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Initiation into the Mysteries

A Collection of Studies in Religion, Philosophy and the Arts

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Initiation into the Mysteries. A collection of studies in religion, philosophy and the arts

Edited by Anikó Daróczi, Enikő Sepsi and Miklós Vassányi

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INITIATION INTO THE MYSTERIES

A COLLECTION OF STUDIES IN RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY AND THE ARTS

Edited by
Anikó Daróczi – Enikő Sepsi – Miklós Vassányi

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INTRODUCTION

The present volume offers an interdisciplinary collection of studies to readers interested in the religious, philosophical and artistic aspects of *initiation*. In itself, the concept of initiation (Greek μυσταγωγία) presupposes that there is an initiator, someone to be initiated, and a secret rite or knowledge—in short, a mystery—into which the elect few would be admitted and which must not be revealed to the rest. In turn, the mystery is supposed to hide a salvific yet incommunicable experience of the divine, which at the same time implies the adherence to a community of the initiated. Initiation is thus very personal, as it encompasses—in Christian theology at least—an encounter with God but also involves a communal experience. Initiation is invariably viewed as a spiritual elevation or empowerment whereby an individual has more immediate access to what is considered to be the meaning of life, and may attain salvation. It is, hence, a transformative event or a transfiguration, the exact meaning of which depends on how a particular religious or philosophical tradition understands the divine.

While in a European context, initiation is an essentially Christian idea, not all the papers of the present volume turn to the Christian tradition for sources. Hermetism, Neoplatonism, pre-Christian paganism and Renaissance esotericism also find a place among the studies published here. Religion and philosophy are not the only viewpoints adopted by our authors, however; the section on art and literature discusses initiation as it appears in novels, short stories, and drama as well as poetry, especially in modern European literature. In chronological terms, the papers span late antiquity, the Middle Ages and early modern and modern times, with a particular emphasis on late ancient, late medieval, renaissance and contemporary authors and sources. In terms of methodology, besides literary, historical and philosophical approaches, some of our authors address this protean topic from an archaeological, psychological or hermeneutical point of view.

The volume is divided into three parts concerning, respectively, religion, philosophy, and the arts. Part 1, covering religion and spirituality, begins with Endre Ádám Hamvas's paper on "Initiation in the *Hermetica*." Getting

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to grips with R. Reitzenstein's and A.-J. Festugière's respective interpretations of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, Hamvas argues in defence of Reitzenstein's conclusion that the *Hermetica* may be construed as a collection of initiatory texts, designed to be read by a teacher and her or his disciple. With his study on "Cyprian's *Ad Donatum* as a Mystagogic Protrepticus," Stefan Freund leads us into the domain of Christian mystical theology. While the Carthaginian Bishop Saint Cyprian's dialogue *To Donatus* is usually seen as an apologetic work, our author advocates the interpretation that it is, instead, a "Christian mystagogic protrepticus," which avails itself of the rhetorical tools of ancient pre-Christian literary style. The historian and archaeologist Zsuzsanna Turcsán-Tóth then discusses "The Statue of Artemis Ephesia in the Light of Porphyry's *On the Cave of the Nymphs*." She has decided to analyze the most frequent motifs on the Hellenistic statues of Artemis Ephesia, that is, the chest ornaments, which commonly include female figures and Cancer. Considering these as one coherent scene, Turcsán-Tóth interprets them with reference to Porphyry's *De antro nympharum*, maintaining the possibility that they might be visual representations of mysteries related to the birth and rebirth of the soul. Next, Filip Doroszewski's "Rite or Metaphor? The Use of ὄργια in the Works of the Greek Christian Writers of the 4th and 5th Centuries" examines the meaning of the term ὄργια in the works of Greek Christian writers of the 4th and 5th centuries. His analysis is carried out on the basis of a scoop of many occurrences of the term in the Greek Christian literature. Drawing on his data, Doroszewski concludes that, as far as the 4th and 5th centuries are concerned, the extant sources do not support the view that ὄργια was used to designate Church celebrations, let alone rites of initiation, as it was with reference to pagan cults. Carrying on with the history of Christian theology, István Pásztori-Kupán discusses "Faith as a Prerequisite to the Initiation into the Mysteries in Theodoret of Cyrus," an Eastern Church Father of the 5th century. To Theodoret, faith and confidence both in the initiator and the mystery itself is a precondition of initiation. To drive home his point, Theodoret even adopts a language and phraseology borrowed from ancient sacred rituals. Anna Judit Tóth focuses on a disturbing paragraph of the *De mensibus* by the sixth century author John Lydus, wherein two enigmatic epithets are given to Dionysus. She offers a clarifying Mithraic reading of the passage, bringing in etymological arguments, examples of iconographical materials of the Mithras sanctuaries and the Porphyrian summary of the Platonic idea concerning the journey of the souls in universe.

Next, Vilmos Voigt wonders whether there were any Old Icelandic Mysteries: while we know about many early Scandinavian religious sites, there are no reports of mysteries and initiation in Old Icelandic texts. The author approaches initiation through an analysis of its absence. He relies on Tacitus' *Germania* as a guide and examines key words and word combinations in

the 13th-century *Edda* manuscripts. Anikó Daróczi argues that passages from the letters of the 13th-century woman mystic Hadewijch invite her readers to an initiatory reading, that is, a manner of reading by which sacred communication is possible: In the *unio mystica* God's hidden Word touches the mystic, who is moved to speak to her disciples. Hadewijch repeatedly asks them to read and listen to her words in such a way that they can experience the divine touch which should enlighten them. Another kind of initiation is described by György Szőnyi, based on a passionate vision of ascension, the *Crater Hermetis* (1493), inspired by Jewish mysticism and the Kabbalah, authored by the wandering Humanist and Neoplatonist Lodovico Lazzarelli. He was converted by the wandering esoteric prophet Giovanni da Correggio, in whom he recognized the reincarnation of Hermes and by whom he himself, as he says, underwent a mystical transformation, becoming "the son of Hermes", Enoch. Szőnyi explores this spiritual reunion. The next paper takes us forward to our own time. Zsuzsanna Kövi, Levente Fogarassy, Zsuzsanna Mirnics, Anna Mersdorf, and Zoltán Vass analyse the psychological influence of the experience of a union with nature in adventure therapy. The authors focus on the spiritual character of this therapy rather than on the experience of initiation, speaking about the sense of identity, inner peace, one-ness, sense of magic in nature, contact with a higher entity, deep experience of insight.

Part 2 offers philosophical reflections on the concept of initiation. Gerd Van Riel's study, titled "Mysticism and Rationality. A Neoplatonic Perspective", turns to the leading Late Antique Platonists Proclus and Damascius in order to refute the view that they were mystics rather than philosophers. Delving into Damascius' works, he produces textual proofs to demonstrate that Damascius' mysticism is in reality the outcome of a thoroughly rational project, which explores the limits of rational discourse. Miklós Vassányi, in his paper "Transcending Transcendence," stays the course as he examines how the unidentified Christian philosopher Denys the Areopagite blends Platonic ideas with Biblical theology in part 4 of his *On the Divine Names.* Denys' philosophical theological project ultimately arrives at the Neoplatonically inspired conclusion that the true mystery of God consists in His being *hyperarrēton*, more than unspeakable. Neoplatonism and Pseudo-Dionysian mysticism are the focus of Monika Imregh's "Initiation into Mysteries in Pico's Works". Pico agrees with Ficino about the importance of Platonic philosophy for Christian thinking and relies on Ficino's ideas about the divinity—and dignity—of man's soul as Pico writes about the mind's aspiration to gain insight into the divine mysteries. Pico gives a method for this ascent, distilled from Pseudo-Dionysius' *Celestial Hierarchy,* and influenced by Hermetism. In his paper on Giordano Bruno, Antonio dall'Igna argues that Bruno's mysticism is a kind of initiation in the sense that it is the highes intensification of both knowledge and will. Dall'Igna offers a scheme of the characteristics

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of metaphysically founded initiation and examines Bruno's mysticism on the grounds of this scheme, focusing on Bruno's view of the divine human, the *eroico furioso*. Martin Moors's study "Which Initiation does not Lead Astray from the True Mysteries?" takes us to the German Enlightenment and Idealism. Martin Moors looks for the meaning of initiation in F. W. J. Schelling's Introduction to his *Philosophy of Revelation*, and compares his findings to what is yielded by a similar inquiry into Kant's pre-critical *Nova Dilucidatio* and later critical works. He concludes that only a positive philosophy, expounded in the vein of Schelling can completely introduce believers into the mysteries of being and existence. The tension between human reason and divine mystery is the theme of Orsolya Horváth's intensely personal approach to Sartre's reflection on the meditation of Kierkegaard on the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac. While in Sartre's view there was no "convincing sign" of the divine origin of God's voice, Abraham's challenge illustrates, for Kierkegaard, how the human being exists when God, whose authority is above the judgement of human reason, enters the space of human experience. Hence, Abraham's situation is not a hermeneutical one, as Sartre argues, but one beyond the hermeneutical, and the challenge is whether his own reason can stand by his experience of God, that is, the sign that he has understood—which is a "compelling sign," as Horváth puts it. Kate Larson's "Authentic Presence—A Phenomenology of Initiation" traces Simone Weil's reading of Plato "as a mystic" from the point of view of phenomenology and specifically a phenomenology of initiation. The author turns to passages in Plato's writings as a form of phenomenology of initiation and locates their influence on Weil's thinking.

Part 3 deals with arts and literature. György Zoltán Józsa's "Initiation Drama in Russian Symbolism" aims to reveal the origins of various codes embedded in Alexander Blok's *The Rose and the Cross* and Valery Bryusov's *The Pythagoreans.* Józsa concludes that an analysis of the two types of initiation hidden in Blok's and Bryusov's respective texts not only reveals a tendency to reconstruct ancient functions of literature, but also suggests a reconsideration of the notion of the reader's perception. Léna Szilárd's paper on "The Development of the Genre of the Initiation Novel in 20th-century Russian Literature—Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*" considers that the plot of Mikhail Bulgakov's novel is the road to the spiritual enlightenment (the *via illuminativa*) of Ivan Ponyrev. Next, Katalin G. Kállay' paper on "Initiation and its Travesty in *The River* by Flannery O'Connor" investigates the extent to which Flannery O'Connor's story is a deliberate travesty of the ritual of baptism and the extent to which the initiation is indeed to be taken seriously. Carrying on with literature, Anita Rákóczy's paper on "Denials of the Divine: Traces of Ineluctable Presence in the Antecedents of Samuel Beckett's *Fin de partie, Endgame,* and *Film*" explores traces of

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divine presence in a number of dramatic works by Samuel Beckett, who, through denial, provokes and creates God in his plays. Enikő Sepsi's paper on "Theatrical Approaches to the Mystery: 'Kenosis' in Valère Novarina's Works" offers an analysis of Valère Novarina's theatre, where self-emptying becomes an important element in the direction of actors, and in which the Christian theological term kenosis is relevant in the context of rituals taking place on stage. This paper is a rare example of Western scholarly literature discussing the connection between kenosis and literature or kenosis and theatre. The topic of Johanna Domokos is "Endurance Running as Initiation into the Mysteries. A Case Study based on the Fiction of Jari Ehrnrooth". In several of his works, the author states, the Finnish philosopher, writer and athlete describes how endurance running can serve as a means of transcending the everyday state of mind and experiencing the "unattainable Holy Absolute." Finally, Melinda Sebők's paper on "The Aesthetics of Silence in György Rónay's Poetry" deals with the work of a Hungarian poet, novelist, critic, and translator, in whose thinking theology and poetry could not be taken apart.

We sincerely hope that every interested reader will find something of relevance among the twenty-four papers that make up this volume and that she or he will gain some insight into the vastness and depth of initiation studies.

It is with great sorrow that we received the sad news that our dear colleague and friend, Ms. Kate Larson, had passed away in 2018. We dedicate this volume to her memory.

The Editors

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INITIATION IN THE *HERMETICA*

ENDRE ÁDÁM HAMVAS

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I discuss the function of initiation into the mysteries in the Hermetica.

In the first half of the 20th century, Richard Reitzenstein proposed that the Hermetic texts can be interpreted in the ritual context of a religion rooted in the Hellenistic Egyptian religious communities, like the magical papyri. Later, he modified this suggestion and applied his widely known theory of "Lese-Mysterium" *to explain the* Hermetica *as a Hellenistic mystery-religion.*

In his voluminous book La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste, *André-Jean Festugière contested this theory, suggesting that any references to initiative practices in the corpus are literary clichés without real religious content. In his opinion, the Hermetic texts were written with didactic purposes under the influence of the contemporary school-philosophy.*

In the present paper, I intend to show that Reitzenstein's view can serve as a good foundation, with modifications, for further research, and that it is possible to reconstruct a real mystical father-son relationship in the Hermetica. The teacher in the texts is the mystagogue, while the pupil and the reader are the initiates. The Hermetica is, hence, a real initiation in this sense.

1. THE DEFINITION OF HERMETIC INITIATION

In my paper, I outline the nature of Hermetic initiation. I first draft a conceptual frame for my research on the basis of W. Burkert's definition[1] of mysteries, and I then demonstrate with examples how this concept of

[1] Walter Burkert, Ancient Mystery Cults, Cambridge, Harvard University Press 1987. About the Greek mysteries see: Michael B. Cosmopoulos (ed.), *Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology and Ritual of Ancient Greek Secret Cults,* London-New York, Routledge, 2013.

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initiation can be applied to the *Hermetica*. I understand that such a brief survey of the subject will necessarily be sketchy, but in my assessment, a few examples suffice to demonstrate what I mean by Hermetic initiation. Also, let me mention here at the outset as a theoretical presupposition that, in my opinion, the technical language of the Greek mysteries is fundamental to any understanding of the Hermetic concept of initiation.

If we want to understand the core meaning of Hermetic initiation, it will be profitable to take a glance at the Greek mysteries first. As I think that a solid terminological basis can be found in Walter Burkert's analysis of this term, I shall use his findings as a guideline for my research. As he points out, the only common feature in the so-called mysteries is the phenomenon of initiation. However, a fundamental difference between the Hermetic and classical Greek mysteries must immediately be emphasized. In the Greek mysteries, the initiates did not refuse the traditional cultic practices of the Greek polis, whereas in the Hermetic texts, the rejection of these practices is pivotal insofar as the material sacrifices differ from the true Hermetic spiritual sacrifice *(logikē thysia)*, which is a real knowledge of God. On the other hand, the phenomenon of initiation is an essential character of the *Hermetica*, as can be seen plainly from the first, the fourth, and the thirteenth treatises of the corpus and from the Latin *Asclepius*. But if it is true that we have a hermeneutical key to interpreting the nature of the Hermetic initiation as it is described in the texts, there is still another significant question, namely, whether the initiation rituals described in the texts were real ritual actions or only written imitations of mystery cults. Hence the main question remains whether the readers of Hermes fulfilled real ritual, initiation-related practices, or we have to choose a different hermeneutical method whereby we understand the features referring to initiation as a spiritual reinterpretation of empirical ritual practices. The latter approach would mean that the text itself is the instrument and medium of a spiritual initiation. In other words, we can propose that in the *Hermetica* and in the Hermetic communities there were no real initiative practices, but the initiation was the reading of the text itself. In my paper, I use Burkert's definition as a guideline. Depending on this conceptual frame, and considering the *Hermetica* as a tool for spiritual initiation, I consider some peculiarities of the Hermetic texts and examine what kind of baptism and life-giving potion play a role in the Hermetic mysteries. Furthermore, I demonstrate that if we read the description of these rituals symbolically, and not in an empirical sense, this does not exclude the

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possibility that they could play a significant role in a real spiritual initiation process.[2] I call this mode of interpretation the "spiritualization of the ritual," as van Moorsel did.[3]

Before proceeding to a detailed analysis, we have to bear in mind that since there is no external evidence of the existence of Hermetic groups or of religious communities which regarded the Hermetic writings as their sacred books, we have to analyse the texts themselves as well as some parallel evidence in order to venture further conclusions. In recent years, some detailed analyses have appeared concerning the nature of the Hermetic spiritual ritual,[4] but as far as I can judge, Gerard Van Moorsel laid down the foundation for this kind of research, based on linguistic investigation, in his book *The Mysteries of Hermes Trismegistus*.[5]

There is yet another essential similarity between the *Hermetica* and the mysteries. This feature can be called "individualization." In the case of mysteries, there are public rituals accessible to the non-initiated, while the purpose of the real, non-public initiation is the total transformation of the person, of the inner self. As Walter Burkert's definition runs, mysteries were initiation rituals of a voluntary, personal, and secret character which aimed at a change of mind through experience of the sacred.[6] I am asserting that the same holds true of the Hermetic initiation.[7]

[2] There is an old debate about the nature of the Hermetic ritual. Some scholars considered the texts as sacred documents for religious groups. Richard Reitzenstein, in his pioneering work about *Hermetica*, tried to prove the existence of a so-called 'Poimandres-community', on which see R. Reitzenstein, *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-aegyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur*, Leipzig, Teubner, 1904. On Reitzenstein's method, see Anthony Grafton, *Forgers and Critics. Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990. For the opposing view, see Festugière's famous book, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, 4 vols., Paris, Gabalda, 1950–1954. Apart from the references in the citations, see J.-P. Mahé, *Hermés en haute-Egypte*, 2 vols., Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval. 1978–1982. In recent times, scholars do not exclude the possibility of Hermetic religious groups as definitely as Festugière did. For more on the socio-cultural background, see R. Gurgel-Pereira, *The Hermetic Logos: The Hermetic Literature from the Hellenistic Age to Late Antiquity*, Saarbrücken, LAP, 2011.

[3] Gerard Van Moorsel, *The Mysteries of Hermes Trismegistus. A Phenomenologic Study in the Process of Spiritualisation in the* Corpus Hermeticum *and Latin* Asclepius, Utrecht, Kemink en zoon, 1955; and idem, Die Symbolsprache in der hermetischen Gnosis, *Symbolon*, 1960/1, 128–137.

[4] The following books are the most thought-provoking in this respect: J. P. Södergård, *The Hermetic Piety of the Mind: A Semiotic and Cognitive Study of the Discourse of Hermes Trismegistos*, Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2003 (Coniectanea Biblica: New Testament series 41); Anna Van den Kerchove, *La Voie d'Hermès. Pratiques rituelles et traités hermétiques*, Leiden, Brill, 2012 (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 77).

[5] See my footnote above.

[6] Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, 11.

[7] Giovanni Filoramo, The Transformation of the Inner Self in Gnostic and Hermetic Texts, in Jan Assmann – Guy G. Strousma (eds.), *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions*, Leiden, Brill, 137–149.

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My aim in this paper is to prove the following propositions:

1. There are traces of initiation rituals in Hermetic literature.

2. The Hermetic initiation rituals are a special kind of religious practice which can be called the spiritualization of the ritual. This spiritualization means a kind of spiritual interpretation of the empirical ritual. The function of this spiritualization process is to internalize the empirical ritual, which was considered materialistic and therefore alien to the real nature of God.

3. I will examine some elements of this spiritualized ritual: the baptism and the drinking of the life-giving potion.

4. I will demonstrate through some early Christian texts that the spiritual or symbolic interpretation of baptism and the drinking of the life-giving potion were known not only to the Hermetic authors, and these examples provide evidence that other religious communities used this method of spiritual interpretation as well. This will lead us to my main thesis, that the examples of spiritual rituals are evidence of the Hermetic initiation and that, hence, the spiritualization of the empirical rituals represented (and should be understood as) a special kind of religious practice.

2. The Nature of Hermetic Initiation

The above statement means that a person who wants to be initiated undergoes the process of initiation voluntarily, and in the course of this initiation, the whole of his or her personality gets a new, divine character.[8]

This is certainly true of the Hermetic mysteries. These dialogues take place between two or three people (as in the case of the Latin *Asclepius*), and in the course of a specific dialogue, it can be seen that the person who manages the dialogue is the mystagogue, while the others who raise questions about the nature of the cosmos, God, and mankind are his sons, though not his biological but rather his spiritual sons. This can be noticed, for instance, in *CH* XIII, where Tat—who is probably also the biological son of Hermes—makes a strange statement, as he does not understand his father's teaching:

> Father, what you tell me is impossible and contrived, and so I want to respond to it straightforwardly: I have been born a son strange to his father's lineage. Do not begrudge me, father; I am your lawful son.[9]

[8] About the meaning of initiation rituals in general, see Mircea Eliade, *Birth and Rebirth: The Religious Meanings of Initiation in Human Culture,* New York, Harper & Bros., trans. by Willard R. Trask, 1958.

[9] CH. XIII. 3. For the citation of the Hermetic texts, I am using the following edition: Brian P. Copenhaver, *Hermetica (the Greek Corpus Hermeticum and the Latin Asclepius in a new English translation, with notes and introduction).* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992. For another reliable English translation, see Clement Salaman (ed.), *The Way of Hermes.*

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The following questions arise here: Why does Tat say that he is Hermes' lawful son? And why does he feel like a "strange" son? The answer is that at that point of the dialogue, he does not yet understand his father, the mystagogue. Hence, we can read the entire dialogue as a process of initiation. This means that at the end Tat understands what it means to be reborn. In the middle of the text, he witnesses his father's deification, when the latter loses his material body, which will prove merely a simple appearance. But when Tat wholly understands what this transformation means, he praises God and sings a hymn for Him, and he will be recognized as his father's real son. In *CH* XIII, we again witness the process of an initiation as Tat gradually becomes Hermes' spiritual son: the culmination of the dialogue and of the initiation is a real event, the deification of Hermes. This reminds us of the *epopteia*, the culminative empirical event in the mysteries. Therefore, it will be seen that in the Hermetic texts, this event can be found as well; and if it is true that *epopteia* means experiencing the divine, then we can say that we have found another key feature of the Hermetic initiation, namely mystical experience.

Another convincing example is *Poimandres*,[10] the first dialogue of the corpus. If we examine the text as a whole, and not merely parts of it, a structure similar to the structure of *CH* XIII is discernible. In the beginning of *Poimandres*, the unknown author—who will turn out to be a prophet by the end of the dialogue—participates in a revelation. Better, he even realizes step by step that he is facing a divine entity who is, in fact, his spiritual leader and who initiates him into the mysteries of divine truth. So we are entitled to say that the whole dialogue is an *epopteia* where the protagonist experiences a divine event in its physical reality. The end of the *Poimandres* shows parallel structural elements to *CH* XIII: after the initiate has understood the meaning of divine revelation at the end of an initiation process (this means here that he gains special knowledge in the course of the dialogue and that he also takes part in a revelation), he is vested with the ability to initiate others into the knowledge of the divine, and he becomes a prophet. On these grounds, we may assert that the *Poimandres* can be read as an initiative text par excellence. In the course of the dialogue, we witness an initiation process as we learn that the narrator gains his knowledge from the divine mind, so later, he will be able to play the mystagogue's role for other people. In one word, first, he will be the disciple of Hermes, but after that, he will become Hermes himself for his

New Translations of The Corpus Hermeticum *and* The Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius, Rochester, Inner Traditions, 2000. For the original texts, I am using the classical edition *Corpus Hermeticum I–IV*, texte établi par A. D. Nock et traduit par A.-J. Festugière, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1946–1954. Some useful remarks, textual comments and notes can be found in the German edition of Carsten Colpe – Jens Holzhausen, *Das Corpus Hermeticum Deutsch*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1997. See also Ilaria Ramelli (ed.), *Ermete Trismegisto: Corpus Hermeticum*, con testo greco, latino e copto, Milano, Bompiani, 2005.

[10] Cf. Jörg Büchli, *Der Poimandres, ein paganisiertes Evangelium*, Tübingen, Mohr-Siebeck, 1987.

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own disciples or for his sons.[11] This fact may explain why the disciple remains unnamed: step by step, he takes over the role of the mystagogue, so it is not his name but his role that is important, as he will become Hermes himself.

I think the experience of the divine in the *Hermetica* is something like the *taurobolium* of the Mithraic cults or the *epopteia* par excellence in the Eleusian mysteries, in which the initiate faced a divine presence. To summarize, for the initiates, the aim of Hermetic initiation is to gain knowledge concerning the divine, and with the help of this knowledge, their personality changes radically, even substantially, and the aforementioned examples show that traces of the empirical experience or *epopteia* can be found in the texts.[12]

This is why the definition of mysteries attributed to Aristotle also applies in the case of the *Hermetica*. According to a fragment, Aristotle said that the initiated person does not learn something but suffers something, namely, some empirical experience: οὐ μαθεῖν τι δεῖν ἀλλὰ παθεῖν.[13] How should we interpret the Greek terms *mathein* and *pathein* here? At first glance, Aristotle's statement seems paradoxical, because as I have pointed out, the spiritual son has to learn something about the nature of the divine in the course of the initiation. So I think the meaning of Aristotle's definition sheds light on the main aim of initiation, which is not only to gain knowledge but to get an *epopteia*, insofar as this implies some unmediated experience. As I pointed out concerning *CH* XIII and *Poimandres*, this kind of initiation is precisely the subject matter of the dialogues, i.e. the initiation in the course of which the initiate comes into an unmediated physical or empirical connection with the divine sphere.

At this point, the question arises whether the initiation depicted in the Hermetic texts represents an empirical method of a religious community or, rather, must be interpreted as a transformation or spiritualization of the empirical ritual practices. According to Van Moorsel's thesis, the texts empirically, as it were, pull down the religious experience, while on the other hand, they pneumatically build it up again. I accept the strengths of this theory, yet I ask whether there is mystical initiation as such without any empirical experience or any *epopteia?* Can initiation be spiritualized at all? It seems worth making some remarks here.

First, some basic features of the mysteries play a special role in the *Hermetica* too, including for instance the spiritual father-son relationship, the command of silence, and perhaps the allusion to the ritual meal in the Latin *Asclepius*. At the very end of the dialogue, after finishing his instructions about the nature of true knowledge and about God and the universe, Trismegistus encourages his disciples to partake in a sacred feast: "With such hopes we turn

[11] Cf. Kerchove, *La Voie d'Hermès*, 44.

[12] Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1985, 277.

[13] Frg. Dialogi, 15. In *Valentinus Rose* (ed.), Aristotelis qui ferebantur librorum fragmenta, Lipsiae, Teubner, 1886, 31.

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to a pure meal which contains no living thing."[14] Why is it so important that the meal not contain meat? A parallel can be found for a vegetarian meal for example in the mysteries at Cave Ida in Crete. If the meal is free of meat, this means that the initiated person has no contact with life or death anymore.[15] The instruction of Hermes is an obvious allusion to a pure, sacred meal, and it makes sense for the reader only if it refers to an empirical cultic practice. Below, I will analyse two examples of spiritualized ritual acts in Hermetic texts, baptism and the function of life-giving potion.

Second, two conclusions can be drawn from the fact that—apart from the Hermetic texts—we do not have any evidence about the existence of Hermetic communities. The first conclusion was drawn by Van Moorsel, who contended to have found the proper method of interpretation.[16] According to Van Moorsel, it is possible that in Hellenistic times the spiritual or allegorical interpretation of the mysteries was a widespread method in some philosophical or religious communities. On the basis of this hypothesis, we may suppose that the *Hermetica* played a special, significant role in these circles and that the books themselves—not cultic practices—had their own effect. Yet we cannot assume anything more than that, because of the lack of any solid proof. Otherwise, an *argumentum ex silentio* like this does not mean that there were no Hermetic groups at all. So according to my hypothesis, it does seem right to suppose that the *Hermetica* preserves the description of a real initiation. Since the edition of the Nag Hammadi Corpus we have some external evidence that the Hermetic texts were used and widely known.[17] We know from Iamblichus or Zosimos that there were readers who used the *Hermetica* as one of their important sources.[18] From this fact derives the second conclusion: if the rituals in Hermetic texts refer to a real initiation, then there could be communities which applied the Hermetic texts and rituals.

[14] *Asclepius Latinus: Haec optantes convertimus nos ad puram et sine animalibus cenam*, Nock-Festugière, Corpus Hermeticum, Vol. 2, 355.

[15] Burkert, *Greek religion*, 280.

[16] Van Morsel, *The Mysteries*, 34–76.

[17] The Hermetic texts found in the Nag Hammadi Library have special importance for the examinations concerning the ritual practices in *Hermetica*. For further details see Karl-Wolfgang Tröger, On Investigating the Hermetic Documents Contained in Nag Hammadi Codex VI, in R. M. Wilson (ed.), *Nag Hammadi and Gnosis*, Leiden, Brill, 117–121; James M. Robinson, *The Coptic Gnostic Library*, Vol. 9, Leiden, Brill, 1979; J.-P. Mahé, La voie d'immortalité à la lumière des *Hermetica* de Nag Hammadi et des découvertes plus récentes, *Vigiliae Christianae*, 45/4 (1991), 347–37; R. Van den Broek, Religious Practices in the Hermetic Lodge, in, R. Van Heertum – Roelof Van den Broek (eds.), *From Poimandres to Jacob Böhme: Gnosis, Hermetism and the Christian Tradition*, Amsterdam, In de Pelikaan, 2000, 78–95.

[18] For the explicit reference to Hermes by Zosimos, see On the Letter Omega, in Michèle Mertens (trans.), *Les alchimistes Grecs*, Tome IV/1, 1–10. In the case of Iamblichus, the most famous example is his *De mysteriis*, on which see Johan C. Thom (ed.), *Iamblichus: On the Mysteries*, trans. Emma Clarke, John Dillon, and Jackson P Hershbell, Atlanta, Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.

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3. Spiritualization of Empirical Ritual Practices in the *Hermetica*

3.1 Baptism

In the following section, I will offer evidence in support of my contention that there are important passages in the Hermetic texts which refer explicitly to cultic practices. To support my thesis, I will give some further textual evidence which is found in early Christian literature to demonstrate the meaning of Hermetic ritual.

