato? One thus confronts the brilliant but strange appearance of Socrates in such a way

²³ As is emphasized by Drew Hyland: “Perhaps the single most distinguishing feature of the Platonic dialogue compared to other formats of philosophic writing is that the dialogue always begins in a specific place, a specific situation, out of which, within the limitations as well as the possibilities of which, the dialogue arises.” D. Hyland, “Potentiality and Presence in Plato: The Significance of Place in The Platonic Dialogues,” *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* VIII, no. 1 (1994): 30.

²⁴ This is perhaps echoed by Aristotle’s insistence that we would not have occasion to ask about place at all if it were not the case that the primary sense of movement is change with respect to place. See *Physics* Δ4, 211a12-13.

that it is always already too late to dissociate that appearance from the peculiar withdrawal of Plato from his own text, just as Plato's own non-appearance, his absence and silence, opens or allows for the place of Socrates in Plato.²⁵

Their (non-)appearing together thus turns on this asymmetrical or non-reciprocal *intimacy*, since each is both present and absent, but differently, only in relation to the other and never in a way that would permit either of the two to be collapsed into the other. The Socrates who does not write gives, in his death, the authorship of his own life to Plato, while the Plato who does not speak, except through his strange grief-stricken silence, gives voice to Socrates, gives the place where that voice, in all its strangeness, comes to be heard.²⁶ This intimacy or *Innigkeit* – are we permitted here to speak of love, of *φιλία*? – does not allow itself to be decided by attributing any priority to one or the other, to either Plato or Socrates, such that one or the other would then come to have the last word, whereby one of the two would come to be only the means of expression for the other, thus placed simply within the other. And yet, this distinction, difference or separation, that will always require counting Plato and Socrates as two, is also necessitated by the peculiar and distinctive *receptivity* of each to the other.

Here it is worth returning once again to that enigmatic claim found in the Second Letter: “there is not nor will there ever be a writing by Plato, but those which now bear his name belong to a Socrates become beautiful and new” (L2 314c). While this remarkable passage can of course be read as Plato's disavowal of any ownership of what is thought to be first of all *his* text, found “in Plato,” one should also not overlook how, precisely in such a disavowal, Plato also insists upon the way in which that text is to be received, thus by still reserving for himself a certain authority or command over the text, of what it can and ought to intend, to whom it can be said to properly belong. One has to consider, then, how such a disavowal does not simply abandon or divest itself of its own work, but points rather to a strangeness or an alien presence that arises from within what is properly its own, from within what would otherwise be thought to belong most of all to Plato himself, to be most of all his. But in just this way, this remarkable passage also makes clear how Plato receives Socrates, allowing him to come to appearance. It is just such a disavowed yet properly Platonic text that is able to singularly effect the *transformation* of Socrates mentioned in the Letter, precisely by providing the place where he thus reveals himself, albeit transformed or made over – this ugly, old man now appearing as both beautiful and new.

How, then, is Socrates to be encountered, as he comes to have his place in Plato, who thus shows himself *strangely* to belong there? This question asks us to attend to the very appearing of this peculiar strangeness itself, to that appearance of Socrates according to its exceptional singularity and as it occurs in the place of its appearance. But this is

²⁵ Again, following Hyland: “We must take note briefly of two other aspects of the dramatic context of the Platonic dialogues. I refer to the very ambiguous presence/absence of Plato, and a parallel presence/absence of the reader. In one sense, Plato, as writer of every dialogue, is always present. Yet, with the curious exception of the *Apology*, where he is said to be present (but silent!), he is never portrayed as actually present at the dramatic place of the dialogue. In a similar way, the reader is one sense present at every dialogue, yet in the dramatic sense always absent.” Hyland, “Potentiality and Presence in Plato,” 37.

²⁶ See Warnek, *Descent of Socrates*, 17.

only to say that there is something extraordinary, even wondrous, in the strangeness of Socrates, in the distinctive way he appears as out of place or lacking place. One thus has to ask about not only the appearance of Socrates as simply strange or out of place but, more precisely, about this very strangeness itself, the way in which it shows itself as a most strange strangeness. Socrates appears, that is, not merely out of place, not simply as ἄτοπος, but his strange appearance effects a displacement proper to place itself, such that one must say that *what is most strange about Socrates is to be found in the very way in which he belongs*.

* * *

One recalls how, in the *Phaedrus*, in a dialogue that unfolds entirely by virtue of where it happens to be placed, namely, outside the city walls,²⁷ one finds Plato's name echoed in the so-called "plane tree," in the *πλάτανος*²⁸ that, throughout the course of the dialogue, rooted there in the earth and stretching up toward the sky, with its broad crown of branches and canopy of leaves extending, filled with the incessant song of the cicadas, continues to shelter both Phaedrus and Socrates from the unrelenting brilliance of the Aegean sun bearing down upon them, thus granting to them the *σκολή* to continue their talk. (*Phaedr.* 229a, 230b)²⁹ It is above all clear that the place of the dialogue cannot be dissociated from this great tree, as it looms over the gently flowing creek and its sloping bank. To be sure, Socrates finds himself entirely captivated by this "divine" or "sacred" [*ἱερός*] place, by its enchanting beauty and its rife fragrance, telling us, in fact, that it is a *τόπος* haunted by gods and nymphs. His initial, dithyrambic speech, "caught in the grips of a divine passion [*θεῖον πάθος*]," proves to be possessed and inspired – that is, *enthused* – by these same nymphs who belong to this place, and Socrates even suggests that it is these very nymphs who have seduced him into giving this first transgressive, impious speech against Eros (*Phaedr.* 238c-d, 241e).

The tree so much defines or marks this divine place that Phaedrus takes it upon himself to swear an oath before it, namely, that he will deny Socrates any future speeches, an oath which he threatens precisely as a means to compel Socrates not to abandon the *λόγος* but to continue by attempting to outdo the speech of Lysias against the lover "in the presence of this very tree," as if the tree and its place somehow bear witness to what transpires between them (*Phaedr.* 236d-e). At yet another passage in the dialogue, only after Socrates has delivered his palinode, as a song of atonement, Socrates himself insists that he and Phaedrus continue their conversation because he takes his own actions in this "resting place" [*καταγώγιον*] to be accountable to the Muses (258e-259d). Socrates

²⁷ It should be recalled how the first occurrence of the word *χώρα* in the *Timaeus* refers to what is outside the city, what is other than the city (*Tim.* 19a). For a reading of the *Phaedrus* that proceeds from this question of the place of the dialogue, see Sallis, *Being and Logos*, "Beyond the City: *Phaedrus*," in *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1996), 104-179. See also the chapter, "Typhonic Eros and the Place of the *Phaedrus*," in Warnek, *Descent of Socrates*, 141-169.

²⁸ The tree in question is, presumably, *platanus orientalis*, so named because of its "broad crown." Like Plato himself, the tree takes its name from *πλατύς*, meaning broad. Sometimes referred to as the plane tree, there is nothing "plane" about it. There are living specimens of this tree today that are nearly 1000 years old.

²⁹ *Plato's Phaedrus*, trans. Stephen Scully (Newburyport: Focus Philosophical Library, 2003).

tells Phaedo that the cicadas, singing overhead and “conversing with each other,” are looking down upon them. And if these cicadas witness Socrates and Phaedrus continuing their talk, resisting slumber in the heat of the midday sun, a gift of divine honor may be bestowed upon them.³⁰ This tall plane tree thus harbors a divine presence that, looking down upon humans, inspires the most beautiful songs and witnesses speeches “both human and divine.” And so, while the place itself leads Socrates to give his transgressive speech against the seductive dangers of Eros, a transgression which calls for his beautiful palinode, it also inspires the remainder of the dialogue, which ends with Socrates praising precisely what he and Phaedrus have learned from the gods of the place.³¹

More decisive still, however, is how, caught up in and overwhelmed by the beauty of this divine place, under the shelter of this *platonic* tree, Socrates appears to Phaedrus like a stranger or foreigner, even as one who is ἀποώτατος, most out of place (*Phaedr.* 230c). In this passage, Phaedrus exclaims, in fact, how “wondrous” [θαυμάσιος] Socrates appears: “you seem like a stranger being led around [ξεναγούμενος, that is, one who is a stranger being guided, led, but also, perhaps, seduced] rather than one who belongs here [the word is ἐπιχώριος, that is, one who is of the place, who is from the χώρα, a native], never getting out of town or journeying into the outland [οὔτ’ εἰς τὴν ὑπερορίαν ἀποδημεῖς, not leaving one’s home and crossing over into what is beyond one’s own borders, into that region marked as extra-territorial]. It even seems to me as though you have never at all ventured beyond the walls [of the city]” (*Phaedr.* 230c-d).³²

Here, in this very place, one finds Socrates claiming that he rarely strays from the city, from that properly human place, since, as he says, the trees and the places of the open country [χωρία] teach him nothing, whereas the humans in the city do (*Phaedr.* 230d). While there is little question that this well-known statement appears *prima facie* to confirm a certain Socratic turn away from nature, and thus to indicate a practice that determines philosophical inquiry through a decisive privileging of human concerns over what lies beyond the city walls, over what is other than or more than human, at the same time, we cannot neglect how this very passage also anticipates another passage much later in the dialogue, where we find this same Socrates speaking of the oracle at Dodona, the great oak in the sanctuary of Zeus, which offered “the first prophetic speeches” and

³⁰ Socrates tells the story of “the race the cicadas” that descended from those humans who, when the Muses were born, found themselves so overtaken by the beauty of song that, utterly foregoing all food and drink, they simply sang themselves to death. Yet what the cicadas are now able to give to humans is nothing other than the power to be like themselves, singers unto death. For one who is not captivated by such a song, the story of the cicadas and their gift only points to death, to the gift of death; it does not reveal a sacred place opening onto a divine ecstasy. But the story speaks of a divine gift that is not unlike the gift of divine madness, or even love itself. It is clear, then, that this story also bears a kinship with another story told in the dialogue, the story of Boreas and the death of Oreithuia. We will return to this.

³¹ Socrates vows to report to Isocrates that he has learned the “love of wisdom.” The dialogue ends with Socrates offering a prayer in gratitude to Pan and all the gods of the place (*Phaedr.* 278b–279c).

³² It obvious, however, that Phaedrus here mistakes Socratic wonder before the beauty of the place for an unfamiliarity with it, as if familiarity already excludes wonder and wonder is an effect of mere unfamiliarity. It is Socrates who betrays a detailed knowledge of the place, both as he guides Phaedrus along the Ilissus to the plane tree (*Phaedr.* 228e) and also as he proves to be more aware of the exact location of the altar to Boreas (*Phaedr.* 229b-c). It could not be more evident that the strangeness of Socrates has nothing to do with a mere lack of acquaintance.

which speaks the truth to humans only if they know how to listen, if they have the ears to be receptive to it (*Phaedr.* 275b).³³ Thus, however we might take what appears here as a privileging of a merely human interaction, at the very least it cannot entail a sheer disregard for trees. On the contrary, Socrates proves to be quite willing and able to listen to the excessive, arboreal truth spoken cryptically in sacred places outside the city. What must be noted for now is only that the apparent strangeness of Socrates, his way of being out of place, or even most out of place in the places of the country, remarked upon by Phaedrus himself, points to neither an unfamiliarity with nor a lack of receptivity to what lies beyond the walls of the city.

It is also important that when Socrates speaks of the tree at Dodona he does so in response to Phaedrus' objection that Socrates is simply making up speeches to suit his own purposes, that he is, in other words, merely fabricating stories about Egypt and whatever else, inventing fictions as he pleases (*Phaedr.* 275b). In referring to the oracle at Dodona Socrates thus means to rebuke a certain youthful "wisdom" that becomes incapable of learning from trees and rocks, as he says. This later exchange, as it concerns a truth revealed in myths and oracles – or, perhaps, more simply, what the trees (and rocks) might teach us – occurs immediately after Socrates relays the story of Theuth and Thamus (274c-275c). The later exchange thus proves to be connected in yet another way to the earlier passage where Phaedrus cannot stop himself from exclaiming how "most out of place" Socrates appears to be outside the city walls. The connection between the two passages does not concern, then, only whether Socrates is receptive to trees. As Socrates finds himself overwhelmed by the beauty of the place to which Phaedrus has led them, in the shade of the tall plane tree, it is this very beauty (and Socrates' own wonder before it) that suddenly interrupts his response to Phaedrus' question concerning the story of Boreas and Oreithuia, namely, whether Socrates takes that story to be true (*Phaedr.* 229c-230a). It is, in other words, the tree and its place that interrupts Socrates as he accounts for his relation to myth and the truth of myth: "in the midst of our speeches, haven't we reached the tree to which you were leading us?" (*Phaedr.* 230a).

In the Socratic response to this question concerning such a truth (of story) we find yet another, utterly significant reference to the ἀτοπία of Socrates, precisely as the appearance of this Socratic strangeness or placelessness proves to be bound up with the appearance of monstrosities: what Socrates calls (at 229e) ἀτοπία. Socrates responds at first by telling Phaedrus that he himself would not be at all ἄτοπος if he, "like the wise," were not to put his trust in such stories, if he were to be unpersuaded or unconvinced by the story of Boreas but were instead to submit it to a certain "corrective" *allegoresis*. Such allegorical translations would put the myths in terms that are more readily understandable, that is, would render them not strange at all but instead "charming," χαρίεντα: Oreithuia was not carried off (abducted or seduced) by the god, Boreas, but was, in fact, only a girl who, playing with φαρμακεία on a rocky bluff – that is, messing around with drugs, herbs, potions – fell to her death, being surprised by a gust of the North Wind. But Socrates – who in a single gesture both offers this utterly reasonable allegoresis and also takes it back, who thus both grasps why it would be compelling but also refuses its interpretative

³³ Socrates also mentions the priestesses at Dodona and their divinely inspired madness (*Phaedr.* 244a).

translation – proves instead to have a much more complicated, that is, *stranger* or more “out of place,” relation to the truth of the story. He neither rejects nor accepts the possible allegoresis of the story, just as he neither rejects nor accepts what we might be tempted to call a “literal” reading of it.³⁴ The strangeness of Socrates appears in this passage to be grounded instead in the affirmation of his distinctive philosophical practice, defined by a task, enjoined upon him by the god, Apollo, that of self-knowledge. Yet, what is stranger still, is that this very practice and its task also demands a certain Socratic acceptance of stories and their monstrous, *atopic* appearances.

Thus, at the very least, it is important to note here the following. First of all, we see that Socrates accounts for this task of self-knowledge in a register that is itself unmistakably mythic, not only because this task is imposed upon Socrates by Apollo through his Delphic inscription and oracular injunctions but, more importantly, because what is to be decided in the task of this Apollonian *autognosis* is itself articulated according to the most monstrous, titanic figure of all, namely, *Typhon*, the most destructive of all winds. While Socrates states that his acceptance of myth leaves room for an investigation into himself, this privileged *autoscopy* is then accounted for precisely as a question of Socrates’ own possible monstrous nature over and against a possible *θεία μοῖρα*: what such a divinely enjoined investigation is to determine is “whether my fortune is to be a beast more twisted and tangled, more furious and raging than Typhon, or to be a more gentle and simple animal, possessing by nature a divine and quiet un-Typhonic lot” (*Phaedr.* 230a). Second, it is evident that the project of such an allegorizing translation of every mythic figure *necessarily* exceeds human limits: Socrates tells us that anyone who undertakes such a comprehensive allegoresis would inevitably lack the *σχολή* to successfully complete it, would be deprived of the temporal space to overcome mythic truth. Such a clever but terrible human, who would undertake such an allegoresis, would in the end find themselves overwhelmed by hoards of monstrous natures. In other words, the very possibility of such a clever (but unfortunate) allegorizing of the divine and the monstrous is itself a sign of a certain human monstrosity and its transgressive hubris. Third, the Socratic response to the question of the truth of myth unfolds here according to two distinct moments, each of which enacts a peculiar displacement: there is (1) the distinction drawn between the myth itself and its allegorical, “corrective” meaning, a true *λόγος*, and there is, then, (2) the necessary displacement of this opposition as such, which thereby points toward an entirely different, *atopic* relation to mythic truth, one which remains, strictly speaking, neither literal nor figurative, reducible, strictly speaking, to neither an acceptance of the story nor its rejection.³⁵

³⁴ For our purposes, what is utterly decisive here is to see how Socrates does not at all simply “turn away” from mythic truth, as is suggested by Derrida, but, in fact, turns away from any investigation that would merely allegorize myth. See “Plato’s Pharmacy,” in *Dissemination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 69.

³⁵ For a more developed discussion of this Socratic response to the question of the “truth” of the story, see Warnek, *Descent of Socrates*, 159-169. See also Sallis, *Being and Logos*, 114-116, and G. Nicholson, *Plato’s Phaedrus: The Philosophy of Love*, 22.

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There is no possibility of doing justice here to every Platonic passage in which the strangeness of Socratic is emphasized, his peculiar way of being out of place. One might think first of all of what is said, not only by Phaedrus here in the dialogue named after him, but also by Polus and Callicles in the *Gorgias* (473a; 494d), or, perhaps, above all, by Alcibiades in the *Symposium* (215a; 221d). Socrates himself is well aware that he is encountered in this way, saying so, for example, in the *Apology* (31c) and, perhaps more importantly, in a passage near the beginning of the *Theaetetus* (149a), where he speaks of his practice as a *maieutic* art. In this passage, as Socrates claims to practice the art of the midwife, he exhorts Theaetetus: “Don’t, however, denounce me before others. They have not been aware (...) that I have this art, and so, because they do not know, they don’t say this about me, but they say I’m most strange and make humans perplexed [ὄτι δὲ ἀτοπώτατός εἰμι καὶ ποιῶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀπορεῖν]” (*Theaet.* 149a).³⁶ It is also the case that this word – ἄτοπος – that ordinarily refers to what is simply odd, unexpected, unusual, alien or even monstrous, is by no means reserved exclusively for Socrates in the Platonic text.³⁷ For this reason, the ἀτοπία of Socrates does not emerge in its own distinctive peculiarity if one looks only for what is “unusual” about him, the ways in which he seems to differ or stand out from his fellow Athenians.

How, then, is one to read those passages in the dialogues in which the figure of Socrates is encountered as strange or ἄτοπος, even most of all strange, ἀτοπώτατος?³⁸ We should guard ourselves against passing over the sense of the superlative here, “most strange,” as one encounters it throughout Greek philosophical discourse – for example, in what is the most difficult, most knowable, most visible, shining forth most of all, most of all good, being most of all, most ruling, most wise, most just and so on. Such superlatives as they speak of what is “most of all,” what is μάλιστα, indicate an impossible limit, a marker for what is already verging on a certain impossibility, as they approach that place where there is no longer any possibility, beyond which nothing is possible. In this sense, being “most out of place,” refers, then, not merely to the extremity according to which the strangeness

³⁶ A similar characterization of the reputation of Socrates is found in the *Meno*, 79e-80b.

³⁷ The teachings of Anaxagoras are called ἀτόπος by Socrates (*Apol* 26e). Compare this to *Phaedo* 98c, where Socrates says that the teachings of Anaxagoras are filled with things that are ἀτόπος. Similarly, at *Phaedo* 99a, Socrates speaks of Anaxagoras claims about cause as ἀτόπος. At *Apol.* 27e, Socrates states that the charge that he does not believe in the gods of the city are comparable to other claims that are ἀτόπος. At *Crito* 44b, Crito calls the dream of Socrates ἀτόπος, the dream that conveys to him the day of the arrival of the ship from Delos. And at *Euthyph.* 3b, Socrates says that the charges against him are grounded in things that are ἀτόπος. At *Phaedo* 68d, Socrates says that what others call courage is ἀτόπος. See also, for example, *Rep.* 493c, where Socrates distances himself from sophistic education by speaking of the teacher who appears to be ἄτοπος. And see also the many other passages in the *Republic* where the word ἄτοπος does not refer to Socrates or to philosophical practice at all, and even appears as something philosophy must avoid: 370a, 405d, 459b, 475d, 484d, 491c, 501d, 544d, 595c. See also those passages in the *Republic* where the appearance of what is ἀτόπος provokes questioning: 428b, 491b, 524b, 530b.

³⁸ For scholarly discussions of Socratic strangeness, see T. Eide, who claims that Plato “established the use of ἄτοπος in Greek literature.” See his article “On Socrates’ ἀτοπία,” *Symbolae Osloenses* LXXI (1996): 59-67. See also M. Barabas, “The Strangeness of Socrates,” *Philosophical Investigations* 9, no. 2 (1986): 89-110; J. Turner, “ΑΤΟΠΙΑ in Plato’s *Gorgias*,” *International Studies in Philosophy* 25, no. 1 (2011): 69-77.

of Socrates would surpass everything else that is strange but is rather a strangeness that could not be any stranger, beyond which nothing is strange or out of place.

As such a limit, at the very extreme of the possible, the superlative in this sense must, however, still belong to what it surpasses, to that by which its very superlativity would be designated, even if, at the same time, it must also break with this belonging decisively, as if what is *most of all* must be attributed to a way of being, must belong to it and be of it, by marking precisely the exceptional, the excessive, and the singular, such that how one might understand the general class among which the superlative is otherwise to be counted would find itself essentially transformed. It is in this sense, then, that one has to consider the superlative strangeness of Socrates, namely, as an utterly *strange* strangeness, as a strange placing of the strange, such that, in this doubling, it is taken beyond the merely strange, beyond what is simply out of place. As ἀτοπώτατος, most out of place, Socrates breaks even with the class of what is simply strange, as if in such superlative strangeness, he appears stranger still than even what is simply strange, still more out of place than what is out of place.

One could, for example, find even in the appearance of a stranger nothing strange at all, in the sense that such strangeness can be attributed to the way in which the stranger, by being from another place, simply does *not* belong. In this sense, then, it would be still more strange if the stranger did not appear as strange, if the stranger did not take place strangely in the place to which the stranger does *not* belong. Here, then, the only thing stranger than the strange not appearing as strange, is the appearance of what belongs precisely as strange. And is it not in this latter sense that Socrates appears as odd, out of place, or most out of place? When in those astonishing moments the familiar itself becomes strange, such as when, for example, the face of a loved one becomes mysterious or even indiscernible, or when one fails to recognize even oneself, perhaps in an image or an echo, what appears is not simply a strangeness encountered in what is already properly strange or foreign, the strange as simply strange, but is rather the rupture of the proper, of what is one's own, from within its very propriety, the strangeness of what belongs, in its place.

The encounter with Socrates, his way of appearing, can thus be thought as the experience of an essential displacement, even the displacement of *essence* as such, an experience in which one encounters the belonging together of the strange or the estranging of what belongs. This is to say that his peculiar or strange ἀτοπία is always such that it bears precisely upon the τόπος itself that would name the place of belonging, the place proper to whatever is as itself. To inhabit the topic of place in Plato, to take up this topic through the strange appearance of Socrates, thus becomes a matter of encountering how place as such, in this appearance, comes to be divested or dispossessed of its presumed propriety, in a paradoxical appearance that runs counter to the insistent δόξα that is only able to find in the strange what does not belong and in the proper only the expected familiarity of what belongs, only what is familiar. If the encounter with Socratic questioning leads inevitably to ἔλεγχος and ἀπορία, what is decisive with regard to the experience of such interruption and impasse is that it always emerges precisely from within the familiar givenness of things, the assumed πίστις of things in their place. Strictly speaking, the appearance of Socrates, as ἄτοπος, must be called paradoxical, in the very sense that, as παρά to δόξα,

it runs counter to or beyond δόξα by following that very δόξα itself, by contravening upon the expected commonplace appearance of things, attending to that very appearance itself as strange.³⁹ Socratic strangeness thus does not refer to a mere being out of place that still leaves intact the propriety of place but instead effectively displaces what we have called the ontotopological thesis, that to be at all is to be in place, that not being in place is not to be.

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And yet, this is not to say that the *practice* of Socratic displacement does not articulate itself with reference to a certain insistent determinacy. The strange atypical belonging of Socrates that effects the displacement of place, presented here as the originary effect of Socratic philosophical questioning, always takes place, namely, *between* the city (the political) and the natural or divine, only opens in the *difference* that is established and sustained between the two ways in which human life would otherwise account for its place, would be in place. There is thus evident in Socratic displacement, in the force of its interruptive interrogation, always an implicit *doubling* of place, as it unfolds between, on the one hand, a place grounded in a certain unyielding attachment to the city and, on the other hand, a place delivered over to the demonic or ecstatic relation to the divine or what might be called *cryptic* nature or, simply, φύσις.⁴⁰ The very place of this displaced belonging, in other words, always concerns both the city and divine nature as what would otherwise grant to human life its proper place.

This essential displacement of the place of human life, as it is effected by Socratic dialogical practice, thus emerges not simply through its ironizing discourse, its insistent claim to ignorance or its preoccupation with erotic matters, but, more fundamentally, in the way that these distinctive traits of Socratic practice are always brought to bear upon the possible determination of the place of human life, of how it takes place and how it might find its proper place, by insisting through its ongoing practice that this is a possibility that can only begin by affirming how it finds itself having been already placed in a certain way. The ignorance and ἔρωξ for which Socrates is famous, in other words, become utterly irrelevant except insofar as these traits also, if not first of all, prove to be configured in his *courageous* affirmation of where and how he finds himself. The uncompromising character of such courage, as a courage for a practice into its death, can be understood in no way other than as the singular philosophical demand that one take up one's given place in life as an unconditional task.

* * *

This is made evident, perhaps most of all, in the *Apology of Socrates*, in the speech he gives at his trial, in which he accounts for the origin of his philosophical practice by appealing to the authority of Apollo, by calling upon the god as a witness, who, as Socrates insists,

³⁹ I am making use here of the way in which Greek δόξα not only refers to opinion, or the way in which things seem to be, but also to a form of expectation, grounded in familiarity and trust.

⁴⁰ This sense of cryptic nature as it unfolds in the Socratic task of self-knowledge is elaborated in Warnek, *Descent of Socrates*.

has assigned him to the city, just as if he had been given a direct command that “he must live philosophically, examining himself and others” (*Apol.* 28e). As if by *θεία μοῖρα*, made clear through dreams and oracles (*Apol.* 33c), Socrates claims that he has been attached to the city by this god (*Apol.* 30e). This reference in the *Apology* to a divine granting of one’s place of belonging, as the *θεία μοῖρα* that assigns one’s place or lot, thus bears a connection to other passages in the dialogues – for example, at the end of the *Meno* or in the *Phaedrus* where Socrates elaborates the Delphic task of *self-knowledge* by contrasting such *θεία μοῖρα* with a possible excessive Typhonic monstrosity (*Phaedr.* 230a). Such divine dispensation thus offers a way to further interrogate the strange sense of Socratic practice, his appearance as a (dis)placement.

In the *Apology* it is above all clear that such a divine placement does not simply call for a simple acceptance of a given place but rather for a philosophical interrogation, as both a practice and a task. At the trial Socrates both responds to the charge that there is something shameful or hideous in his facing death as a result of his practice (*Apol.* 28b) and also rules out the possibility that facing the threat of death he could be coerced into abandoning his philosophical ways (*Apol.* 29c). There can be no question as to how the proper place of Socrates must be understood, at least initially. Attached to the city by the god, he belongs there, even unto death.⁴¹

What is especially revealing, however, is how this sense of divine placement also brings about a most radical *affective* transformation, since it is according to this very way of accounting for his life in the city, as a matter of affirming his way of being placed there, that Socrates comes to advocate against the fear of death. And what is perhaps most remarkable in this peculiar Socratic avowal, as it would displace the fear of death – precisely as it is said to be grounded in his attachment to the city, commanded by the god – is that it is presented by Socrates as an affirmation of his ignorance. In just this way, then, it is evident that the appeal to the authority of the god does not allow itself to be taken as a simple justification of his practice, a justification that would then disburden him of his own practice. In no way can it be said, in other words, that Socratic practice, as it leads him to his trial and his death, follows from a mere obedience to the god. Much more provocatively, the appeal to the authority of the god has to be considered first of all as it throws Socrates back upon the way in which that practice emerges only in a peculiar courage, which allows him to remain open to his place by holding fast to an enigmatic but inescapable ignorance, by preserving that place as a lack of place.

What Socrates says in the *Apology* is that the fear of death, far from arising simply in our unknowing relation to it – such that one might say, according to the familiar platitude, that what is feared is the unknown and nothing is more unknown than death – is instead a way of *seeming* to know what one, in fact, does not know.⁴² Thus, fear, while

⁴¹ See A. Kosman, “Plato’s Heroic Vision: The Difficult Choices of Socratic Life,” *Faculty Publications: Political Science*. Paper 45.

⁴² “Dreading death, gentlemen, is nothing else than seeming to be wise while not being so; for it seems to know that which it does not know. For no one knows whether death happens to be not even the greatest of goods for humans, but humans dread it as if they knew well that it is the greatest of evils. And is this not the most inexcusable form of ignorance, that of supposing one knows what one does not know?” The Greek text runs: τὸ γὰρ τοι θάνατον δεδιέναι, ὃ ἄνδρες, οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἐστὶν ἢ δοκεῖν σοφὸν εἶναι μὴ ὄντα· δοκεῖν γὰρ εἰδέναί ἐστιν ἃ οὐκ οἶδεν. οἶδε μὲν

in no way an actual knowledge, also only becomes possible, according to this remarkable Socratic interpretation, in its failure to confront itself in its ignorance. The power of fear as an affect or a pathos, then, does not consist simply in a failure to know what is feared, but more precisely in its way of not knowing *itself*, namely, not knowing itself *as an ignorance*. The difficulty raised here consists in the fact that what is typically referred to as the unknown in fear – death, for example, as most unknown and most feared – still finds itself claimed and determined in advance in a certain way in the pathos of fear, and thus is also not simply something hidden. According to the text, Socrates says that such fear or dread is caught in a seeming; it is a δοκεῖν. To fear, then, is not to know, but it is more properly a δόξα or an expectation, bound to a pathos, that can only live in the terrible ὕβρις of a certain kind of illusory “knowledge,” where one remains unable to know that one does not know.

In this way, the fear of death shows itself to be constituted in a certain anticipation that has already taken death in a certain way, *as* something terrible, something to be avoided. The dread before death can be said, then, to enact a kind of pathological interpretation, an expectation of death, in which it comes to show itself in a certain way, but this anticipatory grasp prevails *as fear* only by also closing itself off to death, precisely in that very expectation. The δόξα in which death appears as something to dread thus also conceals death, or lets death conceal itself, by forcing it to show itself as something it is not. Death, when feared, conceals itself in its very appearing.

What is apparent in this Socratic displacement of the fear of death, then, is that it belongs to Socratic ignorance to work against the familiar violation of death’s self-showing, by enacting a kind of strange courage that is able to affirm death, or even what is called in the *Phaedo* the care for death [μελέτη θανάτου] (*Phaedo* 81a). Socratic practice enacts such care, however, not by making more truthful claims that would determine what human mortality as such entails, but rather by remaining wondrously open to this mortality, precisely in its strangeness. In such courage, it must be said that death is indeed manifest, and so undeniable, and yet also allowed to remain strangely unknown, to appear precisely as strange. The erotic ignorance of Socrates has to be considered, therefore, as such a wondrous or strange courage that is able to sustain itself precisely in this indeterminacy between a knowing, as it encounters what is manifest, and not knowing.⁴³

This courage that remains in this way strangely open to death, that thereby does not mistake itself for knowledge or wisdom, is thus grounded in the divine placement that calls Socrates to face his death and to care for it, such that it is not possible to consider how Socrates is able to affirm his place in the city without at the same time grasping that this very affirmation must itself also entail a transformed relation to death, effected in the

γάρ οὐδεὶς τὸν θάνατον οὐδ’ εἰ τυγχάνει τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ πάντων μέγιστον ὄν τῶν ἀγαθῶν, δεδίασι δ’ ὡς εὖ εἰδότες ὅτι μέγιστον τῶν κακῶν ἐστί. καίτοι πῶς οὐκ ἀμαθία ἐστὶν αὐτῆ ἢ ἐπονείδιστος, ἢ τοῦ οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι ἃ οὐκ οἶδεν; (*Apol.* 29a-b).

⁴³ Only from here, it should be added, is it possible to begin to think through that famous but mistakenly interpreted Socratic maxim, that virtue is knowledge. What is suggested here, in other words, is not simply that virtue (for example, courage) is reducible to an “intellectual” determination, but rather that knowledge and ignorance must first of all be returned more originally to the way in which they are always already caught up in the *pathos* of mortal human life, thought here as a matter of being placed.

displacement, as it holds itself open to death in its ignorance. And such courage is said to be, quite clearly, a matter of *where* one is placed and whether one is able to remain in that place, that is, whether one deserts one's post (τάξις) or remains there.⁴⁴ Thus, on the one hand, the appeal to the authority of the god, as it would account for the practice of Socrates, must indeed entail the defiant refusal to abandon the place that Socrates has been assigned by the god: Socrates insists that his philosophical practice belongs in the city, that he has been attached to the city, as a divine gift. And yet, on the other hand, that refusal itself, grounded in this peculiar courage, cannot thereby, in its ignorance, simply assume the actual *givenness* of that place as such. This is to say that, by attaching Socrates to the city, the god does not simply give Socrates his place, does not directly and unambiguously command him to take up philosophy, but rather, much more paradoxically, Socrates assumes his place in the city, precisely as it would be *given* to him – in a supposed submission to the command of the god – only by also questioning and challenging that very place *as given*, that is, by holding to his ignorance, by paradoxically insisting that his wisdom is *not* wisdom at all, or, perhaps, only a *human* wisdom.

In order to continue reading the *Apology* in this way, it is necessary to consider how this divine assignment of the place of Socrates in the city comes to be enforced only in and through the strange Socratic response to the god's oracular pronouncement, namely, that no one is wiser than Socrates, that he is, paradigmatically and superlatively, wise. What is decisive here is that this oracular pronouncement can lead to such a placing of Socrates in the city, can effectively attach Socrates to the city, only by taking into account how Socrates receives the oracle, how he proves to be responsive to the word of the god. In other words, it is not as if the oracle simply gives Socrates his place, attaching him to the city with a direct command, that he should remain there and practice philosophy, examining himself and others. The oracular word can be said to effect this placement only because Socrates attempts, paradoxically, to refute it, that is, by impiously challenging the god's authority. It becomes evident in this way that the strange courageous openness to death, the displacement of death's familiarity, as something to be feared, proves to be indissociable from the manner in which Socrates receives the oracular pronouncement, as he undergoes being so placed and yet, at once, also displaced.

The courage for death thus proves to be nothing less than the courage for the oracular command, since the command and the care for death are both grounded in the same affirmation of ignorance that is distinctive to dialogical practice. This is to say that the divine authority that commands Socrates to remain in his place, to practice philosophy in the city, can be located, strictly speaking, *neither simply in the oracle nor in the Socratic interpretation of it*. Rather, the oracular command is able to assign or attach Socrates to the city *only in the questioning response that already takes the oracle to be a confirmation of the need for such a questioning response, a questioning response that leads Socrates to his death*. The strange paradoxical wisdom or truth of the oracle, as it is received by Socrates, thus does not simply lie in the command it issues, but rather in that it issues its command by anticipating what Socrates himself already insists upon doing. The paradox,

⁴⁴ "Wherever someone stations oneself, taking being there as best, or is stationed by one's commander, one must, so it seems to me, remain in that place (ἐνταῦθα) facing all risks" (*Apol.* 28d).

in other words, lies in the way in which Socrates, in order to be able to submit himself to the oracle, to take up its pronouncement as a task, must *already* be claimed by that very task in order to hear what the oracle says. But if the oracle only tells Socrates what he already knows – that his wisdom is his ignorance – how, then, does it actually attach him to the city, assign him his place there? How is the appeal to the word of the god an account of the origin of Socratic practice?

The *Apology* leaves us, then, with the truth of Socratic wisdom as a practice that would displace fear by holding itself open to the utterly questionable place of human life as strange or out of place. Such a place can be given or assigned only as that life would remain open to death, as a care for death sustained in a courageous ignorance.⁴⁵ And was this not precisely what the Athenians took to be the great ὄβρις of Socrates, the dangerous threat that philosophy presents to the city?⁴⁶

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Yet in this way, the *Apology* refers us to the *Phaedo*, to the place where Socrates meets his death and to the dialogue in which Socrates finds it necessary to repeat, no doubt with a decisive difference, his apology for a philosophical life (*Phaedo* 63b). Indeed, nothing could be stranger, more out of place, to the friends who gather together with Socrates on the day of his death than to hear from him that “those who happen to have gotten in touch with philosophy in the right way devote themselves to nothing else but dying and being dead” (*Phaedo* 64a). Yet it will never be sufficiently emphasized how such a philosophical practice of death appeared to the Athenian people: as a morbid stubbornness, a sickly and defiant life, that, in being already half-dead, only gives rise to a citizen who is at best useless, at worst vicious (*Phaedo* 64b).

Nevertheless, it is apparent that the difference between what Socrates is able to say in the *Apology* and what he is able to say in the *Phaedo*, the difference between what unfolds in these two texts, is a difference configured by place, by how place both enables and constrains what can be said and done and what can come to appearance through things said and done. While the *Phaedo* can be read as a decisive repetition of the *Apology*, one also has to consider how the speech of the *Apology* is utterly constrained by the fact that it takes place at a public trial, just as one must attend to how the *Phaedo* remains wholly directed toward the undeniable fact of Socrates’ immanent death and is entirely conditioned by the need on the part of Socrates to respond directly to the fear and grief of his friends in his prison cell.

There is no chance of presenting a thorough reading of the *Phaedo* here, now, where we find ourselves. We have to forego taking up this dialogue as a whole, as it is first of all written by Plato, but then also presented as the recollection of Phaedo, who, as Phaedo himself tells us, was *himself there*, namely, *present* in the place where Socrates comes to his end, except to point to the way in which Socrates attempts, in his prison cell on the

⁴⁵ Consider, then, the very conclusion of the *Apology*: “The hour to depart is now upon us. I go to die, you to live. Which of us goes to the better lot is clear to no one, except the god” (*Apol.* 42a).

⁴⁶ See, for example, the passage in the *Gorgias* (486a-b); see also my *Descent of Socrates*, 68.

day of his death, to console his friends by helping them to find the courage for philosophy, as it would be threatened by both misogyny and the fear of death. Still, it is also decisive that it is Socrates himself who insists upon engaging his friends in this way, by encouraging them to confront the question of his apparent willingness to die. It is Socrates himself, in other words, who provokes the entire dialogue, by abruptly claiming that anyone who takes part in philosophy must be ready and perhaps even eager for death. In his response to the concern of Evenus as it is relayed to him by Cebes, namely, that Socrates in prison has now taken up the writing of poetry and so, might rival Evenus' own poetry, Socrates once again, just as he does in the *Apology*, connects the cryptic authority of the god – announced in the strange dream which keeps repeating the same thing, “make music and work at it” – to the need for an affirmation of death and dying. It is just this outrageous provocation, as it strikes those present to be completely absurd and strange, appearing, as Cebes says, ἀτόπω (*Phaedo* 62d), that imposes upon Socrates the requirement that once again he offer an apology for his philosophical practice, that way of life that leads to death.

It also must be noted how *Phaedo* begins his recollection by explicitly introducing the *strangeness* of his experience, by asserting how, when he was present on that day, he was overtaken by “wondrous feelings” (*Phaedo* 58e). While not feeling pity for Socrates, since he appeared to be happy and not at all fearful of his fate, at the same time, according to *Phaedo*'s recollection, being acutely aware that the man would soon have to die, *Phaedo* also found it exceedingly difficult to take any pleasure in being engaged in philosophical conversation. He confesses to being overtaken, as he says, by the utterly “strange feeling” the ἄτοπον πάθος, that he describes as “an unusual blend, blended together from pleasure and pain” (*Phaedo* 59a).

This is the same strangeness that Socrates himself refers to, again according to *Phaedo*'s recollection, when he remarks, as he is first released from his bonds, while rubbing his leg, “what a strange thing [ἄτοπον] it appears to be what humans call pleasure! (...) and how wondrously it seems by nature to be related to its contrary!” (*Phaedo* 60b). The entire *Phaedo* has to be read from this place of the utterly strange, pervaded by the strange and out of place feelings that are a mixture of both pleasure and pain.⁴⁷

And yet, it is also from this strange, displaced place that the dialogue directs itself toward death, which Socrates speaks of as a journey of the soul to another place, from one place to another.⁴⁸ Indeed, the very strangeness of the place that is the *Phaedo* has to be regarded as an effect of the awareness of this being so directed to a beyond, to that other place, referred to simply as ἐκεῖ. The long history of the misreading of the *Phaedo* in its preoccupation with the so-called “proofs” for immortality appears in this context to overlook the one fundamental and undeniable fact of the dialogue, that for those who are with Socrates in his prison cell he is about to depart from this place – and for those of us who read the dialogue now, and even for *Phaedo* himself and his interlocutor, Echechrates – Socrates is already dead, thus forever and irrevocably absent from this place. Precisely in such a strange place, before death's ineluctable givenness, what is fitting and

⁴⁷ Compare this to the passage in the *Phaedrus* which refers to the mixture of pleasure and pain as an ἀτομία τοῦ πάθους (*Phaedr.* 251d-e).

⁴⁸ As in *Apol.* 40c, 40e.

proper, according to Socrates, is precisely to speak from this place of that other place: “it is especially fitting for somebody who is about to emigrate to that other place to examine and also to tell stories about the emigration there – what sort of thing we think it is. For what else would one do in the time until the setting of the sun?” (*Phaedo* 61d-e).

This conviction is perhaps the single most defining feature of Socratic practice as a whole, of what philosophy as such entails. Thus, without rehearsing the entirety of the *Phaedo*, it is already evident that it can be read as a decisive repetition of what is put forward in the *Apology*, and even as a response to the questions raised there: commanded by the god to remain in one’s mortal place, the philosophical life of Socrates is thereby wholly directed to the necessary displacement of that place, of allowing it to show itself in all its strangeness.

Still, one does not leave the *Phaedo* behind, cannot depart from its strange place, without encountering the beautiful and fantastic story that Socrates tells at the end of the dialogue – just before he meets his end and drinks the fatal φάρμακον – as it tells of the many wondrous places of the earth. This story becomes all the remarkable and strange when one notes how, near the beginning of the dialogue, just before Socrates presents his perplexing affirmation of death, he insists upon the fact that he is no storyteller (*Phaedo* 61b). At the same time, it is also worth noting how he then establishes the place of his body in relation to the earth, as firmly grounded upon it, precisely as he most emphatically declares that anyone who partakes of philosophy must follow his odd Silenic affirmation, namely, that death is a human good, that one should want to follow Socrates “as quickly as possible.”⁴⁹ Socrates declares, “Well then, Evenus and everybody who takes a worthy part in the matter [of philosophy] will be willing to heed my counsel. Though perhaps he won’t do violence to himself – it is said that it is not lawful” (*Phaedo* 61c). But one reads at this very point, according to the account of *Phaedo*, how Socrates places his own body, taking up the place from which he will continue to speak: “And with these words, he put his feet down on the earth and for the rest of the time conversed sitting in this way” (*Phaedo* 61d).

The story or μῦθος that Socrates tells at the end of the dialogue must indeed be heard as the last word of Socrates, his final apology for his life, as the place he has assumed here, upon the earth. The story is, then, yet another affirmation of philosophical death, of the life of the philosopher that embraces its death, that thus opens the place of this life as one in which we do not belong in any simple sense. Yet, from just such a place does the story then also take on its utter strangeness. This story, as it speaks of the many hidden and unknown places of the earth, is by no means presented as something “known,” but rather as only the mere likeness or likelihood of the way things might be. According to Socrates himself, there is no way to show that the things said are true, but only to ask whether and how they might become persuasive (*Phaedo* 108d, 114d). This remark must be taken seriously, precisely as it bears upon the long-standing reputation Socrates has garnered that he addresses in the *Apology*, claiming that such a reputation has utterly nothing to do with his actual practice, namely, that he ponders heavenly things and investigates the many things beneath the earth, the significance of which we shall return to shortly. Moreover,

⁴⁹ At *Theaet.* 176a, Socrates suggest that we should escape from the earth to the dwelling of the gods as soon as possible.

as Socrates confesses that he is himself persuaded by the story that he tells (or retells) in the *Phaedo*, it is also made clear that the origin of the story, how it is that Socrates comes to repeat it, is left by him in complete obscurity. Having only been persuaded of these things by someone unnamed, Socrates begins to tell of the many unknown and hidden places of the earth (*Phaedo* 108c).

How is one to understand this sense of being so persuaded? If the story is primarily an incantation that one must sing to oneself repeatedly, as Socrates claims it is (*Phaedo* 114d), it becomes all the more puzzling how he rebukes Crito for assuming that he is only telling encouraging tales (*Phaedo* 115d), that he is only presenting something like comforting falsehoods, mere childish tales, that in the end have their effect only in the same way that bedtime stories might placate or sooth the child's fear of the night. And yet, just as the judges ask of Crito that he give his assurances that Socrates will not flee from Athens, to pledge that he will remain *there*, what Socrates now asks of his friends, on the threshold of death, is that they give to him the opposite pledge, not that he will remain *here* when he dies but, as Socrates puts it, that he will instead be off and gone (*Phaedo* 115d).

If one does not follow Crito in this way, and instead makes this pledge that would give Socrates his death – as Plato appears to have done, by writing the dialogue, even by marking his own absence, as it is attributable to sickness or grief – one then has only to open oneself to what the story presents, such that one might thereby be persuaded by it, by its truth. Yet what would it mean to be so persuaded? In taking this question seriously, it becomes important to consider the way in which this story effects, in all its strangeness, at least a twofold displacement of the place of human life, of how human life can be said to belong in its place or to its place.

The *first* of these displacements results from the way in which the story opens a strange difference that utterly disrupts the ordinary δόξα of human life, by offering an account of the soul's journey in death and by opening a place for that journey. Death, understood as the freeing of the soul from the body, as the *separation* or χάρις between soul and body, would then open the place that is said to be proper to the soul, would make possible the soul's journey to the place where it most of all belongs, namely, the intelligible or, perhaps better, invisible place, where, as it is said, the soul can then be "itself all by itself." And in this separation, the difference between soul and body also then marks the very difference between life and death itself, where it becomes possible to speak of the soul as divine and deathless, or ἀθάνατος, and to speak of the body as human and mortal, that is, deathly or θνητός (*Phaedo* 80b). In this initial displacement, the story thus offers a mythic confirmation for the claim that in death the soul is "that unseen thing that goes off to another place like herself [τὸ ἀιδές, τὸ εἰ τοιοῦτον τόπον ἕτερον οἰχόμενον]" (*Phaedo* 80d), whereas it is the body that is mortal and visible, and thus both heavy and earthbound, γεώδης. What is opened in this first displacement, then, is precisely the *separation* as such, a separation between two places: whereas the body, in being mortal and weighty, belongs to the earth, the soul in its unearthly invisibility belongs to another place.

Only on the basis of this separation can Socrates insist that the soul itself is in need of care. In the first displacement, as it effects precisely its decisive separation, it becomes evident, in other words, that the care for death which, according to Socrates in the *Phaedo*, names the defining concern of a philosophical life, cannot be separated from "the care

of the soul,” that he also refers to in the *Apology* (*Apol.* 29e). In the separation of the first displacement, as it raises the question of death as a decisive separation of body and soul, what cannot be separated, what proves to be in fact inseparable in the separation, is this concern with death and the soul. In this way, the first displacement, as it appears to support more readily the establishment of what has come to be called Platonism, the differentiation and ordering that Nietzsche so powerfully seeks to invert or overturn, which also finds its exemplary expression in the distinction between the first two kinds of the *Timaeus*, also already imposes death upon human life as the question of an individuated responsibility. The soul, it must be said, only comes to be in this separation from the body, which is also the (philosophical) care for it and death (its very separation).⁵⁰

And yet, in a *second* displacement it is evident that this same myth also effects a certain recoil upon the first displacement, in which the separation of that first displacement finds itself displaced or subverted. The second displacement is enacted, namely, in the way in which it places not only the body, but *both body and soul* upon the earth, as belonging to it. What is at issue here concerns *the very place of the earth* as a place that is no longer only set in opposition to the heavens. As Socrates says, “the earth itself is pure and placed in the pure heaven [ἐν καθαρῷ κείσθαι τῷ οὐρανῷ], that heaven in which the stars are, what the many call ‘ether’” (*Phaedo* 109b).

Thus, at first, the myth only appears to establish and confirm the separation as such. In death, the soul is said to be guided by its δαίμων in the journey from here to that other place, what is called at 107d the τόπος proper to the dead. In this sense, however, what is opened up in the myth turns most decidedly on how we are then to see the earth and the place in it to which we belong, as this entails the utter interruption of our familiar δόξα: “And many and wondrous are the places of the earth (πολλοὶ καὶ θαυμαστοὶ τῆς γῆς τόποι) and the earth itself is neither of the sort nor of the size it’s held to be in the opinion of those who usually speak about it” (*Phaedo* 108c). Yet, not only are the places of the earth many and wondrous, but, according to the story, because we only see the earth from our own place and do not know of its other places, we are also wholly unaware of where our place is, how our earthly dwelling is placed in relation to the earth as a whole. We are unaware, that is, that “we dwell within its hollows or cavities, thinking that we dwell upon the surface of the earth” (*Phaedo* 109c). Just as a fish, by momentarily leaping out of the sea, cannot attain a vision of the beauty and truth of the world on land, so we too, being slow and weak, remain caught within the earth and so do not know what it is

⁵⁰ In the *Gift of Death*, reading one of Patočka’s “heretical essays,” Derrida elaborates the separation of the invisible soul in the *Phaedo* in this way. “For one never reinforces enough the fact that it is not the ψυχή that is there in the first place and that comes thereafter to care about its death, to keep watch over it, to be the very vigil of its death. No, the soul only distinguishes itself, separates itself, and assembles within itself in the experience of this μελέτη τοῦ θανάτου. It is nothing other than this care about dying as a relation to self and an assembling of self. It only returns to itself, in both senses of assembling itself and waking itself, become conscious, in the sense of consciousness of self in general, through this care for death (...) For it is thus that the soul separates itself in recalling itself to itself, and so it becomes individualized, interiorized, becomes its very invisibility. And hence it philosophizes from the beginning. Philosophy isn’t something that comes to the soul by accident, for it is nothing other than this vigil over death that watches out for death and watches over death, as if over the very life of the soul.” J. Derrida, *The Gift of Death and Literature in Secret* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 16.

to dwell upon it (*Phaedo* 109e). And just as fish do not know our heavenly vault, we also do not know the true heaven for those who dwell upon the earth.

It is necessary, above all, to pause here, at this decisive moment, in order to encounter the utter strangeness of what is said, in the utterly simple displacement that is enacted here. One might be tempted, first of all, to recall the way in which the *Republic* presents what appears to be the same displacement, as Socrates presents the image of the cave and its prisoners to Glaucon, those who also live unknowingly within the earth, unaware of what it is to dwell upon it. While the prisoners and the cave in which they are in bondage are said there to present an image of our pathos, our nature in its education and lack of education, what is remarkable is that Glaucon at first does not at all see this, does not at first recognize his own *pathos* in the image. When first presented with the image of this subterranean or underground place, he can only reply to Socrates, “strange (out of place) is the image you speak of and strange (out of place) are its prisoners” (ἄτοπον (...) λέγεις εἰκόνα καὶ δεσμώτας ἀτόπους) (*Rep.* 515a).

Precisely, in this way, then, there is enacted a certain shift that effects what we are referring to here as the second displacement of the concluding myth in the *Phaedo*, since now the soul in dying can no longer be seen as embarking upon a journey that takes leave of the earth, that lets go of its bondage to the earth and its earthy nature. Rather, for those who have prepared themselves for this journey with a life of philosophy, the liberation of their souls in death must be thought instead as the beginning of a movement in which they are, as Socrates says, “set free from those places within the earth, as though from prisons, and by arriving at their pure dwelling, come to dwell upon the earth [οἱ τῶνδε μὲν τῶν τόπων τῶν ἐν τῇ γῆ ἔλευθερούμενοί τε καὶ ἀπαλλαττόμενοι ὥσπερ δεσμοτηρίων, ἄνω δὲ εἰς τὴν καθαρὰν οἴκησιν ἀφικνούμενοι καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς οἰκίζόμενοι]” (*Phaedo* 114b-c).

This second displacement returns us, then, to the *Apology*, and in such a way that it becomes necessary to consider more carefully the accusation presented there by Socrates as part of the long-standing slander against him, that he, as one who claims to be wise, “ponders heavenly things and inquires into the many things beneath the earth” (*Apol.* 18b), as this is said to support the charge of Socratic impiety. While it is certainly clear that the Socratic concern with heaven and earth cannot be accommodated to the kind of inquiry carried out by Anaxagoras, for example, as this is made clear both in the *Apology* (26e) and in the *Phaedo* (97b-99c), still it cannot be denied that the force of Socratic displacement, as it is enacted in Plato’s text, always also continues to bear upon how a properly human dwelling or belonging – as οἴκησις – cannot be detached from the way in which that belonging remains placed in relation to heaven and earth, and not only, as one might expect, simply *between* these, but also, more strangely, both *beneath* the earth and, still more strangely, *above* the heavens. One recalls, for example, the remark made by Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, where he tells us that no poet has ever sung adequately of “the τόπος of being,” that place, namely, that he says is “beyond the heavens” (*Phaedr.* 247c-d; 248a). It is of course evident that these strange places also call us to ask, once again, about the place of mythic discourse in the dialogues and ask, still further, about the truth of Socratic persuasion as it would remain open to such mythic discourse and its truth.

Above all, this sense of a doubled displacement becomes apparent in the way in which Socrates presents the emergence of his own way, what he calls in the *Phaedo*

a second sailing or δευτερος πλοῦς (*Phaedo* 99c-d) as this “second best way” emerges from out of his youthful enthusiasm for the kind of wisdom called the inquiry into nature or περὶ φύσεως ἱστορίας (*Phaedo* 96a). What is apparent, in other words, is that the traditional characterization of Socrates, made famous, for example, by Cicero, when he says that “Socrates brought philosophy down from the heavens and into the cities of men,” would be appropriate only insofar as one can also remain attentive to how Socratic dialogical practice, his turn to the λόγοι, as it displaces the propriety of human place, always does so in a place opened up between the city and divine nature, related to places of the earth and the heavens, and, perhaps, beyond.

* * *

The reading presented here, in *this* place – but where are we? and where are we going? – can be said to make only a beginning in thinking through what is enacted in such displacements of human place, enacted by Socratic practice. And yet, here, it must now also be asked: how can one hope to address the topic of place in Plato (in the appearance of Socrates) without returning to χώρα, given that χώρα permits being addressed neither as a topic nor as a place? The relation between χώρα and place has been left unaddressed here, though without being rigorously excluded, and even if we have also sensed that χώρα at certain places continues to encroach upon the question of place, upon the place of place. Here, then, one might insist upon the need to begin again, namely, from the beginning, ἐξ ἀρχῆς, so as to raise the question of the place of place as it might allow itself to be informed by a discourse of χώρα, proceeding somehow from χώρα to τόπος.

