Symposium

Time, Place, and Self in Interdisciplinary Narratives

The Twentieth Ecumenical Theological and Interdisciplinary Symposium

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Time, Place, and Self
in Interdisciplinary
Narratives

*The Twentieth Ecumenical Theological and
Interdisciplinary Symposium*

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Dr. Theodor Damian, the organizer of the symposium, welcomes the participants.

Dr. Vinton Thompson, President of the Metropolitan College of New York, greeting the event.

Dr. Vinton Thompson giving the opening address.

Theodor Damian, PhD,
organizer of the event

Vinton Thompson, PhD,
President of the Metropolitan
College of New York

Humphrey
Crookendale, JD,
Moderator

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Time and Transcendence: Ethical Values in Theological Perspective

> "If time had had leaves, what an autumn!"
> [Dacă timpul ar fi avut frunze, /Ce toamnă!]
> *Nichita Stanescu*

Definitions

Even though Albert Einstein said that time is an obstinate illusion,[1] other definitions place it in the domain of reality. According to Webster's Dictionary time is "a non-spatial continuum in which events occur in apparently irreversible succession from the past through the present to the future." It is "an interval separating two points on a continuum measured essentially by selecting a regularly occurring event."

Somehow, in similar terms, but leading in a different direction, theologian Dumitru Staniloae defines time "as a duration which is always interval, or the movement in the interval between two ends of a bridge"[2] Time is generally connected to the physical dimension of the universe, it is "an objective form of the material existence,[3] or, more metaphysically speaking, a dimension of existence, or existence itself. This last understanding underlines the ontological character of time. Eliminate the existent and there is no more time. Other philosophers speak of this character of time in a more explicative way. For instance, Robert J. Spitzer believes that time (just like space) is not a passive dimension but, as recently understood, "produces concrete effects on the emission and interaction of various forms of energy, which some philosophers call the 'ontological' status of time."[4]

The active dimension of time can be illustrated by the connection that some scientists see between it and the genome.

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"Time exists only because the genome exists," Alexandru Mironov writes,"the double spiral of the DNA, present in each cell of each observer [person], but also, probably, in all cells of all chlorophyll and protoplasm construction in the metagalaxy we live in."[5]

Moreover, time should not be considered as separate from space and maybe other dimensions of the universe. Celebrated Russian physicist Andrei Linde came up with the idea that the universe has not only two fundamental components: time and space, but also a third one: conscience.[6]

This idea leads directly to the theology of the 7th century thinker Maximus the Confessor according to whom everything in the created order has a certain type of rationality of its own, called in Greek *logoi,* and which is the logical deduction of the fact that, based on John's prologue to his Gospel, everything came into being at the intervention of the divine Logos. In Greek *logos* means both word and reason. This teaching is not far from that of Heraclitus of Ephesus who, five centuries before John, considered the Logos (a cosmic rational power for him) responsible for the movement of atoms (and change) in the universe and thus for the formation of the physical shapes and bodies. But if we speak of reason and conscience we come to the realm of rational beings, of persons. In this sense, from a theological perspective, according to D. Staniloae, time, like space, indicates an interpersonal relation and this is where the highest value of it can be found. Speaking from a horizontal point of view time distinguishes and unites us as well. It is the interval that links us and keeps us apart. We can reduce the interval, make it wider, or overcome it.[7] Speaking from a vertical point of view time connects us and the created order to the eternal God in a dynamic relationship[8] meant to bring man forever into the divine communion. In other words, time is the duration between God's offering and man's response.[9]

A totally different way in which one can explore the meaning of time is etymology. The word comes from the Latin *tempus.* Yet *tempus* comes from an ancient Greek, maybe Pelasgian, verb, *temno-tempo* which means to cut. To cut is to measure, but also to stop (as one is doing busy work) and look, see, understand, contemplate.[10] But *temno-tempo* can be also the etymon for *templum* and hence, contemplation. If *templum* then has this connotation: cut, stop, see, realize understand, that means basically that when you are in such a state, you are in a sacred place where you are supposed not

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only to cut, stop (busy work) in order to see (God) beyond appearances, but even to become a seer, -- and this is what contemplation essentially is – to become, in a sense, like God, the seer par excellence (in Greek, the word God, *Theos* comes from the verb *theastai*, to see). Hence God is the seer of everything and thus knows everything and has power over everything. According to distinguished historian and philosopher of religions, Mircea Eliade, while the temple, *templum* is a special symbol which represents the horizontal dimension of the universe, and the year is the temporal symbol which represents the vertical dimension of the universe, *templum,* however, also has a vertical dimension since it is the means and the way toward one's own transcendence.[11]

Contemplation then has a deep theological meaning having to do with moving from one type of existence, busy work, to a different one, from superficiality to the essence and depth of things, from the profane to the sacred, thus advancing one on the inner journey to God.

Eternity as Transcendence of Time

As A. von Heuer writes, there is a bit of eternity everywhere.[12] If time gives us a taste of the provisional, this implicitly signals that there is a taste of the eternal, too. Emil Cioran's book *The Fall into Time* also suggests that the fall cannot be but from eternity.

If time has in it a bit of eternity this must be understood not in the sense that time engenders eternity but the other way around. Just like the finite has in it the seed, the reflection of the infinite, just like everything in creation that came into being through the eternal, divine Logos bears the mark of the Logos deep down in its core, so it is with time and eternity. In other words, just like every contingent thing in the created order has as its core a transcendent reality, or like the transcendent is hidden in the immanent, so is eternity hidden in time, eternity being the transcendent dimension that gives existence and meaning to whatever it engenders, including time.

According to D. Staniloae, there is an eternity before time and another one after time. Time is different from eternity, yet eternity explains time because it originates in it and has its end in it, and thus "eternity is time's foundation."[13] Eternity is as much in time as it is above it.[14]

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Maximus the confessor has a different explanation when it comes to the relation between time and what is above it. "When it ceases its motion time is aeon, and when the aeon is measured, it is time carried by motion. Aeon is time without movement and time is aeon measured through movement."[15] If the aeon is understood to be the eternal, it is important to know that what makes the difference between them is motion and measure, yet whatever the difference is for as long as there is a fulfillment into something else, time is subject to becoming or is itself becoming.

Presenting Arthur Pontynen and Rod Miller's book *Western Culture at the American Crossroads: Conflicts over the Nature of Science and Reason,* Joshua A. Reichard writes that "the temporal must find completion in the eternal," just like "becoming must be grounded in Being" and *"scientia* must ultimately lead to *sapientia."*[16] This understanding leads already to the field of ethics. The relation between time and eternity can be stated as the relation between Chronos and Kairos.

Chronos is becoming, it is program, schedule, occupation, division, fragmentation, and one can also say, wasting, loss. Kairos is being, it is the appropriate moment, concentration, contemplation, gathering, fulfillment, overflowing, continuation, permanence, durability.[17] There is no incompatibility between Chronos and Kairos, however different from one another they might be.

If Reichard talks about time and eternity, becoming and being, *scientia* and *sapientia,* then all, time, becoming and ultimately man, are capable of eternity: *Tempus capax infiniti,* just as *homo capax infiniti.* On the human plane, when man is capable of contemplation and does it, he or she "sees", realizes, the eternal element in time, the presence of the Kairos in Chronos, and thus, living in both, not in one only, achieves spiritual equilibrium.

This is how one experiences transcendence, which confirms what James L. Kugel wrote, that transcendence is a reality accessible within the humans self.[18]

It is important to note here that even if we speak of man's becoming, time (even when understood as becoming) does not belong to man's being or to that of the created order, "because in the life to come time is no longer experienced in its unfolding."[19]

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When it comes to man and ethics, one important question has to be asked: What is the meaning of time? And another, related one: What do we do with our time?

The first question brings us to the issue of the *Zeitgeist:* the spirit of time. This is a multi-directional exploration because one can think of the spirit of time as opposed to "the letter of time," like sense, meaning, value versus formalism, legalism and political correctness understood in many ways, one can think of *Zeitgeist* in the sense of the general mood, fashion, direction visible in a certain society in any given period of time, and also, one can think of God's presence in the dimension we call time or of time as a divine gift and then of what the divine purpose with the gift is when offered to the receiver.

From a theological perspective time represents the growth, evolution, development of the divine creation, of each thing towards the fulfillment of the purpose it was created for. Consequently, when it comes to us and the meaning of time, the problem posed is about discovering, realizing, understanding the divine purpose in creation, just like one tries to detect one's vocation in life so that one can advance towards what one is "made for." To find one's vocation and follow it means to fulfill one's destiny by also advancing towards one's destination. This is how one finds meaning in what one does and in how one lives, not only for oneself, but implicitly and imperatively for others as well.

That is why, when I understand the purpose of time, and that is part of the zeitgeist, like with the purpose of any other thing, and use it accordingly (as when I get a machine and use it according to the instructions and not otherwise), what I do with it goes beyond it, beyond time, in this case, and reverberates into eternity, or as Joshua A. Reichard, again, wrote, "the temporal must find completion in the eternal." That is so because completion, fulfillment, is found only when you are in communion with the person, place, you belong to.

Everything is about belonging, purpose, meaning, and fulfillment. But the phenomenology of belonging implies going out and coming back, that is procession and return. In the words of Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite, procession and return implies "flowing out from the Good onto all that is, and returning once again to the Good. In this, divine yearning shows especially its beginning and unending nature travelling in an endless circle through the

Good, from the Good, in the Good and to the Good, unerringly turning, even on the same center, ever in the same direction, always proceeding, always remaining and always being restored to itself.[20]

Speaking of belonging which implies return, Mircea Eliade writes about the profane and the sacred dimensions of time and of man's need to revalorize the time as eternity which can be done by one's exit from the irreality of the profane, temporal existence and coming into the realm of the real, of the sacred where one belongs. This spiritual itinerary towards the origins can be achieved only by resacralizing the profane.[21] So time is there in man's life in order to help him or her transcend it as one transcends the interval, not to escape from it. This is how eternity is to be achieved.[22]

The meaning of time then, since time is ontologically related to existence, consists of its sacred core which is there for it to be seen and used by man in order to go back "home," to his or her authentic place and nature, like the prodigal son who, being "out of himself" in the foreign country, and miserable, suddenly "came back into himself", into his own original nature and returned home and was restored in the initial position.

Man thus needs to see and understand and do something about his or her own existence. Pico della Mirandola says that beautifully: "We have given you, oh Adam, no visage proper to yourself, nor any endowment properly your own, in order that whatever place, whatever form, whatever gifts you may with premeditation select, these same you may have and possess through your own judgment and decision. The nature of all other creatures is defined and restricted within laws which We have laid down; you, by contrast, impeded by no such restrictions, may by your own free will, to whose custody We have assigned you, trace yourself the lineaments of your own nature. I have placed you at the very center of the world, so that from that vantage point you may with greater ease glance round about you on all that the world contains. We have made you a creature neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer."[23]

One needs to notice here how man's time and that of the created order interpenetrate each other, which means the created order is there to help man regain his or her original status and man has an obligation to care, honor and sanctify the created order, both,

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based on man's capacity to discover the authentic meaning everywhere, and on his or her responsibility to act accordingly.

In other words between my time and the time of all other things there is a perichoretical relation, like the dance of the sub-particles of matter around their centers and each one around the other, a dance without which the world would not exist. That is why what I do with my time, like in the theory of systems, affects the whole creation whether I realize it or not. Hence the cosmic responsibility that each person has for the entire world, for all people. It is not that the world is responsible for man but vice versa, that is why the fall of man from God's face led to the fall of the created order, for which creation is in pain as St. Paul put it: "For we know that up to the present time all of creation groans with pain, like the pain of childbirth" (Romans 8, 22).

This indicates that "time is not meant to remain exterior to the creature, but, from the outset, becomes the condition of its ascent" and that the created order "has been made to transcend movement and time."[24]

On the other hand my time is mine and it is not. Time was given to me. Like life, like the world. I did not create them. They are gifts. Consequently what I do with what was given to me must start from and lead to the right attitude I adopt towards the giver, in the sense that I need to make sure that what I do with what was given to me will be circumscribed to the purpose the giver had in mind with both the gift and the act of giving. As D. Staniloae writes, "God's eternity is present in the time of man through the offer of His love which provokes and helps man to respond."[25] This is why we can think that we are, and we are not masters of what we say or pretend is ours, because, in fact, nothing is ours, totally and definitively. We are rather temporal administrators of the received gifts with the obligation to use them according to what is imbedded in their nature and to the intention of the giver.

Also, when we think of the nature of the gift, we realize that part of this nature is for the gift to be circulated, shared.

The gift is meant to be communion, eucharist. You have received, you give. This is where your link with the other is your positive work and attitude *coram mundo.*

This is the way in which one becomes, according to the nice expression of Ramin Jahanbegloo, "a friend of one's time."[26]

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Transcendence and Ethics

Transcendence is becoming once again a topic of interest in philosophy and science (see for instance Charles Landesman's book *Leibniz's Mill: A Challenge to Materialism,* Robert J. Spitzer's *New Proofs for the Existence of God: Contributions of Contemporary Physics and Philosophy,* David Hopper's work *Divine Transcendence and the Culture of Change,* Frank Tippler's *The Physics of Immortality,* and others), and, as Jesse J. Thomas indicates, contemporary philosophers of science seek "to restore transcendence to its proper ethical and philosophical-theological place."[27]

Yet while transcendence seems to be a vague and abstract topic, some authors have a more concrete, "tangible" understanding of it. By relating it to personal subjectivity these authors make transcendence somehow more approachable and directly connected to the field of Ethics. This is how D. Staniloae explains it: "Genuine eternity must be the quality of a perfect subjectivity, for only this is wholly incorruptible and possesses the most essential dimensions of inexhaustibility and infinite freshness of manifestation, namely interiority and free will. Only the subject is totally without composition, inexhaustible in its possibilities and free."[28]

The idea of perfect subjectivity as something which cannot be achieved in this temporary existence is expressed by R. Kendall Soulen in a different way. "Human self," he says, "is grounded in a transcendent reality because it revolves around something greater than itself."[29] If it revolves around something greater, that might indicate dependence, but also belonging. Thus the imperfect subject is a reflection, an image of the perfect one, which brings one to the theology of *imago Dei.* It is possible to think that in creating man, God gets out of Himself in a kenotic gesture, as He is the only one capable of *Ek-sistence, ek* in Greek meaning out of. In other words God, as perfect existence and as source of it creates it by exiting His own subjectivity in a sort of "self-negation," that is why kenotic, but also in a sort of self-affirmation at the same time because creating existence, one affirms it, and God affirms Himself in this way thus giving the created order the sense of belonging.

"The possibility of *ek-sistence* is the negation in itself of subjectivity since it consists of becoming what one is not."[30]

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Reflecting this type of *imago Dei* theology, but also the idea of procession and return, Hannah Arendt believes that although man must die, man is "not born in order to die, but in order to begin."[31]

If we speak about existence in general and about birth, life and death in particular, we give to ethics a double dimension, one related to my existence as a human subject where in my personhood I am not distinguished from the others and that connects me to the perfect subject, the divine person, God, and the other one related to my concrete life in this existence which distinguishes me from the others, both dimensions being at mutual interplay and both being major reasons for the most fundamental question one can have: what do I do with what I have and, ultimately, what do I do with who I am. This idea is elaborated by David Hopper when he writes that ethics deals with this life here in the present time and thus has a horizontal character and is individualized, while at the same time keeping its transcendental character.[32]

Thus ethics does bring us towards transcendence. In Karl Barth's words, "As soon as the ethical problem is posed, we begin to have an understanding of what an absolute life could be."[33]

Yet, if there is an absolute, transcendent reality around which our life revolves and on which it depends, if life is the place, time and modality through which everything is decided,"[34] then the question of how I should spend my life and time becomes constant and imperative.

This is all the more important since, according to Erich Fromm's observation, man's life in our society goes in the opposite direction of where it should go. He writes: "Man has become an item to sell on the market of personalities. Success depends on how skillful people are selling themselves on the market, and also on how they can make attractive the box where they are placed as merchandise."[35]

And even worse, like Romulus Vulcanescu put it in a poem, "every single day we are mocking the birds, love, and the sun, and we don't even notice how we leave behind us a desert of despair."

This multi-leveled dramatic crisis that we witness in our world is due in great part to human individualism, as Robert Bellah and his colleagues explain in their book *Habits of the Heart.* Individualism is indeed an existential sin, the image of death, in Roger Garaudy's words.[36]

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Conclusion

Having in view that ethics is the vehicle that helps us live together in a much better and meaningful way, but that it is also our vehicle to transcendence and the absolute, to that which is greater than ourselves, and that individualism is such a demon that blocks our way apparently so efficiently, one thing one can do is to look at what is opposite to individualism. And the opposite is communion. Communion implies kenosis, it makes room for the other which prepares one for the ultimate meeting with The Totally Other.

What is needed is a philosophy of the person, not of the individual, and this philosophy, or theology, or ethics has as a model the divine Trinity, a model of supreme love and inter-personal relationships.[37]

According to R. Garaudy, the other is my transcendence,[38] as opposed to Sartre, who said that the other is my hell (l'enfer, c'est les autres). It is the other that humanizes me, because it is being human towards him or her that makes me a human being, to use A. Heschel's expression.[39] In philosophy the highest value is attached to thinking: *cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am), Descartes says. In ethics the highest value is love, love of others: "you are therefore I am *(es ergo sum),* or as Dostoievsky paraphrases Descartes: *Amo ergo sum,* I love, therefore I am.

NOTES:

1 see Alexandru Mironov, "Principiul antropic" [The Anthropic Principle"], in *Curtea de la Arges,* year III, Nr. 9 (22), Sept. 2012, p. 14.
2 Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God,* Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, Massachusetts, 1994, p. 162.
3 Mihai Vinereanu, *Dictionar etimologic al limbii romane [Etymological Dictionary of the Romanian Language],* Ed. Alcor Edimplex, Bucharest, 2008.
4 see Jesse J. Thomas, "Transcendence and Sentience in Science and Religion," in *Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies,* vol. XXIV, Nr. 1-2, 2012, p. 169.
5 Alexandru Mironov, *op. cit.,* p. 14.
6 *Ibidem.*
7 D. Staniloae, *op. cit.,* p. 173.
8 *Ibidem.*

16

9 *Ibid.,* p. 161.

10 Theodor Damian, "Logos and Science: Hide and Seek in God's Universe," in *Words and Meanings,* Proceedings of the 11th Conference of ISSEI (The International Society for the Study of European Ideas), on "Language and the Scientific Imagination," University of Helsinki, Finland, Language Center, https://blogs.helsinki.fi/issei/2008.

11 See Mircea Itu, *Mircea Eliade* (in Romanian), Ed. "Romania de Maine," Bucharest, 2006, pp. 75-76.

12 Anoushka von Heuer, *Le Huitieme jour ou La dette d'Adam,* Ed. Jean-Luc de Rougemont, Geneve, 1982, p. 78.

13 D. Staniloae, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

14 *Ibid.,* p. 156.

15 *Ibid.,* p. 158.

16 Joshua A. Reichard, "Western Culture at the American Crossroads: Conflicts Over the Nature of Science and Reason", (book review), in *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies,* Vol. XXIV, Nr. 1-2, 2012, p. 203.

17 Theodor Damian, "The Desert as a Place of the World's Transformation According to Eastern Asceticism," in Ines Murzaku (Ed.), *Monastic Tradition in Eastern Christianity and the Outside World,* Peeters Publishers, Leuven, Belgium, 2013, p. 57.

18 see Carlos Eire, "Walking Up to Death," in *First Things,* Nr. 216, October 2011, p. 60.

19 D. Staniloae, *op. cit.,* p. 157.

20 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works,* translation by Colm Luibheid, foreword and notes by Paul Rorem, preface by Rene Roques, introduction by Jaroslav Pelikan, Jean Leclercq and Karlfried Froehlich, Paulist Press, New York, 1987, p. 83.

21 Mircea Itu, *op. cit.,* p. 75.

22 D. Staniloae, *op. cit.,* p. 165.

23 Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man,* Gateway Edition, Henry Regnery Company, Chicago, 1956, p. 7.

24 D. Staniloae, *op. cit.,* p. 157.

25 *Ibidem,* p. 156.

26 Ramin Jahanbegloo, Costica Bradatan, Aurelian Craiutu, "On Margins, Marginals and Marginalities. A Conversation with Ramin Jahanbegloo," in *The European Legacy,* vol. 17, Nr. 6, October 2012, p. 737.

27 Jesse J. Thomas, *op. cit.,* p. 159.

28 D. Staniloae, *op. cit.,* p. 151.

29 R. Kendall Soulen, "Cruising towards Bethlehem," in *God and Human Dignity,* ed. by R. Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead, William B. Eerdman Publishers, Gd. Rapids, MI, Cambridge, UK, 2006, p. 105.

30 André Malet, *Mythos and Logos: La Pensée de R. Bultman,* Labor et Fides, Genève, 1962, p. 12.

31 see Oskar Gruenwald, "The Quest for Transcendence," in *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies,* vol. IX, Nr. 1-2, 1997, pp. 166-167.

32 see Jesse J. Thomas, *op. cit.,* p. 171.

33 Karl Barth, *Parole de Dieu et parole humaine [Word of God and Word of Man],*Impr. France-Quercy-Auvergne, 1966, p. 159.

34 Dragos Vaida, "Religia, un subiect de actualitate [Religion, a present day subject]", in *Curtea de la Arges,* year III, september 2012, p. 12

35 Erich Fromm, *Avoir ou être [To Have or To Be],* Editions Laffont, Paris 1978, p. 12.

36 Roger Garaudy, *Parole d'homme,* Editions Laffont, Paris 1975, p. 63

37 D. Staniloae, *op. cit.,* p. 148.

38 Roger Garaudy, *op. cit.,* p. 63.

39 Abraham Heschel, *Who is Man,* Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA, 1965, p. 61.

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Truth in Perspective[1]

"Is everything right that everyone thinks? How is it possible for conflicting opinions to be right?"[2]

With this statement the ancient Greek philosopher Epictetus offers a challenge to each of us in the 21st century. In both digital and non-digital environments unsubstantiated opinions are asserted and circulated constantly. Many do not have the time, or the ability or the inclination to examine them carefully – to determine if they are worth affirming, much less to be used as a basis for action.

Epictetus continues: "Behold the beginning of philosophy –a recognition of the conflict of opinions, and a search for the origin of that conflict, and a condemnation of mere opinion, coupled with skepticism regarding it and a kind of investigation to determine whether the opinion is rightly held together with the invention of a kind of standard of judgment."[3]

In his way he is describing the need for *critical thinking*. He also is highlighting aspects of this discursive process designed to sort fact from fiction, or to sort what is valuable from the worthless. He joined others who, in their own fields recognized "the conflict of opinions" and who strove to "search the origin of that conflict."