There is a famous example of initiation in the *Hermetic Corpus*. In the fourth treatise, called the *Krates*, a mixing bowl plays the chief role. This *krates* is filled with mind *(nous)* by God, who wants people to immerse themselves in it: "Immerse yourself in the mixing bowl if your heart has the strength, if it believes you will rise up again to the one who sent the mixing bowl below, if it recognizes the purpose of your coming-to-be."[19] Those who understand this proclamation, says the text, will partake in mind and knowledge and will become perfect individuals. In the Greek text, the term "perfect" is *teleios*, which is a *terminus technicus* in the language of the mysteries and refers to the person who has already gained initiation, that is to say, to the initiate. There is plain evidence here that the mysteries influenced the *Hermetica*, and this remind us that the Latin *Asclepius* has *Logos teleios* as its Greek title, which, again, means that the text is one of initiation, so whoever reads it (or uses the text during an initiation process) will be a perfect—*teleios*—person. Now what does "perfect" mean in the *Hermetica?* As one reads in *CH* IV, a perfect person is someone who "received mind", which is a gift of God. It is an important point that this gift is a "prize for the souls to contest"—that is to say, the human souls have to struggle for it, they have to go along the Hermetic way, they have to prepare themselves for the rising of the soul, the *anodos psychēs*. This is why Hermes says the following:

> Those who participate in the gift that comes from God, o Tat, are immortal rather than mortal if one compares their deeds, for in a mind of their own they have comprehended all—things on earth, things in heaven and even what lies beyond heaven. [...] This, Tat, is the way to learn about mind, to resolve perplexities in divinity and to understand God. For the mixing bowl is divine.[20]

[19] *CH* IV, 4; in Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 1992, 15.
[20] *CH* IV, 5, in Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 1992, 16.

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The reference to the mixing bowl is a reference to the ritual of baptism. In the quoted passages of the Hermetic text, the ritual is spiritualized; this process means that the life-giving divine mind plays the same role as the life-giving water in the cultic ritual.

Certain Gnostic texts also offer evidence indicating that "material" cultic acts were spiritualized or interpreted symbolically. As K. Rudolph points out, "sometimes it is very difficult to ascertain whether in the utilization of cultic concepts—like, for instance, 'living water'—we have to do with a rhetorical figure for the gift of Gnosis or enlightenment, or with a covert allusion to a water rite, which the sect practiced."[21] In the Christian tradition, we can find some clear evidence of the spiritual interpretation of baptism or washing in water, and there are some features in this interpretation which suggest that washing was a core element in the teaching of some Christian sects.[22] In what follows, I will present two parallel descriptions of the spiritualization process of baptism that are very similar to the Hermetic descriptions of the ritual. I will show that in some early Christian texts, baptism plays a role similar to the role of the symbolic baptism in the divine mind in *Hermetica*, and this parallelism will, I hope, shed light on some aspects of the Hermetic mysteries. As we shall see, in this context the ritual of baptism means the initiation into a new life, while the ritual itself has a double character: it cleans the initiated person, and at the same time, it is the principle of a new, eternal life.[23]

3.2. The Spiritualization[24] of Baptism in Early Christian Texts

According to Hippolytus, the *Naasseni* held that their teachings went back to Paul's doctrines. Hippolytus cites Paul's *Letter to the Romans* 1, 20-27 as a starting point for the teaching of the *Naasseni* about the impurity of mankind. He then adds:

> For in these words which Paul has spoken they say the entire secret of theirs, and a hidden mystery of blessed pleasure, are comprised. For the promise of washing is not any other, according to them, than the introduction of him that is washed in, according to them, life-giving water, and anointed with ineffable ointment (than his introduction) into unfading bliss.[25]

[21] Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis*, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1987, 220.

[22] About the possible connections between the *Hermetica* and early Christian literature, see W. C. Grese, *Corpus Hermeticum Thirteen and Early Christian literature*, Leiden, Brill, 1979, 44–47.

[23] Cf. Giovanni Filoramo: Baptismal Nudity as a Means of Ritual Purification in Ancient Christianity, in Jan Assmann – Guy G. Strousma (eds.), *Transformations of the Inner Self in Ancient Religions*, Leiden, Brill, 1999 393–404; Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 227.

[24] Cf. *Rudolph*, Gnosis, 220.

[25] *Philosophumena* V, 7, 19.

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I believe it is evident that Hippolytus attributes a spiritual interpretation to baptism here.[26] If credence is given to his report, then a very interesting phenomenon is revealed. The members of the sect created a special amalgam of ancient myths, Christian theology, and Biblical hermeneutics: they taught that the promise of baptism leads to eternal bliss and that this happens through an anointment with life-giving water. We must lay emphasis on the fact that in the case of this text, the interpretation of baptism is parallel to that of the Gnostics, who interpreted it as a spiritual act leading to rebirth or immortalization, not only as a psychic cleansing ritual. This means that the aim of baptism was considered not only to wash away sins but to guide the believer towards a new, immortal life. These references to the life-giving water can perhaps be found also in *CH* IV, quoted above, where baptism in the divine mind is a tool for the rebirth for the eternal life.[27] When in the sixth section, Tat says that he also would like to become immersed *(baptisthēnai),* this may also be a reference to a ritual bath. Hermes' answer confirms the comparison with the *Naaseni.* Similarly, Hermes says the following: "Unless you first hate your body, my child, you cannot love yourself, but when you have loved yourself, you will possess mind, and if you have mind, you will also have a share in the way of learning."[28] It is remarkable that in the case of the Hermetic text, the same scheme can be found as in the case of the Christian sect, i.e., to become immersed in or anointed with life-giving water means to hate one's own body, which connects the person to the evil material world, and then, to gain life from the immaterial realm.[29]

In his brief but important work, *De ecclesiae Catholicae unitate*, Cyprian argues—on the basis of Biblical passages—against the validity of the baptism of the heretics. He states not only that outside the church there is no salvation, but also that the baptism of the heretics is work done for Satan. He says that an invalid baptism also gives a new life, a new life coming not from the water of life but from the water of death; that as to its spiritual effect, it does not

[26] About the technical language in early Christian literature, see Richard Reitzenstein, *Hellenistic Mystery-Religions, Eugene, Pickwick Publications*, trans. by John E. Steele, 1978, 501–511.

[27] Cf. K. W. Tröger: *Mysterienglaube und Gnosis in Corpus Hermeticum XIII*, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1971, 54–82.

[28] *CH* IV, 6: Κἀγὼ βαπτισθῆναι βούλομαι, ὦ πάτερ. — 'Εὰν μὴ πρῶτον τὸ σῶμά σου μισήσῃς, ὦ τέκνον, σεαυτὸν φιλῆσαι οὐ δύνασαι· φιλήσας δὲ σεαυτόν, νοῦν ἕξεις, καὶ τὸν νοῦν ἔχων καὶ τῆς ἐπιστήμης μεταλήψῃ.

[29] There has been an attempt from the beginnings of modern research into the *Hermetica* to prove that the motive of the *cratēr* in *CH* IV is not only a metaphor but carries a sacramental character as well; cf. C. F. Georg Heinrici, *Die Hermes-Mystik und das Neue Testament*, Leipzig, J. C. Hinrichs, 1918, 44. As Tröger points out, there is another theory which stresses the spiritual character of the text and supposes that there is no necessary connection to real ritual acts; cf. Tröger, *Mysterienglaube*, 57.

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clean anyone but defiles people, and makes them like a child for the devil. As can be seen, we find the motif of regeneration in Cyprian's text too; while to his mind, the baptism of the heretics means a rebirth in a contrary sense:

> Although there cannot be another baptism than the one, they think that they baptize; although the fountain of life has been deserted, they promise the grace of the life-giving and saving water. There men are not washed but rather are made foul, nor are their sins purged but on the contrary piled high. That nativity generates sons not for God but for the devil. Being born through a lie they do not obtain the promises of truth; begotten of perfidy they lose the grace of faith. They cannot arrive at the reward of peace who have broken the peace of the Lord by the madness of discord.[30]

We can rely on Rudolph's thesis here, who asserts that the water rite has two aspects: first, it has a cleansing character, but second, it expresses the idea of an *initiation into the mysteries* of Gnostic wisdom. This interpretation supports the straight connection between the conception of living water and baptism in the mind as it stands in the Hermetic text. Hence, we can conclude that the writer of *CH* IV spiritually reinterprets an originally empirical initiation ritual. We have to emphasize that in the case of this Hermetic text, the interpretation of baptism is parallel with that of the Gnostics, who interpreted it as a spiritual act leading to rebirth or to immortalization, not only as a psychic cleansing ritual. This means that the aim of baptism was not only to wash away sins but to guide towards a new, immortal life.

In light of these considerations, it seems legitimate to assert that in *CH* IV, there is a clear reference not only to baptism but also to the spiritual interpretation of a water rite. The essence of the ritual is the same as in the case of the spiritual immersion in the *nous:* by means of both kinds of immersion, one gains immortality. The souls immersing in the *cratēr* filled with *nous* will be immortal in the same way, so it is evident that living water is replaced by *nous* in the Hermetic text.

[30] *De ecclesiae Catholicae Unitate*, 11: *Quando aliud baptisma praeter unum esse non possit, baptizare se opinantur: vitae fonte deserto vitalis et salutaris aquae gratiam pollicentur. Non abluuntur illic homines sed potius sordidantur, nec purgantur delicta sed immo cumulantur. Non Deo nativitas illa sed diabolo filos generat. Per mendacium nati veritatis promissa non capiunt: de perfidia procreati fidei gratiam perdunt*. (English translation by Roy J. Deferrari, in Saint Cyprian, *Treatises*, New York, Fathers of the Church, 1958). Cf. Theodor Damian, The Theology of St. Cyprian of Carthage: The Unity of the Church and the Role of the Bishop, in Fevronia K. Soumakis (ed.), *Power and Authority in the Eastern Christian Experience: Papers of the Sophia Institute Academic Conference*, New York, Theotokos Press, 2010, 90–102; Rex Butler, Sacramentum: Baptismal Practice & Theology Of Tertullian & Cyprian, *The Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry*, 6/1 (2009), 8–24.

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3.3. The Life-giving Potion

There is an important and interesting text, the *Virgin—or Pupil—of the World (Korē kosmou)*, which is linked to the Hermetic tradition. The text consists of a dialogue between Isis and her son, Horus. In the text, Hermes also plays an important role, but that can be neglected when dealing with the philological problems here.[31] The dialogue is in a fragmentary condition now but it can be adequately reconstructed. In the opening scene, the author says that Isis gave a potion of ambrosia to her son, Horus; a drink that souls receive from gods.[32] When that happened, she started informing Horus about the creation of the world, the souls, the fall of the souls, the creation of humanity out of a secret kind of material, and about the fallen soul. Thus, it can be seen that the dialogue is an initiative speech about divine mysteries.

However, there are also some problems with this section: we do not know what kind of souls the author is speaking of, or what kind of potion this divine gift is. Nevertheless, I think it is probable—as it may be supposed on the basis of the fifth section—that it is a drink of immortality for illuminated souls; furthermore, it can be supposed that Isis initiates her son Horus into the divine mysteries of the universe and the creation of the material world and of souls, so the divine potion plays the same role as the living water examined in the previous section: it gives immortality to souls that gain true, divine knowledge. Hence, we can conclude that the *Korē kosmou* is not only a mythological dialogue but also an initiative text, which begins with an initiation into the mysteries, mysteries that can be accessed by divine knowledge.

This motif of the drink of ambrosia appears in the same context in the *Poimandres*. In the last part of the text, the unknown prophet gives an account of how he started to teach the people who sought his teaching, and says that "I sowed the words of wisdom among them,[33] and they were nourished

[31] On this text, see W. Bousset, Kore Kosmu, in *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaften*, Vol. 11/2, 1386–1391; Walter Scott, *Hermetica, The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings which Contain Religious or Philosophic Teachings Ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus*, Vol. 3, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1927, 471–475, 558; Nock–Festugière, *Corpus Hermeticum*, Vol. 3, cxxvi, ccxxi-ccxxvii; Colpe-Holzhausen, *Das Corpus Hermeticum*, Vol. 2, 447; Eduard Norde, *Agnostos theos*, Leipzig, Teubner, 1923, 65–69; André-Jean Festugière, Le style de la 'Korè Kosmou', *Vivre et penser*, 1942/2, 15–57; P. A. Carozzi: Gnose et sotériologie dans la *Kore Kosmou* Hermétique, in Julien Ries (ed.), *Gnosticisme et monde hellénistique: actes du colloque de Louvain-la-Neuve*, 11–14 mars 1980, Louvain-la-Neuve, Université Catholique de Louvain, 1982, 61–78; Howard M. Jackson, Koré kosmou. Isis, Pupil of the Eye of the World, *Chronique d'Égypte*, 61 (1986), 111–135.

[32] *Korē kosmou* (*SH* XXIII, 1): "Having thus spoken, Isis first poured forth for Horus a sweet draught of ambrosia, such a draught as the souls are wont to receive..., and thereupon she thus began her most holy discourse." (Trans. Scott, *Hermetica*, Vol. 1, 457.)

[33] Cf. 1 Cor 3–6.

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by the ambrosial water."[34] I think it is very likely that ambrosial water[35] plays the same role as the ambrosia in the *Korē kosmou:* it is an instrument of initiation, in a concrete and in a spiritual manner at the same time. In a concrete sense, it may refer to a real, empirical initiative ritual, in which the act of drinking a special mixture plays the central part. In another sense, however, it is also a spiritual process, because through this act, the initiate gains knowledge of the divine world and immortality. This is why it is a drink that the souls get from the gods and the initiates from the prophet. For the spiritual interpretation of this section, the passage of the *Gospel of John* gives clear evidence where Jesus says the following to the Samaritan woman about the water of life (τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ζῶν): "whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."[36]

As can be seen from the tractates, the Hermetic ambrosial water could be handed over only to those worthy of divine knowledge; so it is the device for the initiation process which leads to a new life of immortality.

Our investigation shows that the parallel features strengthening our thesis that these allusions can be interpreted as marks of real religious practices are found in many kinds of religious literature, from pagan cults to early Christianity. I would like to highlight this with another example. In the *Avesta*, we read the following about the so-called *soma* or *haoma:* "We just drank the Soma, we have become immortal, we have come to the light, we have found the gods. What can enmity do to us now, and what the mischief of a mortal, o immortal one?"[37] Whatever *soma* or *haoma* is, it has the same function as the Hermetic ambrosial water.

We see now that the water which gives life, partly as a device in baptism, and which cleans the initiate, partly as a drink for ritual use, plays a special part in the Hermetic initiation.

[34] *CH* I, 29. (Copenhaver, 6.)

[35] Cf. *CH* XVIII, 11; *Acts of Thomas* 2, 25.

[36] Jn 4,14: Πᾶς ὁ πίνων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος τούτου διψήσει πάλιν· ὃς δ᾽ ἂν πίῃ ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος οὗ ἐγὼ δώσω αὐτῷ, οὐ μὴ διψήσει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, ἀλλὰ τὸ ὕδωρ ὃ δώσω αὐτῷ γενήσεται ἐν αὐτῷ πηγὴ ὕδατος ἁλλομένου εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

[37] Jan E. M. Houben, The Soma-Haoma Problem. Introductory Overview and Observations on the Discussion, *Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies* 9/1a (2003); Harry Falk, Soma I-II, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 52/1 (1989), 77–90.

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4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the term 'spiritual mystery' is a controversial concept because on the basis of philological evidence, it is not easy to decide whether there was any such real historical phenomenon, or whether it is only a later, modern conceptual construction. This is why I prefer to use the term 'spiritualization of cultic performance', suggested by Kurt Rudolph.[38] It is true that there are texts—for example the above-cited *CH* IV, *CH* I or *Korē Kosmou*—that possibly give evidence supporting this supposition.

On the other hand, if we, drawing on the ideas of Burkert, accept the definition of mysteries as forms of initiation, it can be shown that if there was a Hermetic initiation—and I hope to have shown that there was—we can understand its essence from the Greek mysteries and early Christian cultic performances because of the structural and linguistic similarities delineated above. I think there really was a Hermetic initiation the aim of which was to transform the self of the initiate wholly by the appearance of the divine. This revelation offered a divine knowledge about the universe and humankind and as a consequence, this knowledge provided immortality.

This conclusion may harmonize with theories of other scholars who accepted—with some reservations—that there were Hermetic communities with a kind of religious practice. There have been scholars who supposed that there could have been Hermetic circles or groups forming a special kind of religious phenomenon.[39] For example, G. van Moorsel formulated the supposition that these groups existed but had no *drōmena;* their daily religious practices consisted of singing hymns and saying prayers.[40] K. W. Tröger had another interesting idea, as he also spoke about religious communities for which prayer, the singing of hymns, and the instruction of new members by the initiated were daily routine. Tröger speaks about esoteric Hermetic circles where a small group of people gathered to gain knowledge and where the members prayed and sang hymns. He also speaks about a kind of initiation where the advanced brethren instructed the newcomers. Our Hermetic texts have preserved some of these teachings, whereby we can cast a glance into the life, religious practices, and initiation methods of these communities.[41]

[38] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 220.

[39] One of the first examples is Reitzenstein's above-mentioned *Poimandres*. See note above.

[40] Moorsel, *The Mysteries*, 129.

[41] Tröger, *Mysterienglaube und Gnosis*, 58: "Man wird sich die Hermetiker als Esoteriker vorzustellen haben, die in kleinen Kreisen zusammenkamen, um sich in die Gnosis einzuüben und bei Gebet und Gesang miteinander Gemeinschaft zu halten. Dabei hielten vielleicht fortgeschrittene Brüder Vorträge und Fragestunden für die Neulinge und führten sie so in die religiösen Geheimnisse ein. Die hermetischen Traktate können auf diese Weise als 'vervielfältigte' Referate entstanden und für gemeinsame oder private Religionsübungen

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I wanted to make the point that in the Hermetic texts, certain elements suggest that some originally empirical cultic performances had existed in these communities, such as a ritual meal, baptism or the drinking of a special drink, the life-giving ambrosial water; and that in all probability, these rituals were transformed into a symbolical, spiritual form. I think these ritual acts formed the Hermetic *drōmena*, that is to say, the instruments of a symbolically interpreted and internalized cultic practice which led to the Hermetic initiation.

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gebraucht worden sein. Diese Form hermetischer Organisation bietet sich uns als die wahrscheinlichste an; aber man muß natürlich damit rechnen, daß sie auch anders gewesen sein kann."

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CYPRIAN'S *AD DONATUM* AS A MYSTAGOGIC PROTREPTICUS

Stefan Freund

Abstract

In his early writing Ad Donatum, Cyprian addresses a fellow Christian and narrates his own spiritual experiences before, during, and after his baptism. On the one hand, the bishop of Carthage presents his initiation as a path from the evil pagan world to pure and delightful Christianity. On the other hand, the well-educated author uses many features of classical dialogue, for example the topos of the locus amoenus in the beginning and the pleasures of a symposium in the end. Thus, he builds a bridge from pagan literary culture, which he sees clearly linked to the bad world, to the Christian mysteries of initiation. Ad Donatum, therefore, often classified as an apologetic writing, is, rather, a Christian mystagogic protrepticus. The author tries to give an impression of how it feels to become a Christian. In order to do so, he uses tools of ancient literary style and rhetoric. The aim of the present paper is to show how Cyprian uses pagan patterns of expression to make Christian mysteries understandable while keeping their secrets.

Cyprian came from an affluent pagan family in Carthage and was given a traditional education in rhetoric. In 246 AD, he converted to Christianity and was baptized. Before being elected bishop in 248 AD and before becoming one of the most important representatives of Latin Christianity of pre-Constantinian times, he wrote a brief work entitled "To Donatus" *(Ad Donatum).*[1] Donatus,

[1] For the text of *Ad Donatum* see *Sancti Cypriani episcopi opera*, pars II, Ad Donatum, De mortalitate, Ad Demetrianum, De opere et eleemosynis, De zelo et livore, ed. Manlio Simonetti, De dominica oratione, De bono patientiae, ed. Claudio Moreschini, Turnhout, Brepols, 1976; and Jean Molager, Cyprien de Carthage, À Donat et La vertu de patience. Introduction, traduction et notes, Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1982. On the author in general: Henneke Gülzow – Antonie Wlosok – Peter Lebrecht Schmidt, § 478 Caecilius Cyprianus (qui et Thascius), in Klaus Sallmann (ed.), *Die Literatur des Umbruchs. Von der römischen*

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obviously a well-educated pagan,[2] seems to seek to be baptized, and in order to encourage him, Cyprian shares how, when he was baptized, God's grace brought about a complete inner conversion and gave him a thoroughly new worldview.

This short piece of writing, which consists of little more than ten modern pages, does not belong clearly to a single literary genre. Donatus is addressed as if Cyprian were writing a letter,[3] the frame and the fictive speech seem like a dialogue,[4] the topics mentioned are partly those of an apology,[5] but the tendencies are less defensive than protreptic.[6] *Ad Donatum* is therefore often presented simply as a treatise.[7]

Particularly in recent decades, scholars have come to regard the writing as a masterpiece of early Christian Latin literature and a milestone in the development of Christian Latin *Kunstprosa*. Cyprian declares, in the beginning of *Ad Donatum*, that he will refrain from using rhetorical devices:

> When speech is concerned with the Lord God, the pure sincerity of speech depends not on the force of eloquence for the arguments in support of faith but on facts.[8]
>
> *Cum de domino, de deo uox est, uocis pura sinceritas non eloquentiae uiribus nititur ad fidei argumenta sed rebus.* (Donat. 2)

Nevertheless, Cyprian's style and argumentation are extremely artful and deliberate. Furthermore, he alludes to pagan literature, especially poetry, in

zur christlichen Literatur. Handbuch der lateinischen Literatur der Antike, Band 4, München 1997, 532–575; J. Partout Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop*, London, Routledge, 2002; Maria Veronese, *Introduzione a Cipriano*, Brescia, Morcelliana 2009; Allen Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010; Victor Saxer, Cyprian of Carthage, in Angelo Di Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, Downers Grove, IVP Academic, 2014 [original: Nuovo dizionario patristico e di antichità cristiane, Genova, Marietti, 2006–2008], 2014, I 646–649. Recently, Mattias Gassman, Cyprian's Early Career in the Church of Carthage, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 70 (2019) 1–17, argues that *Ad Donatum* should be dated just before the ordination and is meant to convince critics of the episcopal candidate being controversial because of his pagan education and career.

[2] For the (poor) prosopography see Molager, À Donat 9–10.

[3] See e.g. Saxer, Cyprian of Carthage, 646; Michael Winterbottom, Cyprian's *Ad Donatum*, in Simon Swain – Stephen Harrison – Jas Elsner (eds.), *Severan Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, 190: "letter."

[4] For the discussion see Molager, À Donat, 35–41; Winterbottom, Cyprian's *Ad Donatum*, 191; Mattias Gassman, The Conversion of Cyprian's Rhetoric? Towards a New Reading of *Ad Donatum*, *Studia Patristica* 94 (2017) 247–257, 249.

[5] The apologetic features have particularly been highlighted by Michele Pellegrino, *Studi su l'antica apologetica*, Roma, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1947, 107–119.

[6] Jacques Fontaine, *Aspects et problèmes de la prose d'art latine au IIIe siècle. La genèse des styles latins chrétiens*, Torino, Bottega d'Erasmo, 1968, 169: "discours protreptique"; Marian Szarmach, *Ad Donatum* des Heiligen Cyprian als rhetorischer Protreptik, *Eos* 77 (1989), 289–297.

[7] So do, for example, Molager, À Donat, 9, and most translators.

[8] All translations are taken from Roy J. Deferrari (ed., trans.), *Saint Cyprian, Treatises*, Washington, 1958.

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an indirect and very sophisticated manner, as Antonio Quacquarelli, Jacques Fontaine, Vinzenz Buchheit, Michael Winterbottom, and Mattias Gassman have persuasively argued.[9]

In this paper, I would like to focus on the main subject of the text, which is the personal experience of conversion and baptism and Cyprian's illustration and explanation of his personal experience of conversion and baptism,[10] but from a particular point of view. Cyprian, I contend, presents a preliminary initiation into Christian mysteries for an educated pagan readership. In other words, he writes a mystagogic protrepticus. I begin, therefore, with a sketch of the work's structure. This will further an understanding of how Cyprian generally approaches the topic of Christian mysteries. I then examine how Cyprian presents baptism. Finally, I consider his mystagogic strategies.

[9] Antonio Quacquarelli, *La retorica antica al bivio (L'*Ad Nigrinum *di Luciano e l'*Ad Donatum *di Cipriano)*, Roma, Edizioni scientifiche Romane, 1956; Fontaine, *Aspects*, 149–176; Vinzenz Buchheit, Cyprian, Seneca und die *laudes agricolarum* Vergils, *Rheinisches Museum* 122 (1979), 348–359; Michael Winterbottom, Cyprian's *Ad Donatum*, 190–198; Gassman, Conversion, 248–250.

[10] For the conversion narrative see Pierre Courcelle, Antécédents autobiographiques des *Confessions* de Saint Augustin, *Revue de Philologie* 31 (1957), 23–51; Molager, À Donat, 16–20; Elisabeth Fink-Dendorfer, *Conversio. Motive und Motivierung zur Bekehrung in der Alten Kirche*, Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 1986; Geneviève Ellien, L'*Ad Donatum* de Cyprien de Carthage et le thème de la curiosité, in A. Foulon – M. Reydellet (eds.), *Au miroir de la culture antique. Mélanges offerts au Président René Marache*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 1992, 135–182; Rolf Noormann, *Ad salutem consulere. Die Paränese Cyprians im Kontext antiken und frühchristlichen Denkens*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009, 47–81; Jakob Engberg, The Education and (Self-)Affirmation of (Recent or Potential) Converts. The Case of Cyprian and the *Ad Donatum*, *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 16 (2012), 129–144; idem, Human and Divine Agency in Conversion in Apologetic Writings of the Second Century: "To Dance with Angels," in Brigitte Secher Bøgh (ed.), *Conversion and Initiation in Antiquity. Shifting Identities – Creating Change*, Frankfurt, Peter Lang Edition, 2014, 77–99, esp. 92–93. For the place of *Ad Donatum* within Cyprian's frequently discussed baptismal theology see e.g. Adhémar D'Alès, La théologie de Saint Cyprien, Paris, Gabriel Bauchesne, 1922, 225–242; August Jilek, *Initiationsfeier und Amt. Ein Beitrag zur Struktur der Theologie der Ämter und des Taufgottesdienstes in der frühen Kirche (Traditio Apostolica, Tertullian, Cyprian)*, Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 1979, esp. 252–253; Brigitte Proksch, *Christus in den Schriften Cyprians von Karthago*, Wien, LIT, 2007, 146–151; Abraham van de Beek, Cyprian on Baptism, in Henk Bakker – Paul van Geest – Hans van Loon (eds.), *Cyprian of Carthage. Studies in His Life, Language, and Thought*, Leuven, Peeters, 2010, 143–164; Enno Edzard Popkes, Die Tauftheologie Cyprians. Beobachtungen zu ihrer Entwicklungsgeschichte und schrifthermeneutischen Begründung, in D. Hellholm – T. Vegge – Ø. Norderval – C. Hellholm (eds.), *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity. Waschungen, Initiation und Taufe: Spätantike, Frühes Judentum und Frühes Christentum*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2011, 1051–1070, esp. 1053–1054.

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First part: Structure

The addressee, Donatus, has reminded the author of a promise, and now, during grape harvest holidays, it seems the ideal time to fulfil it. The location, Cyprian continues, seems appropriate, too:

> The delightful appearance of the gardens harmonizes with the gentle breezes of a soothing autumn in delighting and animating the senses.
>
> *Mulcendis sensibus ac fouendis ad lenes auras blandientis autumni hortorum facies amoena consentit.* (Donat. 1)

In a classical *locus amoenus*,[11] where "the leafy covering has made a vine-covered portico" (*uiteam porticum frondea tecta fecerunt*, Donat. 1), Cyprian finds a silent place for an undisturbed conversation. This is, as we learn at this point, what Cyprian has promised. The first lines illustrate the complexity of any attempt to assign the work to a specific literary genre. The initial words ("well do you remind me, dearest Donatus," *bene admones, Donate carissime*, Donat. 1) resemble the beginning of a letter. The beautiful place, however, where two people are said to meet for a conversation, is a typical feature of an ancient dialogue. In chapter 2, Cyprian, as initially quoted, refuses to employ rhetoric to communicate the truth, which is actually a gift of divine grace. This leads him to his main subject. In chapters 3, 4, and 5, the author reflects on his own baptism, which he experienced as a fundamental transformation of his whole life and thinking. God's grace opened his mind and enabled him to resist evil (we will come back to this later). In chapters 6 through 10, Cyprian makes his addressee look upon the world as a whole, and he does so by using an astonishing trick:[12]

> For a little consider that you are being transported to the loftiest peak of a high mountain, that from this you are viewing the appearance of things that lie below you and with your eyes directed in different directions you yourself free from earthly contacts gaze upon the turmoils of the world.
>
> *Paulisper te crede subduci in montis ardui uerticem celsiorem, speculare inde rerum infra te iacentium facies et oculis in diuersa porrectis ipse a terrenis contactibus liber fluctuantis mundi turbines intuere.* (Donat. 6)

[11] See Winterbottom, Cyprian's *Ad Donatum*, 191–194, who analyses the intertextual implications, too.

[12] For the motif and its provenance see Ellien, Curiosité, 140–148.

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From the heights, Donatus is shown the terrible reality: war, crime, and violence prevail (chapter 6).[13] Gladiator games make a spectacle of and incite brutalization (chapter 7), and theatrical events demonstrate and promote immorality (chapter 8). Immorality also dominates private life (chapter 9) and jurisdiction (chapter 10). Indeed, the decline in moral standards and the reversal of all values are particularly salient in these two realms of life. Subsequently, in chapters 11, 12, and 13, Cyprian turns to things which pagans wrongly assume to be goods: honours, power, and wealth. In reality, however, the mighty and the rich, the author argues, are in permanent danger and fear losing their positions and their possessions. In chapter 14, the following conclusion is drawn: Only God provides tranquillity, safety, and everlasting goods; he gives these for free, without requiring labour or effort. In chapter 15, Cyprian again addresses Donatus. Based on the arguments that he has developed up to this point, Cyprian now gives a personal exhortation: Follow God, listen to him, do not long for luxurious villas, but be yourself an eternal house of God. In chapter 16, Cyprian brings his argumentation to an end. He invites Donatus to take part in a modest but joyful and convivial Christian meal. As usual, Donatus is asked to sing the psalms, as he has a melodious voice. These are the basic outlines of the contents.