Such a reading of the *Timaeus* would, as we have already suggested, have to return to the necessity of the ontotopological thesis, which, perhaps, grounds the very *necessity* of Timaeus’ interruptive speech, which as such may itself be called a speech from necessity. This interruptive speech, as it undertakes to make a new beginning, can also rightly be called the chorology. But we want to emphasize that the “palintropic” movement of the *Timaeus* as it gives rise to this chorology, necessitating it, is never simply a matter of the order of things, of what would be first in a sequence, temporal, ontological or otherwise, but is always also, from the very beginning, a matter of *where* things are, of that *in which* things can be or come to be, of what is to be placed where and in what, a matter of how the cosmos in coming to be would be arranged and arrayed, thereby giving rise to place and places. The need for the chorology, as it interrupts the speech from νοῦς, by turning to the question of necessity and making a new beginning from there (*Tim.* 47e-48b), arises then as the “necessity of a retreat” – the withdrawal back into χώρα, the ἀναχωρεῖν (*Tim.* 48b) – which thus returns to or first arrives at this question of how place would be placed, of the very emplacing of place: Timaeus says that such an ἀναχώρησις, as a movement of return, retreat, withdrawal, is necessary in order to reveal the birth of the simple bodies, as fire, water, air and earth, in order to reveal both that “in which [they] are born” [ἐν ᾧ ἐγγιγνόμεν] and also “from which they perish” [ἐκεῖθεν ἀπόλλυτα] (*Tim.* 49e). Moreover, in speaking of such a third kind, as a “receptacle,” he also says that “what comes into it [τὰ εἰσιόντα] and “goes out of it [ἐξιόντα]” are always imitations of the things that are” (*Tim.* 50c).

But such an “in which” remains utterly elusive, precisely as an “invisible,” “shapeless form,” being “all-receptive” [πανδεχές]. As something “like” a place, it must still confuse the very order of placing, the very difference between within and without: “that which receives all the kinds within itself [τὸ τὰ πάντα ἐκδεξόμενον ἐν αὐτῷ γέν]” must at the same time be “outside all forms [πάντων ἐκτὸς εἰδῶν εἶναι]” (*Tim.* 50e). Nevertheless, in this way, proceeding from such a beginning, Timaeus comes to assert that “the greater parts of each kind [of the simple bodies] stand apart, according to their own proper place, through the movement of the receptacle” (*Tim.* 57c).⁵¹ Still (but is it only an afterthought?), such a reading could not forego returning to the figure of Socrates in the *Timaeus*, who, as Derrida observes, throughout the dialogue remains the “out of place” but wholly receptive addressee:

Socrates is not χώρα, but he would look a lot like it/her if it/she were someone or something. In any case, he puts himself in its/her place, which is not just a place among others, but perhaps *place itself*, the irreplaceable place. Irreplaceable and unplaceable place from which he receives the word(s) of those before whom he effaces himself but who receive them from him, for it is he who makes them talk like this. And us, too, implacably (*On the Name*, 111).⁵²

Yet such a reading or discourse, proceeding somehow from χώρα to place as τόπος, in the necessity of its own displacement, would not only have to take up or receive the *Timaeus* more carefully, as the Platonic text in which Timaeus himself presents such a palintropic, interruptive discourse or chorology to an utterly *receptive* Socrates. It would also have to return, perhaps first of all, to ask about the culminating vision of the philosopher’s journey out of the cave – thus, as a movement from out of a place *beneath* the earth – as it is presented by Socrates in the *Republic*, as a journey that culminates,

⁵¹ Is it not especially significant that the text of the *Timaeus* begins with the question of place? But the abrupt posing of this question (of place), it must be noted, also refers to an elusive and unidentified absence, as if the very possibility of this question concerning the “where” must first of all entail such absence: “but, my dear Timaeus, where’s our fourth (...)?” (*Tim.* 17a). Beyond the chorology itself, the *Timaeus* also repeatedly addresses the question of place, even if never directly. Most notably, Timaeus will later discuss and invert the traditional sense of place as it would be ordered according a “below” and an “above,” according to the “heavy” and the “light,” by exposing this sense to a cosmos that is spheriform, called here the heaven as a whole. Nevertheless, even in this context, he will also rehabilitate this tradition which divides heaven into two places or τόποι (*Tim.* 62c-63e). This passage should also be considered alongside *Tim.* 90a, where Timaeus speaks of the form of the soul which dwells at the peak of our body, which “lifts us up toward our kindred in heaven and away from earth, since we’re not an earthly but heavenly plant.” Thus, see also, at *Tim.* 42e-43c, how Timaeus speaks of the human body being oriented according to the six places.

⁵² In another passage, Derrida also states: “In this theatre of irony, where the scenes interlock in a series of receptacles without end and without bottom, how can one isolate a thesis or a theme that could be attributed calmly to the “philosophy-of-Plato,” indeed to philosophy as the Platonic thing? This would be to misrecognize or violently deny the structure of the textual scene, to regard as resolved all the questions of topology in general, including that of the places of rhetoric, and to think one understood what it means to receive, that is, to understand. It’s a little early. As always.” Derrida, *On the Name*, 119.

not only in the scarcely imaginable vision of the sun, but rather, as Socrates says, as the philosopher comes “to see the sun itself, by itself, in its own *χώρα*” (*Rep.* 516b).⁵³

Would the place of such a vision have to be regarded, then, not at all as a place of sheer invisibility – a purely intelligible place, conceived simply beyond the visible and opposed to it – but rather, in belonging to the earth, such a place would also have to refer to the appearance of what is itself precisely, given the strange sense of the superlative we have considered, most of all visible? And yet, perhaps only from such a strange place, where what is exceedingly visible verges on invisibility, in an excessive visibility and vision that would perhaps also break with what is otherwise visible and available to our human vision, would it then be possible to speak, perhaps even persuasively, of the appearance of place itself, the appearance of place in its own place.

⁵³ See Sallis, “The Place of the Good,” in *The Verge of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 29-52.

PLOTINIAN HENADOLOGY

In his *Life of Plotinus*, Plotinus' student Porphyry states that there were, in Plotinus' time, "many Christians and others, and sectarians [αἰρετικοί] who had abandoned the old philosophy," from whom came a profusion of "treatises" as well as "revelations" (ἀποκαλύψεις), that Porphyry says "deceived themselves and many others, alleging that Plato had not penetrated to the depths of intelligible substance," and that Plotinus "often attacked their position in his lectures," as well as in the entire treatise that Porphyry says "we have given the title 'Against the Gnostics'" (*Vita Plotini* 16.1-11). The project of refuting these sectarians was so important to Plotinus that not only was it a recurring focus of his own work, but Porphyry speaks of his fellow student Amelius and himself pursuing it in multiple works of theirs as well.

In Plotinus' day, so-called Gnostics and Christians were scarcely distinguishable, and it was surely difficult to imagine any one of this profusion of emerging sects achieving hegemonic status, much less that one of them, through seizing for itself the power of the imperial state, would be able to sweep away before it cults that had existed for thousands of years. Hence Plotinus writes against the new sectarians, not as a threat against the Pagan world, but as a threat to the correct interpretation of Platonism, because some of these sects had adopted elements of it and might, if not critiqued, succeed in positioning themselves as Plato's legitimate interpreters. Indeed, contemporary work on the Gnostics of Plotinus' era indicates that they were in many ways colleagues of the Platonists, members of a community of inquiry sharing a common legacy of Platonic readings and probably pioneering some of the concepts deployed by successive generations of Platonists. It would be a mistake to think that a simplistic distinction could be drawn between Gnostics and Platonists of this era on any particular issue. We know, however, from Plotinus' explicit treatise against them that one of his principal concerns about these "Gnostics" was that they "contract the divine into one" (II.9.9.36-7), that is, that they are what would later come to be known as monotheists. Plotinus therefore must be understood, in his lengthy engagement with so-called "Gnostics," to have pursued the earliest known intensive and sustained intellectual critique of monotheism.

Another key criticism Plotinus levels at the Gnostics in his essay is that they multiply the intelligible unreasonably: "by giving names to a multitude of intelligible realities (...) bring[ing] the intelligible nature into the likeness of the sense-world (...) when one ought there in the intelligible to aim at the smallest possible number" (6.28-32). The integral connection between the Gnostics' contraction of the divine, on the one hand, and their multiplication of the intelligible, on the other, is the focus of the present essay. For the multiplication of which Plotinus speaks it is not difficult to find examples

in surviving Gnostic texts. For example, the Gnostic treatise *Zostrianos*, which is among those Porphyry specifically mentions (VP 6.6, 14), speaks of “the Exile which really exists” (5.24-5) or “the Repentance which really exists” (5.27). The Gnostic terminology of “really existing” in *Zostrianos*, which is applied likewise – and self-referentially, of course – to the salvific value of the λόγος as “the word as it exists” (44.9-10), invites comparison to the terminology of “real being” (ὄντως ὄν) by which Platonists qualify the intelligible, deriving chiefly from the οὐσία ὄντως οὐσα of *Phaedrus* 247c. But the criterion of intelligibility in *Zostrianos* is not like that which applies to the hypostases of Plotinian Platonism. The hypostases from the Gnostic text seem to originate from psychical *experiences* hypostatized into sites of intelligibility. Indeed, such a procedure would make sense in the context of the Gnostic appeal to the epistemic authority of certain privileged kinds of experience.

By contrast, Plotinus begins his essay with a capsule summary of Platonic metaphysics as operating on just three principal planes: that of the One/Good, “which has nothing in itself, but is some one thing [ἔν τι],” (1.3), that of Intellect, and that of Soul:

and we must not posit more principles than these in the intelligible, or fewer. For if people posit fewer, they will either assert that Soul and Intellect are the same, or Intellect and the First; but it has been shown in many places that they are different from each other. It remains to investigate in our present discussion, if we are to posit more than these three, whatever other natures there could be beside them. (1.16-21)¹

The issue here is not how many *things* there are, but how many *kinds of multiplicity*. Plotinus is arguing that we can determine dialectically that there are three kinds. There is multiplicity consisting simply of ones as such, without intelligible content or rather, as we may say, to the degree we abstract from that content; this is the domain of the One. It is this multiplicity, significantly, to which Plotinus turns in the essay he wrote immediately after the essay on the Gnostics, number 34, the essay on number, which I will argue we should understand as concerning *numerical difference*. Next there is multiplicity consisting of forms, or any multiplicity *qua* intelligible; this is the domain of Intellect. Finally, there is multiplicity consisting of psychical states, or, any multiplicity just insofar as it is psychical; and this is the domain of Soul, of psychical experience. The intelligible is thus a holistic structure, sustaining just as many terms as can be negatively distinguished from one another. It mediates in this fashion between two modes of positivity or givenness, the existential,² which is the givenness of ones *qua* ones, and the psychical, in which things are given in the flux of time.

¹ Quotations from Plotinus are generally as translated by A. H. Armstrong, *Plotinus: Enneads*, 7 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1966-88), though I have occasionally modified them.

² The “existential” is distinguished in post-Plotinian Platonism particularly by the term ὑπαρξίς, which may have acquired its philosophical usage in part from Gnostic texts. See, e.g., J. D. Turner, “From Hidden to Revealed in Sethian Revelation, Ritual, and Protology,” in A. D. DeConick and G. Adamson, eds. *Histories of the Hidden God: Concealment and Revelation in Western Gnostic, Esoteric, and Mystical Traditions* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2014), esp. 156f.

The place of the existential is occupied in Plotinus and in later Platonists chiefly if not solely by *persons*, and hence to that class of things that are *who* rather than *what*.³ This is the significance, I would argue, of Plotinus' reference in this essay and elsewhere to an indefinite multiplicity of "Intelligible Gods." Thus, the All "manifests the greatness of the intelligible nature" through its "life [which] is not a disjointed one ... but coherent [συνεχῆς] and clear and great and everywhere life, manifesting infinite wisdom" as "a clear and noble idol [ἄγαλμα] of the intelligible Gods" (8.9-17). Plotinus here makes implicit reference to *Timaeus* 37c, which refers to the cosmos as an ἄγαλμα of "the eternal Gods" – compare Plotinus, "To be among the Gods is to be among intelligibles; for these are immortal," (*Enn.* I.8.7.16-7). The Gods mentioned in the *Timaeus* passage are similarly there indefinitely multiple, although Plato's account up to that point has only posited a single binary relation between demiurge and paradigm as divine spectator and divine object, respectively. The reference to indefinitely numerous Gods shows that already for Plato, *the number of Gods is not determined by the number of places in a noetic structure*. We shall see how this pertains to the role of henads in Plotinus, not yet specified as "divine," as they will be for later Platonists, but recognized as holding down the real existence of pre-formal numerical difference, and hence creating τόποι, or places, for beings (VI.6.10.3).⁴ Plotinus' henads, then, not yet designated "divine," or clearly posited as prior to Being, as they will be for Proclus, are already prior to beings and to noetic relations. And this is indeed what makes henads divine, and the Gods henads, namely that the henadic manifold secures in a *positive* and not merely privative sense the disposition of numerical as opposed to formal multiplicity.

With respect to the psychical manifold, Plotinus in his essay notes particularly that Gnostics divide Intellect into "one intellect thinking and the other thinking that it thinks" (1.33-34). By positing self-awareness as a separate, novel intellectual moment, and neither as an inherent property of thought,⁵ nor as a psychical moment relative to the intellect, the Gnostics effectively *psychologize the intellect*, which also cleaves the soul, for if "one intellect will be only thinking, and the other will be thinking that it thinks," then "the thinking subject will be another, and not itself" (37-40). By contrast, Plotinus affirms elsewhere (V 3, 13-17) that "when something thinks itself," this is "thinking proper [κυρίως]."⁶ The Gnostic will see this alienation at the core of the self as the problem he is diagnosing, but for Plotinus it is the problem Gnostic ideology is creating. The thinking subject so conceived, privileging the empty moment of "consciousness," can never be identical with *what* he thinks, only with the *act* of thought. It is not surprising, in this light, that the Gnostics should stress the idea of a λόγος salvific in itself, the action of which is as traumatic as it is automatic, for it is the alien solution to the soul's self-alienation.

³ Note already in Plato, *Timaeus* 90a, that the spirit (δαίμων) is given to each (ἐκάστῳ) by the God, establishing the relationship between the mortal and divine individual beyond the register of eidetics, that is, of speciation.

⁴ The term "henad" seems also to have acquired already a particular reference to divine individuality in certain Gnostic texts. See, e.g., J. D. Turner, *Sethian Gnosticism and the Platonic Tradition* (Louvain/Paris: Peeters, 2001), 508-9, referring to *Zostrianos* VIII 67, 75 and 84.

⁵ See on this L. P. Gerson, "Epistrophḗ pros heauton: History and Meaning," *Documenti e Studi Sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* 7 (1997), 1-32.

⁶ On this passage, see *ibid.*, 14ff.

(See, in this connection, Plotinus' critique of the Gnostics' "technical λόγοι" in chap. 14.) The distinction between psychical self-awareness and thinking as such is important for Plotinus because the *I-think* has no noetic content, and hence is "epinoetic" (43); but if intellective distinction is grounded in psychical apprehension alone, it has no integral bond with intelligible content, and so "they [the Gnostics] will be abandoning the idea of a plurality of hypostases" (41-2). All plurality will be reduced to moments in a continuum of psychical experience, and difference will be solely experiential and temporal.

We begin to see the outlines, then, of the two multiplicities between which Platonic Intellect mediates, one of which, the psychical, the Gnostics engorge. But what sort of structure do the Platonists accord to the other manifold, the manifold corresponding to the One? The One itself is referred to in the plural at *Enn.* VI.5.4.22 and 25, as "the first things." The latter is noted by Emilsson and Strange (233),⁷ who remark that "The reference to the One is given in the plural (τὰ πρῶτα), which may be surprising given that the One is a singularity," and cite Plato, *Epistle 2*, 312e1-4 as precedent, but while that text speaks of all things in relation to a King who is first, it does not refer to "first things" in the plural. Of course, it does not need to, because there is a general understanding that there is a multiplicity specific to any ἀρχή or principle, for otherwise it would be no ἀρχή. In fact, Plotinus refers again to τὰ πρῶτα, "first things," at *Enn.* V.1.8.2-3. Emilsson and Strange also note suggestively, but not in connection with Plotinus' "firsts," the lack of a clear principle of individuation in Plotinus that can cover the gaps left by the doctrine of reception of forms according to the capacity of recipients (2015: 27f, 208, 266). They do not consider the possibility, however, that the ultimate principle of individuation for individuals high and low is none other than "the One," which for its own part, however, "neither is, nor is one" (Plato, *Parmenides* 141e).

What, then, is the structure of the manifold of "first things"? We know that it is not such as to fix a discrete number of entities within it, because then it would be intellective; but it does possess a distinctive structure all its own. We need to turn here to an important passage from Plotinus' essay on intelligible beauty, *Enn.* V.8.9.17-24, written not long before the essay on the Gnostics, and which I would like to quote at length:

each God is all the Gods coming together into one [συνόντες εἰς ἓν]; they are other [ἄλλοι] in their powers, but in that one-many they are all one, or rather the one <deity> is all [ὁ εἷς πάντες]; for he does not fall short if all those come to be. They are all together and each one again apart, in position without separation [ἐν στάσει ἀδιαστάτῳ], possessing no perceptible shape – for if they did, one would be in one place and one in another, and each would no longer be all in himself – nor does each God have parts different [ἄλλα] from himself belonging to other Gods than himself, nor is each whole [ὅλον]⁸ like a power cut up [κερματισθεῖσα], which is as large as the measure of its parts.

⁷ E. K. Emilsson and S. K. Strange (trans. and commentary), *Ennead VI.4 & VI.5: On the Presence of Being, One and the Same, Everywhere as a Whole* (Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2015).

⁸ One could also read here οἶον, "nor is each, as it were, like a power."

Here, in the most significant passage where Plotinus deals explicitly with the multiplicity of the Gods in its formal character, we see many traits of the later technical doctrine of the henads as we find it in Platonists like Proclus.⁹ The unity of the divine manifold rests in all the Gods being *in each*, rather than all *in one*, if by that we understood a singularity that, as Plotinus puts it, would “fall short” itself insofar as the many are many, that is, relative to which multiplicity would be an ontological decline, which would be the case if the divine manifold were structured like a whole and its parts.

PLOTINUS' ESSAY ON NUMBER IN RELATION TO HIS CRITIQUE OF THE Gnostics

With this in mind, we can now turn to Plotinus' essay on number, the peculiar character of which, I wish to argue, is that it concerns not merely “number” in the abstract sense in which we use it, but the entire metaphysical problem of ultimate or, as we term it, “numerical difference,” referring to the difference existing between individuals under *infima species*. By recognizing that for Platonists ἀριθμός or “number” connotes, not merely what we count with, but the ultimate manifold of *countables*, ultimate because they are unique, and mathematics hence being the pure form of relation of units *qua* units, we can restore depth and coherence to the entire centuries-long Platonic discourse concerning “number.” With respect to the basic sense Greeks gave to this term, Jacob Klein has argued that ἀριθμός “never means anything other than a definite number of definite objects.”¹⁰ In post-Plotinian Platonism, Proclus refers in the *Elements of Theology* (prop. 113) to the manifold of the Gods, or henads, as an ἀριθμός, rather than a πλήθος or “multiplicity,” inasmuch as the latter would be governed by the rules appropriate to what Proclus distinguishes as manifolds at once themselves “unified” (ἡνωμένος), and composed of “unifieds” (ἡνωμένα), whereas the ultimate manifold must be “unitary” (ἐνωῖος) and composed of henads, in order to avoid an infinite regress. This regress is not cut off by mere stipulation, but rather by the structural solidarity of the henadic manifold, in which all are in *each*, as opposed to all in *one* (or all participating one). At what point this formal structure emerged in Platonic thought is unclear, though it can be inferred from the putatively Pythagorean axiom that “All things are in all things, but in each appropriately.”¹¹

Just as we see Plotinus in the passage from V.8.9 in possession of some form of the doctrine of a polycentric divine manifold, so too in the essay on number, we

⁹ On which see my series of articles on Proclean henadology: E. Butler, “Polytheism and Individuality in the Henadic Manifold,” *Dionysius* 23 (2005): 83-104; E. Butler, “The Gods and Being in Proclus,” *Dionysius* 26 (2008): 93-114; E. Butler, “The Intelligible Gods in the Platonic Theology of Proclus,” *Méthexis* 21 (2008): 131-143; E. Butler, “The Second Intelligible Triad and the Intelligible-Intellective Gods,” *Méthexis* 23 (2010): 137-157; E. Butler, “The Third Intelligible Triad and the Intellective Gods,” *Méthexis* 25 (2012): 131-150.

¹⁰ *Greek Mathematical Thought and the Origin of Algebra*, trans. E. Brann (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968), 7.

¹¹ Attributed by Syrianus to “Pythagoreans” at *In Metaph.* 81.38-82.2 [Kroll], while Iamblichus either attributes the maxim to Numenius, or at least states that “Numenius is unambiguously of this opinion,” (Iamblichus, *De Anima* 6, trans. Finamore and Dillon [Stobaeus, *Anthol.* I, 365], Numenius frag. 41 [des Places]). Hadot, in *Porphyre et Victorinus* I, 243 regards the maxim as “Depuis Numénius d’ailleurs (...) le principe fondamental de la théologie païenne,” though he misconstrues it, in my view, as a principle of “dénomination par prédominance” predicated upon Stoic monism, rather than as an affirmation of *polycentricity* referring to no underlying substance. I have discussed this further in E. Butler, “Polycentric Polytheism and the Philosophy of Religion,” *The Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* 10, no. 2 (2008): 207-229.

see him wrestling with formal aspects of that doctrine, but without reference to the divine. Thus, in a dense discussion in chap. 11 of VI.6, he begins from the necessity of distinguishing between henads and monads, of which his example is the Decad, or Ten, which is one henad consisting of ten monads. The number here, I wish to argue, operates essentially as a paradigm of a unit to which other units are subordinated as its parts or attributes, and this was its function already at the time of Aristotle's disputes with the Academy. At *Metaphysics* 1080a & sqq., for example, Aristotle criticizes the Academic position concerning "incomparable" monads within numbers. That is, the Academicians apparently regard the two monads in the Dyad, e.g., as in some respect resisting assimilation to the two monads out of the three in the Triad, lest the integrity of the Dyad, the Triad and the other numbers be dissolved. Plotinus defends this same Academic position, which allows for a systematic distinction between "henads" and "monads."¹² "Henads" like the Dyad, Triad, et al. are units with other units subordinate to them as their attributes, and these latter units are "monads." A monadic unit, according to this understanding, would be what Proclus and Damascius will call "the unified" (τὸ ἡνωμένον), as opposed to henads, which are "unitary" (ἐνιαῖος), as in prop. 6 of the *Elements of Theology*, which states that "Every manifold is composed either of unified groups [literally of 'unifieds', ἡνωμένα] or of henads."

The opposition here is between that which actively provides unity, which is ἐνιαῖος, and that which is passively unified, the ἡνωμένον or ἡνωμένα, which can refer either to something whose unity is that of a whole of some sort, or to something which has unity essentially as part of some whole. We see from prop. 66 of the *Elements* that for Proclus the whole/part relationship is exhaustive for beings *qua* beings, ὄντα: "All beings are toward one another either whole or part or identical or different," where the relationship of identity/difference is reducible to being part of the whole constituted by either the intension or extension of some εἶδος. This relational web of beings *qua* beings, however, requires some limit to relation, that there may be terms *in* relation, and this is the role of henads, which are units either in an absolute sense, or at least insofar as any "one" be taken *qua* unitary, rather than unified, as subordinating its attributes, rather than reduced to them as the mere conjunction of them.

Why should the forebear of this wide-ranging doctrine in the later Platonists, when Aristotle treats of it, be understood to apply only to "numbers" in the narrow sense, when numbers can be a paradigm for any unit taken as henadic,¹³ that is, as integral and

¹² Xenocrates already speaks of incorporeal multiplicity (πληθος) as composed of "true henads" (ἐξ ἐνάδων ἀληθινῶν, Themistius, *De Anima* 11,20/fr. 260 Isnardi Parente) which suggests the development of a technical sense for this term already in the early Academy. As noted by Slaveva-Griffin (*Plotinus on Number* (New York City: Oxford UP, 2009), 78 n. 39), Xenocrates' formula is echoed by Damascius at *De Principiis* 129.19. But Slaveva-Griffin regards "the clear conceptual distinction between monads and henads" as "at a formative stage" in Plotinus (92), who is still "inconsistent" in his usage of these terms (93), whereas I would wish to resist such a conclusion.

¹³ Hence Syrianus, at *In Metaph.* 84.3-5, speaks of "mathematical objects" as having been "customarily taken by those divine men [Pythagoreans and Platonists] as representative of the intelligible nature as a whole," and again at 176.12 that "These people called all beings numbers." (Passages from Syrianus are from J. M. Dillon and D. O'Meara, trans., *Syrianus: On Aristotle Metaphysics 13-14* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), occasionally modified.)

unique, with its attributes inalienable from it and hence treated as incomparable to like attributes of other units? Aristotle would then be observing a mutually understood Academic convention in discussing this problem in terms of numbers, because the parties in the discussion understand that it concerns *numerical difference*. When Plato introduces the terms “henad” and “monad” in the *Philebus* (15a-c, 23c) he does not use them to refer to numbers in any privileged sense, but to any sort of unit taken up as an object of analysis. In this light, Aristotle would be criticizing not a somewhat obtuse Academic doctrine respecting arithmetic in our modern sense, but an Academic henological philosophy of units *qua* units in contradistinction to which he develops his own ontological philosophy of substance.¹⁴

The Platonic doctrine of henads and monads, which forms the substance of Platonic “henology,” begins with Plato’s *Philebus* and reaches down to Damascius. Its effective termination with the end of the Academy at Athens comes about because of its intimate connection with the polytheism of ancient Platonism and that aspect of Platonic henology which renders it, when properly understood, inassimilable to monotheism, namely the combination of an absolutely negative One Itself as principle of individuation and the positivity of the ultimate individuals. These ultimate individuals are the Gods, because the Gods were grasped as primordial *persons*. Hence the first deployment of the terms “henad” and “monad” in the *Philebus*, albeit they are not distinguished in that dialogue, nevertheless arises in the context of a discussion that begins from Socrates’ intention to distinguish between a “who,” Aphrodite, and a “what,” the concept of ἡδονή or pleasure (12b-c). The essential roots of the henad/monad distinction lies, I wish to argue, in the distinction between *who* and *what* as the basic kinds of unit, with the former, due to its primal simplicity, being designated “henad” as primary product of the One (ἓν), the principle of individuation. This, it seems to me, provides the only basis for recovering a unified sense for the doctrine as it evolved from the earliest Academy to the end of ancient Platonism, regardless of whether expressed as in theological or mathematical terms, for in either case, it amounts to the distinction between ἐνιαῖος and ἡνωμένος units, of which the former are “henads” and the latter “monads.”

Plotinus, after positing the existence of henads and monads, proceeds to a complex argument concerning henadic multiplicity. If there is only one henad, he argues, then it must be “coupled” (συνουσαν) either with supreme Being, or supreme Unity, that is, it must be either the henad of Being Itself, or the henad of the One Itself. The latter he rejects summarily as redundant: “Why would what is one in the highest degree need this monad?” (VI.6.11.17-18). Plotinus thus does away with a singular that would be “the One Itself,” for the One, the principle of individuation, neither is, nor is one. The use of the term “monad” in this passage emphasizes the unit as posited; similarly below (11.23-4) many merely notional “monads” are generated from taking a substantial individual in diverse respects, but also as a singular entity, which the One emphatically is not.

¹⁴ Note, in this respect, that Aristotle himself uses essentially the same argument at 1076b11-39 with respect to the presence of the point in lines and planes and solids, of lines in planes and solids, etc., as he does against the incommensurable monads in numbers, the latter being paradigmatic for all manner of other relations of inherence.

With respect to the other monistic alternative, then, Plotinus argues that if a solitary henad – a “One Itself,” we may say – was identified with Being Itself, “then the other henads will be merely homonymous with the First, and not coordinate with it, or number will consist of unlike monads and there will be differences between monads even insofar as they are monads” (15-18). A fully developed Platonic theory of homonymy in divine series will arrive with Damascius, as I have discussed in a recent article.¹⁵ In the situation Plotinus imagines, however, there would be a single henad that was henadic in the proper sense, with the others having a subordinate and derivative status. This would indeed look not unlike a popular misconception of the Platonic system itself. But Plotinus argues that this will simply return us, in effect, to the notion he criticized at the outset of the chapter, where “the decad is nothing but so many henads” (1-2), that is, autonomous units which do not form a unit in composition. To assert a single eminent henad, with the rest merely homonymously henadic, will be to impose an arbitrary hierarchy upon the system, which by virtue of its arbitrariness will be in fact no proper order at all, a ranking among henads in this way taking the place of the ontological difference between henads and monads.

This error, in turn, is formally identical to the Gnostic homonymy with respect to the term “Gods,” for the Gnostics impose such an order upon the class of Gods. For the Gnostics “contract the divine into one” (II.9.9.36-7), and if there are for them still a multiplicity of “intelligible Gods,” then They are at any rate subordinated to some One in something akin to the fashion that the inferior powers, such as the heavenly bodies, are subordinated to Them (II.9.16.5-13). And of course for the Gnostics there is also such a subordination within the class of humans, between the spiritually “elect” and the rest. These subordinations are not unrelated. In the essay on the Gnostics, Plotinus criticizes this doctrine based on expansive arguments about the nature of the cosmos and the ramifications of Gnostic doctrines; in the essay on Number, I wish to argue, Plotinus’ dense formal analysis renders the same critique. Both essays make the same point, the essay on number arguing that “One henad must not be yoked to some one among beings” (VI.6.11.5-6), that is, collapsing henadic and eidetic difference, while the essay on the Gnostics argues against this same conflation and its cosmological, psychological and ethical consequences.

But what, then, does Plotinus mean when he says that among the things the Gnostics have correctly from Plato is the notion of “the first God” (θεὸν τὸν πρῶτον, II.9.6.39)? The simplest conclusion that takes into account the totality of Plotinus’ testimony is that this is a first *nature*, and not an abstract singularity. The “first God” would thus be the Gods *qua* “firsts,” πρῶτα, which the Gnostics have correctly grasped in its nature, but have failed to distribute. There is more to it than this, however. Plotinus asks us to suppose some important hierarchical distinction among the Gods. “If They” – the Gods who “all and each proclaim to men the things from there,” intelligible things, and hence “intelligible Gods” – “are not what that one is” – namely “king of the Gods” – “this in itself is according to the nature of things” (9.43-44). This κατὰ φύσιν, “according to nature,” comes up again at 13.7, with a very similar sense: “there is an order of firsts, seconds, and thirds in regular succession, and so on to the last, and the things that are worse than the first should not be

¹⁵ E. Butler, “The Henadic Origin of Procession in Damascius,” *Dionysius* 31 (2013): 79-100.

reviled” (3-6). Elsewhere in the essay, the soul descends “according to nature” (4.3.13) and things are “according to nature” in the intelligible world (5.9.10). We may compare Proclus: “All those who have at any time been occupied with theology have termed ‘Gods’ the things first according to nature,” (PT I 3.12 Westerink). What is the sense of this *κατὰ φύσιν*, which transcends the intelligible, so that the latter is not disordered by any order attributable to this *φύσις*, a “nature” transcending even the differences between philosophical systems in Proclus? It evidently does not pertain to “physical” nature as such, but to a field of differences *prior to eidetic determination*, or else the Gnostics would be correct to read off from it a difference of (intelligible) value.

Plotinus argues that even if there is a God who, as a “natural” matter, either rules or even creates the other Gods, this does not affect the “nature,” so to speak, of being a God. Plotinus warns against reifying such a hierarchy as an intelligible structure. For if, as in the essay on intelligible beauty, “each God is all the Gods coming together into one” (V.8.9.17), and this clearly is Platonic technical doctrine, as we can see from its elaboration in subsequent Platonists, then the creative moment of which Plotinus speaks when he speaks of a God “abiding who he is, makes many [Gods] depending upon him and being through that one and from that one” (II.9.9.38-40), must exist as a phase in the activity of a God simply *qua* God, and not limited to some one God to the exclusion of others, in which case there would no longer be a manifold corresponding to Unity, a “numerical” manifold.

Similarly, at VI.5.12.30-7, Plotinus contrasts a God to whom all things revert (*ἐπιστρέφονται*) while he abides in himself to the “other Gods” who “when many [humans] are present often appear to one, because that one alone is able to see them.” We should see this, however, not merely as a difference of “nature,” but a difference of moments in the procession of a henad, which now advances to appearance at a discrete time and place, and now withdraws itself, refusing to be trapped in immanence. This, indeed, is what the Gnostics glean correctly about “the First God,” that is, about primary nature of divinity as such, namely that it is not “enclosed in creation” (*Zostrianos* 9.9). The nature of the Gods, on this understanding, is to show themselves differentially (*Enn.* II.9.9.37: *δειξαι* (...) *ἔδειξεν*) while each abides ineffably. Already in Plato’s *Timaeus* (41a), this “showing” as an expression of divine will is the basis for distinguishing within the Gods between “those who revolve manifestly,” that is, the stars and planets whose appearances are predictable by mechanical methods, and “those who manifest themselves [*φαίνονται*] so far as they choose [*ἐθέλωσιν*].” Indeed, Plotinus uses almost identical language at V.8.1.40-1 in speaking of Pheidias the sculptor having grasped “what Zeus would look like if he willed [*ἐθέλοι*] to manifest himself visibly [*φανῆναι*].” This distinction between active and passive manifestation, in turn, is the most likely origin of that drawn by Plotinus and Gnostics alike – see, e.g., II.9.16.5-6, “the honor which these people [the Gnostics] say they give to the intelligible Gods” – between intelligible and cosmic Gods.

PLOTINUS’ ESSAY ON FREE WILL AS INFORMED BY HENADOLOGY

Jean-Marc Narbonne has noted¹⁶ that Plotinus would have found in the Gnostics many affirmations of the self-causative or self-constituting character of the single God or of

¹⁶ J.-M. Narbonne, *Plotinus in Dialogue with the Gnostics* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 129ff.

whatever “higher” class of Gods they recognize, and has argued accordingly that Plotinus’ essay on free will (ἐκούσιος) and the will (θέλημα) of the One, which is number 39, and hence written not too long after that on the Gnostics (number 33), is in reply to a Gnostic response to treatise 33, in which the Gnostic critic would have charged Plotinus with positing a first principle which merely “happens to be as it is” and hence lacks “freedom” (VI.8.7.11-15). The Gnostic interlocutor criticizes Plotinus based upon the recognition common to them both of the significance of will as a divine attribute. The critic has turned the Gnostic embrace of facticity around rhetorically, by characterizing the lack of intelligible bounds upon divine will in their system as amounting to an affirmation of freedom. In turn, the critic characterizes the Platonic affirmation of the intelligibility of the Gods as relinquishing their agency.

In his response, Plotinus strives to uphold both values, that of divine intelligibility *and* divine agency, and thus demonstrates a continuity in polytheist intellectual self-understanding going back, as I have argued elsewhere, as far as Plato’s *Euthyphro*,¹⁷ and indeed further. For it is deeply rooted, I believe, in the pre-theoretical intuitions of many polytheist traditions to reject any simplistic opposition between divine will and the goodness and intelligibility of that will. To do differently would be to rend the integrity of divine persons, and being grounded in devotion to divine persons makes it relatively easy for even an unschooled polytheist to reject either of these extremes. As Plotinus puts it,

even if Intellect does have another principle, it is not outside it, but it is in the Good. And if it is active according to the Good, it is much more in its own power and free; since one seeks freedom and to be in one’s own power for the sake of the Good. If then it is active according to the Good, it would be still more in its own power; for it has already what goes from itself to it, and in itself what would be better for it, being in it, if it is directed towards it. (VI.8.4.33-40)

Something is “in the Good” not as in something else, but as it is in itself, and not because it has annihilated itself in the Good, for this is not the nature of the Good. The first principle, Plotinus explains, does not “possess uniqueness [τὸ μοναχὸν ἔχον] (...) because it is obstructed by something else but because it is this very thing (...) otherwise one will take self-determination away from what attains the Good in the highest degree” (7.37-42). It is not a question of the uniqueness of a singular entity, “the One,” existential embodiment of ontological parsimony. For this would be a singularity derived from scarcity, what Plotinus characterizes here as being “obstructed” by otherness, or at V.8.9 as a principle of which multiplicity would exhibit the “falling short.” Instead, uniqueness is the property of all that belongs to the first hypostasis, just insofar as it does. Plotinus is affirming that the uniqueness of such units, that is, such “henads,” is not privative relative to some principle, for the first principle is the principle of individuation itself.

¹⁷ E. Butler, “Polytheism and the *Euthyphro*,” *Walking the Worlds: A Biannual Journal of Polytheism and Spiritwork* 2, no. 2 (2016): 20-34.

This same positivity was affirmed by Plotinus at the end of the essay on number, where he stated that “Parmenides (...) was right in saying that being was one; and it is not unaffected [ἄπαθεῖς] because of the *absence* of anything else, but because it really exists; for real being alone can exist of and by itself” (VI.6.18.41-44). Going right back to Parmenides, thus, Plotinus sees a *positivity* of individuation, expressed here by the negation of passive determination. Number, Plotinus explains, “is not bounded by any limit, but by its own agency [ἐαυτῶ] is what it is; for in general none of the real beings is in a limit (...) but those real beings are all measures” (18.8-12). Agency and being a measure for other things are what define the unitary as opposed to the unified.

Returning to the essay on free will and the will of the One, we find the same ideas, but now the language is ethically tuned:

The nature of the Good is in reality the will of himself, a self not corrupted nor following his own nature, but choosing himself, because there was nothing else at all that he might be drawn to (...). It is necessary for the choice and willing of itself to be included in the existence of the Good, or it would hardly be possible for anything else to find itself satisfactory (...). Our discourse has discovered that he has made himself (...). He is not what he happened to be but what he himself willed (VI.8.13.38-59).

The self-making which is the nature imparted by the first principle is one of which neither the *selfhood*, nor the *making*, is to be elided. The personal nature of the henad *qua* henad is stressed here, as often in Plotinus, by the use of gendered rather than neuter pronouns – note, in this respect, that Greek has no neuter term for “God.”

The henadic unit “is primarily self and self beyond being” (VI.8.14.42); but this selfhood is also a primordial and originary being-with-others, for, as he articulates through an organic analogy, “the harmony of all the parts with each other is their reciprocal cause (...) the being and the cause (...) came in this way from a single source [πηγή] which did not reason but gave the reason why and the being together [ἄθρόον] as a whole” (14.27-32). This is a different kind of causality than teleology, or the simple subordination of parts to a whole, which is likely why Plotinus uses here the terminology of a “source,” which will become a technical term in later Platonists for intelligible form as distinct from intellective. Such a cause resists reification, and hence the virtues, e.g., are particularly conceived by Proclus as *πηγαί*.¹⁸

The intelligible cause is not reified because it is not *alien* to the self, but it does express *relation* within the self: “He himself therefore is by himself what he is, related and directed to himself, that he may not in this way either be related to the outside or to something else, but altogether self-related” (17.25-7) – and not either, evidently, we may add, *without relation*. The henad’s willing of herself thus entails a *continuum* or *coherence* (συνεχέει) within the henad, so that such a unit is not merely point-like or atomized. “His holding himself together must be understood ... as meaning that all the other things that exist are held together by this” (VI.8.21.19-21), following from the formal character of

¹⁸ See the discussion in Butler, “The Second Intelligible Triad...,” 150-153.

the ultimate manifold, all of its members being in each, in order that there be no need of a further “one” holding them all.

If we turn again back to the essay on number, we find this continuum/coherence again in the reference to the generation of a “continuous one” (συνεχῆ ἓνα) yielding greater and lesser numbers (VI.6.11.25-9). What is at stake in the emergence of the greater-and-lesser, which is none other than the ἄπειρον of Plato’s *Philebus* in the form it is known to Aristotle, is not an abstract account of how it is that there are many, instead of one alone, but rather the ultimate ontological defeat of *relativism*, by virtue of an account of how multiplicities emerge that *belong to* some unit – in technical terms, how there come to be monads as well as henads. Hence, in the essay on number, after a lengthy argument against psychologism in chapters 12 and 13, Plotinus supplies in 14 the ontological support for what has come before, concluding that number cannot be mere relation, lest all forms be reduced to relations as well (14.27ff). Relativism results if there are not *self-relating* henads creating continuity and coherence within and for themselves.

This self-constitution or ἀθυπόστασις of henads as expressing the nature of the first principle is therefore irreducible to the simple alternative of facticity, of “happening to be,” on the one hand, and of substantial determination, on the other: “Nor should we be afraid to assume that the first activity is without substance, but posit just this as his, so to speak, subsistence [ὑπόστασιν],” (VI.8.20.9-11). The real emergence of substance from henadic activity, where both the *reality* and the emergent and thus dependent nature of substance are simultaneously affirmed, is the crux of the polytheist and Platonic position.

Plotinus’ Gnostic antagonists seem to collapse this position in the name of voluntarism as decisively as modern commentators, in their reading of the Platonic tradition, have collapsed it in the direction of intellectualism. And both, not coincidentally, have also collapsed henadic multiplicity into either a subordinating monotheism, or a substance monism. “He is not what he happened to be but what he himself willed” (VI.8.13.58-9), for the whatness, the essence that emerges from henadic existence is willed, it does not impose itself. “He is not therefore as he happens to be, but as he acts” (16.17-8), for divine action is prior to essence. Plotinus affirms will and action in order to subvert his critics’ opposition between freedom and determinism, their notion that his first principle, just because its activity is intelligible, is stripped of agency.

But Plotinus embraces enough agency to acknowledge facticity, too, in the operations of that principle: “The other things have to wait and see how their king will appear to them and affirm that he is what he himself is, not appearing as he happened to be, but as really king and really principle and really the Good, not active according to the Good” (VI.8.9.17-22). That is, beings will have to *see* what Gods there actually are. Just so, the Platonist Syrianus in his response to Aristotle’s critique of the Platonic doctrine respecting “numbers” will speak of how, though the number of divinities must be finite, “what that number is, however, a partible [μερικῆ] soul could not say, except that it is of such a size as the principles of these extend to in their wish [βούλονται] to produce another for another class of beings.”¹⁹ Note the importance of will (βούλησις) here. *A posteriori* we

¹⁹ In *Metaph.* 145.25-7.

shall be able to set a lower limit on the number of Gods by matching them to ontic classes, but the upper limit expresses Their *will*. But there is both facticity *and* intelligibility, and it is *us* who must hold these two together and not sacrifice one for the apparent sake of the other. Syrianus, again, states that “If, then, the divine number” – i.e., the manifold of the Gods – “knows itself,” – its magnitude – “it is at all events because it is limited as far as it itself is concerned; and it is just so great as the principles wished [ἠβουλήθησαν] it to be, then at all events it is because its measure is pre-ordained to it by the will [βούλησις] of the principles; so that it would not be infinite, except in the sense of being infinite in power, or in relation to us.”²⁰ In Syrianus we see the same convergence of *number* and of *will* as limit concepts that is implicit in the sequence of Plotinus’ thought. Beings must, so to speak, see what happens, not attempting to determine *a priori* Who there *will be* and how, but knowing and bringing forth the proof that They *have been* Good and grasping their intelligibility. As Plotinus says in the essay on number, “if the beings came into existence before number (...) they would be so many by chance [κατὰ συντυχίαν] (...) casually [εἰκῆ]” (VI.6.10.9-13), that is, the only principle for infra-intellective difference would be privative, there being no principle of positive individuation.

That Plotinus has indeed in these essays, under the pressure of the polemic with the Gnostics, articulated a fundamentally henadological understanding of the first principle is underscored by certain criticisms lodged by Proclus in his commentary on Plato’s *Parmenides* (1146f, 1149f) against a certain unnamed thinker. This anonymous figure regards the first principle as self-constituting, a trait which belongs properly, in Proclus’ own more thoroughly differentiated system, to entities posterior to the henads themselves. John M. Dillon²¹ reckons the passage to refer to Plotinus. This ascription, while it is quite plausible in light of the language of self-constitution Plotinus uses with respect to the first principle – that is, to the members of the primary manifold – in *Ennead* VI.8, becomes surprising, however, when Proclus goes on to state that those “authorities” who think of the first principle in this fashion proceed to affirm that the first principle, “as having no cause (...) derives its existence [ὑπαρξίαν] from chance [ἄπο ταῦτομάτου]” (*In Parm.* 1146.8-9).

If this unnamed thinker is Plotinus, he would seem to be in agreement with the very critics to whom he is replying in VI.8, on a different conception of “chance,” however, than their own. For, if we accept Narbonne’s conclusion that it is the Gnostics who Plotinus again confronts in VI.8, then their charge that the Platonists’ first principle is merely as it “happens to be” derives from their own conception of intelligibility, which is seen by them as deterministically constraining so many Gods as it applies to, while the God or Gods to whom it does not enjoy an arbitrary “freedom.” In meeting their objections, however, it appears that Plotinus, in Proclus’ eyes, has gone so far as to strengthen too much the voluntaristic character of his own doctrine.

Whatever is self-constituting, according to Proclus, is “both encompassing of itself insofar as it is a cause, and encompassed by itself in so far as it is an effect”

²⁰ *In Metaph.* 147.18-21.

²¹ *Proclus’ Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, trans. G. R. Morrow and J. M. Dillon, introduction and notes by J. M. Dillon (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1987), 502 n. 8, 505 n. 10.

(1146.11-13); indeed, this is the very “cohesion” (19) of which Plotinus spoke in order to express the self-relation he sees as necessary in the first principle in order that both will and thought should have in it their proper ground. But for Proclus, “what is self-constituted must necessarily be divisible into a superior and an inferior element” (1150.6-7), and therefore, to preserve the transcendence of the henads relative to their products and their integrity as units, Proclus rejects the Plotinian attribution of self-constitution to the first principle as such.

Proclus, as usual, is responsive here to the need for an orderly distinction of the scope of activity of principles, but also to a danger that Plotinus’ approach be taken in a direction that would subordinate intelligibility: “some other thinkers, developing a certain recklessness, have before now even declared it [the first principle] to be *self-moved*, proceeding to this from the concept of self-constitution by reason of the kinship between the two concepts,” (1150.2-4). This would be to render again the activity of the first principle arbitrary, even violent, rending the fabric of understanding beyond repair. We hear in this the echo of the literalism that leads Euthyphro to unthinkingly posit strife among the Gods unleavened by the recognition that theomachy can only be a conflict *among goods*, not the equivalent, in a divine register, of the us-or-them disposition of a fevered and acquisitive πόλις confronting a “barbarian” Other. Such a struggle could only be either between some who are “Gods” proper and some others rendered sub-divine through a spurious ontological division of the category, or, on the other hand, among those equal and opposed to one another in purely relative fashion, as when Plotinus, in the essay on number, speaks of how we multiply a city merely by perspective (VI.6.2.14). Proclus thus, though critical of Plotinus, shows himself vigilant with respect to the same concerns as his Lycopolitan predecessor.

APPENDIX: THE DOCTRINE OF “PATERNAL” GODS IN POST-PLOTINIAN PLATONISM

In the passage discussed above from his commentary on Plato’s *Parmenides*, Proclus distinguishes the henads from being “self-constituted” in the strict sense, inasmuch as they possess rather “paternal and generative rank in respect of all beings” and hence “generate those beings which are self-constituted,” which

receiving their substance from the primal causes, [are] produced also by themselves; and these are dependent upon the paternal causes which generate beings,²² while they in turn are dependent upon the One which is superior to all such causality ... [I]f we were to seek where that which generates itself is situated finally, we would say that it is where actuality first comes into play; and actuality first occurs at the level of being, even as potentiality occurs in the henad prior to being and existence in the henad prior to this, so that the primal being is productive of itself (...) (*In Parm.* 1151.1-5; 20-24)

²² Accepting Steel’s reading here of ὄντων rather than εἰδῶν.

The self-constituted proper, therefore, is according to Proclus' more exacting classifications placed at the level of the henad's ontic self-explication, while the henads as "paternal cause" only produce, and are in no respect produced, even by themselves.

"Paternal" causality is defined by Proclus in prop. 151 of the *Elements of Theology*, which states that "all that is paternal in the Gods is of primal operation and stands in the position of the Good at the head of all divine organizations [διακοσμήσεις]." This phase of the henad's activity corresponds particularly to its status as an intelligible God, as we see from Proclus' remark in his *Platonic Theology* (III 21.74.7-8) that "just as the intelligible Gods are henads primarily," i.e., in the primary sense, "so too are they fathers primarily." The systematic basis for the equivalency of these terms lies in their both situating the henad prior to the classifications of divine activity that express a God's particular role in the cosmic organization. The intelligible God, the God as "father," is thus the God simply *qua* God, not as this or that *kind* of God. Accordingly, Gods in this primal phase of their activity possess a one-to-one relationship to the totality of Being, as in effect, each one the sole producer of all that is, rather than a part of the cooperative work of a pantheon. Since this disposition is given by the very nature of the henadic manifold, the "Intelligible Gods" are in Proclus not a particular class of Gods, but that class to which every God belongs just by virtue of being a God.²³

Platonic speculation on the "paternal" as a causal category likely goes back to Plato's dual characterization of the demiurge as "maker and father" relative to the cosmic organization at *Timaeus* 28c. By the time of the anonymous commentary on Plato's *Parmenides* often attributed to Porphyry, but which may well be pre-Plotinian, it is already recognized that the term "Father" is commonly used in a manner akin to the "One Itself," inasmuch as it does not refer to one thing, lest it be intelligibly determined, rather than determining, for the anonymous commentator states that "some see fit to abolish number" with respect to the "Father" "in that they absolutely refuse even to say that he is one" (frag. 9). In Plotinus' essay on the Gnostics, we see a connection between the intelligible Gods and the status of "father," as well as an indifference to number with respect to "the Father," when Plotinus states that "the honour which these people say they give to the intelligible Gods would be of a very unfeeling sort" if they do not honor as well the "children" of the intelligible Gods, "for every soul is a child of that father," referring thus collectively to the intelligible Gods (II.9.16.5-10).

In the *Sentences*, definitely the work of Plotinus' student Porphyry, a hierarchy of the virtues and their embodiments proceeds from the sage, acting in accordance with the political virtues; to the daimonic man or good daimon, acting in accordance with the purificatory virtues; to the God, acting in accordance with the intellectual virtues; and finally, acting in accordance with the paradigmatic virtues, to "the father of the Gods."²⁴ This position, however, is clearly not restricted to one "father" alone inasmuch as it, like the previous stages in the progression of virtue laid out in this text, is expressly

²³ I have discussed the disposition of the Intelligible Gods in Butler, "The Intelligible Gods..." 131-143.

²⁴ *Sentences* 32, p. 31 Lamberz. See the discussion of this passage by M. Chase, "What Does Porphyry Mean by *Theôn Patēr?*" *Dionysius* 22 (2004): 77-94.

occupied by whomever – even, apparently, extraordinary mortal beings – can practice “paradigmatic” virtue.

Michael Chase points out that another text possibly by Porphyry, *On the Life and Poetry of Homer*, in commenting on *Iliad* I, 498-9, where Thetis finds Zeus sitting apart from the other Olympians, states that “This isolation and this failure to mingle with the other Gods, but to rejoice in frequenting and relating to himself, remaining still and constantly setting the All in order, presents the nature of the intelligible God; for he [Homer] knows that the God who oversees and manages the All, is Intellect.”²⁵ Chase appropriately associates these remarks on Zeus as displaying in the *Iliad* passage characteristics typical of a God as “intelligible God” with the above doctrine from the *Sentences* concerning “paradigmatic virtue” and the state of being “father of the Gods.”

We can see from this that the close association between the “paternal” and “intelligible” disposition of the Gods that exists in Proclus is already present in these texts in some form. In the exegesis of the *Iliad* passage, Zeus “presents the nature of the intelligible God,” that is, what it is to be an intelligible God, what it is to be a God *qua* intelligible, when he isolates himself from determination by all things. This is essentially the same doctrine as Proclus presents in *ET* prop. 151, where the God as “paternal” “stands in the position of the Good at the head of all divine organizations,” thus separated in his²⁶ individuality from the intellective nexus informing the cosmos.

Moreover, the association of “paternal” godhood with “paradigmatic” virtue, and the positing of such godhood relative to “the All,” τὸ πᾶν, argues for something like the doctrine of the third intelligible triad or intelligible intellect as it ultimately emerges in Proclus, largely from his reading of the *Timaeus*.²⁷ For Proclus, the third intelligible triad, which expresses the intellective activity of the Gods, is the paradigm Plato discusses in the *Timaeus*, which is also the form of Animality, “Animal Itself.” The God as intelligible intellect is the paradigm for the order which the demiurge, as intellective intellect, imparts to the cosmos; hence the God as paradigm is the determination of Totality, the All (as distinct, i.e., from the determination of Wholeness – τὸ ὅλον, ὁλότης – through the activity of the second intelligible triad).

The God, therefore, as paradigm – intelligible object in the strict sense as object of divine intellective activity – exhibits a particular aspect of the general henadic disposition of all henads (and hence all things) in each one. For insofar as all things are present in each God, so to the degree that each God is intelligible, all things are intelligible through her. The God thus presents herself both as the paradigm for things and as the intelligible expression of the totality of things through lending herself to them as framework within which they are intelligible, that is, have meaning and value, and not merely as they hold

²⁵ Pseudo-Plutarch, *De vita et poeseos Homeri* 1243–1247, quoted and discussed *ibid.*, 83.

²⁶ Or “her,” inasmuch as Proclus makes it clear that a Goddess such as Rhea can be considered a “father” even in the more differentiated, intellective divine organizations (*Theol. Plat.* V 3.16.18-23), and hence *a fortiori* on the universal plane represented by the classification of “intelligible” or “paternal” God. Indeed, it is not the feminine, but the *neuter* gender which apparently presents an obstacle to “paternity” in this respect. (Cf. *Theol. Plat.* III 21.74.1-8)

²⁷ See my discussion in Butler, “The Third Intelligible Triad..,” 131-150.

together coherently, which is the function of the God through the second intelligible triad, and still a moment marked by relativity.

Rather, the God as “paradigmatic” possesses the finality that comes only with the actual experience by beings of this formative function, that which Plotinus referred to as beings, having “waited,” at last “see[ing] how their king will appear to them” (VI.8.9.17-19). That this structure should resemble at once that of the “call” which certain proponents of a “theological turn” in phenomenology have inferred from the primordial “givenness” of Being, and also the call to which Gnostics spoke of responding, should not, however, prevent us from recognizing that this cardinal facticity is embedded, for the Platonist, in an intelligible structure. The peculiar virtue of Platonism, therefore, is to maintain, against every pressure to collapse them, at once the irreducibility of the call to which a being responds, and the universalizability of the call as such. In doing so, the Platonist resolutely affirms the unique personhood of the God who wills to be known and of the being who wills to know her as the only ground adequate to the intelligibility born and sustained in that relationship.

PROLEGOMENA TO THE ENIGMA OF THE JOHANNINE PROLOGUE: AN INQUIRY INTO ANCIENT PHILOSOPHICAL SYNCRETISM

The Johannine Prologue is “das grösste Rätsel, das die Geschichte des ältesten Christentums bietet.”¹

Augustine testifies to the laudatory acceptance that the striking beginning of the Fourth Gospel found among some (Neo)platonist circles. One such philosopher suggested its emphatic imprint on high places in all Churches:

Quod initium sancti Evangelii cui nomen est secundum Iohannem, quidam Platonici, sicut a sancto sene Simpliciano, qui postea Mediolanensis Ecclesiae praesedit Episcopus, solebamus audire, aureis litteris conscribendum et per omnes Ecclesias in locis eminentissimis proponendum esse dicebat.²

In fact Amelius, of the Plotinian group, commented on the Johannine Λόγος-doctrine (albeit referring to the Evangelist as “the barbarian”), giving a significant formulation of its content. The Amelian quotation runs as follows (a fairly orthodox exegesis except for the explicit Docetism of the Logos-incarnation):

Καὶ οὗτος ἄρα ἦν ὁ λόγος καθ’ ὃν αἰεὶ ὄντα τὰ γινόμενα ἐγίνετο, ὡς ἂν καὶ ὁ Ἡράκλειτος ἀξιώσῃ, καὶ νῆ Δί’ ὃν ὁ βάρβαρος ἀξιοῖ ἐν τῇ τῆς ἀρχῆς τάξει τε καὶ ἀξία καθεστηκότα πρὸς θεὸν εἶναι, καὶ θεὸν εἶναι δι’ οὗ πάνθ’ ἀπλῶς γεγενῆσθαι ἐν ᾧ τὸ γενόμενον ζῶν καὶ ζῶν καὶ ὃν πεφυκέναι, καὶ εἰς τὰ σώματα πίπτειν (sc. τὸν Λόγον), καὶ σάρκα ἐνδυσάμενον φαντάζεσθαι

¹ A. Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Bd. 1 (Tübingen: Akademische Verlagsbuchhandlung von J. C. B. Mohr, 1909), 108.