In his *Politics* Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.) considered a variety of constitutions for Greek city-states in order to derive principles for the best way to order a society.[4] In the middle ages al-Ghazali (1058-1111 C.E.), at great personal cost, embarked on a quest for certainty amidst a welter of conflicting scientific, philosophic and theological disputes of the day. Much later René Descartes (1596-1650 C.E.) attempted to deal with a similar situation in his time through the introduction of a method of *universal doubt*.[5] Georg Hegel, one of the last great system builders in philosophy, erected a comprehensive account of everything designed to include and explain conflicting philosophic viewpoints of all sorts.[6] Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951 C.E.) dealt with conflicting opinions by viewing them as part of complex *language*

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games which could be analyzed for the purpose of either clarifying disputes or of simply "dis-solving" them altogether.[7] Closer to our own time, Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984 C.E.) has offered a developmental and historical account of basic positions and counter-positions in philosophy that affect all of the sciences and literature.[8]

All these thinkers needed to confront truth directly. That confrontation often resulted in a redefinition of what truth is and a clarification of the conditions needed to insure its presence.

In our own postmodern context, the notion of truth has been eclipsed and replaced with alternative notions and concerns. One such notion is that of *perspective.* The notion of perspective shifts attention away from what is believed to the person holding the beliefs. It highlights individual differences and insinuates that truth, if it exists at all, is a merely private and subjective affair. In much contemporary discourse, what I call the "seven privileged variables of academia and popular culture" has taken center stage. These include: *age, disability status, ethnicity, gender, race, sexual orientation* and *socio-economic status*. They have also shifted attention away from truth. They have also been used to "define" personal identity largely in terms of groups, not individual differences.

All of these changes contribute to the drawing of a new conversational map for the postmodern era, with new coordinates. In previous times the conversational map employed as basic coordinates the transcendental notions of *truth, goodness, beauty* and *being.* In the last century or so all of these have come under attack, and a new postmodern map is being drawn up with *perspective* and the seven privileged variables as its coordinates. In the new map most matters are referred to these ideas as focal points of attention. The old coordinates are abandoned as outmoded, or somehow exploitative and repressive of persons. The new coordinates are "privileged" in at least two ways. First, they serve as the primary coordinates of the post-modernist cognitive grid. However, they are also privileged in the deeper sense that they are somehow beyond question. Hence, in Wittgenstein's terms there is a new language game in town. One consequence of this is that, if one can influence the vocabulary of conversation, one can also influence the very thoughts expressed in it.

Where the truth of any claim is in doubt, then the task of critical thinking becomes more urgent. However, where the search

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for truth is simply abandoned, then confusion must ensue. Thus, this paper has three specific aims: (1) to show how different theories of truth can be used to answer specific questions about proposed judgments, (2) To relate these theories of truth to *individual differences* in *perspectives* (viewpoints), and (3) To suggest how the findings might be applied in a "relativistic" age with its redrawn postmodern conversational map.

My approach to these three aims will employ a procedure developed elsewhere known as *interrogative problem representation* (IPR) wherein general and abstract problems are reframed through reduction of abstract language and through specific reference to answerable questions.[9] More specifically IPR involves the removal of undefined abstractions, the identification of subtopics, and reverse engineering to reach specific researchable questions. It is a "turn to the concrete" and away from undefined abstractions which only serve to befog discourse.

Theories of Truth and Specific Questions about Proposed Judgments

The intellectual history of the West has been populated by many distinct theories of truth that attempt to define what it is, to distinguish it from error, and to provide criteria for its use. Among these, three popular theories are the correspondence theory, the coherence theory, and the pragmatic theory.

Correspondence theory. The correspondence theory of truth can be clearly dated as far back as Aristotle, although its origins may be even earlier. It was widely adopted throughout the Middle Ages and the period of modern philosophy (roughly from 1400 to 1880 C.E.) According to this view a proposition is true if it matches up with current or past events in the world. In practice, we use this theory when we check things out for ourselves. We evaluate claims in terms of our own experience. This account is guided by the following reflective question of fact: "Does the proposition under consideration correspond to (or match up with) present or past evidence?"

Cohesion theory. The cohesion theory of truth received its major impetus from G.W.F. Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Mind*.[10] For this view, a proposition is true if it is consistent with other

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propositions in a system of propositions. The matching process is not between a prospective judgment and data or evidence, but between a prospective judgment and other judgments already made by oneself or others. In practice, we use this theory when we match a new claim against what we already know and have learned and against the knowledge of trusted others. If a claim matches in this way, we tend to accept it, if not we may be more skeptical about it. This account is guided by the following reflective question of fact: "Does the proposition under consideration contradict other propositions that have already been learned?" If it does not, then it is coherent with them. If it does contradict, then the entire collection of propositions is incoherent.

Pragmatic theory. The pragmatic theory of truth is often associated with William James and was taken up by others in the 20th century.[11] This view holds that a proposition is true if it works out in practice. Here instead of focusing on the present or past, the focus shifts to the future. There is a predictive aspect to this theory insofar as one must wait for future data and evidence to be collected before one can pronounce any statement true. In practice, we use this theory when we adopt a "wait and see" attitude. We withhold judgment until we examine, at some future date, how things work out. This account is guided by the following reflective question of fact: "Does the proposition under consideration correspond to (or match up with) evidence that will be collected in the future?" James himself initially regarded the pragmatic theory as an outgrowth of the correspondence theory, but later viewed it as sufficiently distinct as to be regarded as something new.

Clearly, these three theories each aim at discerning the truth. However, they do not agree on *how* to do that. They do not have the same criteria; and, if we reframe them in terms of questions addressed, they do not address the same questions. Yet, they all somehow involve "truth."

In our postmodern times (roughly 1880-present), many universal notions and concepts have come under continuous attack. *Truth* is one such target, but other transcendental notions such as *goodness*, *beauty* and *being* have been added to the list. As these have come under suspicion, so has any conversational map that relies upon them. In the latter half of the 20th century they have fallen into increasing disuse, and efforts have appeared to draw up a new conversational map with new co-ordinates and a new lexicon.

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The more confident *truth* is replaced with a more tentative *perspective*. The more abstract and universal *goodness*, *beauty* and *being* are being replaced with the more anthropocentric and relativistic vocabulary of *age, disability status, ethnicity, gender, race, sexual orientation* and *socio-economic status*. With this new map as a guide, for some people, *all* discourse is filtered through and judged in terms of these seven privileged variables, while little mention is made of the transcendental notions of the old map.

The question then becomes, can these two maps co-exist? Can they even benefit from one another?

Perspectives and Truth

While the abstract term 'perspective' is frequently used, it is just as conveniently left undefined. For our purposes here, we will distinguish three types of perspective and relate each to aspects of complex human learning. Perspective can be regarded as primarily *perceptual*, *functional* or *developmental*.

Perceptual perspective. Imagine the following scene. You are in New Jersey walking South on a cliff overlooking the Hudson River. On a clear day, if you glance to the left you can see across the river and may observe midtown Manhattan. If you are in the right position, you can see all the way down Thirty-Fourth Street in the distance. Thirty-Fourth Street is home to the distinctive Empire State Building. If you take three more steps on the cliff (and don't fall off) you can observe all the way down Thirty-Third Street, and so on as you proceed south. However, this is not possible if you are actually walking on Thirty-Fourth Street itself. Three steps are insufficient to take us either physically or visually to 33rd Street. This is perceptual perspective, and it is closely tied to the positioning of our bodies and to our sensory apparatus.

In the history of Western art, this became a matter of great interest for painters as they attempted to represent the perception of distance and the three dimensions it entails onto a two-dimensional canvas or wall. This is no easy matter, and as the paintings of Escher show, what makes sense perceptually may result in a picture that is logically (and architecturally) incoherent.[12]

Functional perspective. Functional perspective is not like perceptual perspective at all. It can include it, but it goes far beyond it. It can be described as a collection of experiences, memories,

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questions, insights, judgments and decisions that are relevant to a current conversation or to a problem solving effort. We routinely summon what is needed when we engage in conversational or problem solving contexts. In contrast, persons with memory problems are at a particular disadvantage here since they cannot retrieve what is needed and what they have previously learned.

Developmental perspective: Developmental perspective is wider still. It includes previously experienced perceptual and functional perspectives. It can be described for each of us as the collection of *all* our experiences, memories, questions, insights, judgments and decisions that have been accumulated over a lifetime. It is not entirely retrievable at any one time. It also helps to define our uniqueness as persons. No other person has your particular collection of experiences, memories, questions, insights, judgments and decisions; and you do not have theirs. The implications of this for both personal identity and for communication are yet to be made explicit in any detail.

Applications in a Relativist Age

We live in a relativist age, a time of skepticism about standards of judgment and of their range of application. Discourse in a relativist age refers us back to *perspectives* and to the concrete detail of individuals' particular situations. Yet 'perspective' itself is an abstract term and will be associated with no useful enterprise unless it is defined. I have offered three ways to define it and, therefore, to clarify the discourse involving it.

Since the time of Nietzsche, a relativist age has been associated with a deep cultural skepticism regarding universal standards of any sort, including standards of truth.[13] There has been an increasing move away from the universal and the absolute that is marked by such developments as: in physics there was the downfall of absolute space and time and the rise of relativity; in art, the rise of perspectivism; in epistemology and ethics, the challenge of relativism; in psychology, the increased study of individual differences; and in psychiatry an increased knowledge of the "private worlds" of patients.

In this changing environment a new conversational map is emerging with its seven coordinates and its emphasis on

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perspectives. It replaces an older map with its traditional coordinates of truth, goodness, beauty and being.

This sort of environment makes it easy to be overwhelmed by the welter of conflicting opinions that has also troubled many prior generations of philosophers and which seems to only get more complicated. Yet also in this environment there are those who seek to "get things right" and to "think things through", and this is accomplished by the art and discipline of what these days is labeled as *critical thinking*.[14]

Elsewhere, I have identified the cognitive acts, operations and events that constitute three different kinds of critical thinking.[15] In each instance the attempt to get things right is driven by a guiding question. For example, in *factual critical thinking,* the guiding question is: "Is this idea or observation or insight true?" (….in some sense of truth) In *values-oriented critical thinking,* the guiding question is something like: "Is X worthwhile?" (…where X can be anything) Finally, in *deliberative critical thinking,* the guiding question is: "Should I (or we) do Y?" (….where Y is any course of action).

These guiding questions all take "yes" or "no" as answers. They also call forth a range of other cognitive acts, operations and events designed to sift through mere opinions and conflicting claims and to identify those that properly answer the guiding question. In this sense, critical thinking is a protection against "cognitively transmitted diseases" such as rampant unclarity, falsehood, untestable claims and incoherent projects. Many ideas may be possible, a much smaller set are true, or worthwhile, or worth our action. In addition, while perspectives (of all three sorts) are a reality, so are the questions that arise from them and about them. They are not so "privileged" as to be beyond question.

I see perspectives as a *source* for all sorts of questions. They can also be regarded as a *testing ground* for the answers we propose. The theories of truth provide the *criteria* for actually conducting the tests. Further, if perspectives can serve this function for the individual, there is no clear reason why it cannot serve this function for groups of individuals. If criteria of truth can be applied by an individual, and if communication actually exists, there is no reason why they cannot be applied by groups. If individual problem solving

is possible, and if communication actually works, then group problem solving is possible.

Summary

In this paper I have attempted to address three aims: (1) to show how different theories of truth can be used to answer more specific questions about proposed judgments, (2) to relate these theories of truth to *individual differences* in *perspective*(or viewpoint) and (3) to suggest how the findings might be applied in a "relativistic" age.

To address the first aim, three accounts of truth were compared and contrasted: the correspondence theory, the cohesion theory, and the pragmatic theory of truth. In addition, it was shown that the correspondence theory of truth is primarily concerned with matching a proposed judgment with available evidence; and the coherence theory of truth is primarily concerned with consistency among a collection of proposed judgments; and the pragmatic theory of truth is primarily concerned with a match between a proposed judgment and future evidence and workability.

To address the second objective I distinguished three types of perspective: perceptual, functional and developmental and I related each to processes of sensation and cognition and to their products. Perspectives involve a great complexity of detail. In addition, when they are associated with the persons who have them, they contribute to what makes each person unique.

Finally, to address the third objective, I noted that in a relativist age discourse often tends towards perspectives rather than more abstract theories of truth. Yet even within this context the question may arise as to whether or not we have gotten things right: that is, whether or not our insights match any set of data, whether or not they are consistent with other findings and whether or not they will work out in the future. For those interested in such an approach to problem solving the reality of perceptual, functional and developmental perspectives can work hand-in-hand with correspondence, coherence and pragmatic theories of truth.

To increase the likelihood of that happening, certain conditions should be present. Any conversation that makes reference to truth or to a perspective will come to no clear conclusions, unless it also makes explicit reference to the questions addressed.
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Moreover, any discourse that claims to resolve an issue of fact or value will remain disconnected from reality unless it makes explicit reference to evidence and reasons.

The reader then is faced with a clear choice: continue investing time in endless arguments or seek to actually solve problems, especially when the problems are formulated in terms of unambiguous and researchable questions. This should make quite a difference – to the problems and to ourselves.

"And so matters are judged and weighed, if we have the standards ready with which to test them. And the task of philosophy is this – to examine and to establish the standards. To go ahead and use them after they have become known is the task of the good and excellent person."[16]

NOTES:

1 This paper originated in a 2012 presentation at the Ecumenical and Interdisciplinary Symposium held each year in New York. I wish to thank Prof. Theodor Damian for his invitation to participate. I also wish to thank Bert F. Breiner and William McArdle for their many conversations with me about these topics, and for reviewing drafts. Of course any errors and unclarities that remain are my own.

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8 Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding,* University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1992.

9 Richard Grallo, "Principles of Interrogative Problem Representation: A Preliminary Sketch," in *Symposium,* XIX(1), 2012, pp. 21-31; Richard Grallo, "Problem Representation in Active Problem Solving," in *Symposium,* XVII(1)*,* 2010, pp. 31-39.

10 G.W.F. Hegel, *op. cit.*

11 William James, *The Meaning of Truth,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1976.

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The Role of Redemptive Narratives in Dan P. McAdams's *Theory of Personality: A Christian Critique*

The Three Levels of Personality

Dan P. McAdams is a psychologist who proposes that the self or human individuality is comprised of three different levels of personality: dispositional traits, characteristic adaptations, and integrative life narratives. At level one, what are routinely called the *Big Five* traits (extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience) provide a useful set of categories for understanding the most fundamental variability in human personality. McAdams says that these categories are basic because

> after many decades of scientific research on dispositional traits, personality psychologists are coming around to the idea that most of the hundreds of traits that can be invoked in describing human behavior in the English language can be found in a five-factor statistical space, now routinely called the *Big Five*.[1]

> Almost any personality trait that is commonly measured on a well-validated questionnaire can be fit into one of the Big Five categories, or else it can be seen as something of a blend of two or more Big Five dimensions.[2]

Each dimension can be defined in terms of a number of characteristics that exist on a continuum. For extroversion, one continuum is between sociable and retiring. For neuroticism, a continuum is between worrying and calm. For conscientiousness, one set of endpoints is self-disciplined and weak-willed. For agreeableness, a continuum is between good-natured and irritable. For openness to experience, one contrast is between original and conventional. There are several contrasting characteristics for each

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dimension.[3] Although there are exceptions, most people score near the middle of a continuum.[4] Conscientiousness is noteworthy for its relationship to work. McAdams says that conscientiousness "consistently predicts high levels of job performance, especially in occupations that call for autonomy and individual initiative."[5] In political orientation, conservatives are higher than liberals in conscientiousness whereas liberals are higher than conservatives in openness to experience.[6]

McAdams does not think that it makes sense to talk about cultures in terms of personality traits, for example, an extroverted versus introverted culture. The Big Five personality dimensions are present in every culture, which influences how traits are expressed in behavior. As McAdams puts it, "Cultural norms and mores are likely to shape how traits are played out in social behavior, but this is very different from saying that cultures match up with or reflect particular *amounts* of a given trait."[7]

At level two, characteristic adaptations fill in the details of the individual personality. They are formed in response to the everyday demands of social life. As McAdams explains,

Characteristic adaptations are those *specific* features of human individuality

> that speak to what people *want* or *value* in life and how they pursue what they want and avoid what they do not want in particular *situations,* during particular *time periods,* and with respect to particular *social roles.* While dispositional traits sketch an outline of human individuality, characteristic adaptations fill in many of the details.[8]

Characteristics develop at the second level in interaction with specific social situations, and they are much more sensitive to cultural differences than dispositional traits. Their formation is contextualized. At the first level, dispositional traits are difficult to change, but characteristic adaptations are more easily changed in response to life's challenges and new situations. Unlike the Big Five, psychologists have not created a comprehensive system for the second level. "There is no Big Five-like taxonomy for Layer 2: Personality psychologists have enumerated so many different kinds of characteristic adaptations that no single, comprehensive system seems about to hold them all."[9]

At level three, individuals define the meaning of life and their identity by constructing integrative narratives of the self through

time. Individuals choose a narrative from the menu of narratives available in a culture and tailor it to fit their own unique social circumstances. According to McAdams,

> If dispositional traits sketch the outline and characteristic adaptations fill in the details, then what else do we need in order to account for human individuality? We need to consider *meaning*. What does a life mean as it evolves over time and in culture? What kind of meaning does a person make out of his or her life overall? As I argued in chapter 3, we ultimately make meaning out of our lives through stories. Beginning in late adolescence and young adulthood, we construct integrative narratives of the self that selectively recall the past and wishfully anticipate the future to provide our lives with some semblance of unity, purpose, and identity. Personal identity is the internalized and evolving life story that each of us is working on as we move through our adult lives. … Integrative life stories are layered on top of dispositional traits and characteristic adaptations in the structure of human individuality.[10]

> Culture, then, provides each person with an extensive menu of stories about how to live, and each of us chooses from the menu. Because different people within a given culture have different experiences and opportunities, no two people get exactly the same menu. We cannot eat everything off the   menu we do get, so our narrative choices spell out, more than anything else, our precise relationship with our culture. . . .A person constructs a narrative identity by appropriating stories from culture. *Self and culture come to terms with each other through narrative.*[11]

Generativity

McAdams wanted to know what kinds of stories adults at midlife tell that give their lives meaning. He seems to believe that midlife is the most important stage in a person's life. It is the stage in which adults are prompted by a deep evolutionary impulse to pass something on to future generations. As he says,

> *In the beginning,* it was no different than it is today. From the moment life first appeared, life demanded continuity from one generation to the next. The task has always been, and always will be, to pass it on. To pass *life* on. To pass life on *in our own image.*[12]

Passing it on, then, involves a wide range of activities - from mating, to raising children, to altruism, to supporting the social good - which stem from adaptations that became part of human nature over the past 2 million yeas of human evolution. It is, therefore, both natural and good - today as it was in the EEA [environment of evolutionary adaptedness] - to be a *generative* adult.[13]

Generativity is McAdams's term for passing it on. It is a psychological term that he took from Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development. Erikson proposed eight stages in a life-history: infancy, toddler, early childhood, middle childhood, Adolescence, young adulthood, middle adulthood, and old age. Each stage involves a psychological issue, central question, and associated virtue. McAdams's focus is on stage seven, middle adulthood. In this stage, the psychological issue is *generativity versus stagnation,* the central question is, *How can I fashion a "gift" (a legacy)?,* and the associated virtue is *care.*[14] Stage seven can be quite long: adults in their 30s to 60s or even 70s, 80s and beyond. The stages should not be understood in a fixed and rigid way, but people generally become interested in each psychological issue at more or less the same time in the course of their life-histories. But later in life, they may move back to an earlier stage to work on an unresolved issue.

Although rooted in evolution, culture is significant as a medium for the meaning of generativity. For example, in traditional societies generativity may entail passing on the eternal truths of a society's religious and tribal traditions. Passing it on is more complicated in contemporary Western cultures that change quickly. Young people may not value the wisdom adults want to share and pass on. Finding a way to express generativity in a context of generativity mismatches is a challenge, as McAdams's recognizes:

Under conditions of swift cultural change, generativity becomes a balancing act between tradition and innovation. In many societies today, youths may no longer value the wisdom of their elders, for that wisdom may be seen as specific to a bygone world.[15]

Parents are not always able to give children what they need, and children do not always value what parents have to offer. Although generativity mismatches may go back even to the EEA, they appear to be especially vexing under conditions of rapid social and cultural change, as we witness in many modern and developing societies in the 21st century.[16]

McAdams developed an instrument to measure generativity, Erik Erikson's middle adulthood stage of psychosocial development. He also composed interview questions to identify the major themes of the stories. He discovered that adults who scored high on generativity told the kind of story that he describes as a redemptive narrative.

Redemptive narratives are not unique in American culture, but the ones told by McAdams's subjects have a specific structure, including the themes of early advantage, the suffering of others, moral depth and steadfastness, redemption, power versus love, and future growth. McAdams provides the following general script for the redemptive narrative:

> I learn in childhood that I have a special gift. At the same time, I see (and am moved by) suffering and injustice in my world. As a result, I come to believe that my personal destiny is to have some positive impact on others. In adolescence I internalize a belief system that sustains my commitment to improving the world. I will never abandon these core beliefs. Over the course of my adult life, I struggle to reconcile my strong needs for power and independence with my equally strong needs for love and community. Bad things happen to me, but good outcomes often follow. My suffering is usually redeemed, as I continue to progress, to learn, to improve. Looking to the future, I expect the things I have generated will continue to grow and flourish, even in a dangerous world.[17]

These themes feature predominately in the narratives of mature American adults who are concerned about generativity or promoting the well-being of future generations.