Let us take a closer look at the architecture of the work. Throughout the text, Cyprian is the only speaker. Nevertheless, as initially mentioned, we observe the framework of a dialogue: the *locus amoenus* and the refusal to use rhetoric in chapters 1 and 2, the declared end of the speech and the transition to the meal in chapter 16. But there are some more symmetrical elements. After the introduction (chapters 1 and 2) and before the final scene (chapter 16), we find two very personal passages which focus on subjective spirituality. In chapters 3, 4, and 5, Cyprian describes his own baptismal experiences, and in chapter 15 he gives individual pastoral advice to Donatus. Both passages are significantly rich with metaphor, which illustrates a personal spiritual status. Thus, for example, the faithful is compared to a soldier who is able to withstand the enemy in chapter 5:

> so that as one cleansed and pure it is seized by no stain of an attacking enemy
> *ut quis piatus et purus nulla incursantis inimici labe capiatur* (Donat. 5),

and in chapter 15:

> You, whom already the heavenly warfare has designated for the spiritual camp, only keep uncorrupted and chastened in religious virtues.

[13] For the evil world as a motif in Cyprian's writings see Vincent Hunink, St Cyprian, a Christian and Roman Gentleman, in H. Bakker – P. van Geest – H. van Loon (eds.), *Cyprian of Carthage. Studies in His Life, Language, and Thought*, Leuven, Peeters, 2010, 29–41, esp. 39–40.

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Tu tantum, quem iam spiritalibus castris caelestis militia signauit, tene incorruptam, tene sobriam religiosis uirtutibus disciplinam. (Donat. 15)

There, too, the soul is compared to a house:

> Now ceilings enriched with gold and houses decorated with slabs of precious marble will seem of no account when you realize that you are to be cherished more, that you rather are to be adorned, that this house is of more importance for you, where God dwells in a temple, in which the Holy Spirit begins to live.
>
> *Iam tibi auro distincta laquearia et pretiosi marmoris crustis uestita domicilia sordebunt, cum scieris te excolendum magis, te potius ornandum, domum tibi hanc esse potiorem, quam dominus insedit templi uice, in qua spiritus sanctus coepit habitare.* (Donat. 15)

The central passage, however, i.e. chapters 6 to 10, start from an explicitly different point of view. Cyprian virtually places his addressee on the top of a mountain so that he can observe the world from a distanced and, so to speak, objective position. Then, in chapters 11, 12, and 13, the deeper reasons for this deplorable state of affairs are named: the wrong values of power and wealth. To these, Cyprian counterposes God's permanent gifts in chapter 14. Thus, on the one hand, we have a more or less symmetrical structure:

dialogic framework (turn of chapters 1 and 2)
subjective spirituality (chapters 3–5)
general objective analysis of the world (chapters 6–14)
subjective spirituality (chapter 15)
dialogic framework (chapter 16).[14]

On the other hand, we notice two reverse trends. In the central part (chapters 6 to 14), the discourse moves from the godless and evil state of the world to God's marvellous gifts, which means we approach God. In the two subjective or spiritual passages (as one might call them), the direction is the opposite one. We start from Cyprian, who is enthusiastic, filled with God's grace, and who tries to verbalize how this feels, and we come to Donatus, who still needs pastoral care and encouragement on his way to God.

But perhaps the most interesting counterpoint occurs in the dialogic framework. Both passages, i.e. chapter 1 and chapter 16, are closely linked. In the beginning, Donatus is addressed in the same words: "dearest Donatus" (*Donate carissime*, Donat. 1 and 16). Twice Cyprian suggests spending the day *(diem ducere)* in a pleasant way (*hic iocundum sermonibus diem ducere*, Donat. 1, and *ducamus hunc diem laeti*, Donat. 16). In both passages positive sensual

[14] This structure partially corresponds to a mixture of three different styles; compare Molager, À Donat, 43–46, and Winterbottom, Cyprian's *Ad Donatum*, 195–196.

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perceptions are vividly described. Particularly noticeable is the metaphorical use of "to nourish" *(pascere)* in the sense of "to uplift." In chapter 1, the text reads "we nourish the soul [...] by what we see" *(animam [...] pascit obtutus)*, while in chapter 16, Donatus is said to "nourish his dearest" *(carissimos pascis)* by singing a religious song.[15] In short, not only literary conventions, which determine the form of the dialogue frame, but also several common motifs demonstrate that the beginning and the end of the work refer to each other. This, however, underlines the differences. The initial scene is situated in an idyllic place, where the perfect beauty of God's creation can be perceived with all senses. But then the text reads:

> And that no profane critic may impede our talk and no unrestrained clamour of a noisy household annoys us, let us seek out this spot. The neighbouring thickets furnish seclusion, where the wandering slips of vines, with their pendent interlacing creep over the burden-carrying reeds, and the leafy covering has made a vine-covered portico.
>
> *Ac ne eloquium nostrum arbiter profanus impediat aut clamor intemperans familiae strepentis obtundat, petamus hanc sedem: dant secessum uicina secreta, ubi dum erratici palmitum lapsus nexibus pendulis per harundines baiulas repunt, uiteam porticum frondea tecta fecerunt.* (Donat. 1)

That means that the place is adequate for this conversation about faith because it is not only beautiful, but also quiet and secret. Let us compare the final scene:

> And since now is the quiet of a holiday and a time of leisure, whatever is left of the day as the sun slopes toward evening, let us spend this time in gladness, and let not even the hour of repast be void of heavenly grace. Let a temperate repast resound with psalms, and as you have a retentive memory and a musical voice, approach this task as is your custom. You sustain your dearest friends the more, if we listen to something spiritual, if the sweetness of religion delights our ears.
>
> *Et quoniam feriata nunc quies ac tempus est otiosum, quicquid inclinante iam sole in uesperam dies superest, ducamus hunc diem laeti nec sit uel hora conuiuii gratiae caelestis inmunis. Sonet psalmus conuiuium sobrium: ut tibi tenax memoria est, uox canora, adgredere hoc munus ex more. Magis carissimos pascis, si sit nobis spiritalis auditio, prolectet aures religiosa mulcedo.* (Donat. 16)

[15] According to *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* X,1 595,51, *pascere* would (literally, not metaphorically) mean "to nourish" here, but of course, Donatus is not expected to provide his fellow Christians with food, but to uplift them during their common meal, which, thereby, becomes a physical *and* mental nourishment.

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The amusement promised here is no longer a conversation in a secret place, but the participation in a Christian community meal. And Donatus is no longer expected to fear a "profane critic," but to delight his friends with the sweet sound of Christian songs. One could even ask to what extent the Eucharist is hinted at here. The words "whatever is left of the day as the sun slopes toward evening" *(quicquid inclinante iam sole in uesperam dies superest)* might recall the Lord's invitation by one of the two disciples at Emmaus: "it is toward evening, and the day is far spent" (Vulg. Luc. 24,29: *aduesperascit et inclinata est iam dies*), which is followed by the recognition of Jesus in breaking the bread.[16]

At any rate, the final scene seems to imply that Donatus is no longer restricted to a natural theology which finds God in the beauty of his creation. Rather, in the end, he is shown approaching the community of the faithful.

Second part: Mystagogy

As we have seen, Cyprian in *Ad Donatum* tries to make understandable what happens in baptism. Therefore, a few things may seem quite strange. The Christian key words *baptizare*, *baptisma*, and *baptismus*, which occur 176 times in Cyprian's writings, are not used at all in this text. Furthermore, only gradually do we learn that the text deals with baptism. Initially, Cyprian says that he wants

> to pass the day in conversation and by diligent discussions to train the understanding of the heart in the divine precepts.
>
> *sermonibus diem ducere et studentibus fabulis in diuina praecepta conscientiam pectoris erudire.* (Donat. 1)

This leaves the subject open. The description of Cyprian's baptismal experience begins in chapter 3 quite unexpectedly. The text is very personal and, as already mentioned, metaphorical. Cyprian, we learn, is in darkness, an errant stranger, in rough sea. Therefore, he cannot believe

> that divine mercy was promised for my salvation, so that anyone might be born again and quickened unto a new life by the laver of the saving water, he might put off what he had been before, and, although the structure of the body remained, he might change himself in soul and mind. 'How,' I said, 'is such a conversion possible, that the innate which has grown hard in the corruption of natural material or when acquired has become inveterate by the affliction of old age should suddenly and swiftly be put aside? [...]'

[16] Compare, however, Curt. 6,11,8: *in uesperam inclinabat dies*. Thus, the reference to Luke is far from being unambiguous.

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> *quod in salutem mihi diuina indulgentia pollicebatur, ut quis renasci denuo posset utque in nouam uitam lauacro aquae salutaris animatus, quod prius fuerat, exponeret et corporis licet manente conpage hominem animo ac mente mutaret. Qui possibilis, aiebam, tanta conuersio, ut repente ac perniciter exuatur, quod uel genuinum situ materiae naturalis obduruit uel usurpatum diu senio uetustatis inoleuit?* (Donat. 3)

Of course, to be "born again," to be "quickened unto a new life by the laver of the saving water," to "put off what he had been before," and to "change himself in soul and mind" all mean to be baptized and, at the same time, illustrate metaphorically what it means to be baptized. These expressions are quite common in Christian Latin literature,[17] but they are not terribly explicit. That means a pagan ancient reader would clearly have understood that Cyprian is speaking about something like the initiation into Christian mysteries and that possibly water somehow interferes here, but nothing more. One reason could be a certain *disciplina arcani*,[18] but primarily, I suppose, our author is just not interested in the outward and visible sign, but in the inward and spiritual grace of baptism, particularly in what it changes in the individual. The crucial question is, "How is such a conversion possible?" *(Qui possibilis tanta conuersio?)*. The word *conuersio*, by the way, occurs only here in Cyprian's writings outside of a biblical quotation.[19] Our author affirms that the possibility of such a conversion once appeared to be an unsolvable riddle to him, too. But then everything changed:

> But afterwards, when the stain of my past life had been washed away by the aid of the water of regeneration, a light from above poured itself upon my chastened and pure heart; afterwards when I had drunk of the Spirit from heaven a second birth restored me into a new man; immediately in a marvellous manner doubtful matters clarified themselves, the closed opened, the shadowy shone with light, what seemed impossible was able to be accomplished, so that it was possible to acknowledge that what formerly was born of the flesh and lived submissive to sins was earthly, and what the Holy Spirit was already animating began to be of God.

[17] For "to be born again" *(renasci)* compare John 3:3, quoted e.g. Tert. *bapt.* 13,3; Cypr. *epist.* 73,22,1; for *animare* "to quicken" in a spiritual sense see *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* II 87,11–13; for "the laver of the saving water" *(lauacro aquae salutaris)* see Cypr. *eleem.* 2: *lauacro aquae salutaris gehennae ignis extinguitur; epist.* 69,12,3; for 'to put off' *(exuere)* in a Christian sense see *Thesaurus linguae Latinae* V,2 2115,58–60; for the change taking place in baptism compare Cypr. *epist.* 74,5,2. On the whole baptismal imagery of dying and rising see Robin M. Jensen, *Baptismal Imagery in Early Christianity. Ritual, Visual, and Theological Dimensions*, Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2012, 137–176.

[18] See Othmar Perler, Arkandisziplin, *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 1 (1950) 667–676, esp. 671–674.

[19] Gen. 3:16 quoted in Cypr. *testim.* 3,2 and *hab. virg.* 22.

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Sed postquam undae genitalis auxilio superioris aeui labe detersa in expiatum pectus ac purum desuper se lumen infudit, postquam caelitus spiritu hausto in nouum me hominem natiuitas secunda reparauit, mirum in modum protinus confirmare se dubia, patere clausa, lucere tenebrosa, facultatem dare quod prius difficile uidebatur, geri posse quod inpossibile putabatur, ut esset agnoscere terrenum fuisse, quod prius carnaliter natum delictis obnoxium uiueret, dei esse coepisse, quod iam spiritus sanctus animaret. (Donat. 4)

In sublime, nearly poetic words, Cyprian narrates and illustrates his baptism.[20] The question "How is such a conversion possible?", however, remains unanswered. The text just says, "what seemed impossible was able to be accomplished." The author later gives only one explanation: It is all a gift of God's divine grace:

Our power is of God, I say, all of it is of God. From Him we have life; from Him we have prosperity; by the vigour received and conceived of Him, while still in this world, we have foreknowledge of what is to be.

Dei est, inquam, dei omne, quod possumus. Inde uiuimus, inde pollemus, inde sumpto et concepto uigore hic adhuc positi futurorum indicia praenoscimus. (Donat. 5)

Subsequently, Cyprian presents even more consequences of this baptismal grace. It will grow more and more and strengthen the baptized and empower them in their fight against evil (chapter 5). All this, however, is based on personal experience only. If you are baptized, you will feel it. The following passage, i.e. the analysis of the world in chapters 6 to 12, provides a different approach, as we have seen above. The basic line of argumentation, as Ralf Noormann has shown, [21] goes quite well with pagan and particularly with Stoic philosophy. Wealth and power are fragile and, therefore, cannot be the highest good. Finally, however, neither experience-based subjective spirituality nor philosophy-based objective analysis of the world can explain how such a conversion is possible or, in other words, how divine grace works. Although Cyprian in his mystagogy suggests two different approaches, the baptismal mystery remains untouched and, thus, mysterious.

[20] The whole expression *unda genitalis* is unique, *genitalis* (*Thesaurus linguae Latina* VI,2 1812,79–80) and *unda* for water are poetic; for other examples of poetic colouring in baptismal descriptions see Robert H.W. Wolf, *Mysterium Wasser. Eine Religionsgeschichte zum Wasser in Antike und Christentum*, Göttingen, V&R unipress, 2004, 29–31.

[21] See Noormann, *Paränese*, 61–65; see Simone Deléani, *Christum sequi*. Étude d'un thème dans l'œuvre de saint Cyprien, Paris, Études Augustiniennes, 1979, 128.

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Third part: Protreptic

In a recent study,[22] Enno Edzard Popkes observes that what Cyprian says about baptism in *Ad Donatum* fits well with his later baptismal theology. Stylistically, however, *Ad Donatum* differs from what Cyprian teaches later as a bishop. Popkes explains this. In *Ad Donatum*, he contends, Cyprian is still much closer to what he heard as catechumen and to what he experienced when he was baptized.[23] Furthermore, Cyprian as a bishop teaches for certain types of given pastoral reasons, whereas Cyprian in *Ad Donatum* follows literary intentions. They may partially be called autobiographical, as Popkes suggests, but we have to take into account that Cyprian clearly focuses on his conversion, which culminates in his baptism. This is a parallel not only to Augustine's *Confessions*, but also to many other early Christian apologies. In this genre, in fact, as Jakob Engberg shows,[24] the author at least mentions his own conversion and thus encourages his audience to follow him. Donatus is certainly a synecdochic addressee. The intended one, of course, is every reader. Nevertheless, Cyprian clearly concentrates on this encouragement. So *Ad Donatum* could be classified as a protrepticus, as Marian Szarmach suggests.[25] His objections, however, of superficiality (290: "Dieses Werk ist im Hinblick auf den Inhalt oberflächlich") and of rhetorical conventionality (esp. 294-295), as well as older interpretations of the work as a hint to a clumsy neophyte,[26] disregard the subtlety of Cyprian's writing. *Ad Donatum* is a careful mystagogy, as we have discussed above, not a baptismal catechesis, and we may not expect dogmatic completeness. And although, as Szarmach stresses, Cyprian makes use of rhetorical commonplaces, *Ad Donatum*, seen as a protrepticus, remains a very purposeful composition. I will try to illustrate this on the basis of two observations. The first one concerns the audience, the second one concerns the way in which Cyprian communicates with Donatus, who represents the audience.

As to the audience, Cyprian's writing is very reader-oriented. In addition to the artful prose, with its rhetorical stylization and elaborate rhythm, the subtle allusions to the classics also suggest an audience that obviously belongs to the well-educated upper class. Also, two other aspects indicate the social status of the intended audience:

[22] Popkes, Tauftheologie, 1053–1054.
[23] Popkes, Tauftheologie, 1053.
[24] Engberg, Education.
[25] Szarmach, *Protreptik*.
[26] Presented and persuasively refuted by Gassman, Conversion, 248–256.

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The panoramic view from the mountain ends with a detailed look on jurisdiction (chapter 10). And we may suppose the members of the well-educated upper class of lawyers to be active precisely in this field.[27]

Cyprian talks about "ceilings enriched with gold and houses decorated with slabs of precious marble" (*distincta laquearia et pretiosi marmoris crustis uestita domicilia sordebunt*, Donat. 15), the complete unimportance of which will be felt by the converted. The mention of such expensive architectural details makes most sense if the addressee at least theoretically may hope to afford them.

As someone with this social status, Donatus is the role model for the intended reader. Thus, however, the audience is expected to be influenced not only by the careful attention Donatus pays to and the interest he takes in the Christian community, but also by his appurtenance to it, which becomes obvious in the last chapter. He is somebody "whom already the heavenly warfare has designated for the spiritual camp" (*quem iam spiritalibus castris caelestis militia signauit*, Donat. 15). And in the end, he is asked to sing psalms, as he is used to doing (*ex more*, Donat. 16). It turns out that the role model is already a soloist in the church choir.

As to communication, we have already seen that *Ad Donatum* shows many features of a dialogue, despite the fact that it is not a dialogue since only Cyprian speaks. And he speaks with overwhelming authority. This consists of two aspects:

Cyprian is an authoritative narrator. He virtually puts Donatus and, of course, the reader on the top of a mountain and makes them see the world, and he describes the vine-covered portico, where the conversation (or rather the monologue) takes place, in a much more detailed manner than would be necessary for Donatus, who is supposed to be present—again the reader is taken on a fantasy trip. Similarly impressive is the narrator's first-person account of his conversion.

Cyprian's authoritative narrative approach is appropriate to his authority as witness to his own conversion. In the whole writing, Cyprian dominates. He explains, he teaches, and he gives instructions. Donatus, however, is initially said to remind Cyprian of a promise. This remains his only act of communication.

What is the reason for this asymmetry?[28] What is Cyprian's authority based on? The text itself offers only one possible answer: Cyprian's authority is based on his experience of conversion and baptism. That means that

[27] Andreas Hoffmann, *Kirchliche Strukturen und Römisches Recht bei Cyprian von Karthago*, Paderborn, Schöningh, 2000, sketches how Roman law and juridical thinking influence Cyprian himself.

[28] Fink-Dendorfer, *Conversio*, 37 n. 3 ("Cyprian scheint aber der geistige Führer der beiden zu sein"), notices this point, but she is too careful in stressing it.

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participation in divine grace or in, as Cyprian puts it in chapter 4, "God's munificence" *(dei munus)*, makes a fundamental difference with respect to the non-initiated,[29] which is a typical mystagogic feature.[30]

This leads us to the following conclusion: In *Ad Donatum*, Cyprian offers an encouraging preparation for the addressee's and, by implication, the reader's conversion.[31] Characteristic of the author's mystagogy are the artful equilibration of proximity and distance with respect to the baptismal mystery, to which the reader is introduced in a subjective-spiritual and in an objective-philosophical way, and the fundamental difference between the initiated and the non-initiated. This mystagogic difference shapes the dynamics of communication and of authority in the whole writing. These elements are combined with features of the protrepticus, as we can see from the fact that Cyprian obviously has in mind a well-educated pagan upper-class audience. To be added are the encouragement by his own example and the proof given in the main part that, compared with what Christianity offers, pagan goods are worthless. In short, in Cyprian's *Ad Donatum*, we find a literary initiation into Christian mysteries for open-minded pagans.

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[29] This point is convincingly stressed by Gassman, Conversion, 256, too.

[30] Pascal Mueller-Jourdan, Mystagogie, *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 25 (2013), 404–422, esp. 404.

[31] Therefore, in my opinion, Vinzenz Buchheit, *Non agnitione sed gratia* (Cypr. Don. 2), *Hermes* 115 (1987), 318–334, and *Seneca*, 359 (quotation), is wrong in limiting the author's intention to the "Absage an den Wert der Philosophie für die Erlangung der *vita beata*."

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THE STATUE OF ARTEMIS EPHESIA IN THE LIGHT OF PORPHYRY'S *ON THE CAVE OF THE NYMPHS*

Zsuzsanna Turcsán-Tóth

Abstract

Artemis Ephesia was one of the most widely worshipped deities of the Graeco-Roman world. Although her cult existed for almost one thousand years, most of the replicas of her cult statue have been dated to the second century AD, and the earliest such statue can be dated to the late Hellenic period. It is difficult to examine the sculptures of Artemis Ephesia, as most of the statues were restored to some degree over the centuries, so we have to analyze the parts of the sculptures that were the least affected by the modifications, namely, the chest. Some of the most common adornments on the Artemis Ephesia statue are the female figures and the Cancer. Earlier research on these elements analyzed them separately from each other, but if we consider them as one common scene, they can be interpreted with the help of Porphyry's De antro nympharum.

In analyses of the figures of ancient goddesses, an inquiry into the statues of Artemis Ephesia is one of the most exciting tasks. Many monographs, articles, and books have been published on this topic. If we think of the first polyhistor who studied this issue in depth, then we can state that research has been trying to understand the secrets of this extraordinary goddess for quite a long time now.[1]

Artemis was in the center of the religious life of Ephesus since the sixth century BC, but some archaeological evidence proves that she had taken a significant position even earlier, maybe as early as the eighth century BC.

[1] The first monograph about Artemis Ephesia, entitled *Symbolica Dianae Ephesia Statua*, was written by a Jesuit scholar named Claudius Menetreius. He was Cardinal Barberini's librarian in the 1630s, but the book was published only in 1657, after the author's death.

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Despite the fact that we are talking about the cult of a popular and widely worshipped goddess, we only have indirect evidence about the appearance of her cult statue before the second century BC.

We do not have any original cult statues of the great Ephesian goddess.[2] Only replicas have survived. The type of representation, actually known as Artemis Ephesia, can be found first on Ephesian coins from the middle of the second century BC.[3] The first replica of the goddess' cult statue probably comes from the era of late Hellenism, but most the statues of her were made during the second century AD.[4] This means that we have details regarding the appearance of the cult statue of Artemis Ephesia only from the second part of the almost thousand-year-long history of her cult.

Richard Oster characterizes the history of Artemis Ephesia and her cult in his essay about Ephesus's religious life under the Principate as a motion picture, not as a single snapshot.[5] After all, this statement is true not only for her cult, but also for her cult statue, with the addition that while the film is being screened, the scene goes dark several times, and more details are visible towards the end of the story than at the beginning.

The cult statue of Artemis Ephesia should not be considered evidence that a representation of the goddess had appeared around the seventh or sixth centuries BC and then remained in the same form since then. Rather, it should be viewed as a result of a long developmental period.[6]

We can be sure that by the second century AD, a more or less uniform representation of the goddess had emerged. Some details like the posture, the "breasts", the *polos*, and the veil (also known as *nimbus*) had been standardized, while some other minor ornaments, such as mythological creatures and animals' *protome*s and reliefs, could have bigger variation.

[2] The question of how many cult statues existed in the millennium-long life of the cult is a matter of dispute. Some scholars believe there was only one, while others think we should suppose the existence of three cult statues; see Robert Fleischer, *Artemis von Ephesus und verwandte Kultstatuen aus Anatolien und Syrien*, EPRO 35, Leiden, Brill, 123–125; Ulrike Muss, Zur Dialektik von Kultstatue und Statuetten im Artemision von Ephesos, in H. Friesinger – F. Krinzinger (eds.), *100 Jahre Österreichische Forschungen in Ephesos. Akten des Symposions Wien 1995*, Wien, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999, 597–598.

[3] Fleischer, *Artemis*, 39, Tafel 51b. These *cistophores* were undated, but according to Karwiese, they were made between 159 and 133 BC, cf. Stefan Karwiese, Ephesos, *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Supplementband 12, 1970, cols. 323.

[4] Fleischer, *Artemis*, XI, 129–130. We do not know the original cult statue or cult statues of the great Ephesian goddess.

[5] Richard Oster, Ephesus as a Religious Center under the Principate I, W. Haase (ed.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* Vol.18, 3, Berlin etc., Walter de Gruyter, 1990, 1699.

[6] Robert Fleischer, Neues zum Kultbild der Artemis von Ephesos, in H Friesinger – F. Krinzinger (eds.), *100 Jahre Österreichische Forschungen in Ephesos. Akten des Symposions Wien 1995*, Wien, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999, 609.

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In the standardized form, the goddess is represented in a rigid posture, with closed legs, upper arms held against her chest, and lower arms parallelly held forward. As for her dress, she is wearing a *polos* or a mural crown, a rigid veil which is round on the top and straight on the sides, a *chiton*, and an *ependytes*, which is a solid piece of clothing covering the front side of the sculptures. On the chest, we can observe different necklaces, a floral wreath, astrological signs, and some female figures. Under these, there are the most characteristic parts of the statues, the rows of pendants often described as "breasts".[7] Sitting, lying, or climbing lion figures can often be seen on the sculpture's forearms, while woollen bands are hanging from the wrists. Among the ornamentation of the *ependytes*, there are mythological creatures and animal figures represented in *protome* or as a relief.

However, if we want to understand the allegorical interpretation of the statues for the people of the era, we have to put it in the context of the second century AD. This does not mean that we do not have to analyze the development process of the ornaments of the statues, but it does imply that we should focus on the interpretations possible in the second century.

Lilian Portefaix was the first to point out that certain works of Neoplatonic authors, first of all Porphyry's *De antro nympharum*,[8] may help in the interpretation of some of the decorative elements of the statue.[9]

Portefaix's theory about the ornaments of the statue, such as symbols of life, death, and rebirth,[10] is very promising but still doubtful. Her theoretical starting point is the widely accepted "breast" hypothesis of Seiterle,[11] to which she added more uncertainty.[12]

[7] The most frequently discussed question in the research on Artemis Ephesia over the course of the past 100 years has been the meaning of the bizarre pendants on the chest area. Although several theories have been suggested, none of them has been able to give an indisputable answer to the problem. I use the most accepted description of these objects, "breasts". For the interpretation of the "breasts" until the beginning of the 1970s, see Fleischer, *Artemis*, 74–87. For the newest interpretation, see Martin J. Steskal, *Das Prytaneion in Ephesos*, Forschungen in Ephesos 9, 4, Wien, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010, 199–200.

[8] Porphyry lived in the third century AD. He referred to Numenius of Apamea and Cronius as the main sources of the *De antro nympharum*. These philosophers worked in the latter half of the second century AD. So Porphyry's writing can be considered a relevant and reliable work if we want to interpret the statues in the context of second-century AD culture.

[9] Lilian Portefaix, The Image of Artemis Ephesia – A Symbolic Configuration Related to her Mysteries? in H. Friesinger – F. Krinzinger (eds.), *100 Jahre Österreichische Forschungen in Ephesos. Akten des Symposions Wien 1995*, Wien, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999, 614.

[10] Portefaix, The Image, 614–616.

[11] Seiterle interpreted the breasts as scrota of bulls, cf. Gerard Seiterle, Artemis: Die Grosse Göttin von Ephesos, *Antike Welt* 10 (1979), 3–10.

[12] According to Portefaix, the hypothetical ritual by which the scrota of bulls were sacrificed to the goddess happened during the birthday ceremony of Artemis Ephesia. Nevertheless, we have no source which supports the idea of the sacrifice of the scrota of bulls or the date of this rite; cf. Portefaix, The Image, 614.

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Furthermore, she analyzed only one of the known Artemis Ephesia statues, the so-called *Schöne* Artemis Ephesia, which was found in the *Prytaneion* of Ephesus. Without doubt, this statue, as opposed to numerous replicas of the cult statue, is original in every detail. However, we easily arrive at a misconception if we study only one sculpture, as there is considerable variation when it comes to the ornaments.

Although I agree with Portefaix's conclusion that some elements of the statue are interpretable with the help of the *De antro nympharum* and that this interpretation is related to birth or perhaps rebirth, I suggest analyzing not one but all of the replicas of Artemis Ephesia in order to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the meaning of the ornaments. My goal is to select the elements which regularly appear on the statues and analyze them. More specifically, I am choosing one of the most commonly appearing group of elements here in order to present an allegorical interpretation of them and to analyze their possible connection with the mysteries concerning the goddess.

For my specific topic, the most important parts of the statue are the ornaments on the chest. This is the part which can be observed in detail only on the statues, while the coins, gemstones, small sculptures, and pottery stamps do not provide relevant information concerning this area.

There are two reasons why I have chosen this part of the statues to analyze. The first is that most of the statues went through a certain level of restoration. But as the chest ornamentations are more relief-like, they are less likely to have sustained damage than the decorations on the *polos, ependytes*, and arms. The changes related to restoration hardly affected the chest, so we can be sure in almost every case that we are looking at the original ancient surface of the statues.

It is important to point out that, in most cases, we do not know the exact site of the Artemis Ephesia statues or their condition when they were found. The first information about them is provided by drawings and descriptions from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, or we only know the statues directly from nineteenth and twentieth-century collections. At that time, they were usually parts of some antique art collection in a restored condition. In very fortunate cases, some earlier drawings from the time before the restoration are also known. These might help further research, but we can never be sure whether the artist represented the real figure and condition or added elements of their own imagination.

The other reason why the main focus of the examination is the chest part of the statue is that the sculptures—though they are similar to one another in the major features—have several variants as to the details of their ornaments.

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The original cult statue must have been a simple wooden *xoanon*[13] which was dressed up, and as a result, we can find very richly ornamented copies. The goddess must have had a significant wardrobe—at least, this is what the number of variations seems to reflect. According to some modern researchers, different clothes were worn by the statue for celebrations.[14]

There are necklaces, female figures and astrological signs on the chest part of the statues. The female figures and the astrological signs often appear in a common “scene”. This can have several variations **(Table 1)**: two figures inside the floral wreath with one or three astrological signs; four figures with five astrological signs between them; four figures with astrological signs under their feet; four figures inside the wreath and astrological signs outside the wreath. On some statues, only the female figures or only the astrological signs are visible on the chest.

The most common variant is where two female figures hold a wreath above a Cancer. This is the example I am going to explain in detail below. That the scene appears frequently is indicated by the fact that the astrological signs and the female figures appear together in 21 cases on the statues, of which in twelve cases only the Cancer appears with the two female figures. In four other cases, we see several other astrological signs next to the female figures, but the sign in the middle is always the Cancer. In the remaining cases, if there is a middle sign, it is Gemini, as we can see on two statues; or there is no middle sign, as the astrological signs are under the women’s feet or outside the wreath.

If we want to understand the meaning of this scenario, we have to decode what the given figures represent together and what they represent separately.