² Augustinus, *de Civ. Dei*, X, 29, I, 450.33-451.5.

ἄνθρωπον, μετὰ τοῦ καὶ τηνικαῦτα δεικνύειν τῆς φύσεως τὸ μεγαλεῖον· ἄμελει καὶ ἀναλυθέντα πάλιν ἀποθεοῦσθαι, καὶ θεὸν εἶναι οἷος ἦν πρὸ τοῦ εἰς τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν σάρκα καὶ τὸν ἄνθρωπον καταχθῆναι.³

Eusebius mentions the passage in his account of the Second Principle of Reality, immediately after he has elaborated on Numenius' position, and re-affirmed the presumed affiliation of Platonic and Hebrew wisdom. It is very likely that Amelius himself connected his own analysis with Numenian theory and the Johannine doctrine.⁴ The point of the Evangelic attestation in Amelius must have been the identification of a particular entity in his system with the Heracleitean and the Iohannine Logos: καὶ οὗτος ἄρα ἦν ὁ λόγος καθ' ὃν αἰεὶ ὄντα τὰ γινόμενα ἐγένετο, ὡς ἂν καὶ ὁ Ἡράκλειτος ἀξιώσειε, καὶ νῆ Δί' ὃν ὁ βάρβαρος ἀξιοῖ etc. The world-creative function is to be explained. Cosmic Creativity belongs primarily to Intellection (Νοῦς), for it presupposes a *plan* of the object to be produced: creation of a thing is the process whose reverse constitutes the thing's real analysis, an objective understanding of its nature. Knowledge is the ground of Creation. The Platonic *Timaeus* provides a classic formulation of this insight. And indeed Proclus explains the Numenian and Amelian interpretations of the creative Principle as differing construals of the Timaeian statement (39E): ἥπερ οὖν νοῦς ἐνούσας ἰδέας τῶ ὅ ἐστιν ζῶον, οἷαί τε ἔνεισι καὶ ὄσαι, καθορᾶ, τοιαύτας καὶ τοσαύτας διενόηθη δεῖν καὶ τόδε (sc. this physican and sensible World-Animal) σχεῖν (*In Tim. Comm.* III, 103.18 sqq. Diehl). Now Amelius posited three demiurgic Νόες (Intellects), τὸν ὄντα, τὸν ἔχοντα, τὸν ὁρῶντα, corresponding to the ὅ ἐστιν ζῶον (being in itself as an organic whole), ἐνούσας ἰδέας (the eidetic articulation of being) and καθορᾶ (the intellectual "seeing" of the ideas), i.e. Νοῦς as pure *being* and intelligibility (of Being); as *having* the forms of being; and as *seeing* (intellecting) the ideal content of being. In this triadic analysis of intelligibility and intellection (being, possessing being as structured definite determination of being and seeing being; or being as an ultimate fact of existence, as being had as a definite determination of being, i.e. as being something, and finally as being seen), Amelius considered the first member as demiurgic par excellence (*ibid.*; OF Fr. 96 Kern).

³ Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, XI, 18-19, 540A sqq.

⁴ Amelius was a particularly close student of Numenius. He collected, edited and commented on the latter's literary remains. Porphyrius, *Vita Plot.*, 3, 43-5: φιλοπονία δὲ ὑπερβαλλόμενος τῶν καθ' αὐτὸν πάντων διὰ τὰ καὶ σχεδὸν πάντα τὰ Νομηνίου καὶ γράψαι καὶ συναγαγεῖν καὶ σχεδὸν τὰ πλεῖστα ἐκμαθεῖν. He was in fact considered a specialist on Numenius. When in Athens there grew the notion that Plotinus was merely adapting Numenian views with the addition of mere platitudes and insignificant details, Amelius undertook to defend his friend with a work entitled: Περὶ τῆς κατὰ τὰ δόγματα τοῦ Πλωτίνου πρὸς τὸν Νομηνίου διαφορᾶς (*Ibid.*, 17). On the other hand, Numenius utilized in his theological speculations the wisdom, symbolism and sacred rites of the oriental eminent nations (among whom he mentioned, Brahmins, Hebrews, Magians (Iranians) and Egyptians), as agreeing with the Platonic spirit. Fr. 1a (des Places): ...ἐπικαλέσασθαι δὲ τὰ ἔθνη τὰ εὐδοκμοῦντα, προσφερόμενον αὐτῶν τὰς τελετὰς καὶ τὰ δόγματα τὰς τε ἰδρύσεις συντελουμένας Πλάτωνι ὁμολογουμένως, ὅσας Βραχμῆνες καὶ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ Μάγοι καὶ Αἰγύπτιοι διέθεντο. He employed the allegorical method (τροπολογῆσαι) in interpreting passages from the Old Testament (Frs. 1b, 1c and 9); Origenes in fact commented favourably on these analyses, Fr. 1c: ...καὶ οὐκ ἀπιθάνως αὐτὰ τροπολογῶντα (sc. τὸν Νομηνίου). Numenius allegorized even a story from the New Testament without mentioning the name of Jesus (Fr. 10a), just as Amelius referred to the Johannine Gospel by calling its author ὁ βάρβαρος.

But in Neoplatonism λόγος is essentially associated to the psychic hypostasis, in contradistinction to the noetic principle to which it is subordinated. And it is from the Universal hypercosmic Soul that the particular psychic entities *descend* into the World according to Amelius; Stobaeus, *Eclogae* I, 49, 39, I 377.11 Wachsmuth: (Περὶ διαφορᾶς καθόδου τῶν ψυχῶν from Iamblichus' Περὶ ψυχῆς) Πλωτίνος μὲν καὶ Πορφύριος καὶ Ἀμέλιος ἀπὸ τῆς ὑπὲρ τὸν οὐρανὸν ψυχῆς καὶ πάσας ἐπίσης εἰσουκίζουσιν εἰς τὰ σώματα. In fact Amelius held (or tended to hold) the singular doctrine that all psychic substance, all souls, are really at bottom not only essentially homogeneous, but also *numerically* one (*ibid.* I, 49, 37 372.10-12; 25-6) differing only and simply in accordance with varying relations and positions (σχέσεσι καὶ κατατάξεσιν, I 376. 3-4). This fits nicely into the Amelian account of the Johannine prologue: everything that comes to be is a being and exists, has life and is living, by being in the Logos principle; ἐν ᾧ τὸ γενόμενον ζῶν καὶ ζῶν καὶ ὄν πεφυκέναι. It furthermore provides the foundation for an explanation of the Incarnation of the eternal Soul-Logos itself in an individual: all particular souls are *identical* with the Universal Soul; in that unique case the fullness of the hypercosmic powers was also actually preserved undiminished (τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος).

The likelihood is thus substantial that Amelius identified the Johannine Logos with his Universal Soul. That he invoked the Heracleitean (and, he might have added, as an elaborate version of divine immanent causality, the Stoic) Logos as ontological principle of reality points in the same direction: in Stoicism this Logos, the aboriginal pure active reality, produces, by its own tensional transformations according to its own law, the cosmic whole; everything has its existence grounded in Logos, is a tensional (τονικός) Logos-modification according to a spermatically pre-existing pattern in Logos itself, subsists therefore *in* Logos. This accounts for the ἐν ᾧ moment, which, significantly, from the Johannine ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν etc. becomes the explicitly sweeping ἐν ᾧ τὸ γενόμενον ζῶν καὶ ζῶν καὶ ὄν πεφυκέναι. The δι' οὗ would also, in the Neoplatonic setting, suggest instrumental efficiency rather than veritable creative causality. It is true that the καθ' ὃν mentioned in the beginning of the quotation suggests the archetypal principle, probably the second Amelian Demiurge (τὸν ἔχοντα, i.e. the divine Intellect qua possessing the ideal articulation of reality, the structured determinations of being); but the Heracleitean invocation in exemplification of this καθ' ὃν redresses the suggestion. Philo illustrates well the prepositional Metaphysics in *De Cherubim*, 35 (§§124-127); 125: πρὸς γὰρ τὴν τινος γένεσιν πολλὰ δεῖ συνελθεῖν, τὸ ὑφ' οὗ, τὸ ἐξ οὗ, τὸ δι' οὗ, τὸ δι' ὅ· καὶ ἔστι τὸ μὲν ὑφ' οὗ τὸ αἴτιον, ἐξ οὗ δὲ ἡ ὕλη, δι' οὗ δὲ τὸ ἐργαλεῖον, δι' ὃ δὲ ἡ αἰτία. In cosmic creation ὑφ' οὗ is God, δι' οὗ His Λόγος. Cf. Seneca *Epistulae*, 65, 8, where two more causes are introduced, *in quo* as the form and *ad quod* as the paradigmatic idea; while one is suppressed, the instrumental δι' οὗ. Finally, that this Logos is God connects with the view that all incorporeal substance from supreme Godhead to particular soulness, is homogeneous (Stobaeus, *Ecl.* I, 49, 32, I 365.7-21). According to Iamblichus, Amelius stands “unfastly” on this doctrine which in effect maintains that νοῦ καὶ θεῶν καὶ τῶν κρειττόνων γενῶν οὐδὲν ἢ ψυχῆ διενήνοχε κατὰ γε τὴν ὄλην οὐσίαν (especially therefore as Supramundane universal soul). The theory cannot be immediately reconciled with the strict Subordinationism in the derivation of reality (One-Mind-Soul), and Iamblichus brings emphatically to the surface the underlying tension in the Plotinian-centered position.

The situation reproduces the then contemporary Trinitarian controversies (which however resolutely left the psychic factor outside the compass of essential divine spirituality).⁵

The ἐν ᾧ motive (the idea that all created existence is substantiated *in* a certain ontological principle) points in the first place to the Platonic cosmic soul; *Timaeus* 34b-c; esp. 36d-37a: ἐπεὶ δὲ κατὰ νοῦν τῷ συνιστάντι πᾶσα ἢ τῆς ψυχῆς σύστασις ἐγγεγένητο, μετὰ τοῦτο πᾶν τὸ σωματοειδὲς ἐντὸς αὐτῆς ἐτεκταίνοτο καὶ μέσον μέση συναγαγῶν προσήρμοττεν... καὶ τὸ μὲν δὴ σῶμα ὁρατὸν οὐρανοῦ γέγονεν, αὐτὴ δὲ ἀόρατος μὲν, λογισμοῦ δὲ μετέχουσα καὶ ἁρμονίας ψυχῆ, τῶν νοητῶν ἀεὶ τε ὄντων ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀρίστου ἀρίστη γενομένη τῶν γεννηθέντων.⁶ This would make the universal soul the first-born of God, the Πρωτόγονος. On the other hand, in the Alexandrian Hellenizing Judaism there has been evolved the idea of divine Logos as τόπος ἰδεῶν and νοητὸς Κόσμος. Philo, *De opificio Mundi*, §20: οὐδ' ὁ ἐκ τῶν ἰδεῶν Κόσμος ἄλλον ἂν ἔχοι τόπον ἢ τὸν θεῖον λόγον τὸν ταῦτα διακοσμήσαντα: ἐπεὶ τίς ἂν εἴη τῶν δυνάμεων αὐτοῦ τόπος ἕτερος, ὃς γένοιτ' ἂν ἰκανὸς οὐ λέγω πάσας ἀλλὰ μίαν ἄκρατον ἡντινοῦν δεξασθῆαι τε καὶ χωρῆσαι; §36, I 11.5 Cohn; §25, I 8.2: ἡ ἀρχέτυπος σφραγίς, ὃν φαμεν νοητὸν εἶναι κόσμον, αὐτὸς ἂν εἴη τὸ ἀρχέτυπον παράδειγμα, ἰδέα τῶν ἰδεῶν, ὁ Θεοῦ Λόγος; §24: οὐδὲν ἂν ἕτερον εἴποι τὸν νοητὸν Κόσμον εἶναι ἢ Θεοῦ Λόγον ἢ δὴ κοσμοποιούντος (an emphatic affirmation of the inherent creativity of Λόγος, and His essential orientation towards creation, essentially in his capacity as comprising the archetypal articulation of all being, precisely as being τόπος ἰδεῶν). The divine Λόγος is the *place* of the Intelligibles, the incorporeal powers of God; *De Somniis I*, §62, III 218.12: (τόπος) ὁ Θεῖος Λόγος, ὃν ἐκπεπλήρωκεν ὄλον δι' ὄλων ἀσωμάτοις δυνάμεσιν αὐτὸς ὁ Θεός. The Λόγος is the House of God; *De Migratione Abrahami* §4: καὶ γὰρ τὸν τῶν ὄλων νοῦν, τὸν Θεόν, οἶκον ἔχειν φησι τὸν ἑαυτοῦ λόγον. (Cf. *Job XXVIII*, 23: ὁ Θεὸς εὖ συνέστησεν αὐτῆς (sc. τῆς Σοφίας) τὴν ὁδόν, / αὐτὸς δὲ οἶδεν τὸν τόπον αὐτῆς). In the last Philonian quotation there clearly emerges the underlying ontological pattern of divinity: God is the universal Nous of all existence; His Logos is the House of His ideas of reality.

The ontological *In-being* requires *inherence* of the ὃ ἔστιν ἐν τινι in τὸ ἐν ᾧ ἔστιν τι. When Seneca enumerates the types of cause, adding the Platonic paradigmatic to the Aristotelian four, he distinguishes the (immanent) formal from the (transcendent) archetypal by calling them *id in quo* and *id ad quod* correspondingly; *Epistulae Morales* 65, §8. There has been a shift in the emphasis and a reversal of the direction in the relationship between the formal principle of a thing and the thing itself: still the form is in the thing in a certain sense, but the constitutive connection is that the thing is in its formal principle. That X is in Y accordingly represents the other side of the fact that Y permeates

⁵ Presumed or postulated homogeneity of the incorporeal realm blurs the essential distinctions between *divinity*, *noeticity* and *psychicality*. The inner gradation of spiritual reality must then be in consistency accounted for by varied degrees and kinds of *failure*, of *defection* from the pleromatic perfection of absolute existence. Such was typically the Origenistic position; *De Principiis* II, 1, 1; II, 8, 3; I, 8, 1 Koetschau. The theory, by emphasizing Logos as πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, involved an Areianizing tendency. Catholic Christianity affirmed an unbridgeable gap between divinity (to which Logos and Holy Spirit were included) and the rest of existence, while post-Plotinian Neoplatonism insisted on the distinct self-contained subsistence of all discernible ontological steps in reality connected by a metaphysical chain of being.

⁶ Here the basic demarcation line between eternal being and engendered existence is drawn in the psychic subsistence.

X, constitutes and holds it together. The immanence of the Stoic divine Spirit in the World may be also formulated as the In-being of the Cosmic Whole in Spirit.

In the *Sapientia Salomonis* (an Alexandrian Judaic tract, probably from the second half of the 2nd century B.C., belonging to the Greek Canon of the Old Testament) divine Wisdom functions similarly to the Stoic universal Spirit. The divine Spirit blows everywhere, is omnipresent (XII, 1), it fills the Universe and keeps the whole of existence integrated (I, 7); this omnipotent, omniscient, intellectual, hypersubtle, active spirit of sacred purity constitutes the substance of Wisdom, the only-begotten of its kind from God; VII 22-3: ἔστιν γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ (sc. τῇ Σοφίᾳ) Πνεῦμα νοερόν, ἅγιον, μονογενές, πολυμερές, λεπτόν, εὐκίνητον, τρανόν, ἀμόλυντον, σαφές, ἀπήμαντον, φιλάγαθον, ὀξύ, ἀκόλυτον, εὐεργετικόν, φιλόανθρωπον, βέβαιον, ἀσφαλές, ἀμέριμον, παντοδύναμον, πανεπίσκοπον, καὶ διὰ πάντων χωροῦν πνευμάτων νοερῶν καθαρῶν λεπτότατων. (The form of the recitation coincides with that at the ritual Orphic hymns; a multiform description of the elusive essence of the reality involved). The Wisdom is the universal Artificer (VII, 22), present when God created the World she knows the ways and works of God (IX, 9), which are her own as well (XIV, 5; 2), principle of their generation and leader of their existence (VII, 12) under God's guidance (15). Wisdom is of holy and unsullied substance, most volatile, she pervades and penetrates everything, being as an exhalation of God's Power and an overflow of omnipotent glory unadulterated and chaste, a radiance of eternal light, image of divine Goodness and spotless mirror of divine Activity (VII 24-26). Wisdom is one but able to do everything, self-contained, self-residing and yet effecting all change everywhere (27), she permeates the Universe and governs all existence to the best end (VIII, 1). Wisdom is the prophetic Spirit (e.g. VII, 27; cf. *Job*, XXXII, 8); she is further associated with God's Λόγος (IX, 1-2): Θεέ... ὁ ποιήσας τὰ πάντα ἐν λόγῳ σου καὶ τῇ σοφίᾳ σου κατασκεύασας ἄνθρωπον. The expression ἐν λόγῳ corresponds systematically to ἐν ἰσχύι, ἐν σοφίᾳ, ἐν συνέσει, as in *Jeremias*, LI, 15: ποιῶν γῆν ἐν τῇ ἰσχύι αὐτοῦ, ἐτοιμάζων οἰκουμένην ἐν τῇ σοφίᾳ αὐτοῦ, ἐν τῇ συνέσει αὐτοῦ ἐξέτεινεν τὸν οὐρανόν (the same in X, 12). In *Proverbs* III, 19-20, the organic dative is employed instead of, and together with, the ἐν-formula: ὁ Θεὸς τῇ σοφίᾳ ἐθεμελίωσεν τὴν γῆν, ἠτοίμασεν δὲ οὐρανοὺς φρονήσει ἐν αἰσθήσει ἄβυσσοι ἐρράγησαν etc. *The divine instrument of creation is that in which created being is substantiated.*

The pre-eternal existence and instrumental, harmonizing creative function of Σοφία is manifested in her self-declaration, *Proverbs* VIII, 22-31 (notice §30: ἡμιν παρ' αὐτῷ ἀρμόζουσα). Her omnipresence is also attested there, §2. In *Sapientia*, however, Wisdom is virtually identified with the Stoic World Soul, the divine Spirit permeating all universe. (The Stoic influence promoted also the explicit identification of Wisdom with Logos). The position of *Sapientia* may be described as a coupling of the Stoic Logos – Old Testament Sophia with a transcendent God; or, alternatively, seen from the other end, as a Stoic divine spirit-cosmic soul construal of the instrumental cause in Old Testament Creation. The Stoic world-structure adapted readily itself to the requirements of a philosophical Old Testament exegesis: one had only, in effect, to interpret the God – Spirit – Logos – Cosmic Soul – Active Principle of Stoicism as divine Sophia, God's noetic Logos and creative Power substantiating in itself all created existence. In fact, the Stoicisation of the *Sapientia* went so far as to assume a pre-existing formless matter out of which (ἐξ οὗ)

God fashioned the World; XI, 17: οὐ γὰρ ἠπόρει ἡ παντοδύναμός σου χεὶρ / καὶ κτίσασα τὸν κόσμον ἐξ ἀμόρφου ὕλης etc. This matter would correspond to the absolutely passive principle of the Stoic System. The idea answered nicely to the watery abyss over which the spirit of God brooded in the beginning of things (Genesis I, 2).

* * *

The Stoic predominance in theological speculation of the Hellenistic Age was challenged in the first century B.C. by the reemergence of Platonic thought in the fourth (Philo Larisaeus) and fifth (Antiochus from Ascalon) Academies, of Aristotelianism (Andronicus) and of Neopythagoreanism. The new tendency had also repercussions on Middle Stoicism (esp. Poseidonius). Seneca (*Epistulae Morales*, 65) distinguishes two theories of Causes, one orthodox Stoic (§§2-3), the other standard Aristotelian (§§4-6) to which it is added the Platonic archetypal idea (§7). This latter complex of Aristotelian physics and Platonic metaphysics (the quintocausal theory) is ascribed to *Plato* [§8: “quinque ergo causae sunt, ut Plato dicit: id ex quo (matter), id a quo (efficient cause), id in quo (form), id ad quod (idea), id propter quod (final cause): novissime id quod ex his est”], although considered as common or conjoint opinion of Plato and Aristotle (§11). The theory is criticised from a Stoic point of view (§§11-14).⁷ Significantly, it is associated to:

- 1) A thoroughly pantheistic doctrine: the general cause of everything is the World-totality itself. §14: “illud vero non pro solita ipsis subtilitate dixerunt, totum mundum et consummatum opus causam esse: multum enim interest inter opus et causam operis.”
- 2) The so-called “Middle Platonic” view of the paradigmatic ideas as thoughts in (the mind of) God; §7: “haec exemplaria rerum omnium *deus intra se habet* numerosque universorum, quae agenda sunt, et modus *mente complexus est: plenus* his figuris est, quas Plato ideas appellat, immortales, immutabiles, infatigabiles.”

⁷ The cardinal point of the criticism is the distinction between *true cause* and *necessary condition*. The latter includes time, place, movement and a host of circumstances that are required or must obtain in order for the effect to be realized. True causality on the other hand resides in the creative faculty, the power to effect something; ultimately the real, universal cause is God as the efficient reason, ποιητικὸς λόγος, *ratio faciens* (§12). All else contributory factors are dependencies of the genuine potency which makes things: the form is rather part of the cause; the archetype instrument of it; the purpose supervening efficiency (§§13-14).

In Clemens Alexandrinus (*Stromata*, VIII, 9) and in Cicero (*Topica*, §§58-64; cf. R.E. Witt, *Albinus and the History of Middle Platonism*, 39-41) there occur basically Stoic identical analyses in the Theory of Causality which bear directly on the issue at stake. In *Topica* §58 there are distinguished two general kinds of causes, that which possesses in itself the power to constitute a certain effect, and that which, although it lacks such efficient nature, is indispensable in the origination of the effect (*sine quo non*, ὄν οὐκ ἄνευ); such are the immediate material substrate, space, time, instruments, preparatory or antecedent causes, fate (§59). The former type of real efficiency is also subdivided into self-sufficient effective causality with no need of subservient factors on the one hand (αὐτοτελεῖ, συνεκτικὰ αἴτια), and adjuvating causes, §60 (συναίτια). See *Stromata*, VIII, 25, 1-4 (= SVF II 346); 28, 2-6. In the latter Clementine passage there is a conflation of the Aristotelian quadruple causality with the Stoic schema: strictly συνεκτικὸν and αὐτοτελεῖς αἴτιον is the efficient cause, while the material belongs to the ὄν οὐκ ἄνευ or at most (ascribing a positive predisposition in material potentiality to assume its perfecting form) to the συνεργὰ αἴτια. Cf. SVF II 351. – The source of the Senecan inquiry is pre-Ciceronian; probably this also holds for the Clementine interfusion of the two opposed doctrines in Seneca.

- 3) Characteristic habitual dialectical refinement: *solita subtilitate* (§14).
- 4) Possibly, a *probabilistic* account of evidence; §10: “Fer ergo iudex sententiam et pronuntia, quis tibi videatur verissimum dicere, non quis verissimum dicat: id enim tam supra nos est quam ipsa veritas.”

The idea of the universal All, self-subsistent, all-inclusive totality of existence organized as a living whole, which is the ultimate cause of the being, conservation and (relative) self-subsistence of everything, is expressed in Ocellus Lucanus, *De universi natura*, §§1 sqq., see esp. §11: ὁ δὲ γε κόσμος αἰτιός ἐστι τοῖς ἄλλοις καὶ τοῦ εἶναι καὶ τοῦ σφύζεσθαι καὶ τοῦ αὐτοτελεῖ εἶναι· αὐτὸς ἄρα ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ αἰδιός ἐστι καὶ αὐτοτελεῖς καὶ διαμένων τὸν πάντα αἰῶνα, καὶ δι’ αὐτὸ τοῦτο [τοῖς ἄλλοις] παραίτιος γινόμενος τῆς διαμονῆς τῶν ὄλων. The doctrine can be found expressly in the Peripatetic Critolaus from Phaselis (2nd century B.C.); fr. 12 Wehrli = Philo, *De determinate Mundi*, 9, VI, 94 Cohn: τὸ αἴτιον αὐτῶ τοῦ ὑγιαίνειν ἄνοσόν ἐστιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ αἴτιον αὐτῶ τοῦ ἀγρυπνεῖν ἀγρυπνόν ἐστιν· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, καὶ τὸ αἴτιον αὐτῶ τοῦ ὑπάρχειν αἰδιόν ἐστιν· αἴτιος δ’ ὁ κόσμος αὐτῶ τοῦ ὑπάρχειν, εἴ γε καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἅπασιν· αἰδιός ἄρα ὁ κόσμος ἐστιν. The World is a self-subsistent cause of the existence of all that exists.

Ocellus Lucanus and Critolaus share also the same theory on World-constitution: there are two realms of reality, the celestial one of immutable, eternal being, consisting in quintessential aether, the fifth element; and the sublunary region of transient becoming, built from the four elements. Of and from pure impassable aether proceeds mental existence, divine intellect, godhead: Critolaus Frs. 15-18⁸; Ocellus §§18-9; 36-7. The upper realm acts, and the lower suffers the influence of the former; the superior is causally empowered to effect the changes that constitute the perpetual becoming of the inferior (Ocellus §§18-9). In the peripatetic *De Mundo* the same notions are encountered and led into systematic theological integration. The World, as the system of all that is included in and between Heaven and Earth (391b9-10 – a Stoic formula with impeccable Aristotelian pedigree) is organized into a Whole by a *harmonizing Power* pervading all existence (396b23-34): this is the cosmic *cohesive cause* (συνεκτικὴ αἰτία, 397b9-10). The World *in toto* is the all-powerful generator of everything (397a 4-6: ...τοῦ πάντων γενετήρος καὶ περικαλλεστάτου κόσμου, τίς γὰρ ἂν εἴη φύσις τοῦδε κρείττων; ἦν γὰρ ἂν εἴποι τις, μέρος ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ). But in fact the source of all sublunary influence lies in the celestial realms (397a 8-b8: τίς δὲ τῶν ἐπὶ μέρος δύναιτ’ ἂν ἐξισωθῆναι τῆ κατ’ οὐρανὸν τάξει τε καὶ φορᾷ τῶν ἄστρον etc.). In the uppermost heaven God is enthroned, the efficient cause

⁸ In Fr. 15 (from Epiphanius) the theories described are ascribed to Aristotle (and affirmed to be common with Critolaus); the formulations display Christian bias (e.g.: εἶναι δὲ λέγει – sc. Aristotle – δύο κόσμους, τὸν ἄνω καὶ τὸν κάτω, καὶ τὸν μὲν ἄνω ἄφθαρτον, τὸν δὲ κάτω φθαρτόν (meaning that things in the lower realm are continuously coming to be and passing away. In the same way we must take the statement that things in the sublunary region are proceeding unprovidentially, carried by an irrational impetus in a fortuitous course. For example Fortune is the principle of events whose causes are ignored by human mind; Antiochus (see e.g. Cicero, *Academicorum Posteriorum*, I, 29: “non numquam quidem eandem (sc. fatal series of determination) fortunam, quo efficiat multa improvisa ac necopinata nobis propter obscuritatem ignoratoremque caussarum.” Cf. Cicero, *Topica*, 63; Seneca *Ben.*, 4,8,3 etc. In Ocellus the formulations are more accurate: the celestial region is where the *cause of becoming* (αἰτία γενέσεως) resides, the *perpetuum mobile* (τὸ ἀεκίνητον); the sublunary districts belong to becoming, they form the perpetually passible (τὸ ἀεπαθές) part of the World (§§18-19). To this lower region belong the four elements (§§20 sqq.); hence the upper realm must consist of the Aristotelian aether.

(ἐξ οὗ, 397b 14) of all things, who effects them through the instrumentality of his divine Power (δι' οὗ, *ibid.*): σωτήρ μὲν γὰρ ὄντως ἀπάντων ἐστὶ καὶ γενέτωρ τῶν ὀπωσδήποτε κατὰ τόνδε τὸν κόσμον συντελουμένων ὁ Θεός, οὐ μὴν αὐτουργοῦ καὶ ἐπιπόνου ζῶου κάματος ὑπομένων, ἀλλὰ δυνάμει χρώμενος ἀτρύτω, δι' ἧς καὶ τῶν πόρρω δοκούντων εἶναι περιγίνεται. τὴν μὲν οὖν ἀνωτάτω καὶ πρώτην ἔδραν αὐτὸς ἔλαχεν, ὑπατός τε διὰ τοῦτο ὠνόμασται etc. (397b 20 sqq.).⁹ Proportional to the distance from his supremest seat is the receptibility of the divine benefits (397b30-398a1).¹⁰ In fact, by a simple motion of the first heavenly sphere the divine power is transmitted to all things, imparting in them according to their essence their severally appropriate functioning: thus the complicated movements that constitute the cosmic becoming are effected, as in an enormously articulate mechanism (398b10-399a30). Hence, 399a30-35, ὅταν οὖν ὁ πάντων ἡγεμών τε καὶ γενέτωρ, ἀόρατος ὢν ἄλλω πλὴν λογισμῶ σημήνη πάση φύσει μεταξὺ οὐρανοῦ τε καὶ γῆς φερομένη, κινεῖται πᾶσα ἐνδελεχῶς ἐν κύκλοις καὶ πέρασιν ἰδίους, ποτὲ μὲν ἀφανιζομένη ποτὲ δὲ φαινομένη, μυρίας ιδέας ἀναφαίνουσά τε καὶ πάλιν ἀποκρύπτουσα ἐκ μίας ἀρχῆς. God and his first effect are invisible and unmanifested, revealed and seen in his works (399b10-19). Thus, ταῦτα χρῆ καὶ περὶ Θεοῦ διανοεῖσθαι, δυνάμει μὲν ὄντος ἰσχυροτάτου, κάλλει δὲ εὐπρεπεστάτου, ζωῇ δὲ ἀθανάτου, ἀρετῇ δὲ κρατίστου, διότι πάση θνητῇ φύσει γενόμενος ἀθεώρητος ἀπ' αὐτῶν τῶν ἔργων θεωρεῖται. τὰ γὰρ πάθη, καὶ τὰ δι' ἀέρος ἅπαντα καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ γῆς καὶ τὰ ἐν ὕδατι, θεοῦ λέγοιτ' ἂν ὄντως ἔργα εἶναι τοῦ τὸν κόσμον ἐπέχοντος (399b 19-25). Zeus is the World-Whole as the Orphic text reveals (OF 168.1-32, quoted vv. 1-5 and 31-32 (with variants) in *de Mundo* 401a28-67; cf. OF 169.1-12), but his Intellect is pure, sublimest aether (OF 168.17). The parts of the World are parts of his body, which have him as his truest self (Mind) for cause; 401a25-27: ὡς δὲ τὸ πᾶν εἰπεῖν, οὐράνιός τε καὶ χθόνιος (sc. ὁ Θεός ἐστίν), πάσης ἐπόνυμος ὢν φύσεώς τε καὶ τύχης ἅτε πάντων αὐτὸς αἴτιος ὢν.¹¹ This idea of the Cosmic Whole as ultimate principle of existence (in the World as we know it) and supremest divinity (in the present world-order) has a remarkable and illustrious descent. It existed in earliest Orphism, as we know from the Derveni Papyrus. It had been articulated at least in late Presocratic Anaxagorean circles (Archelaus). It probably stemmed philosophically from Pythagorean speculations. And it commanded a significant Iranian, Zoroastrian connection.

⁹ This is more in tune with God's perfection, than the idea that he *essentially* permeates the world-whole (398a1-6, and notice the following illustration drawn from Persian kingship, with the conclusion 398b4-10). Cf. 400b6-15, etc.

¹⁰ The idea is repeated and elaborated in Ocellus Lucanus §§14-16. §14: ἔτι δὲ καὶ ὅλη δι' ὅλης ἡ φύσις θεωρουμένη τὸ συνεχὲς ἀπὸ τῶν πρώτων καὶ τιμωτάτων (the aethereal, celestial region) ἀφαρεῖ κατὰ λόγον (i.e. proportionately) ἀπομαραινόμενη καὶ προσάγουσα ἐπὶ πᾶν τὸ θνητὸν (cf. τὸ θνητὸν in Critolaus, Fr. 15) καὶ διέξοδον ἐπιδεχόμενον τῆς ἰδίας συστάσεως.

¹¹ There is a remarkable parallelism between *De Mundo* and Ocellus Lucanus, Fr. 1 (Harder). The World is "ornamented" through harmony (οὕτως οὖν καὶ τὴν τῶν ὅλων σύστασιν... μία διεκόσμησεν ἁρμονία, 396b23-4); the divine power constitutes this cosmic harmony (...γῆν τε πᾶσαν καὶ θάλασσαν ἀέρα (pro αἰθέρα) τε καὶ ἥλιον καὶ σελήνην καὶ τὸν ὅλον οὐρανὸν διεκόσμησεν μία ἡ διὰ πάντων δῆκουσα δύναμις... τὸν σύμπαντα κόσμον δημιουργήσασα etc., b27-31). This Power belongs to God who is distinct hypostatistically from it, as explained above. Similarly God is the *cause* of harmony, which keeps together the world in Ocellus (26.5 Harder): τὸν δὲ κόσμον (sc. συνέχει) ἁρμονία, ταύτας δ' αἴτιος ὁ θεός. Another example in Ocellus is house and city held together by concord whose cause is Law (26.5-6). In *de Mundo* (400b13-28) also the analogy occurs (Θεός for the World is like Νόμος for the city). For other correspondences cf. e.g. the argument that no part of the World can be stronger than the whole; Ocellus §13; *De Mundo* 397a5-6.

In Peripatetic and peripateticising Neo-Pythagorean sources of the Hellenistic times (not unlikely all from the 2nd century b.C.) the view is expressed of the World as a living whole whose cause is God (pure intellection located at the aethereal uppermost heavenly sphere, but which by virtue of his causal agency constitutive of the entire Cosmos is also identified to it). The immanent instrumental cause of the cosmic constitution and preservation is God's Power pervading everything. The nexus of the idea can be summarized thus: God is the World Whole, the entire Cosmos; His divine Nous, and so God in a special sense, resides in the most extreme celestial orbit; His power permeates all existence, every part of the divine body, the Cosmic Whole.

The Aristotelian ancestry of the conception is indicated by the insistence on the bifurcation between celestial and sublunary realms, as well as by the aethereal quintessential (extra-elemental) nature of the former region, foundation of intellection. The crucial deviation from the Aristotelian system lies in the suppression of the absolutely transcendent God, the pure Intellection consisting in νόησις νοήσεως. But this elimination of divine transcendence renders possible the structural assimilation to Stoic Metaphysics or Theory of Principles or Theology (excepting the doctrine of palingenesia, of absolute cosmic periodicity in closed cycles): God resides in the sublimest, celestial, aethereal fire, yet the spirit in which he consists permeates the entire material substance of the World; this was utilized in *Sapientia Salomonis*. *The divine Spirit of the one system (Stoic) corresponds to the divine Power of the other (Orphic – Pythagorean – Peripatetic)*.¹² Syncretistic processes were well under way in the 2nd century B.C.

The Aristotelian (and Old Academic but un-Stoic) sharp distinctness between the celestial and the sublunary parts of the World (characteristically manifested in the postulation and assumption of the fifth element and corresponding to religious Astralism) was blended with Stoic Activism in Physics (exemplified in the immanent causality of the active principle and corresponding to Pantheism). Stoic Physics attracted and assimilated Aristotelian Physics, as is highlighted in the Theory of Causes. Real causality implies primarily ability to do things; it consists in the faculty to effectuate its effect. The basic dichotomy in the working factors of the causal nexus is that between activity and passivity, the power to exercise influence and the capability to undergo it. The Stoic active principle corresponds to, but does not coincide with, the formal principle *as existing in the efficient cause* of the Aristotelian analysis. The fundamental difference of the two systems lies in that the Stoic Physics is *dynamic*, whereas the Aristotelian is *teleological*: according to the former, the World is the unfolding in time of the spermatoc principle, whereas in the latter it is the ontological structuring of reality between the two poles of pure Intellect and bare matter, of which absolute Intellect exists separately

¹² The spirit of wisdom in *Sapientia* is, strictly, ἀτιμις τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ Δυνάμεως (VII, 25), not the Δύναμις itself, just as it is ἔσοπτρον ἀκλιδωτον τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ Ἐνεργείας (26). It is elsewhere in the Old Testament that Ἴσχύς is equivalent to Σοφία (cf. *Jeremias* LI, 15). This does not alter the observed *structural* correspondence; it means, however, that in *Sapientia* the movement has taken place towards the sharper hypostatical distinction between God (and his Δύναμις) and divine Wisdom (with its Spirit). On the other hand πνεῦμα in *de Mundo* is associated (apart from blowing air or wind) to the fertile, ensouled substance permeating plants, animals and all things (394b9-11). The peripatetic character of the work prohibits the explicit identification of this Aristotelian spirit with the Stoic spirit, whose tension (τόνος) constitutes all entities in their essential peculiarity. But the structural pressure is operating in this direction.

in itself, but Matter subsists always in some form or other, however elementary, and is intrinsically craving for in-formation. The desire of matter for form, an ontological arrow from a thing to its completion and perfection, is the organizing principle of reality according to Aristotelianism. In effect this plenipotential teleology is the philosophical rendering of cosmogonical Eros in Orphic and other logicomythical speculations. The articulation of reality consists in varying, orderly proceeding degrees of perfection in a hierarchy of ends the subordinate ones subserving the higher, in a stepwise, atemporal raising of matter through successive grades towards intellection, the supreme perfection in which being becomes totally transparent, intelligible. The ultimate causality in the Aristotelian System is *final*; in the Stoic *drastic*. In the Stoico-peripatetic context, the suppression of the final causality in the Hellenistic syncretistic theories goes hand in hand with the abandonment of a clearly transcendent God. And in fact he was needed as the necessary, ultimate pole of attraction sustaining teleologically the world order. Without absolute teleology, a cosmic god was more suitable for the drastic function in world formation and preservation. With the Scepticism of the Middle and New Academy there was no other contender to uphold the claims of metaphysical transcendence. On the other hand, to balance this Stoic preponderance, the temporal World-development in closed cycles (a powerful corollary of the immanent, activity of the causal principle as spermatic unfolding) was abandoned in favour of Aristotelian Cosmic Eternalism. (Mere beginning in time without evolution and repetition was occasionally attempted later, but it represented a particular Platonic interpretation). This syncretistic tendency reacted on Stoicism itself in the Middle Stoa.

The demand for an ultimate first Principle of Reality (not only as its absolute beginning, but pre-eminently as its absolute ground), and celestialism (the divine nature and efficacy of the aethereal region) were both operating in different forms in both first syncretised systems. The immanence of cosmic causality (religiously expressed as Pantheism) and its dynamic, drastic nature, combined with that demand and emphasis resulted in the *reduplication of divinity*: there is the absolute Cause of the World's being (existence and essence) subsisting separately in itself, and a radiation, so to speak, from it permeating the entire universe; a truly efficient and an instrumental ultimate cause of things: God on the one hand and God's Spirit, Wisdom or Power on the other. God in one sense is the Totality of Existence, the World itself, since there is nothing more potent than this Allness. But as a cause of the World, it must be – if not transcendent – a part of the cosmic Whole. God thus resides in the uppermost celestial region, while the divine *nature* (adopting the Aristotelian lunar borderline) extends to the entire heavenly realm.

* * *

In the 1st century B.C. Platonism was drawn more resolutely into the prevailing Syncretistic modality, with the abandonment in the (Philonian fourth and, primarily, the Antiochean fifth) Academy of its sceptical posture and the reversion to positive doctrine (Theory of Reality). Antiochus from Ascalon presented a unified system which he considered to be the common Platonicaristotelian heritage, with Stoicism in real agreement with it, although

verbally innovative.¹³ The account of Antiochean Physics presented by Varro in Cicero *Acad. Post.* I, §§24-29 is thoroughly Stoic; characteristic Aristotelian influence may be discerned in the emphatic bifurcation (presumably also localized) of the Universe into two portions (§24), and the corresponding equally emphatic mention of Aristotle's fifth element (§26), with no definite view however as to its acceptance or otherwise. Nature is divided into two realms one efficient, the other available to the former (offering itself to it for effectuation), *out of which* latter, things are constituted (ἐξ οὗ, *ex eaque*). In the efficient entities, that which is effective is *force*; in the ones being effected, that which is passive is *matter*. Force and matter exist never separately, but always in interpenetration: in the efficient things force prevails, while in things "offerable" or "actionable," presenting themselves to the exercise of influence and activity upon them, matter is more prominent (it is subdued and kept together by a laxer spiritual tone¹⁴ (§24)). The former category involves fire and air (and aether as a separate principal quality, if Antiochus accepts the Aristotelian doctrine of the fifth element), while the latter consists in earth and water (§26). These are naturally localized (upper and lower-central parts of the World), but, apparently, not in the strict Aristotelian sense of a lunar-sphere borderline division of the world into two fundamentally distinct regions. In this respect Antiochus is rather more Stoic than Ocellus Lucanus, §§18-19; 36-37; although, however, he seemed to have emphasized the preeminent providential government exercised by God on the celestial spheres; §29: "...quem deum appellant, omniumque rerum, quae sunt ei subiectae, quasi prudentiam quandam, *procurantem caelestia maxime*, deinde in terries ea, quae pertinent ad homines." Furthermore, Antiochus contradicted the basic Stoic doctrine that spirit (= *vis*, force) and matter are corporeal even in themselves as principles (although not existing separately the one from the other *realiter*).¹⁵ He maintained that corporeality and quality pertain to the composition of *vis* and matter (§24). Hence the first bodies are the elements which are matter essentially characterized by a definite quality (cf. §26).¹⁶

¹³ Cicero, *Acad. Post.*, I, 37 (Varro expounding Antiochus speaks of Zeno's "innovations"): "haec non tam rebus quam vocabulis commutaverat (sc. Zeno)." *Acad. Pr.*, II 15 (Leucollus speaks from Antiochus' point of view): (Plato was not a scepticist) "quia reliquit perfectissimam disciplinam, Peripateticos et Academicos, nominibus differentis, re congruentis, a quibus Stoici ipsi verbis magis quam sentiis dissenserunt." Cf. Cicero, speaking on his own person about Stoicism, *de finibus Mal. et Bon.*, IV, *passim*, esp. §§72, 73; III, 5; V 74; *Tusc.*, 5, 34; Zeno *ignobilis verborum opifex*; etc. The idea originally was (believed to have been) propounded by Polemo of the Old Academy; upon noticing that Zeno was attending his lectures, Polemo commented on Zeno's Phoenician appropriation and transformation of Old-Academic doctrines: οὐ λανθάνεις, ὁ Ζήνων, ταῖς κηπαίαις παρεισρέων θύραις καὶ τὰ δόγματα κλέπτων, Φοινικικῶς μεταφιεννύς (Diogenes Laertius VII, 25). Φοινικικῶς is a *mot à triple entente*: allusion (1) to the Cypriot descent of Zeno, (2) to the furtive practices of the Phoenician merchant traders and (3) to the Semitic undertones in crucial formulations of Stoic positions. – On the other hand, Cicero also holds the incompatibility between on the one hand Old Academic-Aristotelian and on the other Stoic Ethical theory on fundamental issues (like how is the wise man constituted), *Acad. Pr.*, II §132. – Cicero's own opinion concerning Antiochus was that he taught a slightly modified Stoic doctrine, *ibid.*: (Antiochus) "qui appellabatur Academicus, erat quidem si perpauca mutavisset, germanissimus Stoicus" (cf. *ibid.* §137: "sed ille noster est plane, ut supra dixi, Stoicus, perpauca balbutiens"). The context of all these remarks is problems in Moral Philosophy.

¹⁴ For a development of the Stoic theory of spiritual tension cf. A. L. Pierris, "First Principles and the Beginning of World-Formation in Stoicism," in K. Boudouris (ed.) *Hellenistic Philosophy*, vol. II (Athens: International Association For Greek Philosophy, 1994), 149-176 (esp. Excursus III: *On Spirit and Tension*; 170-5).

¹⁵ See A. L. Pierris, "First Principles..." Excursus I: *Matter, Body, Incorporicals and Concepts*, 159-165.

¹⁶ Much has been occasionally made out of Cicero's (rather than Varro's) apparent confusion between *qualia* and *qualitates*, ποιὰ and ποιότητες in §§24 and 26. According to standard Stoic theory, ποιότης is *corporeal* but

Antiochus no doubt incorporated the Platonic receptacle-theory of matter into his Metaphysics. In general, it is inconceivable to even attempt an Academic Eclecticism in the theory of physical reality without taking seriously the Platonic *Timaeus* into account, indeed on building the unificatory, integrative enterprise on this very foundation. There are signs for a conflation in the Ciceronian exposition of the previously worked out syncretism of Stoic and Aristotelian basic Physics with Platonic Matter-theory.

- 1) The looser use of *qualia* and *qualitates*, as noticed in the preceding note, may point in this direction.
- 2) The peculiarity of ultimate matter in §27 is suggested by the expression “*materiam quandam*.” The formula for matter, “*quae tota omnia accipere possit*” points to the Platonic (*Timaeus* 51A) τῷ τὰ τῶν πάντων ἀεὶ τε ὄντων κατὰ πᾶν ἑαυτοῦ πολλακίς ἀφομοιώματα καλῶς μέλλοντι δέχεσθαι. *Accipere* refers to the πανδεχέξ. Infinite divisibility of matter must also relate intrinsically to extension, especially as it is accompanied by an argument for the explanation of movement without supposition of intracosmic vacuum (systematic and accumulated as in the Atomists, or minute and dispersed as with Strato): “*quae autem moveantur, omnia intervallis moveri, quae intervalla item infinite dividere possint*.” Movement in a total plenum is rendered possible by the infinitesimal displacement of one substance by another, by one thing yielding up its place to another in a continuous way, by a gradual removal of some quality from one place to another.
- 3) Cicero (in the Varronian summary, *Acad. Post.* I, §24) remarks that *vis* and *materia* never subsist in separation from each other, viewing the necessary

unsubstantial, a certain spiritual tension and *vis* defining a character, while ποιόν is matter (substance) informed and held together by such tension. And thus Cicero makes Varro correctly equate *vis* and *qualitas*, while *qualia* are the combinations of that qualitative spiritual force with matter (§28). On the other hand, in §24, he maintains that such a combination, *id iam corpus et quasi qualitatem quondam nominabant*. This is incorrect on both counts: bodies are not only the compounds, but *vis* and matter as well; while a quality has no matter, but is corporeal. In §26 the four basic qualities (heat, coldness, dryness, moisture) seem to be confounded with the four elements (fire, air, earth, water), although there obtains in Stoicism a one-to-one correspondence between the two groups. It should however be noted that the Platonic *space*-theory of matter leaves little point to the distinction between *qualia* and *qualitates*: a certain place assumes now this and now that quality; conversely, *qualia* are qualities *extended, localised*. Thus the primary *qualification* of a certain space constitutes a primary *body*, i.e. a *primary quality in extenso*, and so on for secondary and following formations. When fire moves from one place to another, what really happens is that it is extinguished in the first place and kindled in the second; similarly a quality-complex may disappear from place A and reappear in place B: this ontological cancellation and manifestation of the quality-complex is equivalent to the translation in space of the corresponding body (which is merely the *extended quality-complex*). The identity of the body during such transposition signifies the identity of the same extended quality-complex. Identity of some non-formal and non-spatial component involved in the thing is an illusion. Thus things are in flux; they are river-like. The explicit foundation of this view goes back to *Timaeus*; 49d: ἀεὶ ὁ καθορώμενος ἄλλοτε ἄλλη γιγνόμενος, ὡς πῦρ, μὴ τοῦτο ἀλλὰ τὸ τοιοῦτον ἐκάστοτε προσαγορεύειν πῦρ: ...49e ἐν ᾧ δὲ ἐγγιγνόμενα ἀεὶ ἕκαστα αὐτῶν φαντάζεται καὶ πάλιν ἐκείθεν ἀπόλλυται, μόνον ἐκεῖνο αὐτὸ προσαγορεύειν τῷ τε τοῦτο καὶ τῷ τόδε προσχωρούμενος ὀνόματι... 50b ...αὐτὸν αὐτὴν (*sc.* τὸ πανδεχέξ) ἀεὶ προσρητέον· ἐκ γὰρ τῆς ἑαυτῆς τὸ παράπαν οὐκ ἐξίσταται δυνάμει... φαίνεται δὲ δι' ἐκεῖνα (*sc.* τὰ εἰσιόντα) ἄλλοις ἄλλοισιν. See 52a-b: there are three things to be distinguished: first, the idea; second, the homonym visible quality: τὸ δὲ ὁμώνυμον ὁμοῖον τε ἐκείνῳ δεύτερον, αἰσθητὸν, γεννητὸν, πεφορημένον ἀεὶ, γιγνόμενον τε ἐν τινὶ τόπῳ καὶ πάλιν ἐκείθεν ἀπολλύμενον; third, χώρα which is incorruptible. The Platonic τοιοῦτον of the sensible, extended forms, corresponds to the Stoic *such-ness* (τοιουτότης) as *principium individuationis*.

immanence of *vis* in the context of the general thesis affirming the localization of every real being. Hence, *it is copulation with matter that localizes the power*. And this notion corresponds neatly to the *Timaeon* description of *χώρα* as the receptacle of, and standing basis for, the changing sensible qualities, of *τόπος* as the localizer of becoming. 52a-b: τρίτον δὲ αὐτὸ γένος ὄν τὸ τῆς χώρας αἰεὶ, φθορὰν οὐ προσδεχόμενον, ἔδραν δὲ παρέχον ὅσα ἔχει γένεσιν πᾶσιν, αὐτὸ δὲ μετ' ἀναισθησίας ἀπτὸν λογισμῶ τινι νόθῳ, μόγις πιστόν, πρὸς ὃ δὴ καὶ ὄνειροπολοῦμεν βλέποντες καὶ φαμεν ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι πού τὸ ὄν ἅπαν ἔν τινι τόπῳ καὶ κατέχον χώραν τινά, τὸ δὲ μήτ' ἐν γῆ μήτε πού κατ' οὐρανὸν οὐδὲν εἶναι. In fact, it is this precisely conjunction of *vis* and *matter* that constitute body and quality: “Neque enim materiam ipsam cohaerere potuisse, si nulla vi contineretur, neque vim sine aliqua materia; nihil est enim quod non alicubi esse cogatur. Sed quod ex utroque, id iam corpus et quasi qualitatem quondam nominabant.” The deviation from standard Stoic doctrine involved in the last statement is probably significant. The interference of *matter* and *vis* localizes being and constitutes corporeality just because it consists in the nexus of *space* and *vis*; to be somewhere belongs primarily to corporeality, and necessarily follows from having space as substrate on which spiritual force (*vis*) exercises its cohesive and structuring function.

If primal matter is not space, then how can the complex of idea or form and matter be extended and in space? To reply that form involves eidetic or mathematical quantification (and extension) does not solve the problem: it cannot explain real, physical extension. One has to suppose therefore that matter is extended and in space, but this poses the definitive question what over and above extendedness is after all involved in matter. Passivity seems to be intrinsically characteristic of spatial extension, and whatever else may be thought constitutive of matter, seems to consist in positive ideal-formal determination, something that is extraneous to first matter.

That is not, however, the Stoic line of thought. In Stoicism both spirit and matter are, taken *in themselves*, bodies and thus extended beings, although spirit is not, as such, substance. Space is incorporeal, and, therefore, *non-being*. The crux of the difference lies consequently in the degree of reality of space. Construing space as real, concrete being must lead either to its identification with matter, or to its complementarity with it as parallel *principles of reality*. The first is *Timaeon* Platonism, the second is represented by Potamon of Alexandria, the eclectic from around the end of the 1st century B.C., according to whom (Diogenes Laertius, *Proem.* 21): ἀρχάς τε τῶν ὄλων τήν τε ὕλην καὶ τὸ ποιοῦν, ποιότητά τε καὶ τόπον· ἐξ οὗ γὰρ καὶ ὕψ' οὗ καὶ ποίω καὶ ἐν ᾧ. Place here is distinguished from matter, and quality (*vis*, spirit) from the efficient cause. The Stoic (matter-ποιοῦν) and the Platonic (space-idea or idea exemplified as such-ness in place) system of principles are simply combined the one by the side of the other, with bridging piece the ποιοῦν which is transformed in the ποιότητες for Stoicism, and co-ordinated to the World of Ideas as prototypes of sensible (extended) qualities in Platonism. Potamon is a nicely characteristic example of Prepositional Syncretism in metaphysics.

The Potamian quadruplism in first Principles makes clear how far the Timaeon theory of space-matter was at the centre of system-building in 1st century B.C. Antiochus must have been instrumental in the growth of such speculations. But of course a simple reversal to the Timaeon position was no more definitive. In translocation, not only a quality or quality-complex is transferred from one place to another, but matter is also involved. When a bronze sphere rolls on a surface, it is not only sphericity that is manifested at different places along the path, but a particular sphericity, *this* one (τόδε τι), which involves its own particular concrete bronzeness as well. In the end of the analysis however, there is prime matter and an organized quality-complex; what makes *such* an organized quality-complex *this one*, seems to be, as Plato indicated, the fact that it is manifested *here*, in *this* particular *place*. *Space* appears to be the ultimate source of *this-ness*, as being capable of concrete deictic particularization: *this* place. In locomotion, consequently, after all, what moves is a *such*, not a *this*: although the proximate matter (bronze) moves along with the sphere, the prime one (space) does not. The counter-intuitiveness of this result is illusory; for thisness in space, here and there and distance, can operate when extendedness is structured, which can only be done by form: bodies in effect, as structured places, organize the space.