Generativity is expressed in parenting, teaching, mentoring, volunteer work, leadership, charitable activities, religious involvements, and political activities. McAdams calls this unique American story "the redemptive self":

> In their midlife years, the most caring and productive American adults tend to tell a certain kind of story about their lives. I call this story *the redemptive self.* As they reconstruct the past and imagine the future, highly generative American adults shape their lives into a narrative about how a gifted hero encounters the suffering of others as a child, develops strong moral convictions as an adolescent, and moves steadily upward and onward in the adult years, confident that negative experiences will ultimately be redeemed.[18]

Generativity is a universally human phenomenon, but it is expressed differently in different cultures. One distinguishing feature of a culture is its set of stories from which mature adults draw to express their individual generativity. McAdams says that

> *generativity is a human universal, but the redemptive self is not.* In every human society, productive and caring adults in their midlife years shoulder the burdens of promoting the growth and well-being of future generations. These adults make sense of their own lives through some kind of story that makes good sense within their own culture. The redemptive self is a life story that highly generative *American* adults tell; it is a story that makes good sense in the context of American culture and history.[19]

Cultural Themes in the Redemptive Self

There are also two important cultural themes that have psychological significance for the American redemptive self. The first is the idea that Americans are a chosen people. This idea was present in the minds of Europeans before America was settled. According to McAdams,

> But America had a special power in the minds of Europeans even before they settled it. A century *before* the Pilgrims landed, Europeans imagined that the New World lying beyond the western ocean might turn out to be an enchanted place of utopian designs. For some Protestants in England, taught from childhood that God would work through the English faithful to effect the ultimate redemption of humankind, America represented a promised land where the Reformation's next great victories might be realized.[20]

This idea formed the basis of what historians call the "Puritan Myth." In this myth, the English Puritans, equivalent to the Israelites (God's chosen people), suffered religious persecution back home. They set sail for the New World, crossing the Atlantic Ocean and landing in America, the Promised Land, to establish the "city on a hill," the New Jerusalem (Godly society). They wandered in the Massachusetts forests, the wilderness, and subdued the Indians, their enemies, which were equivalent to Israel's enemies, the Philistines and Hittites. Good harvests indicated success, proof of divine election. Failure was the work of the devil's temptations and proof of falling from God's favor.[21]

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The Puritan Myth is an origin myth, but other forms were added in the course of American history. One was manifest destiny in the 1840s to justify westward expansion. Woodrow Wilson proclaimed that America's destiny was to save the world. Ronald Regan had a sacramental vision that God guided the United States, "the last best hope of man on earth," as a promised land. In McAdams's summary, "But the interlocking ideas of chosen people, promised land, manifest destiny, and redeemer nation form a unique constellation with an especially powerful pedigree in American cultural history—going all the way back to the Puritan Myth. . . . Over the past few centuries the Puritan Myth has morphed into a number of different forms."[22]

The idea of a chosen people has a psychological counterpart in the redemptive self. The theme of being chosen is taken from the unique menu of American culture, but Americans may not be aware of how they have drawn their individual stories from the menu. McAdams believes, however, that Americans do understand their destiny on two parallel levels. In his research, the stories of highly generative adults start with the belief that they have been chosen for a special destiny and answer to an inner calling that makes them unique among their fellow citizens:

> Americans have typically understood their destiny on two parallel levels, both of which may be traced back to the Puritan Myth. On the collective level, we are part of a great enterprise, a people chosen for an exalted destiny, but on the individual level, each person is chosen too—called to a unique and special endeavor in life, *gifted* with an inner *specialness* that distinguishes him or her from every other person who has ever lived.[23]

The other important cultural theme that has psychological significance for the American redemptive self is belief in the goodness of the inner self. McAdams analyzes this theme in the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson and major figures of the self-help genre such as Norman Vincent Peale, Wayne Dyer, M.Scott Peck, Stephen Covey, Melody Beattie, and Rick Warren. He also examines the theme in self psychology and attachment theory. In the self-help literature, McAdams finds five central ideas that are echoed in the other sources:

1. The inner self is good, true, and innocent.
2. The outer world cannot be trusted.

3. Redemption is the actualization of the (good, true, and innocent) inner self. Actualizing the good inner self typically results in living out a generative mission or destiny in life.
4. In order to be redeemed, you must follow a step-by-step plan.
5. Anything is possible. The sky is the limit.[24]

Two points should be emphasized in this portrait of the self. First, the true inner self does not change in the course of one's life. As Stephen Covey says, "People can't live with change if there's not a changeless core inside them."[25] The second point is that the true inner self is capable of and responsible for the work of redemption. McAdams does not mention this point directly but the power of the self to achieve redemption is assumed. A person might be a believer in a faith tradition, but religions faith is not necessary for redemption. But the temptations of the social environment must be resisted. As McAdams writes, "The social environment is fundamentally alien to the self and filled with temptations, constraints, threats, and dangers. Although love and collaboration with others are essential to growth, the norms and strictures of society typically work to inhibit your growth and suppress the self."[26] Without the power to resist the negative factors in the social environment, self-actualization would be impossible.

The Languages of Redemption

McAdams identifies several ideas in American redemptive narratives that are paired with a challenge: atonement/sin, emancipation/slavery, upward mobility/poverty, recovery/sickness, enlightenment/ignorance, and development/immaturity. He says that these ideas represent "six different languages of redemption—that is, six different sets of images and ideas that people routinely draw upon when they are trying to make sense of the moves in their lives from negativity and suffering, on the one hand, to positivity and enhancement, on the other."[27] The atonement/sin pair does not have a privileged status.

There are different source domains for each pair. Religion is the source of the atonement/sin pair. Examples include Puritan spiritual autobiographies and Christian conversion experiences and confession. The political system is the domain of the emancipation/slavery pair. Examples are the African American slave

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narratives and stories of escaping abuse and liberation from oppression. The economy is the domain of the upward mobility/poverty pair. Some examples are Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography,* Horatio Alger stories, rags-to-riches immigrant success stories, motivational speakers, and business testimonials. The source domain of the recovery/sickness pair is medicine/psychology. Examples include stories of healing, psychotherapy narratives, and 12-step programs. Education/science is the source domain of the enlightenment/ignorance pair. Examples are stories of the growth of the mind and stories of insight and discovery. Finally, parenting/psychology is the source of the development/immaturity pair. Some examples are stories of psychological growth and stories of moral development and character-building.[28]

McAdams sees the Catholic practice of confession as the precursor of the narrative form in the West. He notes that

> Confession is a cornerstone concept in Christian religious traditions and in Western morality and jurisprudence. Convoked in 1215, the Catholic Fourth Lateran Council made annual confession obligatory. In so doing, the church established a social ritual that has had profound effects on how Westerners have come to think about their lives ever since.[29]
> … the practice of confession signaled the emergence of a narrative self in Western culture. The telling of transgression to an accepting audience became a standard form of self-expression, a sanctioned way of telling "the real story" about the self. The form is modeled today in autobiographies, tell-all-books, television talk shows, reality TV, and the occasional mea culpa offered by a public official or celebrity caught in an intrigue.[30]

Critique of the Role of Redemptive Narratives in McAdams's Theory

McAdams exaggerates the significance of the American redemptive story. He studied adults who were high and low in generativity and their stories. What about the middle? The value judgment seems to be that those in the middle are not noteworthy because the stories are not about transmitting culture to future generations. McAdams admits,

In that I believe generativity to be the cardinal psychological challenge and virtue of the middle adult years, and in that any good society depends dearly on the generative efforts of its citizens, I have privileged the life stories told by highly generative American adults in midlife.[31]

For Erikson, generativity is a universal stage in psychosocial development. So, the middle also fails but not quite as badly as those low in generativity. Does this comment by a 60-year-old man, "who scored at the bottom of the generativity distribution" of one of McAdams's samples, suggest a failure in redemption?:

I want to keep doing exactly what I want to do. I want to follow my own interests, or lack of interests. I like to drink coffee. I'd like to spend more time in the coffeehouse. I like to run and work out, and maybe take some interesting classes. Maybe travel. But I don't really want much   responsibility, and I have no [large] aspirations for me. I don't want to aspire to anything.[32]

In Erikson's final stage, Ego Integrity Versus Despair, the point is to say, "My life was worthwhile and I can accept it as a gift, even though it was not redemptive." Could the 60-year-old man say this? I think he could.

Critique of the Redemptive Self

From a Christian perspective, there are three assumptions in the redemptive self that are problematic:

1. The inner self, established by an early advantage, is only good, authentic, and innocent.

2. Generative adults redeem themselves. As McAdams says, "They are the redeemers."[33] Redemption is self-redemption (except perhaps for those who use the religious language of atonement/sin).

3. Redemption is this worldly - in this world or not at all.

Also from a Christian perspective, atonement cannot be one among several redemptive ideas. Sin represents some kind of broken relationship with God which has been mended in an act of atonement through Jesus Christ. God's atonement is fundamental. All of the other redemptive challenges, slavery, poverty, sickness, ignorance, and immortality, are consequences of sin. For McAdams, many low-generativity individuals are unable to achieve redemption. As expressed in negative narratives, their life-histories are filled with contamination sequences, stagnation, and vicious circles.

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McAdams writes, "In a contamination sequence, a very good or emotionally positive life-narrative scene (or series of scenes) is followed immediately by a very bad or emotionally negative outcome. The bad ruins, spoils, sullies, or contaminates the good that precedes it. A contamination sequence is the opposite of a redemption sequence."[34] For example, the protagonist of a negative story is happy because she is pregnant. But then her husband is killed in an auto accident and she miscarries. In another example, the protagonist's new house is a joy, but then repair bills become a nightmare.[35] McAdams says that "most life stories contain at least on strong contamination sequence,"[36] but for those who score in the low-generativity range there are many contamination sequences in their life histories.

Another feature of the stories told by low-generativity individuals is stagnation. Following Erik Erikson, McAdams explains that "People who are not generative feel stagnant, stuck, immobilized. They cannot move forward. They are unable to *generate* outcomes that extend their care and commitment to future generations. They feel that they cannot produce anything of lasting value."[37] A final feature of these stories is repetition. Low generativity individuals are not only stuck, but they also tend to repeat contamination sequences in a vicious circle. McAdams speculates that "By replaying the frustrating or traumatic scene again and again, the person may be unconsciously trying to loosen the grip of the event upon his or entire personality. It is as if the repetition of the bad event serves to 'get it out of my system' or enables me 'to get used to it' and 'learn to live with it'."[38]

Christians would say that these low-generativity individuals are unable to overcome the consequences of sin on their own. McAdams suggests that not everything can be redeemed: "Some especially bad things that happen in life may not be redeemable. What about a child's death? What about a profound disability? What about murder?. . .what redemptive meaning might we find in the extermination of 6 million Jews or in the atrocities of Stalin and PolPot?"[39] In the Christian redemptive narrative, God will overcome the consequences of sin, and everyone's life and everything in life will be redeemed - in the end. Everyone's final life-narrative will be positive. According to sociologist Christian Smith, this is part of the *Christian metanarrative:*

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But the love and grace of God is more powerful and determined than the sin of humanity, so through Israel God continued his covenant relationship to redeem the world from its sin. Rather than allowing creation to reap death and utter destruction as the full and just consequence of sin, God himself became human and freely took upon himself those evil consequences. Through the undeserved crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God conquered death, set aright the broken relationship, and opened a way for the redemption of creation.[40]

One reason McAdams discusses the origin of the narrative form in the West is that confession is a decontamination strategy, especially for those who bear some responsibility for a bad event. He explains,

Confession can serve to restore the integrity and wholeness of narrative identity. For some people who feel that their lives are contaminated by bad events for which they themselves may be responsible, confession may help to undo the wrong and open up new opportunities for growth and development. In some life stories, confession may help to decontaminate the past and free the protagonist from vicious circles and stagnant plots.[41]

But Christians believe that confession is effective because of God's forgiveness. Without it, confession may produce some momentary relief, but stagnation and vicious circles are likely to continue in the future.

McAdams is no Pollyanna. He realizes that highly generative American adults are not without their failings, and some things in life are beyond their power of redemption. But what he does not seem to recognize is that redemption - the redemptive self - is incomplete even in the successful stories of highly generative adults. As Christian Smith might say, death is the ultimate word in everyone's life, broken relationships will not be fully set aright, and creation will remain unfulfilled without the power of God's redemption in Christ.

Tragedy

McAdams does not directly say that tragedy is the alternative to both the redemptive self and the Christian story because it is a *narrative without redemption by either human or divine agency*. But he succinctly identifies the points that make the case:

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1. Some bad events in life are beyond our control and unredeemable.

> In classic Greek or Shakespearean tragedy, the hero suffers a fate that he or she cannot avoid and for which he or she is not fully responsible. Oedipus cannot avoid the fate of killing his father and sleeping with his mother, no matter how hard he tries. The tragic hero learns that suffering is an essential part of life, even when the suffering has no ultimate meaning, benefit, or human cause. Suffering is to be endured, but not necessarily redeemed.[42]

2. No person has a completely innocent, good inner self destined to do redemptive work.

> Tragedy also teaches us other lessons that serve as a psychologically useful counterpoint to the redemptive self. For example, tragedy calls into question the belief that any particular individual is blessed with an innocent and good inner self that is destined to achieve good things.[43]

3. The redemptive self is simplistic.

> Tragedy gives fuller expression to the ambivalence and the complexity of human lives than do many other narrative forms. It looks with skepticism upon the kind of ideological certitude celebrated in the redemptive self.[44]

4. Human beings are intractably imperfect.

> Tragedy suggests that we are all flawed. We always have been, and we always will be. Tragedy rejects as folly the notion that selves can ever be perfected.[45]

NOTES:

1 Dan P. McAdams, *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By,* Revised and Expanded Edition, Oxford University Press, New York, 2013, p. 277.
2 *Ibidem.*
3 *Ibid.,* p. 278.
4 *Ibid.,* p. 279.
5 *Ibid.*
6 John T. Jost, Brian A. Nosek, and Samuel D. Gosling, "Ideology: Its Resurgence in Social, Personality, and Political Psychology," in *Perspectives on Psychological Science,* 3(2), 2008.
7 Dan P. McAdams, *op. cit.,* p. 281.

8 *Ibidem,* p. 281.
9 *Ibid.,* p. 282.
10 *Ibid.,* pp. 283-284.
11 *Ibid.,* p. 285.
12 *Ibid.,* p. 28.
13 *Ibid.,* p. 30.
14 *Ibid.,* p. 32.
15 *Ibid.,* p. 34.
16 *Ibid.,* p. 35.
17 *Ibid.,* p. xvi.
18 *Ibid.,* p. 210.
19 *Ibid.,* p. 211.
20 *Ibid.,* p. 84.
21 *Ibid.,* p. 85.
22 *Ibid.,* p. 89.
23 *Ibid.,* p. 90.
24 *Ibid.,* p. 108.
25 *Ibid.,* p. 109.
26 *Ibid.*
27 *Ibid.,* p. 24.
28 *Ibid.,* p. 25.
29 *Ibid.,* p. 196.
30 *Ibid.*
31 *Ibid.,* p. 287.
32 *Ibid.,* p. 190.
33 *Ibid.,* p. 91.
34 *Ibid.,* p. 183.
35 *Ibid.,* p. 187.
36 *Ibid.,* p. 183.
37 *Ibid.,* p. 191.
38 *Ibid.,* p. 193.
39 *Ibid.,* p. 229.
40 Christian Smith, *Moral Believing Animals: Human Personhood and Culture,* Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 2003, p. 69.
41 Dan P. McAdams, *op. cit.,* p. 198.
42 *Ibidem,* p. 232.
43 *Ibid.,* p. 233.
44 *Ibid.*
45 *Ibid.*

Poverty in Paradise: the Thesis of Nilus of Ancyra, *On Holy Poverty*

> There now appeared a common vagrant who used to beg in the town of Ithaca and was notorious for his insatiable greed and his ability to eat and drink all the time. He was a big fellow, yet in spite of appearances he had no stamina or muscle. Arnaeus was the name his lady mother had given him at his birth, but all the young men nicknamed him Irus, as he ran errands for anyone who asked. This was the man who now came along, intent on chasing Odysseus from his own house. He began to abuse him…[1]

In Book 18 of the Odyssey, the hero has disguised himself. Arnaeus, a surly beggar, insults and bullies him - thinking him a helpless old man - and Odysseus gives him a well-deserved thrashing.

We are not meant to "feel sorry" for this literally poor man: we are supposed to despise him. Our poet gives us several cues: he has plenty to eat and drink (apparently his begging is successful); he has been given an effeminate and mocking nickname; he is overgrown but physically weak (the opposite, of course, holds at this point for Odysseus, who appears old and feeble but has the strength of a hero); and his greed is "insatiable" - an unseemly vice even in a wealthy person, absolutely reprehensible in someone who neither works nor rules.

And the word used for this low figure is πτωκοσ. It is a vivid and harsh word, for it means, literally, "one who crouches and cringes like an animal" - in other words, a beggar. In classical literature, as in Homer, the πτωκοσ is simply no good.

Now, some eight centuries later, the first Beatitude according to Matthew is "blessed are the poor in spirit," and the Greek is οι πτωκοι τω πνευματι. This signals a seismic shift: in the New Testament, such poor - whether they beg or not -are special in the

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eyes of God, are μακαριοι; and through the rest of the NT, the poor, οι πτωκοι, are suddenly privileged.[2]

The New Testament consistently supports this shift in connotation (if not denotation); in all three Synoptic Gospels, Jesus tells the rich man seeking perfection to sell what he has "and give to the poor"; in Mark, Jesus tells his followers that "the poor you will always have with you" (14:7); in Luke, he sends the message to the imprisoned John the Baptists that, among other signs of the Kingdom dawning, "the Good News is preached to the poor" (7:22). And Romans 15:26, like the Book of Acts, makes it clear that the first Church took care of the poor; the pooling of resources in Acts, further, suggests that Paul's assertion in Galatians that, in Christ, ordinary social distinctions disappear may have been literally realized among the Christians of the First Church.

In the fourth century, many Christians, seeking to recover the Apostolic fire in an era wherein the Church has become legitimized and in their view compromised, chose to follow the lead of Antony and the teaching of Pachomius, developed the theological counterculture that is early monasticism.

Central to their renunciation was voluntary poverty. The Greek Fathers almost always avoid the word πτωκοσ when talking about this kind of poverty.[3] Such poverty, as opposed to πτωχεια, is voluntary: the monk, seeking to be a φιλοσ Χριστι, a "friend of Christ," voluntarily, deliberately, and cheerfully disposes of his wealth and property.

The word the Fathers substituted was ακτημοσυνη, which is, like *agape*, a relatively rare word in Classical literature. Its meaning is simply "devoid of property,"[4] which is neutral. But it becomes powerful; consider these first examples of its Christian use in the fourth century:

> Evagrius:
>
> "blessed is the mind (nous) that at the moment of prayer becomes detached and poor" [5].
>
> John Chrysostom:
>
> ειπε δη μοι, η αγαπη την ακτημοσυνην ετεκεν, η ακτημοσυνη την αγαπην; "Tell me now, does love engender poverty, or does poverty engender love?" [6]

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And the Desert Fathers make it the first of the three foundational monastic virtues as in a well known story: A brother came to the Abba Elias in his hesychasm, in the cave where the cenobium of Abba Sabba gathered, and asked him for a word. "In the days of our Fathers, three virtues were beloved: voluntary poverty, gentleness, and self-mastery; but today, greed, gluttony, and aggressiveness rule. Choose which you wish to be ruled by."

And in the fifth century that monastic choice is the subject of Περι Ακτημοσυνησ, *On Holy Poverty,* an imaginative, compelling, and practically unread treatise by Nilus of Ancyra.

Few people, even Christians, know him. Nilus seems to have been highly esteemed in his own era. But when Evagrius, the great fourth century ascetic theologian, was suspected - wrongly - of heresy for Origenism, to preserve his treatises, his followers - rightly - passed along his works under a bogus name: Nilus'.

The irony is that for centuries, in Orthodoxy anyway, Nilus was in fact the more famous name by far, since his œuvre was swollen to twice its size. And to compound the problem, this inflated Nilus was supplied an entirely fictional but highly Romantic hagiography, full of details invented by who knows whom.

The task of serious twentieth century scholars was to sort out the authentic Evagrius among the treatises attributed to Nilus and thoroughly to discredit the bogus biography.

But Nilus is interesting in his own right, for many reasons. So the time is ripe for an assessment of Nilus' own work. I say assessment, not reassessment, because the authentic Nilus has never really been assessed; he has attracted virtually no attention.

Nilus has much to offer: style, theological vision, and a window into the ascetic world in the fifth century, which suffers a bit of neglect in the shadow of the fourth.

On Holy Poverty, Περι Ακτημοσυνη, seems to be his final work, and it displays all of his gifts.

Voluntary Poverty is addressed to "Magna the Worthy Deacon of Ancyra," and who this is we do not know, then begins with a reference to a previous treatise, *On Monastic Excellence*, wherein he condemned lazy monks. Now, Nilus says, he wishes to write in praise of those who have chosen the right kind of poverty, those who not only "love this way of living," but also serving to "inspire and guide others toward the right choices." [7]

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This introduces the first of Nilus' three principal themes, one of them being that the right practice of voluntary poverty involves awareness of its tradition, that anyone who practices this way of life must be conscious of its continuities from the Old Testament prophets, through John the Baptist, the Apostles, the first Church, and the Desert Ascetics, down to the present day. All of these, including the Old Testament Prophets, are φιλοι Χριστι, "friends of Christ," since it is He who provided the rule: "If you would be my follower, give up all you have."

These demonstrate total dependence upon God:

> Who sent crows twice a day to bring Elijah food when the famine was raging? Who made the fistful of grain in the water jug hold out for the duration? How did Elisha feed a hundred men with ten loaves, with leftovers to prove the abundance of provisions? [8]

And awareness of tradition is future - oriented as well: the contemporary monastic who wishes to follow this tradition must realize as that he or she must become a paradigm for those who will follow, and even a mentor for juniors in his or her own lifetime. Tradition has often been compared to a chain in which each generation is a link; Nilus invents a much more lively image: tradition is like a relay race, wherein each runner must be vividly aware of the runner who precedes him and the runner to whom he hands off the baton.

A faster runner may need to slow down in order to make the handoff to a slower: likewise, says Nilus, Holy Poverty may enable you to run with the swiftness of a bird, but you may need to sacrifice that speed for the sake of those who look to you as their immediate paradigm in *ascesis.*

But the present-day practitioner of voluntary poverty also must realize that he is living now in a kind of Third or Bronze Age of Holy Poverty. This is Nilus' second major theme: there have been three ages of Holy Poverty.

The First or Golden Age was, of course, the time before the Exile from Paradise. Then,

> when the rule had first been laid upon him … Adam … had all delights and pleasures of Paradise at his fingertips, and had access to every variety of plant . [He] could simply take any food he chose, simply by taking into his hand whatever he liked, peeling anything edible. [And he] enjoyed the friendly conversation of God, and his soul felt delight at that.[9]

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The Old Testament Prophets and the first Christians lived in the Second or Silver Age, and that age retained some of what Nilus calls the "prerogatives of sanctity" - some, in other words, of the privileges we had known in Paradise:

The friends of Christ were determined to become pure in their lives, and to distribute among their friends at all and frankly; they commanded the heavens go supply food to the needy, and it delivered manna, obeying the command; at another time, they closed the sky because of inappropriate teaching, and, like a woman in a greatly extended pregnancy, it withheld the rains for three year and six months. Another time, the night rained down fire, when ordered to consume certain poor devils,[10] and yet again it hurled hail like stones from a slingshot on another occasion at yet other wicked men, causing many of them to die - all the righteous had to do was nod their heads for it to happen. They split the earth with a great abyss, and in went certain rebellious revelers along with all their tents and their cattle. They made a great lake to protect the Royal Road, and the land languished under pools of water where, before, it had been parched for lack of moisture. They crossed rivers with neither foot getting wet, they walked upon a road of fire yet experienced none of the damage fire normally does, their bodies resisting the flames the way cold water does, conquering something that causes destruction with something entirely destructible.[11] They were given to raging animals to eat, yet received not a scratch, taming the beasts with soothing prayer as though it were poetic chant.[12] They lit up the darkness with their column of fire, they put out the burning heat of midday, using the clouds like a tent to cool the burning air. They asked for bitter water and scorched earth, and, another time, potable water and abundant fruit for the thirsty people who possessed a certain land. To the sterile they gave fertility, and restored to life those among them who had died. They withstood a multitude of tyrants with spears, they ridiculed warriors in battle formation, they put the hostile phalanxes to flight, they parried the assaults of the enemy without injury, they burst forth from the locked doors of prisons, they were miraculously freed from their shackles, they ignored the bloody threats of rulers[13] and the furious rage of the peoples and never sensed any danger.[14]

Now, the contemporary Christian lives in a Third or Bronze Age, and he has virtually lost the prerogatives of Protopoverty. The Exile from Paradise means, for man in general, a complete reversal of these conditions: now, the ordinary man must

drag a shovel, a hoe, and a sickle, cleaving that earth (which would on its own produce very little) with a plow, and when it is seeded, bring in farm hands and mow and gather the fruit, pound it, mix the farina (fine meal) with water, cook it with fire, and thus, at last, after all this enormous effort, he eats the loaf of bread.[15]

Which remains the lot of humankind to this day; the steps are the same,; only the technology has advanced, and according to Genesis 4, that is a decidedly mixed blessing.