In most cases, the female figures are turned toward each other and hold a wreath with ribbons over the Cancer, often with a palm leaf in the other hand. At first glance, we would certainly tend to identify them as Nike or Victoria,[15] to judge by the objects they have in their hands **(Table 1)**. But while there are often two female figures, sometimes there are four[16] or six[17] of them.

[13] Fleischer, *Artemis*, 121–125.

[14] Stefan Karwiese, Artemis Ephesia Sebasteia. Ein Entzifferungsbeitrag, in P. Scherrer – H. Taeuber – H. Thür (eds.), *Steine und Wege: Festschrift für Dieter Knibbe zum 65. Geburtstag*, SoSchrÖAI 32, Wien, Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut, 1999, 61–62.

[15] Lichtenecker identified them as Nike, and she meant that they belong among the oldest elements of the statue’s adornments, cf. Elisabeth Lichtenecker, *Die Kultbilder der Artemis von Ephesos*, unpublished dissertation 1952, 104–108. According to Karwiese, they represent Victoria, and they became part of the statue’s ornaments only in the period of Augustus, cf. Karwiese, Artemis, 70–72.

[16] A10, A30, A31, A39. See the catalogues of Artemis Ephesia’s sculptures and upper body fragments in **Table 2**.

[17] A32.

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As far as Nike and Victoria are concerned, we know of representations in which more than one of them appear. (Actually, it is more often the case that there are two of them.) For example, the *Artemis Leukophryene*, honoured in Magnesia on the Maeander, was represented together with two flying Nikes on the coins of the Roman imperial period.[18] But according to Lichtenecker, she was connected with Nike, since an inscription from the second century BC names her Νικηφόρος. [19] As for Victoria, the most typical examples are the so-called *statua loricata*, where regularly two Nikes appear as ornaments on the armour.[20] Although in the case of both goddesses, sometimes we can see two or three of them, there is no known example of four or six Victorias or Nikes appearing on the same object,[21] except as building ornaments.[22]

The other details which make it possible to identify the female figures are the attributes visible in their hands **(Table 1)**.[23] However, we observe not only palm leaves and wreaths in their hands but also some other objects. When they are four, some of them are holding sticks with curved ends, and in some of the representations, the two figures in the middle are holding a *thyrsos*. These attributes are not characteristic of Nikes and Victorias.

The interpretation of the female figures is facilitated by the fact that they appear not only on the replica of the cult statues. They can be observed on some of the coins from Ephesus, although in another context. The first coins of this type date back to the era of Claudius. Most of them were made during Hadrian's reign, and the last pieces are from the middle of the third century AD.

On the reverse of these coins, we can see the front of the Artemision at Ephesus. The representation of the sanctuary is detailed. The small parts, for example the *crepidoma*, the decoration of the columns, and the details of the pediment, are discernible. The representations of the pediment are not always the same, but there are some elements which often appear: oblong openings, female figures, and circles. In most cases, there are three openings, one in the middle and the others in the corners; the two figures are in a posture

[18] Fleischer, *Artemis*, Tafel 62–63.

[19] Lichtenecker, *Die Kultbilder*, 104–105; cf. Otto Kern (ed.), *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Maeander*, Berlin, W. Spemann, 1900, Nr. 100.

[20] Karwiese, Artemis, 71.

[21] As it is visible on A10, A30, A31, A32, A39.

[22] Jean Ch. Balty, Victoria, in Hans Christoph Ackermann – John Boardman (eds.), *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, Vol. 8, 1, Zürich, Artemis Verlag, 1997, 257–258.

[23] Turcsán-Tóth Zsuzsanna, Alapvetés az Artemis Ephesia szobrok ikonográfiai programjának elemzéséhez, 2015, 131–133. http://www.idi.btk.pte.hu/dokumentumok/disszertaciok/turcsantothzsuzsannaphd.pdf accessed 20. December 2015.

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resembling the pose of the statue. They turn toward each other, each raising one hand, and between them we see an oblong opening. Above the opening, we can often observe a disc.[24]

Several interpretations have been offered concerning the significance of the openings on the pediment. According to some researchers, they did not have any specific meanings; they only served to reduce the weight of the roof. Others think that their purpose was to let the goddess see the ritual acts taking place at the altar in front of the sanctuary or to let the moonlight shine through during certain celebrations of the goddess and provide a particular glow for the cult statue.[25]

In my opinion, the solution was found by Peter Hommel in his study about the symbolism of the pediment representations of the sanctuaries appearing on coins. He is convinced that the pediment symbolizes the sky, while the openings represent the gates of the sky.[26] Hommel thought that the female figures visible on the pediment of the Artemision were in fact the guardians of these gates.[27]

We know from the *Iliad* who guards the gates of the sky. In the 749th and 750th line of the fifth book, the Horae appear as the keepers of Zeus's cloud gates. This kind of tradition survived into the Roman imperial period,[28] which is when the statues were made.

Hommel also pointed out that the female figures appearing on the pediment are similar to the female figures on the goddess's statues. With this, he claims that whenever two female figures are on the statues, we actually see the same scene.

However, on the chest of the statues we do not see a gate similar to the oblong openings, but the astrological sign of Cancer. If we accept Hommel's interpretation, we should see a gate in the place of the Cancer, or we should suppose that the Cancer itself is actually the gate.

At this point, we can turn to Porphyry[29] and Macrobius[30] for information on the two gates of the sky. They considered Cancer and Capricorn as two gates through which the souls descend into human existence and through which, in turn, they leave it:

[24] There are some other variants of the pediment's decoration on the coins—for example, only female figures and no openings are visible, or to the contrary, the number of the openings and the circles are different. For the variant, see Peter Hommel: Giebel und Himmel, *Istanbuler Mitteilungen*, Vol. 7 (1956), 42–43; cf. Stefan Karwiese, Artemis, 1999, 74, Anhang 1.

[25] About the theories in short, see Anton Bammer – Ulrike Muss, *Das Artemision von Ephesos. Das Weltwunder Ioniens in archaischer und klassischer Zeit*, Mainz am Rhein, Zabern, 1996, 55.

[26] Hommel, Giebel, 30–40.

[27] Hommel, Giebel, 46–47.

[28] Paus. V, 11, 7; Lucian *Sacr.* 8; Eus. *Praep. ev.* III; Hommel, Giebel, 47.

[29] Porph. *Antr.* 22.

[30] Macr. *Somn.* I, 21, 1.

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> [...] The theologians spoke of these, Capricorn and Cancer, as of two gates; and Plato called them orifices. Of these, Numenius and Cronius say that they ascend through Capricorn.[31]

According to Porphyry, the outstanding importance of the Capricorn and the Cancer comes from the fact that they are located on the two sides, the northern and southern part of the Milky Way. The Milky Way itself is the place where the souls gather, waiting for entry into human existence.

Porphyry mentions not only the gates of the sun but their guardians too, whom he also defines as the Horae.[32] Now, in the middle of the pediments on the coins, there is a gate guarded by two female figures raising their hands. Likewise, on the chest of the goddess, there are two female figures raising a wreath above the Cancer. In Porphyry's interpretation, the Cancer on the goddess's chest appears as a gate, more exactly, as the gate of souls, and the female figures appear as the guardians of these gates.

Figure 1.

[31] Porph. *Antr.* 22. Trans. John M. Duffy (ed.), Porphyrius, *The Cave of the Nymphs in Odyssey*, Buffalo, Arethusa, 1969.

[32] Porph. *Antr.* 27.

This interpretation becomes even more plausible if we observe the scene appearing on the chest **(Fig. 1)** of the Artemis statue which was discovered during the excavation in Caesarea Maritima **(Fig. 2)**. On this statue, in the place of the Cancer, there is a female figure rising from a leaf or a flower with the shape of a half-moon behind her. This figure, defined by modern

Figure 2.

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researchers as the *Rankenfrau*, has been connected by several researchers to birth, rebirth, and fertility.[33] In the system of astrology, Cancer is ruled by the Moon,[34] so the figure refers to the astrological sign related to Cancer, too. However, there is more here. According to Porphyry, the Moon is the guardian of birth.[35] So this image depicts a birth scene, the moment when the soul enters the gate of the Cancer, which is not represented here, but we can see the Moon guarding it behind the figure.

Artemis was closely connected with childbirth. The first act in her life was to help her mother give birth to her brother. Pregnancy and childbirth were some of the biggest crises in the lives of women in Antiquity, so it is no accident that they ardently prayed to Artemis before, during, and after these crucial moments of their lives. Almost every specific moment of childbirth had a specific Artemis: they prayed to *Artemis Soodina* to soothe the pains of labour,[36] to *Artemis Praiai* in case of twins,[37] and to *Artemis Hemere* for a successful birth. Mothers called the goddess *Artemis Lochia, Eulochia*, and *Eileithyia* when expressing their gratitude for a successful childbirth.[38]

On the basis of her dress ornaments and the gates of the souls' incarnations, I suppose the goddess represents a midwife. She thus helps the soul's incarnation and the birth of the physical body at the same time. Both in literal and figurative senses, she is the gate through which the souls can cross over from their astral condition to their lives on earth.

Concerning other details (the Cancer, female figures, and the *Rankenfrau*), I arrived at a conclusion similar to Portefaix's in the case of the bee, bulls, and the moon, at least, insofar as some of the Artemis Ephesia statues' adornments are connected with birth.

The following question is whether these allegorical interpretations of birth and rebirth symbols are related to the mysteries of the goddess, as Portefaix assumed. I think it is undeniable that there are certain facts which confirm this hypothesis.

The mysteries of Artemis Ephesia were celebrated on her "birthday" festivals, and this event and the goddess could be connected not only with birth, but

[33] Maria W. Stoop, *Floral Figurines from South Italy*, Assen, Royal Vangorcum Ltd, 1960, 48. Günther Schörner, *Römische Rankenfriese: Untersuchungen zur Baudekoration der späten Republik und der frühen und mittleren Kaiserzeit im Westen des Imperium Romanum*, Mainz am Rhein, Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1995, 115–116.

[34] Ptol. *Tetr.* I, 17; Tamsyn Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, London – New York, Routledge, 1994, 108; Roger Beck, *A Brief History of Ancient Astrology*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2007, 85.

[35] Porph. *Antr.* 18.

[36] IG VII, 3407.

[37] IG VII, 3101.

[38] Susan Guettel Cole, *Landscapes, Gender, and Ritual Space*, Berkeley etc., University of California Press, 2004, 212. Cole made a list of the Artemis-representations in which the goddess is assisting at a birth. The list was based on the catalogue established by Pingiatoglou, Eileithyia, Königshausen, 1982.

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also with the assistance provided for a woman in labour.[39] If we accept the hypothesis that different replicas of the cult statue reflect the different feasts of the goddess, then the garment with the Cancer or the *Rankenfrau* and the female figures could be connected with one of the greatest celebrations of Artemis Ephesia, her birthday.[40]

It is also interesting that there was an increase in the numbers of the *curetes* and *hierourgoi,* who were responsible for the celebration of the mysteries, in the same century as the one to which the replicas of the cult statue have been dated. It is possible that there is a connection between these two phenomena.[41]

But all this is indirect evidence. Up to this point, I could prove only with reference to one part of the sculptures that they are interpretable in the mirror of a relevant source describing the journey of the souls in the universe or the astral sphere. The question is whether this kind of visualization of the journey of the soul became a feature of the statue as part of the mystery of the goddess or was only shown on the basis of the goddess' role as a midwife. (Another question is how these ornaments got on the statue.[42])

Portefaix's interpretation, according to which some parts of the statue are related to death and others to life, is an approach which uses an overly broad brush to draw conclusions about the content of the mysteries on these grounds.

Given the lack of sources and the great variation in the adornments, we are very far from having proved beyond a doubt that some statues or a part of the statues could be visual representations of the mysteries. At the same time, research into the allegorical interpretations of the other parts of the statues may bring us a bit closer to an understanding of the significances of Artemis Ephesia (as might the discovery of new sources), and this may offer further insights into the depths of second-century religious life and the roles of this ancestral and mysterious goddess in that religious life.

[39] Strab. XIV, 1, 20.

[40] For the celebration of goddess, see Oster, *Ephesus as a Religious Center*, 1709–1711.

[41] Guy MacLean Rogers, *The Mysteries of Artemis at Ephesos,* New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2012, 128–129; 178–180.

[42] It is possible "that some elements of Mithraist religion infiltrated in the theology of the other cult[.]" see Anna Judit Tóth's article in this collection of essays.

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Table 1
Astrological signs and female figures

Statues	♈	♉	♊	♋	♌	♍	♎	♏	♐	♑	♒	♓	Numbers of female figures	Objects in their hands			
														wreath	palm leaves	stick	others
A7	-	-	-	×	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	+	+	-	-
A15	-	-	-	×	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	+	-	-	-
A16	-	-	-	×	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
A17	-	-	-	×	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	+	-	-	-
A20	-	-	-	×	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	+	+	spiga
A26	-	-	-	×	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	+	+	-	-
A34	-	-	-	×	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	+	+	-	-
B3	-	-	-	×	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	+	+(?)	-	-
B4	-	-	-	×	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	+	+	-	-
B7	-	-	-	×	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-
A21	× (?)	-	-	×	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	+	+	-	-
A22	-	-	×	×	×	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	+	+	-	-
A28	×	-	-	×	-	-	-	×	-	-	-	-	2	+	+	-	-
B6	×	-		×	-	-	-	×	-	-	-	-	2	+	+	-	
A12	-	×	×	×	×	×	×	-	-	-	-	-	4	+	-	-	They hold hands.
A4	-	×	×	×	×	×	-	×	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
A18	×	×	×	×	×	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	+	+	spiga
A23	-	-	-	× (?)	×	×	×(?)	×(?)	×	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	They hold hands.
A24	×	×	×	×	×	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	+	-	+	-
A30	-	-	-	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	4	-	+	-	thyrsos
A31	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	-	-	-	×?	4	-	-	-	thyrsos
A32	×	×	×	×	×	-	-	×	×	×	-	×	6	+	+	-	

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Statues	♈	♉	♊	♋	♌	♍	♎	♏	♐	♑	♒	♓	Numbers of female figures	Objects in their hands			
														wreath	palm leaves	stick	others
A25	×	×	×	×	×	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0				
I5	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	2	?	?	?	?
A1	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	0	?	?	?	?
A19	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
A27	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
Sum	**7 v 8**	**7**	**8**	**23 v 22**	**10**	**6**	**5 v 6**	**5 v 6**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**2 v 3**					
A2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	?	?	?	?
A3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
A9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	+	-	-
A10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	× (?)	sneak(?), shield(?)
A11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
A39	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	+	-	-	-
B10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	+	-	-	-
B13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	They hold hands.
A5	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-
A6	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-
A8	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-
A13	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-
A14	-	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-
A29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-
A33	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-
B1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-
B2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-
B5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	-

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Table 2
Catalogues of the Artemis Ephesia's sculptures and upper body fragments

Catalogue number	LIMC	Fleischer	Lichtenecker	Thiersch
Sculptures				
A1	26	E 1	19	1
A2	27	E 2	-	-
A3	28	E 3	29	2
A4	86	E 58	30	11
A5	30	E 4a	-	-
A6	94	E 66	32	-
A7	32	E 6	18	3
A8	31	E 5		123
A9	39	E 13	-	-
A10	-	-	-	-
A11	40	E 14	31	5
A12	41	E 15	22	6
A13	-	-	-	-
A14	44	E 18	33	7
A15	45	E 19	25	8
A16	46	E 20	10	9
A17	47	E 21	8	10
A18	49	E 23		12
A19	50	E 24	27	161
A20	52	E 26	14	14
A21	58	E 31	3	19
A22	60	E 33	12	27
A23	62	E 35	5	20
A24	63	E 36	2	18
A25	67	E 40	6	23
A26	68	E 41	9	24
A27	93	E 65		39
A28	92	E 64	1	38
A29	73	E 45	-	-
A30	74	E 46	-	-
A31	75	E 47	-	-
A32	88	E 60	24	29

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Catalogue number	LIMC	Fleischer	Lichtenecker	Thiersch
Sculptures				
A33	-	-	-	-
A34	90	E 62	13	31
A35	98	-	-	-
A36	98a	-	-	-
A37	98b	-	-	-
A38	56	-	-	-
A39	33a	-	-	-
A40	35	E 9	-	-
A41	72a	-	-	-
A42	87a	-	-	-
Upperbody fragments				
B1	29	E 4	-	-
B2	34	E 8		4
B3	53	E 27	16	15
B4	61	E 34	11	28
B5	57	E 30	3	22
B6	65	E 38	17	28a
B7	66	E 39	23	-
B8	-	-	-	-
B9	79	E 51	4	35
B10	84	E 56	-	-
B11		E 29a	-	-
B12	-	-	-	-
B13	87b	-	-	-

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RITE OR METAPHOR? THE USE OF ὄργια IN THE WORKS OF THE GREEK CHRISTIAN WRITERS OF THE 4TH AND 5TH CENTURIES[1]

Filip Doroszewski

Abstract

This paper examines the semantic field of the term ὄργια in the works of Greek Christian writers of the 4th and 5th centuries. It aims to determine if the term was used by Christian authors for Church celebrations, as has been suggested by some scholars. The paper first discusses the origin of the word and the historical development of its meaning, including the first Christian author to use ὄργια positively, Clement of Alexandria. The second part of the paper examines 86 occurrences of the term in Greek Christian literature of the period. The occurrences are divided into four categories based on their meanings: 1) pagan cult, 2) Jewish and heretical worship, 3) metaphor for secret knowledge, and 4) disputable passages from Eusebius of Caesarea (H.E. 2.1.13 and V.C. 4.22.1). The paper concludes that, as far as the 4th and 5th centuries are concerned, the extant sources offer no support for the view according to which ὄργια was used for Church celebrations.

[1] This paper is part of a collaborative research project on the cult of Dionysus and religious policy of Roman emperors from Augustus to the end of the Severan dynasty, financed by the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education within the National Programme for the Development of Humanities (project number: 2bH 15 0163 83). Classical works are referred to using the abbreviations listed in Geoffrey Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1961 (Christian authors) or Henry G. Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry S. Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon. With a Revised Supplement*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996 (other authors). If none of these lexicons mention the work, titles follow abbreviations from Franco Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, English Edition, edited by Madeleine Goh and Chad Schroeder, Leiden, Brill 2015.

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The history and meaning of the term ὄργια in ancient Greek literature has been addressed several times in the secondary literature, yet to date, the Christian usage has not been satisfactorily explored.[2] This lacuna in the scholarship can lead to simplifications and misunderstandings. In the conclusion to a paper entitled *Le mot et les rites. Aperçu des significations de ὄργια et de quelques dérivés*, André Motte and Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge state that "la notion de mystère sacré accompagné d'une communion avec la divinité" was the reason why "certains auteurs chrétiens ... ont repris à leur compte un mot comme ὄργια pour désigner certaines de leurs célébrations."[3] This opinion was later repeated even more explicitly and without qualification by Fayo Schuddeboom in *Greek Religious Terminology – Telete & Orgia. A Revised and Expanded English Edition of the Studies by Zijderveld and Van der Burg*.[4]

While it is certainly true that in late antiquity many mystery terms, e.g. μυστήρια, τελεταί, ἄρρητα etc., frequently referred to Christian celebrations, at the same time, it is disputable whether this was also the case with the term ὄργια itself. It seems telling that neither Motte and Pirenne-Delforge nor Schuddeboom provided any specific examples of such cultic use in Greek Christian literature.[5] The present paper, therefore, seeks to determine if the word was actually employed by Christian authors for Church celebrations by analysing occurrences of the term in Greek Christian writings of the fourth and fifth centuries. This was a period when mystery terminology, previously used by Christian authors almost exclusively in a figurative manner,

[2] The most important contributions are: Nicolaas M.H. van der Burg, *Ἀπόρρητα–δρώμενα–ὄργια: Bijdrage tot de kennis der religieuze terminologie in het Grieksch*, Amsterdam, H.J. Paris 1939; André Motte – Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge, Le mot et les rites. Aperçu des significations de ὄργια et de quelques dérivés, *Kernos* 5 (1992), 119–140; Fayo L. Schuddeboom, *Greek Religious Terminology – Telete & Orgia. A Revised and Expanded English Edition of the Studies by Zijderveld and Van der Burg*, Leiden, Brill, 2009. See also Calogero Riggi, Vita cristiana e dialogo liturgico nel *Simposio* di Metodio (6,5), *Salesianum* 37 (1975), 503–545, passim. Francesco Massa, *Tra la vigna e la croce. Dioniso nei discorsi letterari e figurativi cristiani (II–IV secolo)*, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2014, 125–128.

[3] Motte – Pirenne-Delforge, *Le mot et les rites*, 139.

[4] Schuddeboom, *Greek Religious Terminology*, XIII: "André Motte and Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge ... concluded, among other things, that the notion of sacred mysteries entailed a sort of communion with the deities for whom ὄργια were celebrated. This also explains how certain Christian ... authors *could use the term* for their own celebrations"; see also Riggi, Vita Cristiana, 526.

[5] There is only one such example in Latin Christian literature, i.e. Prudentius *Perist*. 2.65–68. However, the person who calls Christian rites ὄργια in this passage is a pagan prefect, which raises legitimate doubts as to the intentions of the author, see Schuddeboom, *Greek Religious Terminology*, 194–195; Massa, *Tra la vigna e la croce*, 128.

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started to be applied to the sacraments as well.[6] This period, then, which is called the great patristic age,[7] seems the most relevant for the purposes of our study.

The research was based on a lemmatized search performed in the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG) online. It included both authors who lived at the turn of the 3rd and 4th centuries and authors who lived at the turn of the 5th and 6th centuries.[8] The research ignored cognates of the word ὄργια (e.g. ὀργιάζειν, ἀνοργίαστος etc.); only the term itself was taken into account.

Etymology and meaning

The etymology of ὄργια is uncertain. Today it is usually considered to be derived from the root ϝεργ-, like the verb ἔρδω "to do" and the noun ἔργον "work, deed."[9] Thus, its original meaning was perhaps "things done," and, in a religious context, "rite, service." The word is first used in extant Greek literature in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter*, in which it refers to the mysteries celebrated in Eleusis.[10] The ὄργια, revealed by Demeter to the chosen ones, are characterized in the poem as "the rites that are not to be transgressed, nor pried into, nor divulged."[11] The word, however, was employed for other religious rites as well. In archaic and classical Greece, the term was used mainly in connection with the cult of Dionysus, but also with that of Meter Magna, Kabiri, and Hecate.[12] Later, in Hellenistic times, the cult of "oriental" deities such as Adonis, Baal, Isis, Osiris, and Mithras could be called ὄργια, as well.[13]

Since the paradigmatic Eleusinian ὄργια involved secrecy and the ὄργια of the ecstatic deities such as Dionysus and Meter Magna also involved ritual

[6] Arthur D. Nock, Hellenistic Mysteries and Christian Sacraments, *Mnemosyne* 5 (1952), 210–212; John D.B. Hamilton, The Church and the Language of Mystery. The First Four Centuries, *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanieses* 53 (1977), 489–492; Louis Bouyer, *The Christian Mystery. From Pagan Myth to Christian Mysticism*, trans. I. Trethowan, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark 1989, 160–162; Jan Bremmer, *Initiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World*, Berlin–Boston, Walter de Gruyter 2014, open access http://www.degruyter.com/viewbooktoc/product/ 185838, 161–164, accessed 22 September 2015.

[7] E.g. Bouyer, *The Christian Mystery*, 169.

[8] The occurrence of ὄργια in the *De siccitate* (PG 61.723) was ignored in the present paper, as the work turned out to be an 11th century text and is no longer attributed to John Chrysostom, see Susan R. Holman, *The Hungry are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia*, New York, Oxford University Press 2001, 84, 86, 88.

[9] Robert Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, vol. 1–2, Leiden, Brill 2010, s.v. ἔργον and ὄργια.

[10] *H.Hom.Cer.* 273, 476.

[11] *H.Hom.Cer.* 478–479 τά τ᾽ οὔπως ἔστι παρε[ξί]μεν οὔ[τε] πυθέσθαι / οὔτ᾽ ἀχέειν. Trans. Helene P. Foley.

[12] Motte – Pirenne-Delforge, Le mot et les rites, 128, 130–131.

[13] Motte – Pirenne-Delforge, Le mot et les rites, 128, 138.

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frenzy, the word ὄργια was also used from at least the classical period as a metaphor for experiences which constituted a sort of initiation and/or were particularly intense. Thus, ancient authors could speak about the ὄργια of Aphrodite and of Eros when they meant physical and spiritual love, as well as about the ὄργια of the Muses when they referred to the science or art.[14] Similarly, we may find the term related to excellence, pleasure, or even illness.[15] Since in a religious sense ὄργια were initiatory rites in which one could commune with the divine, the term also became a metaphor for accessing deeper philosophical and theological knowledge. The process of gaining that knowledge was depicted as an initiation into mysteries and as an experience of a Bacchic-like ecstasy. This can be traced back to Plato, who assigned such a figurative meaning to the verb ὀργιάζειν, even if he did not use the word ὄργια itself.[16] By contrast, later, the word was used in this manner by many of Plato's followers. Neoplatonist philosophers used the term in reference to the arcana of philosophy, which was to them the best way to approach the divine.[17] Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish thinker who was much indebted to the Platonic tradition and who deeply influenced the Alexandrian school of Christian exegesis, applied ὄργια to philosophy, divine revelation, and Judaism as a whole.[18]

The first author known to have used the term positively with reference to Christianity was a Church Father inspired by both Plato and Philo, Clement of Alexandria (died before 221), who adapted the Dionysiac vocabulary to the needs of the Christian catechesis.[19] The Christian ὄργια are mentioned in his works twice. At the end of the *Protrepticus*, after having harshly criticized the pagan mystery rites, Clement unfolds a poetic vision of Christianity as the only true mysteries (12.118–123).[20] As he is addressing a pagan readership, he deliberately draws on Dionysiac imagery from Euripides' *Bacchae*, a play which would have been familiar to his audience. Clement makes his intentions clear in the programmatic phrase "I will show you the Word (τὸν λόγον) and the mysteries of

[14] Aristophanes, *Lys.* 832, 898; Aelianus, *NA* 9.66; Achilles Tatius 9.1; Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.10.96.2; Hippocrates, *Lex.* 5 (4.642 Littre); Aristides, *Or.* 34.54; see also Motte – Pirenne-Delforge, *Le mot et les rites*, 131–132.

[15] Marcus Aurelius 3.7; Dio Chrysostomus, *Or.* 4.101; Lucianus, *Trag.* 112 (of podagra).

[16] Plato, *Phdr.* 250c, 252d; see Christopher Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon, und Klemens von Alexandrien*, Berlin–New York, Walter de Gruyter 1987, 39–44.

[17] E.g. Synesius, *Ep.* 137.9; 143.33; Proclus *H.* 4.15. See also Helmut Seng, *Untersuchungen zum Vokabular und zur Metrik in den Hymnen des Synesios*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang 1996, 109.

[18] Examples are listed in Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 115 with n18–20; Schuddeboom, *Greek Religious Terminology*, 154–156.

[19] Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 148–158; Fabienne Jourdan, Dionysos dans le *Protreptique* de Clément d'Alexandrie. Initiations dionysiaques et mystères chrétiens, *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 223/3 (2006), 267–271; Massa, *Tra la vigna e la croce*, 161–189; Courtney J.P. Friesen, *Reading Dionysus: Euripides' Bacchae and the Cultural Contestations of Greeks, Jews, Romans, and Christians*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2015, 118–132.

[20] See in general Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 148–158.

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the Word (τοῦ λόγου τὰ μυστήρια), expounding them after your own fashion."[21] In accordance with his promise, the Alexandrian writer contrasts in *Prot.* 12.119 Cithaeron, a mountain of Dionysus and his unholy rites, with a "sober" (νηφάλιον) mountain at the top of which he places a Dionysianly joyful but at the same time modest chorus of anti-Maenads[22] preaching τὰ σεμνὰ τοῦ λόγου … ὄργια "the solemn ὄργια of the Word."[23] Although Bacchic-like in form, these mysteries of the Logos represent the complete antithesis of the Dionysiac ones in terms of substance.[24] The Christian chorus does not celebrate with their minds obscured by Dionysus' frenzy, but is instead inspired and filled with moderation by God. Most importantly, it has been convincingly demonstrated by Christopher Riedweg that the Logos mysteries in *Prot.* 12.119 cannot be identified with any Christian celebration, as their image is based entirely on allusions to the *Bacchae* and, to a lesser extent, to the Book of Revelation.[25]

Another passage in which the Christian ὄργια can be found is book four, chapter 25 of the *Stromata*. The chapter discusses the perfecting role of knowledge of God *(gnosis)* in the life of a Christian, and it points to Christ as the source and teacher of that knowledge. It also emphasizes that this knowledge cannot be separated from faith in the Gospel, which, in turn, makes one pure in body and soul, which is the purpose of every Gnostic, i.e. every true Christian. In recapitulating the chapter, Clement begins by quoting several lines from a dialogue between Dionysus and Pentheus in Euripides' *Bacchae* (470–72, 474, 476), and he arranges them into a sort of conversation between Christ and a hypothetical profane man. Christ is first called a mystagogue who himself reveals his ὄργια, and then, when asked about their nature, he answers that they are worth knowing, but are available only to those who are initiated and of pious manners.[26] This poetic image is,

[21] *Prot.* 12.119.1 δείξω σοι τὸν λόγον καὶ τοῦ λόγου τὰ μυστήρια, κατὰ τὴν σὴν διηγούμενος εἰκόνα; trans. William Wilson, revised by Kevin Knight. See Massa, *Tra la vigna e la croce*, 169–170.

[22] Note a wordplay μαινάδες/ἀμνάδες – "Maenads"/"lambs"; see Massa, *Tra la vigna e la croce*, 173–175; Friesen, *Reading Dionysus*, 127.

[23] *Prot.* 12.119.1 ὄρος ἐστὶ τοῦτο θεῷ πεφιλημένον, οὐ τραγῳδίαις ὡς Κιθαιρὼν ὑποκείμενον, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἀληθείας ἀνακείμενον δράμασιν, ὄρος νηφάλιον, ἁγναῖς ὕλαις σύσκιον· βακχεύουσι δὲ ἐν αὐτῷ οὐχ αἱ Σεμέλης "τῆς κεραυνίας" ἀδελφαί, αἱ μαινάδες, αἱ δύσαγνον κρεανομίαν μυούμεναι, ἀλλ' αἱ τοῦ θεοῦ θυγατέρες, αἱ ἀμνάδες αἱ καλαί, τὰ σεμνὰ τοῦ λόγου θεσπίζουσαι ὄργια, χορὸν ἀγείρουσαι σώφρονα.