But then, after all, it is being-determinations that particularize: singularity is absolute determinateness, a quality-complex that is unrepeatable. The *principium individuationis* is absolutely determinate such-ness; the foundation of individuality is the non-existence in *rerum natura* of indistinguishability (the Stoic doctrine of ἀπαρραλαξία). Thus, there is no this-ness in space as such, apart from the reference to this-creating determinacies (qualities). Hence this space is ultimately the space occupied by this entity, rather than vice-versa. And as an entity in movement occupies *different spaces* in succession, its *own places* are different at different times, and there is no identical this-space associated with the identical this-entity. Consequently (adopting the Antiochean construal of the space-matter doctrine), the notion of a *particular prime matter* (the *prime matter* of *this* thing) is *self-contradictory*. Prime Matter is substrate for the entire cosmic formation, the polar complement of *Vis* in general. Changes within the World, seen from the point of view of the universal Whole, are really internal *reallocations* of qualities in the total space-matter continuum, which admits of parts at all only in the context of its *structuring* through *qualification*. The Ciceronian formulations are revealing in their emphasis on the *totalitarian* inherent relationship between *Vis* (quality) and *Matter*; §27: “sed subiectam putant omnibus sine ulla specie atque carentem omni illa qualitate... materiam quandam, ea qua omnia expressa atque effecta sint, quae tota (πᾶσα) omnia (πάντα) accipere posit omnibusque modis mutari atque ex omni parte etc.”¹⁷

¹⁷ The spatial order and arrangement in an entity's structure, the mutual adaptation of its parts and, in general the organized distribution of its quality-complex, constitutes its intrinsic τόπος. The idea was expounded already by Theophrastus (Fr. 22 Wimmer = Simplicius *Corollarium de Loco, Comm. In Arist. Phys.* 639.15-22: μήποτε οὐκ ἔστι καθ' αὐτὸν οὐσία τις τόπος, ἀλλὰ τῇ τάξει καὶ θέσει τῶν σωμάτων λέγεται κατὰ τὰς φύσεις καὶ δυνάμεις, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ζῴων καὶ φυτῶν καὶ ὅλως τῶν ἀνομοιομερῶν εἴτε ἐμψύχων εἴτε ἀψύχων, ἐμμορφον δὲ τὴν φύσιν ἐχόντων. καὶ γὰρ τούτων τάξις τις καὶ θέσις τῶν μερῶν ἐστὶ πρὸς τὴν ὅλην οὐσίαν. διὸ καὶ ἕκαστον ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ χώρᾳ λέγεται τῷ ἔχειν τὴν οἰκείαν τάξιν, ἐπεὶ καὶ τῶν τοῦ σώματος μερῶν ἕκαστον ἐπιποθῆσειεν ἂν καὶ

Of course all this is also perfectly Stoic: the clue to the underlying difference lies in what is reported for Antiochus concerning the non-corporeality of matter and *vis* taken in themselves. In Stoicism extensionality (three-dimensionality) endowed with the potency to act or suffer (exercise or undergo an action) constitutes beingness as corporeality; so matter is in itself *ἄποιον ὤμα*; sheer extensionality (the void) is a non-being. But if matter is incorporeal (as in Antiochus), it must either be sheer extensionality (space as such) or an ideal entity (something subsisting somehow not in space, although not as a separate existence, and even if also pervading, directly or by proxy, bodily substance). Evidently, it cannot be the latter; it must therefore be space. Correspondingly, *vis* in general must be a sort of ideal reality, even though existing inseparably from material substance, being always in the corporeal nexus, where it assumes specificity of determination, i.e. particular quality. This complementary ideality of the system emerges thus naturally from the space-matter doctrine.¹⁸

ἀπαιτήσσει τὴν ἑαυτοῦ χώραν καὶ θέσιν. The idea was highly developed in later Athenian Neoplatonism; e.g. Damascius (in Simplicius, *ibid.*, 625.13 sqq.): ἡ δὲ κατὰ μέγεθος καὶ ὄγκον (*sc.* τῆς οὐσίας διάστασις) ἐν θέσει γέγονεν εὐθὺς διὰ τὴν ἄλλου ἀλλαγῆς τῶν μορίων διάρρησιν. διττὴ δὲ καὶ αὐτῆ· ἡ μὲν σύμφυτος τῇ οὐσίᾳ, ὡσπερ τοῦ ἑμοῦ σώματος τὸ τὴν κεφαλὴν ἄνω εἶναι τοὺς δὲ πόδας κάτω, ἡ δὲ ἐπείστατος, ὡς ποτὲ μὲν ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ, ποτὲ δὲ ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ τὴν θέσιν ἔχω... κείσθαι δὲ λέγομεν ἐκεῖνα κυρίως, ὧν τὰ μόρια παρατέταται καὶ διέστηκεν ἀπ' ἀλλήλων... (27) τούτων οὖν τῶν διαστάσεων, ἵνα <μῆ> παντελῶς εἰς τὸ ἀόριστον ὑπενεχθῶσι, μέτρα συναγωγὰ ὑπέστη... τῆς δὲ κατὰ τὴν τῆς θέσεως διάρρησιν ὁ τόπος. Such οἰκεῖος τόπος consists in the εὐθετισμός of parts vis-à-vis the whole (cf. 626.5 sqq.). This structure is of course preserved in the main during movement, but the place within the Cosmic Whole which the thing occupied at a particular moment of the movement is not. – As a general account of space this *relational* theory presupposes *extension* as spatial alienation and distancing of parts (διάρρησις μερῶν) within a whole. We are thus back to where we began.

¹⁸ The re-emphasis on the spatial construal of matter was already operational in Hellenistic Peripatos. A finite World with matter as space involves the non-existence of extension outside the cosmic Whole. And this precisely was Strato's theory, which further, significantly, is brought into connection with the views of the Platonists. The Void is considered to subsist in itself, only by abstraction in thought; in *rerum natura* it is always filled with bodies; *thus it is co-extensive with the Cosmic body as a whole*. Fr. 60 Wehrli: οἱ δὲ ἰσόμετρον αὐτὸ (*sc.* τὸ κενόν) τῷ κοσμικῷ σώματι ποιοῦσι, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τῇ μὲν ἑαυτοῦ φύσει κενὸν εἶναι λέγουσι, πεπληρωθῆαι δὲ αὐτὸ σωμάτων ἀεὶ, καὶ μόνῃ γε τῇ ἐπινοίᾳ θεωρεῖσθαι ὡς καθ' αὐτὸ ὑφεστῶς, οἷόν τινες οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν Πλατωνικῶν φιλοσόφων γεγόνασι. τὸν Στράτωνα δὲ οἶμαι τὸν Λαμψακηνὸν ταύτης γενέσθαι τῆς δόξης (Simplicius testifies). Void is space *without* body, and as such it is naturally nonexistent. Space as extension is always occupied by body, and in fact is adapted for all sensible appearances. Fr. 59 (again from Simplicius): τῶν δὲ διαστατῶν λεγόντων (*sc.* τὸν τόπον) οἱ μὲν ἐπὶ δύο διεστῶς ὡς ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης τε καὶ ὁ Περίπατος ἄπας, οἱ δὲ ἐπὶ τρία, καὶ τούτων οἱ μὲν πάντῃ ἀδιάφορον καὶ ποτε καὶ ἄνευ σώματος μένον ὡς οἱ περὶ Δημόκριτον καὶ Ἐπικούρον, οἱ δὲ διάστημα καὶ ἀεὶ σῶμα ἔχον καὶ ἐπιτήδειον πρὸς ἕκαστον ὡς οἱ κλεινοὶ τῶν Πλατωνικῶν καὶ Ὁ Λαμψακηνὸς Στράτων. This suitability (ἐπιτηδειότης) to every corporeal form clearly corresponds to the Platonic *πανδεχέες*. Strato, on the other hand, postulated the existence of vacuum *within* the World (Frs. 54-55), but as a remainder left over from the occupation of space by bodies, since their parts do not touch among themselves through their entire boundaries, but little vacancies are formed at the interstices, which vacancies constitute the existence of void, never κατὰ φύσιν accumulated, so to speak, in close order, but always dispersed in tiny segments throughout the cosmic substance. Fr. 57: οἱ μὲν γὰρ τὸ καθόλου μὴδὲν εἶναι κενὸν διατείνονται, οἱ δὲ ἄθρον μὲν κατὰ φύσιν μὴδὲν εἶναι κενόν, παρεσπαρμένον δὲ κατὰ μικρὰ μόρια τῷ ἀέρι καὶ τῷ ὑγρῷ καὶ τῷ πυρὶ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις σώμασιν, οἷς μάλιστα συμφέρεσθαι προσήκει (Hero Alexandrinus). Cf. Frs. 56; 64; 66. Strato's mediation towards syncretistic approaches is evident also in the emphatic employment of the power-vocabulary in the theory of first principles. Principles of nature are the qualities (Frs. 42-44), and, accordingly, first principles are the primary qualities (warmth etc.); these are δυνάμεις which in fact are *corporeal* (σωματικά). Fr. 65a-b: ...τὸ φῶς οὐδὲ ἡ θερμότης οὐδ' ἄλλη δύναμις οὐδεμία σωματικὴ. Fr. 89: "huius (*sc.* Strato) tale decretum est: frigidum et calidum semper in contraria abeunt, una esse non possunt; eo frigidum confluit, unde vis calidi discessit... cum vis maior frigidi illata in cavernis est etc." Fr. 94: ...Στράτων καὶ Δημόκριτος καὶ τὴν δύναμιν σῶμα· πνευματικὴ γάρ (with reference to the Stoic spiritual tension). Θερμότης καὶ ψυχρότης ἀεὶ δυνάμεις; fire and water are the substances of the corresponding powers, οὐσίαι τῶν δυνάμεων

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Constructing the general harmony between Stoicism, Aristotelianism and Platonism in the framework of the 5th Academy presented two fundamental issues that have to be coped with: one was the space-matter theory, the other Ideas as paradigmatic essences. *The two cardinal Timaeon doctrines had to be integrated within the preworked Stoicoaristotelian accord.*

Antiochus accepted the existence of ideas as unchangeable being, discernible only as such by the mental faculty; Mind is at bottom the sole trustworthy judge of reality; it constitutes the criterion of truth in involving the conception of unalterable, perennial self-identical being which establishes unmistakable perception in the natural World of change. *Acad. Poster.* I, 30: “Mentem volebant rerum esse iudicem: solam censebant idoneam cui crederetur, quia sola cerneret id, quod semper esset simplex et unius modi et tale quale esset. Hanc illi ἰδέαν appellant, iam a Platone ita nominatam, nos recte speciem possumus dicere” (cf. *Tusc. Disput.*, I, 58; *Orator*, §10).¹⁹

Ideas are objects of intellection. Objects of sensation (“res eas, quae subiectae sensibus viderentur,” *Acad. Post.* I, 31, ὑποκείμενα ταῖς αἰσθήσεσι) constitute the sensible World, which is in continuous flux: this cosmic reality is therefore called *opinabilis*, δοξαστή. Science on the other hand resides in the concepts and reasonings of mind; “scientiam autem nusquam esse censebant nisi in animi notionibus atque rationibus” (§32), ἔννοιαι and λόγοι.

For Antiochus ideas and conceptions or intellections are fundamentally the same; or, more accurately, he concentrated on the fact that the idea as intelligible (νοητόν) is the object and content of the intellection (νόησις) as the mental act of comprehension. This is evident from the flow of the argument in §§31-2. In *Acad. Prior.* II, 30, again in a statement of Antiochean position, the genetic account of these intellections is given. Mind has the power to repose and store sense-perceptions, building on whose similarities it effects mental notions or conceptual perceptions of things: it sees them intellectually, in their ideal content. “Mens enim ipsa, quae sensuum fons est atque etiam ipse sensus est, naturalem vim habet, quam intendit ad ea, quibus movetur. Itaque alia visa sic adripit, ut eis statim

(Fr. 49). Full Stoicism is evident both in the fact of the non-Aristotelian one-to-one correspondence between primary qualities and basic elements, and in the understanding of qualities as tonic forces informing material substance. The latter distinction between δυνάμεις as the qualitative contrarities and οὐσίαι as the substances whose powers the qualities are (between e.g. warmth and fire, with a third entity the *corporeal* substance) appears also in Ocellus Lucanus §20-23. Fundamental qualities as δυνάμεις are attested already for Alcmaion (DK 24B4). Aristotle conceptualized the general import of the meaning of power as principle of change in something else or in itself taken as something else (*Metaph.* 1046a10; 1020a5: ἀρχὴ μεταβολῆς – or μεταβλητικὴ – ἐν ἄλλῳ ἢ ἢ ἄλλο); and this included e.g. ἡ τοῦ θερμοῦ δύναμις, *De part. Anim.*, 650a5. But the analysis of quality in *Categ.* 8 shows however no particular awareness of, or relevance to, the later problem-structure. In *Probl.*, Γ 14, 873a11-2, σώματα are distinguished from the αἰ ἐν αὐτοῖς δυνάμεις; this is the Peripatetic rendering of the Stoic distinction between οὐσία and ἡ ἐν αὐτῇ δύναμις; for Stoicism matter is the substance of things and powers are corporeal, while for Peripatos, powers are immaterial and, therefore, incorporeal, since bodies necessarily involve matter. The characteristic doctrine of a *power* permeating and fashioning the World appears in Peripatetic circles with *De Mundo*, 396b 29.

¹⁹ The intellectual conception of man, e.g., controls the καταληπτικὴ φαντασία of this thing as a man; in this way the supposed discrepancy in the report of the Antiochean doctrine between *Acad. Post.*, I 30-2 and *Acad. Prior.*, II, 30 is eliminated.

utatur, alia quasi recondit, e quibus memoria oritur. Cetera autem similitudinibus construit, ex quibus efficiuntur notitiae rerum, quas Graeci tum ἐννοίας, tum προλήψεις vocant.²⁰

That the Platonic ideas are νοήματα was entertained already in the (middle of the) 4th century B.C. Alcimos²¹ wrote, 560F6 §13 Jacobi = Diogenes Laertius, III, 13: ἔστι δὲ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν ἕκαστον ἀϊδίον τε καὶ νόημα καὶ πρὸς τούτοις ἀπαθές, διὸ καὶ φησιν (sc. Plato, *Parm.*, 132d) ἐν τῇ φύσει τὰς ιδέας ἐστάναι καθάπερ παραδείγματα, τὰ δ' ἄλλα ταύταις εὐοικένας τούτων ὁμοιώματα καθεστῶτα. Νόημα is related to νόησις and νοητόν in the way that conception as concept is related to conception as conceiving and to the conceived, or thought is related to the thinking of thought and to the thing thought of. In the intellectual act νόησις emphasizes the activity-aspect, νόημα the intellection itself as an achieved datum, while νοητόν refers to the content of the intellection. In fundamentalist Intellectualism as in Parmenides, thinking (to think) is identical with the object thought: ταυτόν (...) νοεῖν τε καὶ οὐνεκὲν ἔστι νόημα (28B8.34); in fact thinking is identical with being: τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι (B3). For thinking involves being, in which it is being thought: οὐ γὰρ ἄνευ τοῦ ἐόντος, ἐν ᾧ πεφασισμένον ἐστίν, εὐρήσεις τὸ νοεῖν (B8.35-6). Conversely, the idea is expressed by the saying of Metrodorus of Chios: πάντα ἐστίν, ὃ ἂν τις νοήσαι (B2); thinking and being are co-implicated. Or rather, thinking is ingrained in being; it is its luminosity, its self-revealingness, its order. In fact, being thinks (itself) rather than it is being thought of (by something extraneous).²² The intelligibility of being (its effulgence, its order that constitutes it and makes it transparent and luminous) constitutes intelligence, i.e. the conception of being. The mental act is grounded in being. In this perspective, Being is identical with Mind. Mind absolutely taken is the radiance of Being (its intelligibility) considered as illuminating that out of which it proceeds. *Mind is therefore Being's revelation*. When the soul receives such unveiling, it is *enlightened* by mental vision: it becomes intellectual. The light proceeds from the objective reality to the thinking subject. Even better: the eye that sees being is being's own. Even more: the eye is being itself. Mind is the light of being, the order of existence.

Plato's speculations must have been construed in such a sense by his contemporaries, whether or not explicitly formulated by him in these terms. Alcimos bears testimony to this. Ideas are νοήματα (*Diog. Laert.* III, 13), but also νοητά (§10); they are exemplars standing in Nature (§13), they exist as real beings (§15). Individual minds (of men but also of all animals) identify themselves with these ideas in intellecting them, and this makes the animal being in contact with the idea: τίνα γὰρ ἂν τρόπον, φησί, διεσώζετο τὰ ζῶα μὴ τῆς ιδέας ἐφαπτόμενα καὶ πρὸς τοῦτο τὸν νοῦν φυσικῶς εἰληφότα; The argument is that every animal instinctively recognizes the individuals of its own species as well as those appropriate for food, and this could not obtain without an awareness of essential

²⁰ *Notitia* for ἐννοια occurs in §22; *de Fin. Bon. Et Mal.*, V, 59-60; *Topica*, 31; *Leg.*, I, 24. *Notio* is commoner, esp. in Cicero's philosophical works, e.g. *Acad. Post.*, I, 32; 42; *Acad. Prior.*, II, 33; 85; *de Fin. etc.*, III, 33. *Intelligentia* further appears occasionally, as in *de Fin. Etc.*, III, 21; *Leg.*, I, 26; 27; 44; 59.

²¹ The Sicilian historian (Σικελικῶ) and renowned orator who was attracted to Stilpo (*Diog. Laertius*, II, 114). He argued elaborately in four books *To Amyntas* that Plato took over from Epicharmus the cardinal tenets of his Theory of Ideas.

²² The idea is worked out in A. L. Pierris, "Logos as Ontological Principle of Being," in K. Boudouris (ed.), *The Philosophy of Logos*, Vol. II (Athens: International Association For Greek Philosophy, 1996), 156-162.

similarity among sense-objects, which implies discernment of ideal identity (§§15-6).²³ Recognition of the same presupposes reference to an ideal exemplar or archetype of the essence in common by the same things.

If ideas are severally thought-contents and thoughts, precisely by virtue of their being archetypes of true being, the question arises, what do they constitute in their totality as existing in *rerum natura*? Again the inner tendency of the Platonic System points to the identification of the *World of Ideas* with divine, absolute *Mind*. The multiplicity of Ideas on the other hand requires the postulation of a second principle by the side of absolute Goodness (τὸ Ἀγαθόν): a sort of intelligible “matter” is needed, whose relationship to space-matter is left obscure and which would be essentially Evil in its dualism to the First Principle.²⁴ And indeed Speusippus adopted different pairs of principles for each successive stratum of reality starting from (1) the unitary Αὐτοέν and descending to the World of (2) Numbers, (3) of Magnitudes, (4) of Soul, and finally of (5) sensible things (Fr. 33a-e Lang = 29-30 Tarán). In the different levels of reality, there are different but corresponding principles, corresponding dualisms. Thus, e.g. just as numbers are produced from the One and the Multitude (πλήθος), so extensional magnitudes are generated from the pair of the Point (*like* the one) and amorphous continuous extensionality (*like* the discreet Multitude); Aristotle *Metaph.* 1085a 32: ἕτεροι δὲ (sc. τὰ μεγέθη γεννώσι) ἐκ τῆς στιγμῆς (ἡ δὲ στιγμή αὐτοῖς δοκεῖ εἶναι οὐχ ἓν ἀλλ’ οἷον τὸ ἓν) καὶ ἄλλης ὕλης οἴας τὸ πλήθος, ἀλλ’ οὐ πλήθους. Cf. *Metaph.*, 1044a7-8; *Topica* 108b23-31. He distinguished Goodness from Oneness and posited the former “late” in the ontological hierarchy, attached essentially to the psychic realm.²⁵ In this way, multiplicity and (mathematical) extension can exist

²³ Alcimos’ emphasis on the spontaneous recognition of *similarities* as conclusive argument for the existence of paradigmatic ideas, is probably connected with the fact that Speusippus wrote extensively (in 10 books) on *Similaris* (Diog. Laert., IV 5: τῆς περὶ τὰ ὅμοια πραγματείας α’-ι’); Frs. 5-26 Lang = 6-27 Tarán.

²⁴ Aristotle emphasized the point from a different point of view. He observed that in *Timaeus* Plato equates the Participating Principle (τὸ μεταληπτικόν or μεθεκτικόν), hence, matter, with space; he further remarks that in his *Ἄγραφα Δόγματα*, Plato identified the μεταληπτικόν with the Great and Small (τὸ μέγα καὶ τὸ μικρόν). In either case, the second principle is of the nature of Place (τόπος), as it must consist in *extensionality*. Accordingly, the Platonic theory must needs face the problem why Ideas and (ideal) numbers are not then in place. *Physica* 209b11-16: διὸ καὶ Πλάτων τὴν ὕλην καὶ τὴν χώραν ταυτὸ φησιν εἶναι ἐν τῷ Τιμαίῳ· τὸ γὰρ μεταληπτικόν καὶ τὴν χώραν ἐν καὶ ταυτὸν. ἄλλον δὲ τρόπον ἐκεῖ τε λέγων τὸ μεταληπτικόν καὶ ἐν τοῖς λεγομένοις ἀγράφοις δόγμασι, ὅμως τὸν τόπον καὶ τὴν χώραν τὸ αὐτὸ ἀπεφήνατο. And 210b33-a2: Πλάτωνι μέντοι λεκτέον, εἰ δεῖ παρεκβάντας εἰπεῖν, διὰ τί οὐκ ἐν τόπῳ τὰ εἶδη καὶ οἱ ἀριθμοί, εἴπερ τὸ μεθεκτικόν ὁ τόπος, εἴτε τοῦ μεγάλου καὶ τοῦ μικροῦ ὄντος τοῦ μεθεκτικοῦ, εἴτε τῆς ὕλης, ὥσπερ ἐν τῷ Τιμαίῳ γέγραφαεν. To the problem posed by Aristotle, it may be added that there is the further question as to the relationship between the intelligible (*Resp.*, 508c1; 527b5), supracaelestial (*Phaedr.*, 247c3) place (τόπος), which generates multiplicity *incorporeal* (κόσμος ἀσώματος, *Philebus* 64b), and the *Timaeus* cosmic place (the space-matter) in which the physical World is constituted.

²⁵ For Speusippus, perfection, beauty and goodness appear “late” in the procession of reality from the Supreme Principle, the Αὐτοέν. Aristotle *Metaph.*, 1091a33 sqq. (Fr. 34f Lang = 44 Tarán): ...ἀλλὰ προελθούσης τῆς τῶν ὄντων φύσεως καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ καλὸν ἐμφαίνεσθαι. Cf. Frs. 34a-f Lang = 43-46 Tarán. In fact there is gradation in the derivation process: beauty precedes goodness; Iamblichus *De Comm. math. Scientia* IV, 16.10 sqq. Festa: τὸ δὲ ἐν οὐτε καλὸν οὐτε ἀγαθὸν ἄξιον καλεῖν, διὰ τὸ καὶ τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ὑπεράνω εἶναι προϊούσης γὰρ πορωτέρω ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς φύσεως, πρῶτον μὲν τὸ καλὸν ἐράνην, δεῦτερον δὲ καὶ μακροτέραν ἀπόστασιν ἐχόντων τῶν στοιχείων τάγαθόν. The view may be probably related to Speusippus (as in H. J. Krämer, *Der Ursprung der Geistmetaphysik: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Platonismus zwischen Platon und Plotin* (Amsterdam: P. Schippers, 1964), 213). Perfection (and beauty) pertains preeminently to the realm of numbers (and geometrical structures), to the μαθηματικά. Goodness on the other hand refers primarily to action and presupposes possibility of (some) change, as in Aristotle *Metaph.* 1078a31: ...τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ καλὸν ἕτερον, τὸ μὲν γὰρ αἰεὶ ἐν

without involving error and evil. And indeed how could the One as the absolutely first principle be the Good, goodness itself, without the Other Ultimate Principle becoming Evil itself? Mind furthermore is the World of organized extension (geometrical realities), distinct both from the First Principle (Αὐτόεν) and the universal soul (τὸ Αγαθόν).²⁶ In this way, the Speusippean hierarchy of reality prefigures Neoplatonic developments under a stricter, late (but classical) Pythagorean, *mathematical* construal: (1) Ἔν – (2) Νοητόν (Numbers) – (3) Νοερόν (Magnitudes) – (4) Ψυχὴ – (5) Αἰσθητὸς Κόσμος.

In opposition to Speusippus, the Xenocratean system was more compact.²⁷ There are two ultimate principles, the One and the (indefinite) Dyad. The second Principle informed by the One generates the ideas-numbers, which exist primarily in soul.²⁸

πράξει, τὸ δὲ καλὸν καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀκινήτοις. The difficulty that may be thought to emerge from the *divine creative activity*, which then should be considered as good (*Timaeus*), is in the Speusippean context only apparent: cosmic creation is a subjective mode of presentation, διδασκαλίας χάριν; in fact there is an atemporal constitution of the physical World just as in the derivation of each “successive” stratum of reality. The ontological hierarchy is eternal, not a development in time. Thus there can be little doubt that God for Speusippus is beyond goodness, which *first* “appears” in the psychic substance, and *secondarily* in the sensible World through its animate part (cf. Fr. 55 Lang-Tarán: οἱ δὲ μέχρι τῆς ἀλογίας (sc. ἀπαθανατίζουσιν), ὡς τῶν μὲν παλαιῶν Ξενοκράτης καὶ Σπεύσιππος etc. All animals have *immortal* souls). Soul and Nature are the 4th and 5th respectively orders of Speusippean reality. And this fits nicely with the report in Iamblichus, *ibid.*, 18.1-12 Festa: τὰ δὲ στοιχεῖα, ἐξ ὧν οἱ ἀριθμοί, οὐδέπω ὑπάρχει οὔτε καλὰ οὔτε ἀγαθὰ: ἐκ δὲ τῆς συνθέσεως τοῦ ἐνόου καὶ τῆς τοῦ πλήθους αἰτίας ὕλης ὑφίσταται μὲν ὁ ἀριθμὸς, πρώτοις δὲ ἐν τούτοις τὸ ὄν φαίνεται καὶ κάλλος, ἐφεξῆς ἐκ τῶν στοιχείων τῶν γραμμῶν τῆς γεωμετρικῆς οὐσίας φανείσης, ἐν ἧ ὁσαύτως τὸ ὄν καὶ τὸ καλόν, ἐν οἷς [οὔτε] οὐδὲν οὔτε αἰσχροὺν ἐστὶν οὔτε κακόν: ἐπ’ ἐσχάτῳ δὲ ἐν τοῖς τετάρτοις καὶ πέμπτοις τοῖς συντιθεμένοις ἀπὸ τῶν στοιχείων τῶν τελευταίων κακίαν γενέσθαι etc. Cf. Krämer, *Ibidem*.

²⁶ Fr. 58 Tarán: Σπεύσιππος τὸν νοῦν οὔτε τῷ ἐνὶ οὔτε τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸν αὐτόν, ἰδιοφυῆ δὲ (sc. τὸν Θεὸν εἶναι). God is absolute Mind, distinct from both the Ἔν and the cosmic Soul. This God is a living force, governor of the Universe; Fr. 56a Tarán: “(Speusippus) *vim* quandam (sc. esse deum) dicens qua omnia regantur, eamque animale” (cf. Fr. 56b). He is the creator who fashions (an educative mode of expression) the World according to the absolute Archetype, the Decad, the all-encompassing entity of numbers-ideas. Fr. 28 Tarán, ll. 10-14: (Speusippus writes extensively on the Decad) φυσικωτάτην αὐτὴν ἀποφαίνων καὶ τελεστικωτάτην τῶν ὄντων, οἷον εἶδος τι τοῖς κοσμικοῖς ἀποτελέσμασι τεχνικόν, ἐφ’ ἑαυτῆς ἄλλ’ οὐχ ἡμῶν νομισάντων ἢ ὡς ἐτυχε θεμένων ὑπάρχουσιν καὶ παράδειγμα παντελέστατον τῷ τοῦ παντός ποιητῆ θεῷ προεκκεκλιμένην. This Decad is the foundation of the number-system, the essential totality of the World of Numbers-Ideas and its condensed reality. It relates to the God-Mind as the Intelligible relates to the Intelligence intelligencing it. Absolute Mind must therefore be systematically equated with the organized system of extension and magnitudes (geometrical) as receptacle and place (ὑποδοχὴ καὶ τόπος) of number-ideas, corresponding to the Platonic τόπος νοητός. The Speusippean God-Νοῦς is thus the proximate principle of psychic and sensible reality, as in *Timaeus*. It is significant that according to this analysis life or vital force “precedes” soul in the order of reality: it pertains primarily to Mind and to pure extensional structuring. Such abstract mathematization of powerful ideas, of which feature Aristotle complained severely as unduly dominating Old-Academic thought, detracted from their relevance, occasioned the Stoic reaction, and caused more than two centuries of immanent Theology and physical Metaphysics.

²⁷ This is the point of Theophrastus’ eulogy in *Metaph.* 6b6 sqq. = Fr. 26 Heinze. All other mathematizing Metaphysicians articulate in detail the derivation of numbers and magnitudes from first principles, but treat in a markedly cavalier fashion physical reality. To such treatment Xenocrates presents an exemption: οὗτος γὰρ ἅπαντὰ πως περιτίθησιν περὶ τὸν κόσμον, ὁμοίως αἰσθητὰ καὶ νοητὰ καὶ μαθηματικὰ καὶ ἔτι δὴ τὰ θεῖα. His generations aptly reflect the way the principles constitute and order this World.

²⁸ Fr. 65 (Philoponus, In *Arist. De Anima* 408b32): ἔλεγεν οὖν (sc. Xenocrates) ἀριθμὸν μὲν τὴν ψυχὴν διὰ τὸ πληρωμα εἰδῶν εἶναι τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ λόγον: ἐκ τῶν λόγων πάντων γὰρ ἐν ἑαυτῇ τοὺς λόγους ἔχει, ὡς εἰπομεν: ἀριθμοὺς δὲ τὰ εἶδη ἐκάλουν ὡς εἴρηται, καὶ αὐτὸς γούν (sc. Aristotle) ἐν τοῖς ἐξῆς φησὶν «καὶ εὐ δὴ οἱ λέγοντες τὴν ψυχὴν τόπον εἰδῶν (*De Anima* 429a27). Aristotle must be in this passage chiefly referring to a characteristic singular doctrine, like the Xenocratean – see *Number, godhead and soul is the same essential reality*; Fr. 16: “estque numerus, ut Xenocrates censuit, animus ac deus, etc.” *Daemons*, good or bad, belong to the same substance; Frs. 23-25. Deamon for each man is his soul; Frs. 81; 83. It follows, that the Dyad (= Mother of Gods) of Fr. 15 is the

Xenocrates interpreted the Timaeon psychogony as eternal generation from the One and the Indefinite Dyad. The Principle of Infinity enters into the Platonic mixture as divisibility (τὸ μεριστόν), which combined with the indivisible Oneness (τὸ ἀμέριστον), produces the number-system. The Second Principle enters again into the mixture as otherness (τὸ ἕτερον) opposed to the self-identity of the One (ταυτόν), and this synthesis constitutes self-movement, change-in-identity; for otherness is the principle of movement, just as identity is the principle of permanence. Thus the Xenocratean definition of soul is reached: self-moving number (or vital idea), ἀριθμὸς κινουὺν ἑαυτόν. Fr. 68; cf. Frs. 60-65.²⁹ Tidying up the reported formulations in Fr. 15 it may be stated that the Indefinite Dyad is amorphous Soulness, the underlying principle of psychicality. When acted upon by the One, it generates the intelligible World of number-ideas (τὸ νοητόν) and simultaneously the living, intellecting psychic essence (νοῦς, νοερόν, ψυχή), which are but two aspects of the same reality, distinguishable in thought as subject and object of thinking: this reality is, in its totality, the *Cosmic Soul*, formed in harmony, of the *Timaeus*.³⁰

First numbers acting on the material Principle (the Indefinite Dyad, principle of divisibility, otherness and movement) generate organized extension. Dyad and matter give one-dimensional magnitude, Triad and matter create surfaces, Tetrad and matter produce three-dimensionality (mathematical solids). Thus the geometrical objects are framed as the intermediate grade of reality between the supracosmic intelligible realm and physical existence, they constitute the celestial region; (Fr. 5; cf. Fr. 34; for the triple division of reality see Fr. 55). Other numbers (as ideal entities and paradigmatic causes, Fr. 30; cf. Fr. 34) form with matter the variegated physical existence. As the numerical eidetic essence becomes more complex, the resulting configurations are less able to maintain themselves permanently in their self-identity vis-à-vis the material otherness and mobility, and this instability makes them thus changeful. In this last function, matter is appositely called τὸ ἀένανον by Xenocrates (Fr. 28), to highlight its unceasing, ever-flowing essential character.³¹

second ultimate Principle, the *Indefinite Dyad*, contrary to a widespread misperception occasioned by the loose doxographical formulation; for the Indefinite Dyad is not in itself the universal soul but its principle.

²⁹ Fr. 68: οἱ μὲν γὰρ (sc. Xenocrates' followers) οὐδὲν ἢ γένεσιν ἀριθμοῦ δηλοῦσθαι νομίζουσι τῇ μίξει τῆς ἀμερίστου καὶ μεριστῆς οὐσίας· ἀμέριστον μὲν γὰρ εἶναι τὸ ἓν, μεριστόν δὲ τὸ πλῆθος, ἐκ δὲ τούτων γενέσθαι τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῦ ἐνὸς ὀρίζοντος τὸ πλῆθος καὶ τῇ ἀπειρία πέρας ἐντιθέντος, ἦν καὶ δυάδα καλοῦσιν ἀόριστον. καὶ Ζαράτας (sc. Zoroaster), ὁ Πυθαγόρου διδάσκαλος, ταύτην μὲν ἐκάλεσε τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ μητέρα, τὸ δὲ ἓν πατέρα διὸ καὶ βελτίονα εἶναι τῶν ἀριθμῶν, ὅσοι τῇ μονάδι προσεοίκασι (i.e. even numbers. Cf. Fr. 15: Ξενοκράτης... τὴν μονάδα καὶ δυάδα θεοῦς, τὴν μὲν ὡς ἄρρενα πατὴρ ἐχουσαν τάξιν... ἦντινα προσαγορεύει καὶ Ζῆνα καὶ περιττόν καὶ νοῦν... τὴν δὲ ὡς θήλειαν, μητὴρ θεῶν δίκην etc.). τοῦτον δὲ μήπω ψυχὴν τὸν ἀριθμὸν εἶναι· τὸ γὰρ κινητικὸν καὶ τὸ κινητὸν ἐνδέειν αὐτῶ· τοῦ δὲ ταυτοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἑτέρου συμμεγνέντων, ὧν τὸ μὲν ἐστὶ κινήσεως ἀρχὴ καὶ μεταβολῆς, τὸ δὲ μονῆς, ψυχὴν γεγενῆσθαι, μηδὲν ἦντιν τοῦ ἰστανάμι καὶ ἴστασθαι δύναμιν ἢ τοῦ κινεῖσθαι καὶ κινεῖν οὖσαν.

³⁰ Fr. 15: Ξενοκράτης... τὴν μονάδα καὶ δυάδα θεοῦς, τὴν μὲν ὡς ἄρρενα, πατὴρ ἐχουσαν τάξιν ἐν οὐρανῷ βασιλεύουσαν, ἦντινα προσαγορεύει καὶ Ζῆνα καὶ περιττόν καὶ νοῦν, ὅστις ἐστὶν αὐτῷ πρῶτος θεός· τὴν δὲ ὡς θήλειαν, μητὴρ θεῶν δίκην, τῆς ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν λήξεως ἡγουμένην, ἣτις ἐστὶν αὐτῷ ψυχὴ τοῦ παντός. Zeus Supreme (Ἵπατος Ζεὺς) was for Xenocrates (Fr. 18) the first Principle of the unalterable, self-identical realm (ἐν τοῖς κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ὡσαύτως ἐχουσι), i.e. in the World of ideas-numbers. Hence the Monad of Fr. 15 is the absolute Principle, the One. Correspondingly the second Principle is the *indefinite Dyad*. As formed by the One, this constitutes the Universal Soul governing the entire World; οὐρανός in the passage refers to the outermost celestial sphere, and connotes the cosmic Whole.

³¹ Τὸ ἀένανον is the same with the Ἀόριστος Δυάς, the Second absolute Principle. The structural identification is confirmed by the doxographical lemma ἀένανον τὴν ὄλην αἰνιττόμενος (sc. Xenocrates) διὰ τοῦ πλήθους (Fr. 28,

Mind as supreme God and ultimate Principle of reality (= the One) is beyond even eidetic-numerical multiplicity. It is the cosmic Soul, not the extreme divine Mind, that contains the World of Ideas-Numbers.³² This universal Soul on the other hand, permeates the physical, sensible World (see Fr. 71; cf. Fr. 73). Since the Xenocratean supreme Mind in itself is above all being–determination (being itself the first principle of eidetic-numerical articulation), it cannot think of any such being-determinations and eidetic-numbers. Consequently, it points backwards to the Parmenidean self-intellection of differenceless absolute being (where pure intellection coincides with pure being, and νοεῖν is identified with εἶναι); and also forward to the Aristotelian God who is pure νόησις νοήσεως, because he is pure actuality, i.e. actuality without any admixture of potentiality, and the only thing that can exist separately from any material substrate, and thus free from any tincture of contingency and potentiality, and thus necessary and eternal, is thought, intellection, pure mental activity. This now intellection, in order to remain necessarily existing and eternal, without any complication of contingency that would compromise such a unique status, must think of nothing that would be so compromised by consisting in a being-determination which necessarily involves form-in-matter. Therefore the divine mind must think of nothing but itself, being thus an intellection of pure intellection, or in other words, pure actuality by and in itself.³³

169.23 Heinze). It is not variation in the *material*, but difference in the *informative* principle, that accounts for the diversity in the orders of reality. The entire process may be schematized as follows: One + Matter → Numbers (souls) Numbers + Matter → Mathematical Extension – Celestial Objects (other) Numbers + Matter → Mathematical Extension – Sublunary physical realm Numbers and souls are not in themselves extended and corporeal (Frs. 66-7). The allegorical interpretation of Homer, *Ilias*, Λ, 40 (fr. 55) indicates that for Xenocrates the same matter underlies his triple division of reality. Describing Agamemnon's shield, Homer refers to its silver strap, where (v. 38) αὐτὰρ ἐπ' αὐτοῦ / κυάνεος ἐλέλικτο δράκων, κεφαλαὶ δέ οἱ ἦσαν / τρεῖς ἀμιστρεφέες, ἐνὸς ἀγχένος ἔκπεφυκυῖαι. The Scholia T *ad loc.* have: ταύτην Ξενοκράτης μίμημα τοῦ κόσμου φησὶν εἶναι. (The “correction” ὁ Κράτης is totally unwarranted and unidiomatic). This feature gives substantial compactness to the Xenocratean System. On the other hand (and under the assumption of the identity of Oneness with Goodness), the involvement of the same matter in the constitution of the very first order of being, admits for the existence of evil very “early” in the generation of reality (Fr. 76; cf. evil daemons Frs. 23-5).

³² God-Mind as a solitary intellection without differentiated content is a doctrinal common ground between Xenocrates and Aristotle (God as νόησις νοήσεως). Cf. supra.

³³ For the Platonic Theory of First Principles see: A. L. Pierris, *The Other Platonic Principle*, in A. L. Pierris (ed.), *Aristotle on Plato: The Metaphysical Question, Proceedings of the Symposium Philosophiae Antiquae Secundum Thersense* (June 30-July 7, 2002, 2004), 239-91.

ALEXANDRE KOJÈVE AND EMPTINESS

You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?"
(John 18:38)

While Alexandre Kojève is best known for his supposedly eccentric commentary on Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, the range and depth of his investigations into a variety of fields remains little known, partly by his own intention, partly by dint of the extraordinary success of the commentary itself. Kojève's investigations stretched from abstract art, to Cantorian mathematics to modern quantum theory concerning which he wrote a prescient and substantial work in 1929.¹ In this respect, Kojève compares favorably with other Russian polymaths of his generation, though he exerted a far greater influence in the West than most of them. Like many of his generation, Kojève showed a precocious interest in the East, most extensively, in Buddhism. The evidence is considerable. We have a fragment, entitled "Descartes and Buddha," dating from 1920, when Kojève stopped in Warsaw after having fled the Soviet Union, along with a substantial amount of material, including a long *Referat* on the central Buddhist thinker Nāgārjuna, spanning his student days at the University of Heidelberg up to 1927, after he moved to France. Kojève took many courses on Eastern thought, not only Buddhism, but Taoism as well, and studied Tibetan and Chinese along with Sanskrit. His proficiency in the latter is clear, though it is not as clear what level of proficiency he achieved either in Chinese or in Tibetan.²

¹ Much of this material remains unpublished and is located in the Fonds Kojève at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. The *Referat* is entitled: "The Philosophy of Nāgārjuna set out according to the Chinese and Tibetan version of the Madhyamivasāstra."

² The evidence of the *Referat* alone suggests considerable proficiency. See, also, D. Auffret, *La Philosophie, L'État, la fin de l'Histoire* [Philosophy, the State and the End of History] (Paris: Grasset, 1990). While Kojève's interest in Buddhism in China did not wane, a rather astonishing note in the first volume of his immense late work, *Attempt at a Rational History of Pagan Philosophy* (1968-1973) questions whether there is any genuinely philosophical thought in China outside of the Buddhist tradition. See, A. Kojève, *Essai d'une histoire raisonnée de la philosophie païenne* [Attempt at a Rational History of Pagan Philosophy] vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 163. In the same note, Kojève also *denies* the influence of Eastern thought on Hegel.

Kojève's interest in Buddhism and Daoism is distinguished by a singular concern for the negative: in-existence, non-identity, non-intention or "non-doing" (*wu-wei*/無為 or 无为) and emptiness (*śūnyatā*/空). One may argue that, in this respect (as in many others), Kojève seems to agree with Heidegger that the Cartesian tradition is unable to think the negative as such, a point made in Heidegger's famous talk, "What Is Metaphysics?" (1929) and anticipated by Kojève's fragment, "Descartes and Buddha." Though the tangled argument of the fragment is by no means clear, the basic point appears to be that, for Descartes, thought cannot think the negative and, thus, thought cannot adequately think being because thought cannot think non-being.³ The underlying assumption of course is that to think being requires that we be able to define not only what is but what is not: a wholly positive account of being is not attainable within its own terms.

This is a surprisingly intricate argument and remarkable within the context of Kojève's commentary on and adherence to Hegel. In Kojève's commentary, the celebrated *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (1947), the central argument of the final parts of the commentary (taken from the lectures given in 1938/1939) holds that the completion of Hegel's system in the advent of wisdom is at once also the abolition of the negative in total identity or transparency. The Hegelian sage is defined as being capable of answering all fundamental questions dealing with his or her actions by means of a coherent and complete discourse (the *Phenomenology* itself).⁴ Presumably this means that the sage is capable of answering the question about being, and, indeed, he or she may proceed to do so by going back through the *Phenomenology*. Kojève underlines repetition in these cases – transparency is achieved by a closed loop in which every negation gets one closer to the complete revelation of the whole. The negative eliminates itself in a declaration of absolute, self-constructing and replicating, identity – the famed end of history that is associated with Kojève's reading of Hegel.

The end of history in complete self-replicating identity is a peculiar result if one takes Kojève's interest in Buddhism seriously. For what does the elimination of the negative have to do with Buddhism, at least in the sense that Kojève grants to it in his fragment comparing Descartes and Buddha? The fragment seems to indicate that Buddhism allows one to think the negative, not to eliminate it. Kojève's Hegel, viewed from this perspective, simply completes aspects of Descartes' thinking and thus must remain an antipode to Buddhist thought. Yet, this is manifestly not the case, for Kojève also indicates that the moment of final transparency is also that of the most complete negation. Kojève's Hegel is thus a good deal more complicated: the end of history seems at once to be the "moment" of maximal positivity and negativity, where both converge and melt away into a new immediacy.⁵ How is this so?

³ M. Heidegger, *What Is Metaphysics?* in *Pathmarks* ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 82-96. А. Кожев, "Декарт и Будда." *Атеизм и другие работы* [A. Kojève, "Descartes and Buddha" in *Atheism and Other Works*] ред. А. М. Руткевич (Москва: Праксис, 2007), 45-49.

⁴ See A. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, trans. J. H. Nichol, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1969). Also see, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, ed. R. Queneau (Paris: Gallimard, 1980). The English translation is a drastically abridged version of the French original: indeed, only half of the lectures from 1938-1939 are available in the English translation.

⁵ Needless to say, this is but one reading of Hegel. The debate over the meaning of Hegelian "absolute knowledge," as set out in the notoriously cryptic final chapter of the *Phenomenology* is extremely complicated, stretching

In what follows, I want to respond to this question by reference to Kojève's consideration of the negative in his Hegel commentary. I argue that Kojève introduces a distinctively Buddhist element into the reading of Hegel, contrary to what one might expect.⁶ In doing so, Kojève was hardly original: the philosophers forming what may be called loosely the Kyoto School had already begun to integrate a distinctively Buddhist concept of nothingness into their readings of Hegel.⁷ Yet, unlike those philosophers, Kojève's attitude to Hegel is not one of reproach. To the contrary, Kojève develops a notion of the negative that weaves together several different traditions which regard the moment of truly human emancipation as a moment of complete abandonment or negation of the self, of the individual, natural life. The human being thus most clearly and enduringly posits itself at the same moment that it negates itself. While this may seem to be a cloying, paradoxical statement, it is nothing of the sort, as I hope to show.⁸

I.

The lectures from 1938-1939 are Kojève's "last word" on the issue of wisdom, the final stage of Hegel's system. But I want to start out from a different point, the lectures from 1934 that form the second appendix to the French edition of Kojève's commentary, entitled "The Idea of Death in the Philosophy of Hegel." And, before discussing those lectures, I want to cite a text likely written much later and included in Kojève's book on Kant, first published five years after his death in 1973:

For the Buddhist, the *natural* life is *eternal* (or, at least, co-eternal with Time); it is sufficient to act in any way whatsoever (to act from Desire; Karma) to be *re-born* and thus to *live* indefinitely; on the contrary, one must do something special in order to *extinguish oneself* (Nirvana) after one's natural death; to wit, (i.e. to acquaint oneself with the "dogma" [Dharma] and) to apply the "Discipline" (Vinaya) which consists moreover in doing nothing or doing "nothing" (eg. the *Wei wu-wei* of the Daoists: "to do non-doing"), that is, to suppress the "Desire" (Ràga) that leads necessarily

from Karl Marx to Robert Pippin's recent reading that has little to do with Kojève's. Since this paper is about Kojève, not Hegel, I see no reason to go further than to advert to the tendentiousness of Kojève's view, which some commentators think deeply problematic while others, though more sympathetic, consider a simplification.

⁶ This may be the most contentious comparison. On the face of it the duality Kojève emphasizes in his approach to Hegel is certainly not evident in Buddhism where non-duality is crucial. See the extensive discussion of this issue in: J. W. M. Krummel, *Nishida Kitarō's Chiasmatic Chorology* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2015), 30-47. In this respect, the issue is whether the duality that Kojève affirms in Hegel on the surface ends up affirming non-duality, which seems to me to be a defensible interpretation.

⁷ See P. Soares, *The Kyoto School's Takeover of Hegel* Nishida, Nishitani, and Tanabe *Remake the Philosophy of Spirit* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011). In regard to the use of Indian and Chinese sources by the Kyoto School, see J. P. Keenan, "Mahāyāna Emptiness or 'Absolute Nothingness'? The Ambiguity of Abe Masao's Role in Buddhist-Christian Understanding" in *Théologiques* 20, no. 1-2 (2012): 341-363. Keenan questions the derivation of the notion of "absolute nothingness" from Madhyamaka and Yogācāra sources or, indeed, the complicated Chinese reception of Madhyamaka thought. For our purposes, it is interesting to note that the Kyoto school seems to create a fusion of the Hegelian absolute and a notion of emptiness that is contemporaneous with Kojève's own work. The complaints about the Kyoto philosophers' "misuse" of emptiness may apply to Kojève as well.

⁸ Indeed, one could argue that it is the very heart of Madhyamaka thinking. See G. Nagao, *The Foundational Standpoint of Mādhyamika Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 9.

to Action (Karma) determining (even if “moral”) a future *life*. Now, as far as he is Religious, the Buddhist admits the impossibility of Satisfaction in this “worldly” *life*. Religious “Satisfaction” or “Salvation” can only consist in Extinction (since, even if he is reborn, which is possible if one applies a certain “moral,” as Buddha or the supreme God, he lives a “worldly” life and cannot obtain the religious Satisfaction that is the only true value for him. [What is truly remarkable is that the Buddha advises against the supreme “morality” that “divinizes” man because, having become God, that is, perfectly *happy* or “blessed,” he is no longer able to recognize the *unworthy* character of this “blessedness,” in such a manner that the very idea of genuine Satisfaction (=happiness of which he is worthy) becomes forever inaccessible to him, in such a manner that he is condemned to eternal life (or co-eternal with Time)]. Of course, Satisfaction is only “lived” during the life of the Buddha, that is, of the “accomplished” Buddhist, and it is nothing else, in the final account, but Faith, in the sense of a subjective *certitude* concerning the *expectation* of death at some point (close for the Buddha and deliberately far way, indeed indefinite, for the Bodhisattva) definitely and for the good.⁹

A few preliminary comments are in order here. Just as he does in his commentary on Hegel, Kojève identifies the final point, the end with satisfaction. In turn he identifies satisfaction with happiness or blessedness: one is only happy when one is satisfied. In contrast to the Hegel commentary, however, Kojève qualifies the achievement of satisfaction by maintaining that it is deceptive. The state of satisfaction or blessedness in this life does not liberate the Buddhist practitioner but in fact imprisons him because the satisfaction achieved is wholly unworthy. And it is wholly unworthy because salvation in this world is impossible – satisfaction in this world thus must be a sort of deception or undignified (even cowardly) compromise that allows one to avoid the genuine end of the Buddhist path: extinction (*l’anéantissement/nirvāna*).

The upshot of this view is that there can be no final, genuine satisfaction in this life. And, indeed, the more radical thrust of Kojève’s characterization of Buddhist salvation is that one must literally extinguish oneself to become free: one must *allow* oneself to die. Far from hearing the voice of Hegel in this characterization of Buddhism, one is more likely to hear another voice, that of Hegel’s tireless opponent, Arthur Schopenhauer. There is perhaps nothing surprising in this affinity since Schopenhauer played a significant role in introducing Buddhist ideas into Western philosophy fully one hundred years before Kojève. Of particular interest in this context is Schopenhauer’s negative view of suicide as an act that emerges from attachment to this world and not freedom from it.¹⁰ If one reads Kojève’s words in this light, the negative view of suicide arises because suicide is unable to free us from desire, a mode of liberation that seems to be the main element in the notion of extinction presented by Kojève.

⁹ A. Kojève, *Kant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 47.

¹⁰ See A. Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1974), 306-311.

But this issue need not preoccupy us for the moment. Far more important is the distinction between what is essentially a false satisfaction and genuine satisfaction. False satisfaction arises from any form of satisfaction that is less than complete self-extinction, and the implication one has to derive from Kojève's comments in this regard is that anything less than literal extinction as a desiring being is inadequate, a mere deception or mask that allows one to live falsely, thus not facing up to the most profound challenge of Buddhism as Kojève sees it: the final departure from the natural order. It is not difficult to draw the properly Kojévian conclusions from this final point; namely, that true salvation is irreconcilable with "natural" existence: if I get up to eat, for example, I show myself to be deluded about my salvation because the act of eating is an act asserting my bondage to the natural world in which I assert the priority of my own existence over all others. I may eat moderately in accordance with rules of fasting or other rituals, but, for Kojève, one should not be misled by these kinds of ritual behaviors – they are all a compromise with natural existence that allow us to excuse ourselves from taking the most radical steps necessary for self-extinction, for release from the cycle of nature or suffering, *samsāra*.

Is this a praise of suicide, of Buddhist "nihilism"? It would seem so; and, indeed, a fascinating and central assertion of Kojève's thinking is that suicide is the only genuine form of emancipation for the human being.¹¹ Kojève goes even further to assert that we become truly human only when we emancipate ourselves through suicide. To put this in the terms we have employed: to become truly who we are as human beings we must negate what is not human in us. What proves to be not human in us is what we refer to as nature. The truly human being, like the truly Buddhist enlightened one, engages in a manner of suicide by negating nature, all barriers to human freedom set by nature.

The implicit claim here is that it makes sense to talk of a truly human being only as a being that is different from (or negating) a natural being. Though his arguments for this distinction are complicated and varied, we may reduce them to a single proposition: that human beings are different from natural beings because they can vary or reject the teleological structure of nature. Human beings are human because they can both recognize and refuse to follow the simplest "natural" imperatives, among which the imperative to self-preservation is at once the most important and difficult to overcome. Hence, suicide, the ultimate overcoming of natural imperatives and, thus, the most extreme expression of freedom whose sense derives precisely from that capacity to vary, reject or transform what seems to be "naturally" given.

II.

Kojève's complexity arises from the diverse ways in which Kojève nests this apparently simple argument within different cultural formations (all viewed as having sense as "cultural" only insofar as they vary or depart from a presumed natural foundation). It is thus no surprise that Kojève chooses Hegel, arguably the most extravagantly holistic

¹¹ See A. Kojève, *Athéisme [Atheism]*, trans. Nina Ivanoff (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), 162. In this work, written in Russian in 1931 and not published during Kojève's lifetime, Kojève argues for suicide as a kind of negative regulative idea. One asserts one's freedom by recognizing the freedom one has to kill or not kill oneself at any given moment. It is, however, quite evident that the later Kojève does not fully accept this position as being other than illusory.

of all philosophers, as the best foundation for a myth of self-extinction in the West that rivals the self-extinction Kojève identifies with the East and, particularly, with Buddhism.

The lectures contained in the appendix to the Hegel commentary show with great clarity the foundation of Kojève's Western myth of self-extinction. The basic conceptual structure underlying these lectures equates the famed Hegelian phrase that defines the *Phenomenology* as describing a process of mutual becoming whereby substance becomes subject and subject substance with a process in which the human being discovers her identity as death, the purely negative, and evaluates that identity in a positive way. The becoming subject of substance or substance of subject is death.

Kojève develops this thesis in a curiously indirect way. While he opens the lecture by focusing on the connection between substance and subject as being the "key for understanding the Hegelian system as a whole,"¹² it is not immediately evident why the explication of this relation might be best achieved through a discussion of the concept of death within that system. There is, at least at first blush, no clear reason to equate the relation of subject and substance to death. We have of course intervened on this relation from the Buddhist point of view as expressed by Kojève, but let us take a moment to sketch out Kojève's argument itself in order to make better sense of this intervention.

Kojève's Hegelian premise is that philosophy must give a total account of the whole if it is to be true. Any philosophy that claims to be total can be total only if it takes into account that claim itself. The claim to totality must be included within the philosophy, and, since that claim is discursive, philosophy must take into account its own capacity to talk about itself. Of course, however, it is not philosophy that talks about itself but we who talk about or otherwise engage in philosophy. Kojève then invokes a crucial distinction between nature and what he refers to as human or subjective reality to underline this distinction. Nature is in itself silent; only through discourse does nature come to itself and, thus, nature is never wholly natural but rather the creation of a discourse that necessarily defines itself in contrast to nature.¹³

More even than Hegel, the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau on Kojève's distinction seems decisive. As in Rousseau, nature is in itself silent and only emerges as such after that silence has been broken once and for all. While language may attempt to describe nature, it can never return us to the state of nature because language is the result of the fall from the state of nature. Language thus can only ever grope to return us to an

¹² A. Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel [Introduction to the Reading of Hegel]*, ed. R. Queneau 2nd ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), 620/114. The lecture is not included in the English translation of Kojève's Hegel lectures, as so much else, and may be found in English in the journal *Interpretation* (see, A. Kojève, "The Idea of Death in the Philosophy of Hegel," trans. J. J. Carpino, *Interpretation* 3, no. 2-3 (1973): 114-156. I have translated the text afresh indicating the French page numerals first, followed by those of the corresponding English page.

¹³ This is a summary *in nuce* of Kojève's dualistic view of Hegel: that there is a "nature" that gets assimilated by a subject and that this process is only fully described in a two-step process evident from as early as Chapter 2 of the *Phenomenology* where the whole is only achieved as the final, total grasping of what is thought together with the process of thinking it, the former constituting the "naïve" view, the latter (ultimately) the view of absolute knowledge. What prevails, then, an overweening idealism? The extinction of material reality in the triumph of absolute spirit? This (Marx's) reading ends up in Kojève's hands as empty because, with the material, the spiritual or ideal disappears.

original equilibrium – the equilibrium of silence – that has been irrevocably eliminated through language itself.

From this point of view, we may argue that Kojève's interpretation of the distinction between subject and substance as opposing discourse to nature follows Rousseau or shows us a Hegel who is far more the disciple of Rousseau (not a particularly novel point). Moreover, the characterization of philosophy as a discourse about being that must take itself into account if it is to be total, and thus true, is a response to the disequilibrium Rousseau bequeaths to us. For disequilibrium, a fundamental incapacity to return to the equilibrium of nature, is a problem Rousseau sets for thinking and to which Hegel replies, as we may gather from Kojève, by suggesting that the equilibrium can be restored in a total account of the whole that leaves nothing out.