The real blessing, Nilus explains, is actually what most people call the "curse": God has "adjusted reality to current [human] needs:

> Now the proof is in the experiment.   What regularly affects the senses frequently cancels hope, but the solicitude of the higher power never disappoints.   Besides, what farmer has not known failure of the corps? Who has not known what losses can ensue when trying to get crops to grow? … Then again who has not, in time, discovered the security that divine providence offers? How that gift of God provides farmers, when necessary, with just the right amount of food, and, when those who have made use of every technology in order to rejoice in their affluence and abundance have begun to experience famine and need, God miraculously prepares the table for those who have trusted in his care? [16]

In other words, the conditions of Paradise would no longer work for us: we could not handle ease and abundance; we need the hard edge of life in exile, in order to curb our appetites, and realize God's Providence; if we had the conditions of Paradise now, we would simply forget God, and we would soon become fat and die.

In ages past, there was only one way of Poverty; another symptom of the decline is that, in the present, there are three: "The way of Holy Poverty in the present life is triplex: there is the middle way; there is the material way; and there is the way of many possessions."

The Material Way (της ενυλου αγωγη) is the label Nilus assigns to the Messalians, the Ευχιται or *Euchites*, a movement which would be condemned as heretical at the Council of Ephesus very soon after Nilus' death. These practiced celibacy and poverty only in order to practice Paul's "continual prayer"; they viewed themselves as above, or beyond, the sacraments, and depended on patrons for livelihood. In the course of this they gave monastic poverty, and monks in general, a bad reputation, for not only did they leech off the wealthy, they were also, like so many gnostic

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deviants, antinomian, and tended to run wild; people were actually afraid of them.

Nilus calls them "material" for the same reason John of Damascus calls them "materialist mystics": they believed their visions were literal and physical, that is, that they saw, or heard, God with their physical organs of sense, rather than with the eye of the soul, as Orthodox do. Nilus despises them the way St. Benedict despises footloose monks, and he hurls invective at them.

"The Way of Many Possessions" (πολυκτημονος) is a Nilus coinage for a very recent phenomenon; the word is a deliberate reversal of our basic word for Holy Poverty, Ακτημονυση. The historical context explains the puzzling word. Less than a century had passed since the deaths of Antony and Pachomius. But cenobitic monasticism had in that short time already begun to experience the great monastic paradox: for the monastery, to succeed is to fail. That means, the focus, energy, organization, delayed gratification, and cooperation demanded of the cenobitic lifestyle resulted almost always, when the monks devoted themselves to any activity or any manufacture, in great worldly success. It was to be a truism in the medieval West and in the history of Orthodoxy: if the monks raised grapes, their wine would be the best available, if wheat, they baked the best bread; their hospitals, scriptoria, and eventually schools were almost always the best around and frequently the only ones.

Because Ancyra was so well-positioned geographically and politically (and still is), and because the Late Empire was enjoying a brief period of renewed peace and prosperity under Theodosius II, first under his Prefect Anthemius, then, from 416, under his own rule, Eastern monasteries were flourishing in precisely this way: they were becoming rich. And that wealth meant they were drawn into the cares universally known to affluent businessmen. Which is dangerous; Jesus says it is harder for a rich man to get into heaven than for a camel to pass through the eye of the needle; Nilus expands this:

> Those who embrace such heavy and onerous burdens will enter the Kingdom of Heaven only with difficulty - if at all - as they try to assimilate to the Truth through the eye of the needle, squeezing with force through that narrow gate into glory, through the strait channel, and on into the nearly inaccessible ground. The narrow way tears at them, though they twist themselves sideways to get through".[17]

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What they produce is "merchandise rather than philosophy," and still, they are called monks.

The Middle Way is, of course, the way Nilus commends: between the irresponsibility of the Messalians, on the one hand, and the secular compromise of the affluent cenobites, on the other.

We cannot realize the privileges of the first two eras:

> No one alive today either reaches or has ever reached the level of virtue attained by the Holy Ones[18] of long ago, who, as our sources tell us, lived the monastic life homeless, hearthless, garment-less,[19] always migrating, and gladly taking what food they could get when they could get it, and making their bed out of whatever was at hand, and wherever they happened to be, and not giving a thought (as nowadays they do) to those who contrived against them or chased them off, and to the many who bullied them.[20]

But like the Hagioi of the Second Age, there is a certain excellence, a certain *arête,* in this middle way in the Third Age. It will not result in the kinds of miraculous feats the Saints of the Bible performed, but it will result in a rapid flight through this life, it will allow the greatest possible share in leisure and in contemplation:

> You are carefree of possessions and from the noise of those who demand tribute. You have kept nothing in the way of property, and have gained everything in the way of authority. As you followed the voice of the Lord, you do not have a spare tunic, and instead you have been clothed in Christ, who frightens away any trouble that would assail you from without.[21]

And this leads to Nilus' third, and most important, theme. Holy Poverty is many things: it is an element in *ascesis* (and Nilus is one of the most avid users of that term, borrowed from athletics by St. Paul; he makes extended comparisons between the ascetic who embraces poverty and the athlete who strips down in order to compete - and compounds that, in his usually knotted way, with a comparison with Joseph, who, had he actually been naked, would have offered nothing to Potophar's wife to tear and condemn him with!), it is obedience to two of Christ's commands, it is imitation of the various Saints, the αγιοι, it is renunciation of the damaged world.

But above all, all Holy Poverty is a return to the condition to Eden. For Adam was, says Nilus, the first Poor Person. It seems

counterintuitive: most of us think of Adam before the exile from Paradise as rich, not poor, since he has anything he wants.

In this Golden or First Age of Poverty, man has everything, but he owns nothing. Nothing is "his," there is no such word. There is only the first Covenant: he may have anything he wants save one thing. And that one prohibition is for one reason only:

> Therefore God did not immediately bring about the satiety of abounding honor, and the smug cheer[22] that goes with it, but went to keep company with him every day when he needed some encouragement[23] for the soul in the wilderness, committing the enjoyment of all the fruits that grew in Paradise to his enjoyment, ordering him to abstain from one only, not because of its taste, but training him like an athlete (γυμναζων).[24]

Poverty is a return to Eden, just as Christ is the New Adam. Nilus calls Adam the "living protoplasm, the πρωτοπλασμη ζωη, a term which originates in the late second century with Irenaeus - who is Nilus' remote model, theologically, and with whom he shares much vocabulary. Poverty is an ascetical way of realizing what happens in Baptism: which is, the old Adam is replaced by Christ. This most venerable of ancient theologies has its perfect visual analogue in the baptistery of the House Church at Dura-Europos (see next page). Here we see Christ the Good Shepherd in the upper zone; immediately beneath him, the naked Eve and Adam. Baptism effects the transition from the lower to the higher zone; *ascesis* perfects it; and Holy Poverty re-opens the gates of Eden: for the One who was poor closed them, and can open them again.

NOTES:

1 *The Odyssey*, trans. E. V. Rieu, Rev. D. C. H. Rieu, Penguin, 2003, p.239.

2 The familiar Matthaean form, cited here, can usefully be interpreted to mean "those who know their poverty of spirit," and who, therefore, know they have to beg - beseech God - for it, just as the literal poor for fulfillment. This makes eminent sense in the context of the early Church. But most scholars think the Lucan form, which is simply "Blessed are the poor," is likely the original form, in which case Jesus is declaring πτωκοι "blessed," μακαιροι. Like so many of Jesus' sayings and stories, this is a challenge to common sense: poor beggars are not, in any ordinary sense, blessed, and neither are "those who mourn" - a point that is sharpened by the fact that μακαριοσ can also be translated "happy."

3 Gregory of Nyssa is the major exception, in his *Homily 1 on the Beatitudes*, but he can hardly avoid it, as he is quoting the Gospel.

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4 α-privative + κτημ+ οσυνη. Derived from κταομαι, "I get, I procure for myself, I acquire."

5 *De Oratione*,119. See Documenta Catholica Omnia; Evagrius Ponticus *De Oratione* (0345-0399) (http.//www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/ 20_20_0345-0399).

6 *Homily on the Acts of the Apostles*, in *A Selected Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, series I, volume 11, ed. by Philip Schaff, W.M.B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1889, 11.1

7 Nilus, *De Paupertate Voluntaria*, in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, 79, col. 968 ff. This is the only extant version of the treatise; from time to time, I have made editorial judgments to correct what I consider errors in the PL text. Whenever I have done so I will explain in a footnote. All translations of Nilus' work are mine; there is no translation into any modern language of anything authentically belonging to Nilus.

8 *Ibidem,* chapter 17.

9 *Ibid.*

10 αλαστορας.

11 το φθοροποιον τω ευφθαρτω νικησαντες. An elegant phrase; Nilus has coined the word ευφθαρτω, *eu* "completely" + *ftharto,* "corruptible, breakable, vulnerable."

12 The reference is of course to Orpheus.

13 αρξοντων.

14 Nilus, *op.cit.*

15 *Ibidem.*

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.,* chapter 52.

18 αγιων. Or, in Lat., "Saints" *(sanctorum)*.

19 Ανοικος, ανεστιος, ανειμων . The alliteration of course disappears in English (and in Latin: *sine domo, sine foco, et sine vestibus*). The conventional phrase is used by Lucianus, *De Sacrificiis* 11, αοικος και ανεστιος, "homeless and hearthless." In other words Nilus augments the standard "heart and home" making it, "homeless, hearthless, and garment/less," to emphasize the completeness of the earlier poverty while keeping the alliteration.

20 Nilus, *op. cit.,* chapter 3.

21 *Ibidem.*

22 καταστρηνιασαντα της αληκτου ευφροσυνης.

23 ψυξαγωγιας. Literally "soul-guiding"; the word was used, originally, in the sense of leading back souls from the nether world: cf. Philostratus, *Heroicus* 18.3.

24 Nilus, *op. cit.,* chapter 14.

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Frightening Habits
Existential States Caused by Extreme Aesthetic Experiences

All aesthetic experience involves degrees of individuation. Part of the pleasure of the varieties of beauty we find in nature and art is the experience of being taken out of oneself, of imagining oneself as another, in living in a different world, most often momentarily but sometimes habitually. The following will be a not-completely speculative exercise in the metaphysics of aesthetics, by which I mean an attempt to analyze and understand how the aesthetic experience of certain uncommon artificial and natural objects can change our behavior, our character, and, I would add, our existential state.

Because of the admittedly nebulousness of the subject, I have tried to organize the existential states in question in the form of a chart (see next page) and a rather rigid categorical scheme. My hope is that my scheme does not obscure the insights of the commentators or the actual changes we go through when we give ourselves up to beauty in all its varieties.

Deindividuation

Deindividuation is loss of self through immersion in a mass. Augmented by aesthetic stimulants such as music, dancing, drugs and sex, deindividuation can produce sensory overload, disorientation, synaesthesia, and abnormal behavior. The experience is often blissful, sometimes terrifying, and occasionally dangerous.

Most mainstream critics and aestheticians have ignored deinviduation or deplored it, because it obliterates the supposed autonomy of the rational mind. Deindividudation cancels ordinary reality. How can one imitate the inimitable?

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EXISTENTIAL STATES
caused by aesthetic experiences

	DEINDIVIDUATION	PSEUDO-INDIVIDUATION	HYPERINDIVIDUATION
	Romantic longing Winckelmann's identity-loss Kant's "mathematical" sublime Excess of the signified	Aristotelian classicism	Enlightenment rationality Burke's emotional exercise Kant's "dynamic" sublime Excess of the signifier
action:	**tertiary** death and/or dismemberment metamorphoses	**dominant** ordinary drama	**primary** conflict and victory super-heroism
sight:	**secondary** darkness indeterminacy	**subordinate** normal beauty determinacy	**secondary** light augmented determinacy
sound :	**primary** chromatic harmony unison late Wagner wall of sound acid rock	**subordinate** mood music	**tertiary** diatonic harmony dissonance Beethoven's 5th & 9th martial rythmns hard rock

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This basic conceptual restraint should long ago have been enough to prevent anyone from identifying, describing, categorizing or otherwise representing the state of deindividuation. Nevertheless, people do try to describe the state itself, using an advanced glossary for its various aspects ("sublime", "mystical", "transcendent", etc.). Deindividuation's enthusiasts, such as the Romantics, notorious for a general preference for night over day and death over life, have gone even further, claiming that it has social effects.

Deindivuation's most common trope is identity-loss, sometimes a bit too concretely represented as dismemberment. Deindividuation fills consciousness, and empties it. The "mass" we are immersed in is beyond our control: either a mass of sensations and emotions, or an overwhelming conceptual problem, an inconceivable idea. Typically it is an excess of concretion rather than abstraction. This is reverse Platonism: instead of revealing universal order, the universal is diluted, allowing form to lose out to formlessness. Perceiving the infinite is perceptually simple. Complexity can detract from apprehending the sublime object's scale or import.

A lack of information can enhance the sublime. In deindividuating art, imitation of nature does give way to the presentation of what is typically described as higher or deeper than nature.

Although it is quite possible to deindividuate alone or in a small group, deindividuation is commonly considered a crowd phenomenon, something that happens in congregations, audiences, rallies and riots. In entertainment, some genres (dance music, rock, opera) produce deindividuation on a regular basis, and some works (Wagner's *Tristan,* most famously) produce it as their main effect. In these cases we are immersed in the "mass" element of mass virtual pleasure: the mass of onlookers and performers, which produces a melange of contact, imitation, identification, and sensory overload. Barriers between people give way.

Deindividuation would be included under the Aristotelian category of *thaumaston:* improbable, magical and, according to Aristotle, irrational *(alogon).* Aristotle implies that *thaumaston* denies the guiding principle of drama, the imitation of nature.[1] Against the background of deindividuation, the figures on the stage are invested with multiple meanings, far exceeding what they are actually doing.

a) action

In terms of plot, deindividuation is a paradox: the action of inaction. The center of interest shifts from action and reflection to a succession of states of mind which have no connection to ordinary reality: feelings without objects, motivation without motives. Deindividuation does not gain its aesthetic value from playing on sympathy, curiosity, or the need for excitement; it does not produce that sort of concern for our own well being which Aristotle characterized as pity and fear. Nor does it seek to relieve us of negative emotions. Deindividuation is not catharsis.

Undeniably, deindividuating drama dispenses with certain basic resources of the theater, undercutting character and action. In form and content, indeterminacy cannot be part of ordinary reality, the arena of action and suffering. It is about the liberation of the spirit from its finite condition. This fact addresses the confusion of autonomy and action, and the false identification of both with freedom. Supposedly deindividuation threatens moral autonomy, and thus freedom of action. It has been devalued in favor of more active forms of entertainment. Its presence as an element in the structure of mass virtual pleasuring has been used to devalue entertainment as a whole. Confusing action with freedom seems to give the actors more freedom, and hence power, than the audience.

The threefold identification of cognition and action and both with the exercise of free will has been one of the most obscuring distortions in the tradition. Intellect = activity = freedom implies that "passive" enjoyment on the part of the audience somehow compromises our autonomy as agents. Presumably non-mass behaviors like reading or conversing stimulate the active processes, while mass behavior as such does not. Distrust of deindividuation reflects larger anxieties about massification and loss of control.

But is deindividuation more of a threat to freedom than other forms on the continuum? Why should an onslaught of sounds and images be any more pacifying than an onslaught on arguments? Why is going to a rock concert any more (or less) antisocial than, say, looking at a picture or reading a book? One reason I chose to present aesthetic experience in a tripartite fashion is that to fucus on deindividuation alone, outside its function in a continuum diverts, our attention from other elements of mass virtual pleasuring that should be just as, if not more, disturbing.

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Dramatic action, according to the composer/philosopher/ revolutionary Richard Wagner, can be deindividuated simply by being multiplied, as in a chorus or a crowd scene. Through mutual interaction, individuals gain what Wagner calls "manifoldness". The action of a specific character, no matter how distinctly drawn, becomes "many-voiced". Dramatic action, deindividuated in this sense, can then seem to transcend ordinary reality and to gain the quality of wonder.[2]

For Wagner, ideas, not less than heroes and heroines, are immediate, living and apprehensible through the senses. In his music music dramas ideas do not have supporting roles: they seem to dominate the action, and typically become more and more prominent as the drama progresses. Yet it is important to recognize that these are not the functional concepts of ordinary reality: no less than musical themes and scenic forms, they both represent and succumb to a process of deindividuation. Abstractions in perceptible form, they eventually collapse into nothingness.

Wagner, inspired by both Buddhism and Romantic love, thought deindividuation is basic to human nature because of sexual attraction. Hormone-induced idealization of a sexual partner is merely a prelude to loss of self. Wagner finds proof in the myth of Zeus and the girl Semele, the union/rape? that produced Dionysus. Longing for sensuousness, Zeus dissolves (while of course "annuling" his human partner in the process). Wagner's love scenes are orgies of deindividuation: the most obvious example, that of the second act of *Tristan und Isolde,* makes annihilation hotter than sex. Sometimes what is being negated is the incest taboo. In the first act of *Die Walkure,* the twins Siegmund and Sieglinde, whose pairing will produce the Dionysus-avatar Siegfried, experience mutual deindividuation. In the last act, Wotan, Zeus' Germanic incarnation, experiences deindividuation while saying farewell to his daugher Brunnhilde (who herself gets put to sleep). In every case, individuals are negated so life can be affirmed.

Redemption, for Wagner, always involves deindividuation. His *Ring of the Nibelung,* a cycle of music dramas that includes *Die Walkure,* is an anti-Oresteia in the sense that order gives way to chaos. One of Wagner's more explicit philosophical concerns was the danger of partiality and formalism, otherwise known as the rule of law. In the *Ring,* Wotan's system of contracts (metaphor for industrial capitalism) has become rigid and lifeless. The protagonists

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Siegfried and Brunnhilde sacrifice themselves to bring this regime down. They accomplish this by being dissolved into their elements. Water and fire, the traditional elements of purification, play key roles in this action. Brunnhilde, the "sacral virgin", is first protected by fire and then consumed by water. Siegfried, the master of fire in forging, is destroyed by fire-forged metal and then consumed by water. Even the shining Ring, symbol of order, returns to its elemental condition in the Rhine. The demise of all finite beings was for Wagner the realization of the "nothingness" of the world.[3]

For Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, tragedy is a representation of deindividuation. Generalizing from his own not atypical experience of Isolde's *Liebestod* at the end of Tristan und Isolde, Nietzsche concludes that all tragedy, Greek, Shakespearean and Wagnerian, contains a point at which the plot itself breaks down. At this point, presumably at or near the end, the world of phenomena is led to its limits "where it denies itself and seeks to flee back into the womb of the true and only reality". This provides joy in annihilation, "fusion with primal being."[4]

b) sight

Deindividuating forms are ones that flow into each other and defy our powers of perceptual discrimination. The blending and obscuring of forms imitates the infinite variability of the state of mind of the hero at the tragic catastrophe, in integrity of his character together with the new vitality occasioned by the liberation of the finite spirit from its natural condition.

Wagner well understood that visual arts can provide deindividuation, provided we intuit them disinterestedly. Given disinterest, visual arts can operate like music, uniting the Will with the essence of external things.[5] Wagner calls attention to ancient tragedy's use of the cothurnus, masks, and costumes to idealize the action, to provide the traditional sublime characteristics: distance, magnitude, awe. In his own practice he dispenses with the masks, to reveal more distinctly the individuality of his characters. But individuation for Wagner is merely a means to a more complex deindividuation. Expression and gesture (as in Shakespeare) are analogues of music.

Deindividuation for Wagner carries a considerable metaphysical burden: knowledge of the essence of reality. He

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describes such knowledge in visual terms: a veridical illusion, an immediate vision, a dream-picture. It "shines in the night" of inwardness, "as a light quite other than the world-sun's light, apprehensible only out of this depth." In the *Ring* the lighting acts with as much dramatic point as the characters (sometimes more). The play of light and darkness is actually a contest between two metaphysical principles, light and anti-light, as it were. In this contest, light not only struggles with but also symbolizes its rival, darkness, which itself symbolizes deindividuation. At the beginning, nature appears as a gradual transition from darkness to light at the bottom of the Rhein river. When the Rhinegold finally appears, it is in a shaft of sunlight. This was supposed to suggest a sort of origin-myth that the Presocratics or Romantics might have come up with: the world begins in an interchange of elements, in this case water and light. Light enters into water and transfigures it: meaning, spirit unites with matter and transforms it. Just as the beginning there is a gradual transition from darkness to light, so at the end we have a transition from light to darkness.

In *Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche suggests that in tragedies which do not involve music, a musical analogue may be provided by scenic structure and visuals, thus revealing "a deeper wisdom than the poet himself can put into words and concepts." Nietzsche even hints that plot elements themselves may provide such an analogue: Hamlet, he notes, "talks more superficially than he acts." Presented along with such a visual counterpart, the protagonists and their actions seem more defined. They make up a sort of indeterminate geometry, "a delicate web". Visuals are given an "internal expansion", and reveal their structure, "the relations of things." Visuals re-produce music's reproduction of the world structure. Recopying clarifies: we can <u>see</u> the action as a movement toward deindividuation.

c) *sound*

There is a good reason that sound is the primary medium for deindividuation: we can't "close" our ears. Sound has seemed to some to be somehow less illusory than sight. Perhaps this is because of sound's association with the human voice and therefore immediate truth-telling. Music expresses objects that are indeterminate. Indeterminacy has been attributed to music from early on. The lack of strict definition, in form and reference, which

is more obvious in music than in the plastic arts, appeared to be one of music's best qualifications for profundity and importance, as contrasted with the supposed superficiality characteristic of the other arts. As we shall see, music became for the Romantics a mystical source of artistic creation and philosophical illumination, a solvent of self and world.