[24] Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 152.

[25] Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 151–153; cf. Massa, *Tra la vigna e la croce*, 175, who suggests that *Prot.* 12.119.1–2 might be an "evocazione di una riunione di cristiani per la celebrazione del loro Dio."

[26] *Str.* 4.25.162.3–4 αὐτὸς οὖν ἡμᾶς ὁ σωτὴρ ἀτεχνῶς κατὰ τὴν τραγῳδίαν μυσταγωγεῖ, ὁρῶν ὁρῶντας καὶ δίδωσιν ὄργια. κἂν πύθῃ· τὰ δὲ ὄργια ἐστὶ τίν' ἰδέαν ἔχοντά σοι; ἀκούσῃ πάλιν· ἄρρητ' ἀβακχεύτοισιν εἰδέναι βροτῶν, κἂν πολυπραγμονῇ τις ὁποῖα εἴη, αὖθις ἀκουσάτω· οὐ θέμις ἀκοῦσαί σε, ἔστιν δ' ἄξι' εἰδέναι· ἀσέβειαν ἀσκοῦντα ὄργι' ἐχθαίρει θεοῦ·; see also Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 150n102. But cf. Friesen, *Reading Dionysus*, 131–132, who sees irony here.

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no doubt, meant by Clement as a metaphorical summary of his discussion on the Gnostic path to God and the initiatory role played in it by Christ/Logos, ὁ παιδεύων τὸν ἄνθρωπον "the instructor of man."[27]

The context of both these passages makes it clear that Clement does not use the term ὄργια for any particular Christian celebrations. Rather, he adapts the Platonic/Philonic tradition of the philosophical mysteries and reinterprets the Euripidean image of Dionysus and his rites.[28] Thus, in both cases the word takes on the meaning of the true knowledge of God which one can gain if one follows Logos. This is not to say, however, that in Clement's writings the Christian ὄργια have nothing to do with the sacraments. In fact, both of the above-mentioned passages have definite sacramental overtones. In the *Protrepticus*, immediately after describing his vision of the Christian chorus, Clement summons yet another poetic image, this time of himself being illuminated, sealed, and initiated by God, which is certainly a reference to baptism, although to its spiritual effects rather than to the rite itself.[29] In book four, chapter 25 of the *Stromata*, in turn, Clement says that the rite of baptism is a sign from God that He wants Christians to live in the purity of body and soul.[30] With respect to the latter, Clement also mentions the Eucharist prefigured by the sacrifice of Melchizedek, who typified Christ.[31] Still, even if the sacramental rites are a prerequisite to sharing in the Christian ὄργια, i.e. to gaining a deeper knowledge of God, in Clement none of the sacraments are directly called ὄργια or any other mystery term.[32]

Christian use in the 4th and 5th centuries

Analysis of the TLG revealed eighty-six occurrences of ὄργια in Greek Christian writers of the 4th and 5th centuries. These occurrences can be divided into four categories according to their meanings: 1) pagan cult, 2) Jewish and heretical worship, 3) metaphor for secret knowledge, and 4) disputable passages. Below, we survey all the passages in the above-mentioned order.

[27] *Str.* 4.25.162.5.

[28] Hamilton, The Church and the Language of Mystery, 484–486; Jourdan, Dionysos dans le *Protreptique*, 274–275.

[29] *Prot.* 12.120.1 Ὢ τῶν ἁγίων ὡς ἀληθῶς μυστηρίων, ὢ φωτὸς ἀκηράτου. δᾳδουχοῦμαι τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ τὸν θεὸν ἐποπτεῦσαι, ἅγιος γίνομαι μυούμενος, ἱεροφαντεῖ δὲ ὁ κύριος καὶ τὸν μύστην σφραγίζεται φωταγωγῶν, καὶ παρατίθεται τῷ πατρὶ τὸν πεπιστευκότα αἰῶσι τηρούμενον. On the reference to baptism, see Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 156–157 with n135; see also Massa, *Tra la vigna e la croce*, 180–182.

[30] *Str.* 4.25.160.3.

[31] *Str.* 4.25.161.3.

[32] Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 159 n147: "bei ihm [i.e. Clement, F.D.] … Mysterientermini in sakramentaler Bedeutung noch kaum zu finden sind."

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Pagan cult

Most of the occurrences, fifty in total, refer to pagan cults and have an extremely negative meaning. Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260–c. 339) uses the term eleven times in such a context. Of these eleven occurrences, seven are found in the *Preparatio Evangelica* in quotations from parts of Clement's *Protrepticus* in which pagan cult practices, and especially Dionysiac ones, receive harsh criticism.[33] The remaining four instances concern the Phoenician worship of serpents, the "adulterous" (μοιχικά) rites of Eros and Aphrodite, and pagans worshipping pleasure as a goddess.[34] In *Panarion* 2.243.16, Epiphanius of Salamis (c. 315–402) speaks of the pagan ὄργια that lead to despair and destruction. Another two instances of the word occur in the poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329–390), where they refer to the cult of Mithras and the Thracian celebrations.[35] Synesius of Cyrene (c. 370–c. 414) applies the term in *Aegyptii sive de providentia* 2.5.8 to Dionysiac orgies. Macarius Magnes[36] (turn of the 4th and 5th centuries) speaks one time in the *Apocriticus* of pagan ὄργια abolished by God (3.68.5). In the *De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate*, Cyril of Alexandria (c. 376–444) blames pagan poets and writers for telling false stories about the ὄργια of their gods (PG 68.1069). Ten occurrences can be found in various works of Theodoret of Cyrus (c. 393–c. 458), who uses the word for the cult of Dionysus, Demeter, and Aphrodite.[37] The empress Aelia Eudocia (c. 401–460) mentions in *De martyrio sancti Cypriani* 2.13 certain ὄργια of a serpent, perhaps of the Delphic Python. A contemporary of Eudocia, Nonnus of Panopolis (*floruit* c. 450), employs the term as many as 17 times in the *Dionysiaca*, where it refers mostly to the cult of Dionysus, apart from one passage about the cult of Hera.[38] Claudian,[39] an epigrammatist who lived at the turn of the 5th and 6th centuries, applies the word one time to the pagan cult of εἰδώλων κενεῶν, "empty idols."[40] In the *Epitome historiae tripartitae* of Theodorus Lector (early 6th century), the term takes on the meaning of the sacred objects found in a pagan temple (4.250.3). The last three occurrences are found in the writings

[33] *P.E.* 2.3.8.1, 2.3.9.1, 2.3.11.3, 2.3.12.2, 2.3.14.1, 2.3.27.1, 2.3.41.3.

[34] *P.E.* 1.10.53.4, *L.C.* 7.3.3, *L.C.* 7.4.8, *P.E.* 7.2.4.5.

[35] *Carm* 2.2 (poem.) PG 37.1572, *Or.* 39 PG 36.340.

[36] Perhaps identical to Macarius of Magnesia, an opponent of John Chrysostom at the Synod of the Oak in 403.

[37] *Affect.* 1.21.5, 1.110.4, 1.114.1, 1.114.4, 2.32.4, 7.11.2; *Ezech.* PG 81.885; *H.E.* 262.16, 317.25; *H.Rel.* 26.13.12.

[38] *Dion.* 3.263, 4.270, 9.114 and 287, 13.7, 15.66, 20.267, 27.214, 31.250, 33.229, 44.124 and 219, 45.25, 46.81 and 96 and 107, 48.774; see Francis Vian, Les cultes païens dans les *Dionysiaques* de Nonnos: étude de vocabulaire, *Revue des études anciennes* 90 (1988), s. 407.

[39] The identity and chronology of that poet are discussed in Alan Cameron, *Claudian. Poetry and Propaganda at the Court of Honorius*, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1970, 7–14.

[40] *AP* 1.19.8; trans. William R. Paton.

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of John Malalas (c. 491–578). In *Chronographia* 12.3.20–29, the historian speaks of the Maiuma festival held in Antioch in honour of Dionysus and Aphrodite, as well as of the nocturnal cult of Dionysus mentioned by Virgil.

Jewish and heretical worship

Some authors from the period in question use the term ὄργια with polemical intentions to describe the Judaic cult and/or religious practices of certain Christian sects. Of seven such instances in total, four are found in Theodoret of Cyrus, who applies the word to Manicheans (classified as heretics by the author), the followers of Simon the Magician, and heretics in general, and the licentious customs of Jews (with relation to Hosea 4.14).[41] Another two occurrences are found in Nonnus' *Paraphrasis*, in which they refer to Jewish worship.[42] The last author to be mentioned here is Procopius of Gaza (465–c. 528). While discussing Ezekiel 8:14, a passage in which Jewish women bewail the pagan deity Tammuz in the Temple of Jerusalem, he calls these practices ὄργια.[43]

Metaphor for secret knowledge

The 27 occurrences that fall under this category can be grouped into two subcategories: 1) secrets in general and 2) the Christian faith and its teachings.

Secrets in general

The first occurrence of the 19 assigned to this subcategory is found in Synesius of Cyrene, who uses the term twice in his letters in reference to the secrets of Neoplatonist philosophy.[44] Another 13 instances occur in Nonnus of Panopolis. In the *Dionysiaca*, ὄργια is a metaphor for the art of writing, poetic inspiration, laws, astronomy, medicine, viticulture, female private

[41] *Haer.* PG 83.337, 380, 384; *Os–Mal.* PG 81.1573.

[42] *Par.* 2.113, 4.107; see Filip Doroszewski, Judaic Orgies and Christ's Bacchic Deeds: Dionysiac Terminology in Nonnus' *Paraphrase of St. John's Gospel*, in: Konstantinos Spanoudakis (ed.), *Nonnus of Panopolis in Context. Poetry and Cultural Milieu in Late Antiquity*, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter 2014, 294–300.

[43] *Is.* PG 87.2140.

[44] *Ep.* 137.9, 143.33 (34); see Antonio Garzya, *Synésios de Cyrène, Tome II–III, Correspondance*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres 2000, 398n7.

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parts, and physical love.[45] A future countryman of Nonnus, Christodorus of Coptus (*floruit* 491–518), twice speaks of the ὄργια of wisdom and science.[46] One instance can also be found in the Cologne Mani-Codex (dated to the 5th century[47]), in which Mani says that in a gospel addressed to his followers he proclaimed the eminent ὄργια (67.17).[48] Finally, Zacharias Rhetor (c. 465–after 536) in *Ammonius* 2.11 and 15 mentions the ὄργια of Aristotelian philosophy.

The Christian faith and its teachings

This subcategory includes only eight instances. Methodius of Olympus (turn of the 3rd and 4th centuries) uses the term in the *Symposium* to refer to the "mysteries" of virginity.[49] It is worth noting that Methodius' phrase Ταῦτα τῶν ἡμετέρων, ὦ καλλιπάρθενοι, τὰ ὄργια μυστηρίων, "These, o fair virgins, are the orgies of our mysteries"[50] (6.5), put by him into the mouth of Agathe, one of the speakers of the dialogue, apparently echoes Clement of Alexandria's exclamation from *Prot.* 12.120.2 Ταῦτα τῶν ἐμῶν μυστηρίων τὰ βακχεύματα, "These are the Bacchic rites of my mysteries!" As we have seen, the Dionysiac imagery reinterpreted by Clement in the *Protrepticus* can hardly refer to actual Christian rites, which makes the figurative meaning of Methodius' phrase even more obvious.

Two other relevant examples occur in Eusebius of Caesarea. In the *De laudibus Constantini*, he calls his praise of Constantine the Great an initiation into the divine ὄργια of the emperor's deeds.[51] In the *Demonstratio Evangelica*, Eusebius juxtaposes the Jewish blood sacrifice with the ὄργια of the soul established by Christ.[52] The church writer explains that these ὄργια consist of glorifying God "with a clean heart and a pure mind, in purity and a life of virtue, and by true and holy teaching."[53] It is clear, then, that the word

[45] *Dion.* 4.264, 7.266, 11.506, 15.70, 17.224 and 377, 18.6, 35.62, 38.31, 41.344 and 381, 42.373; see Vian, Les cultes païens, 407.

[46] *AP* 2.1.133 and 303.

[47] Albert Henrichs, The Cologne Mani Codex Reconsidered, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 83 (1979), 351.

[48] On the broader context in which the passage occurs, see Guy Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism*, Leiden, Brill 2005, 67.

[49] See Riggi, Vita cristiana, passim; Massa, *Tra la vigna e la croce*, 127.

[50] Trans. William R. Clark.

[51] *L.C.* pro.5.7–8 οἷς δὴ τὰς θεοπρεπεῖς τελετὰς ἱεροφαντούμενοι ὧδέ πη θείων ὀργίων ἐφαψόμεθα; see Riggi, Vita cristiana, 523 with n56.

[52] 1.6.66 τὰ ψυχῆς … ὄργια.

[53] Ibidem, trans. William J. Ferrar.

ὄργια must be understood as a metaphor here. Much in the same figurative vein, Didymus the Blind (313–398) mentions in his commentaries the ὄργια of truth and ὄργια of spiritual law.[54]

In one of his hymns, Synesius of Cyrene employs the term in a poetic contemplation on the mysterious way in which Christ was engendered by the Father.[55] Finally, Nonnus of Panopolis applies the term in the *Paraphrasis* to Jesus' parabolic style, which is hardly understandable to his disciples, and also to the words of God handed down by Jesus to his followers.[56]

Disputable passages

As we have seen, none of the 84 instances mentioned above refers to an actual Christian celebration or rite, even if some of the passages clearly speak of Christian doctrine. Still, there are two more occurrences of ὄργια, both from Eusebius of Caesarea, the precise meaning of which cannot be as easily determined as in the previous cases. The first occurrence is found in *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.1.13 and the other in *Vita Constantini* 4.22.1. In the following part of this section, we will look at these passages in more detail.

H.E. 2.1.13 is a passage that briefly retells the narrative of Acts 8.26–39, the account of the Ethiopian dignitary baptized by Philip the Evangelist. Baptism is the leading theme of the eighth chapter of Acts, which describes Philip's missionary journey after he fled persecution in Jerusalem. Chapter eight starts with Philip's arrival in Samaria, where he evangelizes and baptizes its inhabitants, including Simon the Magician; it then tells how the apostles Peter and John came to support Philip, and it concludes with the baptism of the Ethiopian. The same sequence of events occurs in Eusebius' retelling of Philip's journey in *H.E.* 2.1.10–13. As Eusebius often closely follows Acts in the second book of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, we can take for granted that this time he also had Acts in mind, if not in front of him, and that he assumed his audience would be familiar with their narrative.[57] In his version of the Ethiopian's account, Eusebius does not mention the rite of baptism. He focuses instead on the dignitary's conversion and its consequences for his country:

[54] *Zach.* 2.250.4 τὰ τῆς ἀληθείας ὄργια, *Eccl.* 310.16 τὰ ὄ]ργια … τοῦ πνευματικοῦ νόμου.

[55] *H.* 5. 90–91 περὶ σᾶς ὄργια βλάστας / τὰ πανάρρητα χορεύσω; see Seng, *Untersuchungen*, 109.

[56] 16.111 οὐ φθέγγεαι ὄργια μύθων, 17.90–91 ὄργια μύθων / ὑμετέρων ἀνέφηνα; see Doroszewski, Judaic Orgies, 293–294.

[57] Alanna Nobs, Acts and Subsequent Ecclesiastical Histories, in: *The Book of Acts in its Literary Setting*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans 1993, 155–156. See also *H.E.* 3.25.1 in which Eusebius says that of all the NT books, that of Acts is second in importance only to the Gospels.

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> Tradition says that he, who was the first of the Gentiles to receive from Philip by revelation the mysteries of the divine word [τὰ τοῦ θείου λόγου ὄργια μετασχόντα], and was the first-fruits of the faithful throughout the world, was also the first to return to his native land and preach the Gospel of the knowledge [εὐαγγελίσασθαι … γνῶσιν] of the God of the universe and the sojourn of our Saviour which gives life to men.[58]

What does Eusebius actually mean by τὰ τοῦ θείου λόγου ὄργια, "the ὄργια of the divine word"? It is explicitly stated in the passage of Acts which Eusebius summarizes that the Ethiopian dignitary was baptized by Philip (8.38): "He [i.e. the Ethiopian, F.D.] commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized [ἐβάπτισεν] him."[59] Should we then understand the words τὰ … ὄργια μετασχόντα, "received the ὄργια," as a reference to baptism?

The expression looks like a metaphor for the Christian teachings passed on by Philip to the dignitary, especially if we remember that Clement of Alexandria figuratively speaks of the "ὄργια of the Logos" preached by a choir of Christ's followers (*Prot.* 12.119.1). The θεῖος λόγος, "divine word" is a phrase frequently used in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, where it means, depending on the context, "Christ/Logos," "Scriptures," or—often difficult to distinguish from each other—"Gospel" or "Christian faith,"[60] There is no doubt that expounding the Scriptures and preaching the Gospel play an important part in both Acts 8.26–39 and in *H.E.* 2.1.13. In Acts, the Ethiopian admits that he does not understand the Scriptures and that he needs an explanation (Acts 8.30–31). In response, Philip both comments on the Book of Isaiah and proceeds to εὐηγγελίσατο αὐτῷ τὸν Ἰησοῦν, "proclaim to him the good news of Jesus" (Acts 8.35). Similarly, we read in *H.E.* 2.1.13 that the dignitary subsequently εὐαγγελίσασθαι … γνῶσιν, "proclaimed [the good news of] the knowledge" about God and Christ in his country. Thus, "the ὄργια of the divine word" could simply be understood as the arcana of the Christian faith.

Attention needs to be drawn, however, to the fact that in the Alexandrian tradition, which Eusebius closely follows,[61] a deeper understanding of the Scriptures was seen as the true Christian mysteries, accessible only to those

[58] ὃν πρῶτον ἐξ ἐθνῶν πρὸς τοῦ Φιλίππου δι᾽ ἐπιφανείας τὰ τοῦ θείου λόγου ὄργια μετασχόντα τῶν τε ἀνὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην πιστῶν ἀπαρχὴν γενόμενον, πρῶτον κατέχει λόγος ἐπὶ τὴν πάτριον παλινοστήσαντα γῆν εὐαγγελίσασθαι τὴν τοῦ τῶν ὅλων θεοῦ γνῶσιν καὶ τὴν ζωοποιὸν εἰς ἀνθρώπους τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν ἐπιδημίαν; trans. Kirsopp Lake.

[59] Trans. the *New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.*

[60] Christ Logos e.g. 1.2.4 and 16, 1.3.7; Scriptures e.g. 1.4.11, 10.4.29; Gospel/Christian faith e.g. 1.1.2, 2.15.1, 3.37.2, 4.11.8. See also Lampe s.v. λόγος.

[61] On Eusebius and the Alexandrian tradition see e.g. Charles Kannengiesser, Eusebius of Caesarea, Origenist, in: Harold W. Attridge and Gohei Hata (eds.), *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, Leiden, Brill, 1992, 435–466 passim.

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initiated by a mystagogue and illuminated by God.[62] Certainly, in *H.E.* 2.1.13 it is Philip who, as an agent of God's revelation, initiates the Ethiopian. But the point is that the illumination itself was regarded as strictly bound up with the rite of baptism. In his *Paedagogus*, Clement of Alexandria says that baptism is "illumination … by which we see God clearly," and he assures his reader that "since knowledge springs up with illumination, shedding its beams around the mind, the moment we hear, we who were untaught become disciples."[63] Thus, although the phrase "the ὄργια of the divine word" refers primarily to the mysteries of the Christian faith, there can be no doubt that both Eusebius and his early Christian readers (who, as a matter of fact, knew from Acts that the Ethiopian was baptized) understood being admitted to such ὄργια as a consequence of baptism, which was regarded as a rite of Christian initiation.[64] This baptismal context, however, does not change the fact that the word ὄργια is not employed here by Eusebius for the rite of baptism itself.[65] This understanding of ὄργια in *H.E.* 2.1.13 is in fact supported by a Byzantine Church historian, Nicephorus Callistus, whose version of the Ethiopian's account, although largely dependent on that of Eusebius, clearly speaks of both the ὄργια in which the dignitary was initiated and of the rite of baptism which he underwent.[66]

Another disputable passage from Eusebius in which the term ὄργια occurs is *Vita Constantini* 4.22.1, which praises emperor Constantine's religious zeal:

> He himself, as if he were one participating in sacred mysteries [οἷά τις μέτοχος ἱερῶν ὀργίων], would shut himself at fixed times each day in secret places within his royal palace chambers, and would converse with his God alone [μόνος μόνῳ τῷ αὐτοῦ προσωμίλει θεῷ], and kneeling in suppliant petition would plead for the objects of his prayers.[67]

[62] Hamilton, The Church and the Language of Mystery, 486–487; Riedweg, *Mysterienterminologie*, 137–140; Bouyer, *The Christian Mystery*, 140–141, 150–153.

[63] 1.6.26.2: φώτισμα … δι᾽ οὗ τὸ θεῖον ὀξυωποῦμεν; 1.6.30.1 Ὅτι δὲ ἡ γνῶσις συνανατέλλει τῷ φωτίσματι περιαστράπτουσα τὸν νοῦν, καὶ εὐθέως ἀκούομεν μαθηταὶ οἱ ἀμαθεῖς; trans. William Wilson, revised by Kevin Knight.

[64] See e.g. Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation*, Collegeville, Liturgical Press 2007, 115–200.

[65] See, however, Riggi, Vita Cristiana, 526 for a different interpretation of the term ὄργια in *H.E.* 2.1.13.

[66] *Hist. Ecc.* 2.6.39–44 PG 145.769b: δι᾽ ἐπιφανείας γὰρ Φιλίππῳ τὴν ὁδὸν διιόντι προσκολληθεὶς, καὶ διὰ μιᾶς ῥήσεως Ἡσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου τὰ ὄργια τοῦ καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς λόγου μυηθεὶς, καὶ τὸ βάπτισμα εἰσδεξάμενος, ἐπεὶ πρὸς τὴν πάτριον γῆν ἐπαλινόστει, τοῖς ἐν Αἰθιοπίᾳ πρῶτος τὴν κατὰ τὸν Θεόν τε καὶ τὸν Σωτῆρα γνῶσιν εὐηγγελίζετο.

[67] Αὐτὸς δ᾽ οἷά τις μέτοχος ἱερῶν ὀργίων ἐν ἀπορρήτοις εἴσω τοῖς αὐτοῦ βασιλικοῖς ταμείοις καιροῖς ἑκάστης ἡμέρας τακτοῖς ἑαυτὸν ἐγκλείων, μόνος μόνῳ τῷ αὐτοῦ προσωμίλει θεῷ, ἱκετικαῖς τε δεήσεσι γονυπετῶν κατεδυσώπει ὧν ἐδεῖτο τυχεῖν; trans. Averil Cameron, Stuart G. Hall, adapted.

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As was observed by Johannes Straub, this passage must be read in the broader context of what Eusebius says about Constantine's view of his place in the Church.[68] What we can infer from the *Vita Constantini* is that the emperor regarded himself as a person chosen by God to lead the Church. He not only "conducted matters … in the manner of a church of God" in his palace, he even acted "like [οἷά τις] a universal bishop appointed by God."[69] It should not be surprising, then, that Constantine is said in the above-quoted passage, *V.C.* 4.22.1, to have a close and intimate relation with God, to whom he μόνος μόνῳ … προσωμίλει, "talked one-on-one" in private. This intimacy enjoyed by the emperor with God was, no doubt, meant by Eusebius as a sign of Constantine's saintly piety. In fact, Eusebius seems to echo passage 2.163 from Philo's *De vita Mosis*, which talks about Moses' τὰς πρὸς θεὸν ὁμιλίας, ἃς ἰδιάζων μόνος μόνῳ διελέγετο, "conversations with God held one-on-one in private."[70] The allusion is all the more likely, considering that the parallel between Constantine and Moses plays an important role in the *Vita Constantini*.[71]

However, regardless of Constantine's image as a pious (not to say perfect) Christian, we cannot forget that he was baptized on his deathbed, which meant that during his lifetime he was not yet a full member of the Church. This is surely why Eusebius does not say that the emperor was a μέτοχος ἱερῶν ὀργίων, "participant of the sacred ὄργια," but that he behaved οἷά τις, "as if he were" one. If we are right in interpreting such participants as full Christians, then precisely what made Constantine comparable to them? Kneeling and praying to God in private? Certainly not, as Tertullian instructs catechumens preparing for baptism to pray *orationibus crebris, ieiuniis et geniculationibus et pervigiliis*, "with frequent prayers, fastings, bendings of the knee, and all-night vigils."[72] If it was not words and gestures, what else could it be?

As we remember from the discussion of *H.E.* 2.1.13, a baptized (i.e., illuminated) person had *ipso facto* a fuller understanding of God and faith than a non-baptized one. It is thus tempting to assume that this quantitative difference, or rather the lack of it, provides a basis for Eusebius's comparison of Constantine to a "participant of the sacred ὄργια." In fact, this explanation would be a perfect match for Eusebius's hagiographical image of Constantine.

[68] Johannes Straub, Constantine as ΚΟΙΝΟΣ ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ. Tradition and Innovation in the Representation of the First Christian Emperor's Majesty, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 21 (1967), 48–50.

[69] *V.C.* 4.17 and 1.44.1; trans. Cameron and Hall.

[70] See also Erik Peterson, Herkunft und Bedeutung der Μόνος πρὸς μόνον-Formel bei Plotin, *Philologus* 88 (1933), 30–41, passim.

[71] On Moses as a type of Constantine in Eusebius' *V.C.*, see Averil Cameron – Stuart G. Hall, *Eusebius. Life of Constantine*, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1999, 34–39.

[72] *Bapt.* 20.1; trans. Ernest Evans.

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Even when the emperor was still unbaptized, Eusebius seems to say, he was not like an ordinary man. Having been divinely chosen, he enjoyed a privileged intimacy with God, just as Moses did.

It seems, therefore, that the term ὄργια is used here, too, to indicate a deeper understanding of the Christian faith, an understanding that brings one closer to God. This is all the more likely since Eusebius, when describing the deathbed baptism of Constantine in *V.C.* 4.62.4, does not use the word ὄργια, even though he employs other mystery terms.[73] Moreover, Eusebius admits in the same passage that when finally baptized, the emperor φωτὸς ἐνεπίμπλατο θείου, "was filled with divine light," which, in fact, not only emphasizes that even Constantine, although outstanding in every respect, needed the light of baptism, but also confirms the emperor's uniqueness, as before his proper illumination, he already had a deep understanding of God's mysteries.

Conclusion

Most of the 86 occurrences of the word ὄργια found in the Christian writers of the 4th and 5th centuries refer to religious practices regarded by these authors as improper: 50 are applied to pagan worship, four to Jewish worship, and three to the practices of heretics. In each of these cases, the term ὄργια appears in a negative and polemical context. In another 19 occurrences, ὄργια is a metaphor for various kinds of knowledge, sometimes very exclusive, that can only be gained by instruction or by some kind of initiation process. This way of using the term can be traced back to at least the classical period.

The research on which this comparison is based revealed only ten instances in which the word ὄργια appears in a Christian context. A closer examination, however, showed that in none of these instances did the term denote a Christian celebration, although the sacrament of baptism was an underlying theme in both of the disputable passages from Eusebius of Caesarea. Thus, it must be concluded that, as far as the 4th and the 5th centuries are concerned, the extant sources offer no support for the view according to which some Greek Christian authors used the term ὄργια for Church celebrations. The reason for this seems obvious. In late antiquity, the metaphorical usage of the word ὄργια for the arcana of the Christian faith stood firmly in a long and honourable tradition of mystery metaphors rooted in the writings of Plato and adapted by his followers, Philo and Clement. When employed in a non-metaphorical way, by contrast, the term carried strongly negative

73 Eusebius says that the emperor Χριστοῦ μυστηρίοις ἀναγεννώμενος ἐτελειοῦτο, "was initiated by rebirth in the mysteries of Christ"; trans. Cameron and Hall.

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connotations associated with pagan, Jewish, and heretical worship, as well as with immoral behaviour.[74] It is therefore not surprising that the Church writers preferred less controversial terms to describe their celebrations.

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[74] On the sexual connotations of the word ὄργια, see Massa, *Tra la vigna e la croce*, 125–128.

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FAITH AS A PREREQUISITE TO THE INITIATION INTO THE MYSTERIES IN THEODORET OF CYRUS

István Pásztori-Kupán

Abstract

Theodoret of Cyrus, one of the last and somewhat late representatives of Christian apologists, follows his predecessors when he argues that any knowledge—including the knowledge of and initiation into the mysteries—must be preceded by faith. This requirement means that those who wish to attain initiation into any art, science, or knowledge, including a spiritual or religious mystery, must manifest not only a certain level of interest, but also faith and confidence both in the person who performs these initiations and in the very mystery they intend to attain. The examples borrowed from various philosophical schools, secret religious rites, and the like tend to show that for Theodoret, initiation into the mysteries of the Christian faith is no exception. Of course, these mysteries are also different in kind, consisting of doctrinal ones (e.g. the mystery of the Incarnation, the mystery of the Trinity, etc.) and of ritual practices including baptism and the Eucharist. Those wishing to be initiated (e.g. the catechumens) are required to listen to the Lord himself, the Creator of the Universe, who uses human mediators in order to convey the message to all. It is interesting to observe that in his argumentation concerning the necessity of faith for the commencement of the initiation, Theodoret not only uses biblical expressions and quotations but even adopts a language and phraseology borrowed from ancient sacred rituals, sometimes even with strong physical connotations (e.g. "we, the lovers of the Trinity": Ἡμεῖς οἱ τῆς Τριάδος ἐρασταί). It appears that the persuasive rhetoric used by Early Christian fathers to convince their listeners of the truth of the Gospel was not very different from the style of non-Christian thinkers and orators. The longevity of the Greek rhetorical school in Antioch may have played an important role in the formation and sustenance of such phraseology.