History is disequilibrium. Human beings as subjects are creations of that disequilibrium, the fall from nature. As creations of disequilibrium, they are creatures defined by their incapacity to return to the plenitude of equilibrium – they are creatures defined by a lack of plenitude, by what they are *not*. They are thus also creations of the negative, and Kojève identifies the human with the negative. He bases this identification on a simple point: to be other than nature in the first place is to establish a “moment” of elementary negation. The human being is not natural. And, indeed, the human being can be human only insofar as it persists in its non-identity with nature or, put differently, in its negative identity or freedom, for “outside of the natural World, he [man] is pure nothingness.”¹⁴

The initial premise of Kojève's argument is that the subject is human and that both subject and the human belong to the negative. They are expressions of negativity and cannot be other than expressions of negativity as long as they remain estranged from nature. Their attempt to recover nature is however of a most peculiar kind. For Kojève the return to nature is achieved by the negation of nature as being other than human. To use another traditional vocabulary, if the human is human insofar as it is alienated from nature, the attempt to heal that alienation turns into something akin to the assimilation or colonialization of nature – the subject becomes substance by negating substance as opposed to the subject in the achievement of absolute knowledge. In doing so, the subject comes to accept itself as mortal, as extinguishing itself in death as well: “Hegelian Absolute knowledge or wisdom and the conscious acceptance of death, understood as complete and final extinction (*anéantissement* – the same word Kojève uses to translate nirvana in the quote above – JL) are the same thing.”¹⁵

The unity of subject and substance in absolute knowledge is death or extinction. The disequilibrium that finally resolves itself in the achievement of harmony between subject and substance reveals the true nature of that harmony as extinction, both of the relation between substance and subject, man and nature, that emerges from that disequilibrium

¹⁴ Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, 631/122. One of Kojève's favorite images is that of the ring with nature as the ring itself and man as the empty hole (“[m]an is nothingness, pure and simple”). See Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 214-215. Also see A. Kojève, *Outline of a Phenomenology of Droit*, trans. B.-P. Frost, R. Howse (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 214. There is a remarkable (and likely intentional) similarity between this image and the famed Zen *ensō* (円相).

¹⁵ Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, 633/124.

as well as the terms themselves – neither nature nor man survive the end of the history that begins with their mutual discovery. What is left is neither something nor nothing; strictly construed, one cannot attempt to define what remains after the end of this history because this “it” remains beyond definition and thought, beyond relation of any kind – the absolute.¹⁶

I might note that Kojève is curiously ambiguous about the post-historical state. If his lectures on death in Hegel (given in 1933-1934) clearly focus on extinction in a sense that we may be able to connect with the way he uses the term in the fragment from Kant, the later lectures from 1938-1939 present rather a different picture of the post historical state as a state of ghastly “bodies without spirit” caught in a repetition that they are unable even to understand. The temptation to view these different possibilities in terms of Kojève’s own characterization as opposing those unable to die to those who finally achieve that blessing is hard to avoid.

III.

Is this “good” Buddhism? There are few concepts in Buddhism more controversial and complicated than *śūnyatā* or emptiness, and a huge literature has grown about this idea, focused on the work of Nāgārjuna, arguably the foremost Buddhist speculative thinker.¹⁷ Nāgārjuna’s thinking plays a pivotal role in Mahāyāna Buddhist thought. He is the founder of the Madhyamaka, or “middle way,” school and his influence on Chinese (and Japanese) Buddhism is so enormous that he is second only to the Buddha himself in authority.¹⁸ While it is risky to do so, I want to give a brief sketch of Nāgārjuna’s conception of emptiness that attempts also to account for Kojève’s interpretation of Buddhism. Perhaps the best way to begin is by defining the concept of *svabhāva* (自性), inherent existence or “own-being.”¹⁹

¹⁶ The absolving reflection that comes to full knowledge of itself as such at the end of the *Phenomenology* as thought thinking itself seamlessly. The philosophers of the so-called Kyoto School conceive of an “absolute nothingness” that is an absolute self-negation resembling in some respects what Kojève seems to consider here. See T. Altizer, “Buddha and God: Nishida’s Contributions to a New Apocalyptic Theology” in *Japanese and Continental Philosophy: Conversations with the Kyoto School*, ed. B. W. Davis, B. Schroeder and J. Wirth (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2011), 179-192.

¹⁷ See J. L. Garfield (trans.) *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna’s Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995). The discussion of emptiness on p. 89 of the translation is quite useful. The *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (Chinese in the translation of Kumārajīva: 中論 and Tibetan དབུ་མ་རྩེ་མཆོག་ or *dbu ma rtsa ba shes rab*) is the central text of the Madhyamaka tradition with an enormous commentarial tradition in Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese, Korean and Japanese. Even to speak of emptiness as a “concept” is problematic as is the equation of emptiness with nothingness that plays a key role in the Kyoto school’s assimilation of Hegel. See, for a compact overview, M. Cestari, “Between Emptiness and Absolute Nothingness: Reflections on Negation in Nishida and Buddhism” in *Classical Japanese Philosophy*, ed. J. Heisig, R. Raud (Nagoya: Nanzan Institute, 2010), 320-346.

¹⁸ While Kojève was clearly well aware of Nāgārjuna, his knowledge of the Chinese Madhyamaka tradition, in particular, the San-lun (三論) tradition is less clear. The issue is of considerable importance since the two-truth or two-reality (二諦) doctrine of the San-lun tradition is more radical than the approach associated with Nāgārjuna by the Indian and Tibetan commentarial tradition. The San-lun orientation tends to fit with Kojève’s own more radical sense that a “middle way” is ultimately a palliative to forestall the more extreme possibilities opened up by the notion of two realities with one ostensibly superior to the other.

¹⁹ See J. Westerhoff, *Nāgārjuna’s Madhyamaka: A Philosophical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009), 19-52. Westerhoff’s account is rich and complex – I have simplified considerably for the purposes of this paper.

Svabhāva has no exact equivalent in Western philosophy. The handiest equivalent is likely the concept of essence and the corresponding structuring of the world as a collection of essences.²⁰ What exactly does this mean? Essence confers upon what it defines independence and reality to the extent it exists – only one essence has necessary existence: God or the whole of all things.²¹ But the Buddhist notion of *svabhāva* has no connection to a deity, and thus it denotes an essence that has no dependence on any other. The crucial distinguishing feature of *svabhāva*, then, is precisely this thoroughgoing independence, freedom from any connection.

Emptiness denies that any thing possesses *svabhāva*. All things are in fact dependent temporally-conditioned beings having no independent, enduring reality on their own. This is the primary meaning of emptiness, a denial that things as they appear to us have any fixed or independent reality. Appearances are not deceptive as such, however. They are only deceptive in so far as we take them to be more complete, stable and enduring than they are. What we may assume to be permanent is eminently changeable because relative to a network of relations having no beginning or end. To free ourselves from the deception of appearances is simply to free oneself of the impression that there is anything that resists change or transformation including of course one's own "phenomenal" self.

The connection of emptiness with extinction is an intriguing one.²² The underlying connection is that one frees oneself from having final views – one comes to realize that what we take to be fixed and lasting is merely an appearance, provisional and directed by some underlying interest. Once we realize that things are empty, that the view itself is empty, we may free ourselves entirely from views, from the need for views. The liberation from views is indeed a kind of extinction as Heidegger notes:

He who wishes to place himself in the beginning of a truly free philosophy must abandon even God. Here we say: who wishes to maintain it, he will lose it; and who gives it up, he will find it. Only he has come to the ground of himself and has known the whole depth of life who has once abandoned everything and has himself been abandoned by everything. He for whom everything disappeared and who saw himself alone with the infinite: a great step which Plato compared to death.²³

The Madhyamaka school was highly provocative a point made well by Nagao. See Nagao, *The Foundational Standpoint of Madhyamika Philosophy*, vii.

²⁰ J. Arnau (trans.), *Nāgārjuna: Abandono de la discusión* (Madrid: Siruela, 2006), 27. Also see Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom*, 89.

²¹ This view, the "ontological" argument of St. Anselm and others, ends up, however, in super-essentialism.

²² There are connections with notions of *nirvāna* and *anattā* (non-self) in the Theravada tradition. To what an extent emptiness is a universalization of *nirvāna* and *anattā* is no doubt a very fraught question. Nāgārjuna himself does not make things easier with his famous equation of *samsāra* and *nirvāna*, a way of describing the complex duality of the two-truth doctrine set out briefly below. See Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom*, 73 – verse XXV of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*.

²³ M. Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Akron: Ohio UP, 1984), 6-7.

This freedom from views has been associated with skepticism in discussions of Nāgārjuna's thought.²⁴ The association is apt to some degree since ancient skepticism has a primarily therapeutic orientation as well. And this is precisely the principal thrust of the doctrine of emptiness, liberation from views, from the tyranny of needing to know.

The practice of liberation, as Kojève notes, however is by no means clear or straightforward and the irony Kojève identifies emerges in this context as well. The basic question is: Can one live freed from views? The quote from Heidegger above gives a clear response to this question. Thus, to live and claim to be free from views is to live in an inevitable hypocrisy because one has to rely on fixed views to get around in the world.

Cosmic skepticism does not harmonize well with everyday life in which one avoids walking in front of cars or the bus on the way to work. Theoretical skepticism merits ample mockery for the obvious discrepancy between thought and deed – one cannot deny appearances and accept them at the same time.

Yet, Madhyamaka thought seems to do exactly that with its doctrine of the “two truths.”²⁵ The doctrine of the two truths is central to the “middle way” and provides a justification for those who are incapable of accepting the conclusion that the insight into emptiness, once achieved, means that one need no longer heed any appearances. The impossibility of ignoring appearances while living among them – and who can possibly avoid living among them? – compels one to live with two truths. Otherwise, one could simply accept the ultimate truth and let go of appearances as being superficial.

The doctrine of two truths accounts for the intriguing situation of the person who has accepted emptiness. For, having accepted the emptiness of all things, what amounts to their contingency and relativity to certain constellations of interest, one is indeed freed from acceptance of them, but one is not wholly freed of them at the same time. One may look at things as empty but one has to live in the world not given over to emptiness. What kind of practice might this be? The obvious answer is that one lives in the middle, neither finally assenting to nor denying either truth. Yet, this refusal to affirm either truth does not sit well with the notion that one of these truths is indeed ultimate – if all things are empty, then emptiness would seem to be the ultimate truth. Even when one asserts the emptiness of emptiness, virtually a complete freedom from beliefs, it is not clear whether such a complete freedom from belief offers or can offer any guidance to one who continues to live in the world of conditional appearances – we return circuitously to the Kojévian problem; namely, that is it impossible to live without making a compromise between the interests of living itself and the freedom from all such interests. In this respect, the doctrine of emptiness remains a doctrine unable to extricate the adept from the distinction Kojève makes between the undignified and dignified sage.

Can one really accept one's own contingency or dependence on a web of relations – that is: Can one continue to function from the selfish need to transform other creatures and to seduce human beings to serve one's own needs while disguising that base need

²⁴ In particular, by Jay Garfield. See J. L. Garfield, *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), 3-23.

²⁵ The doctrine of the two-truths (or “twofold truth”) comparing an absolute truth to a truth of convention (*samvrti* or 俗) is a fundamental feature of the Mādhyamika view and, as Gadjin Nagao suggests, to the entire Mahayana tradition. See G. M. Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 13-22.

by allowing it to perpetuate itself under the guise of having become enlightened? Is the doctrine of the two-truths anything more than a way of permitting one to reconcile oneself to an undignified form of wisdom – a palliative that undermines genuine wisdom in pretending to embody it (an impossible task).

IV.

If the true sage is after a self-extinction that cannot be reconciled with continuing to live, then the living sage is indeed little more than a palliative, self-deceiving figure who strives to achieve a perfection that he cannot achieve. The living sage finds himself in the same position as the sage who claims knowledge of the two truths as a compromise with the extreme rejection of appearance demanded by unflinching respect for the ultimate truth.

But it is not only in relation to the Buddhist tradition that Kojève's equation of salvation with self-extinction seems both remarkably consistent and outrageous. The Christian sage, the saint, comes under critique to the degree that he too continues to live. In this case, Kojève's thinking approaches a difficult fault-line in Christian doctrine as well. This fault emerges clearly exactly when we come to consider the goodness of God's creation, thus, the merit of what appears to be natural as the nature God has created. If this nature is good, so the argument goes, then why is there any need for salvation in the first place? How, then, does one reconcile the narrative of fall and redemption with the creation narrative? If the world is fallen, how can it be, at the same time, the creation of a benevolent, omnipotent deity?

In both cases, Kojève brings out a singular problem with the negative, and apprehensions of the negative in two different traditions. But he also does the same in terms of Hegel's thought itself. For the most adamant resistance to Kojève as a reader of Hegel comes from philosophers who dismiss his supposed radicality in favor of what might be called the "pragmatic" Hegel. What I mean here is the important stream in the modern Anglo-American reception of Hegel that, broadly speaking, interprets Hegelian thought as creating the basis for a practice of free, democratic social interaction that does not come to an end other than to perpetuate itself as a society in which norms are freely chosen and obeyed. This stream of thought insists that Hegel is not about a radical overcoming of history itself but rather as a disciplining of history – in other words, this view seeks the same sort of reconciliation with the continuation of life as its counterparts.²⁶

There is indeed another variant of this way of thinking in Russia to which Kojève is likely alluding as well. Kojève wrote a great deal about Vladimir Solovyov, considered by many to be Russia's most important philosopher. Kojève holds the same view, though with striking irony, and develops an elaborate critique of Solovyov bearing an extraordinary resemblance to Kojève's distinction between the unworthy and the genuine Buddhist

²⁶ A number of scholars (for example, Robert Brandom, Frederick Neuhouser, Terry Pinkard and Robert Pippin) have argued for taking the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as setting out a theory of self-consciously rational social practices. From their point of view, Kojève must seem to be a very unwelcome reader of Hegel. See T. Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996); R. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008); and F. Neuhouser, *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003). Robert Brandom gives an overview of his approach in *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2013).

path. The basic point of Kojève's critique is that Solovyov's notion of "god-manhood" (*богочеловечество*) is inadequate, serving only to assert what it seeks to overcome, the distance between human beings and the deity. Kojève interprets Solovyov as a sort of unhappy Kantian: one strives to fulfill the universal (divine) law but cannot achieve that universal law as long as one lives. What is operative here? In Kantian terms, the problem emerges from a central discrepancy Kant defines as a conflict between universal law and inclination. While the universal law of the categorical imperative imposes a duty on all persons who wish to be act ethically, Kant is extremely guarded about the possibility of leading a truly ethical life. He is so guarded because the truly ethical life requires that one act always for the universal law only and not out of inclination. If one acts at any moment out of inclination, one is not only not acting ethically but in a manner that is, by definition, not ethical. Kant's ethical "rigorism" entails this strict distinction between ethical and non-ethical actions. Likewise, Solovyov's notion that one can become divine by assuming the divine law is fraught with the singular difficulty that, as long as one lives, one lives selfishly, individually, for the body, and one cannot live otherwise. As long as one lives, one is a servant to a particular life and, as such, detracts from the universal life.

Is this critique a Buddhist critique of Solovyov's Christian philosophy? Or is Kojève's critique of the Buddhist view, as he characterizes it, a Christian critique of Buddhist thought? Or are both critiques the result of a Hegelian critique of Buddhist thought or a Buddhist critique of Hegelian thought? The point is that, in the end, the critiques come together to set out a singular, one might say, shocking critique of the path of the sage, absolute knowledge or divinization. The best life is not a life. Of course this phrase is hardly new either; rather, it is almost a commonplace of tragedy, most powerfully expressed, perhaps, by the chorus in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*. Is this pessimism, the view that all we do is repeat failure as long as we live and that, from this sobering result, we choose either to persist in stupidity or end that stupidity with the most truly human, universal and intelligent act – self-extinction.

V.

To return to the beginning, we may suggest that Kojève attempts to attain a universalist goal by bringing West and East together. From this perspective, he is one of the thinkers on the forefront of creating a narrative of global integration that welds together different discourses and different traditions into a single overarching discourse. While Heidegger referred to Nietzsche as the first truly global philosopher, it seems to me that Kojève, along with Heidegger and the Kyoto philosophers represent among the most extensive attempts to attain this goal.

Now, a central issue in this reconciliation of West and East is negation. If we return to Kojève's youthful fragment, "Descartes and Buddha," we discover an anticipation of the problem framed as the inability of Western thought to think the negative as opposed to the countervailing ability of Eastern thought to contemplate the negative without similar difficulty. But perhaps even more important in this respect is the other issue we have discussed: the predominance in the West of self-interest as the directing tendency of Western thought since Descartes as opposed to Eastern thought where there is a more pronounced attempt to overcome self-interest and not to nurture it.

To what extent is the problem of the negative connected with the problem of self-interest? One argument that affirms a very fundamental connection between the two is made by Heidegger. Indeed, it is not wholly unfair to attribute the mastery argument to Heidegger or, at the very least, the revival of the mastery argument in the twentieth century.²⁷ Heidegger conducts a polemic against thinking that turns everything into an object (*Gegenstand*) as a means to place it within a system of thinking that seeks to affirm the intelligibility of all things; that is, the systematic drive of modern thinking, both philosophical and scientific, is after ensuring that what we encounter may be reduced to objects for a subject in a system that appears to be for the benefit of the latter. To the extent that all of what we encounter may be reduced to things, we can ensure both the intelligibility of our world and, thus, its predictability. We seek to turn the world into a seamless system in which all things are decided; and we may look at this arrangement of what we encounter in the world from two perspectives. On the one hand, we may gain a certain mastery in so far as we can assert the complete and seamless predictability of our encounters – the world becomes completely routine, and we replace insecurity with the endlessly familiar. On the other hand, we may assert a more complete mastery in so far as we ensure the intelligibility of all we encounter so as to modify it with the intent of creating the world anew in our own image or in accordance with our desires. While these ways of asserting mastery differ as to the end sought, they are both unified as to the necessity of assuring that all we encounter may be made accessible to our intelligence.

To make all we encounter accessible to our intelligence is a form of self-interest, even if on the scale of a general self or a general conception of what it is to be human. Both certainty, and the possibility of transforming the world so that we may shape or transform it as we see fit, serve the selfish interest of increasing our power so that we may enhance our capacity to defend ourselves against disease and death. In this respect, intelligibility serves what is perhaps the most powerful underlying end, perpetual preservation of the self – something akin to real, physical immortality or a potent prolongation of our lifespan. The abolition of the negative in complete intelligibility thus serves to enhance self-interest, no matter how ironically, and what we may call the most powerful form of self-interest: the preservation of the self from the twin evils of disease and death.

The negative does not enhance self-preservation. The negative expresses impossibility – the negative is negative precisely to the extent that it does not offer itself up to intelligibility. The negative takes the paradoxical and problematic form of formlessness – the negative is the “placeholder of nothingness,” a phrase Heidegger employed to describe *Dasein*.²⁸ By this I mean that the negative as such is a term whose positive content is not to have content – this is perhaps the only way to express the truly negative, as a hollowing out of concepts that would otherwise have a positive content. And that positive content is positive because it can be defined without paradox or contradiction. By the same token, the negative cannot lend itself to definition; yet, if that is so, how may we speak of the

²⁷ This argument emerges more or less intact in Hans Blumenberg’s *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* and at numerous spots in the work of Hannah Arendt, Leo Strauss and other thinkers influenced by Heidegger including those, like Blumenberg and, indeed, Theodor Adorno, for whom the influence emerges as opposition.

²⁸ See Heidegger, *What Is Metaphysics?*, 94.

negative? As Kojève says in a later writing, we cannot speak about that about which we cannot speak.

Here Kojève's central objection to the living sage emerges again: one cannot truly speak of the negative. We return to a similar problematic – the attempt to speak the negative, to the extent it is an attempt to do so in speech, cannot achieve the goal it purports to achieve by definition since to speak the negative transforms it (unless one equates speech with mere non-sense) – it is yet another form of deception.

VI.

Living wisdom is a contradiction. We are death, and nothing short of the attainment of death may bring us to our “true” nature. All attempts to create a simulacrum of this final state must fail – we cannot imagine ourselves dead without contradiction. We live then necessarily in a sort of deception or illusion about our true human identity as long as we remain alive. These statements may seem merely to fit a series of clichés about human existence: that it is like a dream, that it is a vale of illusion, that it is a mere ante-room on the way to a purified state of being that we always have trouble describing because that purification robs us of the necessary condition of description – language.

From this perspective, human life is a sort of error that needs to be corrected. As Kojève puts it:

The history of Man, that is, Time, will last as long as there remains a *difference* between (subjective) “knowledge” and the (objective) “truth” or the Reality-revealed-by-knowledge. That is to say that History will last as long as there will be in the World a being that errs and, bit by bit, eliminates its errors on its own. Now, this being is Man, and only Man. For, in general, animals and nature do not err. Or, granted, if you like, nature errs too. Only, if nature errs, its error (a monster, for example, or a living being not adapted to its environment) is *immediately* eliminated: it dies or perishes without being able to keep itself alive even temporarily. Only Man can keep error in the world by making it *last* in the form of an erroneous discourse. And History is the History of the erroneous discourses of Man which bit by bit become truths. And this not only because they change to conform to a given Reality but because Man, by work and struggle, transforms Reality itself in order to make it conform to his discourses that, initially, departed from Reality. And at the moment when the conformity of Reality and Discourse is perfectly realized, at the moment, thus, when Man can no longer *err* because he no longer transcends the given having no further desire – at this moment History stops. Then, subjective knowledge is at once objective; that is, it is *true*, definitively and completely. And this “absolute” knowledge is Knowledge.²⁹

²⁹ Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, 418-419.

Human life as error is another venerable claim in the Christian tradition. One may recall St. Augustine's famous formulation from the *City of God*: "*si enim fallor, sum*."³⁰ This formulation is far more incisive than it may seem if one takes into consideration the sense of being that St. Augustine conveys – we are indeed alive as long as we err. The corollary, that perfection is death comes through not so clearly since the promise of finality is not final for St. Augustine but rather the promise of a future life.

Kojève rejects this promise of future life as the “fundamental theological mistake” of Christianity.³¹ This rejection is extremely important since it reveals Kojève's profound attachment to what he refers to as the daring Buddhist notion of extinction in which any hope for continued existence (inevitably including grandly anthropomorphic visions of an afterlife, whether benign or monstrous) is extinguished as well. If Kojève's thinking may line up various patterns in the different traditions we discussed above, he seems ultimately to make a decision in favor of Buddhism over both the Christian afterlife or a Hegelianism that creates a sort of continuous repetition of the same. To the contrary, Kojève's challenge to the traditions he seeks to weave together – to the Buddhist tradition as well – is to imagine a state of living that is not mired in error, that is capable of transcending nature as he conceives of it. By transcending nature, I mean the capacity to transcend the interests (at their most basic: in food, security and sex) that are at the heart of our physical (or “natural”) life.

VII.

What is at stake here? A very great deal if we take into account even the crudest political consequences. If we consider error a kind of violence, then the reign of error is violent. We may delight in our capacity to err because it grants us a kind of freedom, but we must also recognize the violence inherent in that freedom. Violence is inherent in that freedom to err because error emerges from an inability to be liberated from selfish impulse – indeed, we may describe error precisely as the failure of universality. If that is indeed so, violence is inherent because orientation to oneself by definition places others in a subordinate role – it denies them the same priority that it accords to itself and cannot do otherwise. Hence, error is dangerous or, as traditionally understood in the Christian tradition, evil.

The association of history and human action with evil shows Kojève to be the heir of this tradition. Unlike this tradition, however, Kojève denies salvation through any external agency and, in so doing, he shows his kinship with Rousseau. Yet, the salvation Kojève does offer has less to do with the sort of utopian state that Rousseau invents and which is perpetuated in different ways both by Hegel and Marx. This statement may shock – is not Kojève's end of history a utopian trope?³² As I have already noted, the evidence is strikingly equivocal. The dividing line, again, seems to be exactly the one Kojève identifies

³⁰ Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans* trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 482. (XI.26)

³¹ A. Kojève, “Marx, Hegel and Christianity” trans. H. Gildin, *Interpretation* 1, no. 1 (1970): 348.

³² Kojève's own ambivalence is evident in the large treatise he wrote during World War II, *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right (droit)* (1943), mentioned above. The need for a penultimate legal regime is both a sign of the difficulty of attaining to the utopian state, that “universal and homogeneous” state Kojève projects as the final social organization at the end of history.

in the discussion of Buddhism taken from his book on Kant: one either lives in a false or meretricious utopia where salvation ends up inevitably as the satisfaction of selfish desire,³³ however well hidden, or one ends up extinguishing oneself.

The latter solution is striking for its manifest absurdity – mass suicide as the truly human solution to history? – or for its monstrousness now that we possess technologies capable of achieving the goal of mass suicide. What is Kojève after? Do we become last men, “bodies without spirit” or automata or “noble” suicides? What does each of these possibilities entail?

Kojève describes “bodies without spirit” in the following manner:

The end of History is, properly speaking, the *death* of Man. After this death, there remain: 1) living bodies with human form, but emptied of spirit, that is, Time or creative power; 2) a Spirit that empirically exists but in the form of an inorganic reality, one that is not living, as a Book that, though not animal life, has nothing to do with Time. The relation between the Sage and his Book is thus rigorously analogous that that between Man and his *death*.³⁴

Put simply, “bodies without spirit” are animals. The complete negation of the human being is a return to nature, to animal life. There is nothing very controversial about this view since it follows from the extinction of the human, though in the possibly inconsistent sense that, strictly speaking, with the death of the human the animal dies too. Hence, Kojève’s reference to “living bodies with human form” is a more precise way of describing the return of human beings to a natural existence. This kind of being has nothing to do with the notion of the last man, a beast in all but name, the final fruit of the bourgeois striving for material satisfaction.

Nor can one say this of the automata Kojève mentions in a famous letter.³⁵ Automata are something akin to creatures of the Book – they are programmed to repeat the same actions in the same situations – in other words, they too are like animals with the Book now acting as a rudimentary form of instinct. A program in this sense is exactly like instinct, and it does not seem likely that Kojève would consider any being an automaton that can vary its own program, this being a fundamental sign of a capacity to err or create that is distinctively human. I raise this example simply to show that Kojève does not make any substantial distinction between organic and mechanical reality. Common to both is the notion of the Book or a program or instinct that dominates and completely eradicates the possibility of error. Let me be clear here: error is eradicated because the program is complete such that any slip must fail – a slip or mistake is then only possible as a mistake and not a creative variation or “new” beginning.

We are thus left with the final option: the “noble suicide.” This option in turn brings us back again to Kojève’s basic premise, that to be human is to err. To be human, then,

³³ Heidegger’s critique of communism is predicated on this assumption. See M. Heidegger, *Überlegungen XII-XV (Schwarze Hefte 1939-1941)* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2014), 149.

³⁴ Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, 388.

³⁵ See the letter to Leo Strauss, dated, September 19, 1950 in *On Tyranny* ed. V. Gourevitch and M. S. Roth (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 246.

is not to correct error or see it as a mistake but to extend it; and, if the human extends error, we have to conclude that the human can only perpetuate a cycle of violence to any peaceful cycle or system. We are thus left with a stark alternative: the perpetuation of error as an illusory freedom or the final correction of that error. To the extent error is perpetuated, however, full freedom from nature or natural necessity has not been achieved. To perpetuate that error is to remain in servitude to natural inclination even though that servitude may be disguised in many ways. Only complete emancipation from natural inclination truly frees us from any form of necessity, an emancipation that frees us because we lose our fear of death and come to accept death, not as a living motto or “regulative idea” – Kojève puts the possibility of such “regulative ideals” radically in question but as the literal project of extinction, of suicide, not as a “powerful comfort” but as a beautiful, beguiling idea in itself.

To regard suicide as the true end of human striving is a far more radical conclusion than any other offered by modern thought. Nietzsche’s vaunted “Re-evaluation of All Values” pales in comparison as does Heidegger’s overcoming of metaphysics. If Kojève is not always candid about the sheer radicality of his thought, it is easy enough to see why. For that thought offers a continuous challenge to what we consider common sense or wise; in this respect, one wonders to what extent Kojève retrieves for us crucial aspects of Buddhism, Christianity and philosophy that have remained hidden or scorned because they do not flatter common sense behind which one finds the polymorphic and seductive imperative of self-preservation.

I sit alone, my sideburns grey –
 The hall is empty, almost second watch.
 In the rain mountain fruits fall,
 Grasshoppers chirp under the lamp.
 White hair is hard to change,
 Just like gold cannot be made.
 Wanting freedom from age and sickness,
 I must learn the way of no-birth.

[獨坐悲雙鬢，
 空堂欲二更。
 雨中山果落，
 燈下草蟲鳴。
 白髮終難變，
 黃金不可成。
 欲知除老病，
 唯有學無生。]³⁶

³⁶ Translation modified from C. Becker, Li-Ling Hsiao, “The Meaning of Impermanence in Wang Wei’s Poetry” *Southeast Review of Asian Studies* Volume 35 (2013): 161-169.

THE FORTRESS OF FAITH, OR THE “METRICS” OF POWER: AN INTERPRETATION OF CHAPTER X OF MACHIAVELLI’S *THE PRINCE*

Chapter X of *The Prince*, titled “In What Mode the Forces of All Principalities Should Be Measured,” follows a pair of chapters whose subject is becoming a prince in two modes that cannot be “altogether attributed either to fortune or to virtue.”¹ While these chapters appear to be an appendix to Machiavelli’s program as set out in chapter I – but an appendix that is intelligible and important – the role of chapter X seems either obscure or trivial. The chapter adds a “consideration” (42) about acquiring and maintaining a principality – primarily what one should do if one doesn’t have an adequate (or “just”) army, or enough money, to put up a defensive fight, – but its main point, i.e., that one should rely on one’s own arms, has already been made (ch. VII). Insofar as it is an account of principalities that lack armies to take the field, chapter X is a transition from the armed conquering principalities of chapters III-VII to the principalities of chapter XI that do not even defend their states. Thus judging the ability or inability of a principality to put up a defense is the ostensible answer to the query implied by the chapter’s title. But if that is its core theme, it is odd that the chapter is separated from chapters XII-XIV which are devoted to military education, especially since chapter X even praises military exercises in its central paragraph – separated, no less, by a chapter on ecclesiastical principalities which are unarmed. The puzzling character of chapter X is also present in the relation of its text to its title, for the text does not say, at least not explicitly, how precisely one should measure the (military) forces of *all* principalities or even of some.² In fact, the word usually translated as “measure” in the title, *perpendo* (*Quomodo omnium principatuum vires perpendi debeant* / “In what mode the forces of all principalities should be measured”)

¹ N. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 34. This translation is cited throughout the essay, though occasionally with modifications by the author.

² For considerations on the tension between the title (“all”) and the first sentence (“some”), see P. Larivaille “Nifo, Machiavelli, Principato Civile,” *Interpres* IX (1989): 153-54, as well as the comments in the appendix in: N. Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, ed. Mario Martelli, Nicoletta Marcelli (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2006).

should be translated as “weighed” or “considered,” as it has the same root as “to think” (*pensare*). What kind of thinking does the chapter engage in?³

The chapter proves crucial, a fulcrum – it is the *only* one in which Machiavelli refers, in the same sentence, *both* to something he said above and to what he said below, in particular, concerning the all-important subject of managing well “the other governing” of one’s subjects, i.e., governing other than fortification. As I will suggest, it is the deepest analysis of morality and religious belief in *The Prince*, thus linking up with chapters XV-XXIII. Thus, while apparently a surprising chapter that seems either superfluous, or at least merely supplementary, it offers some of the most fundamental thoughts of *The Prince*, especially in its final paragraph, whose meaning, however, cannot be seen without the first two paragraphs.⁴

The chapter consists of three parts or paragraphs. The first paragraph makes a simple distinction: whether one can rule by oneself, or whether one is “always under the necessity of being defended by others” (whether those others are available to help or not). This fundamental question is perhaps a “consideration” that should be raised about *all* principalities as the title has it, but the first sentence speaks of examining the qualities of “these” principalities – so perhaps not all. In trying to determine which principalities are at issue, one naturally thinks of the “civil” ones of the preceding chapter (itself paired with chapter VIII also). Civil principalities are the ones in which a private citizen becomes prince of his “fatherland” with the support of either the great or the people (38-39). The remainder of chapter IX argues for the superiority of relying on the people, provided one “knows how to command and is a man full of heart, does not get frightened in adversity, does not fail to make other preparations, and with his spirit and his orders keeps the generality of people inspired” (41); we also hear in chapter IX that the people desire mere security, “not to be oppressed.” Correspondingly, the third paragraph of chapter X is also devoted to the prince’s reliance on, and manipulation of, the people, thus confirming the link between chapters IX and X.⁵

But, to add a second puzzle raised by the title, if Machiavelli’s “consideration” (or weighing) applies only to a certain subtype of the civil principality, why does the title refer to *all* principalities? I will suggest that since the *vires* (forces) of the titles are, at least in one metaphorical sense, the spirits of the people or even of humanity generally, including fear, hope, the belief in obligation, nobility, and shame, Machiavelli is indicating in this chapter what the most important consideration is in “measuring” and tapping a country’s strength – a psychological strength over whose control Machiavelli is competing with religion. Machiavelli, in fact, is ever concerned with the question of weakness and strength

³ On Machiavelli’s “measurement” of faith, see the longest chapter with the shortest title in: N. Machiavelli, *Discourses of Livy*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield, N. Tarcov (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁴ Even if the original manuscript did not have paragraphing or an equivalent symbolic division, chapter X has three clearly articulated parts, with the discussion of the German cities being the dividing, middle one. These parts are designated as paragraphs in virtually all modern editions and I will follow that designation.

⁵ See also the expression *per chiarire meglio questa parte* – “to clarify better this part” which occurs only in these two chapters.

in a theological and a moral context: the world having grown weak, the weakness of the moderns or Christians, the need for strength of mind and body.⁶

In addition to the puzzles already mentioned, Machiavelli's cavalier or ironic tone in offering solutions also suggests that something strange is happening in the chapter. In the simple distinction of the first paragraph, those who have "abundance of either men or money" are said to be able to rule by themselves, and Machiavelli says he has discussed "above" that first case. But nowhere before or after has Machiavelli indicated that merely having men or money (not even both!) is enough for a secure, self-reliant rule. At any rate, the subject of chapter X then becomes exclusively those who are "compelled of necessity to take refuge behind walls and to guard them," substituting for those "always under the necessity of being defended by others" of the first formulation of the distinction. This less desirable alternative, where not even outside help is available, is, Machiavelli tries to make us believe provisionally, quite acceptable. But even without getting to chapter XX and learning about the general dangers and/or uselessness of fortresses,⁷ one sees that even with a potentially interminable list of requirements fulfilled ("other governing" done well, having a strong town, not being hated by the people), the fortified prince who is not self-sufficient will still be attacked, though with "great respect" (Mansfield: "great hesitation"). It is hard to see how to make Machiavelli's prescriptions in this chapter practical. The political aspect of his advice must be largely ironic. This will become clearer when we move from the general advice in the first paragraph to the particular examples in the second paragraph. That the chapter's core may be a meditation on psychology⁸ rather than merely practical advice will also be suggested by the last sentence of the chapter: "If one considers all this well, it should not be difficult for a prudent prince..." – a slightly ungrammatical sentence (more proper would have been: "if one considers all this well, *one will see...*"), indicating the disjunction between theory and practice since one's consideration of anything will not change the degree of difficulty or ease a prince will face.

Machiavelli himself characterizes the practical advice he offers in the chapter as "only an exhortation" (43), the only other use of that term seen in the title of the concluding chapter, that practically unlikely patriotic prayer, which lays out the theoretical difficulties, ultimately spiritual, for liberating and unifying Italy. The word "exhortation" both indicates the impracticality of Machiavelli's advice here and introduces the lexical register of morality and piety that will be crucial to the chapter as a whole.⁹ Since Machiavelli is clear elsewhere, actual fortresses are *not* to be relied on (see *Prince XX* and *Discourses II.24*), one must try again to grasp the true intention of the chapter.

⁶ For usages showing that the nexus of psychology-politics-piety is always on his mind see, for instance, Machiavelli, *Discourses II.2*, and a number of chapter titles; Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 181-189, 242-43, 269, 285, 295.

⁷ Not to mention *Discourses II.24*, "Fortresses Are Generally Much More Harmful Than Useful"; in the *Art of War* Machiavelli distinguishes fortifying the walls of one's city from building separate fortresses as discussed in *Prince XX* and *Discourses II.24*. N. Machiavelli, *Art of War*, trans. ed. C. Lynch (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

⁸ See N. Tarcov, "Belief and Opinion in Machiavelli's *Prince*," *Review of Politics* 75, no. 4 (2013): 573-586; Sandro Landi, *Naissance de l'opinion publique dans l'Italie moderne. Sagesse du peuple et savoir de gouvernement de Machiavel aux Lumières* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2006), 19-58.

⁹ See *Esortazione alla Penitenza*; Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, 304 n. 56, 332 n. 47.

One is immediately helped in this effort if one recalls that Machiavelli uses "fortresses" metaphorically. Figurative fortresses of hope, fear, providence are very powerful (see *Discourses* II.24: "the pride of the fortress" and III.39: "the citadel of our hope and salvation"). This "fortress" is fundamentally built on the belief in goodness, obligation, and ultimately divine providence. As we will see, the "Germans" of chapter X reflect this twofold meaning of "fortress": goodness/religion and food supplies/economics. In a sense, "to rely on fortresses is not to rely on the people."¹⁰ But to use a "fortress of salvation" is to reach the core of the people.¹¹ As Machiavelli himself will say, the "best fortress there is, is not to be hated by the people" (ch. XX, 87)¹²: it is to claim the universal love of men, or at least their fear and awe.

The "German cities" of the second paragraph can be said to represent both that claim and the resistance to that claim. While in Book II of the *Art of War* the Germans' greatest strength is said to be "infantry," which a close study of *Discourses* II.16-18 would show stands for God, no mention of German infantry is made in *Prince*, chapter X (German infantry comes back in chapter XXVI). Still, the drama of the chapter is the battle between economics and piety over the future of "Germany."

The Germans appear to be brought up as an example of not making the people hate the prince. Machiavelli speaks three times of the people being fed or getting drink and food. They keep enough in their public stores to drink and eat and burn for the year (burning is of course a matter of cooking and warmth, but perhaps also suggestive of burning heretics.) There is some ambiguity, to which we will get, as to the quality of the German military. But the exercises that are not merely "held in repute" but are in fact engaged in are those of economic activity that are "the nerve and the life of that city."¹³ One can consider here also the end of chapter XXI: the prince "should inspire his citizens to follow their pursuits quietly, in trade and in agriculture and in every other pursuit of men, so that one person does not fear to adorn his possessions for fear that they be taken away from him, and another to open up a trade for fear of taxes" (91). It appears that Machiavelli wants to make the nerve and life of "all" cities productive economic activities that keeps the subjects or now citizens happy and loyal. *Nervo* – which means spirit or pluck in chapter XXIV, the only other usage in the book, – is here the economy, the food market (see also *nervo* in *Art of War*: German cities are the "nerve"). The German cities have little "countryside" (*contadina*), it is said, but since *contadina* could also mean the realm of a count or nobility, this means they give short shrift to gentlemanliness.¹⁴ They are presented as proto-democratic, if not proto-capitalistic. Since actual fortresses are not the solution and can give you a false sense of security (*Discourses* II.24), the

¹⁰ L. P. de Alvarez, *Machiavelli's Enterprise: A Commentary on the Prince* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois UP, 1999), 107.

¹¹ Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, 105, 130-31, 230.

¹² See H. C. Mansfield, *Machiavelli's New Modes and Orders: A Study of the Discourses on Livy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 269.

¹³ E. Benner, *Machiavelli's Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2009), 443; see B. Forsen, "Was there a South-West German City-State Culture?" *A Comparative Study of Six City-State Cultures*, ed. M. Hansen (Copenhagen: Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, 2002). T. Brady, *Turning Swiss: Cities and Empire, 1450-1550* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985).

¹⁴ See *Discourses* I.55 and Mansfield, *New Modes and Orders*, 161.

economic prosperity approach, the sweetness and dynamism of commerce, may well be Machiavelli's serious practical suggestion in this chapter. How do you measure the forces of a principality, from that point of view? GDP growth and consumer sentiment. But this answer may not be the chapter's final word either since what Machiavelli is aiming at is an understanding of hatred (and love) and the most potent forces in the human heart. It is these forces, and one's knowledge of them, that are decisive in weighing the strength of all principalities. In this regard, the submersion of "nerve" as spirit does not last long; nerve in a more spirited way returns in paragraph three. This makes us suspect that the proto-democratic and economic understanding of life is not the deepest stratum of the chapter as a whole (contrast Benner). Religious and moral longings are present throughout as a competitor of the economic mindset. As de Alvarez points out, Machiavelli mentions in an easily overlooked way the fact, preparatory to the considerations of chapter XI, that the Germans only obey the (Holy Roman) emperor only when they want to and they do not fear him.¹⁵ This might mean, since Machiavelli had said that he will discuss here those who cannot rule by themselves, that God cannot rule by himself. He needs, of course, the Church but it – like God – is also in need of the people. Machiavelli then would be out to explain what the root of the people's loyalty is and thus make, in the second paragraph of the chapter (among other places), the powerful suggestion that it is by feeding and securing them that one gains their support. It would seem the gods can be starved out of existence.¹⁶

Yet the German cities are not impregnable. Everyone "thinks" their capture would be "tedious and difficult" – it may not be. And not everyone even thinks their capture is impossible (see also paragraph 1: "not easy to attack," and paragraph 3: "cannot be attacked (...) and if indeed there is someone who would attack"). It is true that all of the German cities have "suitable ditches and walls, and sufficient artillery," but while military exercises are held in repute and there are many "orders" to maintain them, it is not clear that they are actively practiced; to support the suspicion of the German military preparedness, one can point out that while the Germans are called "most free," in chapter XII the Swiss are called "most free" and "most armed." Machiavelli also neglects to remind us here that the Germans were always in need of the outside help of the emperor, a superior prince (*Discourses* II.19: they must repeatedly call upon the outside help of that superior distant "prince"). One might also recall here that the German cities are, at least according to *Discourses* I.55, the home of goodness, religion, and lack of corruption. And when Machiavelli says that the German cities do not fear any other power "around" (*intorno*), he leaves open the possibility that the Germans still fear a power that is above them. In sum, even if one was not prepared by these suggestions and the often psycho-theological imagery and themes of preceding chapters (e.g., a rational account of Moses as founder in chapter VI, Cesare Borgia as Jesus whose downfall is belief in forgiveness in chapter VII, etc.), the opening issue of the paragraph – obedience, willing or not, to a Holy

¹⁵ de Alvarez, *Machiavelli's Enterprise*, 47.

¹⁶ Cf. Aristophanes' *Birds* and *Wealth*; Machiavelli's modifies Tacitus' *nihil rerum mortalium tam instabile et fluxum est quam fama potentiae non sua vi nixae* ("nothing in mortal things is so unstable and fluctuating as a reputation of power that is not supported by its own force," *Annals* XIII.xix) to "nothing is so infirm and unstable as the fame of power that is not founded on one's own" (*Prince*, ch. XIII); de Alvarez connects this with Aristophanes' *Birds* 1515-24.

Emperor – and the oddly lacking in historical specificity historical German examples may incline one to think that a more general political psychology of piety is at work here – a consideration of what makes people turn to “superior princes” beyond their civil rulers. Having thus indicated in the middle paragraph the contest between economics and piety, a contest represented by the ambiguous twofoldness of “Germany,” Machiavelli turns, in the third and final paragraph, to an examination of the spiritual foundations and “mechanics” of faith and loyalty.

The third paragraph contains a galaxy of theological and moral concepts: hatred, shame, the changeability of worldly things, patience, the destruction of one’s possessions, the forgetting (or mistaking) of one’s prince, love, fear, hope, doubt, and belief in obligation. The paragraph picks up where the first one ended as if the second, with its economic prosperity solution, had not intervened. There are subtle changes, however – due to the alternative developed in the second paragraph. *Terra gagliarda* (robust land, in an uncivilized way) is replaced by *citta forte* (strong city; Inglese’s edition has the even more distinct *citta cosi ordinata* – “a city so ordered”). A city becomes a city when it has a vital working population. Machiavelli thus also prepares the substitution of citizens for subjects at the end of the chapter; he does reason about republics, not just about all principalities (chapters II, V, and XII, as well as the populism of chapters IX, XVI, and XVII). The other change is that Machiavelli does not specify at the outset of the third paragraph the person(s) whose hatred the prince should avoid. What does this mean? Perhaps the argument for democracy is not the deepest layer here. Yet paragraph three is still about the people. The change means that “the prince” at the beginning of chapter X is flagged, in one of its meanings, as Machiavelli himself, in addition to referring to actual princes and to God (and “the prince” Machiavelli puts forth in paragraph two seems to be the republic itself, the practically princeless German cities). Machiavelli’s concern then might be with not being hated. But still, hated by whom? The people? Or their God? It is to the relation of these three that the final analysis of the chapter is devoted.

Despite or because of these modifications, the third paragraph returns to, and deepens or heightens, the psychological level at which paragraph one was beginning to operate. The paragraph consists of a dialogue or a disputation in which Machiavelli addresses an objection and engages in an extraordinary analysis. The analysis works on at least two levels or from at least two perspectives: from the inside and from the outside, that is, defending a prince and attacking or showing how to attack a prince (see the Machiavellian Spinoza’s appeal to and defense of the Bible). But the prince in turn is at least a threefold figure: 1) actual ruler of a city; 2) God; 3) Machiavelli himself, with the contest between Machiavelli and God for princely rule over the opinion of the people being the crucial subtext at the peak of this chapter.¹⁷

It does not seem adequate to say, as the third paragraph has it at the beginning, that a siege of a city with a year of supplies will always fail because, generally speaking, “worldly things” are so variable that it is “next to impossible” to do a siege for a year; of

¹⁷ Cf. Tarcov on Machiavelli’s “disconcerting facility at shifting perspectives” in “Arms and Politics in Machiavelli’s *Prince*,” *Entre Kant et Kosovo: Etudes offertes a Pierre Hassner*, ed. Anne-Marie Le Gloanec and Aleksander Smolar (Paris: Presses de Science Po, 2003).

course, the *quasi* qualifier of impossible already shows the incompleteness of the argument. Anticipating the following chapter – what might be called Machiavelli’s siege of the Church – one can interpret the beginning of the third paragraph as follows. One should retreat in shame if one attacks religion or the church. Worldly things are so variable that one cannot maintain a sustained siege on religion without falling sick or suffering from some other weakness; or the attack on the church is itself the weakness, the shameful sin (the only other reference to shame in *The Prince* is the “double shame” in chapter XXIV). Machiavelli introduces here an objector whose concern is the opposite: not how to sustain the besiegers, but how to prevent the people from “forgetting the prince” (compare chapter XVII: “While you do [the people] good, they are yours, offering you their blood, property, lives, and children (...) when the need for them is far away; but, when it is close to you, they revolt”). The objector notes or worries that if the people’s possessions are outside – that is, if property and external goods, about which they care more than they do about their souls, are being destroyed, burning of property, at least for a moment, trumping hellfire in Inferno as motivator – they will lose patience, not keep faith, and want immediate protection and security; in other words, their self-love will make them forget the prince.

A clue that the meaning of the objector’s statement is this far-reaching is found in the oddness of the expression “forget the prince”: it is unlikely that, strictly speaking, anyone can forget one’s actual prince¹⁸ (the more precise expression would have been: to fail to place the interests of their prince first). This raises the possibility that the prince in question is God, someone, in a sense, far more forgettable (on forgetting God, see *Deuteronomy* 8:11-19; *John* 8:13 and *Psalms* 9:1, 50:1, 50:22, 78:7). A sustained belief in God requires “patience” in seeing one’s external or worldly possessions destroyed or given up – if, as the objector reproachfully begins with a conditional, “the people have their possessions outside,” not placing all their bets on purity of heart. “Charity” for oneself, selfishness, would thus lead to impiety.¹⁹ More precisely, since the word for “forgetting” Machiavelli uses here, *sdimenticare*,²⁰ is not the one he usually uses elsewhere, *dimenticare*, the action in question may well be not a simple forgetting but a forgetting of the true prince while confusing him with an idol of a this-worldly prince: thus this-worldly selfishness would lead to *idolatri*.

Machiavelli then responds in the manner of a scholastic *quaestio*: a “powerful and spirited prince will always overcome these difficulties...” Machiavelli speaks here of

¹⁸ According to manuscript G (from 1530?), Prince X speaks of *dimenticare l’amore del principe* (not *sdimenticare el principe*). See A. E. Quaglio, “Per il testo del ‘De Principatibus’ di Niccolò Machiavelli,” *Lettere Italiane*, XIX, no. 2 (1967), 168. Cf. *Prince* V (a republic never forgets its ancient orders and liberty), *Discourses* II.19 (the soldiers in Capua forget the fatherland) and III.24 (the army forgets the senate). See Mansfield: Machiavelli “begins [ch. xxv] by asking how much of the world is governed by fortune and God, and how much by man. He then supposes that half is governed by fortune (forgetting God) and half by man” (Preface to translation, xxiii).

¹⁹ For a parallel account of “carità propria” in chapter X, see William B. Parsons’ “‘La Carità Propria’ and the Uncertain Foundations of Unarmed Principalities,” in *In Search of Humanity: Essays in Honor of Clifford Orwin*, edited by Andrea Radasanu (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 165-176 and Parsons’ *Machiavelli’s Gospel: the Critique of Christianity in The Prince* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2016), 73-78.

²⁰ *Sdimenticare* means rather reversing one’s memory of something – see Cardano and Scaliger’s dictionaries. In some manuscripts, chapter XVII has “*perche gli uomini sdimenticano piu presto la morte del padre, che la perdita del patrimonio.*”

a "powerful and spirited" prince rather than the "prudent" one,²¹ who has citizens rather than subjects, appearing at the end of the paragraph where Machiavelli himself is the prince. Machiavelli maintains an ambiguity here as to whether he is looking at the siege from inside or from outside. Here Machiavelli is making a transition from the perspective of a defender or adviser of a besieged prince to a position of a besieger. He exposes what might be called the three "vires" or powers (mentioned in the title) of the ruling prince: hope, fear, and the "skillful securing against those who appear to him too bold." Then, after revealing these three powers, Machiavelli goes on to account for the deeper belief that allows these princely or godly strengths to have purchase on the people's spirits.

The "prudent and spirited" prince employs strategies to keep the spirits of the people alternatively hot and cold, hopeful and fearful²²; those whose firmness and boldness cannot be controlled are exterminated. The first tool mentioned is "giving hope to the subjects that the evil will not last long." The second is "giving them fear of the enemy's cruelty." On the one hand, the enemy in question, once we have exhausted the more narrowly political reading, may be sin or the devil. On the other hand, the reference to a cruel enemy may indicate a more defined shift here to Machiavelli's perspective as a besieger. Machiavelli provides elsewhere indications that he regards Christianity as necessarily leading to a kind of cruelty.²³ Where this strategy of controlling the people fails, and for those appearing too bold to the prince, there is "securing with dexterity" – swift and skillful executions (see "cruelty well-used" in chapter VIII); later in the paragraph Machiavelli will also discuss the psychology of one side of "pious cruelty." By qualifying "too bold" with "appearing to him" Machiavelli may be recommending an aggressive policy of repression, thus acknowledging the partial ineffectiveness of hope and fear (of evils from others) as tools, but he might also be suggesting that those who are bold, including Machiavelli himself, are not in truth "too" or sinfully bold.

Machiavelli then deepens his consideration, extending it to the "beyond" (*oltre il questo*). The enemy of the prince (or God) will "reasonably" burn and ruin the countryside (again, *contado* may also suggest the sham sense of nobility supportive of the religious belief) upon his arrival. Reason or reasonableness has now been explicitly associated with the *enemy* of the prince/God whom it is sinful to forget out of self-love (the bulk of the chapter is directed literally to those who cannot put together a "just army"). A frontal attack on this prince, however, may not be advisable since, taking the statement allegorically, religious believers will defend their God with their defensive and hot spirits. Yet this root of religious belief – self-defensive anger – is not the deepest or more reliable one. The spirits will cool and then a more fundamental and abiding support for the people's belief in "The Prince" will emerge.

Machiavelli then says that the prince should therefore "doubt" so much the less (rather than Mansfield's "hesitate"). Who is the prince here? Machiavelli or God? The

²¹ Consider the "*savio principe*" throughout the *Prince* and the "*signore prudente*" in chapter XVIII.

²² One might be reminded of Thucydides's description of Pericles's management of the Athenians during the Peloponnesian invasions of Attica, or of Cleopatra's hot-and-cold treatment of Antony.

²³ See *Discourses* II.23-25 on Christian morality's interplay between charity and persecution; see *Prince* XXI with Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, 157, 186-87: "pious cruelty" which could refer both to the harshness of religion and the mercifulness of cruelty, *pietosa crudelta*.

layers and levels of Machiavelli's analysis again morph and the answer is both. The prince is Machiavelli, "the prudent" one, insofar as "doubt," a frontal assault, is not to be advised, for the fundamental reason that will be articulated shortly. The prince is also God, "the powerful and spirited one," for the very same fundamental reason.²⁴ A direct attack on God is, in a sense, reasonable since the angry defensiveness of religious believers against the impious argument that the believers are sacrificing the only "real goods," their "possessions," is not the greatest bulwark of piety. In fact, the passion for God will only emerge in its greatest strength and nobility after a recognition of the futility of one's attachment to worldly things has taken place, only after the sense of the variability of worldly things or one's mortality has corroded one's being. It is only then that the sacrificial character of piety – "the evil has been received," there is no remedy – begins to have a redeeming or uplifting effect. The "nature of men is to be obligated as much by benefits they give as by benefits they receive." This experience of nobility is the core of the feeling of piety. It is only then, and through that experience, that the sense that a higher power is "obligated" to one comes fully into its own: "it appears he [the Prince] has an obligation toward them, their houses having been burned and their possessions ruined *in his defense*" (emphasis added; this is another kind of "cruelty well-used," chapter VIII – piety is welcomed cruelty to oneself).²⁵ It is only then that a belief in providence is fully generated; part of this experience is the opinion or reflection adumbrated in the preceding chapter: the benefit that comes as an expected, unearned grace is more obligating: "men who receive good from someone from whom they believed they would receive evil are more obligated to their benefactor" (ch. IX, 40). The nature of men is to be obligated by their own sacrifices – the converse is that self-love leads to the forgetting of the otherworldly prince of the world.²⁶ The people will then be "united with their prince" all the more. In realpolitik terms, they may do so expecting to be helped by the prince, since no one else might help them, but even this expectation depends on believing that a genuine obligation has been created, which belief is not merely a question of "economic" calculation of benefit but a kind of wild gamble when all has been lost. Though at one level, to be sure, the prince in play here is also an actual prince under certain circumstances, he must, at this most extreme moment of unification of ruler and subject, be God. But from another perspective, and almost immediately in the paragraph, the prince becomes also and above all Machiavelli, who has the "means for life and for defense" and who understands the psychology of nobility and piety (who "considers all this well") and thus has a grasp of the "vires" of any and all principalities and will come to control "the city" and offer a new "nerve and life" for human beings.

²⁴ He may "infuse his spirit into the universal" (IX 41; "*tenga con l'animo et ordini sua animato l'universale*"). On "universal" love and hatred, see the longest chapter in the *Discourses*.

²⁵ Cf. Tarcov, "Arms and Politics in Machiavelli's *Prince*": "wartime suffering can strengthen rather than weaken attachment to the state."