Romantic composers investigated the expressive possibilities of musical "color": color is perceptible but, in comparison with harmony, formless. For them instrumental voices sound at once human and alien. Wagner is the dramaturge of deindividuation. Music, for him, is primarily a means to experience this state. Following Plato, he assumes that deindividuation can be communicated through a chain of imitations. Invoking classical tradition, Wagner describes the process: the experience of deindividuation is first described from without, in the myth-maker's narrative, and then produced in his audience by means of poetry, the "musical" element of myth. In music the element of contemplation, of detached audition, is secondary to immediate identification with what is being expressed. Music allows us to assimilate ourselves instantly and completely to the action or emotion or situation it expresses, whether of the composer, performer, or protagonist.

Wagner gives as an example of deindividuation Beethoven's entire Fifth Symphony, with its "long, connected tracts of sound" expressive of "endless agitation." According to Wagner, there are degrees of deindividuation within music: harmony – the "vertical" extension of notes in a chord) is the least determinate of all the elements of music, and so takes the lowest position on the individuation-scale, while melody – harmony mirrored in :horizontal" extension – is slightly more determinate, " the surface of the sea of harmony". As music gets more programmatic, it is getting more determinate. If anything is sung, such as the choral finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, then music can approach the determinacy of the text. So even music, deindividuation's paradigm in art, ascends the scale to greater and greater determinacy and significance.

Sympathetic identification, however, is not music's most characteristic effect. Identification is directed not so much toward particular emotions or actions or states as toward the abstract types of these. And yet expressing abstractions is not music's most characteristic effect either. Universals are as liable to definition as

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particulars. Rather, music's most characteristic effect is the communication of the essential and thorough-going lack of definition in its subject-matter: the unknowable and inexpressible "infinite". Its objective pole is the sublime of expanse; its subjective pole is "longing" *(Sehnsucht)*. Indeed, it is not even clear that longing in this sense is an emotion at all, if we understand by emotion as affective response to an event or situation within ordinary reality. The ultimate object of musical expression is metaphysical, that which the abstract types of action, emotion and character may themselves be taken to express: impulse toward organization, fullness of productivity, eventual dissolution of all forms.

Wagner thought it was music's deindividuating quality that gives it prominence in music drama. This genre requires a move from the determinacy of the dramatic text to the indeterminacy of music. The text is to be "vindicated" or "elucidated" through melody, and melody elucidated through harmony. This gives the text the qualities of Schiller's "Ode to Joy" in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony: "necessary, all-powerful, all-uniting". Borrowing Schopenhauerian terminology, he argued that when we hear music "the Will" overcomes the illusion of difference from the essence external things. Music frees us from the limitations of individuality. We are one with the essence of things. "Hearing has opened to the Will the gate through which the world presses on it, and it on the world."

Psychological deindividuation is expressed through formal deindividuation. Of course Wagner knew how to represent individual characters traits musically, but the point of doing so was not accurate representation for its own sake: it was to add to their allusiveness. Wagner subjects his themes (leitmotives) to essentially symphonic development, producing a texture in which themes "contrast, complete, re-shape, divorce and intertwine with one another." Just as individual persons deindividuate in the mass, so too do individual musical lines deindividuate in counterpoint and harmony. Deindividuation, primarily through music, gives music drama traditional qualities of the sublime: depth, elevation, wonder.

The *Ring* cycle begins with a musical representation of nature: a tonic-dominant-tonic motif. At the end, Wagner decided to cut short Brunnhilde's closing monologue, substituting an orchestral ending. Music, the deinvididuating medium, is alone capable of

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communicating the drama's metaphysical meaning. A motif from the second act of *Die Walkure,* associated with Sieglinde's love for her unborn child, Siegfried, not heard in any other connection anywhere else in the trilogy, reappears as Brunnhilde holds up the Ring. It gives way immediately to the Valhalla motif and other motifs associated with various characters and events, but does not disappear altogether, and in the final bars overwhelms everything else. This ending has been controversial: Shaw took it as evidence for Wagner's failure to sustain the serious mission of music drama throughout the last half of the cycle. The juxtaposition of the death of Brunnhilde, Siegfried, the Gods and Alberich's offspring Hagen, and the destruction of Valhalla, with this life-theme presents us with the key to Wagner's conception of tragedy: the presentation of destruction as the medium for renewal.

When music is produced by the chorus, its deindividuating effect is amplified. The chorus reverses the traditional relationship between text and music, which privileged the text. In this Aristotelian tradition, truth to nature required the subjugation of music to the text. This tradition had no way to account for the value of pure musical beauty, nor the element of spectacle in the ballet, chorus and scenic effects, nor the device of the *deus ex machina.* This tradition did not admit that music itself could be the vehicle for dramatic ideas inexpressible through action or speech. For the Romantics, by contrast, characterization, plot construction and diction, in their definiteness, are incapable of communicating the elevation and freedom -- the access of infinite power -- characteristic of the state of mind of the tragic hero. The great advantage of the dramatic text -- its ability to define the action -- is also a disadvantage in sublime tragedy, where action is subordinated to contemplation and where no specific situations or measures are adequate to the meaning. In music drama, music is central, overcoming the limitations of character and text. Singing and dancing, at once immediately appealing and highly formalized, transforms the tragic catastrophe into what is in effect the idealized counterpart of suffering and destruction. The tragic hero becomes a universal protagonist. In this way the chorus overcomes the distance of dramatic representation and includes the audience directly, through synethy, in the hero's spiritual elevation.

Nietzsche maintains that tragedy involves a moment when the myth, or plot, is "broken and annihilated". The primary agent for

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breaking down the plot is music, like that of the Greek chorus or Wagnerian orchestra. Plot, in Nietzsche's dichotomy, is Apollonian, deriving from the world of visual imagination. Music, by contrast, is the "objectification of the Dionysian state", an immediate representation of deindividuation. Even though music may merely accompany and highlight the action during most of the drama, in the "total effect of tragedy, the Dionysian predominates." "Dionysus speaks the language of Apollo; and Apollo, finally the language of Dionysus."

Music is the objectification of a Dionysian state: "it represents . . . shattering of the individual and his fusion with primal being. The action of inaction also describes the audience response. Typically, deindividuating audiences are quiet and non-violent. Is it possible to enjoy deindividuation and still live and act in the everyday world? To overcome its escapist allure? Instead of negating the will, can deindividuation potentiate it?

Romantics would say that the traditional action = freedom equation is itself a form of unfreedom, leading to the fetishization of control. When the formula is extended to action = freedom = intellection, we have a prescription for a kind of internal domination, the fetishization of clarity. But why should one cognitive condition out of many be the sole medium of liberation? Wagner, for example, wants to free us through sensuality. His music dramas are full of sexual ecstasy, incest, man-animal love, and climazes of all kinds. He want to energize us through forced erotic pseudo-emotions, using our nature masochism as a resource for empowerment. Wagner's dramaturgy is a homeopathic cure for submissiveness. With Wagner the authoritarian text gives way to another kind of authority, the authority of the mass: multiplicity becomes universality, in which all voices are united and ultimately drowned out by the orchestra.

During the experience of deindividuation, we may seem to assume other identities. Wagner thought that this dialectic of identities was a symbol of universal love. Does this help us, once re-individuated, to envision alternatives to the present scheme of things? Does it suggest possibilities for change? Deindividuation seems to open up the determinate, authoritarian text to multiplicity. Is deindividuation inherently democratic, as implied by Wagner's "many voices"? Can it a protean power for change?

No matter how vivid, such apparent identity-shifts seem ridiculous, disorienting, wonderful. They are certainly not the stuff of action within ordinary reality. After all, what we are talking about is the state of mind of the tragic hero at the moment of catastrophe. But within this state it is tempting to see some recompense. Idealists tend to treat the hero as a sort of Platonic philosopher-hero, which is to say, a dramatic vehicle for communicating a vision of the world seen "theoretically". In this vision, movement is apparent, and only rest is real. We are aligned with universal order. The normal response to devindiduation in any medium is a process of re-individuation, in which the self gradually recomposes itself. We again affirm the world and resume action.

Romantics equate deinviduation with sublimation, a supra-individual transport. Romantic heroes tend to be consumed, at one point or another, in an immediate experience of forces of nature, sometimes outside, often within the individual. If nature confounds human understanding, it does so by virtue of its endless multiplicity and change. Only insofar as humans, in their pride, seek to stand aloof from this process can deindividuation seem threatening. Deindividuation transfigures life's determinate movements and individual characters. It is the state of being in harmony with the fundamental process of nature. This descent into nothingness enables a return, not for the individual but rather for the individual transformed into an elemental force (the hyperindividual). Deindividuation promises the return, on a higher plane, of finite existence, of worldly action and social intercourse. The tragic hero dies so that the audience may live.

If we can be open fully to deindividuation we can take its power into ourselves, just as the philosopher, through theoria, recreates in his own mind the structure of the cosmos. In this way the philosopher-hero, and, by imitation, the audience, can gain a heroic power to transcend the limitations imposed by bodies and societies.

Even the terminal chaos of the *Ring* was meant to suggest an eventual process of re-individuation. Chaos, symbolized by the waters of the Rhine, is itself part of a greater order, the cyclical structure of birth, death and re-birth. For Wagner, universal order takes the form of love as sympathy, in the sense of the magical interchange of forces in nature, the human world and supernature. Love defies limitation and crosses all boundaries. Sexual love

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recapitulates the polarity of nature and spirit, and with an analogous power: it is a source of renewal and illumination. Poetry returns to music, which is another way of saying that, by devaluing character and movement, the aesthetic function of the representation of character and action is achieved.

The issue of control is central to deindividuation: if the experience were not arranged in some way to provide for the ultimate safety of the self, there could be no aesthetic value, nothing entertaining at all. It is impossible not to control deindividuation. Even dumb awe is an act of orientation. Of course there are degrees of control: different modes of mass virtual pleasure call for different stances, from distancing to identification. Some ways of experiencing mass virtual pleasure affect us more than others.

In considering this issue, we are led to look at the internal power struggle posed by mass virtual pleasure. There could very well be an isomorphism between this pleasure and political action. The restoration of individual autonomy sometimes becomes the chief benefit of the experience. The traditional theory of the sublime is based on the assumption of sublime resistance or stoic endurance. The aesthetic value of deindividuation lies in the moderation of emotion, so that what is initially terrifying loses its intensity. Deindividuation is an analgesic.

Insofar as we are able to connect deindividuation to a political stance, it seems to be especially troubling. We have seen its use -- in Wagnerian form -- under Hitler. But of course German culture before Hitler had room for rapture, in the form of nature worship, mass intoxication, etc. No matter how domesticated or reimagined -- as holistic thinking, eco-consciousness, forms of Emersonian pantheism -- deindividuation has an undeniable irrationalist potential.

Pseudoindividuation

The most common form of entertainment is enjoyment of the simulations of elements of reality. Of all possible materials, reality would seem to be the least likely source of such gratification; nevertheless, we continue to take keen pleasure in vivid representations of our ordinary world, even the least attractive parts of it.

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In "normal" entertainment, deindividuation functions most often as a framing-device. Drama depends on it: the "suspension of disbelief", which after all is a kind of loss of self. Hyperindividuation, likewise, is sometimes used to drive the plot. But most entertainment in the modern period has been primarily about individuals: the characters and what they do. Within the typical farrago of actions and reactions, unions, separations, victories, defeats, and the like, deindividuated characters (fools, drunks, etc.) and hyperindividuated characters (heros, antiheros, megalomaniacs, etc.) enter in only for dramatic relief. They punctuate the action, contrasting with and thus helping to delineate the specificity of the main proceedings.

I call the result of all this for the audience "pseudo" – individuation because their primary pleasure in ordinary drama and what might be described as normal beauty comes from an imaginative identification with the protagonists, creating a sort of false self. This false self is most vivid in the moment of the aesthetic experience, but can remain with an individual in his dreams, his memories, and his learned responses to social situations. People imitate what they see on the big and little screens, and though most examples tend toward superficiality – matters of style and apparel or discourse, among the most common – the experience of pseudoindividuation can carry over into other areas of life, extending a sort of Romantic irony over all of one's interactions with others because one knows that there is always an escape route in the pseudoindividuating aesthetic experience, always alternative selves to inhabit, at least in imagination.

a) action

As an aesthetic effect, pseudoindividuation produces processes of restoration or consolidation of the self, or in other words, to ensure that the self is indeed in possession of itself. The representation of action, through linguistic, visual or other media, has been thought since antiquity to have individuating effects in this sense. Aristotle can be cited as the chief witness. His notion that the chief use of tragedy is the catharsis of pity and fear became a paradigm of individuation. The various theories of the sublime that emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be considered as variations on this notion.[6] Catharsis may leave the

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subject the way it was before the arousal of pity and fear, or it may leave it better off. The self subjects itself to "pollution" through sympathetic identification (Platonic *mimesis)* of one or more debilitating emotions (fear, frenzy or enthusiasm) but then is purified and restored to its pre-pollution state. Or, alternatively, the self, bringing debilitating qualities from the outside, is purged of them.

The dichotomy generates an amazing proliferation of complications. Catharsis implies mimesis, since it necessarily involves first having something to cathart. There is an initial mimetic stage , when participants reproduce imaginatively what is going on around them. The dichotomy actually comes down to a disagreement about the duration of this period. In the Platonic view, virtual images leave long-term traces in the mind that remain after the act of virtual pleasuring is over. In the Aristotelian view, virtual pleasuring brings about short-term mimetic effects but then cancels them within the span of the experience itself, leaving the mind free of further effects.

We have to assume the existence of mimesis in order to hypothesize catharsis. Is there a prior move that makes mimesis possible? After all, no one seem particularly upset about all the possibilities for mimesis in ordinary reality. So what is it about mass virtual pleasuring that gives it this special mimetic capacity? I believe the answer lies in the fact that the mimesis-catharsis is a polarity within a larger polarity, one of whose poles – deindividuation – is provides the necessary condition for mimesis. Mimesis itself depends on an initial catharsis of the active part of ourselves. We have to experience the mimetic form passively, or it will not have an effect.

(Since this is an essay about extreme aesthetic states, my treatment of this element of the aesthetic continuum will be appropriately brief.)

b) sight

For Aristotle, the plot is primary. Spectacle, poetry, and music are just accessories. Merely reading or hearing the plot of a tragedy, he says, is just as effective in arousing (and, presumably, purging) emotion as attending a full theatrical presentation.[7] (Whether or not reducing dramatic representation to such a logocentric stalk

contributes or detracts from *thaumaston* (see above), Aristotle does not say.)

c) sound

As with sight, music in pseudoindividuation is subordinate – "mood music," "background music," cues for the action and delineation of characters. It may at first seem surprising that the inventors of opera could have found theoretic justification in Aristotle, for in practice opera imitates nature just as little as it reflects what Plato would have preferred, the rational structure of the cosmos. As I have illustrated above, the real requirements of opera as music and drama seem to go beyond both the Platonic and Aristotelian perspectives.

Hyperindividuation

Hyperindividuation of aesthetic response is the effect most often described by traditional theorists of the sublime such as Burke and Kant. This species of sublimity has been described as "negative", "dynamic". This is the "beauty" of terror. This is, in Nietzsche's formulation, the "Apollonian" sublime. In the archetypal case, there is a conflict of two definite entities, the self and a threatening object. When an object is seemingly impossible to measure or a sign seems overwhelmingly obscure, one reaction is aggression. We dismiss, and sometimes even destroy, the object.

It has also been labeled the "patriarchal" or Oedipal sublime, insofar as it seems to be analogous in certain ways to Freud's account of ego-formation. Having already passed through and, normally, survived the period when perception was exclusively of the mother, the child at this phase is ready to perceive the father as an object. The Ego merges with the Superego, in a sense, to produce the hyperindividual, empowered to act within ordinary reality. As Colonel Kurtz says in *Apocalypse Now,* "Terror is your friend."

If deindividuation is rapture, hyperindividuation is redemption. In terms of its use of media, it is the reverse of deindividuation: sound recedes, sight and action take over. It is

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communicated by protagonists being objectified, projected upon, idealized, and fetishized.

a) action

Hyperindividuation, insofar as it involves idealizing ordinary reality, has been identified as the impulse for civilization, the source of both naming and action. It is a source of psychological and physical strength. It is produced by a power exchange from object to subject. When external power is internalized, the product is the hyperindividual.

The experience of the negative sublime is a resistance-drama, ultimately beneficial to the self and society. Plato's hymns and marches were supposed to prepare people for war and obedience. Plato's conception of *theoria* is based on contemplating sensible forms standing in a relation of true mimesis to the trans-sensible structure of the cosmos. Doing this allows one to take into oneself the harmonious movements of "deep" reality.

The key element, the internalization of external power, was taken over by the sublime enthusiasts of the early modern period. When we hyperindividuate, we do not lose our individuality so much as enhance it. Witnessing the exploits of a hero, even if he is defeated, becomes a source of personal, and possibly communal, power. In the Romantic view, the gods and demigods are true hyper-individuals: they may sometimes come into conflict with chthonic forces of destruction, requiring expenditures of superhuman energy, but their supremacy is never seriously in doubt. As we can see in Apollo's face and posture as he kills the Python, they express nothing less than supreme cheerfulness. They are perfect optimists. Their way of dealing with evil subjectively is to transform it into the bare Platonic form of evil, as it were, removing its emotional sting. They treat the world, as Nietzsche put it, as an aesthetic phenomenon, and not an ugly one. Rising to the level of the gods and demigods, human can experience their own existence aesthetically, and thus gain an access of vitality. It's liberation through aestheticism.

For Wagner, the hero is the one who most completely idealizes the world. Even though he or she may die, the hero's action is triumphant, a symbol of life, because it springs from idealization. Tragedy, a collective celebration, used visual exaggerations to help

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the audience identify with the protagonists. "[The people of Athens] erected a stage and put on the mask and costume of a god or hero, in order itself to be a god or hero . . . ." But of course, as always with Wagner, identification does not stop with that. The combination of deindividuation and hyperindividuation has a revolutionary effect on ordinary reality. "Tragedy was the entry of the people's art-work into the public arena of political life." The main miracle at Bayreuth was supposed be the transformation of pessimism into activism. Rapture was a means to redemption, which in turn was a source of power. Through subjection, triumph. To Wagner, Siegfried represented a combination of Bakunin, the anarchist hero, and Apollo, the Greek god. In the *Ring,* Siegfried the political actor and rule-breaker is overlaid by mythology, which gives him an aura of invincibility (until he dies).

For Nietzsche, rapture requires redemption as a counterbalance. First, deindividuation is clarified through the individuating media of visuals and dramatic action. When added to music, these media give the audience a better intuition of the meaning, for example, of Isolde's ecstatic expiration. But clarification is also recontextualization. In presenting deindividuation visually and dramatically, the definiteness with which the individual's suffering and destruction is presented acts an antidote against deindividuation. As Nietzsche puts it, the emotion of pity saves us from "primordial suffering." In "the dramatic proto-phenomenon", deindividuation is followed by re-individuation, directing the individual outward, into ordinary reality. The individual is able to imaginatively identify with beings previously unknown.

In tragedy and music drama, deindividuation has a power that is imitable and extendible into the larger social order. Hamlet's death is followed by the establishment of a new regime; Oedipus' actions "produce a higher magic circle of effects;" Prometheus becomes "the Atlas of all individuals." This is the sublime senario: from humankind's natural unfreedom, freedom is achieved. In the contest with other hyperindividuals, the hyperindividual emerges triumphant. Acting within ordinary reality becomes possible and even desirable.

The sublime, in its mainstream manifestation, represents an optimistic evaluation of catastrophe. It presumes a broadening of intellectual command that exceeds the scale of the terrorizing or

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destructive object. It would of course be futile to oppose a finite protagonist to such an object. The effect of sublimity depends, at least initially, on the threat of overwhelming force. The immensity of the catastrophe demands a superior response. This is hyperindividuation. Hyperindividuation allows re-entry into ordinary reality. The hero transcends the world, yet requires and loves the world. Bravery and all the other things he needs to carry out worldly action come from an inner idealization, characterized by Nietzsche as the ability to treat the world as an aesthetic phenomenon.

The hyperindividual is a "corn god". It is an icon that has been turned into a fetish. A person becomes a personification: perfected, vivified, he or she comes to represent the fulfillment of the desire for perfection. This process of hyperindividuation can be a source of freedom, but it can also promote political submission. The world structure as Nietzsche describes it allows for individuals only as inessential elements, "moments" of the whole. They are the material on which the life process works, the resources it consumes. In the presence of Dionysus, the reveler "is no longer the artist, he has become the work of art". He is like a sculptor's block of marble: something to be chiseled into shape by Dionysus, the "world-artist". In the dramatic proto-phenomenon, the reveler comes to life, Galatea-like, as an individual -- and promptly kneels down in front of its "creator".

Political regimes use Apollonian aesthetics to endow the leaders, and, by extension, the regime itself, with qualities of invincibility and immortality. For Nietzsche, "active sin" is the justification of evil.

b) sight

Opera is not the best medium for individuated forms, such as melodrama. However, because it includes spectacle, opera can be adept at producing hyperindividuation. Characters become icons; action is enlarged and simplified. Hyperindividuation is produced by clarity and hardening. It is perceived as abstract, cold. Complex traits of emotion and material existence seem to be missing.

According to Wagner in his *Art and Revolution*, drama started when tragic poets, having undergone deindividuation, had the experience of actually seeing the god Dionysus. After visualization

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came linguistic description, in the form of the composition of the tragic texts.[8]   In Wagner's music drama, light symbolizes order. Light is the condition of the revelation of order as visible form. Siegfried's prototype was Apollo, Python-slayer and god of light. Apollo, like his divine father, was motivated by the contemplation of order, and this motivation is reflected in his ethical stance. Apollo proclaimed law at Delphi, according to Wagner, by appearing in his own beautiful form, "beautiful but strong". This allowed the Greek audience, with their beautiful bodies and restless souls, to project themselves onto Apollo, and, seeing themselves in an idealizing mirror, as it were, to connect with their own unchanging nature, thus becoming more peaceful, and more orderly, even when engaged in the most passionate action.

c) sound

Sound is not the natural medium for hyperindividuation, but there are musical forms that can suggest hyperindividuation and accentuate it. In Viennese classical style, for example, it is the irresistible pull of the tonic that animates the succession of musical and dramatic events. Dissonance, in the broad sense of harmonic events on the dominant pole of the tonic-dominant polarity, of necessity had to be resolved through return to the tonic, and no matter how gradual or delayed this return is it is this return and nothing else that gives meaning to the work as a whole. Movement mades sense only because we anticipate a clear end to movement.

For Wagner, reversing the historical process and returning to the origin of myth was essential in the creation of a new mythology; yet he makes it clear that this complicated reduction and re-invention of the contents of myth is not sufficient to ensure universality in art. Myth requires an idealization of its own – and this is to be ensured by music. The idea that music is the highest of the arts is found in Arthur Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Representation*.[9] This accounts for his care in presenting appropriate music for the hyperindividual: simple, celebratory, martial, and above all, tonally resolved.