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Theodoret of Cyrus, one of the late but nonetheless great Christian apologists, in his work consisting of twelve discourses entitled *The Cure of Greek Maladies (Graecarum affectionum curatio)*, which was written in the first half of the fifth century, adopts the argument of faith, of trust concerning the acquirement of any knowledge by any pupil of any skilled craftsman, scholar, or philosopher.[1] The mode of presenting his case differs from that adopted in his other works. To mention the most obvious example, in the first discourse, entitled *On the Faith* or *Concerning Faith*, there are hardly any biblical references in comparison to the numerous quotations from works by various ancient writers.[2] Nevertheless, this was the only effective way to present a valid Christian answer to Greek philosophy: one has to accept an entirely different way of thinking and a distinctive set of arguments and authoritative texts, which are held in high respect by the non-Christian community. Like quite a few Early Christian writers before him (Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Eusebius of Caesarea),[3] Theodoret was also able to surpass the limits of his own paradigm.

The idea of initiation into any knowledge, craftsmanship, skill, or religious mystery is very much present in this work. The faith of the apprentice, however, both in the desired knowledge and in the initiator, is vital even for the very commencement of the teaching. Of course, the conceit of the so-called educated prevents them from being good pupils of the "simple-minded" fishermen and the cobbler (i.e. of the Apostle Paul). As Theodoret puts it,

> When they pick the fruits of every craft, they are not interested in the language of the craftsmen: they do not demand that the cobblers should come from Attica, nor the blacksmiths, the architects, the painters, the constructors of boats or the pilots – but even if these were to be Scythians or Sarmatians, Iberians or Egyptians, they joyfully have the benefit of their skill, demanding only a careful job, and are not in the least annoyed about the difference of nationalities. When listening to a cithara

[1] The three critical editions of this work are: Thomas Gaisford, *Theodoreti episcopi Cyrensis Graecarum affectionum curatio*, Oxford, Oxford Academic Press, 1839; Joannes Raeder, *Theodoreti Graecarum affectionum curatio*, Leipzig, Teubner, 1904; Pierre Canivet, *Théodoret de Cyr: Thérapeutique des maladies helléniques*, Sources Chrétiennes 57, Paris, Cerf, 1958. For our paper we have used Canivet's edition.

[2] The first English translation of this chapter *On the Faith* is in István Pásztori-Kupán, *Theodoret of Cyrus*, The Early Church Fathers, London, Routledge, 2006, 85–108. For a complete English translation of the entire work see Theodoret of Cyrus, *A Cure for Pagan Maladies*, trans. Thomas Halton, New York, The Newman Press, 2013.

[3] Hereby we mean Clement's *Stromata*, Origen's *Contra Celsum* and Eusebius's *Praeparatio evangelica*. See Otto Stählin (ed.), *Clemens Alexandrinus Stromata*, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 52, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1960–1970; M. Markovich (ed.), *Origenes Contra Celsum Libri VIII*, Leiden, Brill, 2001; Karl Mras (ed.), *Eusebius Werke VIII: Praeparatio evangelica*, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 43, Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 1954–1956.

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> player, they expect only the harmony of sounds without being at all interested in knowing whether he is Greek or barbarian. Thus, it is only the teaching of the truth they refuse to receive in all simplicity, but they consider themselves dishonoured if a Barbarian instructs them in this language; and this conceit can be found among people who have not even reached the summit of Greek philosophy, but, so to speak, have lightly tasted a few morsels with their lips and who have begged[4] from here and there some petty ideas![5]

Their refusal to receive the Christian teaching and the Gospel from the less eloquent Barbarians is quite curious, especially because the Hellenes learned not only arts and crafts from other people, but were initiated into religious rites and mysteries by non-Greeks. This point is very much stressed by Theodoret, who faithfully follows here the argument of famous earlier apologists:

> The initiations [τὰς τελετὰς] of the Dionysia, the Panathenea, and surely of the Thesmophoria[6] and Eleusis were introduced to Athens by Orpheus, a man from Odryse, who, on arriving in Egypt, transformed the secret rites *[μετατέθεικεν ὄργια]* of Isis and Osiris into those of Demeter and Dionysus, as Plutarch from Chaeronea in Boeotia as well as Diodore of Sicily teach,[7] and as the orator Demosthenes remembers and says that Orpheus showed them the most sacred rites.[8] The mysteries of Rhea or Cybele or Brimo – name her as you wish, for you have an abundance of names attached to non-existent beings![9] – in any case, the Greeks imported her celebrations and the initiations in them from Phrygia into Greece: the above-mentioned authors testify to this explicitly.[10]

After a longer argument concerning the pre-eminence of truth as opposed to the origin of its teacher, in rebuttal of the counter-argument concerning the prerequisite of faith in acquiring any knowledge, Theodoret turns to demonstrate that even the philosophers demanded unconditional attention from their pupils. He invokes the example of Pythagoras in the following manner:

[4] Greek ἠρανισμένοι – two decades later Theodoret uses the same term to depict the main character representing the Monophysite heresy in his work entitled *Eranistes (The Beggar)* composed in 447. See Theodoret of Cyrus, *Eranistes*, ed. Gérard H. Ettlinger, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975.

[5] Theodoret, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* (henceforth: *Curatio*) I, 10–11.

[6] For further information see Allaire Stallsmith, Interpreting the Athenian Thesmophoria, *Classical Bulletin* 84/1 (2009), 1–23.

[7] See Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, ed. F. Vogel, Leipzig, Teubner, 1888, I, 96, 4–5.

[8] See Demosthenes, *Orationes* XXV, 11 (*In Aristogitonem* 1): ὁ τὰς ἁγιωτάτας ἡμῖν τελετὰς καταδείξας Ὀρφεὺς. S. H. Butcher (ed.), *Demosthenis orationes* vol 2/1, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1907.

[9] Theodoret suggests that there are plenty of names which refer to nothing real.

[10] Theodoret, *Curatio* I, 21–22.

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> Now if it is the term "faith" itself that you are attacking (for I have heard you saying also that we do not bring forth any proof of our doctrines, but merely direct our disciples to believe), you utterly and openly malign our teaching, because we indeed connect the testimony of the facts themselves to our words. Yet again, according to the proverb, you are wounded by your own feathers! In fact even the famous Pythagoras, son of Mnesarchus, student of Pherecydes and founder of the Italian school, gave as a rule to his students to keep silence for five years and to listen only to him in order to accept what they were told without dispute and contestation; thus, to believe and not to be inquisitive, as though in doubt. Indeed, even his successors, to anyone demanding demonstration of what had been said, customarily replied, "He said it!", thus both assuming themselves and demanding others, to hold the word of Pythagoras stronger than any demonstration. If both speakers and listeners deemed the doctrines and instructions of Pythagoras sufficient for belief, who is then so foolish or rather quite moonstruck to doubt the God of the universe in his teaching, and neither to believe his words nor to impart to the God of the universe as much veneration as was accorded to Pythagoras by those who were recipients of his teaching? How is it not pitiful, my dear friends, that whilst Plato recommends to believe undoubtingly even in poets, you rage against us, since it is evident that we exhort you to believe in God the teacher?[11]

Furthermore, even if the teachings of various philosophers differed (and Theodoret goes on to present some of these differences at toilsome length), "despite speaking differently, each of the groups [of teachers] had some who believed what they said".[12] This was again due to their faith, i.e. their confidence in their own teacher. Consequently, faith is the very path which leads to initiation:

> The Sicilian poet Theognis also advocates the nourishment of faith [τὸν τρόφιμον τῆς πίστεως] and says, "The man of faith [*or* the trustworthy/faithful man], Cyrnos, is worth his weight in gold and silver in times of grievous dissension".[13]

The expression "the nourishment of faith" is commonplace enough in Theodoret.[14] According to the basic meaning of the term, Theodoret considers Christians as "having been raised in faith", and as a result, having received

[11] Theodoret, *Curatio* I, 54–57.

[12] Theodoret, *Curatio* I, 64.

[13] Theodoret, *Curatio* I, 69. See also Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* XII, 2, 2. The quotation is from Theognis, *Elegiae*, 1, 77–8 in D. Young (ed.), *Theognis Elegiae*, second edition, Leipzig, Teubner, 1971.

[14] Theodoret uses the same expression in *De Trinitate* 3 (*Patrologia Graeca*, henceforth: PG 75, 1149D), in his *Letter* 92 *to Anatolius* (Sources Chrétiennes, henceforth: SC 98, 244), in the *Commentary on the Psalms* (PG 80, 860), *on Galatians* (PG 82, 477), as well as in *Haereticarum fabularum compendium* (PG 83, 525 and 537).

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"the nourishment of faith". Not only in this context, but also in other cases this expression suggests that in order to become a Christian, one must receive this nourishment as part of the initiation into the divine mysteries. This leads to another important conclusion:

> This means that intellectual things are approachable only through the mind; yet without faith the mind cannot see any intelligible things.[15]

Theodoret's argument is based on the classical opposition between visible (ὁρατός) and perceptible or intelligible (νοητός) realities. While the former mostly require eyesight, the latter also need the abilities of the mind or intellect. The idea is very close to 2Cor 4, 18:

> We look not at the things, which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

In Theodoret's words:

> Thus, faith is necessary for those who want to contemplate intellectual things, precisely because one cannot find an image corresponding to them.[16] [...] Therefore, we need the eyes of the mind to perceive intelligible things, and just as we require the eyes of the body in order to observe visible things, we surely must resort to faith to attain initiation[17] into the divine things.[18]

The term ἐποπτεία (initiation) applied above designates the highest degree of initiation into divine mysteries (e.g. of Eleusis).[19] The vocabulary of ancient religious rituals is consciously integrated into the apologetic discourse, and it is also intermingled with philosophical concepts as follows:

> Since the eye is clearly in the body, in the same fashion faith is in the understanding *[διανοία]*. Moreover, just as the eye needs light to show forth visible things, similarly the mind *[ὁ νοῦς]* clearly needs faith to show forth divine things and to keep watch over their constant splendor *[τὴν περὶ τούτων δόξαν φυλαττούσης βεβαίαν]*.[20]

[15] Theodoret, *Curatio* I, 72: Νῷ γὰρ μόνῳ πελάζειν τοῖς νοητοῖς δυνατόν· δίχα δὲ πίστεως οὐδὲ ὁ νοῦς ὁρᾶν δύναται τὰ νοούμενα.

[16] Theodoret, *Curatio* I, 76.

[17] See also Canivet's observations in SC 57, 124, note 3.

[18] Theodoret, *Curatio* I, 78.

[19] See also Clement, *Stromata* I, 28, 176; Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* V, 10, 2.

[20] Or "their firm opinion", depending on how one interprets *δόξα* in this context (Theodoret, *Curatio* I, 78–79).

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The above syllogism is concluded by a very epigrammatic sentence: "Thus, the beginning of knowledge is the knowledge of our own ignorance."[21] Ignorance, of course, has to be driven out first by the purifying faith of initiation. Theodoret invokes the authority of Plato, Orpheus, and Euripides:

> Now in addition to this, one also needs to drive out evil lessons from the soul, and thus to receive divine ones. This is again what Plato taught, saying, "It is not permitted for the impure to touch what is pure".[22] This is also what Orpheus says, "I shall address myself to those to whom it is permitted: close the gates, you profane!"[23] Euripides echoes this when he cries out, "uninitiated mortals have to ignore ineffable [mysteries]!"[24]

The first two quotations, which are from *Orpheus* and *Phaedo*, contain the same term θέμις and θεμιτός respectively, which means something "laid down", "customary", or in a stronger sense, something permitted by the laws of God and men. This "permission" constitutes the difference between those who are admitted to and those who are rejected from the rites. Needless to say, the permission is conditioned by the person's faith in the rituals.

The excerpt from Euripides' *Bacchae* is crucial. In the famous drama, Dionysus, who claims to have arrived from Zeus, rejects the curious questions posed by Pentheus, who is seeking the reason why Dionysus intended to introduce these new mysteries into Greece. Dionysus, disguised as his own priest, replies: "I was sent by Dionysus, who is of Zeus". In reply to Pentheus' sarcastic question whether there was a Zeus who bred new gods, Dionysus says: No, this is the same Zeus who married Semele, i.e. Dionysus' mortal mother. Dionysus also says that he did not see Zeus during the night, i.e. in a dream, but rather in reality, and that Zeus himself gave him the sacred rites (orgies). Pentheus inquires about the form *(idea)* of these rites. This is when Dionysus replies in the manner quoted above: "Uninitiated mortals have to ignore ineffable mysteries!" The example taken from *Bacchae* is particularly interesting because the cult of Dionysus was a "foreign", i.e. "Barbarian" rite for the Greeks. A few lines later, Dionysus himself tells Pentheus that "all the Barbarians dance in celebration of these rites" (πᾶς ἀναχορεύει βαρβάρων τάδ' ὄργια). To which Pentheus replies contemptuously: "Yes, for they are far more foolish than Hellenes." Dionysus quickly corrects him: "In this at any rate they are wiser; but their laws are different."

[21] Theodoret, *Curatio* I, 85: Ἀρχὴ ἄρα γνώσεως τῆς ἀγνοίας ἡ γνῶσις.

[22] Plato, *Phaedo* 67 b in J. Burnet (ed.), *Platonis Opera* vol. 1, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1900.

[23] Orpheus, *Fragment* 245, 1 in H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, vol. 1, Berlin, Weidmann, 1951. See Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* XIII, 13, 5.

[24] Euripides, *Bacchae*, 472.

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This idea is obviously in accordance with Theodoret's earlier argument—borrowed mostly from his predecessors—concerning the Greeks having been taught virtually everything by the so-called "Barbarians", so they do not have the right to despise them. *Mutatis mutandis*, Christianity itself can also appear as a "new" and "Barbarian" rite for his readers: nonetheless, this scarcely means that, in light of Dionysus' words, the "Barbarians" could not be yet again "wiser than the Greeks".

In addition to making full use of the vocabulary of mysterious rituals, Theodoret reveals his classical erudition when he presents the relationship between faith and reason as well as the idea of initiation by referring to the relevant philosophical terms of Aristotle and Epicurus:

> Therefore, my friends, nobody should speak against faith, since it is evident that even Aristotle called faith the criterion of science *[κριτήριον ἐπιστήμης]*;[25] Epicurus even labelled it the preconception of the mind *[πρόληψις διανοίας]*.[26] Preconception, which acquires knowledge *[γνῶσις]*, becomes comprehension *[κατάληψις]*. According to our concept, faith is a voluntary assent of the soul *[ἑκούσιος τῆς ψυχῆς ξυγκατάθεσις]*,[27] or a contemplation *[θεωρία]* of the obscure things, or a stance concerning what exists and a direct grasp of the invisible [world], commensurate with its nature, or an unambiguous disposition *[διάθεσις ἀναμφίβολος]* fixed in the souls of its [i.e. faith's] possessors. Faith *[πίστις]* surely needs knowledge *[γνῶσις]* just as knowledge needs faith, for neither faith can exist without knowledge, nor knowledge apart from faith. Still, faith precedes knowledge and knowledge follows faith; impulse *[ἡ ὁρμή]*[28] fastens on knowledge and is followed by action *[πρᾶξις]*. One has to believe first and then learn; once knowing, be eager; and having become eager, act. For even the alphabet cannot be learned if one does not believe the schoolmaster what one should call the first letter, then the second and so on. It is evident that if one were at once to contradict the teacher saying that the first letter should not be called "alpha", but be given a different name, one would not learn the truth but inevitably would go astray and accept falsehood as truth. But if one believes the teacher and accepts the lessons according to his rules, faith will be very swiftly followed by knowledge. Thus it is advantageous to believe the geometer when he teaches that a point is something absolutely indivisible, and a line is a length lacking width. Nevertheless, no one

[25] Aristotle, *Topica*, V, 3, 131 a, 23–6. See W. D. Ross (ed.), *Aristotelis topica et sophistici elenchi*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1958.

[26] Or "presumption". See, e.g. Epicurus, *Ratae sententiae* 37 in G. Arrighetti (ed.), *Epicuro: Opere*, second edition, Turin, Einaudi, 1973.

[27] For further discussion of these concepts see, e.g. George B. Kerferd, The problem of *synkatathesis* and *katalepsis* in Stoic doctrine, in J. Brunschwig (ed.), *Les Stoïciens et leur logique*, Paris, Vrin, 1978, 251–272.

[28] The Greek ὁρμή in Stoic philosophy means "appetition" including both the reasoned choice and the irrational impulse.

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> could ever rationally demonstrate this, because if one removes width from a line, the length will surely disappear with it. Still, the geometer commands us to think like this, and the one who desires to study these geometric forms submits oneself and believes readily.[29]

After presenting the analogies of faith, according to which "every person who wishes to learn a certain profession goes to a school of a specialist capable of teaching him and cherishes the lessons presented" by the master, Theodoret concludes:

> You see now, my dear friends, that faith is a certain common property *[κοινόν]* of everyone: both of those who long to learn any art [...]. Knowledge, on the contrary, does not belong to all, but only to specialists.[30]

It is at this point that he emphasizes the importance of initiation into the Christian community by faith:

> This is also why we bring forth the teaching of faith *[τὴν τῆς πίστεως διδασκαλίαν προσφέρομεν]* before everything else to those who approach us and desire to learn the divine things; and once they have been consecrated and initiated *[τελουμένοις καὶ μυουμένοις]*, we show them the hidden meaning of the mysteries *[δηλοῦμεν, τίνων ἐστὶν αἰνίγματα τὰ γινόμενα]*.[31]

The initial faith required of the novices, then, is followed by their consecration and initiation consisting of the subsequent and gradual revelation of the meaning of the mysteries for them during the period of their catechumenate. Furthermore, the amount of information transmitted to different members of the community is conditioned by their own level of initiation, much as happens in the case of some mystery rites:

> Neither among you does everyone know what the hierophant[32] says; the masses watch the sacred performance and those who are called priests accomplish the ritual ceremonies, yet the hierophant is the only one who knows the meaning of the words and he makes them known only to those he deems fit.[33]

[29] Theodoret, *Curatio* I, 90–95.
[30] Theodoret, *Curatio* I, 104.
[31] Theodoret, *Curatio* I, 109.
[32] The hierophant's duty was to teach the rites. In Eleusis, he also initiated the uninitiated into the mysteries. See Canivet's observation in SC 57, 132, note 2.
[33] Theodoret, *Curatio* I, 110.

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A suitable parallel of this principle of initiation can be found in the preamble of Theodoret's tract *On the Holy and Vivifying Trinity:* "We present the teaching of divine doctrines as a reminder for the well versed, and as instruction for the uninitiated."[34] The implications of this analogy are obvious. As the author continues,

> In consequence, if the meaning of these repugnant and disgusting orgies is unknown to all save those who are called hierophants, it is plain madness to aspire to the knowledge of the all-holy and divine mysteries before faith [i.e. before believing]. Perhaps you are neither persuaded by Pindar the lyricist who clearly forbids "to open the ancient word to all".[35] Plato gives the very same advice, for he says, "Take care, lest these [doctrines] ever fall into [the hands of] uneducated people, because, in my opinion, it is almost impossible for most of them not [to treat] them when heard as quite ridiculous, while for the well-bred souls there is nothing more admirable and more inspired. Yet often repeated, always heard, and over many years these [doctrines] are hardly purified like gold, at great effort".[36]

As a result, there is a ranking of the Christian believers also, and their level of initiation gives them access to the relevant teaching. This is why the "reminder for the well versed" may contain expressions which might surprise the uninitiated. Nonetheless, these are entirely legitimate and acceptable for those nurtured in faith. Such formulae include terms like "we, the lovers of the Trinity" (Ἡμεῖς οἱ τῆς Τριάδος ἐρασταί).[37] It appears that the persuasive rhetoric used by Early Christian Fathers to convince their listeners of the truth of the Gospel was not very different from the style of non-Christian thinkers and orators. The longevity of the Greek rhetorical school in Antioch—including that of Libanius, who, reportedly, on his deathbed regretted that the famous Antiochene preacher, John Chrysostom (Theodoret's example), could not take his place at the head of the Antiochene rhetoric school[38]—may have played an important role in the formation and sustenance of such phraseology.

[34] Theodoret, *De Trinitate, Prologus* 1: τῶν θείων δογμάτων τὴν διδασκαλίαν προθήσομεν, τοῖς τε εἰδόσιν εἰς ἀνάμνησιν καὶ τοῖς ἀγνοοῦσιν εἰς μάθησιν. Jean-Noël Guinot (ed.), *Théodoret de Cyr: La Trinité et l'Incarnation*, SC 574–575, Paris, Cerf, 2015, I, 234.

[35] Pindarus, *Fragment* 180 in H. Mähler (ed.), *Pindari carmina cum fragmentis*, Leipzig, Teubner, 1975. See Clement, *Stromata* I, 10, 49.

[36] Plato, *Letter* 2, 314a in J. Burnet (ed.), *Platonis Opera vol 5: Epistulae*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1907. Theodoret, *Curatio* I, 114–115.

[37] Theodoret, *De Trinitate* 1, SC 574, 240.

[38] See Sozomenus, *Hist. eccl.* VIII, 2 (trans. Chester D. Hartranft): "There was, however, at Antioch on the Orontes, a certain presbyter named John [Chrysostom], a man of noble birth and of exemplary life, and possessed of such wonderful powers of eloquence and persuasion that he was declared by the sophist, Libanius the Syrian, to surpass all the orators of the age. When this sophist was on his deathbed, he was asked by his friends who should take his place. 'It would have been John', replied he, 'had not the Christians taken him from us'. Many

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of those who heard the discourses of John in the church were thereby excited to the love of virtue and to the reception of his own religious sentiments." See Philip Schaff – Henry Wace (eds.), *Socrates and Sozomenus Ecclesiastical Histories*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, vol. 2, Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1890.

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DIONYSUS AND HIS *DOPPELGÄNGERS* IN JOHN LYDUS

Anna Judit Tóth

Abstract

The De mensibus *by John Lydus contains a problematic sentence stating that Dionysus had two epithets: Dimētōr and Dithyrambus, and both or one of these names mean(s): "the one who has two paths of procession, the one, from the east toward the south, in winter, and the other, from the north toward the west, in summer." This sentence can be explained with the help of Mithraic theology as it is summarized in Porphyry's* De antro nympharum. *In Mithraic cosmology, the alter egos of Mithras, Cautes and Cautopates are associated with the same directions and seasons as in the text by Lydus. The Dionysiac triad in the* De mensibus *can be read, thus, as an interpretation and adaptation of a Mithraic cosmology. The close analogy suggests that in the imperial era of Rome, similar stellar theologies were adapted for mystery cults with independent origins.*

Pagan theology of Late Antiquity has become a popular subject in recent decades, and not only among philosophers.[1] In the field of religious studies, more and more scholars have recognized that these sources, which were written in a Christian empire, contain valuable data unknown from earlier ages. In the following pages, I would like to focus on one author of the sixth century, John Lydus. His most important and complete work on the magistrates of the Roman Empire has many modern editions and translations,[2] while his other monograph on the Roman calendar has been

[1] The research leading to these findings was made possible through funding from the Hungarian Fund for Academic Research (OTKA) under the project number K 101503.

[2] Editions of the *De magistratibus:* R. Wuensch (ed.), *Ioannis Lydi De magistratibus populi Romani libri tres.* Leipzig, Teubner, 1903; T. F. Carney, *Bureaucracy in Traditional Society. Romano-Byzantine Bureaucracies Viewed from within,* 3 vols., Lawrence, Kansas, Coronado Press, 1971, with English translation; Anastasius C. Bandy, *Ioannes Lydus on Powers or the Magistracies of the Roman State. Introduction, Critical Text, Translation,*

almost completely neglected by modern scholarship. Its standard edition was published in 1898, replacing an earlier edition from 1837.[3] A modern edition and translation, which will probably not be able to fulfil the same role,[4] an unofficial English translation on the web,[5] and a handful of articles have been published concerning Lydus' book. This neglect can only partly be explained by the fact that the *De mensibus* survived only in a fragmentary form; the main cause paradoxically lies in the reliability of the author: his citations are usually correct and precise, he used the best sources and focused on his main effort: to preserve his Roman cultural heritage. The predictable consequence of this attitude is that most of his data are familiar from other—earlier and better—sources. Yet, among his lengthy argumentations crowded by dense Neopythagorean and Platonic terminology and veiled by obscure mysticism, we can find surprising information which begs some explanation.

In Book IV, we read the following mysterious sentence about Dionysus:

> Σεμέλης δὲ αὐτὸν ποιοῦσιν υἱόν, ὡς ὑπὸ γῆν κρυπτόμενον καὶ διὰ τοῦ Ἑρμοῦ, τουτέστι τοῦ λόγου, προιόντα· καὶ τῷ μηρῷ τοῦ Διὸς ἐντρεφόμενον, οἱονεὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀπορρήτοις τοῦ κόσμου λανθάνοντα· καὶ Διθύραμβον καὶ Διμήτορα τὸν δύο προόδους λαχόντα, τὴν μὲν ἀνατολικὴν πρὸς νότον ἐν χειμῶνι, τὴν δὲ βορείαν πρὸς δυσμὰς ἐν τῷ θέρει. καὶ ταῦτα μὲν περὶ Διονύσου. (Lydus, *De mensibus* IV, 51)[6]

Commentary and Indices, Philadelphia, The American Philosophical Society, 1983, with English translation; Michel Dubuisson (ed.), *Ioannes Lydus, Des magistratures de l'État romain*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2006, with French translation. Monographs and other publications on this work are Carney, *Bureaucracy in Traditional Society;* C. N. Tsirpanlis, John Lydus on the Imperial Administration, *Byzantion* 44 (1974), 479–501; Bandy, *Ioannes Lydus on Powers;* James Caimi, *Burocrazia e diritto nel* De magistratibus *di Giovanni Lido*, Milano, Dott. A. Giuffrè Editore, 1984; Anna J. Tóth, John Lydus as Pagan *and* Christian. In: Marianne Sághy – Edward M. Schoolman: *Pagans and Christians in the Late Roman Empire: New Evidence, New Approaches (4th-8th centuries).* Budapest, CEU Press, 2017. 59–68; Sviatoslav Dmitriev, John Lydus and his Contemporaries on Identities and Cultures of Sixth-century Byzantium, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 64 (2010), 27–42.

[3] Edition of the *Liber de mensibus:* R. Wuensch (ed.), *Ioannis Lydi Liber de mensibus*, Leipzig, Teubner, 1898; Immanuel Bekker, *Ioannes Lydus. Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, Bonnae, Impensis ed. Weberi, 1837, 3–118. I do not know of a single article whose only theme would be the *De mensibus*, while there are publications dealing with all three works of our author like, e.g. Michael Maas, *John Lydus and the Roman Past*, London – New York, Routledge, 1992. Anthony Kaldellis, The Religion of John Lydus, *Phoenix* 57 (2003), 300–316.

[4] Anastasius C. Bandy, *Ioannes Lydos On the Months (De mensibus).* Translated and edited by Anastasius C. Bandy with associate editors Anastasia Bandy, Demetrios J. Constantelos, Craig J. N. de Paulo, Lewiston – Queenston – Lampeter, The Edwin Mellen Press, 2013.

[5] http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Lydus/de_Mensibus/home.html accessed on 25 February 2016.

[6] "They describe him as the son of Semele, as being hidden under earth and coming forth by virtue of Hermes, that is, the Logos; and being fostered in the thigh of Zeus, as lying hidden in the secret places of the cosmos; and they call him Dithyrambus and Dimêtôr ['having two mothers'], the one who has two paths of procession, the one, from the east toward the south, in winter, and the other, from the north toward the west, in summer. So much regarding

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We get this enigmatic statement after a series of mythical allegories. The sentence depends on the predicate *poiousin*, whose first object is *auton*, and the second objects are *Dithyrambon kai Dimētora*. The phrase *ton dyo proodous lachonta* is an apposition, which probably belongs not only to the term *Dimētora*, but maybe to *Dithyrambon* as well; so it is true for both that they have these two *proodoi*—whatever the meaning of the latter is. My arguments are not grammatical, but etymological: we can suppose that Lydos interpreted the *Di-* element in the case of both words as "two," which is true for *Dimētōr*, but false in the case of *Dithyrambus*. Following Lydus' logic, *Dithyrambos* should have the meaning of "having two gates or doors"—in Greek, only this word and *thyrsus* begin with *thyr-*.[7] This interpretation of Dithyrambos as "having two gates" must have seemed plausible to Lydus, because, as we will see, Lydus is actually speaking about two gates, namely the "gates of the sky."

The meaning of the phrase *ton dyo proodous lachonta* is "he who has share in two *proodoi*." According to the Liddel–Scott dictionary, *proodos* means: going on, advance, progress, appearance in public, procession, proceeding forth, emanation.[8] As a first approach, we can accept the meaning "procession"; however, without understanding the precise and definitive meaning of the whole sentence, we still do not know how to understand this procession—I mean, what kind of procession or whose procession it is. The phrase is followed by two further appositions, which define or at least specify these two *proodoi:* a) the first "procession" is an eastern procession towards the south and in winter; b) the second procession is the northern procession towards the west and in summer.

As far as I know, nobody has tried to find an explanation for this disturbing passage—there is no annotated edition of the text and there are almost no translations of it into modern languages, so scholars have not been compelled to solve this riddle. The only apparent issue is that the sentence refers somehow to the directions of the sky. What we read in the text is a short hint at a philosophical or theological concept unknown from other sources. We can assume that this concept involved astrology, which could provide a terminological framework combining the directions of the sky and seasons.

Dionysus." http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Lydus/4/March*.html accessed on 25 February 2016 (trans. Mischa Hooker). The translation of A. Bandy is as follows: "They represent him as the son of Semele hidden under the earth and coming forth through Hermes, that is, the generative principle, and as being nurtured in the thigh of Zeus, that is to say, hidden in the covert places of the world, and as Dithyrambos and Dimeter *[sic!]*, who has been allotted two progressions, the eastern one to the south in winter but the northern one to the west in summer. And these are the facts about Dionysus." (Bandy, *Lydus On Months*, 227–229.)

7 Bandy also interpreted it as "two doors", cf. Bandy, *Lydus On Months*, 229 n. 143.

8 Liddel-Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. *proodos*.

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Nevertheless, what Lydus reveals about this concept is not enough for us to understand the original idea in the background—the text provides us with an equation which has too many unknowns. The only chance to find a solution is to look for an analogous idea in ancient religion or philosophy where there are two "processions" and the east, the south, and the winter occur together, as do the north, the west, and the summer. I suggest that the solution is easier than it seems, because we have a very close parallel in the cult of Mithras.