²⁶ In *Prince* XVII, the picture of the people is different: "While you do them good, they are yours, offering you their blood, property, lives, and children, as I said above; but, when it is close to you, they revolt" (66). Moreover, "love is held by a chain of obligation, which, because men are wicked, is broken at every opportunity for their own utility." Still, there is a strong root of obligation: "fear is held by a dread of punishment that never forsakes you (66-67).

Christianity is a mixture of hot and cold. "Heat" stands for anger, but also for hope. "Cold" stands for fear, but also for belief in providence. Machiavelli will keep the spirits *firm*,²⁷ neither hot nor cold, but "German" in the secular sense. If chapter X is a preparation for chapter XI, the potent and spirited prince of paragraph three is a description of what Machiavelli is up against; that chapters X and XI together are focused on the Christian world is also indicated by the fact that neither cites any ancient examples.²⁸ But chapter X is more than a transition to chapter XI; it is a theological and psychological tour de force on its own. Machiavelli here thinks through and then replaces the potent and spirited god with a prudent god, Machiavelli himself, who at first and at the end, stands for "life" (see the "nerve and life" of the German cities, where life is *vita* as distinguished from Machiavelli's own *vivere* at the end of the chapter – Machiavelli's way of life infuses a new life to the city), and not for the sacrifice of life.²⁹ Machiavelli will demonstrate that "[m]en willingly change their lords in the belief that they will fare better" (ch. III, 8). Machiavelli engages in his own intellectual-spiritual warfare (*Prince* XIII-XIV; *Discourses* I.11-15 and II as a whole).³⁰

The conclusion of the whole theologico-political meditation, "if one considers all this well," is that a prudent prince can keep his people firm during a siege by managing the same spirits, hope and fear, that Christianity relies on, but in his case for this-worldly "life and for defense" rather than for other-worldly salvation.³¹ The Machiavellian prince must be resolutely focused on this worldly strength and security, future benefits in his life, greater GDP, power, and glory. But how would this deliberate forgetting and confusing (*sdimenticare*) of one's lords or ultimate authority work? Machiavelli recommends implicitly in chapter X a "Germany" in the secular sense as the model of a new "strong city." He replaces a pious plebs with a well-fed one. But if the deepest longing of the human soul is, as the chapter also argues, for noble sacrifice through which one can attain faith in a providential higher power, how can that new "Germany" satisfy human beings? Do the people desire "not to be oppressed" or do they wish for a union with God? Germany, after all, represents, in the scheme of the chapter, a city that cannot fight on its own but needs to retreat behind walls – and insofar as the walls in chapter X allegorically refer to the walls of the world (*moenia mundi*), the retreat is a retreat from God. The economics of

²⁷ See Mansfield on the meaning of "firm spirit" as defensiveness of this world – Mansfield, *Machiavelli's New Modes and Orders*, 238.

²⁸ There is good reason to think that when Machiavelli wrote to Vettori on December 10, 1513 that he has "composed" a little work *De Principatibus*, which he will still "engross and repolish" (*ingrasso e ripulisco*), he had completed only the first eleven chapters. In this sense, too, chapter X and XI of *The Prince* can be seen as its culmination. See R. Black, "Notes on the Date and Genesis of Machiavelli's *De Principatibus*," *Europa e Italia. Studi in onore di Giorgio Chittolini* (Firenze: Firenze UP, 2011), 29.

²⁹ L. Strauss, *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy*, introd. T. L. Pangle (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 223. Leo Strauss' "error": cites the "poverty and example," but omits the "life" of Christ.

³⁰ According to Tarcov, the "core of Machiavelli's own spiritual warfare" is "the most fundamental instance of reliance on one's own arms is the human being who relies on his own arms rather than depend on God." Tarcov, "Arms and Politics in Machiavelli's *Prince*."

³¹ See Mansfield on chapter XVII, in the preface to his translation: "Machiavelli's new prince arranges the obligation of his subjects to himself in a manner rather like that of the Christian God, in the eye of whom all are guilty by original sin; hence God's mercy appears less as the granting of benefits than as the remission of punishment" (XVII-XVIII).

modernity may seem merely a withdrawal from, or a distraction against, the demands and attractions of revealed religion. To test and think through this potential limitation of Machiavelli's reorientation would require a study of the moral analysis of faith, love, and hatred in Prince XV-XIX,³² as well as the whole web of *The Prince*, if not of Machiavelli's oeuvre as a whole.³³

³² See C. Orwin, "Machiavelli's Unchristian Charity," *American Political Science Review* 72, no. 4 (1978): 1217-1228; R. H. Cox, "Aristotle and Machiavelli on Liberalism," *The Crisis of Liberal Democracy*, ed. K. Deutsch and W. Soffer (Albany: SUNY Press, 1987), 125-47.

³³ See N. Tarcov "Machiavelli's Critique of Religion," *Social Research* 81 no. 1 (2014): 193-216.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE KINGDOM AND THE SUSPENSION OF POLITICS

1.

In the essay *The Work of Man* Giorgio Agamben stated that the political living being (*zōon politikón*) lacks a work of his own (*tò érgon toū anthrōpou*). Man is a being of pure potentiality (*dýnamis*) and realizes his undefined nature, without ever exhausting it, through the continuous overcoming of his natural potentialities.¹ And yet, western political thought has been genetically marked by Plato and Aristotle's conception according to which a specific work is assignable to man and to his politics. In this inappropriate attribution Agamben detached the roots of the biopolitical destiny of the West. Biopolitics is not merely the outcome of modern revolutions. Even though it coincides with the modern political order characterized by the triangle power-knowledge-law,² it has been inscribed as a possible result of the European history from the very beginning of the western political thought, since Aristotle linked the *érgon* and the *bios* of man to *epistēmē politikē*.

Agamben is searching for the recovery of an un-energetic, that is, purely dynamic, form of politics that would allow man to express his unlimited possibility to overcome himself. Given that man is pure *dýnamis* lacking the utmost *télos*, such a being owns the potentiality (from the Latin: *potius*, "more"³) to reestablish his politics without grounding it in *érgon* and *bios*. Man always remains more than he has been doing. Consequently, the object and task of politics shall cease to fall back into the production and the care of *bios*. The new community ought to be constituted upon inoperativeness (*inoperosità*) and the

¹ Cf. G. Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. D. Heller-Roezen (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999), 177-184; G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. D. Heller-Roezen (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998), 44. For a critical interpretation, see L. De la Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben: a Critical Introduction* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009), 4-5; K. Attell, *Actuality*, in A. Murray and J. Whyte (eds.), *Agamben Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2011), 17-19.

² Cf. M. Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended": *Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-76*, ed. M. Bertani, A. Fontana, F. Ewald, A. I. Davidson, trans. D. Macay (New York: Picador, 2003), 23-25.

³ Cf. G. Agamben, "Bartleby, or On Contingency," in *Potentialities*, 243-271.

corresponding political action should be able to realize “in every act its own *shabbat*” and in every work (*opera*) it shall expose “its own inoperativeness and its own potentiality.”⁴

The most destinal definition of the work of man was given at the very beginning of *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle is trying to determinate the highest human good, that is, what is the better for man (*tò áryston*). The science dealing with the better is the *epistēmē politikē*, to which the lessons on ethics represent an introduction. Aristotle points out that the better corresponds to happiness. But such a statement leaves unexplained the nature both of the happiness and of *tò áryston*. Accordingly, Aristotle attempts to define these notions by taking into account the work of man (*tò érgon tou anthrōpou*).

Just as for a flute player, a sculptor, or every artisan (*pantì techníte*), and, in general, for all those who have a certain kind of work and an activity (*érgon ti kai praxis*), the good and the “well” (*tagathòn kai tò eū*) seem to consist in this work (*en tō érgo*), so it should also be for man if indeed there is for him something like a proper work (*érgon autoū*). Or must we say that there is a proper work for the carpenter and for the shoemaker, and for man there is none, that he is born with no work (*argon*)?⁵

Tò áryston consists of certain work and activity. By accomplishing his proper work one enacts his potentialities. If we recall that Aristotle defines happiness as *autarcheia*, the self-sufficiency, properly “the self-government,” we can argue that the excellent and happy man depends and relies only on himself. He does not need anything, for he is accomplishing as best as he can what he was born for. He has reached the *télos*. The one who has reached the end of his life does not fall into idleness, but keeps executing his proper work. Yet, decisive questions still need an answer: in what consists the activity of the one who possesses everything he needs and is not depending on anybody? What is the specific work of the happy man, the work whose excellent execution brings happiness?

Single technical knowledge and activities do not exhaust man’s possibilities. The work should not be reduced to ordinary operations. It rather indicates the activity defining man’s *énérgēia*, his proper activity conceived as being-at (*en*)-*érgon*. On this basis Aristotle comes to the definition of happiness as *psychēs enérgeia kat’aretén*, that Agamben translates as “the being-at-work of the soul in accordance with virtue.” The question concerning the work of man is decisive, “for on it depends the possibility not only of assigning him a proper nature and essence, but also (...) of defining his happiness and his politics.”⁶ The *érgon* assigns an end, measure, and limit to the *dýnamis* of the political living being. When man is executing his proper work at best, he ceases to be the pure, indeterminate possibility of becoming this or that substance. Nonetheless, Agamben shows a great deal of interest for the question Aristotle raised in the form of the absurd: that man is, essentially, an inoperative (*argos*) potentiality:

⁴ G. Agamben, *The Work of Man*, trans. K. Attell, in M. Calarco, S. DeCaroli (eds.), *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty and Life* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2007), 10.

⁵ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b22-30.

⁶ Agamben, *The Work of Man*, 2.

The modern (or, rather, postmodern) problem of a fulfilled realization of human work and thus of a possible *désœuvrement* (*désœuvre* corresponds perfectly to *argos*) of man at the end of history here has its logical-metaphysical foundation. (...) What is at issue in this question is the very nature of man, who appears as the living being that has no work, that is, the living being that has no specific nature and vocation. If he were to lack an *érgon* of his own, man would not even have an *enérgeia*, a being in act that could define his essence: he would be, that is, a being of pure potentiality, which no identity and no work could exhaust.⁷

In order to escape this risk, Aristotle looked for the *érgon* of man in the sphere of life: “The simple fact of living (*to zēn*) seems to be common even to plants, but we are seeking something that is proper to man (*tò idion*). We must therefore set aside nutritive life and the life of growth (*threptikèn kai tèn auxetikèn zoén*). Next would be a form of sensitive life (*aisthété tis*), but it also seems to be common to (...) every living thing. There remains the form of the practical life of a being who has logos (*praktiké tis toū logon échontes*).”⁸ The fact that the relation between limbs and body corresponds to the one between *érgon* and single *erga* attests to the fact that we have entered the sphere of life and left the one of technical knowledge, *polis* or culture. Moreover, the determination of man’s *érgon* within the realm of *bios* and its definition as a certain form of *praktiké tis* certifies that the “nexus life-politics belongs, from the very beginning, to the way the Greeks think of the *polis*.”⁹ The city is the space where the work of man is practised and only there can it be enacted. Yet, Aristotle came to the definition of the work of man (and of his politics) through the exclusion of some of his vital activities from human happiness.

There remains the form of the practical life of a being who has logos. Of this, one part has logos in the sense of being obedient to it, the other in the sense of possessing it and exercising thought (*dianoóúmenon*). And, as this (rational) life has two meanings, we must state that life according to activity (*kat’ enérgeian*) is what we mean (...). If therefore the work of man is the being at work of the soul in accordance with logos, or not without logos, and if we say that the work of his sort and of this particular good individual is the same in kind (*ò d’ autò famen érgon eīnai tō génei tōūde kai tōūde spoudaiou*) (e.g. a lyre player and a good lyre-player, and similarly in all cases), (...) we must suppose that the work of man is a certain kind of life (*zoén tiva*), and that this is the being at work of the soul and a praxis in accordance with logos (*psychēs enérgeian kai práxeis metà lógou*), and that the work of a good man is these same things, performed well and in a beautiful way (*eū tauta kai kalōs*), each act in accordance with its own virtue (*katà tèn aretèn*): if this is the case, human good turns out to be the

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1097b31-1098a3.

⁹ Agamben, *The Work of Man*, 3.

being at work of the soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most perfect.¹⁰

The *érgon* coincides with certain kind of life (*zoé tis*), with a practical living in accordance with *logos*. Happiness as individual and political end of human existence consists in a certain activity of the rational soul in accordance with its own virtue and, in conformity with human nature, within the *polis*. The activity of the *logos* ensues from the inactivation of the rational soul's *dýnamis*. According to Agamben, the Aristotelian definition of the work of man implies two theses on politics that penetrated into European political thought. In the first place, "politics is a politics of activity (*operosità*) and not of inoperativeness (*inoperosità*), of the act and not of potentiality." In the second place, the *érgon* as *zoé tis* has been determined through the practical inclusion within the rationally determined political *áryston* of the excluded bare, un-contemplative, biological life.¹¹

If man is the being of pure and boundless *dýnamis* to never ultimately determine himself,¹² to assign himself a work means to restrict his potential exceeding of *potentia*. A man having a work of his own is a diminished, reduced, less powerful being, and so is his thinking. The thinking, by limiting its own essence of pure *dýnamis*, assigns to itself a task and turns back to the practical life as the field in which to realize it. Yet, Agamben claims that politics lacks the work of its own: it "remains unassignable with respect to individual human activities (playing the lyre, making statues, producing shoes)." Moreover, politics has been defined through the articulation of life (nutritive, sensitive and rational function) and "through the exclusion – as un-political – of a part of its vital activity."¹³

In other words, a politics modulated on the category of *érgon* cannot fulfil its task: it remains unable to bring man to the better. Moreover, since the *érgon* has been individuated by the rational function, its political realization splits man in two parts, a political one and an un-political one. The latter is included in the city by means of its exclusion from the political happiness. Accordingly, Agamben claims that we ought to ground our politics in inoperativeness and not to assign it a further task or work.

2.

The assumption and care of the bare life is the last political work, the last, distorted, and diminished form of political happiness. Biopolitics is the final formula of the politics of activity. It derives, on one hand, from historical delusions that followed in the wake of the failed modern attempt to realize a society of perfect justice and peace and, on the other hand, from the ancient nexus between life, city, and being-at-work. I shall argue that the determination of the political work in the sphere of *bios*, namely the ergologic shift from the ancient *áryston* to the modern biopolitical care of *bios*, rather represents a consequence

¹⁰ *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a3-18.

¹¹ Agamben, *The Work of Man*, 4.

¹² In an interview Agamben summed up his thought: "The human is the animal that has no job: it has no given biological task, no clearly prescribed function. Only a powerful being has the capacity of not being powerful. Man can go everything but does not have to do anything." P. Colilli, *Agamben and the Signature of Astrology: Spheres of Potentiality* (Lahnman: Lexington Books, 2014), 145.

¹³ Agamben, *The Work of Man*, 6.

of the great hope created by the Christian promise of the coming Kingdom of God and by the subsequent disappointment that followed the failure of its actualization.¹⁴ Consequently, both the crisis of the work category – that, as we shall see, in Agamben’s opinion brought about the biopolitical assumption of life – and the politics of inoperativeness are seen to be related to the semantic frame of the eschatological and soteriological expectation.

We are used to classifying the Kingdom in terms of heavenly, over-mundane categories. The Kingdom is mostly identified with an over-reality situated somewhere else and in the time that will come in a distant future. Nevertheless, the object of the original Christian faith was a tangible political reality. The first Christians prayed for the imminence of the salvation within this generation – here and now, in accordance with the concrete image of the resurrection of bodies –, and they believed that men achieve the perfect freedom, justice, and happiness only by living under the actual kingship of God.

The Kingdom that the first devotees expected was a political structure, a definitely renewed community with its territory, people, and King: a divine monarchy – a *theoarchy*, that is, God’s government – they estimated would be perfectly at work soon, before they died. If the Kingdom Jesus announced were an almost abstract reality, if it did not entail the destruction of every mundane order, be it secular or sacerdotal, the worldly authorities would have no reason to reject the eschatological prophecy. As Sergio Quinzio – one of the greatest apocalyptic thinkers of the last Century – remarked, Jesus represented “a threat for the traditional order of human societies, which is ultimately grounded in the symbolic projection of the need for perfect justice into the heaven and in the acceptance of the mundane reality and its tragic injustice.”¹⁵

The Scriptures do not unveil the exact features of the Kingdom. However, a clear sign of its concreteness is symbolized by the gesture Jesus accomplishes each time he proclaims the imminence of the redemption: the healing of the sick.¹⁶ The language of the Kingdom is bodily and earthly. Our thirst, hunger, long for perfect justice, and other vital needs will be finally satisfied. The Kingdom is the fullness and fulfillment of life, but the only full and fulfilled life is the one within a perfect political community. Man is not an un-political animal, nor he is an individual: he is part of a community, of the chain of generation, of a physical people.

The Kingdom of God differs from the monarchies and other forms of regime in virtue of its origin. No man is able to erect it. Therefore, in the end-time, suspended between the already and the not yet, man and his politics have no *érgon* of their own when it comes to the new *télos* of human life and of the history. Man can just partake in saving his life by obeying Jesus’s precepts, but is deprived of the *dýnamis* to actualize the government of God. He does not have a decisive political task to be accomplished. Consequently, the faithful obedience to Jesus’ words does not generate a new social structure or order, a new

¹⁴ On the genealogical relation between Christian theology and modernity see M. A. Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

¹⁵ S. Quinzio, *Cristianesimo dell’inizio e della fine* (Milano: Adelphi, 2014), 100.

¹⁶ Cf. Matt. 4:23-24; 10:1; 11:3-5; 1 Kings 17:17-23; 2 Kings 4:18-35. See R. Schnackenburg, “Signoria e regno di Dio nell’annuncio di Gesù e nella Chiesa delle origini,” *Communio. Strumento internazionale per un lavoro teologico*, no. 86 “Venga il tuo Regno” (Milano: Jaca Books, 1986), 34-48.

political work. Given that the believers did not expect the continuation of the world¹⁷ and that its end was conceived of as imminent,¹⁸ the first eschatological communities coherently resigned from mundane activities. They disregarded all worldly offices and rejected everything that comes from the world: riches, offices, jobs, science, procreation. They ceased to work and, more importantly, they ceased to value the works. This is the meaning of the often misinterpreted Pauline verb *katargéo*: to deactivate, to make inoperative.¹⁹ When the salvation is at work, man is substantially workless for he is unable to enact the only work that awaits to be realized. Only from this perspective the conciliatory attitude of the first generations of believers bred towards the Imperial power, as some fragments of the New testament suggest, is interpretable: all worldly powers are irrelevant with respect to the end. All worldly works are dead works and the basics of the new teaching is the metanoia from them (*metanoías apo nekron érgon*).²⁰

3.

The faith in the Kingdom deprived man of and emancipated him from every political *érgon*, and destined him to radical inoperativeness, that is, to countless possibilities of becoming this or that substance. Political and religious authorities, that all prophets from Isaiah to Jesus relate to the Antichrist, can lead human societies only to the achievement of the worldly *áryston*, which inevitably remains interwoven with humiliation, injustice, evil, violence, thirst and hunger, and is thus fundamentally antichristic. No politics is truly soteriological.

By interpreting the old testament prophets, Quinzio argued that the coming Kingdom will be populated by the spared rest of Israel, the community of those who will remember forever the sufferings they went through, so as to make the eternal life even sweeter by comparison. The Kingdom, earthly but anti-mundane, fights against other kingdoms. Its King, *Rex Iudeorum*, leads his people in arms and is endowed with the right to judge. The Kingdom is realized not through the evolution of the history of salvation, but through the destruction of mundane realms and of the prince of this world.²¹ All around the eschatological Jerusalem the damned will be included in the eternal order through the eternal exclusion from grace. They are the paradigm of all later exceptions. In the city of God “nothing will be holy for everything will be holy: there will be a throne but no temple (Rev. 21, 22).”²² No one will pray, believe, nor hope any longer, for the saved can step before the King and plea for the satisfaction of their vital needs.

The life of the rest will not be incomparable. As Benjamin told Bloch when recounting his own version of Scholem’s story of the Kingdom: “Everything will be as it is now, just a little different.”²³ After the end of the messianic banquet, during which

¹⁷ Cf. Matt. 6:34.

¹⁸ Cf. Matt. 4:17; 10:7; Mark 1:15.

¹⁹ Cf. G. Agamben, *Il tempo che resta. Un commento alla Lettera ai Romani* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000), 92-94.

²⁰ Cf. Heb. 6:1.

²¹ Cf. S. Quinzio, *Religione e futuro* (Milano: Adelphi, 2001), 159.

²² S. Quinzio, *Un commento alla Bibbia* (Milano: Adelphi, 1991), 819.

²³ W. Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 2: Part 2: 1931-1934*, ed. M. W. Jennings, H. Eiland, and G. Smith (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard UP), 664. The passage is cited and interpreted by G. Agamben, *The*

the Lord serves his people²⁴ and dries their tears with his own hand, everyone will go back to their fields, to their works. What was suspended, will be renewed. The time will continue in usual rhythms. The just will build again his household and bring his cattle back to the pastures.²⁵ The Lord will take care of Israel's wounds and heal his bruises. He will give him consolation and crown him with a tiara instead of ash. The Lord will dance for him with cries of joy and wash his feet²⁶. The saved will be given "the oil of joy for mourning, the mantle of praise for the spirit of heaviness."²⁷ Those who were given "the bread of adversity and the water of affliction"²⁸ will enjoy the daily bread free from injustice. Man's life will not have a *télos* to be reached and will consequently turn into pure *dýnamis*: *energéia* will be indistinguishable from *dýnamis*.²⁹ Man's being-at-work will exhibit all of its inoperativeness and potentiality.

The Jerusalem's political community will be perfectly just, happy and peaceful.³⁰ Jerusalem is a city after the measure of man³¹. A perfect ruler – as the etymology of the word *liturgy* testifies – will serve his people who, in turn, will show him perfect obedience and help, meanwhile both will maintain their different grades of holiness and freedom. According to Quinzio's prophetic interpretation of the last page of the Revelation, "the relationship between man and God is a relation of servants who – in accordance with the ancient scheme of ministrants – judge together with their king, partake in the glory of his government, and have the access to his intimacy – as his relatives and children – proportionally to their merits."³² The whole of human life will turn into a liturgy – the work for the people – which defines the proper being-at-work of the perfect politician. Indeed, the Lord "did not come to be served, but to serve."³³ The perfect ruler is the one who perfectly serves his people by ruling them and the government of the others is the highest form of service: "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."³⁴ This image

Coming Community, trans. M. Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 52: "This small displacement is so difficult to achieve and its measure is so difficult to find that, with regard to the world, humans are incapable of it and it is necessary that the Messiah come." On Agamben's interpretation see A. Benjamin, *Working with Walter Benjamin: Recovering a Political Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2014), 42.

²⁴ Cf. Rev. 3:20.

²⁵ Cf. Isa. 58:12; 30:23-24.

²⁶ Cf. Zeph. 3:18; John 13:4.

²⁷ Isa. 61:3.

²⁸ Isa. 30:20.

²⁹ Cf. R. Kearney, "Paul's Notion of Dunamis," in J. D. Kaputo and L. M. Alcoff, *St. Paul among the Philosophers* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2009), 152.

³⁰ Cf. G. Cunico, "Ripensare il messianismo. Introduzione," *Humanitas* 60, no. 1-2 (2005): 5-27; J. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel from Its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah*, trans. W. F. Stinespring (London: Allen & Unwin, 1956); T. Tagliacozzo, *Messianismo e teologia politica in Walter Benjamin*, in T. Tagliacozzo, I. Bahbout, D. Gentili (eds.), *Il messianismo ebraico* (Firenze: Giuntina, 2009), 93-105.

³¹ Cf. Rev. 21:17.

³² Quinzio, *Un commento alla Bibbia*, 820.

³³ Cf. Matt. 20:28.

³⁴ Cf. Luke 22:25-27.

of humiliation does not abolish the glorious dimension of the old testamentary *krator* and *despotes*. Jesus is the eschatological king and judge and in biblical language to judge means to govern³⁵. “At the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”³⁶ The King can be just and merciful only as servant and the people can rule with him only by obeying his perfect justice. “The mercy of the king who, in order to console a friend, becomes poor beside him is much more perfect than the mercy of the king who raises the friend up to the level of his own kingly richness.”³⁷

4.

The Kingdom, announced as already at work, did not come. The death, the sin, and the law Jesus’s resurrection abolished, kept exercising their dominion over man’s life. Henceforth, the death became absurd and turned into the greatest scandal for the first generations of Christians.³⁸ As the salvation has not been perfected, the living itself has been deprived of any sense except for “waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God.”³⁹ Man could not achieve the perfect highest good and could not stop longing for the promised happiness.

In the expectation of the Kingdom man’s life becomes impossible. The salvation did come and did not come, is already at work and is not yet at work. Man has no work of his own to accomplish and yet he cannot live in total inoperativeness. Moreover, he still needs the law Paul declared dead and fulfilled by the justice and mercy of the Almighty. The law used to make him aware of the sin and offered at least a behavioral model in accordance with God’s will on which one could measure the distance of his life from perfectness. But in the time of the deactivation of the law man’s condition is suspended between its nothingness and the perfect freedom which is still to come. “The believer does not need the normative criteria, the rules of behavior. He is not a slave, but he cannot sustain the freedom.”⁴⁰ He cannot obey the mundane justice and the worldly potentates because he gained freedom, whereas they preserved their injustice and soteriological powerlessness. “History after Christ gives all too ample proof – from the Inquisition to Robespierre and beyond – that the outcome of the will to justice is terror.”⁴¹ Whether man’s mercy forgave all the misdeeds, the chaos would consummate the society. Every worldly order is based upon terror, fear, violence, and injustice. As such, it refutes the providence of God. Every chaos brings terror, fear, violence, and injustice. As such, it proves that God does not guide the history towards the salvation according to a providential plan. Terror or chaos: the impossible alternative has been disclosed in front of man’s work and of his politics.

The delay of redemption produced a tragic consequence. In order to safeguard the Christian faith, the Church interpreted the Kingdom in terms of a spiritual reality. The spiritual Kingdom, already at work, was consequently opposed to the imminent, earthly,

³⁵ Cf. S. Quinzio, *La fede sepolta* (Milano: Adelphi, 1997), 147.

³⁶ Matt. 19:28.

³⁷ Quinzio, *La fede sepolta*, 38.

³⁸ Cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-15.

³⁹ 2 Pet. 3:12.

⁴⁰ Quinzio, *Un commento alla Bibbia*, 659.

⁴¹ S. Quinzio, “Justice and Mercy,” *Kronos. Philosophical Journal* III (2014): 228.

and political Kingdom of the prophetic tradition which clearly was not operant.⁴² The spiritualization of the salvation masked the evidence that the world, declared redeemed, has not been redeemed. The soteriology was thus divided from eschatology and interiorized. The relation between religion and politics was torn apart as well: the domain of the former was established in more distant heaven from which the latter was substantially separated.⁴³ The spiritualization assigned a new, tragic, work to man and his politics: the establishment of a Christian order within which everyone would have access to salvation. A dead work. The only possible work of the faith. The delay of the Kingdom made politics and law necessary and apparently salvific once again. The metanoia started to imply the commitment to the dead, worldly works of proselytism, piety, refutation of heresies, etc.

Politics is incapable of conducting the community towards the eschatological *áryston*. The new better, identified with the miracle of the resurrection and the eternal life in the city of God, and which is incomparably higher than the one the Greeks aimed at, configures an end that neither man's works, nor his faith, nor his mercy, nor his virtue could accomplish. The new better is not a human task. Man's works, be they completely rationally and technically perfect, be they based or not upon the true knowledge or faith, cannot wipe out the death and the already experienced evil.⁴⁴ They cannot restore Adam's innocence. When it comes to the highest good Jesus promised, they are perfectly ineffective. Man can do anything, move restlessly in any direction, become this and that substance, have this or that destiny, replace one social order with another, but nothing he realizes does possess the potentiality to make him reach the end. All his possibilities are worthless. His works of justice are never just, but his injustice is always unjust. The worldly *áryston* is always a little different from the Kingdom, for the substance of the salvation is defined by the definitive separation of the good and the evil. And everything that is not salvation is incomparably less than man was promised and has been expecting.

By opposing the Kingdom to the world, Jesus detached respect to every mundane authority. No man can be reasonably dignified with the authority of the ruler. The Kingdom, unactualizable through the good mundane works, cannot constitute a model to be imitated as well. Every work for the people does not truly serve the people. The very moment the salvation had been announced, politics turned dead and had to be put under suspicion. The same can be told about the marriage, the procreation, the medicine, the temple.

The terrible deferment of the end could lead either to the end of the faith or to its reformulation in a spiritualistic sense.⁴⁵ Eventually, the redemption was identified with the salvation of one's soul by means of actions in accordance with the law – the dogmas of the Church. Indeed, the Church – the holy order – assumed the liturgical office so as to provide man with the beatitude conceived as “inner and spiritual peace of the one on whom the world keeps trampling, which represents a normal condition, freely chosen by God and doomed to last for millenniums.”⁴⁶ The eschatological prophecy was thought

⁴² Cf. R. Schnackenburg, *Gottes Herrschaft und Reich. Eine biblische-theologische Studie* (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder Verlag, 1965), 1-47.

⁴³ Cf. Quinzio, *Cristianesimo dell'inizio e della fine*, 69-70.

⁴⁴ Quinzio, *La fede sepolta*, 46.

⁴⁵ Cf. J. Taubes, “The price of messianism,” *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 33, no. 1-2 (1982): 595-600.

⁴⁶ Quinzio, *Un commento alla Bibbia*, 410.

of as already realized in Baptism.⁴⁷ Gradually, the Christianity constituted a new mundane power guarantying the being-at-work of the spiritual Kingdom in accordance with the providential will of God.⁴⁸

By establishing a new social order, the Church and the Christian worldly authorities proved to be necessary and tragic powers whose work is a salvation they cannot actualize. In this way, they rescued the hope in salvation by confining it within the religious and political symbolism⁴⁹ – they perverted its original content. Their activity presupposes the continuity between the world and the Kingdom, a continuity the Scriptures – by presenting the Kingdom as the anti-world, as the anti-mundane and still earthly reality, as the transfiguration and not the progressive fulfilment of the worldly reality – radically deny.

The denial of the personal authority led to the paradoxical situation that fully manifested only in the modernity. As no society can exist without a guide and as men are considered free in virtue of the remission of sins, the personal authority had to be replaced with the principles of the general will and institutional control. That is, with sociological methods and administration techniques. Only an impersonal, abstract authority can go along with the principle of the individual freedom characterizing the man unbound from his original political and religious community. Finally, the implications of the anti-mundanity of the Christian faith brought to the constitution of a typically modern institution, that is, the State. The State, aiming at guarantying peace and security, life and justice, within a circumscribed territory and for a physical people, replaced the spuriously anti-mundane medieval Imperium, which in turn was governed in accordance with all too mundane interests.

The promises of modern politics are all derived from the Kingdom. Modernity imitates its features: peace, equality, liberty, justice, brotherhood, life without diseases (originally the disease is at one with the sin), violence, prevarication, and death. These are earthly, bodily, concrete goals, in opposition to the spiritual salvation the Medieval order operated for. The political theology of the Church first, and the political soteriology of the modern State grounded in the notion of popular sovereignty afterwards, turned politics into operative means having the goal to actualize the perfectly mundane and kingless kingdom.

5.

The new *érgon* of man, a work radically divided from the better, has been taken on the eschatological hope and subsequent delusion. The announcement of the Kingdom could lead either to total inoperativeness – impossible in the world – or towards the soteriological politics. Both the politics of inoperativeness and the politics of salvation have been taken on and have veiled the essential powerlessness of the practical life with regard to the utmost end. Agamben claims that in the modern age politics became a collective and historical work of the people or nation (freedom, eternal peace, society without classes). Yet, after the World War I the work-paradigm entered into crisis and national States began to comprehend they no longer had a task to realize practically:

⁴⁷ Cf. J. Danielou, *Bible and the Liturgy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 86-113.

⁴⁸ On this, see G. Agamben, *La Chiesa e il Regno* (Roma: nottetempo, 2010).

⁴⁹ Quinzio, *Un commento alla Bibbia*, 82.

In the impossibility of defining a new “work of man,” it is now a question of taking on biological life itself as the last and decisive historical task. The “work” of the living being in accordance with *logos* is the assumption and care of that nutritive and sensitive life on whose exclusion Aristotelian politics had defined the *érgon toū anthrṓpou*⁵⁰.

Biopolitics is thus the last outcome of the Greek political thought. Their philosophy assigned a work to thinking and living, which are a-teleological, or turned so after the announcement of the Kingdom. The aim and task of thinking is not even the thinking itself, because the thinking and the thinking of thinking are *dynámeis*, the irresistible revealing of man’s dynamic essence. The thinking should not be at the service of the practical life, of political happiness. It should just think – and this “should” does not specify, once again, the next collective task. By grounding politics in the inoperative power of the thinking, Agamben inaugurates the possibility of rethinking politics.

Man’s thinking and living turned a-teleological because the *télos* of the history was set independently from man’s will. Only God has a *télos* he can actualize. Only after the announcement of the imminence of salvation does it become true that, as Agamben claims, “there is no essence, no historical or spiritual vocation, no biological destiny that humans must enact or realize.”⁵¹ Man’s happiness (resurrection and living in the city of God) does not depend on him, on his works, on the being-at-work of the soul in accordance with virtue. Whatever man undertakes, however he accomplishes his deeds, he cannot institute the government of God. After the World War I, man comprehended that the mundane imitations of Kingdom are tragic and useless; that the social metanoia does not lead to the Kingdom of Man. This is why the injunction to living (the care of nutritive and sensitive life in accordance with *logos*) turned out as the only possible practical task.

If biopolitics configures the practical assumption and care of *bios*, its genealogy is seen to be more consistent with the outcomes of the eschatological delusion rather than with the Greek work-paradigm. As we have seen, after the announcement of the coming Kingdom all works were suspended. Since the Kingdom did not come, they turned necessary and were consequently interpreted either as signs of an already accomplished redemption that the Parousia would merely perfect, or as mundane modalities of gaining salvation. Finally, as all historical tasks reviled their mixture with injustice, the care of *bios* appeared as the only work emancipated from evil. The only authentic *liturgy*. To live is unquestionably a good in the eschatological horizon of expectation. To live seems to be not a dead work for it means to credit God, the only being having a work of his own, with a supplement of time in which he could eventually carry it out. In the *post Christum* epoch, the only task of politics could be the salvation of life, the only task of the living being to keep on living, to remain the possibility of becoming this or that substance. In the pre-modern epoch life is the life of the soul. Modernity marks the passage to a new, scientific, social-biological definition of life. Consequently, biopolitics designs a politics aiming at the salvation of life meant as *bios* through the *katechonic* action with respect

⁵⁰ Agamben, *The Work of Man*, 6.

⁵¹ Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 41.

to the multiplication of inequality, diseases, poverty, war, and insecurity, for only a life within the society, within a culture, can be saved.

Biopolitics is thus rooted in the suspension of politics that followed the announcement of redemption and that its delay did not permit to actualize. While medieval politics cooperated with the Church in order to save the souls or aspired to save the souls on its own, now the liturgical work of politics is reduced to the tutelage of the biological functions (reason is one of them) of all members of the social body. Both ends are genealogically rooted in the political paradigm the Kingdom embodies, and yet both of them are “a little different” with the respect to the fullness of man’s life in the Kingdom. Both of them are dead works.

6.

When politics attempts to save the life by subtracting it to natural or social threats, to the death and suffering, to inequality and injustice, when it protects the world from ecological catastrophes, in a word, when it makes our living better and is at work for the best, it does not merely exclude the living beings who oppose these final goals. It also removes the necessity to invoke the end of mundane life and to pray for the irruption of the true Kingdom. It makes the faith unnecessary, overcome. And this is precisely the work of the Antichrist:

The Antichrist – Quinzio prophesied – appears as human and benevolent (2 Macc. 4, 11; 1 Macc. 6, 11; Dan. 11, 32), even merciful (2 Macc. 4, 37); he is not moved by ferocity, but by the shrewd will to edify an ecumenical unity of nations in his imperium, by the intention to make the glory of his kingdom coincide with the universal wellness of all men (1 Macc. 1, 43; 2 Macc. 11, 22-26). So the Antichrist simply applies the worldly possible logic and moral. That is, he excludes the miracle of the perfect salvation given by God. The Antichrist is a generous dispenser (1 Macc. 3, 30), for he believes in the utility the money furnishes, in the security it can buy, just as he believes in the great works that man, bestowed with autonomous determination, is able to accomplish (2 Macc. 5, 21; 9, 8; Mark 13, 22; Rev. 13, 13). The Antichrist believes in the healthy and efficient youth of the bodies and minds (2 Macc. 4, 9-14). His program – the program of the human reasonableness, of the good sense and balance – runs into the obstacle of the absolutistic fanaticism, which considers the trust in man as a blasphemy (John 2, 24-25; Matt. 10, 17; 16, 23; Luke 16, 15) and pretends an unseen and undefined salvation, different from the one the world can reasonably have or at least hope for, and which sacrifices everything for this impossible goal. At the end, the hard law of things compels the Antichrist to suppress the benevolent tolerance inscribed in his program (2 Macc. 4, 11; 9, 26-27; 11, 23-26; 1 Macc. 1, 44-51) and to make use of force. The Antichrist cannot tolerate obstacles for he knows what he is doing to be good, the only good possible for men. Irritation, anxiety, angst, and uncontrollable wrath grab the Antichrist when he is facing the enemies of his great work (1 Macc. 6,

8-11; 3, 31; 2 Macc. 9, 4; 5, 11)... Is there anyone more powerful than him, anyone able to accomplish greater works? The Antichrist is nothing but a more human god, a god turned man. All that the Antichrist can do is nothing but the usurpation of the only doer of things. So, it is by necessity made on image and similarity of the divine work. The Antichrist, *simia Dei*, imitates the divine goodness, his great work, the apocalyptic judgment on his enemies; just as God, he witnesses weakness and failure (Dan. 11, 21; 11, 45). This is why he is called Antichrist: he marks the final distortion of God's work, the lowest point in which the salvation is getting confused with its absolute opposite.⁵²

The biopolitical destiny of the West Agamben alludes to, a politics that works on the care of life (the preservation of life is the absolute opposite of its salvation because of the "little difference" it presents with respect to it), is politically juxtaposed to the only anti-mundane politics possible after the announcement of the imminent Kingdom, that is, political eschatology. As Jacob Taubes had shown, political eschatology is structurally opposed to the politics of the classical antiquity and is grounded in the political features of Jewish messianism and in transcendent apocalyptic: "The political expectations are reflected in the transcendental world of imagining what is to come. It would be too narrow to conceive of the Kingdom of God as *polis* or *politeuma*, which rather suggests the idea of kingly rule, or more precisely, the realm of kingship. (...) The kingship of God is that kingdom which God gives to the House of David, as if it were a loan, so that it can exercise kingship on his behalf. God's Kingdom assumes eschatological proportions in the form of prophecy. The apocalyptic division between 'this' and 'that' world, between the 'present' and 'future' aeon, specifies the location of the Kingdom more precisely. The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of Heaven...When it is said that the Kingdom of Heaven is coming, it means that it is coming from above."⁵³

The only politics coherent with the announcement of the Kingdom – political eschatology – was performed by prophets.⁵⁴ In the Bible they are always opposed to the sacerdotal order and political authorities. The politics prophets perform has no practical tasks: it does not aim to reform the social order, to save the mundane life, to make the living more just, to make the social justice advance. Their politics does not save. It does not have a work of its own. It is a paradoxical politics of *shabbat*, inactivity, and in every act it exhibits its potentiality and inoperativeness. It envisions and invokes the day when men will stop being "like those over whom you have never ruled."⁵⁵ The personal authority

⁵² Quinzio, *Un commento alla Bibbia*, 368-369.

⁵³ J. Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology*, trans. D. Ratmoko (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009), 50.

⁵⁴ From this perspective Quinzio's interpretation is consistent with the Islamic and Jewish political philosophy. According to Maimonides, for instance, the prophet performs the decisive political function and "the city founded by the philosophers and governed by their law is inferior to the city founded by a prophet and governed by his law, for the philosopher-legislator is inferior to the prophet-legislator." R. Lerner, *Moses Maimonides*, in L. Strauss, J. Cropsey (eds.), *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 239.

⁵⁵ Isa. 62:19.

of the prophet is grounded in the Holy Spirit⁵⁶: “God fulfils the content of the prophecy, gives importance to the words of the prophet so as to give consolation. The prophet does not anticipate the future, God realizes what the prophet had anticipated.”⁵⁷ The prophet is the true political man because – when the community trusts him – his words, which are not his own words, have the potentiality to change the intersubjective relations, transform (in the sense of *metanoia*) man’s attitude towards the mundane authorities, culture, knowledge, values. There is no truly soteriological political order without the prophecy of the Kingdom. The word-gesture (both terms translate the Hebraic *davar*) of the prophet operates on the reality with creative power, as the *fiat* of the first day of Creation.⁵⁸ God’s word fulfils the things, brings salvation that irrupts in the existing world by means of the very word anticipating and urging it.

Just as the prophecy was split from the announcement of the future so as to reduce it to the testimony of the presence of the always operative God among his people – that is, so as to make it a confirmation of the traditional holy order instead of a sign of a tragic necessity to break this order and make the theophany irrupt –, so the prophecy was split from the apocalyptic announcement. Finally, the Apocalypses, which affixes a seal on the Scriptures, was considered as late and imaginative interpolations in the prophetic horizon. But there is no prophecy that is not apocalyptic (...). The prophets’ oracles are brimming with future, a future that is inseparably messianic and apocalyptic. The prophecy appears when the people are at the bottom of an abyss, because there is no creation without chaos.⁵⁹

Politics of activity we have known for two thousand years, oriented towards the mundane good, leaves man and his society as they have always been. Their work is an unjust order. Moreover, by making us believe that political rule alone has the power to stabilize, moralize, beautify, satisfy the vital needs, and save, it confines us more and more to the world and makes us believe that the only true horizon is the worldly one: through a distorted faith and hope, it counterfeits the original, eschatological faith and hope.

The only true political action – an act of inactivity, an inoperative work – is the eschatological announcement of the coming salvation. This action deactivates every kind of mundane law and power. The only true authority is the authority to *anticipate* the Kingdom. Such authority does not improve any worldly reality, nor does it pretend to do so. Upon this authority the freedom of the prophet was based. Indeed, the prophet cannot recognize any other authority over him, over Lord’s spirit speaking through him: “The spirits of prophets are subject to prophets.”⁶⁰ No institution is able to deprive him of this freedom – the freedom of the truth. And yet, starting from the institutional establishment of the good novelty occurred in the Fourth century, prophet’s authority and freedom has

⁵⁶ Cf. Luke 4:18-21; Isa. 61:1-2.

⁵⁷ Quinzio, *Un commento alla Bibbia*, 259.

⁵⁸ Cf. Isa. 55:10-11; Hos. 6:5; 12:11; Hab. 2:3.

⁵⁹ Quinzio, *Un commento alla Bibbia*, 268.

⁶⁰ 1 Cor. 14:32.

been limited by the ecclesiastic control, which represents “the antecedent and model of the democratic control. Thence the concept of authority as reflection of the general will of the community has been elaborated, which had to be guaranteed by the mechanism of juridical mediation. Such an authority had the upper hand over the authority of the prophet (factual, not legal; immediate, not discussed) which was rooted in his own charisma.”⁶¹

Given that in the Greek political culture *tò áryston* was considered as achievable by man within the city in the form of the autarchic happiness, their politics had an *érgon*, and man had it as well. Their gods, on the contrary, being already happy, lacked a *télos*. Within an eschatological horizon of meaning, within the history of salvation, works alone do not save because of their being performed in the worldly reality which remains by necessity infiltrated by the evil. They have to be suspended. The only work of man is the inoperative expectation and anticipation of the Kingdom; a work the prophets performed by urging God to save and which is opposed to all mundane works. The prophecy is the true liturgy. This inoperative work cannot be performed by mundane powers. Whether they assumed it as their paradoxical activity, whether they became prophetic, the society would precipitate into chaos, lawlessness, mutual war of everyone against all the others. Consequently, the worldly authorities had to take on the salvation of life (meant as soul or society, meant in spiritualistic or social-biological sense) as their work. Therefore, they usurped the authority of God, confirming once again their antichristic essence. “Then comes the end, when he delivers the Kingdom to God the Father after making inoperative every rule and every authority and power.”⁶²

7.

The main outcome of the faith in the Kingdom, which perverted the nexus between *tò áryston* and practical living, is that human works never turn totally good. Man can never be happy on his own, thanks to his works and virtue. Now the right time has come to ask what is the meaning of Agamben’s politics of inactivity, the politics that does not take care of *bios*? Isn’t it just an imitation of the original Christian rejection of mundane politics? Or is it rather an authentic prophecy?

In the impossibility of generating an authentically political salvation through the actualization of the perfect society, of a society of perfect justice, freedom, and equity, modern politics took on the salvation of the bare life as its decisive and last historical work. This salvation is social, technical, administrative, and irresistible. As we know, it is *anomic* as well, interwoven with terror, fear, violence, and injustice. The state (the order) and the terror (the disorder) form a unitary system, they cannot persist if separated.⁶³

Agamben interprets and opposes Aristotle’s conception of the work of man within the soteriological horizon of meaning, extraneous to the classic culture and thought. Indeed, as he himself put it, “in the culture of the modern age, philosophy and critics have inherited the prophetic work of salvation, which the holy sphere had already entrusted

⁶¹ Quinzio, *Cristianesimo dell’inizio e della fine*, 130.

⁶² 1 Cor. 15:24. See Agamben, *Il tempo che resta*, 104-105.

⁶³ Cf. G. Agamben, *Il mistero del male. Benedetto XVI e la fine dei tempi* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2013), 35.

to the exegesis.”⁶⁴ And the prophecy is the utmost form of exegesis, the only one the human reason cannot judge, for it can be judged only by the completion.

The salvation of *bios*, as the counterfeit of the eschatological salvation of life, is the only reality the thinking and works, no matter how powerful and inoperative they should become, shall never be able to realize. They remain ineffective with respect to the resurrection of the dead. Yet, they have to be done in order to preserve the human life. With respect to the Kingdom, the thinking remains *vana curiositas*, the foolish wisdom of this world. A dead work. Agamben’s politics of inactivity (which is to be identified with the politics of the “messianic community”⁶⁵) rests on the separation between soteriology and eschatology – it implies the continuation of the world and never invokes its immediate end –, even if it restores the category of inoperativeness lying at the core of the political eschatology of the prophetic tradition. It tries to make this world better. Here the thinking does not urge God to save but thinks to be able to save by not assigning to itself the task of saving. In other words: the salvation from biopolitics is just another counterfeit of the original salvation. It aims at saving the living beings, their bodies, souls, freedom. Agamben’s proposal does not solve the scandal of the presence of evil in a world that is declared redeemed, nor does it go beyond the conception of politics marked by Christian eschatology and soteriology. Once again the thinker (be he religious or secular) is put in the place of the prophet, the critical thinking in the place of the prophetic word. By following Agamben, we get entangled in the contradictions of the modernity, of the history *post Christum*, a history that should have not been at work.

8.

Politics, the one that, when aiming at the better, does not generate the evil, will become possible again only at the end of the Christian conception of time, and will remain workless and yet necessarily and tragically operant in the end-time. After the Medieval illusion according to which politics was the instrument of spiritual salvation – in Church’s or Prince’s hands – Machiavelli and Hobbes made it clear that politics is always mixed up with the evil, independently of its structural orientation towards *tò áryston*. This political realism – real only within the *Post Christum* epoch – was wiped away by the modernist political belief in the tangible perfect society. The post-modern delusion made it clear once again that in order to save lives politics has to include through exclusion, guarantee the tolerance through discrimination, be unjust while searching for justice, and that every profane power is but a shade veiling the essential anomia characterizing the time of expectation: the truth that we, accustomed to aspire to the total good, cannot but consider unacceptable.

In the time of expectation, the only work of man and of his politics is an un-political work: to preserve the life on earth by means of scientific and technical progress the kingly science, as the ancients labelled the political art, has the duty to facilitate, so as to credit

⁶⁴ G. Agamben, *Nudità* (Roma: nottetempo, 2009), 12-13.

⁶⁵ Cf. Agamben *Il tempo che resta*, 76; D. Ferris, *Agamben and the Messianic: The Slightest of Differences*, in A. Glazova and P. North (eds.), *Messianic Thought Outside Theology* (New York: Fordham UP, 2014), 73-92.

God with more time. Even if this work implies the politics of activity, it is not a political work, the latter being defined by its natural link to the inherently human *télos* of man's life.

Until we keep thinking politics within the Christian horizon of redemption and connecting it to the salvation of the soul, society, humanity, or *bios*, we will keep oscillating between illusion and delusion, utopic counterfeits of the Kingdom and cynical and resigned realism deprived of a truly political *télos*. The announcement of Kingdom made the nexus politics-salvation impossible, but its delay made it necessary. In order to rethink the relationship between politics and *tò áryston* – in order to rethink *tò áryston* itself and the work of man – we have to turn back to Plato and Aristotle. But, paradoxically enough, we are culturally signed by the great messianic promise, so that our only experience of *tò áryston* is associated with the much higher good exemplified by the earthly life in the anti-mundane Kingdom. This is why we have to pass through the suspension of the political work of man in order to start rethinking its everlasting (not historical, epochal, soteriological) potentialities and, together with it, the appropriate measure of human happiness.

Czeslaw Milosz

CHILD OF EUROPE

1

We, whose lungs fill with the sweetness of day.
Who in May admire trees flowering
Are better than those who perished.

We, who taste of exotic dishes,
And enjoy fully the delights of love,
Are better than those who were buried.

We, from the fiery furnaces, from behind barbed wires
On which the winds of endless autumns howled,
We, who remember battles where the wounded air roared in
paroxysms of pain.
We, saved by our own cunning and knowledge.

By sending others to the more exposed positions
Urging them loudly to fight on
Ourselves withdrawing in certainty of the cause lost.

Having the choice of our own death and that of a friend
We chose his, coldly thinking: Let it be done quickly.

We sealed gas chamber doors, stole bread
Knowing the next day would be harder to bear than the day before.

As befits human beings, we explored good and evil.
Our malignant wisdom has no like on this planet.

Accept it as proven that we are better than they,
The gullible, hot-blooded weaklings, careless with their lives.

2

Treasure your legacy of skills, child of Europe.
Inheritor of Gothic cathedrals, of baroque churches.
Of synagogues filled with the wailing of a wronged people.
Successor of Descartes, Spinoza, inheritor of the word 'honor',
Posthumous child of Leonidas
Treasure the skills acquired in the hour of terror.

You have a clever mind which sees instantly
The good and bad of any situation.
You have an elegant, skeptical mind which enjoys pleasures
Quite unknown to primitive races.

Guided by this mind you cannot fail to see
The soundness of the advice we give you:
Let the sweetness of day fill your lungs
For this we have strict but wise rules.

3

There can be no question of force triumphant
We live in the age of victorious justice.

Do not mention force, or you will be accused
Of upholding fallen doctrines in secret.

He who has power, has it by historical logic.
Respectfully bow to that logic.

Let your lips, proposing a hypothesis
Not know about the hand faking the experiment.

Let your hand, faking the experiment
No know about the lips proposing a hypothesis.

Learn to predict a fire with unerring precision
Then burn the house down to fulfill the prediction.

4

Grow your tree of falsehood from a single grain of truth.
Do not follow those who lie in contempt of reality.

Let your lie be even more logical than the truth itself
So the weary travelers may find repose in the lie.

After the Day of the Lie gather in select circles
Shaking with laughter when our real deeds are mentioned.

Dispensing flattery called: perspicacious thinking.
Dispensing flattery called: a great talent.

We, the last who can still draw joy from cynicism.
We, whose cunning is not unlike despair.

A new, humorless generation is now arising
It takes in deadly earnest all we received with laughter.

5

Let your words speak not through their meanings
But through them against whom they are used.

Fashion your weapon from ambiguous words.
Consign clear words to lexical limbo.

Judge no words before the clerks have checked
In their card index by whom they were spoken.

The voice of passion is better than the voice of reason.
The passionless cannot change history.

6

Love no country: countries soon disappear
Love no city: cities are soon rubble.

Throw away keepsakes, or from your desk
A choking, poisonous fume will exude.

Do not love people: people soon perish.
Or they are wronged and call for your help.

Do not gaze into the pools of the past.
Their corroded surface will mirror
A face different from the one you expected.

7

He who invokes history is always secure.
The dead will not rise to witness against him.

You can accuse them of any deeds you like.
Their reply will always be silence.

Their empty faces swim out of the deep dark.
You can fill them with any feature desired.

Proud of dominion over people long vanished,
Change the past into your own, better likeness.

8

The laughter born of the love of truth
Is now the laughter of the enemies of the people.

Gone is the age of satire. We no longer need mock.
The sensible monarch with false courtly phrases.

Stern as befits the servants of a cause,
We will permit ourselves sycophantic humor.

Tight-lipped, guided by reasons only
Cautiously let us step into the era of the unchained fire.

THE LIVING AGAINST THE DEAD

Miłosz is like the world and, just like the world, he has many secrets. One of them is his attitude to those he lost in the war – his colleagues, friends, peers. I want to tear a confession from him, I want to interrogate his shadow about the rules that determined his relationships. What was he ashamed of? What was he trying to escape from? Whom did he protect? Why, writing about the living, he failed to mention the dead? Why did he shift attention away from his own person? What hurt him? And why so much?

THE RELIGIOUS APPREHENSION OF THE WORLD

Haunted by fears and vague metaphysical intuitions, imagination today is subject to irreversible erosion. God is not thought of otherwise than in quotation marks, and so is used mainly as a rhetorical figure expressing what is not completely apprehensible or possible to encompass. In such a world, poetry, too, struggles with the loss of meaning. It cannot provide convincing answers to the questions that life poses, thus becoming heavy, incomprehensible, unable to exceed itself, with the result that it devours its own tail. This is why it must be simplified at all costs, firstly by giving up any unnecessary formal complexities – one should learn about a pine tree from the tree itself. In this respect, certain patterns can be found in the poetry of the East, except that it generally remains deaf to the questions that have puzzled the Old Continent for thousands of years: the difference between good and evil, God and creation, freedom and necessity, mind and body. As Miłosz writes in one of his essays,

I do not hide the fact that I seek in poems a revelation of reality, of what is known in Greek as *epifaneia*. This word used to mean, in the first instance, manifestation, the appearance of the Divinity among mortals, and also our recognition of the divine in an ordinary, familiar form, as for example, in the form of a man. Epiphany thus interrupts the everyday flow of time and enters as one privileged moment when we intuitively grasp deeper, more essential reality hidden in things or persons.¹

Clearly, the anthology of religious poetry intended by Miłosz in the 1990s had a specific aim, just as all the other anthologies that he managed to edit and publish. The aging poet

¹ Cz. Miłosz, “Against Incomprehensible Poetry” in *To Begin Where I Am: Selected Essays*, ed. B. Carpenter and M. G. Levine (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 383.

yearns for metaphysical comfort, declares his wish to sit at one table with gods and point to “It,” using less and less sophisticated poetic means, like a man struck dumb.²

CALIFORNIAN RUSSIANISTS

Quite different reasons, I suppose, served as the basis for the *Postwar Polish Poetry* anthology, published by Doubleday & Company half a century ago. At first the anthology seems to be a matter of coincidence, just as Miłosz’s essays on Dostoevsky, which he started to work on rather unexpectedly and purely for his own sake. “It so happens that these things take place as if by chance,” Miłosz recalls in an interview with Aleksander Fiut. “I was asked if I would like to teach a course on Dostoyevsky, as the professor who had previously taught Dostoyevsky died, and it appeared there was no one to substitute him. ‘Fine,’ I said. If I had been offered to teach a course on Tolstoy, I would have said ‘no.’ But it was Dostoyevsky, so I said ‘fine.’”³

In 1960, Miłosz had been offered a job at Berkeley’s Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, where from 1961 he conducted a seminar on the art of translation. It was at that time that he first tried his hand in the translation of Polish poems into English, the language he had learned from Shakespeare, in German-occupied Warsaw.⁴ Miłosz’s students formed a small seminar group. His classes were usually held in English, yet the language would naturally switch to Russian whenever Aleksander Wat joined the seminar (Wat was on a scholarship in the United States). The students did not know Polish or knew it insufficiently, as Miłosz wrote to Jerzy Giedroyc in his letter of November 1964:

A number of our recent seminar meetings have been devoted to Tadeusz Borowski’s work. Aleksander Wat was also present at the last two meetings, and he told us many interesting things about Borowski, in Russian, because most of the students don’t speak Polish well enough. About Borowski, in California, in Russian; I hope you appreciate the strangeness of this situation.⁵

In another letter, written in March 1965, he pointed to the distinctive character of those meetings: “What is more, I record the seminars which he participates in. Discussions about the poetry of Różewicz, in Russian, in California, between Wat and Miłosz – a most piquant case. (Russian became our lingua franca).” Miłosz wrestled with the medium of three languages at the same time, but it was the process of translating from Polish into English that presented him with the greatest difficulties. “I’ve translated two poems by Czaykowski into English and they sound nicely,” he wrote in May 1964. “The Skamandrites

² Ibid. “It” is also the title of Miłosz’s penultimate poetic collection (Kraków: Znak, 2000).