My hope is that this scheme, applied to any artistic genres capable of producing the relevant existential states, will help us to understand the role of dramatic and musical art in our culture, and

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lead us to question the long-term effects of what appears to be a general cultural pattern: the more-or-less exclusive devotion to one artistic genre at the exclusion of others. When these genres produce extreme aesthetic experiences, we can expect similarly extraordinary changes in people themselves.

NOTES:

1 Aristotle, *Poetics,* transl. S. H. Butcher, intro. by Francis Ferguson, Hill and Wang, New York, 1961, p. 109. Butcher translates *Thaumaston* as "the wonderful". Aristotle describes it as "irrational" *(alogon).*

2 Richard Wagner, "Opera and Drama" (1850-51), in A. Goldman and E. Sprinchorn, eds., *Wagner on Music and Drama,* Dutton, New York, 1964.

3 Richard Wagner, *The Ring of the Nibelung*, trans. A. Porter, Norton, New York, 1976.

4 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), trans. W. Kaufmann, Vintage, New York, 1967.

5 Wagner, "Beethoven" (1870), in Goldman and Sprinchorn, *op.cit.*

6 Aristotle, *op. cit.* (VI.2).

7 Aristotle, *op. cit.* (l. 1453).

8 Wagner, "Art and Revolution" (1849), in Goldman and Sprinchorn, *op. cit.*

9 Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (1819), trans. E. F. Payne, Dover, New York, 1969. (See the second "aspect" of the third book, No. 51).

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The Concept of Time Associated with Cybernetic Systems

The time is one of the three basic concepts of Newtonian physics. The other two are the space and the masse. But the two defining events of life – birth and death – are essentially associated with time. And for this reason the understanding of time's nature has been fascinating not only for physicists, but also for theologians, philosophers and artists.

As a basic, fundamental concept the time cannot be rigorously defined in accordance with the principles of classical logic and mathematical reasoning. It cannot be determined by genus and specific difference, and any definition is necessarily circular (time defined in terms of duration or succession, duration or succession defined by using time, etc.). Time can only be explained by comparison and/or by appeal to intuition, and as a result there are theories with regard to the nature and definition of time, but not an absolute truth.

Intuitively, the time has one dimension and one way of motion. To the contrary the space has three dimensions and six ways of motion: left-right, up-down, front-back. But both, time and space, are infinite. If the time would have a beginning this would necessarily be in time. And if it would have an end this would also be in time. But this implies a potential infinite inclusion, and therefore the time cannot be perceived in another manner than being infinite.

In the Greek mythology, the significance of time was emphasized by the fact that there was a god of it – Chronos. He was personified by a man who was old and had a long gray beard. But who was also wise because the old Greeks respected the experience accumulated in life as much as the ephemeral passing moment.

For the Christians and Jews the world has a beginning and might have an end because it was created by God, but God himself

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is eternal, without beginning and end. And, interesting, although there are various interpretations of God's spatial and substantial infinity there is a virtual consensus on its eternity – that is temporal infinity. But before creation there was no world and therefore there was no time because time is defined by change in the world. Subsequently, God is infinite and eternal because for God there is no time. The time exists only for the God created world that includes the humans.

Among the philosophers, from the ancients to the moderns, two main groups of theories regarding the nature of time have emerged - the realist-objective, and the subjective ones. According to the former theories the time is an essential defining characteristic of the world. The world's existence is independent from humans and it is not the creation of human mind. The truth is that we exist in the world, and not that the world exists in our minds. Subsequently, the world exists in time and we exist in time. Because the time is an essential characteristic of the world, it is also a defining attribute of us. In accordance to the opposite group of theories the time is basically associated with our mind. It allows to us to order the sensations and impressions that we receive from outside, and to reason using concepts that might be based on experience or on spontaneous creativity of our mind.

For Heraclitus the world was real. It was being in continuous movement and change, and subsequently the time was an essential, sine qua non element of it. He theoretically affirmed that everything flows (the rightly celebrated "panta rhei") and poetically asserted that "no man steps in the same river twice."

But in opposition to him, Parmenides of Elea has affirmed that the change is impossible and the real world is static and out of time. In his conception the time was an element of our perception process and not of the real immutable world.

In "Physics" Aristotle defined the time in terms of change and succession, and the fact that he did this in "Physics" and not in "Metaphysics" indicates that he regarded the time as a measurable attribute of the real, objectively existing world.

A similar premise was accepted by Newton and Leibnitz, although the former regarded the time and space as being absolute, and the latter as being relational. However, Kant's point of view was different.

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Observing that the universal validity of mathematical deductions and judgments cannot be based on experience he asked himself how can the synthetic a priori judgments be universally true. And his answer was that this is possible because the time and space are a priory conditions and forms or our internal intuition.

Continuing the Newtonian tradition Lorentz, Einstein, Heisenberg and Planck concentrated their attention on time properties, and not on its nature. Probably, because in their opinions only the former has been a problem of physics while the other has been a topic of metaphysics and theology.

On the basis of the Michelson-Morley experiment Lorentz assumed that the space and time are dependent, and formulated the mathematical equations that describe the contraction and dilatation of space and time (phenomenon observed at speeds close to the speed of light, but practically impossible to be observed at the regular speeds). For Einstein there were no doubts that the space and time are inseparable and that the contractions and dilatations experimentally observed by Michelson and Morley were real. As it results from the conceptual framework of both - the special and general theories of relativity – in Einstein's opinion the space had in fact four dimensions, the time being the fourth (a conception that Minkowsky described in geometrical terms).

This conception was new in physics. But not in art. Because in 1883, twenty two years before Einstein published his article on the special theory of relativity, Eminescu has had an extraordinary artistic intuition, and wrote in *The Morningstar*:

> Where he [the Morningstar] arrives there is no frontier
> Nor any eye to know
> And time in vain tries
> To be born from chasms

But if a genial artist and a distinguished physicist focused on the relativity of time and space others focused on time divisibility or on the application of the theory of probabilities in physics, the field of deterministic thinking "par excellence."
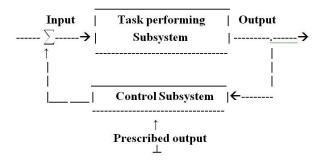
From one side Maxwell, Boltzmann and Gibbs contributed to the creation of statistical mechanics. From another side Max Planck has considered that there is not only an extremely small indivisible unit of energy – the quant – but also and extremely small indivisible unit of time – the chronon. And this hypothesis war really

interesting because in a completely non-intuitively manner it assumes that the most significant kind of continuity - the time itself – might be discrete.

For a comparable reason the theories of Heisenberg and Schrodinger have not been only important achievements of theoretical physics but also significant challenges to the ordinary manner of thinking. In accordance with Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty some complementary properties of particles cannot be simultaneously determined with the same amount of precision. If the precision increases for one property, it necessarily decreases for the other – an assertion that it is not consistent with the Newtonian mechanics and the conceptions of classical physics with regard to space and time. Similarly, the Schrodinger equation which is the analogous in quantic mechanics of Newton's second law, implies a conception on time that is closer to that of Planck than to that of Newton.

Within this historical framework, the theoretical concept of self-controlled/self-adaptive system can provide a more nuanced interpretation of time. If not of its true nature, at least of some of its properties.

A cybernetic system or a self-controlled system is a feed-back endowed system. It has two subsystems – one that performs a given task and a control one. The control subsystem compares the output of the subsystem performing the task with a prescribed output and sends commands to the performing subsystem such as the output to become gradually (in the case of continuous systems) or step by step (in the case of discrete systems) closer to the prescribed output. If the prescribed variable – that is the one with which the real output is

Self-controlled feedback system

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compared by the control subsystem – is associated with the environment the system is usually called self-adaptive. If that variable is a trajectory (for example the one followed by a fighter jet targeted by a missile having a cybernetic system of guiding) the system is usually called an optimal tracking system.

One observes however, that regardless of how such a system is called, it has an essential, defining property that differentiates it from a classical Newtonian mechanical system. As a result of the feedback connection and of the control subsystem, this type of system is able to perform a given task by providing an output identical or very close to the prescribed one, and by this to achieve a qualitative change. Consequently it might be associated not only with a specific time dynamics but also with an irreversible one.

This specific characteristic of cybernetic feedback systems has determined some philosophers to affirm that the time associated with them is qualitatively different from that specific to the pure mechanical systems. It has been said that this time is "full" and absolutely irreversible while the time of Newtonian mechanics is "empty." In the former "something really happens" while in the latter "nothing really happens." At the end of a motion period the main characteristics of a classical mechanical system are exactly the same as at beginning of the motion. But those of a feed-back system are not. A "real history" happened.

Observing that all plants and animals as well as all human societies are extraordinary complex feedback meta-systems containing themselves feedback systems it is possible to imagine the following simple experiment for understanding the difference between the nature of time associated with the classical mechanical systems and that specific to the cybernetic ones.

Let assume that we would make two films. In one, we would film a locomotive moving from left to right, and in the other we would film the evolution of a rose plant from seed to flower. For convenience we would compress the film showing the evolution of the rose and we would invite a group of people who did not take part in the filming to watch the two short movies. In order to avoid any misunderstanding before starting the projection we will inform them that the film showing the rose's evolution was drastically compressed for shortening the projection time.

We would show first the movie with the locomotive – but from the end to the beginning and not from the beginning to the end

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and we would observe that the viewers do not remark this fact. But after this we would try to do the same with the documentary showing the evolution of the rose plant, and of course we would immediately remark the viewers' perplexity.

The explanation is very simple but it is also significant. Presenting the movies' photograms in inverse succession is equivalent to considering that the time is reversible. And this was not observed in the case of the locomotive, because on the screen it moved from right to left and in reality from left to right. But moving in an opposite way was absolutely normal and logically flawless. But observing a flower shrinking and evolving into a seed was completely abnormal and illogical. And this is so because the moving locomotive is a typical, classical Newtonian system, while a growing plant is a self-adaptive feedback system - a system that has real history, and for which the time is "full" and irreversible.

If the concept of time, as it was conceived by Parmenides of Elea and postulated in the classical and relativist mechanics is from one perspective unhistorical, the one associated with the self-adaptive or self-controlled systems is necessarily historical. It is so because irreversible qualitative changes happen in it. Life is a continuous change, and this change is unidirectional and irreversible. All living organisms continuously transform themself from birth to death. Aging is possible but its opposite is not. And the cause of this consists in the fact that the living organisms are hyper-complex meta-systems of self-controlled, self-adaptive systems existing in historical unidirectional and irreversible time.

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The Self as Temporalized Being: Reflections on Heidegger's Profound Boredom

Heidegger's analysis of boredom is in ambiguous rapport with the tradition of the hermeneutics of acedia-melancholy. By his response, which addresses the problem of the two major complexes of hypostases of boredom and sublimity, Heidegger inscribes himself as a descendent of both Pascal and Kant, while his call of the bored back to boredom can even be viewed as a form of Evagrian courageous resistance to acedia. Indeed, if the theology of sin condemns the soul's turn toward the world or its withdrawal into sleep and recalls it to the contemplation of God, similarly Dasein is called to resist the eccentric temptation to self-forgetfulness and inauthentic existence. But contrary to tradition, in Heidegger this call is not to God but to boredom. In order to decipher the meaning of this counterintuitive move, a deeper understanding of both boredom and God is necessary. According to Heidegger, boredom is a fundamental ontological "attunement" (*Stimmung*) of Dasein and therefore the space and time that appear in boredom are revelatory of Dasein's essence.

What marks all forms of boredom is interpreted as a condition of *suspension* and *entrancement in limbo* whose cause is the indifference of the world and the unification of the three temporal horizons. Voided of phenomena by the loss of world, time appears as time itself, a time that, as Kant argued, is nothing. Through the transparency of time and the vanished world, the self sees itself as a nothing. The theological intuition of the tradition of acedic melancholy interpreted as a sin appears to be finally vindicated: the demonic temptation to boredom is mortal since it is the deadly embrace of the nothing. But Heidegger goes further: he adopts Schelling's quest for a more originary origination that identifies nonbeing or nothing as the groundless ground of Being itself. In the depth of boredom one encounters the primordial nothing at the heart of Being itself. The Heideggerian call to the nothing of boredom is

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therefore a call to Being itself, or God, but to that in God that is not God or Being. Here Heidegger articulates existentially Schelling's metaphysical intuition and, though apparently diverging from the theology of sin, he paradoxically fulfills it and even deepens it.

In *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (1929) Heidegger engages in a reflection on mood, attunement, boredom, time, and the self.[1] For Heidegger mood is no longer an inferior manifestation of nature to be overcome by the Spirit as for Hegel, but rather a fundamental mode of being since understanding and state of mind are the two constitutive equiprimordial ways of being-there (*Dasein*), of finite being. State of mind is our mood or attunement and emerges as an ontic mode, one of the fundamental existential(e)s.[2] As a fundamental mode of being, mood is a locus of disclosure of the essence of Dasein and must not be evaded, although evasion itself is also meaningfully disclosive.[3] What qualifies boredom to be a perfect case for Dasein analysis? This is how Heidegger justifies his interest in boredom:

Philosophizing is a comprehensive questioning arising out of Dasein being gripped in its essence. Such being gripped is possible only from out of and within a fundamental attunement of Dasein. This fundamental attunement itself cannot be some arbitrary one but must permeate our Dasein in the ground of its essence. Such a fundamental attunement cannot be ascertained as something present at hand that we can appeal to or as something firm upon which we might stand but must be awakened - awakened in the sense that we must let it become awake. This fundamental attunement properly attunes us only if we do not oppose it, but rather give it space and freedom. . . . We can only ever encounter such a fundamental attunement of our Dasein in a question, in a questioning attitude. This is why we asked whether perhaps contemporary man has become bored with himself and whether a profound boredom is a fundamental attunement of contemporary Dasein.[4]

Profound boredom *(tiefe Langeweil*e) appears as a fundamental attunement, permeating contemporary Dasein in the ground of its essence. Since philosophizing is a questioning that arises out of a fundamental attunement of Dasein, and since profound boredom is such, philosophizing must begin with and arise out of Dasein's profound boredom. Heidegger initiates the questioning of the relation of boredom, time, and the ground of Dasein:

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Boredom, *Langeweile* - whatever its ultimate essence may be - shows particularly in our German word, an almost obvious relation to time, a way in which we stand with respect to time, a feeling of time. Boredom and the question of boredom thus leads us to the problem of time. Or … does boredom first lead us to time, to an understanding of how time resonates in the ground of Da-sein.[5]

Boredom reveals our feeling of time, and leads to an understanding of time in relation to the self. Since in boredom time stands in a relation to us, boredom is a fundamental attunement of our philosophizing in which we develop the three metaphysical questions of world, finitude, and individuation. The attunement to boredom, as the ground of mood that gives us the possibility of "grasping" time and the being-there of man, offers the possibility of answering the three questions.[6] For the first time in the history of Western consciousness boredom undergoes, with Heidegger, a radical hermeneutical transformation: no longer an evil coming from the outside - whether as noontime demon or absent God - or from the inside - as idle passivity or the curse of our fallen condition - boredom emerges as our own fundamental attunement. This attunement must be lucidly cultivated not as a spur toward attaining God's grace and recovering our initial fullness, but because its relation to time grants it an exceptional insight into world, finitude, and individuation.

Following Kant's brief exposition of the distinctive levels of boredom, Heidegger identifies three forms of boredom of increasing depth. The first one is *becoming bored by something* and *killing time*:

We are sitting for example, in the tasteless station of some lonely minor railway. It is four hours until the next train arrives. The district is uninspiring. We do have a book in our rucksack, though - shall we read? No. Or think through a problem or some question? We are unable to. We read the timetables or study the table giving the various distances from this station to other places we are not otherwise acquainted with at all. We look at the clock - only a quarter of an hour has gone by. Then we go out onto the local road. We walk up and down, just to have something to do. But it is no use. Then we count the trees along the road, look at our watch again - exactly five minutes since we last looked at it. Fed up with walking back and forth, we sit down on a stone, draw all kinds of figures in

the sand, and in so doing catch ourselves looking at our watch again.[7]

I have quoted the entire passage with the description of the first level of boredom, *being bored by* something and *killing time*, for its striking resemblance to Evagrius's description of acedia. Heidegger refers to it as the first form of boredom, which develops two moments, "being held in limbo by time as it drags" and "being left empty by the refusal of things" and "being held in limbo by time as it drags".[8]

Heidegger then exemplifies the second form of boredom, *being bored with oneself* and the *passing of time* belonging to it:

We have been invited out somewhere for the evening. We do not need to go along. Still we have been tense all day, and we have time in the evening. So we go along. There we find the usual food and the usual table conversation, everything is not only very tasty but tasteful as well. Afterward people sit together having a lively discussion, as they say, perhaps listening to music, having a chat, and things are witty and amusing. And already it is time to leave. . . . There is nothing at all to be found that might have been boring about this evening, neither the conversation, nor the people, nor the rooms. Thus we come home quite satisfied. We cast a quick glance at the work we have interrupted that evening, make a rough assessment of things, and look ahead to the next day - and then it comes: I was bored after all this evening, on the occasion of this invitation.[9]

The second type of boredom, *being bored with oneself* and *passing the time*, is no longer superficial or naïve, projecting itself on the world and blaming its lack, as in *being bored by* while waiting in the train station. Self-consciousness deepens and this fundamental attunement is let to appear and recognized as one's own: the boring arises out of Dasein itself. Heidegger remarks that an ever deepening understanding of boredom occurs through which the temporality of Dasein, and thus Dasein itself in its ground, emerges.

The third form of boredom is profound boredom, *it is boring for one,* as in "it is boring for one to walk through the streets of a large city on a Sunday afternoon".[10] *It is boring for one* recalls the Pascalian ennui, that is, the experience of the groundless ground inside the self, the nothing as essence of the human condition, one that is subverted by distraction, and from which only God can redeem. The three instances offer access to deepening degrees of

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boredom and consciousness: determinate boredom, or *being bored with this or that*; indeterminate boredom, or *being bored with nothing in particular except oneself;* impersonal boredom, or *it is boring for one*. In determinate boredom, waiting for the train in an unfamiliar setting creates an inner sense of being trapped in spatio-temporal vacuity. Empty time is killed by filling it with meaningless activities: counting the trees, looking at one's watch. In indeterminate boredom, one passes the time by filling the empty time with company, and being alone with others. It is only in impersonal boredom that boredom cannot be resisted and is allowed to appear in its essence and depths as a fundamental attunement: it is let occur on a Sunday afternoon while strolling through the streets of a big city.

Profound boredom transforms Dasein, who only now understands that the mood is irresistible and cannot be avoided by killing or passing the time, and is compelled to listen to what it wishes to say. To "no longer permit any passing the time means to let this boredom be overpowering." We are compelled to listen by a "kind of compelling force which everything properly authentic about Dasein possesses and which accordingly is related to Dasein's innermost freedom".[11] Tarrying in the nothing of boredom leads to authentic being since it is the clearing *(Lichtung)* of profound boredom in which Dasein has access to innermost freedom that opens up the possibility of vision. But is not this indulgence in profound boredom the deadly sin of acedia? Before we can answer this question we must follow Heidegger further in his analysis of boredom.

Within all three forms of boredom, Heidegger identifies two structural moments: *emptiness* and *entrancement* or *suspension in limbo*; both are related to time. Dasein is suspended in limbo and trapped in its emptiness. The condition for the possibility of boredom is the complete indifference of the world. It is this indifference of the world that leaves time, the bearer of beings, empty of its content of beings. Dasein is left as the self that is there. Bearers of beings, the three temporal horizons of past, present, future conjoin into a horizon of the whole time of Dasein, a perfect moment of empty totality in which Dasein encounters itself in its temporal essence. This unified horizon entrances Dasein and calls it to its possibility, the moment of vision.

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With Heidegger, boredom springs from the temporality of Dasein; it is Dasein itself in the depths of its ground. In order to see Dasein in its essence, boredom must be let to appear and must be listened to through conscious attunement. Boredom calls for an ontology of both time and being, of being in relation to time. Two fully adequate illustrations of this suspended entrancement in a time that is empty of beings are Evagrius's monastic in the desert at noontime and Pascal's man left alone in an empty chamber. In the absence of distractions, that is, in a time voided of beings, one faces the abyss of one's being, suspended between infinities. There are significant similarities between Heidegger's phenomenology of the first form of boredom, on the one hand, and the phenomenology of the sin of acedia and Pascalian distraction, intended to cover up the abysmal nothing at the heart of being, on the other. Unreflective boredom expels one into the world, leads to everydayness and the falling of Dasein signaled by idle talk, curiosity, ambiguity, falling, and thrownness - all forms of the "they" (*das Man*) consciousness, the sin of acedia. This flight from boredom makes one eccentric to oneself and deaf to the call of God or conscience. Both Evagrius and Pascal emphasize the evil of distraction generated by boredom: immersion in the world leading to abandonment of monastic life, for Evagrius, and concealing the void of one's condition, for Pascal. The sin of acedic boredom deepens into forgetfulness. It is only Heidegger's first form of boredom that is akin to this condition: killing time while waiting for a delayed train, where killing time means filling the emptiness of waiting with meaningless activities, such as counting the trees. For Heidegger, as for Pascal, the sin is distraction from what boredom reveals, the unreflective evasion of it, which is not a remedy but the deepening of the "sin."

In the third degree of depth, in profound boredom, Heidegger interrupts the kenosis of the acedic mood into its sinful effects, the eccentric killing or passing the time. At the profound level, he preserves the attunement to boredom and contemplates the mood itself in its purity: the experience in consciousness of *the nothing (das Nichts)* as the essence of Dasein's being. True, the remedy recommended by Evagrius, Pascal, and Heidegger is recognition, resistance to the impulse of flight, silence, and return to authenticity. But for Evagrius and Pascal authenticity means return to God, while for Heidegger it calls forth attention to what the attunement to profound boredom discloses. Heidegger's analysis invites the

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deepening of consciousness by cultivation of mindful attending to or indulging in the mood: the experience progresses from a passing discomfort to an experience of nonbeing or the otherness of Being. Heidegger undertakes two radical and disturbing unveilings. First the call back to boredom that can be understood through a shift in Dasein's consciousness, since only a deepening and maturing of consciousness is able to welcome attunement to profound boredom as the ground of Dasein's own depths. Second, the ground of Dasein in its depths, the Pascalian nothing, is Being itself in its otherness. The attunement to boredom as the depths of Dasein thus discloses a more originary origination, a Schellingian *Ungrund* more primordial than Being, whose contemplation offers the possibility of freedom for a new beginning, a renewed self-creation.