It is unique even among the secretive mystery cults of Rome that no direct source survived referring to the doctrines of this cult—which can be explained, at least partly, by the fact that the Mithraic community did not celebrate public festivals and no public form of the Mithras cult existed in parallel with the mysteries, in contrary e.g. to the mystery cults of Isis, where the secret initiation and theology coexisted with festivals like the *Navigium Isidis*, open to the wider public. Given the lack of literary sources, reconstructions must be based on the rich iconographic material found in the Mithras sanctuaries. The scene of the tauroctony stood in the centre of the cult both in the literary and the metaphorical sense. In recent decades, an academic consensus has been reached on the interpretation of this scene: it is not a representation of a myth but a stellar map, in which all characters correspond to constellations: the bull, the scorpion, the dog, the lion, the hydra, the raven, the crater, etc.[9] Although there is some debate concerning the precise meaning, the theory itself has not been challenged. The central problem that hinders our understanding is the polyvalent symbolism of the iconographic motives deriving from the polyvalence of any astrological symbolism—e.g. the bull can refer to the moon, to Venus, to the constellation of the Taurus, or to the zodiac sign of the Bull/Taurus.[10] This complex code is suitable for representing a specific astronomical event or a place on the sky, or a date of time—or two or three of them at the same time. Deciphering such a code would be virtually impossible without literary sources, but fortunately we do have sources, since certain texts of Late Antiquity reveal details of this cosmology. However, we are not always able to determine if a source is dealing with a specifically Mithraic concept.

For our present purpose, the precise meaning of the tauroctonic scene is almost unimportant. It can be a representation of a significant astrological event which affects the fate of the souls or even the fate of the whole universe—this will not influence the meaning of Lydus' text. The Mithras

[9] In the interpretation of the tauroctony, I follow the hypothesis of R. Beck, as it is proposed in Roger Beck, In the Place of the Lion: Mithras in the Tauroctony, in Hinnels John R. (ed.), *Studies in Mithraism*, Roma, L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1994, 29–50; and Roger Beck, *Mithras: The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire. Mysteries of the Unconquered Sun*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006.

[10] On the polyvalence of symbolism: Beck, *Mithras*, 197–200.

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theology had another aspect crucial from the perspective of this inquiry: the astronomical map was somehow connected with the journey of the souls in universe. The best summary of this idea can be found in Porphyry's *De antro nympharum:*[11]

> 21. Taking the cave as an image and symbol of the Cosmos, Numenius and his pupil Cronius assert that there are two extremities in the heavens: the winter tropic than which nothing is more southern, and the summer tropic than which nothing is more northern. The summer tropic is in Cancer, the winter tropic is in Capricorn. Since Cancer happens to be closest to us upon earth, it has, with good reason, been assigned to the Moon, which is nearest to the earth; since the southern pole is as yet invisible to us, Capricorn has been assigned to Saturn, the most remote and highest of the planets.
>
> 22. [...] The theologians spoke of these, Capricorn and Cancer, as two gates; and Plato called them orifices. Of these Numenius and Cronius say that they ascend through Capricorn. And Cancer is northerly and suited for descent, while Capricorn is southerly and suited for ascent.
>
> 23. The northern quarters of the heavens are for souls descending to genesis, and correspondingly the northern gates of the cave are rightly said to be for the descent of men; the southern quarters of the heavens, however, are not for the gods but for the souls ascending to the gods and for the same reason.[12]

According to Porphyry, there are two gates in the sky: one where the souls enter the universe and another where they leave this world of generation and corruption. Later, Porphyry's argumentation ends with a specifically Mithraic theory, but in these earlier parts of the text, there is no sign that Porphyry thought of this concept as Mithraic. For him, it was simply Platonic. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that it was an invention of the Mithraic theology, later borrowed by Neoplatonist philosophers.

The cited text of Porphyry contained a corrupt sentence which was conjectured in the 1969 Arethusa edition in the following manner:

> 24. Τῷ μὲν οὖν Μίθρᾳ οἰκείαν καθέδραν τὴν κατὰ τὰς ἰσημερίας ὑπέταξαν· διὸ κριοῦ μὲν φέρει Ἀρηίου ζῳδίου τὴν μάχαιραν, ἐποχεῖται δὲ ταύρῳ, Ἀφροδίτης δὲ καὶ ὁ ταῦρος. δημιουργὸς δὲ ὢν ὁ Μίθρας καὶ γενέσεως δεσπότης κατὰ τὸν ἰσημερινὸν τέτακται κύκλον, ἐν δεξιᾷ μὲν <ἔχων> τὰ βόρεια, ἐν ἀριστερᾷ δὲ τὰ νότια, τεταγμένου αὐτοῖς κατὰ μὲν τὸν νότον τοῦ Καύτου διὰ τὸ εἶναι θερμόν, κατὰ δὲ τὸν βορρᾶν τοῦ

[11] The standard edition is John M. Duffy (ed.), *Porphyrius, The Cave of the Nymphs in the Odyssey*, Buffalo, Arethusa, 1969.

[12] Translation from Duffy, *Porphyrius*.

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<Καυτοπάτου> διὰ τὸ ψυχρὸν τοῦ ἀνέμου.[13] 25. ψυχαῖς δ' εἰς γένεσιν ἰούσαις καὶ ἀπὸ γενέσεως χωριζομέναις εἰκότως ἔταξαν ἀνέμους διὰ τὸ ἐφέλκεσθαι καὶ αὐτὰς πνεῦμα, ὥς τινες ᾠήθησαν, καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν ἔχειν τοιαύτην. ἀλλὰ βορέας μὲν οἰκεῖος εἰς γένεσιν ἰούσαις· διὸ καὶ τοὺς θνήσκειν μέλλοντας ἡ βορέου πνοὴ 'ζωγρεῖ ἐπιπνείουσα κακῶς κεκαφηότα θυμόν', ἡ δὲ τοῦ νότου διαλύει.

These Cautes and Cautopates are the *alter egos* of Mithras. Their names are absent in the corrupted versions of the codices, but the conjecture of the Arethusa edition reconstructed the names, which have been well-known from the epigraphic material of the Mithras sanctuaries but otherwise unknown in literary texts. Cautes and Cautopates, these two little gods or *daimōns*, share a common appearance, but they are always smaller than Mithras. They are often represented in Mithraic sanctuaries in the form of little torchbearers, Cautes' torch points upward, Cautopates' downward. These *alter egos* or *doppelgängers* are why Mithras is sometimes called "threefold Mithras" in sources.

On the basis of Porphyry, we can sketch a scheme now:

Mithras: stands in the points of the Equinox;
Cautes is associated with the left, south, hot, torch upward=birth?
Cautopates is associated with the right, north, cold, torch downward=death?

We cannot decide if Mithras stands at the point of the spring or the autumn equinox, but he watches the events from the east. The following interpretation seems simple and logical: Cautes ignites his torch, he belongs to the south and the hotness, and consequently he might be a symbol of birth. Cautopates is the opposite: north and cold and perhaps even death.

Nevertheless, this picture is still incomplete. If the place of Mithras is one or both of the two equinoctial points on the Ecliptic, then we would expect Cautes and Cautopates to have their place on the same line, the Zodiac. They must have it there if they are associated with the journey of the souls, because Porphyry explicitly says that the gates of the heavens lie on the Ecliptic. But as soon as we add the place of the gates to our scheme, it becomes surprisingly paradoxical:

[13] "The equinoctial region they assigned to Mithras as an appropriate seat. And for this reason he bears the sword of Aries, the sign of Mars; he also rides on a bull, Taurus being assigned to Venus. As a creator and lord of genesis, Mithras is placed in the region of the celestial equator with the north to his right and the south to his left; to the south, because of its heat, they assigned Cautes and to the north <Cautopates> because of the coldness of the north wind. With good reason they assigned winds to souls proceeding to genesis and departing from it because they as well drag spirit along with them, as some have supposed, and possess a like essence. But the north wind is the proper wind for souls proceeding to genesis. It is for this reason that for those about to die the breath of the north wind 'blowing upon them revives the soul from its grievous swoon,' while the breath of the south wind dissolves it." (Duffy, *Porphyrius*)

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Cautes: torch upward, left, south, hot, birth, southern gate: Capricorn (winter), remote, soul ascending to heaven, death.

Cautopates: torch downward, right, north, cold, death, northern gate: Cancer (summer), near, descending souls, birth.

So the torchbearers' connection with birth and death can be just the opposite of what we have assumed.

The cause of this paradox is simple: the directions of the Ecliptic are not stable, in contrast to the directions of the poles as the sky revolves around the poles every night. If we want to attribute fixed dates and directions to the Zodiac constellations on the Ecliptic, we can do that by observing the sun. The main information we can say about a Zodiac sign is that the sun is in it at a certain moment—e.g. at the time of the winter solstice, the sun is in the sign of the Capricorn. Winter is cold, but the sign of the Capricorn cannot be linked to the northern direction because at the time of the winter solstice, the sun reaches the southernmost point of its path—at least if we view it from the northern hemisphere, where in December the sun shines in the faraway realms of the southern hemisphere. The ambivalent meaning attributed to the twins Cautes and Cautopates is not only an academic interpretation (or over-interpretation) loosely based on Porphyry. It is confirmed by the sources: the twins are interchangeable in the representations,[14] since they are ultimately symbols of the cyclical movement of the sky, and perhaps, of the cycle of life and death.[15]

We can add a further item to the characteristics of the Mithraic twins, which does not derive from Porphyry, though it is self-evident: Mithras is the Sun, the *Sol invictus*—so the twins must have some link with the sun. The simplest explanation is the following:

Cautes: rising sun (east);
Cautopates: setting sun (west).

Sometimes we find the symbols of Zodiac signs next to their figures on the reliefs or on the pedestal of their statues: a bullhead for Cautes and a scorpion for Cautopates. These are the so-called *stereos* or "solid" signs of the spring and the autumn, when the change of the season becomes "firm":

Cautes: bull, Taurus, spring;[16]
Cautopates: scorpion, Scorpio, autumn.

[14] Beck, *Mithras*, 208.
[15] Beck, *Mithras*, 81.
[16] On the connection between the torchbearers and the seasons/vegetation, see Beck, *Mithras*, 213–214.

So we can add further items to our scheme:

Cautes: torch upward, left, south, hot, birth, spring (Taurus), east, rising sun, southern gate: Capricorn (winter), remote, soul ascending to heaven, death;

Cautopates: torch downward, right, north, cold, death, autumn (Scorpion), west, setting sun, northern gate: Cancer (summer), near, descending souls, birth.

As I have said, the two torchbearers are interchangeable—which is just the main goal of the whole system: to represent a paradox, i.e., the paradox of the unity of opposing principles: a death on earth is a birth in heaven.[17] Another cause of the variety of the meanings is the simple fact that the scheme tries to describe movements: the circular and cyclical movements of the sky, while iconographically we can represent only static conditions.

For our purpose, the most important result is that in this scheme, which has been widely accepted in Mythraic studies for decades now, we find the same qualities as in the text of Lydus:

Cautes: winter, southern gate, east;
Cautopates: summer, northern gate, west.

The main difference is that Lydus clearly speaks about Dionysus and his epithets, Dimētōr and Dithyrambus, and hence, no Mithraic allusions can be involved in the given context. We can observe another slight difference: the consequent and symmetrical opposition of the specific properties is broken if 'eastern' is opposed to 'northern' and 'toward south' to 'toward west':

Proodos 1: eastern, towards south, in the winter;
Proodos 2: northern, towards west, in the summer.

No celestial movement can take place in opposite directions so we must assume that this pairing of the properties is a mistake, committed either by Lydus or, more probably, by his source. We cannot exclude the possibility that the text in our codices is corrupted. Perhaps it is not too daring to correct and complete the scheme:

Dithyrambos	Dimētōr
"having two gates"	"having two mothers"
proodos 1	*proodos* 2
southern	northern
towards east	towards west
in the winter	in the summer

[17] Beck, *Mithras*, 212–214.

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I admit that Lydos writes nothing on the relationship of the epithets, so they can be interpreted as synonyms indicating the same quality of the god: that he has two *proodoi;* or perhaps on the contrary, Dithyrambos was intended to be completely independent from Dimētōr, and the Lydus' explanation pertains only to the latter. However, we cannot exclude a third possibility: that they are epithets of a "threefold Dionysus," equivalent to the Cautes and Cautopates of Mithras.

At first glance, it seems to be a problem that Dionysus was not a sun god, in contrast to Mithras, but in Late Antiquity, practically any god could be regarded as a solar deity. In Macrobius' *Saturnalia,* for instance, Dionysus was explicitly identified with the sun.[18]

The consequences of this parallelism are far-reaching. Modern scholarship discovered this astrological theology relatively recently, in the 1980s and 1990s. Porphyrius is not the only source, though. There are also scattered references in works by other authors. I applied this system to explain the doctrines of the mysteries of Mithras because they match each other. The similarity is too close to be a coincidence. However, this theology does not seem to be an exclusive property of the Mithraists, even if they were its creators. As it contained many elements inspired by Platonic philosophy, accessible to any educated person in Antiquity, we cannot exclude the possibility that the philosophical framework we reconstruct as Mithraic theology was or became a common property of many other religious movements of the Roman Empire.

One observes a similar phenomenon in the case of modern esotericism: neopaganism, popular Buddhism in the west, New Age, transpersonal psychology and many other spiritual movements all have radically different origins, but similar ideas turn up within their systems, (reincarnation, a holistic approach, a material world that can be influenced by the power of the mind etc.), perhaps because of the spirit of our time, or just because the same person usually tries out many of them. This was typical in the Roman Empire as well. One person could gain initiation into multiple mystery cults.

My last question is who adapted the elements of Mithraic theology to the cult of Dionysus and when. Without further sources, we cannot do more than create a list of the possibilities. Lydus could have made a mistake in his interpretation of his sources, but I would exclude this possibility, as he worked too meticulously to commit such a mistake, so close to falsification.

[18] Macrobius, *Saturnalia* I, 18, passim. Macrobius identifies Dionysus not only with Apollo (I, 18, 1–6) and, consequently, with the Sun as a god (I, 18, 7–10) but also with the Sun as a celestial body. He claims that in the mysteries, Apollo is the diurnal Sun, while Dionysus is the Sun under the horizon at night: *in sacris enim haec religiosi arcani observatio tenetur, ut sol cum in supero id est in diurno hemisphaerio est, Apollo vocitetur: cum in infero id est nocturno, Dionysus qui est Liber pater habeatur* (Macrobius 1, 18, 8). According to Macrobius, the several different ages of the god in his representations (Dionysus as an infant, boy, middle-aged and old man) hinted at the solstices and equinoxes.

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So we should choose either of two hypotheses: a) At a certain point in the development of Dionysiac mysteries, some elements of the Mithraist religion infiltrated the theology of the other cult. As the present volume proves, there are signs of similar tendencies in other cults.[19] b) It is conceivable that the idea in our text is a concoction of Neoplatonic philosophers and other thinkers of the fourth and fifth centuries. If this latter possibility is true, Lydus' text still remains a document of Late Antique religion, but it is independent from any actual cult practice. However, we cannot expect to find satisfactory answers to these questions unless we find new sources.

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[19] See the article by Zsuzsanna Tóth.

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A MYSTERY AMONG THE MYSTERIES: ARE THERE OLD ICELANDIC MYSTERIES?

Vilmos Voigt

Abstract

In comparative religion, mystery is a rite, revealing a certain kind of knowledge, and initiating the participants into a hidden, secret world. On old Germanic religion, we have both intrinsic and extrinsic data available from the time of Tacitus (1st century AD). Early Scandinavian archaeology of religious sites is a much cultivated field, with excellent secondary literature. Nevertheless, in Old Icelandic texts there are no proper reports about mysteries. Leading scholars of Old Germanic religion, even the partisans of the ritualistic school (as for instance, Jan de Vries and Otto Höfler) did not classify, for example, Männerbund, "sacred kingdom" (literally, male association) and initiation as mysteries. It was only Ernst Uhly who considered "Nordisch-Germanische Mythologie als Mysteriengeschichte" (1984).

In this paper, the striking absence of mysteries in Old Icelandic texts will be examined. Following on from that, I also want to address the phenomenon of Euhemerism, expressed in a few Old Icelandic sources, first of all by Snorri Sturluson, who in his Gylfaginning *suggests that the traditional Old Norse mythology is an "illusion"* (ginning). *In this regard, I shall also look into the* Gesta Danorum *of Saxo Grammaticus, where giants and magicians from ancient times in possession of "knowledge" were later considered to be gods.*

Vexilla regis prodeunt, fulget crucis mysterium
(Venantius Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers)

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In comparative religion, the word "mystery" denotes rites that reveal a certain kind of knowledge, and initiate the participants into a hidden, secret world.[1] Its manifestation is usually a *rite de passage*,[2] in which the participant moves out of condition A to condition B (both in a social and a religious meaning). These rites are usually repeated (in most cases during recurring feasts), whereby more and more is revealed from the same hidden teaching. Mysteries are universally known religious phenomena, which have existed all around the world from the Stone Age on, and which can take on the most varied forms, from sacred to utterly profane.

"Rite," "cult," "sacrifice" are very complicated and interconnected terms, and it is not always easy to decide whether they refer to "mysteries" in the proper sense of the term or not. Fortunately, there is an Old Norse noun *seiðr* meaning *Sitte, Brauch, Sittlichkeit* in Modern German, which later was also used for the "new religion" *(inn nýi seiðr)* and was borrowed by the Lapps as *seita,* "rites and places of offering." However, this Old Norse word does not have a connotation with reference to mysteries.[3] Its original form was *siðu,* which denoted, if uncertainly and vaguely, "magic."

Tacitus as a Source

We do have information concerning Old German mysteries, thanks to our perennial guide Tacitus. Chapter 2 of his *Germania* (offering manifold exact data relating to the end of 1st century AD within the framework of an *interpretatio Romana*)[4] is a gem of early European phenomenology of religion. Here Tacitus reports that the Germans used traditional songs in their celebrations, which were the only sources for their collective memory, songs about the god Tuisto, and his son, Mannus. Mannus had three sons, whose names stood for the following tribes: *proximi Oceano Ingaevones, medii Herminones, ceteri Istaevones vocentur.* In the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, the three names were first interpreted as denotations of distinct early Germanic tribes. Later they were understood as designating Germanic dialects, and only from the second half of the 20th century were they seen as "Kultgemeinschaften" (much like Roman Catholics versus Protestants

[1] To my great surprise, there are very few entries about "mystery" in the current handbooks or dictionaries of comparative religion. In what follows, I refer only to summarizing papers, without discussing here the general theories of Otto Höfler and Jan de Vries.

[2] This is a term by Arnold van Gennep, usually misunderstood. First edition: Arnold van Gennep, *Les Rites de passage,* Paris, Émile Nourry, 1909.

[3] Dag Strömbäck, *Sejd. Textstudier i nordisk religionshistoria,* Stockholm – Köpenhamn, Hugo Gebers Förlag – Levin & Munksgaard, 1935.

[4] There are several editions of the *Germania* of Tacitus so I am referring to the text by its chapters.

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within the same Christian religion). Anyhow, we do not find any reference to "mysteries" behind the data referring to the three "genuine" cult systems among the early Germanic tribes.

In chapter 9, Tacitus says that some Suebians offer sacrifices also to the Egyptian goddess Isis *(Pars Sueborum et Isidi sacrificat).* For Tacitus it seemed strange that the Germans should adopt any cult of a faraway goddess. He supposed that they found the decorated heavenly boat, that is, the symbol of Isis, familiar *(unde causa et origo peregrino sacro, parum comperi, nisi quod signum ipsum in modum liburnae figuratum docet advectam religionem).* We know that there was a strong cult of Isis all over Egypt (and in Rome). It is interesting to notice that according to Tacitus, the contemporary Germans invoked the secret names of the gods, which they observed in "reverence" *(lucos ac nemora consecrant deorumque nominibus appellant secretum illud, quod sola reverentia vident).* This "secret knowledge" announced by the name of the gods might be interpreted, to some extent, as a kind of "mystery."

Tacitus as a very early witness is even more intriguing if we consider the archaeological data connected with *Nehalennia*.[5] The name of a Germanic goddess, Nehalennia occurs centuries later on many votive tablets from the 3rd century AD among Western Germans. The richest archaeological sites are Domburg and Colijnsplaat at the mouth of river Schelde, i.e., along the westernmost seashore in today's Netherlands. Unfortunately, we do not know direct descriptions of the rites which may have been carried out then or later because since Tacitus' time, the two shrines or temples once existing there have been covered by sand dunes or were simply washed away by the sea. Two tablets with identical motifs were also found in the Köln – Deutz area. On the tablets, we see the goddess with a basket of fruits, a dog, often inclining on a boat, or with an oar. The Romanized symbolic motifs were definitely borrowed from the "Cult of Matrons" in Rome; the dog as an animal referring to death and the ship belong to the lore of many "sea-faring" gods in the Antiquity. The inscriptions reveal a connection of Nehalennia with deep sea sailing. It is imaginable that this was the reason why Nehalennia had a cult on the western coast of the European continent. One votive altar inscription (Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum, vol. XIII, № 8798) directly equates *Nehalennia* with Isis.

There has been a lengthy discussion among German philologists in the 19th and 20th centuries on whether we can suppose the existence of any "sea-goddess" among the early Germans. Or is Nehalennia only a reminiscence of a simple local variation of a rite of the seamen living on the coasts of the Atlantic? The reports do not refer to any "mysteries" but we cannot

[5] See G. Neumann – P. Stuart, Nehalennia, in Heinrich Beck *et al.* (eds.), *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde.* (Hereafter *RDA.*) Zweite, völlig bearbeitete und stark erweiterte Auflage. Berlin – New York, Walter de Gruyter, 2002, Bd. 21, 61-64.

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exclude that such existed. The etymology of Nehalennia's name (originating perhaps from the Latin root of *nex* and *necare* "to kill") is striking if we accept the more than century-old assumption of Friedrich Kauffmann (*Dea Nehalennia,* 1892) who connected the word *nēų* "ship" with the names of the gods Nerthus and Nehalennia. Nehalennia then means "she who lives close to the water" (i.e., to the sea). This would not be far from the aquatic connotation of Isis in Egypt. The goddess on the tablet is usually sitting in a "Matrona" type of robe.[6] No priests or other participants of mysteries are shown on the tablets.[7]

The case of Nerthus / *Njörðr*

The Goddess *Nerthus* is already described in chapter 40 of the *Germania* by Tacitus as *Terra Mater* venerated by many Germanic tribes south of the "Eastern Sea" (that is, the Baltic Sea). According to this description, she has a sanctuary on an island in the Ocean and on her cow-driven chariot, she conducts regular processions over the land. Returning back home to the island, she (and her vehicle with the covering carpet) are washed clean in a secret lake by serfs, who are then killed in order that nobody should be informed about the exact location of the secret place. In the cult of Nerthus, the division between sacred and profane is clear, the rite is kept in secrecy in a brutal way—still we cannot say that it is a mystery. The female name *Nerthus* is akin to the Old Norse *Njörđr,* a god from the group of the Vanes,[8] with a special connection to the sea and sailing.[9] It is surprising that the name Nerthus comes from a group of masculine words, including Ancient Greek ἀνήρ, "man." Njörđr commonly occurs in Old Scandinavian place names and archaeological finds. In West Norway, related place names originate mainly from the coast, while in Sweden they are common in the central, agricultural area. In general, the Vane gods *(vanir)* protect agriculture and the household—in contrary to the warrior-like As gods *(aesir).* The continuity of the cult of Njörđr is traceable until the time of the Christianization of Northern Europe. But we do not find explicit references to mysteries connected to Njörđr. The female Nerthus developed into a male god—this is striking, especially if we realize that Njörđr's children are twins: the goddess *Freyja* and the god of fertility, *Freyr* (meaning, in the

[6] Matrona, the "Great Mother" is a Celtic fertility goddess,

[7] Å. Hultgård, Nerthus und Nerthuskult, in RDA, Bd. 21, 2002a, 83-89. Å. Hultgård, Njörđr, in RDA, Bd. 21, 2002b, 234-240.

[8] See in general Nils Lid (ed.), *Religionshistorie,* Stockholm – Oslo – København, Albert Bonniers – H. Aschehoug & Co. – J. H. Schultz, 1942. (Nordisk Kultur XXVI.) See also Adolf Schück (ed.), *Befolkning under medeltiden,* Stockholm – Oslo – København, Albert Bonniers – H. Aschehoug & Co. – J. H. Schultz, 1938. (Nordisk Kutur II.)

[9] H. R. Ellis Davidson, *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe,* Middlesex, Penguin, 1964, 132-138.

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Viking Age, "lord, master"). Freyja and Freyr were leading gods in the Viking Age, whose adventures are referred to in many different written sources. Njörðr appears in such stories both as a heroic and a ridiculous person, or even as a clearly average figure. But we do not find among these stories accounts of mysteries in the proper sense of the term.

It must be pointed out, however, that in the work of Tacitus, the Germans are not the early Scandinavians but the continental German tribes living in the territory of present-day Germany. We can speak of a "continuity" of rites and religious beliefs only in the case of Nerthus / Njörðr.[10] There again, we do not know the reason for the gender shift.

There is another striking case of the afterlife of *Nerthus / Njörðr*. In his famous book *Du mythe au roman* (Paris, 1970), Georges Dumézil shows how the stories about a warrior chieftain, Hadingus, in Saxo Grammaticus' *Gesta Danorum* I, v-vii, follow the construction of narratives about Njörðr.[11] Dumézil rejects the assumption that Hadingus was a Viking named Hastings, that is, a historical person. Three major narratives (Njörðr and Skadi, the marriage of Hadingus, and the one on Hadingus and navigation) date back to the age of the Vane gods. By this reconstruction, we may learn more about the structure of the activities of the Vanes in general. However, one important point is still not explained by Dumézil's theory: how does Hadingus, an otherwise unknown person, replace the god Njörðr in Saxo's chronicle? Is this a case of "Euhemerism"?[12]

Sacred places or spaces

There is important information on the "grove of the *Semnones*" in chapter 39 in Tacitus.[13] According to him, the *Semnones* were the mightiest tribe of the *Suebi*. From time to time, all the tribes sent delegations to a grove and there started to perform their rites by sacrificing humans. The grove could be approached only if one was tied up in handcuffs. German philologists have noticed that in a lay of the *Verse Edda*, the *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* (strophe 28, and in a reference in prose) a hero, Dagr, that is, "Day", kills the protagonist Helgi with the spear of Odin. The murder happens in a place called *Fjoturlundr*, that is, "fetter-grove." Thus we understand that the grove

[10] Folke Ström, *Nordisk hedendom. Tro och sed i förkristen tid*, Göteborg, Akademieförlaget – Gumperts, 1961, 34-40.

[11] Georges Dumézil, *Du mythe au roman*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1970.

[12] Kurt Johannesson, *Saxo Grammaticus. Komposition och världsbild i Gesta Danorum*, Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell, 1978, 94-100. Johannesson connects the description of Hadingus and other warriors to the medieval notion of *fortitudo*.

[13] Rudolf Much, *Die Germania des Tacitus*, 3. Auflage, Heidelberg, Carl Winter, 1967.

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could only be visited if one was tied up in fetters. This is then a thousand-year-old motif concerning a "sacred grove" in Germanic mythology. (The complex problem of sacrifices would need a separate study.)[14]

All these ancient religious motifs stem from the Continental Germans. Early Scandinavian religion can be located in several different territories: today's Norway, the central and southern parts of today's Sweden, the northern regions of present-day Denmark, and, after the 9th century AD, also Iceland. Historians of religion in Northern Europe find different cultures there already from about the Iron Age.

There are numerous archaeological sites in Scandinavia that can be connected to religious rites. We do not deal here with the "rock-paintings" or with the origin of Scandinavian runes. In early place names (registered in later times, but representing the pre-Christian religion, many of them also traceable in recent place names), we find terms referring to nature, buildings, and religious background. A handful of these have been interpreted as places that were separated or reserved for various forms of religious activities. The best known of these are the following: **Al* (Gothic *alhs*, Anglo-Saxon *ealh/alh*) in Nordic place names, as for instance *Aal,* meaning simply "holy." **Wi* and *wae,* usually prefixed, like in the case of *Vi-borg,* might mean "(a kind of) shrine." **Hargr* (Anglo-Saxon *heargh*) is usually translated as "stone-sacrifice-table," and occurs in modern place names like *Harreby.* A hörgr probably had a wooden roof construction. *Hof* also had the meaning of "temple," while its original meaning is very simple: "surrounded yard."[15] Even *stald*, originally meaning "constructed, erected," was understood as "altar." These old place names go back to the time before the birth of Old Icelandic texts. Thus it is worthwhile examining whether they occur in the Verse Edda. We know the songs of the Verse Edda from manuscripts of the 13th century but the songs were created many centuries earlier.

Some of the terms listed above are absent from the vocabulary of the Verse Edda. In turn, *vé* is used, meaning "homeplace," especially the "homeplace of a god." Old Icelandic *hǫrgr* is often used with the meaning of "heathen shrine." The word *hóf* had two meanings: "dwelling" and "temple." The term *stallr* was also used in both of its meanings: "construction" and "altar," and was also employed as a more modern word for "crib."

A quite difficult passage of the *Fjolsvinnsmál* 40:1-2 reads *men blóta þær á stallhelgum staþ,* or in English "(Ay they help award) to their worshippers, in hallowed stead if they stand." The end of the sentence was interpreted

[14] R. Maier – Ch. Saar – T. Capelle – A. Pesch, Opfer und Opferfunde, in *RDA*, Bd. 22, 2003, 107-127.

[15] B. Bulitta, *hóf* in *RDA*, Bd. 15, 2000, 59-61.

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by the excellent translator Lee M. Hollander as "if they offer up sacrifice."[16] The scene takes place in a stead, a stable *(stallr),* which is rendered sacred, perhaps purified (for the service). In this case, there was a small room in a building, which was prepared for the sacrifice. The other examples from the Verse Edda tell us the same: that there was no special place or building for preparing a performance of the mysteries. In one word, the simple dwellings *(hof)* of the peasants were used for the purposes of everyday life as well as for private religious practice. *Hörgr* might be a larger building but still not one specifically designed for the rites.

There are differences as to time and place in the terms or names for "shrine" and "sacrifice." The main tendency is, however, the same among the Norse: there is no proof that these terms should have been names of places or buildings specifically used for performing mystery rites. We learn about "holy forests," "holy groves" etc., but not as places specific to the mysteries.