³ Cz. Miłosz, A. Fiut, *Czesława Miłosza autoportret przekorny. Rozmowy przeprowadził Aleksander Fiut* [*Czesław Miłosz’s Perverse Self-Portrait: Interviews by Aleksander Fiut*] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1988), 125.

⁴ Cz. Miłosz, “Gorliwość tłumacza,” *Ogród nauk* [“The Translator’s Zeal,” *The Garden of Sciences*] (Lublin: Wydawnictwa Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1991), 175.

⁵ J. Giedroyc, Cz. Miłosz, *Listy 1964-1972* [*Letters*], ed. M. Kornat (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 2011). All references to this edition are given in square brackets in the body of the text.

are hardly translatable, the reason being the thinness of their images and the fact that they rely upon melody. I didn't want to omit them, though, so somehow I managed to translate a couple of poems by Słonimski, as well as one by Iwaszkiewicz and Wierzyński" (48). The idea of publishing a volume of poems by Polish poets in English translation seems to have emerged directly from the American publisher's enthusiasm for Urszula Koziol's poem "Alarum."

I've only recently translated a poem by a poetess who is 20 years old or so, called Urszula Koziol; I came across the poem "Alarum" in the Warsaw-based *Kultura*. *Mais quelle dignité!* When you show post-1956 Polish poetry to Americans, they just go crazy about it; never before in my life have I got a letter from a publisher like the one in response to the sample of translations I sent to New York. And it's not the *Westernness* of this poetry that they value, but its otherness and uniqueness. (34)

One cannot underestimate the role that Thomas Merton played in promoting Polish poetry on the American market. Merton, a Trappist monk, thinker and writer, was himself an ardent devotee of Miłosz's work after he had read *The Captive Mind*. As Miłosz would recall years later: "I didn't need to look for a publisher of my *Postwar Polish Poetry*; having read the manuscript, Merton immediately sent an enthusiastic letter to the big publishing house, Doubleday, where his opinion was highly respected, and everything was settled."⁶ As far as the market success is concerned, Merton's blurb of praise printed on the anthology's dust jacket proved no less significant. It went as follows:

This collection of new Polish poetry shows a remarkable vitality. No one could be better qualified than Czesław Miłosz to find and translate the best work of the Polish avant garde, of which he himself is one of the most articulate representatives, and with which he remains in close contact though living in exile. The young Polish poets are writing with total contempt for all political and cultural clichés, independent of ideological imposture, candid, ironic, lucid and sometimes completely shattering. For many of these poets are men who witnessed, and barely escaped, genocide as well as war. One of the most moving poems in the book, at least for me, is Miłosz's own "Poor Christian looks at the Ghetto," written in Warsaw in 1943. The younger poets emerge as the purest and most promising of any group I can think of offhand (except perhaps the Greeks). In the whole collection, Zbigniew Herbert (...) stands out as one of the most important poets of our time in any language.

In his preface to *Postwar Polish Poetry*, Miłosz personally refers to his students' commitment and their contribution to the making of the anthology. He stresses the fact of

⁶ Cz. Miłosz, "Thomas Merton," *Ogród nauk*, 189-190.

not being a native speaker of English, which makes him distrust his ear but rely instead on the help and control of those who have spoken English since childhood:

I wish to thank Mac Goodman, Lawrence Davis, Reuel Wilson⁷ and Richard Lourie for the long debates we had over one sentence or, quite often, over one word. Two poems of Slonimski and one of Jastrun ('Remembrance') were given definitive shape by Lawrence Davis. Some poems were translated by Peter Dale Scott with my minor assistance and are marked accordingly.⁸

POLISH SCHOOL OF CONTEMPORARY POETRY

Before *Postwar Polish Poetry* was published, English-speaking readers had only been familiar with the work of Miron Białoszewski and Zbigniew Herbert, printed in *Encounter* in 1958 and 1961, respectively. Miłosz's anthology revolutionized that state of affairs in the sense that it gathered in one book such a great variety of individual poetic voices. Its release marked the date when the term "the Polish school of poetry" was coined.⁹

The publication of such work in the United States seemed difficult to accomplish due to the incompatibility of national experience (Americans had never waged war against a foreign aggressor on their own territory), including the poetic experience. "Life in *partibus infidelium* [among the unbelievers] is not a treat, and for the writer it is devastating. There are times when it almost seems to me that I have been beaten. There is this feeling of an undefined audience, and even more than the two languages, these two audiences annihilate each other" (77). Therefore, if an anthology of postwar Polish poetry had a chance at all to come to life on that somewhat virgin territory, it very much depended on the translator's skills and poetic taste, on his selection of young enthusiasts for a team, in this case the seminar members whose first language was English, and – last but not least – on his connections in a renowned publishing house.

Postwar Polish Poetry consists of ninety poems by twenty one Polish poets who were living at that time (with the exception of Staff, who had passed away eight years earlier). As a matter of fact, all of them published their poems in Poland after 1956, when censorship was temporarily lifted. The freedom of poetic expression, alongside beautiful phrasing, conditioned the authenticity of the message. However, there were exceptions to that rule. The anthology included a number of war poems or poems written before the war. The exceptions were also poems by emigrant writers, including Czaykowski, Wat and, of course, Miłosz himself. And even if Miłosz did not attach any significance to the place where the particular poet lived and created (as he claimed in his preface), it is rather obvious that in his anthology he gave precedence to national writers above those in exile.

The main section of the volume opens with Leopold Staff's biographical note:

A gentle old man with a goatee, he was venerated by much younger poets for his passionate interest in their work, his optimism – very necessary at

⁷ Mary McCarthy's son.

⁸ Cz. Miłosz, ed., *Postwar Polish Poetry. An Anthology*, (New York: Routledge, 1965), vii.

⁹ See *Czesław Miłosz and Polish School of Poetry*, special English issue of *Teksty Drugie [Second Texts]* (2012).

that time – and the poems he sent to underground publications. After 1945 Staff profited considerably from his friendships with very young poets, then entering the literary scene, and, being open to their judgments, attained his long-sought ideal: complete simplicity of form. (...) Though he is no longer living, there is no doubt as to his place among the poets of today.¹⁰

Staff was therefore a poet capable of defying the war of generations in Polish poetry, absorbing as much from the young as he himself could give them in return. One should notice that in addition to the poems constituting the anthology, the notes on the poets, as composed by Miłosz, are of paramount importance. This is primarily because the strictly biographical data is substituted by other poetry-related facts. Excluding the poems and compiling the biographical notes, we should obtain something like “the history of Polish poetry between 1956 and 1965” – an offbeat piece of text, revelatory of Miłosz’s fascinating, willful foresight, as the note on Stanisław Grochowiak shows: “At thirty he won a respectable position in Warsaw which may endanger his future development as a poet.”¹¹ One of the most engaging biographical notes is that of Tadeusz Różewicz, quoted here *in extenso*:

Różewicz’s poetry stems from traumatic war experiences. He served in the guerrilla Home Army and his first poems published immediately after the war are short, nearly stenographic notes of horror, disgust, and derision of human values. Long before anybody in Poland had heard of Samuel Beckett, Różewicz’s imagination created equally desperate landscapes. Since he hated art as an offence of human suffering, he invented his own type of anti-poem, stripped of “devices” such as metre, rhyme, and even, most often, of metaphors, and limited to the simplest words. His scorn for “art” is quite programmatic, with all the contradictions such an attitude involves. He is a nihilistic humanitarian, constantly searching for a way out of his negation which is mitigated only by pity; his tenderness bursts out only when he writes on little things of everyday life. He was unsuccessful in his attempts to find solace in an ideology. His poems written between 1949 and 1956, when he tried to sound positive and optimistic, fell often into what he had avoided before and has avoided since, sentimentality. It seems that his tragedy is to deny the values which are affirmed by his revolt. It is not by chance that I have mentioned Beckett. Różewicz is the author of a few plays which exemplify the Polish “theatre of the absurd.” The target of his attacks is the precarious normality undermined by chaos and violence; and the title of one of his plays is, significantly enough, “The Witnesses, or Our Little Stabilization.” The impact of his “naked” poetry upon the younger

¹⁰ Miłosz, *Postwar Polish Poetry*, 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 133.

writers has been universally recognized. He lives in Gliwice, an industrial town of Silesia.¹²

THE RIGHT OF THE LIVING

Miłosz's anthology of Polish poets appeared in February 1965, as he mentions in a letter to Giedroyc, using the occasion to also ask for a review. Besides, Miłosz expresses his need to explain, in a separate text, the reasons why he decided to promote these particular poets, and not some others (86). His letter meets with no response from the Editor. Writing again in April of the same year, Miłosz cannot restrain his irritation and gives an ultimatum to Giedroyc: "Either you force Kot [Jeleński] to review my anthology *Postwar Polish Poetry*, or I'll have to do it myself, for who else? Czerniawski, that miserable scribbler, turns out to be our writer in exile only because there aren't any others" (95).¹³ Eventually, Giedroyc thanks his friend for sending the book, but his manner is somewhat cool and curt, if not reluctant. "I've only just received your anthology. I think it would be a good idea to also send it to Vujičić in Yugoslavia" (97). Full stop. It may be a good book, but for Yugoslavs! They are not familiar with recent Polish history, they will not realize the deliberate omissions in the selection of authors. A few months later, however, Giedroyc mitigates his initial attitude: "When it comes to your anthology, it would certainly be good if you translated one of its American reviews, or found someone there who would like to do it" (101).¹⁴ But Miłosz already has a different plan. "Well, fine then," he thinks to himself. "My anthology is one of the best-selling books in Berkeley bookstores, though it's hard to say whether it means anything or not on a nationwide scale" (102).¹⁵ In another letter he adds: "I'm going to translate Polish poets for Penguin, London; basing on my anthology, they regard me as the best in this field" (106). *Postwar Polish Poetry* had only two superficial reviews at that time, written by Miłosz's friends.¹⁶ Why was it never given proper attention in *Kultura* if Miłosz cooperated with the magazine?¹⁷ The answer can be found in his preface to the anthology. In it, Miłosz explains that the poems included are by poets who are *living*. His criterion is therefore rather peculiar: to publish poems only by those poets who managed to survive the war, the occupation, the Warsaw Uprising, namely, those who have shown their ability to survive, a skill so much appreciated by

¹² Ibid., 61.

¹³ The editor of Giedroyc and Miłosz's volume of letters is mistaken in his annotation (96), in which he suggests that Adam Czerniawski's review was actually written and published in 1965 in the fourth issue of *Kultura* while, in fact, Czerniawski's text entitled "Poeta sam" [The Poet Alone] is not about Miłosz's anthology, but on Jan Brzękowski's collection of poems *Science Fiction* (London: Oficyna Poetów i Malarzy, 1964).

¹⁴ Twenty years later, when the second, expanded edition of *Postwar Polish Poetry* was published – and Miłosz had already won the Nobel Prize – a review appeared by Reul K. Wilson, one of Miłosz's co-translators for the anthology – "Review of *Postwar Polish Poetry*" in *World Literature Today* 58, no. 2 (1984).

¹⁵ Here, once again, the editor's footnote leads us astray. Milica Kirkoff's review "Dwie antologie poezji polskiej w Jugosławii" [Two Anthologies of Polish Poetry in Yugoslavia] does not relate to Miłosz's *Postwar Polish Poetry*, but to two other anthologies: Peter Vujičić's *Savremena Poljska poezija* and *Poljska Lirika dvajsetego stoletja* edited by Ryszard Matuszewski.

¹⁶ At least this is to the best of my knowledge. J. Zwolska Sell, "Review," *The Polish Review* 10, no. 3 (1965); B. Deutch, "To Survive Is To Sing," *Book Review*, 9 May 1965.

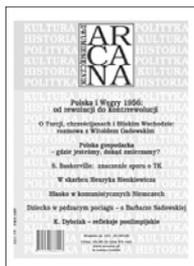
¹⁷ Certainly the two mentions of Miłosz's anthology in *Kultura* (no. 7-8 (1965): 213-215) are not to be regarded as reviews. Both of them – one penned by Babette Deutch, the other by Maureen Sullivan – can at most be called useful blurbs. It is no surprise, then, that they passed unnoticed.

Miłosz. Thus, the editor mobilizes the living against the dead, which is why the volume could not include poets such as Andrzej Trzebiński, Krzysztof Kamil Baczyński, Józef Czechowicz or Lucjan Szenwald.

I wish to explain in a few words why and how I made this anthology. The underlying motive, as I see it, was my distrust of a poetry which indulges in negation and in a sterile anger at the world. Man confronted with mechanisms beyond his control is a loser until he learns that what seemed to crush him was, in fact, a necessary trial to open a new dimension and to prepare his mind to cope with unheard-of circumstances. This, in my opinion, is what has happened in contemporary Polish poetry. A historical steam-roller has gone several times through a country whose geographical location, between Germany and Russia, is not particularly enviable. Yet the poet emerges perhaps more energetic, better prepared to assume tasks assigned to him by the human condition, than is his Western colleague.¹⁸

My answer would be: bullshit, stop pulling our leg. *Postwar Polish Poetry* allowed Miłosz to somehow overlook those poets, most of them his friends, who had died in the Uprising (Baczyński), at the front (Szenwald), of a bomb (Czechowicz), with mouths plastered up during the execution (Trzebiński). Who was that anthology made for, then? The American critics failed to notice it, the students would rather listen to Aleksander Wat's Russian anecdotes, Giedroyc refused it and preferred to ignore it, silence it. It appears, therefore, that the anthology was not made "for someone," but "against someone" – against the poets who had been killed undeservedly or had died prematurely, against whom the editor might have held a grudge. Having lived through the occupation, yet not carried away by patriotic emotion, Miłosz might have felt a prick of conscience, a sense of guilt caused by the fact that he himself had not fulfilled – or only partially fulfilled – the duty which for those other poets was something obvious and self-explanatory.

¹⁸ Miłosz, *Postwar Polish Poetry*, v.



100TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE OF *ARCANA* MAGAZINE

Arcana is a bimonthly published in Cracow by the Arcana publishing house. The journal was founded in 1995. A renowned historian, Andrzej Nowak, was the first editor-in-chief until the end of 2012. In the years 2013-2014 the editor-in-chief was Krzysztof Szczerski, and from 2015 – Andrzej Waśko. The journal is dedicated to culture, history and politics.

TIME AND NATION AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF WORLD HISTORY

A reply to the questions posed in the 100th anniversary issue of *Arcana* magazine

1. *Is Poland still of any use to anyone? How is Polishness/Poland (potentially) relevant to Poles, to the country's inhabitants, to its neighbors, and to others (to our region, to Europe, to the world)?*
2. *Are we of any use to Poland? What obligations might we have today as a result of our professed belonging to the Polish historical/civic/national community?*

These questions can only be answered once we have determined what Polishness is, which, in turn, requires us to explain what a nation is and to identify its status in the order of existence. There are two points that require explanation: the relationship between the nation as a concept and history as a category, and the nature of the stability (or instability) of the current historical order and the historical order in general.

1.

Let us therefore begin with the philosophical perspective. The nation is a broad concept that describes a certain collective form. This form obviously encompasses more than just me, with all my existential particularity, but others, as well. And yet, what is more puzzling is that this is not an abstract concept nor a detached essence existing somewhere in the realm of pure ideas. The nation is a form immersed in historical time; moreover, it is a certain form of historical time. The others encompassed by this concept are more than just my contemporaries: they are also – or perhaps above all – the ones who were here before me and will come after me. No other concept of human community, such as humanity or society, is so profoundly bound to the concept of history. The history of man, the story of the evolution of our species – a process that has spanned millenia – feels distant to me, as an individual; it does not involve me directly, nor does it define me or my particularity in any way. In contrast, society – human masses agitated by incessant economic changes, subjected to advertising campaigns, stock market cycles, and boom-and-bust cycles – changes too quickly to give us a sense of temporal community. The concept of history, as inscribed in the categories of humanity and society, is thus either too broad or too narrow; it is diffused in indeterminacy or crumbles into a series of random events that cannot be assembled into a cohesive, unified concept of time. The true history is that of nations.

A discussion of the nation thus involves the consideration of a certain general form, but one that is nevertheless temporal; a shape or form (I intentionally use the Aristotelian terms) that is at once constant and variable. By proposing history and time as the first complements to the concept of the nation, we have already carried out its significant reconstruction, as this strips the concept of various terms once ascribed to it, ones that are revealed to be categorically inadequate (atemporal), or incidental and fleeting (temporally derivative). Our reconstruction thus leads to a temporal reduction: we observe the nation to have, first, a certain temporal form, and, second, a certain form of time, namely history. Let us now examine past forms of the nation as a concept, paying particular attention to their incompatibility with the experienced facts, and then expose their temporal meanings. The essence of the nation thus is not, as Schelling posited, a shared religion; it is apparent that Poles had various religions in the past, and we can also imagine that they may someday have none; the story of religion, which Schelling regarded as synonymous with history in general, is but a single chapter in the history of nations. Nor is the nation defined, as Hegel claimed, by the form of the state; we once had no state, and yet we were Poles; the history of the state and law can be part of the history of a nation, but it is not a prerequisite. German idealism, which discovered history as an independent realm of reality and produced its first concepts, quickly lost its temporal relevance in describing the story of the world, setting its scope so wide that history immediately ground to a halt, petrified in some shape of timelessness or supertemporality. The picture of world history painted by the hands of German philosophers had no room, as 19th century Polish philosophers observed, for Poles (in particular) or Slavs (in general). Slavs appeared to be an extra-historical people: they did not arrive in time for history; they were late for the drama of the stories that had come to an end. Their religion, Eastern Christianity, was founded by Greeks and Jews; it was shaped into its final form by Protestants, who extracted from Christianity its most radical intellectual and practical conclusions. Nor was there, in the period following the reforms of Peter the Great in Russia and the partitioning of Poland, any sort of state or political organization particular to Slavs that would allow them to justify their existential independence.

The discrepancy between this diagnosis and the actual state of affairs (we are told that we do not exist, though it is plain that we do) encouraged Libelt and Trentowski to construct a Slavic philosophy and create a Slavic mythology. Following in their footsteps, but discarding German idealism – which is not worth supplementing with Slavic philosophy, but should simply be rejected – I propose a reversal: it is not we, Slavs (in general) and Poles (in particular), that are an extra-historical people. Rather, it is Schelling and Hegel's metaphysics that is atemporal; its ahistoricity lies in their replacement of world history with particularistic histories, such as those of countries or religions. That this is more than just a game of semantics will become apparent later in this argument, when we attack the reality (at once the historical and ahistorical one) that German idealism identified and justified, and is referred to in its ideological articulations.

Let us return to the concepts of the nation used in the past. Our historical experience also contradicts the ethnic notion of the nation, one that attempts to reduce the nation to a tribal or racial community. This concept, as is apparent today, was a modern construct, one based on the biological theories posited by Darwin and the English utilitarianism that

lay at their foundation; a construct at odds with the actual order of Polish history – which, from its very dawn, encompassed myriad tribal particularisms and distinct ethnicities – from which a multi-shaped shape emerged: the multi-national Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. We see the same categorical error in modern-day nationalism, which attempted to reduce the existence of a nation to its biological substance, tangibly present here and now, and visible, for example, under a microscope. Yet it is substances, material objects, that always exist in the present. The nation, meanwhile, is a form that emerges from a historical past and extends into the historical future; it is thus, in the jargon of 20th century philosophy, a certain form of sense, a manner of meaning, or, in purely traditional terms, it has a spiritual nature, it is the spirit of time, a temporal breath. Finally, the nation cannot be reduced to a community of language, though the latter, as a prerequisite of the nation (a nation cannot exist without a language), must be accounted for in the concept; it is thus experientially obvious that not every Polish speaker considers him or herself Polish; the Polish language, as I will explain shortly, can and often does become an extra-historical tongue.

But should we reconstruct our concept of the nation in this particular manner? And what do we stand to gain from such a reconstruction? I believe that, above all, it is not arbitrary. The construction of concepts invariably takes place on the foundation of previous cognitive facts. It is an attempt to realize that which is already known, though indistinct and blurry. With regard to the concept of the nation today and the way in which we speak about it, what is crucial is the person or thing against which it is used. The concept of the nation is a battle word. It carries an ominous promise of conflict and strife (to which it owes its true significance and weight, also in the eyes of its enemies; war, Heraclitus says, is the father of all). That is why the third requisite complement to the concept, alongside history and language, is the category of the enemy. In the past the concept of the nation meant a group opposed to other groups against which the nation waged national wars; the new, emerging concept of the nation will denote a historical community that is in opposition to post-historical social humanity. The concept of the nation as we unwittingly employ it today would thus differ significantly not only from the concept of the nation in the Nobles' Commonwealth, but also from the concept of the nation in pre-World War II Poland. The nation as a temporal community can change its temporal meaning while remaining the same nation. In order to explain this, I must switch this lecture from the philosophical perspective to the historical one and descend into the actual, material conditions in which this concept is constructed, and, subsequently, turn towards the enemy.

2.

We employ the concept of the nation in a post-Hitler reality. It is no accident that the Third Reich provides the negative context in which the word is used: no one wants to use the word the way the Nazis did, and whoever employs it risks being attacked with conventional accusations of “fascism” – this conventionality, a sign of intellectual inertia, spiritual torpor, is not some superficial customary epiphenomenon (like table etiquette), but is rooted in the dogmatic foundations of liberal societies. However, the post-Hitler reality, the post-war world, is shaking on its foundations: the last participant of those events, the seemingly final victor of that war, i.e., the United States, stands at the brink of spiritual

collapse whose visible consequences are the economic crisis and military defeats; new players have emerged on the stage of history, or, rather, old players have assumed – or are attempting to assume – some new shape (I refer primarily to national China and post-national Germany, as well the hybrid Soviet-Tsarist mafia-police state of Russia). One might therefore expect a revision of the rules of the game of world politics and, at a deeper level, a revision of the rules of global humanity, a revision that will involve the concept of the nation and which we will necessarily be drawn into. After all, when our neighbors, nations that have played a role in our history since its very beginning, ones with which we share a history, begin to reinvent themselves – or at least attempt to do so – then we, Poles, must act in kind. Otherwise others will do it for us.

Let us return to the point at which modern history begins, namely, to World War II. It was a global class of empires in which the Third Reich suffered a complete defeat – the very empire that took the principle of nationality as its own and failed precisely (and thus for fundamental reasons) because of that principle. Hitler lost the war to Stalin because he did not set up, in the summer of 1941, a Ukrainian government in Lviv or an army made up of Red Army deserters. Had he done so, Poland likely would not exist today. Then, in the summer of 1941, for the first time in our history, we faced the prospect of complete annihilation, the horizon of the end of time. But let us take a calm look at the facts. Hitler lost because he failed to grasp the rules of the game, the volatile laws of history. It is impossible to build a national empire in global politics, primarily for demographic reasons. His defeat in the march on Moscow involved a confrontation between the military and geography: Wehrmacht soldiers faced enormous swathes of land inhabited by millions of people. This unexpected change in categories – an army fighting against geography and demographics – seems fundamental and ought to be kept in mind. The essence of the total war waged by planetary empires are shifts and relocations; Hitler waged war against civilians.

The war was won by empires that took as their principle planetary universalism: communist Russia and liberal America. Both learned a lesson from Hitler's defeat, accepting the fact that an empire, if it is to be stable, must tolerate smaller nations within its borders. The range of the conflict expands even further, and the nature of war changes completely, becoming a so-called cold war, shifting from the military plane to the economic and social plane. Expansion turns into export. The Soviets export a social revolution, investing money in communist parties all over the world, leading to one local flare-up after another; Americans, on the other hand, export mass-produced goods, flooding the entire planet with this mass of products. An important element of this expansion is the entertainment industry, whose virtual products serve as a vehicle for the American way of life, which in turn produces a demand for American goods. Thus powered, the wheel of supply and demand accelerates towards infinity, encompassing the entire planet, drawing in and consuming America's Asian and European allies until ultimate victory is achieved.

America won that war. The quality of life enjoyed by KGB officers and Soviet apparatchiks in the 1980s was much worse than that of their counterparts in the so-called West. Hence the bizarre revolution, the peculiar revolt which saw the secret police topple its own empire. This is the true irony of history: the KGB elites produced by the Soviet Union for its own defense ended up turning against it, just as the bourgeoisie, a product

of the feudal economy, once turned against feudalism in a dialectical move (the fact that the collapse of the Marxist regime can be explained using a stock Marxist diagnosis only magnifies the overall irony of history).

It is important that we have a clear understanding of the nature of America's victory. This was not a military triumph, but an ontological victory; the victor was the American way of life, the American way of being, which, at the end of the last century, appeared more attractive than all the competing alternatives. The rules of this victory now seem obvious; what matters more at this point are its costs. It turns out that America's victory was a Pyrrhic one, and that we are far from done paying the price for it. This success was built on an internal defeat, and another reversal is apparent in its form, one that happens to parallel the similar reversal observed in the foundations of the Soviet Union. Empires practice subjugation through liberation or, conversely, liberation through subjugation. The order of freedom and coercion are reversed at their very core.

Hitler wanted to make slaves of Slavs. Postnational or supranational empires enslave their own citizens. The ancient word *slave* is never actually used, of course; empires are inhabited by modern people. Propaganda in communist countries talks about the "liberation of people"; class enemies are sent to reeducation camps or treated in psychiatric hospitals, as animosity towards the system is madness, an activity that contradicts reason; law-abiding citizens meet with their case officers to expand their own class consciousness. In all of the above instances, violence takes the form of education, tearing into the depths of one's soul to sow the seeds of a new human form, the Soviet man. All of this takes place in the ghostly light of the end of time. A state that monitors its citizens with wiretaps and surveillance resembles a caricature of the Christian God, who sees all and watches over all; it is as if the prophecies of Hegel and Schelling about the realization of God in history had come to pass, but backwards, inverted into their own reversal. The Hegelian thesis about the "end of history" is, after all, another cliché of Marxist newspeak.

A parallel reversal takes place in the American man, but since we are speaking about the liberal world, one ruled by the invisible hand of the market, it seems more involuntary and spontaneous than Soviet manipulation. American expansion, as I mentioned previously, powers the autotelic wheel of supply and demand, thus leading to an economic boom, an explosion that is significantly more effective than the detonation of a thousand atomic bombs. But to expand production and increase consumption, Americans must reduce themselves, their own citizens, to some semi-animalistic or para-animalistic form of life, giving rise to a new form of bio-existence: the consumer. Consumption isn't an animalistic behavior (animals feed), but neither is it a human one (humans eat). The consumer unnecessarily consumes products – he is essentially a soldier on the front lines of an ontological war; what matters is movement, turnover in business, enlarging one's own form of existence.

The ontology of the consumer finds its most apparent manifestation in the disposable objects that populate his existential environment. This category of things is no longer limited to packaging or packaging-objects, such as the now-symbolic Coca-Cola can. In a consumer economy, it is not cost-effective to repair malfunctioning household appliances; for this economy to persist, for this self-perpetuating movement to continue, it is preferable that the consumer purchase and consume some new product. Mass production

thus becomes a way to manufacture temporary objects. Herein lies the source of the all-encompassing sense of non-reality that fills the inhabitant of this bizarre realm. Washing machines, tape recorders, cellular phones, and automobiles are all internally flawed in the same way; objects lack permanence; everything is ephemeral. Production is geared towards further production. Consumption leads to further consumption. Buy, destroy, and buy again. The perpetual return of the same. Endless temporariness.

What initially strikes us as a customary or economic phenomenon is essentially a way of experiencing time. Animals live in the moment. Humans know that they will die and can bind their future and past into a meaningful whole. Consumers live in the moment, a moment that expands into eternity. The past and future contract and disappear, sucked up and swallowed by the all-encompassing present. This is precisely the purpose of consumer loans, which have become a ubiquitous form of the circulation of money in liberal economies, and which involve living at the expense of the future, as if the future did not exist. The same is true of the mortgage – the purchase of an apartment at the expense of the future – which can additionally be considered a radical attempt to spatialize and immobilize time. However, this new form of experiencing time manifests itself most primevally (i.e., in its bio-existential form) in the new models of youth and old age that have recently emerged in Western civilization. Old age has come to be regarded as unnatural, a disease; at the same time, youth has become the natural state of man, though, as an ephemeral state by its very nature, it leads to nothing, but rather finds a purpose in itself. Today's television audiences watch hosts in their fifties dress like teenagers and behave like teenagers.

This figure is based on a profound change in the purpose of life, i.e. – ultimately – a change in the purpose of change; life, after all, is constant change, *metabole*. In the consumerist reality, there is no bio-cultural mechanism, no existential figure or accumulation of experiences. When everything is ephemeral, nothing is preserved. The past disappears. Life itself becomes a disposable object.

The liberal ideologues of the 1990s spoke about the “end of history,” repeating, in an unpleasant echo, the Soviet slogans of the past. But once again, this end assumed a grotesque form. Hegel saw the end of history as the ultimate whole, the absolute synthesis. The liberal “end of history,” on the other hand, involves the collapse of the order of time, in which one of its parts (the present) breaks out of the whole or replaces the whole. This grotesque and lame universality mumbles at us today in Basic English, a new global language that, in this role, has superseded Latin, the universal language of the Middle Ages, and French, the universal language of the Enlightenment. Russian traditionalists once believed that the Soviet Union had nothing to do with the Russian spirit; as if communist expansion, deadly to Russia itself, had somehow torn out its national essence. It is hard to escape the impression that something similar has happened to America and England. A cursory glance at English language textbooks and their evolution over the past half century reveals that they have been losing – or have been washed clean of – the features of American and English national cultures. And if imperialism has a linguistic form, then it becomes clear why there exists a dogmatic prohibition against using the concept of the nation, which was our point of departure here. In its unhindered expansion, every empire creates its own dogmas and establishes its own particular imperial dogmatics.

But this reality is not permanent, and its impermanence – its internal instability – was first revealed in the crisis that ushered in the new millennium. Mortgages became unaffordable. America and Europe, and with them the rest of the world, collapsed into an economic depression, as if time, which they had attempted to cheat, was undermining the stability and equilibrium of Western societies. There was another scam that failed: war without death. Soldier-consumers don't want to die. Under these circumstances, the generals' primary concern is protecting the lives of their troops, a goal that requires enormous technical resources; this, in turn, makes wars too expensive. Even when won, they turn into a financial defeat. The peculiar victories in Iraq and Afghanistan, victories that were or turned into defeats, undermine the power of the global empire. The rising tension is beginning to tear apart the planetary order. In this situation, the suspicion that imperial orders are by nature unstable is not unfounded. Speaking in philosophical terms and transferring the problem into the realm of the abstract (in keeping with the movement of reality itself): there is a justified suspicion that a good concept of world history does not exist. Every such concept involves the substitution of a general concept with some particular reality, the elevation of some particle of existence, be it social struggle (communists) or economic growth (liberals), to the level of the universal. Sooner or later, a concept of world history devised in this manner must break down and collapse.

3.

From this perspective, in the face of planetary instability, the new meaning of the concept of the nation I presented above becomes clear, as does the necessity to choose Polishness. Considering the chaos we face, we can be confident in saying that we will not exist without Poland. If we lose our past and future, our life will collapse in on itself in an illusion of post-historical timelessness – a real illusion, an actual specter. We ourselves will become slaves to forms that are foreign to us and which we do not control; forms that cannot be harnessed, as they are foreign to themselves and have no control over themselves as they turn into their own opposites.

Choosing the nation means choosing finiteness over infinity. All of the totalitarian crimes and planetary catastrophes of the past century entailed attempts to enclose infinity in a finite form. That is precisely the ontological purpose of every instance of imperialism. It is only through the acceptance of our finiteness, Aristotle teaches us, that man can be happy. This we must find in ourselves, embracing the finiteness of our own lives and thus discovering in ourselves (by relying on ourselves) our own existential sovereignty, our existential independence, *autarkeia*.

By choosing the nation we choose time, a historical order, the succession of generations, from which emerges the figure of continuity, the only permanent form available to us here; the only stability we have is in the permanence of time. It is a choice of finiteness in two meanings of the word. I choose finiteness, a complete form, in opposition to the global magma, the planetary formlessness; at the same time, I also choose my own existence in time between those who were here before me and those who will come after me; I choose a finite existence that occurs between their finite existences, in the permanence that is the history of a nation.

By choosing Polishness we also choose freedom, which – as was indirectly suggested above – is only possible in time. Time is the condition of free choice because we always choose between future possibilities based on past experiences. A person who lacks a future and a past loses control over his own life and transforms into some enslaved of semi-animalistic life form.

Choosing this freedom means choosing a concrete form. This freedom, this existential sovereignty, was the meaning of the Crown upon which the Holy Kingdom of Poland stood. It was divided up among the nation of noblemen during the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania, and, following the Kościuszko Uprising, transferred to all Poles. Each of us thus carries that Kingdom within us. To be a Pole means to be a free man, the master and commander of one's own self. The gift is all the more precious in that it has been attested by blood and death. Freedom looks back upon us from the faces of our national saints and martyrs: Karol Levittoux, Emanuel Szafarczyk, and Jan Rodowicz-Anoda.

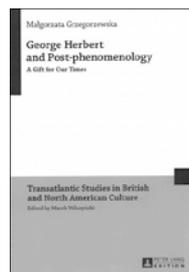
Our choice of Polishness is not directed against any other nation – this bears repeating – but against the planetary magma, against global chaos. As we look around, we see other forms of freedom, but they are particularistic and separate. This is because freedom is never general in nature: each concept of it is always grounded in some particularistic act. We Poles have the Golden Liberties of the nobility, while Czechs have the Hussite Wars, and the Ukrainians – the memory of the free Cossacks; the Polish Crown has always been accompanied by the Crown of Saint Stephen I, Mindaugas, and Demetrius Zvonimir. Their presence is our fortune. Just as a free man needs others to accompany him in his freedom – one cannot be free among slaves – so free nations need each other in order to be free.

Thus the Polish form is our obligation. When we speak of a shape existing in time, it is this form that we ultimately refer to. The Polish form is more than just sentimental shapes, aristocratic manors, and bucolic landscapes, no matter how dear they may be to us. This form is the shape of time, encompassing our past and future experiences. Poles, contrary to what we hear on television, need poets to establish the formal foundations of their individual and untranslatable existence, as well as historians to describe this temporal existence and philosophers to explain it. This is our current obligation, our duty towards the Polish form, which has existed and will continue to exist.

Grzegorz Czemieli

GEORGE HERBERT AND THE CHURCH ECOLOGICAL

[Małgorzata Grzegorzewska, *George Herbert and Post-phenomenology: A Gift for Our Times* (Frankfurt am Mein: Peter Lang, 2016)]



When Sir Francis Drake returned to the shores of England on 26 September 1580 after completing the first nautical circumnavigation of the earth led by a single navigator, one of the first things he did was write a letter to Elizabeth I, announcing his homecoming from an expedition she sent him on. Initially, when he set sail in 1577, there was no clear idea as to the exact purpose of his endeavour. “To explore? To trade? To make a profit?” It baffled everyone involved. Upon arriving at Richmond Palace, he was quite anxious as to how the Queen might receive him. The Spanish ambassador Don Bernardino de Mendoza, for instance, was pressing her to punish the “robber.” However, Drake was convinced that he still had the upper hand. After all, he had some convincing arguments:

The diamonds. The crown of emeralds which, no doubt, some smith on the galleon had fashioned out of the crucifix stolen from the *Grand Captain of the South* off Valparaiso all those months ago. Gold ducats which streamed through the fingers of the acquisitive lady, painted, bewigged, brocaded, when he unlocked the chests (...). And a great map, decorated in glowing

¹ G.M. Thomson, *Sir Francis Drake* (London: André Deutsch, 1988), 103.

colours and showing where the ship had touched as she crawled across the wrinkled surface of the ocean.²

It sufficed. The captain was pardoned. More so, in several years he was to become the vice admiral of the English fleet, leading it against the Spanish Armada. His brilliant career as a naval officer continued until his death in 1596, despite suffering some terrible losses at the hands of the Spanish.

In 1593, when Drake was elected as member of the parliament for the third time, and London was fighting off a terrible plague which wiped off some 15,000 people, far away from the great politics and military campaigns, the provincial Welsh town of Montgomery welcomed a new citizen, George Herbert. Born as the seventh child of Richard and Magdalene Herbert, he would also leave his mark in history, albeit as another kind of navigator. His own pilgrimage to the ends of the world, conducted in the service of an altogether different sovereign, led him not across distant oceans, but rather to such places as the “cave of Desperation” and “fancy’s meadow,” finally leaving him “robb’d of all my gold” at a “lake of brackish waters on the ground.”³

What allows to juxtapose the perilous voyages of a seafaring “Queen’s pirate”⁴ and a “country parson’s”⁵ poetic excursions into the realm of the spiritual? Professor Małgorzata Grzegorzewska’s recent work titled *George Herbert and Post-phenomenology. A Gift for Our Times* (Peter Lang, 2016)⁶ develops a novel reading of the poet’s only collection of verse in English – *The Temple* (1633), published in the same year when he died of consumption. Her study of Herbert’s cycle offers a consistent interpretation along theological and phenomenological lines, revealing a “spatial design” – identified in the Coda as characterizing the sequence’s penultimate poem “The Church Militant” but attributable to the entire collection – which consists in “moving constantly westward” whereby “the Church and its ominously persistent follower, Sin, circumnavigate the earth” (229). Unlike Drake’s voyage, however, which wound back at Rame Head, a “poet’s work cannot reach completion” (230). The circle of the poetic “Circumnavigation of the Word” cannot ever close in on itself because it would thus annihilate a crucial difference, or distance, which secures an alterity, or otherness that reveals itself in the form of “the givenness of grace, love and language” (228). The disclosing of that givenness is considered by Grzegorzewska to be “the essential lesson of *The Temple*” (228).

When Drake completed his run around the globe, the only thing that changed was the name of his ship: no longer *Pelican* but *Golden Hind*. Its captain, nevertheless, did not open up within himself a space where alterity could show through, facilitating dialogue and cultivating hospitality. In contrast to this, the goal of Herbert’s circumnavigation

² Ibid., 153. The Queen’s total profit from Drake’s voyage is estimated to be “more than the total of Exchequer receipts for a year (...) by any reckoning, a great deal of money” (156).

³ G. Herbert, “The Pilgrimage,” *The Complete English Works*, ed. and intro. A. Pasternak Slater (London: David Campbell Publishers, 1995), 138-139. Hereinafter abbreviated as *CEW*.

⁴ See: H. Kelsey, *Sir Francis Drake: The Queen’s Pirate* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2000).

⁵ *The Country Parson, His Character, and Rule of Holy Life* is the title of a prose work in which Herbert “set down the form and character of a true pastor” so that he “may have a mark to aim at” (*CEW* 196).

⁶ Hereinafter referred to only using page numbers.

is not to traverse the world but Word, revealing “the originary givenness of life, poetry and prayer” (53). Consequently, the poet-priest deals in a different kind of geography, sketching not a network of navigable routes, trading outposts and strategic straits, but rather drawing “a map of the constellations of stars” (15) that figure on the firmament of moral responsibility to life. In this sense, the political, scientific and mercantile cartography of Drake is supplemented with an ethical dimension attentive to the non-human ground from which humanity emerges. His task is “to provide in his poetry space for the voice of another, and then let his voice call, entice, and seduce the speaker and the reader alike” (23). This eternal Guest “denies permanent sameness” (24), i.e. a convenient, stable self-transparent identity; rather, it “denotes the pure given and pure hospitality” (26). Acknowledging it becomes for Herbert a task as arduous and demanding as tracing a safe route around Tierra del Fuego.

The cartographic metaphor situates Herbert at an important spot in history. As David Livingstone put it, the 16th and 17th century geography was a nexus of ideas, which “cannot be depicted in isolation from the rich intellectual and social contexts (...) [including] such important cognitive and social movements as hermeticism, Reformation theology, Puritan social policy, overseas expansionism, the art of map making, and ethnographic theory (...) in which a diverse range of geographies were forged.”⁷ During Herbert’s early life, two major figures emerged in England, advancing a new scientific and entrepreneurial programme: Richard Hakluyt (ca. 1552-1616) and Walter Raleigh (1554-1518), in whose legacy “we find geographical knowledge deeply implicated in a host of scientific, religious, patriotic, social and economic projects.”⁸ However, catalysed by the Scientific Revolution, the geography that emerged from this era solidified and later ossified during the Enlightenment within boundaries developed by René Descartes and Francis Bacon.

Both of them were Herbert’s contemporaries and forged hugely influential scientific programmes characterised by dualism and representationism in the case of Descartes, and a vision of humanity’s complete dominance over nature in Bacon. While this fostered a rapid growth of the natural sciences, the mechanistic views of the said philosophers reduced nature to a mere object. As a result, “this purely quantitative understanding of the order of nature displayed in Descartes’s map of the universe came to dominate modern Western philosophy and science, completely obliterating the religious and qualitative one (...) [as] Earth and Heaven lost all metaphysical and cosmological sense.”⁹ What George Herbert offers with regard to this in the light of Grzegorzewska’s interpretation is an alternative mapping of the world, one that does involve reductionism, or rests on a mechanistic approach. It does not situate humanity *outside* the world but *inside* it. By acknowledging a source givenness of life, *The Temple* puts poetry at the service of a “loving attention to immanent divinity”; moreover, instead of “struggling to overcome a loss, or restore a wholeness,” the poems discussed in the book fathom the inexplicable totality without claiming to be able to scrutinize it, against the “Cartesian paradigm of the

⁷ D.N. Livingstone, *The Geographical Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 100-101.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁹ V. Virga, *Cartographia: Mapping Civilizations* (New York: Hachette, 2008), 149.

knowing, naming and fully autonomous subject inherent in the concept of the lyrical ‘I’” (47). From this perspective, it becomes clearer why Herbert’s poetic project needs to locate alterity at the heart of the solid, self-reliant *ego cogito*. What is at stake here is the creation of a different geography: a reimagined ecology of humanity and the world, or poetry and Word. As Grzegorzewska puts it succinctly in the third chapter, “in Herbert’s poetry the ‘gifted’ supersedes the ‘lyrical subject’” (95), which is thus identified not as a self-standing unity but a dialogic subject born in response to the anonymous call. That call is silent and by virtue of not coming into being itself, it allows one to be. In the language of Jean-Luc Marion, whose philosophy informs the fundamental tenets of the reviewed study, the subject is inverted: not self-creating but *dativo*, i.e. passive, brought to being by the said anonymous call. The said distance or difference, identified as that which does not allow a purely mathematical self-closure in mechanistic circumnavigation, needs to be ascertained in order to acknowledge that call within oneself.

Consequently, just like one’s subjectivity cannot be seen as self-evident, and world cannot be taken *wholly* as Drake’s mechanistically inclined nautical fantasy might suggest, God cannot be made into an object (105). In an interesting turn of phrase, Grzegorzewska points out that anyone who attempts to do so may be found guilty of sinful pride, pertinently likened to Satanic solitude. This position would be marred by a self-transparency that does not allow any distance *within* the person, thus making one both disconnected from the world and unable to register the gift of life’s givenness, precluding an ethical opening up of oneself to otherness (106).

These questions are specifically ecological, insofar as “what we now call ‘ecological’ issues coincided with so remarkable a flowering of poetry that is often called the golden age of English verse [in the 17th century].”¹⁰ What is at stake in current ecological discourse is how to effectively mobilize the counter-mechanistic positions that are also discernible in works produced by the so-called metaphysical poets from the said period. McColley goes on to argue that these writers, faced with rapid geographical, scientific, economic and theological advances, struggled to find means of “weaving the fabric of language in ways that enable the mind and the senses to perceive the wovenness of the natural world.”¹¹

Inasmuch as one of the crucial tenets of George Herbert’s work is – according to Stanisław Barańczak – to reflect the Creation’s harmony in artistic form,¹² Grzegorzewska seems to justifiably emphasize *The Temple’s* intricate structure and spatial design. Throughout the book, her analyses seek to consider form and content together, without erecting barriers separating the poem, the world, and the poet. By utilizing formal poetics, semantics and even elements of phonosemantics, she makes a convincing case for the “wovenness” of Herbert’s poetic language (“I weave myself into the sense,” he claims himself [182]), which is identifiable on all levels of the collection: from its structure and the patterning of the poems, to the most delicate turns of phrase and biblical allusions. In *The Temple*, no poem seems to exist independently of the entire sequence (15), forming a complex ecology, or assemblage, which resonates with life only insofar as the entire

¹⁰ D.K. McColley, *Poetry and Ecology in the Age of Milton and Marvell* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² S. Barańczak, translator’s introduction to: George Herbert, *66 Wierszy* [66 Poems] (Kraków: Znak, 1997), 7.

architectural structure allows its source givenness to echo and be made audible. By doing this, Herbert's temple offers an image of the world where nothing exists in separation from the generative forces that enliven matter and make it a thriving ecology. As McColley puts it, "a living earth needs a living language (...) that represents connected beings in responsive and connected words (...) the kind of language I call 'ecological' (...) that counters allegorical, mechanical, instrumental, and commercial appropriation."¹³ A case in point is the poem "Vanity I," in which the poet scorns the Astronomer, the Diver, and the Chymick, who are all addressed in the final lines: "thou searchest round / To find out *death*, but missest *life* at hand" (*CEW* 83, emphasis in the original). Whoever aims to reduce the earth, to circumscribe it within a limited domain, can be deemed guilty of vanity, which overlooks the fundamental indebtedness of all life to an invisible ground that cannot be revealed in commercial enterprises or scientific programmes. For this to emerge it is necessary not just to speak out in organized form but to listen closely. Thus, listening becomes as important as expressing, and Herbert's poems invite other voices to inhabit its space by listening closely (165), which amounts to formulating a "project of hospitable listening" (187). In a defence of poetry titled *Ecopoetics*, Julia Fiedorczuk and Gerardo Beltrán quote Forrest Gander's claim "I don't think poets tell things at all (...) poetry listens" and posit that "[e]cologically oriented poetry is not necessarily a celebration – either of non-human nature, or of human dependence on it. Rather, it is a practice of listening."¹⁴ In line with ecocriticism, Grzegorzewska aptly points out that the traditional pastoral idyll is in many cases a fake set-design, paradoxically unnatural (180); Herbert's poetry – although displaying a "National Geographic quality – a curious delight in natural history"¹⁵ – moves away from the "artificiality of a fabled Arcadian false Paradise to the living waters of divine Logos" (181). Instead of fashioning a pleasing image of a "natural retreat" where one would be granted blissful oblivion, Herbert's nature is place where life meets death, while humans engage with their bodily nature and other representatives of the animate and inanimate world, learning both how to recognize the earth's intricate interdependence ("all thy lights combine"; "The H. Scriptures II," *CEW* 56) and how to develop a sense of hospitality ("Where is all there all should be"; "The Invitation," *CEW* 176). However, only when we understand that human life occurs *in* the hospitality of the given, i.e. the gift of life, that we can begin developing means of being hospitable in the sense of welcoming the "Word made flesh" and prioritizing modes of inhabiting that favour sustainability and responsibility. Likewise, poetic creativity can be no longer viewed as creation *ex nihilo*, but entails serious engagement with the given. Grzegorzewska quotes another "defence of poetry" – one advanced by Philip Sidney – to make this point: poetry, according to the author of *Astrophel and Stella*, is a gift rather than art. Herbert's work can be viewed as stemming from and developing this position, for he exchanges inspiration for vulnerability (198), and argues for "the ultimate unity of the Giver, the gift and the givee"¹⁶ (88), which makes the site of this encounter, i.e. the human body, both a subject and an object (89). If we obliterate this long-entrenched dualism, it becomes clear

¹³ McColley, *Poetry and Ecology in the Age of Milton and Marvell*, 8-9.

¹⁴ J. Fiedorczuk, G. Beltrán, *Ecopoetics: An Ecological "Defence of Poetry"* (Warszawa: Biblioteka Iberyjska, 2015), 203.

¹⁵ A. Pasternak Slater, introduction to: *CEW*, xl.

that ecologically-minded poetic practice is not a God-like creation but a mode of being *in* and *with* the enfleshed world: “Herbert does not want to be a maker in the image and likeness of the divine Maker, but a servant of the Word” – one who inclines us to “focus on hospitality and divine generosity” (186).

Kate Rigby – who uses Martin Heidegger’s concept of enframing (*Das Gestell*) to show how the world can be set up as an idle resource – argues that:

[f]rom an ecocentric perspective, one which allows to earth, sky, and divinities a plurality of voices of their own, it is not so much that things need us so that they can be named; rather it is we who need to name so that we can share understanding about what we perceive and value, what we fear and desire, how we should live and how we should die.¹⁶

Given the etymology of the word “ecopoetics” – from the Greek roots *oikos* (home) and *poiesis* (making), it is possible to view Herbert’s poetic project as one aiming to create a home to dwell in, a Temple. It is a home built not only with bricks but also with the matter of language and the effort of close attention on our part. If successful, it stands as an echo chamber that makes audible – through its “fan-vaulting” (Pasternak Slater’s term [xxxviii]) – the “originating” speech, not the “secondary” one we are used to (Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s concepts), making poetry “a space of dialogue” and “echoes” (168). Poetry in the ecological sense becomes thus closely associated with geography – “earth-writing,” etymologically speaking – and performs its own “homecoming”: “a practice of homemaking, a way of engaging with other beings and entities with a heightened awareness of material and cosmic dimensions of being.”¹⁷

However, two kinds of “home” come into focus in Herbert’s work: bodily and spiritual. Unlike Stanley Fish, for example, who has identified the founding tension of his poems as one between doubt and certainty, Grzegorzewska finds a different, much more fundamental relation of intensity: the tension between immanence and transcendence. In her book, this tension is formulated in the following terms: “Henry’s emphasis on radical immanence and immediacy, as opposed to Marion’s emphasis on radical transcendence and the distance of the divine” (136). On the one hand, Herbert’s poems are analysed from a bodily perspective, in which the corporeal “language of suffering” – i.e., a suffering that experiences itself in auto-affection – “brings to the fore both the radical immanence of the flesh (...) and the theological aspect of Christ’s Passion, which surpasses all human suffering” (68). In this sense, prayer begins in the body and at the “altar of earth” (Exodus 20:24-26; 55); after all, Grzegorzewska argues that Herbert shows us we cannot love without the body, which is humanity’s ultimate foundation. Even more so, human beings can be seen in this view as relying on non-human forces that weave the body into the world. Without flesh – the intersection that folds man into world – there is nothing, no outside. The fleshliness of the world, in turn, is brought forth from the “fleshliness of word,” stemming from “Word of Life that *precedes* the intelligible world” (135). Here, Henry is

¹⁶ K. Rigby, “Earth, World, Text: On the (Im)possibility of Ecopoiesis,” *New Literary History* 35, no. 3 (2004), 434.

¹⁷ Fiedorczuk, Beltrán, *Ecopoetics*, 273.

attempting to move beyond the Greek dualism (135), overcoming the binary opposition of subject and object by bringing together humanity and world in an “immanence of absolute Life” (147). This life, however, does not reveal itself directly to us, remaining invisible yet allowing things to emerge in the field of the visible. As a poet, Grzegorzewska concludes, Herbert can be seen as attempting to make the invisible discernible, acknowledging the radically non-human source of meaning – the Logos of the Gospels (134) as Henry calls it. Consequently, Herbert is portrayed as seeing human beings to be both “wrapped in flesh,” “tending to earth,” and endowed with a spiritual dimension (138), without being simultaneously broken in two: “the mind and the body are thus a perfect unity” (139). In this light, it seems no longer surprising that praise for the invisible background can be found in the form of “inspired prayer,” best exemplified by lark’s song: animal and angelic, devoid of human words and not composed by man (146). Poets could thus take inspiration from this as the bird’s song displays a crucial aspect of such poetics, in which the “focus on sensible and (...) vulnerable flesh (...) rather than the inert body, is a fundamentally *poetic* passage towards the Word which breathes life into the ‘clay,’ ‘mud,’ ‘dust’ of the earth” (148, emphasis in the original).

Henry’s position, however, cannot be easily reconciled with that of Marion or Levinas, who emphasize – respectively – the “oversaturated” gift of life and the call of the other as the founding principles of human subjectivity. In contrast to Henry’s immanent Life, these are transcendent means of constructing consciousness, unlike the auto-affecting immanent Life Henry identifies with Christ.¹⁸ In an interview with M. Huhl and J.-M. Brohm, Henry raises the question of the status of the Other in Levinas’s philosophical project, asking if it is the other, God, or the way in which one is touched by God. The key question here is whether we deal with the internal affection of suffering, or the external affection of calling. Herbert seems to sit right in the middle of this problem, underscoring *both* the bodily dimension of being, its fleshliness, and the divine invitation. Thus, being “enfleshed in human voice” poetry testifies to the “originary givenness of life” and “becomes inextricably connected with bodily experience: both joy and pain are felt in the sensible and living flesh, which is the only ‘site’ where a human being can respond to the call of Life” (53). Poetry as prayer is about opening oneself to divinity, to the larger whole, but nevertheless always beginning from the material body.