Thus Heidegger's call to boredom is a twofold paradoxical departure from the tradition of the hermeneutics of melancholy. It is a call to remembering Being itself which is no longer a transcendent absolute object and can be reached only in one's own depths being-here. At the same time Being reveals its ultimate groundless ground or *Ungrund* - the absolute indifference, in theological terms, or God's otherness as the ground of God. Existentially, boredom must be followed into its abysmal depths with the care and the lucidity of an Athena-inspired Perseus in order for Dasein to open up in freedom.

Care and Anxiety

A brief excursion into *Being and Time* (1927) is needed in order to pose the question: how do the Heideggerian existential moods par excellence - care *(Sorge)* and anxiety *(Angst)* - relate to boredom as the fundamental ontological attunement?[12] All three have traditionally been identified as hypostases of melancholy. The first step toward an answer is to find out what each of these attunements discloses about Dasein, since it is in the context of Dasein analysis that Heidegger associates existential anxiety and care. While *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* is an analysis of boredom, time, and the self, *Being and Time* provides an existential-phenomenological interpretation of the Augustinian-Kantian intuition of time and rethinks Husserl's phenomenology of temporal subjectivity. In anxiety, care appears as the being of Dasein. Like boredom, anxiety is unreflectively avoided through flight into the

inauthentic existence of everydayness and of *das Man* consciousness. If listened to, anxiety shows Dasein as the being of care, care that may take either authentic or inauthentic forms. Anxiety is the existential condition of a being defined by care for itself, one whose horizon is death.

In "Melancholy: Between Gods and Monsters," Richard Kearney introduces the existentialist account of melancholy and adduces Heidegger's "allusion to melancholy - or what he prefers to call *angst* - in the ancient myth of Saturn" in section 42 of *Being and Time*.[13] He notes that Heidegger justifies Dasein's being of care by appealing to a myth whose main protagonist is the god of time, so let us turn for a moment to *Being and Time,* §39-42. In order to make clear that his "existential interpretation [of man as a being of care *(cura)]* is not a mere fabrication, but that as an ontological construction it is well grounded and has been sketched out beforehand in elemental ways," Heidegger adduces a "document which is pre-ontological in character, even though its demonstrative force is 'merely historical.'" In this document "Dasein is expressing itself 'primordially' unaffected by any theoretical interpretation" as "'historical' in the very depths of its Being".[14]

According to the myth, once Care gave shape to a piece of clay, Jupiter gave it spirit. Together with Earth they begin to argue over whose nature and name the new being should bear. They ask Saturn to mediate. Saturn deliberates that at death the soul of the creature will return to Jupiter, its body to Earth, but during its life it belongs to Care; the creature's name will be *homo*.[15]

As Kearney remarks, for Heidegger the myth indicates that each human being is a creature cleft between its terrestrial genesis and celestial longing, and the split accounts for the Saturnine quality of finite existence. For Heidegger, Saturn is an emblem of both melancholy and time, the melancholy that the passing of time produces in a being that temporalizes itself: "Being in the world has the stamp of Care which accords with its Being. It gets the name *homo* not in consideration of its Being but in relation to that of which it consists *(humus)*. The decision as to wherein the primordial Being of this creature is to be seen, is left to Saturn, Time".[16] He understands care in its essentially twofold structure: it becomes manifest as thrownness *(Geworfenheit),* or care for inauthentic being, surrendered to the world of its concern, and also as care for its own authentic being, through which man's perfection is

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accomplished, his transformation into being free for his ownmost possibilities. Kearney explains that Saturn, the god of time, connects our being to our temporality, a "connection which Heidegger identifies with our experience of (a) dread *(Angst)* as a facing up to our own inner nothingness, and (b) care *(Sorge)* as a being-free for one's own possibilities, that is, for one's own authentic future which is not yet." Kearney continues, "In melancholic dread we experience 'nothing' and 'nowhere.' Or to be more precise we encounter ourselves as a free temporal projection of possibilities culminating in our death. . . . But it is, strangely, this very experience which individualizes us and makes us authentic *(eigentlich)"*.[17] The fact that the experience of nothing is a condition for authenticity should not surprise one familiar with the hermeneutics of melancholy. Kearney remarks that the existentialist view of melancholy as a "precondition for authentic insight" was already intimated by Aristotle, Ficino, and Kant.[18] He notes the tradition of Saturnine ambivalence, which subsumes both anxiety and care into the concept of melancholy, thus bringing clarification to the otherwise confusing separation between the two. He also emphasizes that melancholy escapes the nets of scientific reason, that ultimately only indirect discourse of symbol and myth does justice to this infinitely complex experience.

If we return to profound boredom as a fundamental ontological attunement, we begin to understand the intricate interrelation among the different hypostases of melancholy. Profound boredom lets finite being see within the depths of its own emptiness - this is the acedic hypothesis of melancholy. Care emerges as the background nature of Dasein in its authentic and inauthentic forms: it is care that leads to existential anxiety as a response to the encounter in boredom with the nothing. In acedia - literally a lack of care *(a-kedos)* - which is logically the negation of Dasein's ground of being, care disintegrates into cares and the acedic becomes careless about its very ground of being. Indeed, Heidegger's analysis endorses the traditional theology of sin according to which acedia is the gravest of mortal sins - the sin against the spirit that cannot be forgiven.

NOTES:

1 Martin Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics,* trans. William McNeil and Nicholas Walker, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1995.

2 Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1962: "What we indicate ontologically by the term state of mind is ontically the most familiar and everyday sort of thing; our mood, our being attuned. Prior to all psychology of moods, a field which in any case still lies fallow, it is necessary to see this phenomenon as a fundamental existential(e) and to outline its structure" (p. 173). For more on the meaning of the term *existential(e)*, see "Being in the World in General as the Basic State of Dasein" in *Being and Time*, Part 1, Division 1, §12.

3 *Ibidem:* "Dasein always has some mood. . . . A mood makes manifest how one is and how one is faring. In this how one is having a mood brings Being to its there. The being of the there is disclosive moodwise in its that it is. In an ontico-existential sense, Dasein for the most part evades the Being which is disclosed in the mood. . . . In the evasion itself there is something disclosed" (pp. 173-177).

4 Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts…,* p. 132.

5 *Ibidem,* p. 80.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 81.

7 *Ibid.,* p. 83.

8 *Ibid.,* pp. 99-101.

9 *Ibid.,* p. 109.

10 *Ibid.,* p. 135.

11 *Ibid.,* p. 136.

12 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*.

13 Richard Kearney, "Melancholy: Between Gods and Monsters," in *Strangers, Gods, and Monsters*, Routledge, London, 2003, pp. 167–68.

14 Heidegger, *Being and Time,* pp. 241–42, §42.

15 *Ibidem:* "Once when Care was crossing a river, she saw some clay; she thoughtfully took up a piece and began to shape it. While she was meditating on what she had made, Jupiter came by. Care asked him to give it spirit and this he gladly granted. But when she wanted her name to be bestowed upon it, he forbade this, and demanded that it be given his name instead. While Care and Jupiter were disputing, Earth arose and desired that her own name be conferred on the creature since she had furnished it with part of her body. They asked Saturn to be their arbiter and he made the following decision which seemed a just one: "Since you, Jupiter have given its spirit, you shall receive its spirit at its death; and since you, Earth have given its body, you shall receive its body. But since Care first shaped this

creature, she shall possess it as long as it lives. And because there is now a dispute among you as to its name, let it be called *homo* for it is made out of *humus* (earth)" (p. 242 [198], §42).

16 *Ibid.,* p. 243, §42.
17 *Ibid.,* p. 167.
18 *Ibid.,* p. 168.

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The Awareness of *Self* from a Linguistic Perspective, with Special Attention to the Romanian *sine* 'self'

If we take the idea expressed by G. H. Mead that language is at the heart of the structure of the self,[1] a short linguistic approach to the concept of self, soul, spirit may be due. In the Greek world the word Psyche as expressed in Homeric poems meant the dead or described death, most likely associated with breath. A similar association between breath and soul is found also in the Romanian neuter noun *suflet,* 'soul', derived from the verb *a sulfa, suflare* 'to breathe, breath'. Other languages associated the Soul with the Spirit, for example the Latin, and with it the Romance languages, where *Aminus, Anima* meant 'spirit'; the same approach we find in Slavic languages. The German *seele* and English *soul* are of obscure origin, whereas the Self is found in many Indo-European languages. The occurrence of different nouns to express 'the soul' and 'the self' may indicate that they were perceived as two entities, even if in philosophical discourse they are often inter-used. When Plato discusses the 'cultivation of the soul' as the primary duty for making it capable to control the body and its passions he refers to the Soul as intellectual and moral Self.

The Self or the One's own inner center (psychic nucleus) was in the earliest formulation of the modern psychology derived from the distinction between the Self as I, the subjective knower, and the Self as Me, the object that is known. This approach seems to offer the distinction between the concept of 'self' as a noun and the pronominal forms involved in action 'myself', yourself', etc.

From a linguistic perspective the word 'self' in Indo-European languages has its root in the Proto-Indo-European reconstructed form *séwe, Skt *svá* 'one's own', Toch A *ṣñi* 'one's own' Toch B *ṣañ* 'one's own', Latin *sē* 'him-/her-/itself', OHG *sih* 'him-/her-/itself', which developed in English as *self*; German *das Selbst, sich*; Fr *le soi*, Lith *save* '-self', Romanian n. *sine*, f. *sinea*

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'the self'. By observing the Tocharic isoglosses it appears that perhaps the oldest meanings of this word was 'one's own', covering both notions of possession and action. The pronominal aspect of this concept, attached to the actioner, received the characteristics of the person making the action, masculine, feminine or neuter, particularly in the later developments of the West European languages, as in 'I myself did that', whereas the invariable form became attached to the subject I, the Self, indicating perhaps a later development.

The Romanian concept of the Self *sine* is explained in grammar books as the third reflexive pronoun in accusative, a compound form, partially of Latin origin, *si+ne*<Lat. se- plus *-ne*, the last particle being considered of Dacian origin,[2] and showing a relation to the Tocharian B *şañ,* or the Welsh *hunan.* The Romanian pronoun is used mainly with prepositions as in *pentru/dela/în sine* 'for/from/in himself/herself/itself', similarly to the first and second personal pronouns in accusative *pentru/dela/in mine* 'for/to/of me', *pentru/dela/in tine* 'for/to/of you', explained through the Lat. me, te plus Dacian *ne*. The neutral third person form is preferred in expressions like *lucrul in sine* 'the thing in itself', *viaţa în sine* 'life in itself', but it also could be used in expressions like *în sinea lucrurilor* 'in the essence of things', *în sinea lumii,* 'in the essence of the world, of nature'. The noun *Sine* is used in philosophic discourse connoting 'the Self' - *sinele* (with the enclitic article *–le)*.

Interestingly, what separates the Romanian language from the other Indo-European group is the presence of the feminine form *sinea,* with the same meaning 'the Self', generally used by all speakers to express the idea of '[with]in myself, in my consciousness', in expressions like *în sinea mea am decis ca…* '[with]in myself I decided that…', or *în sinea ta* '[with]in yourself', *în sinea lui/ei* '[with]in him/her-self'.

The existence only in Romanian language of both forms in neuter and feminine could lead to speculations on the approach to consciousness by its speakers. Although they act as a pair, *sinea* may be less used by itself in a discourse, whereas *sine, sine-le* (enclitic article) acquired the qualities of a noun 'the consciousness, the self', frequently used in scientific context, psychology, philosophy, and such.

Constantin Noica,[3] a famous Romanian philosopher, opened a door for us into the beauty and uniqueness of the Romanian

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language. He especially discussed the destiny of this pair *sinele* and *sinea,* in company of the Greek *Logos* and *Eros*, or the Latin *Animus* and *Anima*. In his opinion the Romanian *sine* has broken the circle of a passive *I*, entering, philosophically, into the universal sphere of spiritual family, the culture, the historic moment, expressing one's ideals, liberties, of the lucid *I* (das Ich) in its intention to reach the depth of *the Self* (das Selbst). Whereas *sinea* expresses the feminine principle beyond humans, intimate with nature and the germinating night.

The unique presence of this peculiar pair in Romanian language does not have a quick answer. One could attempt to explain the word formation *sinea* by association with the Romanian word for 'the heart' *inima,* also a feminine noun. With its root in the Latin *Animus, Anima*, 'soul, spirit' the Dacians preferred and retained the feminine form *Anima*, and developed it into the noun *inima* 'the heart'. Perhaps this pair of feminine concepts *sinea* and *inima* influenced each other, and perhaps the people living in the Roman province north of Danube River retained the concept of spirit - *Anima* – according to their own understanding, as *Anima* was located in the chest from where the emotions flow, where the heart is. For the concept of the spirit to name the physical organ *inima* the Daco-Romanians may asserted their belief that the spirit 'animates' the heart, or that the spirit and the heart are one. Perhaps this union between the heart, the soul and the spirit, this alignment between the self and the heart, was believed to lead to a harmony desired by humans.

Romanian language employs the word *sine* also to form the reflexive pronoun, to express an action that is done by the same subject or it reflexes on the subject. While in English language there is only one form: *myself, yourself*, etc., in Romanian we find the stressing pronoun *eu însumi* 'I myself', *tu însuţi* 'you yourself', *el însuşi, ea însăşi* 'he/she him/herself', etc.; more so, Romanian language could combine these two very concepts to get closer to the meaning of 'self' in expressions like *în/pe/de sine însuşi/însăşi* 'within/on/of/ himself/herself, itself'. The stressing pronoun is explained by the Romanian linguists as derived from the Latin in + pronoun ipse (-a, -um), ipsus, in spite of the existence in language of the noun *îns, ins* 'person, human', with forms in masc. *îns, ins,* fem. *insă*, masc. pl. *inşi,* fem. pl. *inse*, all meaning 'person/persons, someone, anyone'. This noun could have been the base for *însu+mi,*

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însu+ţi, însu+şi, pl. *înşi+ne* etc., meaning 'I myself, yourself, ourselves, themselves'. To sustain this formation we could take a look at the reconstructed IE personal and reflexive pronoun, e.g. *h_1eĝ ,I', and the stressed *h_1eĝóm ,myself', which can be found enclitic, e.g. *$h_1$me first person sg., second personal pronoun enclitic *-te (Alb -të); the first dual 'we two, us two', e.g. Grk nó 'we two, us two', Toch B wene 'we two', Alb ne 'us'; the second person plural enclitic *wos, e.g. Lat vōs, Skt vas.[4] Thus, the Romanian stressing pronoun *însu+mi* may very well be a compound from *îns* 'a self, a human being' plus the enclitic IE particles *$h_1$me, *-te, etc.

Further, the Romanian noun *îns* could be related to the PIE reconstructed root *$h_a$énsus 'god, spirit, vital force'; IEW 48 *ansu-; GI 653; BK 369 *an-aħ-/*ən-aħ-; ON *ōss* 'god' [gen. āsir, nom. pl. aesir]; OE ōs (gen. pl. ēsa) 'god'; Goth (as reported by Jordanes) *anses* 'half-gods', Av *anhu* 'lord, overlord; life (period) of existance', *ahura-* (<*h_aṇsu-ró-) 'god, lord', *Ahura-mazdāh* 'the highest of gods'; OInd *ásu-* 'powerful spirit', *ásura-* 'divine, mighty; god, lord'; Tocharian A āñcäm, 'self, soul'. "This *$h_a$énsus has long been thought to be related to *$h_a$en(h_1)- 'breath' (and thus might mean 'spirit' or 'inspirator' or the like)."[5]

The connection between breath and spirit, soul and self is thus historically attested, and the development of such concepts in philosophy and religion shows the continual effort of humans to penetrate the mystery of the human Self.

NOTES:

1 G.H. Mead, *Mind, Self and Society,* Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1934.
2 *Istoria limbii Române*, Editura Academiei RSR, Bucuresti, 1969, p. 239.
3 Constantin Noica, *Rostirea filozofica româneasca,* Ed. Stiintifica, Bucuresti, 1970.
4 J.P. Mallory and D.Q. Adams, *The Oxford Introduction to Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Indo-European World*, Oxford Univ. Press, 2006, pp. 416-417.
5 *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture,* J.P. Mallory and D.Q. Adams, eds., Fitzroy Dearborn Pubs., London and Chicago, 1997, p. 330.

Semnificaţia şi sensul noţiunii de Biserică în reflecţia preotului martir Pavel Florenski (1882-1937)

Biserica este aşezământul dumnezeiesc divino-uman, având conţinut sacramental-teandric. Biserica le susţine pe toate în existenţă şi le uneşte, prin Harul ei cel nevăzut. Capul Bisericii este Hristos Domnul şi numai în Biserica întemeiată pe jertfa Sa supremă şi Învierea din morţi se asigură mântuirea oamenilor.

Preotul Pavel Florenski a redactat un impresionant studiu despre Biserică intitulat: *Noţiunea de Biserică în Sfânta Scriptură* [1]. De asemenea, a tradus cartea lui Rudolph Sohm: *Structura Bisericii în primele secole ale creştinismului*.[2]

Studiile florenskiene sunt înrâurite profund de Taina Bisericii, în reflecţiile sale teoretice, iar termenul care defineşte trăirea vie, duhovnicească a Bisericii este acela de *ţercovnosti*. Ascensiunea pe treptele eclesiologiei ţine de misterul însuşi al fiinţei, care este nepătrunsă şi nelimitată. Din *Stâlpul şi Temelia Adevărului*, cartea fundamentală a preotului Pavel Florenski, răzbat aceste trepte, chiar dacă nu i se dedică *Bisericii* un capitol aparte, ca de altfel şi *Hristologiei*.

Teodiceea - calea ascendentă, ascetic-contemplativă şi justificatoare, în sensul prezenţei în noi a lui Dumnezeu, aparţine Bisericii.

Pe terenul *antropodiceii* în definirea Cultului şi Tainelor, Preotul Pavel Florenski operează *pnevmatologic*, deci tot în determinanta eclesiologică.

Părintele Florenski nu face o disociere a *teologiei* de *mathessis* (învăţătura), neexistând o relevanţă pentru una sau cealaltă.

Teologia, spune părintele profesor Ioan Ică jr. în Studiul introductiv la *Stâlpul şi Temelia Adevărului,* "trebuie să exprime, să imite în sens invers realitatea religioasă a mântuirii omului prin unire cu Dumnezeu. Această unire realizată în mod unic şi definitiv în Iisus Hristos este rezultatul a două mişcări concomitente: pogorârea şi golirea (kenosis) de Sine a lui Dumnezeu spre om, prin care se realizează justificarea omului (antropodiceea), ca afirmare a

lui de către Dumnezeu sau îndumnezeirea (theosis-ul) omului, ca justificare (teodicee) şi afirmare a lui Dumnezeu de către om, cu ajutorul lui Dumnezeu".[3]

Cele două mişcări, ascendentă şi descendentă se realizează total numai în Biserică, *Stâlpul şi Temelia Adevărului* (1Timotei 3,15), ceea ce constitue însuşi titlul lucrării părintelui Pavel Florenski.

Cu adevărat *Stâlpul* poate fi considerat un *opus magnum al filosofiei universale din toate timpurile*[4], dar şi o carte de referinţă teologică, unde centralitatea pe întregul edificiu al Bisericii trebuie să fie Iisus Hristos, Domnul, Creatorul şi Mântuitorul lumii.

Vom încerca să analizăm două puncte din studiul preotului Pavel Florenski, despre Biserică:

1. Dualitatea Bisericii;

2. Definiţia alegorică a Bisericii şi raportul Bisericii cu Împărăţia lui Dumnezeu.

Dualitatea Bisericii

Preotul Pavel Florenski defineşte Biserica în lumina Sfintei Scripturi. În studiul său abundă texte scripturistice, surse terminologice greceşti dar şi trimiteri la scriitori străini catolici: Hillerin, Holtzmann, Fallot, Lenne, Kraus, Harnack, Jalaguier şi alţii. Acest fapt denotă o riguroasă cercetare a textului în complementaritatea şi analiza sa epistemologică.

Biserica este anunţată de Dumnezeu-Omul Iisus Hristos la mărturisirea Apostolului Petru (Matei 16, 16), care în numele tuturor apostolilor primeşte confirmarea prezenţei Fiului lui Dumnezeu Celui Viu, ce-şi va zidi Biserica Sa. Anunţul este asemenea Bunei Vestiri a Fecioarei Maria de către Îngerul Gavriil, că va naşte Fiul Celui Prea Înalt (Luca 1, 35).

"Legată nedespărţit de Ziditorul şi Dumnezeiescul său Pricinuitor şi, totodată, neseparată de condiţia sa umană, Biserica poartă prin ea însăşi, în provenienţa sa, un caracter dual şi dualitatea ei fiinţială".[5] Pavel Florenski defineşte termenul dualitate (dvuedinstvo), ca natură dublă enipostaziată, pământească şi dumnezeiască a Bisericii, care defineşte fundamentul credinţei, fundament din care rezultă unitatea oamenilor şi inter-relaţionarea lor. Fundamentul Bisericii, divino-umanitatea, termeni ai dualităţii priviţi unilateral şi exclusiv duc la erezii eclesiologice, hristologice şi euharistologice. Potrivit celor două firi în Hristos sau celor două

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principii în Euharistie, dualitatea Bisericii este descoperită, simțită numai în experiența duhovnicească vie, nemijlocită a omului înduhovnicit. Preotul Pavel Florenski consideră că dualitatea Bisericii creează intelectului antinomii (stalknavenia) necesare, folositoare și enumeră câteva dintre acestea. Biserica se constituie din mulțimea credincioșilor, din prezența lor. Dar nu o simplă adunare abstractă, ci chemarea ce vine de sus, care face să fiițeze într-o unitate și să se împărtășească de Dumnezeire (Vl. Soloviov). Sensul Bisericii este comuniunea oamenilor cu Dumnezeu, în vederea mântuirii lor. În Faptele Apostolilor, cap. II, v. 41 se spune despre cei ce au fost pătrunși de propovăduirea Apostolului Petru, că s-au adăugat celorlalți, care deja formau comunitatea și comuniunea.

Preotul Pavel Florenski îl citează pe Jalaguier în analiza ce o face Bisericii care, pe de o parte, revelează lumii sursele vieții duhovnicești, iar pe de altă parte Biserica însăși se naște în cei pe care îi consacră acestei vieți. Accentul pus pe prima formă poate duce la un monofizitism eclesiologic, în care Biserica devine totul, anihilând voința și credința membrilor ei, iar accentul pus pe a doua formă poate duce la subiectivism, ce are drept consecință hristologică arianismul zilelor noastre; iar separarea extremă operată de protestanți între Biserica văzută și nevăzută o constituie erezia nestoriană, din domeniul hristologic. [6]

Preotul Pavel Florenski consideră că, Biserica trebuie privită din ambele perspective, atât de jos în sus, cât și de sus în jos, pentru a evita *prea omenescul din ea* (Fallot) și *părerile subiective* (Homiakov).

Biserica este *Trupul lui Hristos* și însuși Hristos-Domnul este Capul ei: "Voi zidi Biserica Mea" sunt cuvintele Mântuitorului din Matei 16, 18.