The tension between immanence and transcendence, or human body and universal Word, has been similarly captured in Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s *The Visible and the Invisible*, where he elaborates the concept of the flesh, utilized by Grzegorzewska, and the Chiasm. The Chiasm, a crisscrossing X, denotes the intersection of touching and being touched (e.g. as when hands are clasped in prayer; object and subject conflating), or more generally – the point where the self and the world intertwine. Meditating on the source of meaning, Merleau-Ponty locates it not just *inside* humans or *out in the world*, but at this exact meeting point. Gathering the themes of circumnavigation (or auto-affectation), and the invisible ground of flesh as an element (an element like water or air), he argues that:

¹⁸ See the interview with M. Huhl and J.-M. Brohm, *Przegląd Filozoficzno-Literacki* 34, no. 3 (2012): 170-171. Originally published in: *Prétentaine* 6 (1996): 27-43.

no locutor speaks without making himself in advance allocutary, *be it only for himself*; because with one sole gesture he *closes the circuit of his relation to himself* and that of his relation to the others and, with the same stroke, also sets himself up as *delocutary*, speech of which one speaks; he offers himself and offers every word to a universal Word.¹⁹

The universal Word could be viewed in Herbert's context as approximating Henry's Logos, which animates and creates itself, facilitating expression and sense. If we agree with Merleau-Ponty that "language is everything, since it is the voice of no one,"²⁰ then this could be reconciled with what Grzegorzewska calls an "intuitive grasp of reality which makes us part of that reality" (91). If in our expression we are simultaneously *both* subject and part of the world, as Merleau-Ponty has it, then Levinas is right that "the bodily gesture is not a nervous discharge, it is a celebration of the world, poetry" (91). In this sense, poetry is – as it emerges from the above quotations – a chiasmic "passage towards the Word" and an "offering to a universal Word."²¹ Poetry is thus the site where the human, the carnal, and the non-human, the Word, come together, which is made possible only by kenosis defined by Grzegorzewska as a "relinquishment of divine attributes by Christ Jesus in becoming human so as to become entirely receptive of God's will and experience suffering for the sake of all humankind" (204). Christ's emptying of himself could be read as the opening of the Chiasm and the condition for the emergence of life. Only an incarnated God could be the Word made flesh. By staging this problem in verse, Herbert "envisages a poetry that inhabits Word so entirely that it must abandon human eloquence" (222). Grzegorzewska reads *The Temple* precisely as a collection that tackles the kenosis and death of Word, attempting to follow this model by incarnating or enfleshing itself, and surrendering to the Word whose "originary givenness (...) comes before human words" (120). Unlike human words, it does not "represent" the world, but "actually brings it into being (...) and saves it" (207).

The question I would like to raise here is in what sense "kenotic speech" can be viewed as "the gift for our times" (230). How can poetry become the means for "saving the world"? The answer to this is not really elaborated on by Grzegorzewska, which is in my view the greatest disappointment regarding this otherwise perfectly consistent book. Positioned prominently in the very title, the question of "our times" is never addressed directly, though I would strongly argue that solutions to many of today's great problems can be found in the book in germinal form. The two interpretative strategies I would like to point out in this context are ecopoetics and geophilosophy, both of which have already provided cue points for the discussion above. The two also relate to the dimensions of creativity and commentary, respectively, as well as home-making and world-building. Both are also driven by metaphor, a key component of the metaphysicals' literary workshop and a Chiasm-like device that translates back and forth between worlds or ecologies. At

¹⁹ M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. C. Lefort, ed. A. Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern UP), 154 (italicized emphasis in the original, my emphasis in bold – G.CZ.).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 155.

²¹ The Chiasm, Merleau-Ponty argues, is that through which "we become the other and we become world." *Ibid.*, 160.

the same time, however, both pose specific problems that indicate places where George Herbert could be criticized. None of the two also fit his work perfectly, but in missing the mark slightly orient us to some of the nagging issues that could be rectified in our understanding of poetry, including its today's function and task, as well as the role of humanities in general.

Firstly, although Herbert wrenches the world from a merely reductionist and mechanistic image, he still places humanity atop the Creation, elevating us to the level of masters who rule unquestioned over the material world.²² When discussing the role of hand – standing for the body in general according to Grzegorzewska (82) – she points out that it can be seen as the “agent of civilization” which “allows man to hold sway over nature,” leaving “handprints” (84). Hands are capable both of the most laudable and appalling things. Though it is clearly argued that transforming one's language so as to approximate the kenotic Word would help develop a bodily ethics that could prevent our hands from becoming coffins (83), as is brilliantly put by Rilke, whom Grzegorzewska likes to quote almost as much as T.S. Eliot. To understand this idea, I would like to engage with eco-poetics, which champions a bodily ethics of respect and responsibility while extending loving care over the ecologies or assemblages we form with the world.

Secondly, eco-poetic “homemaking” is a work done in language, which demands that we make new metaphors. Herbert seems to have a good intuition in this respect, which tells him to shun the conventions of courtly love and pastoral poetry as inadequate to the problems facing his world (and ours, too, we might add). However, it remains uncertain what his “plain style” would be like. In fact, his own poetic language is not plain at all, displaying a dizzying spectrum of stanzaic and metrical variation, or employing a plethora of criss-crossing references and allusions. It is also definitely true that T.S. Eliot sensed a potential to put metaphor to fuller use in the 17th century before the ossification of scientific and artistic discourses in their impoverished, parcelled forms. Metaphor, keenly used with dazzling audacity in many metaphysical poems of the period, is the vehicle of change and becoming; it fashions styles of living by attentively turning to others “in so far as it translates one entity's entanglement with other entities.”²³ Thus, encountering the other within oneself demands forging metaphors in a “process of learning to live with others, and of coming to terms with the fact that so many various others make up what we think of as ‘ourselves’.”²⁴ Ultimately, this is linked to our readiness to adopt more responsible approaches to the environment, especially in the face of climate change, water shortage, extinction of bees and many other current environmental problems. In fact, as many proponents of eco-poetics underscore, a greater poetic sensibility could lead to a greater concern for broadly understood ecological issues.

²² In an insightful and highly critical essay titled “‘Why are we by all creatures waited on?’: Situating John Donne and George Herbert in Early Modern Ecological Discourse” (*Early English Studies* 3, <https://www.uta.edu/english/ees/fulltext/ralph3.html>), Laura Ralph lucidly demonstrates that Herbert, unlike Donne for example, firmly establishes mankind as the crowing of Creation, and never questions the order of being. “In short – she claims – Herbert's devotional subjectivity is one of answers, while Donne's is one of questions.”

²³ Fiedorczuk, Beltrán, *Ecopoetics*, 262-263.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 276.

Thirdly, the theme of hospitality resonates strongly not only with the above questions, but also with the one of refugee crisis and mass migrations, which is not likely to dissolve into thin air, and needs to be addressed with responsibility, demanding in many cases to reconsider the kinds of ethics we subscribe to. Herbert's sense of calling that entails a Levinasian "responsibility that empties the Ego of its imperialism and egotism" (78) offers an injunction to practice "kenotic" hospitality. Understanding that a certain amount of otherness is inherent to even the most monolithic cultural formations ought to be proliferated if we are to open ourselves more to the calling for help that makes us "infinitely responsible in the face of the Other" (78). It is the urgent task of the humanities today to engage those questions directly, providing support and education to promote attitudes of understanding, respect and hospitality. After all, Grzegorzewska views "this poetry as an expression of belief in Love which does not shun abandonment, does not turn away from death, does not fear fragmentation and does not demur at dealing with dust" (48). Today's crises demand that we accept this mode both in the theoretical and practical dimension.

To conclude, and simultaneously return to the geographical framework of circumnavigation proposed at the onset, it seems fitting to refer to the concept of geophilosophy, as developed by Nicola Masciandaro. Drawing from Deleuze and Guattari's original concept elaborated in *What is Philosophy?*, he proposes a different view of "encircling" earth – one that seeks to engage with earth, wrap it in loving "commentary" and develop a new mode of earth-writing producing not revenue but something he calls "spice." In a nutshell,

the geophilosopher is one who philosophically experiences rather than sees the earth, who passes through by remaining with it. Geophilosophical experience entails facing, more and more deeply, the fact of earth as the place of philosophy, and more profoundly, experiencing earth as facticity itself, the site of thought's passage to the absolute. Commentary, the space of deictic and anagoric understanding, encodes this experience in the form of spice.²⁵

Commentary, a universal genre, becomes in this account a mode of writing that aims to "sphericize" the text – to surround it from all sides with close attention. Invoking Levinas, Masciandaro argues that "commentary-as-spice" allows that which cannot be rendered thematic to emerge by way of "reduction of the said to the saying."²⁶ This entails an othering that circulates, revolves around the globe, wrapping it with care and giving it savour in a "poetic compulsion to *deform* the object of understanding precisely so as to understand it."²⁷ The result of such practice – spice – is a non-commercial product, which has been traditionally associated with mystical fruit, and also recurs in Herbert's poetry. In "The H. Scriptures I," he praises the Bible as "infinite sweetness" and "honey gain" (CEW 56). In "The Odour," Grzegorzewska argues, "sweet taste" refers to Christ's

²⁵ N. Masciandaro, "Becoming Spice: Commentary as Geophilosophy," *Collapse* VI (2010), 28.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 47; in short, to replace referential language with one that facilitates the revelation of otherness.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 49 (emphasis added). The "deformation" emphasizes the use of a "non-representational" (metaphorical) mode.

wounds, returning again in “The Banquet” (116). Moreover, “prophet’s words savour of sweet honey” (221) because he is tasting God. Finally, in a discussion of the possible reading of *The Temple* as a mystical wedding, Grzegorzewska points out to a passage where Herbert writes: “Spices come from the East; so did thy Spouse” (227). The pun “spice-spouse” – we learn – works well in the context, as the reference to “the flavours and fragrance of Indian spices chimes perfectly with all the poems in *The Temple* praising the sweetness of God” (228).

Perhaps this is also the kind of sweetness that was experienced by Teresa of Ávila, who emphasizes that “worldly joys (*spiritual sweetness*) have their source in our own nature and end in God.”²⁸ What she indicates is that contrary to “consolation,” which has its origin in God, “sweetness” is anchored in the carnal and yet it uplifts and initiates an ecstatic becoming in striving towards God. Herbert could be regarded as following a similar course, one that bridges immanence and transcendence, navigating a route leading from the former to the latter, underscoring fleshliness as the vehicle of cognition and wisdom. Certainly, as shown in *Rethinking Philosophy and Theology with Deleuze: A New Cartography* by Brent Adkins and Paul R. Hinlicky (London: Bloomsbury 2013), the tension between transcendence and immanence proves to be fertile ground for theological debates willing to renegotiate the relationship between the two without effectively supplanting one with the other.

When seen on the backdrop of such figures as St. Teresa, or philosophers of immanence like Spinoza, Herbert emerges as a thinker and artist sitting astride an important cleavage, which today can be viewed from a critical perspective and utilized to advance an important ethical project countering some of today’s civilizational maladies. Thus, Herbert’s position makes him an intellectual whose work could be revisited, yielding ripe fruit. His position vis-à-vis earth draws him close to Heidegger, who was so agitated by the image of earth seen from the orbit. The German philosopher expressed his worry that the planet shall be taken solely for a “reserve” material for consumption and utilization. However, he would rather consider it necessary for us to extend proper care (*Sorge*) over the globe. Similarly, Herbert refuses to reduce earth to stone-cold matter, and envelops it in a temple of words, which he erects at the middle-ground between enfleshed vulnerability and anonymous calling from beyond. He practices attention in surveying the home shared with all life, and attentively acknowledges it by constructing a monument in words – one that wraps earth in poetic hospitality, supplementing the cartographic grid with an immanence-rooted engagement we could call ecopoetic.

Indeed, as Grzegorzewska underlines, “kenosis” becomes the crucial concept here, as it denotes a becoming-human, or enfleshment, that entails becoming vulnerable. This is an important lesson that the humanities could teach us: the world is a complex ecology, where many paths criss-cross, therefore calling us to work hard on attuning our sensibilities to acknowledge our indebtedness to an immense depth of the non-human, an unfathomable assemblage of beings that cannot be fully subsumed under any reductionist or mechanistic logic. In this light, the figures of Incarnation and Passion come alive, expressing the tension

²⁸ Teresa of Ávila, *The Interior Castle* (1577, 1921; emphasis added) (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/tic/tic10.htm>), Chapter 1.

between the body and the world. As such, these concepts are endowed with a fullness that has been articulated, in English-language poetry, by writers like Gerard Manley Hopkins or Seamus Heaney. Ultimately, these concepts become themselves incarnated in our life and problems.

An ethics rooted in incarnated, bodily practice is a mode that Christianity has employed to performatively transform the body, much like monks and ascetics did in the Middle Ages. During the Renaissance, however, the geographical expansion necessitated an even broader perspective to answer the famous question posed by Spinoza: “What a body is capable of?” Although it may seem technical, the question implies a range of problems, the key one involving modalities of being in the world. What Herbert’s *The Temple* conveys – as Grzegorzewska demonstrates – is that our ethics and everyday practices need to be more ecological, i.e. in tune with the body, its immediate milieu, and the larger planetary forces. Only by shaping our values in relation to enfleshment can Herbert rise to the task of embracing earth in care and attention, revealing an ethically crucial connection between vulnerability and hospitality. This makes him a unique figure of his times, one that shines on the map of the era. Thus, he may be fruitfully reread from today’s perspective, yielding insights that could become “gifts for our time.”

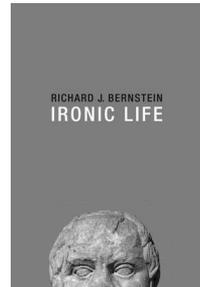
Though Grzegorzewska does ultimately deliver on her promise to explicate the epnymous “gift,” her book also proves that to keep the sweetness accessible, the humanities need to incessantly cocoon earth, finding out ever new ways to access the transforming powers of vulnerability, attentiveness and hospitality by developing metaphors and modes of speech that reveal the discussed givenness. Temples upon temples of ecological intellectual labour are necessary to attune the body to develop what Pope Francis has called “integral ecology,” which he understands as a road to “the full development of humanity” in an ethical relationship with nature, characterized by “broader vision” and “respect.”²⁹ If we are to follow Grzegorzewska’s reading of *The Temple* as “evidence of the kenosis of the Word and a testimony to the death of the Word, and also as an exercise in paying attention to the present moment” (48), it becomes necessary to follow the route outlined by Francis in his encyclical and promote a “Church ecological” whose militancy would consist in renouncing total control, recognizing human place in nature, and charting navigable, sustainable routes of life, “building a home that is always in the process of becoming: a radiant web of meaningful things.”³⁰ This last phrase perhaps best reflects Herbert’s project, which involves poetic praise, architectural ingenuity and intricacy, as well as responsible home-making conducted in the spirit of inclusiveness.

²⁹ Francis, “Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si’*. On Care for Our Common House” (http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf), 45, 118, 103 (respectively).

³⁰ Fiedorczuk, Beltrán, *Ecopoetics*, 278.

IRONY, LIBERALISM, AND RELIGION¹

[Richard J. Bernstein, *Ironic Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016)]



Philosophy, it is widely held, really only started with Socrates. Another thing that Socrates is famous for is his irony. In his latest book *Ironic Life*, Richard Bernstein argues that the two innovations go together. Both philosophy and irony are here taken in a very rich sense: philosophy, for Bernstein, ought not merely to include what he calls (following Alexander Nehamas) theoretical philosophy, whose aim is primarily to get things impersonally right, but also philosophy understood as an art of living, whose basic, very personal question Socrates poses in the *Republic*: how should one live? (325d). Bernstein worries about an imbalance between the two philosophical traditions in contemporary academic philosophy, and the central aim of his book is to convince us of the need and possibility to restore the balance. Irony is crucial to that end for Bernstein, richly understood as designating a Socratic way of life, and not merely a rhetorical figure of speech.

Bernstein begins by assessing Jonathan Lear's and Richard Rorty's respective takes on irony. In the second chapter, he focuses on the figure of Socrates and his irony as read through the works of Gregory Vlastos and Alexander Nehamas. The third chapter is in many ways the heart of the book as Bernstein puts the focus on Kierkegaard, whose understanding of Socrates and irony is crucial for Lear and Nehamas and to a lesser degree also for Rorty and Vlastos. Assessing their various readings of Kierkegaard (of Socrates), Bernstein develops his own views on irony. In the final chapter, he draws it all together, surveys once more what we learned from each of his interlocutors about irony, and builds it into a case for restoring the balance in contemporary philosophy between philosophy as impersonal inquiry and personal art. He brings the virtues to this project that he is most respected for: his ability to combine penetrating and passionate critique with the constant readiness to hold out a hand across disciplinary front-lines, to see what is good and valuable even in those interlocutors that he most disagrees with, all in the service of engaging issues of broad humanistic and civic importance.

Bernstein opens with a discussion of Lear's views on irony as presented in his Tanner lectures *A Case for Irony*. Lear argues that we constitute ourselves through the practical identities that we assume: being a husband, an employee, a citizen, a teacher,

¹ I would like to thank Ewa Atanassow and Shaoul Sussman for helpful discussion of an earlier draft.

etc. Such practical identities allow for *pretense* in the old, non-pejorative sense of “putting oneself forward as,” say, a teacher. There are certain norms and ideals embedded in these practical identities that I express in all the ways of putting myself forward as a teacher. The experience of a gap between the embedded aspirations and the ways in which I put myself forward might lead me to subject the way I live and express a practical identity to reflective criticism. It might, however, also lead to an ironic experience, which for Lear is something quite different. It is a particular kind of disruption and revision of a practical identity and a form of *erotic uncanniness*. First, uncanniness, because what was familiar (say, being a teacher) suddenly becomes strange and unfamiliar. I ask myself whether all that I am doing really has anything to do with teaching; even whether among all those who profess to teach there is a single real *teacher*? Irony grabs us, pulls the rug from under our feet and brings our activity to a halt. Secondly, there is an *erotic* aspect, in the Platonic sense: while it has suddenly become unclear to me what being a teacher really means, I experience a strong desire for knowing what it means and experience myself as committed to the practical identity of being a teacher. Irony is not, as it is sometimes thought, a form of lofty detachment but, to the contrary, a form of commitment across a breakdown in intelligibility.

Lear sees in Richard Rorty a post-modern aestheticist with a thin conception of irony, which does not adequately appreciate the erotic aspect of irony, the commitment to a practical identity and desire for its renewed intelligibility. Bernstein responds that Lear has a thin conception of Rorty. He defends his philosophical and personal friend with all his acumen drawing deeply on his thorough acquaintance not only with Rorty’s writing but also his biography. He points out how Rorty had a successful early career as analytic philosopher before he himself experienced an ironic disruption of this practical identity.² Rorty started to think that what is done in philosophy departments has little to do with what philosophy really is, but nevertheless remained committed to the idea of doing *philosophy*. He was also a highly engaged political progressive with strong ethical commitments throughout his life. Through his writing and his life, he made the case for the “liberal ironist,” who knows about the (historical, biographical, etc.) contingency of his most deeply held beliefs but who is nevertheless firmly committed to them. The liberal ironist should not be misconceived as an “anguished existentialist adolescent” but rather as an “unruffled pragmatist” (139).³ Bernstein deftly and fairly defends Rorty against the charge of not valuing commitment. It should be said though that this involves disentangling, with a lot of patience, an “outrageous Rorty” from a “reasonable Rorty” (with whom Bernstein mostly agrees, 121). This is a fair but extensive interpretive maneuver and perhaps Lear should not be blamed to harshly for seeing in Rorty the post-modern aestheticist, whose irony consists in uncommitted play with different “vocabularies.”

After the fulminant philosophical clash of the first chapter, the second one follows with more calm and less tension, an *andante* after the opening *allegro*. Bernstein takes a big step back in time and returns to the figure of Socrates as he prepares the development

² Lear contends at one point that “no philosopher who doesn’t experience such moments is worthy of the name” – J. Lear, *A Case for Irony* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011), 77.

³ All not further specified page numbers refer to the ebook edition of: R. J. Bernstein, *Ironic Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016).

of his own views on irony in the third chapter. The figure of Socrates is approached through Vlastos and his student Nehamas, again set up in an opposition, but this time in a more reconciliatory manner. Vlastos held that we can discern the historical Socrates in Plato's "early" writings with some help from Xenophon and Aristotle. He argues that Socrates' irony is best characterized as "complex irony" in which what is claimed is simultaneously true in one sense and false in another, unlike simply irony, where what is meant is simply the opposite of what is said. Socrates *lived* this kind of irony so skillfully that he thereby changed the meaning of the previously mostly pejorative term *eironeia* (meaning mostly "deceit") into the expression of "urbanity, elegance, and good taste" (167) that *ironia* came to mean for Cicero and Quintilian. Vlastos' main motivation is to defend Socrates against all charges of deceit.

Nehamas disagrees with Vlastos' claim that we can discern a historical Socrates in Plato's writing, and thinks Vlastos' project of solving the riddle of when and how exactly Socrates is ironic is doomed to failure. Taking his cues from Kierkegaard, he argues that Socrates' irony is most centrally his *silence*: Socrates, the Platonic character, is an inscrutable riddle to us because his historical model was inscrutable already to Plato. We will never know with certainty what he said (or did not say) with irony. Vlastos tries to make Socratic irony transparent in order to absolve him of the charge of deceit, but for Nehamas the binary distinction between truthfulness and lying is too crude to capture what is distinctive about Socrates. The point of Plato's writing – and his own irony – is to get us readers to identify with Socrates against his interlocutors, while also realizing that we could answer Socrates no better than them. Thereby the dialogues throw us back on ourselves and confront us with the need to think for ourselves through the questions that Socrates raises. Through Socrates' irony we are forced to eventually stop looking for the "real" Socrates' answers and face the challenge of coming up with our own.

Bernstein argues that Vlastos' concept of complex irony is itself more complex than Nehamas has it, but apart from that he agrees with Nehamas that a simple distinction between truthfulness and deceitfulness is too crude to morally capture Socrates, that the meaning of Socratic irony is "undecidable" (Derrida), and that Plato pushes us to realize this, to accept the challenge of thinking for ourselves, and to live accordingly. He highlights the agreement between Vlastos and Nehamas (and Lear and Rorty and himself) that Socrates' irony is about his entire personality and *way of living*, rather than just some figures of speech.

The third chapter is the book's center of gravity. Through a reading of Kierkegaard, who is crucial for Lear and Nehamas, and important for Rorty and Vlastos, irony is revealed to comprise a negative and a positive movement. Its first movement is a detachment from all traditional and conventional moral and political outlooks (or practical identities). Kierkegaard follows Hegel in his diagnosis that Athens was undergoing a "crisis of tradition" (246) when Socrates entered the world-historical stage. The sophists tried to guide thought and action by reference to an autonomous subject, rather than traditional authority. In them reflective consciousness was awakened – but also lulled to sleep again immediately, because they thought they could easily give reasons for everything. Socrates showed that they could not. For Hegel this entailed a positive counter-movement, but for Kierkegaard Socrates saw the critical project through by incarnating "infinite absolute

negativity”: infinite, because it is directed against all cultural actuality at a time, negative, because it has no positive alternative to offer, and absolute because “Socrates refuses to cheat” (256).

For Lear this is merely the view of the early Kierkegaard of *The Concept of Irony*. He emphasizes the late *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, in which Kierkegaard, under the pseudonym of Johannes Climacus, emphasizes the positive movement in irony (which Lear characterizes as its erotic aspect: the desire for a new intelligibility of the disrupted practical identity and the loyalty to it). Bernstein stresses the continuity: Kierkegaard never gave up on the radicalness of the early demand for negativity, yet already in the early work Kierkegaard also sees the need for a positive movement. Infinite absolute negativity might simply collapse into the dangerous nihilistic “pure irony” of the romantics. It is only in the later work that he finds his answer to the question how to distinguish destructive from liberating irony: “ethical passion.” Bernstein’s view of ethical passion is different from Lear’s. Just like Nehamas’ Plato is using the elusive and ironic Socrates to throw us back on our own individuality and force us to think through ethical questions for ourselves, Bernstein’s Kierkegaard plays with pseudonyms, in the last instance, to confront us with the impossibility of finding the real Kierkegaard and with the necessity of making for ourselves the existential ethical choices that terminate the negativity. That is what he indirectly communicates us. Bernstein’s Kierkegaard (and the reasonable Rorty’s) is an existentialist Kierkegaard for whom the question how to reconcile with a moral outlook requires an individual choice.

In the fourth and final chapter, Bernstein draws it all together. He reviews once again his agreements and disagreements with each of his four contemporary interlocutors, how they stand to each other, and eventually highlights the common point that all four plus himself are receptive to the subterranean tradition of philosophy as the art of living. In the end, Bernstein does not merely (or even primarily) argue that this tradition is a worthy and living option but *performatively shows* it in his interpretations, which combine attention to what philosophers say with an attention to what they do, and what they do by saying something. The interlocutors are treated not merely as name tags for bundles of theses but made to come alive as philosophical characters in dialogue. Bernstein does it particularly well in the case of Rorty, whom he knew extremely well, but the spirit that he misses in much of contemporary academic philosophy already pervades his readings of the others as well. In the end, a provocative dialogue of voices emerges from the book, which neither resolves into simple harmony nor ever collapses into silence, and Bernstein, like his Kierkegaard and like Nehamas’ Plato, invites the reader to draw from it their own lessons for a philosophical life.

The most interesting voice in this dialogue is that of Jonathan Lear. Bernstein appreciates a lot of his views but is also highly critical of others. I want to offer two suggestions here about the nature and scope of Lear’s and Rorty’s disagreement that I think Bernstein has not brought fully into view yet. The disagreement with Rorty’s “liberal ironist” might turn around not just different views on irony. They also have different views on the question whether there is such a thing as an essence of the self (a “logic of the soul,” in Lear’s terms), as Bernstein notes. Yet even beyond this, I think, that there are *political* differences and something that, for want of a better name, I suggest calling

theological differences. I do not hope to resolve any of these here (although I think it entirely possible that they could be resolved) but merely want to suggest some ways in which these differences could be brought out in more detail, as possible ways of continuing this conversation.

For a real understanding of Lear's political philosophy we have to wait, of course, until he writes one. Nevertheless, I think there are very good reasons from his work so far to believe that he is not a political liberal (where political liberalism is understood as the kind of liberalism that advocates state-neutrality between different conceptions of the good). Traditionally, liberals, from Kant to Rawls, have justified liberal political institutions and policies via some version of the idea of a social contract on the foundation of a certain conception of the individual as rational, stable, self-transparent, and autonomous – what critics often summarize under 'liberal atomist individualism'. Lear has spent all his life arguing against this conception of the psyche, drawing in original ways on Plato and Freud, on Aristotle and Kierkegaard. That alone does not support the claim that he is not a political liberal. After all, there are people like Rorty or, one of Lear's heroes, Bernard Williams who reject that conception of the psyche but endorse political liberalism. As Williams writes in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*: "Granted that human beings need to share a social world, is there anything to be known about their needs and their basic motivations that will show us what this world would best be? I doubt that there will turn out to be a very satisfying answer."⁴ Neither Rorty nor Williams thought that there was that kind of essence to our selves which would have supported the social-contract tradition, but neither thought that this kind of support was necessary. I do not think that such a 'Nietzschean liberalism' is a real option for Lear, because (a) he *does* think that there is a "logic of the soul" to be worked out and (b) that this logic of the soul is continuous with the logic of the city (in Plato's terms); that intrapsychic goods are dependent on interpsychic conditions (in more psychoanalytic terms). He explicitly defends Plato on this point against Williams.⁵ Of course, this is not to suggest that Lear, as a person and philosopher, is necessarily anti-liberal. He defends the compatibility of a Freudian view of the psyche with democracy.⁶ Democracy is perhaps not the central issue here. Carl Schmitt (yet another, different admirer of Kierkegaard) defended a form of "authoritarian mass democracy."⁷ The question is about *liberal* democracy. Perhaps a form of perfectionist liberalism, which is not neutral between different conceptions of the good, would be an option for someone like Lear.

Such disagreement, if it indeed exists, would shed light on a set of differences that I want to loosely summarize under the heading of *theological* differences – which in turn might further illuminate what political differences there are. Rorty strongly disliked the idea of any kind of superhuman and supernatural authority.⁸ Lear is not a religious thinker, Christian or other, but he is someone who takes religion very seriously and certainly not

⁴ B. Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 169.

⁵ J. Lear, "Inside and Outside the Republic," *Phronesis* XXXVII, no. 2 (1992).

⁶ J. Lear, *Open Minded – Working Out the Logic of the Soul* (Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1998), 16-32.

⁷ J. Habermas, "'The Political': The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology," *Religion in the Public Sphere*, ed. E. Mendieta & J. van Antwerpen (New York: Columbia UP, 2011), 19f.

⁸ R. J. Bernstein, *The Pragmatic Turn* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 200f.

one to write with the assumption that all his readers are secular liberals.⁹ It seems to me that he retains perhaps something of the phenomenology of a religious experience in his secular account of ironic experience, especially regarding its incommunicability, its spontaneity, and its challenge to the ordinary intelligibility of the world.

First, as Bernstein notes, Lear's irony seems to have something incommunicable about it: if you don't have an ear for it, you might never get it. Bernstein insightfully compares it to love and the power of music, which are also hard to explain to someone who has never personally experienced them. Similarly for religion: unless one grew up with it, the idea might not make much sense.¹⁰ Moreover, in the spontaneity with which it overcomes one and the radicalness with which it puts the world in doubt, the ironic experience shares some qualities with the experience of a miracle. Miracles, too, supposedly intrude into the normal order of things without warning, are puzzling for our ordinary conceptions of things, and might even powerfully disrupt their intelligibility (while maybe offering an opportunity for a new intelligibility). Liberalism was born from the experience of religious war and has perhaps never fully shed the distrust of such intense, private but potentially disruptive experiences. Bernstein's parallel with love is helpful but, in its ordinary forms, love is far more universally shared and thus far less suspect, and in its high-intensity border-line fanatic forms love (of a person, a cause, a country) becomes as suspect to liberals as religion. Bernstein's worries that Lear "doesn't face up to the hard issue as to how such an appeal [to ironic experience] can be abused" (102).

He also worries about making ironic experience a necessary condition for human excellence.¹¹ If someone achieves great excellence as a teacher without ever having an ironic experience, while a colleague has an ironic experience but does not achieve the same excellence, what reason is there to privilege one over the other? I believe we can read this as a politically liberal concern that the roads to human excellence should be many. Strong claims about necessary conditions, especially when they take the form of a not-so-common, intense but elusive private experience bring to mind the sometimes dire political consequences of certain religions' claims to exclusive knowledge of the way to save our souls.¹²

Bernstein is not at all opposed to critique and disruption of conventional moral and political views as long as the critique is communicable and pluralist. He is highly appreciative of how Lear characterizes the negative, critical movement of irony. For Lear, the value of the ironic experience is grounded in the fact that we are finite, erotic creatures who inhabit practical identities that are themselves vulnerable to disruption, not just through irony, but, for example, through cultural crises. Developing the capacity for irony is learning to live with the finitude of the concepts with which we understand ourselves, the world, and others. It is valuable not just because disruption gets us out of our

⁹ Cf. J. Lear, *Radical Hope – Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 2006), 113f.

¹⁰ Habermas, "'The Political'..," 61-2.

¹¹ He worries even more about making it a sufficient condition. I share this worry but would resist reading Lear as claiming that excellence at a practical identity, achieved through ironic experience, is a sufficient condition.

¹² It is interesting in this context that, as Lear reminds us, Socrates in his relentless questioning was on a mission from god (Lear, *A Case for Irony*, 32).

prejudiced conventional conceptions but also because it means learning how to find our feet again after such disruptions. It is not just about leaving the cave, but about achieving psychic integrity.¹³ It seems to me that this difference in emphasis, too, could be read as carrying (faint or not so faint) political connotations: between the negative, critical side and the positive, conservative side of irony.

Perhaps a great testing ground to further bring out the differences that I have loosely summarized under the umbrella term ‘theological’ would be to compare and contrast their readings of Kierkegaard, a post-metaphysical, but not post-religious thinker.¹⁴ Rorty and Nehamas are two kinds of Nietzscheans in their general philosophical outlook. Bernstein also wants to associate Rorty and Kierkegaard (288), but his and Rorty’s is a fairly secular, existentialist Kierkegaard. Bernstein wants to “bracket the issue of the relationship of ethics, religion, Christianity, and faith (which of course *is central* for Kierkegaard)” (281) and does not want to read the aesthetic, ethical, and religious spheres of existence as in some necessary sequence. I leave it to the Kierkegaard experts to decide upon these matters, but strongly suspect that some Christian readers, for example, will read Kierkegaard very differently – with Lear perhaps somewhere in between?

Thus, I think to better understand the differences between Lear and Rorty / Bernstein on the matter of irony we need to get the full spectrum of political and theological differences into view. I have suggested that a way of doing so would be to compare and contrast their respective stances towards liberalism and their readings of Kierkegaard. My hope is that this would allow us to continue and deepen the fascinating conversation that Richard Bernstein has begun for us.

¹³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 115-8.

¹⁴ J. Habermas, “How to Answer the Ethical Question,” *Judeities: Questions for Jacques Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 147.

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Vladimir Varava

PHILOSOPHY BORN FROM THE SPIRIT OF LITERATURE: THE EXPERIENCE OF RUSSIAN CULTURE

The relationship between literature and philosophy is one of the questions which cannot be solved unambiguously. Both literature and philosophy are creative living organisms which exist according to their own inner laws, characterized by eternal openness, dialogue and metaphysical questions. They often interact; in the Russian culture this interaction is particularly meaningful, since it is directly connected to the question of the status of Russian philosophy. The search for Russian philosophical, and hence cultural, identity, initiated by P. Chaadayev, is far from being complete. It is still an open question, heuristically powerful – and a nationally specific topic of Russian philosophy, not its weakness; Russian literature, in its genre specificity, is a uniquely valuable source of philosophical ideas. Both a tendency to reduce all philosophy to literature and attempts to separate them, thus demoting Russian philosophy to a secondary role, are to be dismissed. To understand what we believe to be the originality of Russian philosophy as one of the highest achievements of world philosophical thought, one has to apply the concept of the “idea-centered text,” characterised by an idea-centered plot – as opposed to the most common literary form, the event-driven one, the use of which in philosophy is impossible. This type of literature has its Biblical and Greek archetypal patterns and revolves around open, “accursed” questions, such as Job’s question, and is characterized by incompleteness, language experimentation and life of ideas. Being – Word – Idea: this is the way Russian philosophy goes in search of truth and meaning.

Natalia Rostova

THE CONCEPT OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL CHAOS IN TWO RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHICAL MANIFESTOS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Two philosophical manifestos, Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky’s “Red Snow” (1930) and Georgy Ivanov’s “The Atom Explodes” (1938), which place their heroes into the world without the Other and manifest that the primeval human condition is chaos which precedes reflection, consciousness and subjectivity, are a literary pair not to be discussed independently from one another. The Other provides ready meanings and context of perception and experience. In a world without the Other, a human being is confronted with an absence of original wholeness. He is fragmented into splinters of feelings and thoughts, facing the major question of a possibility of reintegration into an organic whole. Ivanov’s man is a defect in the world’s structure, an atom in the process of explosion, missing the Other, while Krzhizhanovsky’s man is an atom exploded, without the Other.

Piotr Nowak

THE ADVENTURES OF THE RUSSIAN SOUL

The greatest works of Russian literature and theological philosophy that took as their subject the throbs of the collective soul of the nation almost invariably stepped outside the boundaries of rationality, in the narrow sense of the word, due to their broad scope and the irreverence of their authors. To define the “Russian idea” requires more than just critical consideration; what is needed is an “ear,” or rather a nose. To better understand the “nature” of the frenetic chaos into which life casts Russians, we must first explain the peculiar nature of the Russian Raskol. It was precisely the matter of form, a manifestation of that which is godly, which turned out to be fundamental. Its modification – and this was sensed by everyone who was opposed to change – directly encroached upon the sacred by introducing ambiguity where everything was supposed to be clear. Similarly, under the reign of Ivan the Terrible, not only were people uncertain whether they were being ruled by a saint or by the blackest of demons; most importantly, they didn’t know whether they were still alive or whether they had long ago been buried alive. Raskol and its “political” complement in the form

of the *опричина* permanently warped and destabilized the structure of Russian statehood and customs, while, in the religious realm, abolishing the difference between good and evil that is fundamental to Christianity.

Janusz Dobieszewski

PUSHKIN THROUGH THE EYES OF VLADIMIR SOLOVYOV

It may be said that the birth of Alexander Pushkin in 1799 launches the nineteenth century in Russian culture, while with the death of Vladimir Solovyov in 1900, the nineteenth century comes to an end. Their work codified norms, measures and canons for the entire field of Russian poetry and artistic prose (Pushkin), as well as for the sphere of the philosophical, theological and social thought (Solovyov). The exceptional role of the nineteenth century in the development of Russian culture also contributed to their extraordinary position. Solovyov's original and compelling personality transformed the image of Pushkin which we encounter in his works into a singular, striking and at times even shocking figure. A closer look at this image will illuminate some important properties of Russian culture in its entirety. In this text we try, together with Solovyov, to define in detail the nature of creative genius and of the spiritual split characteristic of Pushkin.

Fedor Girenok

VVEDENSKY: THE POETRY OF CONSTRUCTIVE MISUNDERSTANDING

Russian philosophy of the first part of the 20th century found an unlikely refuge in the literature of late avant-garde, where the fundamental critique of reason and language was realized and the notion of life as the epitome of the absurd, and not a logical process, was established. Alexander Vvedensky's name became the embodiment of avant-garde philosophy. His poetic critique of reason, by showing the world as cohesive and time as fragmented, and thus unsubmitive to reason, is connected to his rejection of the Kantian a priori concepts of the mind. Life is not a logical process, it is absurd, and reason is not a tool for knowledge, but for suffering, for filling one's emptiness with hallucinations. What is absurdity? It is nonsense, illogicality. And this is the truth. Yet in Vvedensky's works absurdity is an object, a stone which reason throws at people. Or, rather, you throw it at yourself.

Marina Savel'eva

LEV SHESTOV AND THE SHAKESPEARE AUTHORSHIP QUESTION

Lev Shestov, while not a Shakespearean scholar, brought up the problem of the great playwright's creative origins in his work "Shakespeare and his Critic Brandes" and thus established a criterion for understanding Shakespeare's personality. According to Shestov, the specificity of individual character cannot be explained through the objective circumstances of one's milieu, yet that is exactly what Brandes had attempted. Another point of view is to assume that all the questions concerning Shakespeare's biography can probably be answered on the basis of his character, which means that the playwright was fanatically devoted to his poetic calling and regarded his work as an open book of his soul. However, Shestov did not accept this individual-oriented attitude, calling it a "simplified approach." He also did not believe that the unconscious mind has a crucial influence on the creative process. The philosopher came to the conclusion that everyday objective and incidental life played as crucial a role in the formative process of creative activity as individual talent. Shestov was not satisfied with the existence of biography as such, he was interested only in a biography that would reveal the mystery of creative process. The scholars unanimously agreed with the false conclusion of author's self-identification with his characters; the philosopher refuted this approach. As scholars refused to learn from Shakespeare, they overlooked what for Shestov was the essence of his work: the open question of how to restore the connection between the work of the spirit and everyday events.

Anastasia Gacheva

MILLENNIUM AND APOCATASTASIS IN RUSSIAN PHILOSOPHY BETWEEN THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY AND THE 1930S

Russian philosophy is characterized by what Nikolai Berdyaev called "eschatological anxiety." Reflections about history are closely connected to the question of the end of history. For Russian thinkers history is religious; its spiritual, metaphysical plane is as real as the positive facts it describes. The end of history depends on the qualities of history itself, whether the human race will stay on the anti-God, erroneous track, or will it turn to God and "accept Christ." History is a work of salvation, a field for theandric cooperation, and man – God's "co-worker" whose mission is to become a tool for exercising God's will in the world. Central is here the theme of universal salvation, which emerged already in the Russian Sainthood tradition. Additionally, during the 19th century, the millennium image started to emerge in literary works. The images of millennium and apocatastasis were opposed to other images from Revelation to John, which were, in contrast, connected to the idea of history's failure, expressed the idea of evil, or showed

the future division of people into the saved and the damned. Yet the indirect, open character of the prophecy was being stressed. The triumph of evil in history, manifested in the negative images of the Apocalypse, will only become reality if humankind refuses to reject the anti-God. Russian philosophers of the period discussed emphasized the fact that the notion of eternal hell destroys the concept of God's omnibenevolence and deprives existence and history of meaning; it is the invention of the vengeful and malicious human heart, contradicting the idea of complete unitotality.

Irena Księżopolska

THE SILENT MALICE OF (IN)ANIMATE OBJECTS: NABOKOV'S THINGS

Nabokov is famous for paying meticulous attention to material aspects of fictional reality. In this article we analyse his attitude to objects expressed in two texts: a novel "Mary" and a speech "Man and Things," and connect it to his biographical experience. In "Man and Things" Nabokov appears not only to exclude from the category of objects anything that may exist outside human activity (i.e., Nietzsche's spider, trees and moonlight), anything that belongs to nature, but he also rejects the very idea that man-made things may be perceived as inanimate. The language Nabokov employs subtly contradicts his ostensible thesis. Thus, while starting with the claim of patent anthropocentricity of objects, he is yet unable to deny them animate existence outside man's dominion. The subject of "Mary" is self-dehumanization; however, Nabokov's use of "inanimate" objects also becomes a study of the fabulous creatures that still exist outside the human gaze and, if ignored by humans, may sabotage the life of their unwitting creators. The novel is an experiment in covert observation of the furtive life of things. It is tempting to see "Man and Things" as Nabokov's attempt to put this disquieting subject to rest by denying the very idea of "objective" existence of objects, any existence outside human subjectivity and motivation.

Carl A.P. Ruck

SOMA AND THE GREEK MYSTERIES

It is argued that the Greeks knew little about Zoroaster or Zoroastrianism except as a fanciful construct. It is not true, nor is it likely that the Greeks had no curiosity about neighboring peoples with whom they had frequent contact. Central to the religion was a psychoactive sacrament called haoma. In this text the literary evidence of the Greeks' knowledge of haoma is delivered and practices of mushroom intoxication among Greeks are outlined in the context of other ancient fungal sacraments, which makes it possible to establish a link between these practices and the Greek mysteries. Then some mythological connections – bovines, Gorgon Medusa, Golden Fleece, the liver of Prometheus, Dioscouri, Kabeiroi and primordial ploughman – are analysed, before reaching the final conclusion concerning the meaning of mystery. Plato explicitly stated that what was experienced in the Mystery initiation was a face to face encounter with deity. As a Neoplatonist, the Christian Paul described his own mystical rapture in similar terms. As enacted in all scenarios for such Mysteries, the initiate experienced a symbolic death as a preparation for enhanced living. The entire evolution of civilized modes of culture and the analogous hybridizing of primitive toxic plants into the foodstuffs upon which life depends became a personal experience in the vast expanse of limitless time. Life henceforth was lived with confidence in its antecedents and its cosmic projection.

Peter Warnek

PLATONIC DISPLACEMENTS AND THE STRANGE APPEARANCE OF SOCRATES

Our topic is place in Plato. Yet addressing this topic with care requires that place be first of all thematized as such, that is, set down or situated in a certain way, given or allowed its proper place within its own region, such that, in accordance with his position, it may then be interrogated or inquired into. Addressing this topic would mean posing or placing questions within the limits of what has been set down or indicated in this way. By posing questions, such an address would seek to accomplish an exposition, even an *Erörterung*, that would delimit or demarcate its thematic concern, elaborating and clarifying how it shows itself within the region to which it properly belongs. Moreover, in asking about place "in Plato," we immediately run up against a basic difficulty, namely, that the question of place – that is, place as τόπος – is never once made explicit in the dialogues as a sustained thematic concern, neither in Plato nor by Plato. We find neither Socrates nor Timaeus, nor anyone else – certainly not Plato himself – ever attempting to give an exhaustive account of place as such, that is, of what it is itself as itself, its τί ἔστιν, despite Aristotle's well – known but puzzling claim to the contrary.

John Uebersax

DIVINUS PLATO: IS PLATO A RELIGIOUS FIGURE?

Should we view Plato not only as a philosopher, but also as a religious figure? This is not merely a theoretical question; it has important implications for how we read Plato and what we hope to learn from his works. If Plato is only a rational philosopher – an ancient

version of John Locke or Bertrand Russell – then we would expect his writings to contain logical arguments and theories, some correct and some incorrect, some interesting and illuminating and others perhaps less so. But if Plato is someone more than that – an inspired sage or prophet – we might hope to find in his works a more-than-ordinary wisdom and some material of spiritual importance. Certainly this is a question that modern philosophers and Plato scholars need to consider, since upon its answer depends our ability to properly understand his works. If Plato's motives are religious, and if our hermeneutical approach fails to account for that, not only will we fail to learn much of what Plato has to say, but we are also liable to misconstrue his meanings in general.

Edward P. Butler

PLOTINIAN HENADOLOGY

The Platonic doctrine of henads and monads, which forms the substance of Platonic "henology," begins with Plato's *Philebus* and reaches down to Damascius. Its effective termination with the end of the Academy at Athens comes about because of its intimate connection with the polytheism of ancient Platonism and that aspect of Platonic henology which renders it, when properly understood, inassimilable to monotheism, namely the combination of an absolutely negative One Itself as principle of individuation and the positivity of the ultimate individuals. These ultimate individuals are the Gods, because the Gods were grasped as primordial persons. Hence the first deployment of the terms "henad" and "monad" in the *Philebus*, albeit they are not distinguished in that dialogue, nevertheless arises in the context of a discussion that begins with Socrates' intention to distinguish between a "who," Aphrodite, and a "what," the concept of ἡδονή or pleasure (12b-c). The essential roots of the henad/monad distinction lie, I wish to argue, in the distinction between who and what as the basic kinds of unit, with the former, due to its primal simplicity, being designated "henad" as primary product of the One (ἓν), the principle of individuation. This, it seems, provides the only basis for recovering a unified sense for the doctrine as it evolved from the earliest Academy to the end of ancient Platonism, regardless of whether expressed in theological or mathematical terms, for in either case, it amounts to the distinction between ἐνιαῖος and ἡνωμένος units, of which the former are "henads" and the latter "monads."

Apostolos L. Pierris

PROLEGOMENA TO THE ENIGMA OF THE JOHANNINE PROLOGUE: AN INQUIRY INTO ANCIENT PHILOSOPHICAL SYNCRETISM

In *De civitate dei* Augustine testifies that the Johannine Prologue sparked considerable interest among some Neoplatonic philosophers. Correspondingly, Diogenes Laertius provides a quotation from Amelius, being a direct exegesis of the Logos-doctrine. The commentary is influenced mainly by Numenius and Plotinus, both Amelius' teachers. The incarnated Logos is interpreted in a Docetic fashion, namely as the Universal Soul, an incarnation of the eternal Soul-Logos. Amelius' speculation emerges from the long-lasting assimilation of Platonic and Stoic philosophies resulting in a syncretic physics based on Plato's *Timaeus*, the roots of which are already seen in the old Academy, particularly in Xenocrates' theory of two ultimate principles, the One and the Indefinite Dyad. Xenocrates stressed the extreme divinity and transcendence of the two as the source of an eternal generation of the Soul; he interpreted the latter as immanent, i.e. containing both the intelligible World of Ideas (Numbers) and living, intellecting psychic essence, the two being the aspects of the same reality, distinguishable in thought as subject and object of thinking. The very same processes of assimilation deeply affected Judaic thought, as seen in *Sapientia Salomonis* which problematizes a similar relation between the divine Wisdom and the Stoic universal Spirit. Therefore both Greek and Judaic thought tended to identify the instrument of creation with its substance, thus allowing for the duality of both incarnated and eternal Logos.

Jeff Love

ALEXANDRE KOJÈVE AND EMPTINESS

While Alexandre Kojève is best known for his supposedly eccentric commentary on Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, the range and depth of his investigations into a variety of fields remains little known, partly by his own intention, partly by dint of the success of the commentary. Among his other interests was Eastern philosophy. Kojève's interest in Buddhism and Daoism is distinguished by a singular concern for the negative: in-existence, non-identity, non-intention or "non-doing" and emptiness. The underlying assumption of course is that to think being requires that we be able to define not only what is but what is not: a wholly positive account of being is not attainable within its own terms. The end of history in complete self-replicating identity known from the commentary is a peculiar result if one takes Kojève's interest in Buddhism seriously. His fragment comparing Descartes and Buddha seems to indicate that Buddhism allows one to think the negative, not to eliminate it. This paper attempts to answer the question of how to understand the end of history in the light of these Buddhist interests. According to Kojève Hegelian philosophy is the Western myth of self-extinction. For Kojève the return to (human) nature is achieved by the negation of nature as being other than human. From such a point of depart he criticizes both Nagarjuna's liberated and Christian saint, as they continue to live. Neither can one truly speak of the negative. We are thus left with the final option: the "noble suicide."

Svetozar Minkov

THE FORTRESS OF FAITH, OR THE “METRICS” OF POWER: AN INTERPRETATION OF CHAPTER X OF MACHIAVELLI’S “THE PRINCE”

The role of chapter X of Machiavelli’s “The Prince” seems either obscure or trivial. The chapter adds a “consideration” about acquiring and maintaining a principality – primarily what one should do if one doesn’t have an adequate army, or enough money to put up a defensive fight – but its main point, i.e. that one should rely on one’s own arms, has already been made. The puzzling character of chapter X is also present in the relation of its text to its title, for the text does not say how one should measure the forces of all principalities. Yet the chapter proves crucial, a fulcrum; as I argue, it is the deepest analysis of morality and religious belief. I will suggest that since the vires (forces) of the titles are, at least in one metaphorical sense, the spirits of the people or even of humanity generally, including fear, hope, the belief in obligation, nobility, and shame, Machiavelli is indicating in this chapter what the most important consideration is in “measuring” and tapping a country’s strength – a psychological strength over whose control Machiavelli is competing with religion. The conclusion of the whole theologico-political meditation is that a prudent prince can keep his people safe and courageous during a siege by managing the same spirits, hope and fear, that Christianity relies on, but in this case for this world’s “life and for defense.” The Machiavellian prince must be resolutely focused on worldly strength and security, future benefits in his life, greater GDP, power, and glory.

Ivan Dimitrijević

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE KINGDOM AND THE SUSPENSION OF POLITICS

In the essay *The Work of Man* Giorgio Agamben stated that the political living being lacks a work of his own. He recalls Aristotle’s search for such a work, aimed at determining the highest human good and thus the centerpoint of episteme politike. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle eventually determines the ergon of man within the realm of bios, which is identified by Agamben as the foundation of biopolitics.

Yet, the determination of the political work in the sphere of bios rather represents a consequence of the great hope created by the Christian promise of the coming Kingdom of God and by the subsequent disappointment that followed the failure of its actualization. As the actualization of the promised perfect political community was irrelevant to any political activity, it allowed for total disregard of politics and worldly powers. The following failure of the actualization resulted in the permanent state of anomy, the death of politics. The Church and the Christian worldly authorities turned out to be necessary and tragic powers whose work is a salvation they cannot actualize, torn between the mundane Imperial authority and the anti-mundane Christian faith. As the authority of the Church is being denied in modernity, a new type of society emerges, replacing personal authority with the principles of the general will and individual freedom. The implication of the Christian anti-mundanity results in the emergence of the modern State which imitates the Kingdom and all its promises regarding bodily fulfillment.

Piotr Nowak

THE LIVING AGAINST THE DEAD

Miłosz is like the world and, just like the world, he has many secrets. One of them is his attitude to those he lost in the war – his colleagues, friends, peers. I want to tear a confession from him. In February 1965 his anthology of Polish poets appeared in America. Why was it never given proper attention in *Kultura* if Miłosz cooperated with the magazine? The answer can be found in his preface to the anthology. In it, Miłosz explains that the poems included are by poets who are living. His criterion is therefore rather peculiar: to publish poems only by those poets who managed to survive the war. Thus, the editor mobilizes the living against the dead. It appears, therefore, that the anthology was not made “for someone,” but “against someone” – against the poets who had been killed undeservedly or had died prematurely, against whom the editor might have held a grudge. Having lived through the occupation, yet not carried away by patriotic emotion, Miłosz might have felt a prick of conscience, a sense of guilt caused by the fact that he himself had not fulfilled – or only partially fulfilled – the duty which for those other poets was something obvious and self-explanatory.

Wawrzyniec Rymkiewicz

TIME AND NATION AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF WORLD HISTORY

The nation is a broad concept that describes a certain collective form. This form obviously encompasses more than just me, with all my existential particularity, but others as well. And yet what is more puzzling is that this is not an abstract concept nor a detached essence existing somewhere in the realm of pure ideas. The nation is a form immersed in historical time; moreover, it is a certain form of historical time. The others encompassed by this concept are more than just my contemporaries: they are also – or perhaps above all – the ones who were here before me and will come after me. No other concept of human community, such as humanity or society, is so profoundly bound to the concept of history.

The collapse of world history after the end of the cold war gave rise to a new form global form of bio-existence: the consumer. Consumption isn't an animalistic behavior (animals feed), but neither is it a human one (humans eat). Animals live in the moment. Humans know that they will die and can bind their future and past into a meaningful whole. Consumers live in the moment, a moment that expands into eternity. The past and future contract and disappear, sucked up and swallowed by the all-encompassing present. In the consumerist reality, there is no bio-cultural mechanism, no existential figure or accumulation of experiences.

Grzegorz Czerniel

GEORGE HERBERT AND THE CHURCH ECOLOGICAL

[Małgorzata Grzegorzewska, *George Herbert and Post-phenomenology: A Gift for Our Times* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2016)]

When seen against the backdrop of such figures as St. Teresa, or philosophers of immanence like Spinoza, Herbert emerges as a thinker sitting astride an important cleavage, which today can be viewed from a critical perspective and utilized to advance an important ethical project countering some of today's civilizational maladies. Thus, Herbert's position makes him an intellectual whose work could be revisited, yielding ripe fruit. His position vis-à-vis earth draws him close to Heidegger. He refuses to reduce earth to stone-cold matter, and envelops it in a temple of words, which he erects at the middle-ground between en fleshed vulnerability and anonymous calling from beyond. An important lesson that the humanities could teach us is that the world is a complex ecology, where many paths criss-cross, therefore calling us to work hard on attuning our sensibilities to acknowledge our indebtedness to an immense depth of the non-human. What Herbert's *The Temple* conveys – as Grzegorzewska demonstrates – is that our ethics and everyday practices need to be more ecological, i.e. in tune with the body, its immediate milieu, and the larger planetary forces. Only by shaping our values in relation to en fleshment can Herbert rise to the task of embracing earth in care and attention, revealing an ethically crucial connection between vulnerability and hospitality. This makes him a unique figure of his times, one that shines on the map of the era. Thus, he may be fruitfully reread from today's perspective, also in connection with the encyclical of Pope Francis.

David Kretz

IRONY, LIBERALISM, AND RELIGION

[Richard J. Bernstein, *Ironic Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016)]

Philosophy, it is widely held, really only started with Socrates. Another thing that Socrates is famous for is his irony. In his latest book *Ironic Life*, Richard Bernstein argues that the two innovations go together. Both philosophy and irony are here taken in a very rich sense: philosophy, for Bernstein, ought not merely to include what he calls (following Alexander Nehamas) theoretical philosophy, whose aim is primarily to get things impersonally right, but also philosophy understood as an art of living, whose basic, very personal question Socrates poses in the *Republic*: how should one live? Bernstein worries about an imbalance between the two philosophical traditions in contemporary academic philosophy, and the central aim of his book is to convince us of the need and possibility to restore the balance. For Bernstein the tool that can help perform the task is irony, richly understood as designating a Socratic way of life, and not merely as a rhetorical figure.

The philosophical quarterly *Kronos* was established in 2007 by scholars connected with the University of Warsaw and the University of Białystok. Metaphysics, the philosophy of politics, the philosophy of literature and religion, history of psychoanalysis comprise the thematic scope of the journal. The editors of the quarterly strive to familiarize the Polish reader with new translations and commentaries of classic works (Plato, Joachim of Fiore, Nicholas of Cusa, Shakespeare, Schelling, the Schlegel brothers, Heidegger and many others), as well as the work of contemporary philosophers.

The annual *Kronos Philosophical Journal* (in English) was established in 2012 as a companion edition to the quarterly, to supplement it, yet without repeating the content of the Polish edition. The papers presented in the annual might be of interest to the readers from outside Poland, allowing them to familiarize themselves with the dynamic thought of contemporary Polish authors, as well as entirely new topics, rarely discussed by English speaking authors. One of the issues published so far contained passages from previously unknown lectures by Leo Strauss on Aristotle; another issue was dedicated to the Russian phenomenologist Gustav Shpet. The current issue deals with complex interactions between philosophy and literature, and the upcoming one will be dedicated to the contemporary reception of Martin Heidegger's work.