Domnul Iisus Hristos nu a zis: Va fi zidită Biserica de către Petru sau de către Apostoli sau de oameni în general, ci de către Sine Însuși. Biserica este "mai presus de lume și mai înainte de lume, dumnezeiască, suprafirească".[7] Natura duală a Bisericii face să se distingă în ea două aspecte: Biserica este Absolută, iar prin caracterul văzut i se conferă autoritatea și libertatea. "Domnul Iisus Hristos nu este numai întemeietorul Bisericii în planul exterior, pentru ea însăși și pentru viața ei, ci El este în același timp Învățătorul și conținutul învățăturii, norma vieții și izvorul acestei vieți, principiul istoriei bisericești, inima și nervul ei vital."[8]

Preotul Pavel Florenski, raportându-se la alţi întemeietori de religii consideră relaţia dintre Hristos şi Biserică diferită fiinţial şi, în mod excepţional, imposibil de comparat cu celelalte confesiuni. Definirea structurii teandrice a Bisericii se face prin ea însăşi, dar numai în Persoana şi Opera lui Iisus Hristos, şi prin actele Sale mântuitoare, ce culminează în Cruce şi Înviere.

Vechiul şi *Noul* în Biserică se potenţează reciproc, se echilibrează şi se armonizează. Instituţiile pământeşti sunt "ca praful spulberat de vânt de pe faţa pământului" (Psalmul 1, 4), însă Biserica se dezvoltă în mod organic, în cel mai înalt sens al cuvântului.

"Principiul autorităţii luat în mod unilateral, ca principiu al unirii forţate nimiceşte automat tot ce este nou şi Biserica locală încremeneşte în nemişcarea moartă a unităţii. Are loc pietrificarea organismului bisericesc iar fluxul psihic se încetineşte până la extrem, trecând în monoideism".[9]

Noul şi *Vechiul* în Biserică se intercondiţionează datorită fundamentului divino-uman al ei, prin care izvoarele Revelaţiei, Sfânta Scriptură şi Sfânta Tradiţie se explicitează în Biserică pentru fiecare timp, trăindu-se actualitatea vie a divino-umanităţii. Libertatea privită unilateral, discreţionar, fărâmiţează şi nimiceşte, inevitabil, tot ce este vechi (tezaurul), iar Biserica locală "se descompune într-o multiplicitate sectară lipsită de frâu".[10]

În virtutea fiinţării divino-umane a Bisericii, preotul Pavel Florenski vorbeşte despre două aspecte ale Bisericii şi anume:

1. Biserica, sub aspectul ei dogmatic, trebuie să fie privită permanent, în raportul cu persoana lui Hristos, prin care se uneşte cu Dumnezeirea, cât şi în raport cu oamenii ce intră în componenţa ei, prin care se înrudeşte cu lumea.

2. Biserica prin natura sa mistică are în mod necesar trăsăturile de neşters ale Domnului Său, iar prin natura sa văzută (empirică), trăsăturile oamenilor ce intră în componenţa ei.[11]

Funcţia alegorică a Bisericii şi raportul ei cu Împărăţia lui Dumnezeu

Preotul şi omul de ştiinţă Pavel Florenski, în cuvinte pline de esenţă, vorbeşte despre funcţia alegorică a Bisericii şi raportul Bisericii cu Împărăţia lui Dumnezeu. Precum este foarte dificil să

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trasăm o graniţă între definiţia metafizică şi cea simbolică, la fel de dificil este să delimităm definiţia simbolică de cea alegorică. Există o varietate terminologică şi o unitate a conţinutului în ce priveşte cuvintele *Împărăţie*, *Biserică*, *Viaţa Veşnică* şi chiar sinonimia expresiilor *Împărăţia lui Dumnezeu* şi *Împărăţia Cerurilor* este determinată de anumite nuanţe.

Conceptul de *Împărăţie* constituie centrul de referinţă în jurul căruia iradiază întreaga doctrină a Bisericii. Părintele Pavel Florenski îi aminteşte pe Evangheliştii sinoptici referitor la această afirmaţie, la care Evanghelistul Ioan vine cu un element esenţial – cel de *viaţă veşnică;* pentru Epistolele pauline *Împărăţia* este însăşi *Biserica.*

Preotul Pavel Florenski vorbeşte despre interioritatea termenilor şi chiar o identitate funciară, ce ţine de iconomia creştină pe pământ. "Împărăţia lui Dumnezeu este viaţa care ni s-a dăruit în Hristos"; "Împărăţia lui Dumnezeu este viaţa dimpreună cu Dumnezeu dăruită în Hristos sau părtăşia cu Dumnezeu a omului"; "Împărăţia lui Dumnezeu este totalitatea bunătăţilor dăruite nouă în Hristos." Florenski condensează conceptele de *Împărăţie*, *Biserică* şi *Viaţă Veşnică*, uneori, contopindu-le, alteori, deosebindu-le.

Luând textul de la Evanghelistul Matei, 16, 18, 19, cu făgăduinţa pe care Hristos Domnul i-o dă lui Petru, printr-un paralelism ebraic, termenii de *Biserică* şi *Împărăţie* se identifică, dar avem de-a face aici şi cu o îndoită reprezentare simbolică. Porţile iadului nu vor birui Biserica întemeiată de Hristos. "Porţile iadului" este o desemnare metonimică a Morţii […] Biserica trebuie să fie antidot al Morţii adică Viaţă, Viaţa prin excelenţă, Viaţa însăşi sau Viaţa veşnică."[12] Termenii în acest context se suprapun. Părintele Florenski aminteşte de un alt text, de la Matei 18, 15-20, despre paralela dintre puterea din *Biserică* şi puterea din *Cer*, definită *Împărăţia Cerurilor* şi stabileşte sinonimia pe cele două expresii.

"Viaţa veşnică (ζωη αιωνιος) sau simplu viaţa (ζωι) desemnează cel mai mare bun, la a cărui stăpânire a fost chemat omul. Ca atare, în aceeaşi revelaţie creştină cuvintele *zoi eonios* (viaţa veşnică) sunt opuse expresiilor (κολασις αιωνιος) chinuri veşnice, întunericul cel mai din afară (σκοτος το εξωτερον) pierzania (απωλεια), expresii prin care dimpotrivă se neagă ceea ce alcătuieşte fericirea omului şi se afirmă ceea ce reprezintă pentru el răul."[13]

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Vorbind de *Împărăţia lui Dumnezeu,* Florenski enunţă două puncte de vedere: obiectiv-religios şi subiectiv-etic (sau subiectiv mistic şi obiectiv *mistic)*: "Împărăţia lui Dumnezeu înlăuntrul vostru este" (Luca 17, 20-21), reprezintă aspectul subiectiv-etic, în sufletele, în inimile voastre, *in animis vestris,* iar aspectul obiectiv-religios se referă la: printre voi, în mijlocul vostru, *intra vos*.[14]

Textul florenskian abundă de citate din Sfânta Scriptură, cu texte referitoare la Împărăţia lui Dumnezeu, la persoana lui Iisus Hristos, începătorul Împărăţiei Cerurilor şi la identificarea ei cu Biserica.

Părintele Pavel Florenski dă Împărăţiei lui Dumnezeu trei sensuri distincte:

1. Totalitatea celor care mărturisesc ascultarea faţă de Dumnezeu şi care s-au învrednicit să-I slujească Lui; oameni învăluiţi de strălucirea Evangheliei: "toţi cei care nu s-au lepădat de creştinism pe faţă sunt recunoscuţi ca mădulare ale Împărăţiei. Aceasta este comunitatea creştină istorică aşa cum a fost descrisă în parabola despre neghină şi despre năvod."[15]

2. Totalitatea celor care aparţin lui Dumnezeu şi Îi slujesc cu adevărat în conformitate cu textele din Matei 21, 31; 11, 12; 5, 20; 7, 21. Este Împărăţia al cărei "Cârmuitor suprem este Dumnezeu şi care se supune necondiţionat voinţei Împăratului Său. Aceasta este Împărăţia ideală, centru şi principiul continuităţii împărăţiei istorice; este de asemenea împărăţia nevăzută în sensul în care putem include în ea şi pe îngeri şi cei care sunt cunoscuţi numai lui Dumnezeu".[16]

3. Şi, în sfârşit, privilegiile ce le primesc cei aleşi în Trupul structurat-sacramental al Bisericii, privilegii care semnifică bunătăţile poporului răscumpărat. Părintele Florenski enumeră mai multe texte din Sfânta Scriptură şi arată însemnătatea lor duhovnicească. Se vorbeşte despre bogăţiile duhovniceşti, comoara lăuntrică pe care nu o poate răpi nici o putere a lumii. Textele de la Matei 5, 3 cf. 5, 10, sunt corelate cu cele de la Marcu 10, 15 şi Matei 18, 3.

"Împărăţia Cerului devine organism istoric, dar sub condiţia de a fi mai întâi stare lăuntrică, dispoziţie sufletească, analogă dispoziţiei copilului care se supune pentru că îl crede şi iubeşte" (Matei 18,3).[17] În continuitatea celor spuse Pavel Florenski adaugă lângă bunătăţile dumnezeieşti, slava veşnică din care se vor desfăta cei care o primesc în Împărăţia cerurilor. Drepţii "vor şedea la masă cu Avraam, cu Isaac şi cu Iacov în Împărăţia Cerurilor"(Matei 8, 11,

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cf. 26, 29), proslăvind milostivirea lui Dumnezeu şi lăudându-L întru stăpânirea moştenirii celei veşnice. Ei se află în fericirea netulburată, consecinţă a strălucirii vieţii lor transfigurate. În consens deplin cu Evanghelia, Părintele Florenski defineşte relaţia dintre Împărăţia lui Dumnezeu şi Biserică în termeni de interioritate: "Porţile Cerului se deschid numai dinlăuntru".[18] Odată deschise ele nu trebuie să se mai închidă. Sămânţa căzută în inimă creşte permanent; cel ce şi-a potolit setea de la Hristos, izvorăşte el însuşi râuri de apă vie (Ioan 7, 38); dospeala creşte în deplinătate; cuvântul lui Dumnezeu pătruns în suflet se înmulţeşte şi se dezvoltă, devenind izvor, centru şi punct de convergenţă al unor impetuoase acţiuni harice asupra oamenilor şi asupra întregii făpturi. În datoria înmulţirii talanţilor omul devine un organ viu al desăvârşirii, mădular al Bisericii, în Împărăţia lui Dumnezeu.

Iisus Hristos, Dumnezeul întrupat recapitulează şi însumează toate (Efeseni I, 10). "În starea finală, Biserica şi Împărăţia lui Dumnezeu coincid. Acum ele sunt două sfere, care se suprapun parţial."[19] În marea sferă care îmbrăţişează toate, a viitoarei Împărăţii a lui Dumnezeu, sfera Bisericii se află chiar în centru.

Preotul Pavel Florenski vede Biserica în accepţiunea de integralitate. Revitalizarea omenirii ecleziale, a omenirii-Biserică ţine de disponibilitatea delimitării celor două lumi: ţarina semănată cu grâu şi neghină, năvodul cu peşti mici şi mari; diferenţierea dintre femeia din lume (desfrânata) şi Mireasa Ierusalimului. Opoziţia organismului eclesial se va sfârşi prin desăvârşita armonie a noului Ierusalim (Apocalipsa, 21).

"Între aceste două extreme opuse, remarcate în prima şi ultima carte a Sfintei Scripturi a avut loc procesul istoriei mondiale, al cărei chip simbolic ne-a fost dat într-o sfântă carte ce poate fi considerată de trecere între Vechiul şi Noul Testament, cartea Proorocului Daniil, II, 37-38 (Pavel Florenski citează aici din Vl. Soloviov). Acest proces, într-un anumit moment, în momentul Răscumpărării omenirii a suferit o sciziune prin introducerea unui noi factor de desăvârşire: Biserica. Acum a început recristalizarea omenirii în jurul acestui principiu divino-uman. Biserica s-a arătat a fi un organism aparte, prin care s-a revărsat în lume energia duhovnicească al cărei conţinut este viaţa veşnică, Plinătatea prin care Hristos umple trupul Său - Biserica, iar totalitatea întregii făpturi ce va să intre în Ierusalimul ceresc este Împărăţia lui Dumnezeu".[20]

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Rezumat la concepţia teologică generală

Indiscutabil, concepţia teologică a Părintelui Florenski nu priveşte nici Sofia, nici antinomismul creaţiei sale, larg dezvoltat în *Stâlpul.* Sofia noi am tratat-o în dreptul punctelor controversate şi am exprimat ferm punctele noastre de vedere. Polul de iradiere şi de convergenţă, însă, al edificiului gândirii sale prin care se unesc reflecţiile teologice şi filosofice îl constituie dogma deofiinţimii, Adevărul Suprem Întreit Ipostatic. Toate normele de gândire se întâlnesc în acest punct cel mai înalt al credinţei, acea cumpănă de gândire prin care termenii *homousios* şi *homiusios* se despart printr-o graniţă nevăzută şi care delimitează sistemele de gândire umană. Afirmarea dogmei deofiinţimii persoanelor Sfintei Treimi constituie momentul de semnificaţie unică în istoria Bisericii urmând apoi, Calcedonul.

Prin *homousios,* care exprimă concomitent atât dogma trinitară cât şi dogma hristologică se defineşte esenţa concepţiei bisericeşti despre lume şi valorizarea "duhovnicească" a legilor gândirii.

Sistemele filosofice şi teologice se pot împărţi în două tipuri, având drept criteriu identitatea fiinţei sau asemănării fiinţei.

Homousianismul sau consubstanţialitatea este proprie filosofiei persoanei în ireductibilitatea şi taina absolută a unicităţii, în nevoinţa duhovnicească ce tinde spre Creator, în unitatea universală opusă homiusianismului sau ideea asemănării ce fundează raţionalismul, conceptul şi filosofia raţiunii.

Filosofia homousianistă specifică Ortodoxiei propăvăduieşte taina unei umanităţi luminate şi înduhovnicite în intenţionalitatea dezvăluirii chipului în Arhetip, a simbolului, a experierii tainelor în lumina credinţei şi a sensului, în iubirea de jertfă. Gândirea homiusiană este specifică lumii raţionalizate, însingurate, tehnicizate care respinge taina iconică, fiinţa cultică, fundamentarea sacramentalităţii în creaţie, sfinţenia şi temeiul hristologic al ei.

Potrivit filosofiei homiusiene fiinţele duc o existenţă exterioară, relaţiile sunt vremelnice, "logositatea" homiusiană înlocuind pe însuşi Dumnezeu-Logosul din creaţie şi umanitate cu iluzia unei comuniuni cu Realitatea Supremă. Dimpotrivă, filosofia deofiinţimii, a consubstanţialităţii afirmă legătura lăuntrică şi ontologică prin care făpturile sunt chemate deopotrivă la iubirea concretă în Dumnezeu, unitatea în multiplicitatea nelimitării fiinţei

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şi conturarea datului concret. Rădăcinile deofiinţimii se regăsesc şi în filosofia platonică a lumii ideilor (sensul idealismului).

Principiul deofiinţimii dă sens unităţii în umanitate, unităţii genetice şi ontologice prin care oamenii se percep ca fraţi în identitatea concretă a naturii fiinţelor comune. De aici, teoria ontologică a dragostei ce decurge din teoria deofiinţimii în planul existenţei lumii şi al întregului cosmos. Din aceasta decurge eliminarea oricărei izolări şi separări de rasă proprie ideii asemănării. Oamenii sunt fraţi nu numai că descind din Adam, strămoşul comun, ci şi în virtutea fiinţialităţii comune a esenţei lor.

Preotului Pavel Florenski îi datorăm introducea principiului deofiinţimii în metafizica existenţei concrete (Losev) şi conceperea naturii lumii ca un ansamblu organic.

Dragostea din această perspectivă nu este ceva psihologic, nu este o categorie morală ca în concepţiile raţionaliste. Nu este o "gâdilare" a sufletului care se transformă apoi în egoism şi poftă, ci este sentimentul profund al realităţii creaţiei, propriu creştinismului care ontologic uneşte întreolaltă făpturile zidite de Dumnezeu.

Ortodoxia se trăieşte în evidenţa ascetică a trăirilor în Duh, a înfrânării raţiunii, descoperind chipurile sfinte şi luminile prezenţei pnevmatice.

Acestea, considerăm noi, sunt în linii mari coordonatele majore ale concepţiei teologice despre Biserică ce decurg din monumentala operă florenskiană.

NOTES:

1 Preotul şi omul de ştiinţă Pavel Florenski, în celebrele sale materiale eclesiologice, condensează *Hristologia*, ca şi cum ar fi fost scrisă cu un scop precis: evidenţierea Hristologiei însăşi şi evidenţierea *eo ipso* a Bisericii lui Hristos. Aceste studii au fost gândite în anii studenţiei, când Pavel Florenski încă nu intrase în labirintul filosofic conexat cu lumea ştiinţifică matematică şi cu cercetări în domeniul fizicii, bulversate toate de magnifica lucrare a lui Serapion Maşkin de la Optina Pustin *Sistemul unei viziuni creştine asupra lumii* (2250 pagini), care va înrâuri profund cealaltă lucrare, opera fundamentală a lui Pavel Florenski *Stâlpul şi Temelia Adevărului*. Când manuscrisul primit de Pavel Florenski pentru publicare în *Vestitorul teologic* unde era redactor, de la însuşi Serapion Maşkin, care a

murit la câteva luni, va vedea lumina tiparului, atunci se vor vedea similitudinile între cele două manuscrise. Manuscrisul lui Serapion Maşkin, se găseşte la Profesorul Andronic (Trubaciov), fiul fiicei gânditorului, Olga, manuscris care, credem, niciodată nu se va dezvălui. În discuţiile repurtate cu părintele Andronic, Trubaciov în Ostrovul Valamului, unde chiar Părintele Andronic mi-a oferit volumele din *Stâlpul,* Ediţia ʼ90, pe o iarnă cu zăpadă până la acoperiş, zic, în discuţiile purtate cu Preacuvioşia sa am observat o reticenţă izbitoare şi complicitate tacită cu manuscrisul lui Serapion Maşkin. A existat o *captatio benevolentiae* foarte puternică la început între mine şi rudele Trubaciov, estompată cred de recurgerea la o imparţialitate şi interesul obiectiv pentru opera şi viaţa gânditorului. Primit cu mare rezervă în Academia Duhovniciască din Petersburg în anii 1990-1992 de către teologii dogmatişti puritani pe linia Liveri, cu oarecare înţelegere din partea lui V. Mustafin, este forjat apoi intens de lumea academică şi filosofică, mai ales din Moscova.Un manuscris de ontologie a creaţiei florenskiene, prin condescendenţa D. Serghie Serghievici Horujii, doctor în matematică-fizică, a putut fi reevaluat, din perspectivă teologică, la Academia duhovnicească din Petersburg, de subsemnatul în 1993.

2 Rudolph Sohm, *Kirchenrecht. Die geschichtlichen Grundlagen*, Duncker & Humblot, Leipzig, 1892.

3 Diac. Ioan Ică jr., "Studiu introductiv" la *Stâlpul şi Temelia Adevărului,* Ed. Polirom, Iaşi, 1999, p. XXXVII.

4 *Ibidem,* p. XXXIII.

5 Pavel Florenskii, "Eklesiologhiceskie materialî", în *Bogoslovskie Trudî,* XII, Mockva, 1974, p. 81.

6 *Ibidem,* p. 82.

7 *Ibid.,* p. 83.

8 *Ibid.,* p. 84.

9 *Ibid.,* pp. 84-85.

10 *Ibid.,* p. 85.

11 *Ibid.,* p. 85.

12 *Ibid.,* p. 172 ("Allegoriceskoe apredelenie Ţerkvi i atnaşenie eio k Ţarstvii Bojii")

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Ibid.*

15 *Ibid.,* p. 173.

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.,* p. 173.

18 *Ibid.,* p. 174.

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.,* p. 175.

Alina Feld, Bert Breiner, Clair McPherson

Richard Grallo (left) and Doru Tsaganea

Viorica Colpacci,
Director of "Spiritus" Art Gallery

Lou Tietje, Viorica Colpacci, Alina Feld

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PROGRAM

XXth Ecumenical Theological and Interdisciplinary Symposium

Time, Place and Self in Interdisciplinary Narratives

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11:00 AM

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Professor of Philosophy and Ethics, Metropolitan College of New York; President of the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality:
The Transcendent Dimension of Place and Time: A Theological Narrative

Richard Grallo, PhD
Professor of Applied Psychology, Metropolitan College of New York:
Truth in Perspective: Application of Interrogative Problem Representation

Louis Tietje, PhD
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The Role of Redemptive Narratives in Dan P. McAdams's Theory of Personality: A Christian Critique

Clair McPherson, PhD
Associate Professor of Ascetical Theology, General Theological Seminary; Professor of Theology, Fordham College Lincoln Center:
Poor in Paradise: The Ascetical vision of Nilus of Ancyra in De Voluntaria Paupertate

Paul J. LaChance, PhD
Associate Professor, Philosophy/Theology Department, College of St. Elisabeth, New Jersey:
Experience of Self and God: Gestalt and Focusing Interventions in Pastoral Counseling

Roland Clark, PhD
Assistant Professor, History Department, Eastern Connecticut State University:
Orthodox Priests and the Legion of the Archangel Michael

Steven Cresap, PhD
Associate Professor of Modern European Intellectual History, Metropolitan College of New York:
Frightening Habits: Existential Effects of Extreme Aesthetic Experiences

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Doru Tsaganea, PhD
Associate Professor of Mathematics, Metropolitan College of New York:
The Concept of Time Associated with Cybernetic Systems

Dean Vasil, PhD
Adjunct Professor of Latin and Philosophy, Independent Scholar:
Descendants of Pascal and Dostoievsky: European Critics of Technocracy

Catalin Vatamanu, PhD
Associate Assistant of Old Testament Theology, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iassy, Romania: *The Light of God in the Hebrew and Christian Traditions*

Ana R. Chelariu, MA, MLS
Writer, Independent Researcher:
The awareness of self from a linguistic perspective: Pro-Indo-European *séue *(acc.) English* self; *German* das Selbst, sich; *Romanian m.* sine, *f.* sinea

Alina Feld, PhD
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His Eminence Dr. Nicolae Condrea, Archbishop, The Romanian
Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

His Excellency Marian Pârjol
Consul General of Romania in New York

Vinton Thompson, PhD
President of the Metropolitan College of
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Ruth Lugo, PhD
Dean of the Audrey Cohen School for Human Services and
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DISCUSSANT:
Bert Breiner, Ph.D.
Adjunct Professor of Religion, Hunter College, City University of
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Divine Creation and Human Responsibility in the Context of Contemporary Ecological Preoccupations
Symposium, Nr. III/1, 1996

Quo Vadis Homo? Salvation and the Modern World
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