Hidden Knowledge and Euhemerism

Hidden knowledge is not a rare motif in Old Icelandic literature. There are several texts in which a hero (usually Odin in disguise) is questioning a "wise" person, usually a dwarf, giant, or other supernatural being, about hidden or lesser known parts of Old Icelandic cosmology and mythology. The stories are without direct references to an initiation into mysteries. In such stories, Odin is the omniscient hero. There are several versions about how Odin learned his wisdom: from Mimir's head or by drinking from Mimir's well. He acquires knowledge in a mysterious way but there are no allusions to mysteries with human participation.

As an exception, one of the most complicated narratives of how Odin learnt the runes and acquired wisdom is told in an independent short poem, inserted into strophes 138—141 of the *Hávamál*, as follows:

138. I wot that I [Óthin] hung   on the wind-tossed tree
all of nights nine,
wounded by spear,   bespoken to Óthin,
bespoken myself to myself, ...
139. Neither [drinking] horn they upheld   nor handed me bread;
I looked below me –
aloud I cried –
caught up the runes,   caught them up wailing,

[16] Lee M. Hollander, *The Poetic Edda. Translated with Introduction and Explanatory Notes*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1990, 151.

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thence to the ground fell again.
140. ... I mastered mighty songs nine,
and a drink I had of the dearest mead...
141. Then began I to grow and gain in insight,
to wax eke in wisdom:
one verse led on to another verse,
one poem led on to the other poem.[17]

The situation is simple: Odin is hanging on the world-tree for nine days, without eating or drinking, then he takes up the runes, falls down from the tree and learns nine songs, the key to wisdom, and the capacity for making verses one after the other. His new knowledge is twofold: runic and poetic. From the text we learn that it was a difficult self-sacrifice, resulting in more wisdom and poetic gift. From a phenomenological point of view, we have here an example of an initiation rite. But it happened only once, at the beginning of times, to the god of all wisdom, and it was never repeated, neither by gods nor by humans. The secret knowledge of using the runes is an important part of the event.

In general, the runes in Scandinavia are often associated with magic power and use but runic writing itself was not religious or secret. Runes could be used for any purpose and by anybody who mastered the art of carving the signs. The oldest inscriptions with Old Germanic runes are on artefacts or are tomb inscriptions with exact data. We do not have long runic inscriptions, religious texts, or inscriptions with double or symbolic meanings.

Among the early songs in Old Icelandic, we do not find "mystery songs." Undoubtedly, however, mythological and ritual songs did exist. Their specialized literature is not very rich.

One aspect I would like to dedicate special attention to is Euhemerism.[18] In mysticism and mysteries in general, there is a situation 1 (everyday life), which develops into and becomes a complex situation 2 (higher strata of meaning, hidden knowledge, and special techniques of achieving it). Euhemerism, then, affirms that references to the divine in situation 2 are not of a divine character; today's gods just go back to ordinary situations of type 1 which took place yesterday. In short, gods were first common people: *dii homines fuisse*.

In Old Icelandic literature, Euhemerism mingled with a Christian understanding of religion: medieval learned authors considered the Old Icelandic mythology as a field of Euhemerism. Ari Frođi in his Íslendingabók (1225) narrates the history of the Icelanders (and not their religion), pointing out that two Nordic gods, Yngvi and Njörđr, had in fact been men, even

[17] Translation by Lee M. Hollander, *The Poetic Edda*, 36.

[18] G. W. Weber, Euhemerismus, in *RDA*, Bd. 8, 1991, 1-16.

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the kings *Yngvi Tyrkjakonungr* and *Njǫrðr Svíakonungr*, and were venerated as gods only thereafter.[19] Snorri in his *Prose Edda* describes the world of the Nordic gods, using as a framework the adventure of an imaginary Swedish king, Gylvi.[20] Searching for Asgard, one evening he arrives at a hall and asks there three gods, Hárr, Jafnhárr and Þriði about Nordic mythology. The answers describe important aspects of Nordic religion. Awakening the next morning, Gylvi finds himself in an empty open field: both the hall and the meeting with the gods was an illusion *(ginning)*. The title of the poem "Gylvi's Illusion" *(Gylfaginning)* emphasizes Snorri's Euhemerism.

The famous *Ynglingasaga* by Snorri describes the history of the ruling family of Sweden, the Ynglings.[21] Chapters 5-7 recount that Odin and the As above gods migrated from Asia, where their capital was Ásgard, an important place where sacrifices were carried out. Odin had had 12 high priests, who migrated together with him to the Swedish town Sigtuna. There Odin and his companions (among others *Njörðr, Freyr, Heimdall, Þórr, Baldr*) presented a sacrifice and on that account were later venerated as gods. Snorri's account stands at the beginning of his *World History* (*Heimskringla*, written about 1230) and offers a well calculated Euhemeristic explanation: important men of yesterday have become the gods of today. In such a construction, there is little room for mysteries.[22]

It is interesting to confront Snorri's text with the information proffered by Adam of Bremen *(Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* IV, 26-27 and the relevant *scholia)*.[23] Adam used several different sources, among them reports by eyewitnesses. His text was compiled by 1070, when large parts of today's Sweden had not yet been Christianized. According to his report, in Uppsala (also in the vicinity of Sigtuna) there stood a large heathen temple, made of pure gold. Within it there were three huge golden statues, with Thor in the centre, Wodan and Fricco *(cum ingenti priapo)* on his two sides. Hence just at the time of Norway's conversion a mighty non-Christian temple was

[19] Íslendingabók – Landnámabók. Jakob Benediktsson (ed.), Reykjavík, Hið Íslenzka Fornritafélag, 1968. Ættartala 27.

[20] See Snorri Sturluson, *Edda. Prologue and Gylfaginning*, edited by Anthony Faulkes, London, Viking Society for Northern Research – University College, 2005, 7-55.

[21] See for the comparison of the three versions of Snorri's *Prologue* Diana Whaley, *Heimskringla. An Introduction*, London, Viking Society for Northern Research – University College, 1991, 55-57.

[22] The problem is very carefully discussed in various papers by Walter Baetke, *Kleine Schriften. Geschichte, Recht und Religion im germanischen Schrifttum*, Weimar, Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1973.

[23] See Adam of Bremen, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*. Bernhard Schmeidler (ed.), Hannover – Leipzig, 1917. (Monumenta Germaniae Historica – Scriptores rerum Germanicarum 2.) English edition: *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*. Translated by F. I. Tschan, Columbia University Press, New York, 1959. See also A. Buchner, Adam von Bremen, in *RDA*, Bd. 1, 1973, 56-57.

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functioning in Sweden, most probably with complex rites. It was as it were a cathedral without Christianity. In every third year a great sacrifice was offered by all the *Svea* (Swedish) people. The feast lasted for nine days, thus giving time to elaborate rites. In a sacrificial grove, dogs, horses and even human remains were visible. The rite served to continue and restore "traditions and peace" (ár ok friđr, pax et prosperitas). So just at the dawn of the Christian era in Scandinavia, the traditional religion was finally able to reach a higher level of complexity and organization, where we can reckon with mysteries as well. But it was too late: the Scandinavian kings forced the population to be good Christians. And soon the kings of Scandinavia became themselves Holy Kings.[24]

However, in spite of Ernst Uehli's endless generalizations,[25] we really do not know much about mysteries in Old Icelandic. The situation is different both in the earlier and the later centuries.

Conclusion

For people in (old) Iceland, the mysteries arrived with Christianity, carrying with them deep meaning, non-indigenous rites, the Latin language, etc. It is well known that in medieval Scandinavia (especially in Sweden) mysticism was highly elaborate. But all this took place after the conversion. For the intellectual background, consider the rapid worldwide success of Holy Birgitta's prayers. In Iceland, Christian mysticism was not well known. When we read the sagas about Icelandic bishops (see the *biskupasögur* of the 12th-14th centuries) we find stories about miracles carried out by the first bishops but there are no reports about mysteries.

Coming back to the motto of my paper *(fulget crucis mysterium)*, the significance of the Cross was not theoretical for the devoted Scandinavians but rather implied an attempt to understand and interpret the actual world. A *vexillum regis* with a cross was in reality a Danish invention (of 1219, Lindanisse, today Estonia) when, as legend has it, the victorious Danish flag, the *Dannebrog*, fell down directly from the heavens to help soldiers of King Valdemar II. However, the very first reference to this miracle is from 1529—and a miracle does not necessarily imply the existence of initiation rites or a mystery cult.[26]

[24] On this topic there is a rich literature. See for instance a recent collection of comparative papers: Nora Berend (ed.), *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy: Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c. 900-1200,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007.

[25] Ernst Uehli, *Nordisch-germanische Mythologie als Mysteriengeschichte.* Mellinger, Göttingen, 1984.

[26] Since the *Dannebrog* is the state symbol of Denmark, there exists a vast popularizing literature on the topic. See for example Inge Adriansen: *Nationale symboler,* København, Museum Tusculanum Press, 2003.

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WORDING THE SILENCE: INITIATORY READING OF MYSTICAL TEXTS

Anikó Daróczi

Abstract

Hadewijch, the 13th-century Brabantine woman mystic, was the magistra of a small group of beguines. We know almost nothing about her life, except that she wrote letters, visions and songs of love mysticism that most probably circulated among her followers and disciples. In her letters there are a number of passages in which she asks the addressee – whom she often calls "dear child" or "sweet love" – to read and re-read what she had received from her, suggesting on the one hand that she as magistra cannot say more about her own experience of God than what she had already said and written, and on the other hand that meditative reading could lead the "dear child" to a more profound knowledge or even experience of the divine. Indeed, if we keep re-reading her letters about the ineffable unio mystica and can listen to the modus mysticus in which she writes, we can conclude that she invites her disciple to an initiatory reading, which sometimes, through the power of unfathomable images arranged in repetitive (rhythmical) patterns, leads to a seeing beyond the imaginable.

The Word and the Silence

Before a mystic author finds the right words and utters them, a process of 'becoming word' takes place within the mystical one-ing. The mystical experience of oneness happens within the person's innermost being, at an unfathomable depth. God's touch, there, is itself a form of speaking. Mystical speech is a response to the divine touch which is God's Word: what the mystic as mystic says emerges from *unio* and leads back to *unio*.

This is what we understand from the oeuvre of Hadewijch, a Brabantine woman love mystic of the 13th century who was an author of visions, songs

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(or "poems in stanzas"), and letters in rhyme and prose.[1] She was the *magistra* of a small group of beguines – known as *mulieres religiosae* (devout women) – belonging to the higher social strata, and therefore literate. Hadewijch addressed her words to this small group of like-minded souls, but her writings were known for at least two centuries and highly appreciated outside her own circle. Within a network of Augustinian canons and Carthusian monks they were even considered sacred.[2]

According to one of her letters, God touches *(gheraect)* with His own fathomless depth the deepest part of the person and thus further deepens that abyss of the soul, drawing her to Himself. In that space, the soul hears the word that is 'hidden' *(verholen)* from those who do not serve God in the freedom of a perfect experience of love *(minne)*. In this freedom the soul sees and hears the secret words that are 'unsayable' *(onuertellec)* and 'unheard' *(onghehoert)*.[3] In Letter 2 we also learn that this word is 'hidden' *(verborghen):* the soul, Hadewijch says, will hear from God the hidden counsel, as Job says: 'To me was spoken a hidden word'.[4] This clearly alludes to Gregory the Great's *absconditum verbum*[5], which can also be understood as an inner longing that arises from within. To hear the hidden word is to receive the words of the Holy Spirit with one's heart. The Spirit's speaking cannot be known except by someone who is capable of taking in the words. It can be felt in silence but not expressed verbally.[6] In Letter 28, as we shall see later on, Hadewijch speaks of the soul that is 'guided into a blessed stillness' *(gheleidet in ene verweende*

[1] Her 14 Visions, 31 Letters in prose, 45 Songs or Poems in Stanzas and 14 Rhymed Letters have been preserved in four extant manuscripts. The earliest one, Manuscript "A" (Royal Library of Brussels, 2879-80), was copied in the first half of the 14th century, "B" (Royal Library of Brussels, 2877-78 is a copy of A from around 1380. The third one, "C" (Library of the University of Ghent, 941), was copied at the end of the 14th century. There is a fourth manuscript, "R"' (Antwerp, Ruusbroec Society 385 II), from the 16th century, but it does not contain all of the works of Hadewijch.

[2] In the prologue of the Middle High German 13th-century translation of Hadeiwjch's Letter 10 she is called St. Adelwip (...) who is a great saint in the eternal life" *(sante adelwip ... die do ist ein grosze heilige in dem ewigen lebende)* whose teachings have enlightened "friends of God living in Brabant." The author Jan van Leeuwen in his *Zeven tekens uit de zodiac* calls Hadewijch "a holy glorious woman" *(een heylich glorieus wijf)*, whose "books" are begotten of God and whose teachings are as true as the teachings of Saint Paul. Within a Brabantian network of Augustinian canons and Carthusian monks her works were considered to be sacred texts Cf. Fraeters2014, p. 32 and 182 (Textual Appendix).

[3] 'Dan alre eerst moechdi rusten met sente ianne die op jhesus borst sliep. Ende alsoe doen noch die ghene die in vrihede der Minnen dienen: Si rusten op die soete wise borst ende sien ende horen die heimelike worde die onuertelleec Ende onghehoert sijn den volke ouermids die soete runinghe des heilichs gheests.'(Letter 18, 182-188)

[4] '... soe suldi den *verholenen raet* van hem horen, Alsoe iob van hem seghet: Te mi es gheseghet een *verborghen woert'* (Letter 2, 119-121, my italics)

[5] *Moralia in Iob*, 5.28.50 (PL 75.705, rep. CCSL 143, Turnhout: Brepols, 1979).

[6] Cited from Reynaert 1981, 199-200.

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stilheit), in which she 'hears a great murmur from the wonder which is God Himself in everlastingness' *(een groet gheruchte van dien wondere dat god selue es in ewecheiden)*.[7]

The same idea is found in William of Saint-Thierry, who writes of one word that arises in the Bride in her unity with the Bridegroom, and that word is God. The Word is not divided into syllables but is communicated through a simple touch.[8] The image of the Bridegroom who speaks to the Bride so as to make his mark on her can shed light on the nature of the communication between Hadewijch, in her capacity as a *magistra*, and her followers. The touch of the divine voice *(gherochte)* moves Hadewijch to a speaking that will in turn affect those who read it or listen to it. It may be no coincidence that Hadewijch in Letter 1 attributes to herself the role of the Bridegroom in a climactically structured sentence that, as we shall see below, is characteristic of her own speech act. She commands her addressee as a bridegroom commands his beloved bride *(alse brudegom ghebiedet siere lieuer bruyt)* to 'open up the eyes of [her] heart in clarity' *(ontpluuct die oghen claerlike)* and see herself in God (Letter 1, 18-24). Seen in this light, Hadewijch's language is not only a means of expression but also an experience, for it is part of God's working in the soul. God's voice, active within Hadewijch, turns her into the commanding, speaking Bridegroom and by the same token gives rise – among other writings – to the *Letters*.

Reading as feeling and hearing

There are places in Hadewijch's *Letters* that provide us with some notion of how these texts were read. Hadewijch closes Letter 24 by noting that God's name is loveable to 'the ears of the reasonable soul' *(de ore der redeleker zielen)* and that the addressee should allow all the words which she has heard about God in Scripture 'and which you read yourself and which I have told you and which someone else tells you, in Dutch or in Latin' to go into her heart *(laet in uwe herte gaen)*.[9] The meaning of 'heart' is multi-layered, but can be assumed

[7] I am making use of a new translation of Hadewijch's Letters, by Paul Mommaers, In: Anikó Daróczi and Paul Mommaers: *The Complete Letters of Hadewijch*, Peeters (in press). All her works have been published in English by Columba Hart (*Hadewijch. The Complete Works*, Paulist Press, 1980). There is a more recent translation of her Poems in Stanzas or Songs by Marieke van Baest: *Poetry of Hadewijch*, Peeters, 1998.

[8] *Enarrationes in Psalmos* §149, in Mommaers 1987, 144-145.William also recounts how all of a sudden he realised that he hears what he does not see, and feels through an inner sense what he does not understand, namely, the presence of the Divine. ('Et subito videtur sibi primo audire quod non videt, et sentire sensu interiore quod non intelligit, praesentiam Divinitatis.' *Expositio super Cantica canticorum*, in Mommaers and Willaert 1988, 123.)

[9] Ende alle die woerde die ghi hoert van hem inde scrifture, ende die ghi selue leset Ende die ic v gheseghet hebbe Ende die v yeman seghet in dietsche Ochte in latine, die laet in uwe herte gaen, Ende merct ende benyedt te leuene na sine werdicheit. Dus oefent v in al dat ic

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to refer here to the 'seat of the effects of love and attachment'.[10] At the same time, the heart is the seat of the memory *(memoria)*.[11] The addressee must allow the words to penetrate deeply into her being. She must meditate on the words and concentrate her attention on them so that they may have the desired effect on her life. In the same vein, Letter 24 contains yet another noteworthy passage, which suggests what else can happen in the heart that has taken into itself the words spoken about God: the addressee should remember God and carry Him in her heart and embrace Him "sweetly with an open, expectant *heart*, always longing for His *hearty* sweetness and for the *heartiness* of His *hearty, sweet nature*"[12] (italics mine).

This information indirectly sheds light on the practice of the reader of Hadewijch's letters and lends support to the approach to the texts taken in this study. First, it appears that meditative reading is considered to be the norm.[13] We are also given to understand that reading involves the body and the senses. Reading the words, remembering them, ruminating on them and allowing them to speak to the heart are the constituent elements of meditation. The meditator reads the text slowly, divided into segments with the aim of memorising them. This can entail word-for-word memorisation, or concentration on the keywords of the text, so that the content of the larger units remained imprinted in the memory. But reading often meant reading aloud. 'Reading' thus also means 'hearing', as one would read with and for the ears, so to speak. As for the influence of what is read upon the senses, we must also bear in mind the power of sound, of the word that is spoken and thus heard.

About the influence of the words heard, Hadewijch says at the end of Letter 25:

> Once I heard a sermon which spoke of Saint Augustine. At the moment when I heard it, I became so inflamed within, that I felt as if everything on earth was to be burned by the flame which I felt within me. Love is all. (Letter 25, 34-39)

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v gheseghet hebbe. Want menne mach nieman Minnen leren, Mer dese dogheden volleiden den mensche ter Minnen. (Letter 24, 104-111).

[10] Verdam, *Middelnederlandsch Woordenboek*, pt. III, col. 387-392.

[11] Cf. Carruthers 1994, 48-49 and Jager 2000.

[12] '*Memorileke seldi gode van herten draghen.* Ende lieflec behelsen met openre hopender *herten*, ende gapen altoes jeghen sine *herteleke* soetheit Ende ieghen die *hertelecheit* siere *herteleker soeter naturen*.' Letter 24, 64-71. Italics mine.

[13] On the reading method of *lectio divina* (ruminating on and tasting the sweetness of the words) as this appears in—for instance—Jean de Fécamp (ca. 990-1078), see Gehl 1987 and Leclerq and Bonnes 1946. On the body of the reader as a musical instrument on which the *voces paginarum* resound, and on how to practice *lectio spiritualis*, see Illich 1998. See also Duncan Robertson: "John of Fécamp's *Confessio theologica* ... and its various revisions offer what may be described as original 'meditations' on sacred writings, quoted at length and focused through extended first-person prayers. In these works, reading flows into writing, the quotations into the quoting texts, in an unbroken continuum." Robertson, 133.

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> Te enen tide hoerdic een sermoen, Daer men seide van sinte Augustine. Op die vre dat ic dat hoerde, werdic soe sere ontfunct van binnen, Dat mi te moede was, Ochte alle dat in ertrike was, verberrent soude hebben vander vlammen die ic in mi gheuoelde. De Minne es al.

This passage makes it clear that through hearing, other sense perceptions are also made possible – in this instance the sensation of warmth ('inflamed from within ... burned by the flame'). It is as though this sensation brought her, in the last sentence, to the conclusion that 'Love is all' (39). Something external (a sermon by Saint Augustine) gives rise to a sensation within *(in mi),* i.e. which has been internalised.

Reading as experiencing word and silence

The excerpt from Letter 24 cited above goes even further: it is indeed 'words' *(woerde)* that point the way towards the mystical experience of *minne*, but 'one cannot teach love to anyone' (*menne mach nieman Minne leren*, 109). The possibilities open to Hadewijch as a spiritual leader were thus limited. This is also clear from Letter 19: Hadewijch marvels at the equanimity with which the addressee accepts the fact that she does not enjoy fruition of God *(ende ghi niet sijns en ghebruket),* whereas this deficiency disturbs Hadewijch so greatly that at that moment she can find no words for it, "about that I must keep silent", she says, and she adds: "Read, if you want, what you already have; I shall be silent."[14]

Again, the addressee is asked to reread texts. But we also find a topos here that appears in various forms in Hadewijch's Letters: she implies that she will keep silence. This silence may often be understood as the powerlessness of Hadewijch to teach her 'dear child' to love *(minne te leren),* as she says in Letter 24, but it also opens up a space for silence and the stillness of meditative reading that, in her powerlessness, she recommends to the addressee.

At the end of Letter 19, there is yet another moment of silence, a different one, one of not daring to speak. But for now it is enough to understand that reading in Hadewijch's time and in her circles was meditative in nature, and as such involved both soul and body. Reading that implies hearing conveys knowledge but is first and foremost interspersed with silence. No matter how the reader strives to memorise and internalise, she experiences the silences or stillnesses that result, and experiences their ineffable content in her entire being. In both Letter 19 and Letter 24, Hadewijch indicates that she can

[14] Hoe mi dat becomt, dies moetic swighen; wat dat ghi hebbet dat leset, alse ghi wilt. Ic sal swighen. (Letter 19, 41-42)

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accompany the addressee only up to a certain point, after which she has to leave her friends to their own devices; her words must be powerful enough to open their heart to receive *minne*.

Yet only if silence follows upon powerful speech can silence be weighty and fruitful. It is this voice of silence that the addressee must hear and allow to work deeply within. For this reason, we must also read Hadewijch's *Letters* in such a way that the vitality of this stillness that lies enclosed can come to the fore.

In order to make it easier to understand this way of reading and its mechanics, in what follows I write out the texts *per cola et commata*. This is one of the oldest forms of punctuation, a system used to help the reader know where to pause or take a breath in order to recite the text correctly.[15] The text was broken up into 'rhetorical units' or 'lines of meaning'– the copyist begins a new line after every sentence or textual segment.[16] Here I expand on the system a bit further by striving to ensure that main clauses and subordinate clauses are placed under each other, as a result of which we can also follow a syntactical analysis.[17] By reading the texts below in this manner, we can hear and feel the *vox intexta* more clearly. For a member of Hadwijch's mystical circle, such a reading might have been enlightening – and, at certain moments, as we shall see, even initiatory.

Reading/listening as seeing

In the very first Letter we can distinguish the various steps that lead to the formulation of the essence of Hadewijch's teaching: *Fiat voluntas tua*. The letter begins with the word *God*, followed immediately by 'clear Love' *(clare minne)*. A link is thus made between God and this clear Love. Words denoting light continue to dominate the entire first sentence (italics are mine).

God,
        who *clarified* clear Love
        – that was unknown – by His life,
        by which He *clarified* all life with the *clarity* of Love,
He may *enlighten* and *clarify* you
        with the *clear clarity*

[15] The system was introduced by St Jerome for writing out biblical texts in order to make their meaning clear. Parkes 1993, 35.

[16] The *cola et commata* method was discussed extensively in medieval treatises on grammar and music, along with *distinctio, periodus* (which consists of several *cola et commata*) and *pausa*. There are slight differences in nuance in the meanings given these terms by various authors. See, among others, Gysin 1958, 76.

[17] In the new translation of the Letters (see note 6) the text is printed according to this segmentation.

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by which He is *clear*
to Himself
and to all His friends and His nearest beloved. (Letter 1, 1-7).

God / die de *clare* minne die onbekint was / *verclaerde* bi siere doghet / daer hi alle doghet bi *verlichte* in siere *claerheit* der minnen, / Hi moet v *verliechten* ende *verclaren* /metter *claerre claerheit* / daer hi hem seluen *claer* met es / ende al sinen vrienden ende sinen naesten gheminden

Given the way Hadewijch formulates and constructs her sentences, light emerges in this text as a reality that can unexpectedly bring something about that does not belong to the realm of understanding or a person's own will. She then goes on to evoke a community that is enlightened by God's clarity and in which 'you' and 'I' (the *magistra* speaking) are bound to each other, as well as to those who are 'beloved by God'.

Further on, Hadewijch makes use of other rhetorical stances. One of these is her role as the *magistra* who shows the way towards *minne*.

This is why
I pray you
as a friend his dear friend,
and I admonish you
as a sister her dear sister,
and I demand of you
as a mother her dear child,
and I order you from your Beloved,
as the bridegroom orders his dear bride,
to open up the eyes of your heart in clarity
and regard yourself holy in God. (17-25)

Hier omme / bidic v / alsoe vrient sinen lieuen vrient / Ende mane v / alse suster haere lieuer suster / Ende hete v / alse moeder haren lieuen kinde / Ende ghebiede v van uwen gheminden / alse brudegom ghebiedet siere lieuer bruyt / Dat ghi ontpluuct die oghen uwer herten *claerlike,* / ende besiet *v* in gode heilichleke.

The link between God, speaker and addressee is represented by a crescendo along two separate lines: that of an increasing exhortation ('I pray you, admonish you, demand of you, order you'), and an ever more personal appeal (friend, sister, mother, bridegroom) to the sensibilities of the listener. 'Order you from your Beloved' *(Ghebiede v van uwen gheminden)* is clearly the high point of the first series, just as bridegroom/bride is of the second. This long sentence hearkens back to the beginning of the letter with the word *claerlike,*

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but with a clarity that now becomes a mirror for the human being who can thus see herself in God. At the same time, by the reference to sight, the next sentence ('Learn to see what God is', *Leert te besiene wat god es*) is being prepared.

The eyes must be opened up in order to see. It is as if this seeing were the source and objective of all other admonitions and commandments. The message is: learn to see with the eyes of your soul. The notion of 'opening' *(ontpluken)* the eyes was prepared in the preceding step by means of a twofold crescendo. Its force is then developed in the following sentences through the verbs 'learn to see' *(besiet).*

Learn to see what God is.
How He is
the Truth
that lends presence to all things,
and the Goodness
that makes all richness flow,
and the Wholeness
that makes all life into a whole,
for which they sing Sanctus three times in heaven,
because those three Names in their one Being gather all powers,
whatever their working from these three Beings. (25-32)

Leert te besiene wat god es: / Hoe hi es / waerheit / alre dinghen ieghenwerdichlike / ende goetheit / alre rijcheit vloyeleke / ende gheheelheit / alre doghet gheheeleke / omme de welke men singhet .iij. sanctus inden hemel / omme dattie .iij. namen in haren enighen wesene alle doechde versamenen / van welken ambachte si sijn uten desen .iij. wesenen.

This long sentence comprises three parts: an introduction, a subordinate clause that contains an elaboration *(amplificatio)* of 'what God is' and consists of a single form repeated three times; subordinated to the second part, is the third, which is an evocation of that which flows forth from God's nature. The second and third parts are structured in such a way that what is being said has time to imprint itself on the mind of the listener/reader. Hadewijch's audience is not given information or didactic material to be remembered but experiences a power that gradually prepares it for the praise *(laudatio)* of God. The latter is almost a form of invocation. The technique deserves special attention. What we are dealing with here is practically a doxological song: 'for which they sing Sanctus three times' (the liturgical *sanctus, sanctus, sanctus*). This song of praise is continued in the following sentences, culminating in the articulation of the core of Hadewijch's teachings:

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Because this is what God is,
therefore one shall let Him enjoy Himself
in all the works of His clarity,
Sicut in celo et in terra,
always with words and with works saying:
Fiat voluntas tua. (41-45)

Om dies dit god es / daer omme salmenne sijns selues laten ghebruken / in al sinen werken van siere claerheit / *Sicut in celo et in terra* / Altoes met woerden ende met werken te segghene: / *Fiat voluntas tua.*

There is no concrete admonition here; it is as if Hadewijch could now allow herself to address her reader at a more abstract level and to formulate another core message of the Letters in its most concise form: *Fiat voluntas tua*. This is the unmistakable culmination of the great enigmatic beginning of the Letters.

The message with which she leaves the addressee at a certain point: she must open *(ontpluken)* her eyes herself, see God (and herself in the divine clarity) and allow herself to have fruition *(ghebruken)* of God.

Knowing by feeling

A quest for passages about speaking and keeping silent leads naturally to those letters where – like in her very first one – Hadewijch states the kernel of her mystical teaching. In Letter 17 she describes the insight, given her directly by God, concerning the complexity of the experience in union. There is a constant back-and-forth movement between, on the one hand, the human level where commandments apply to 'works' *(werken)* among humans and, on the other hand, the divine level where other commandments (actually prohibitions) are in force, the need for 'resting' *(rasten)* in God – in other words, between earth and heaven. The juxtaposition that permeates the structure of the text is not a contradiction but a paradox – one must learn, by experience, how one can find the balance between 'working' and 'resting' – there is an ineffable level of existence, only accessible by one's own experience, where working and resting, human and divine, are one.

In the focus of Letter 17 Hadewijch expresses simultaneously both the apex of the experience of union as well as the ineffability of that experience (101-122). Hadewijch relates that she had been taken up into the unity of God:

There He took
Him together with me
and me together with Him.

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And in the unity
in which I was then absorbed and clarified,
there I understood this being-one
and I knew more clearly
than by speaking
or by reasoning
or by seeing,
one can know any object knowable on earth.
(Letter 17, 106-111)

Daer nam hi / hem ouer mi / ende mi ouer hem. / Ende in die enicheit / daer ic doen in ghenomen was ende verclaert, / daer verstondic dit wesen / ende bekinde claerlikere / dan men met sprekene / ocht met redenen / ocht met siene enighe sake / die soe bekinleec es in ertrike bekinnen mach.

Taken up into this divine being *(dit wesen)*, she understands what it is that God explicitly says to her. This is reinforced by the threefold repetition of 'knowing' *(bekinnen)* and by the comparative 'more clearly' *(claerlikere)* – a word that is already familiar from Letter 1. This is a crucial moment, for here we are approaching the source of mystical communication and of all mystical utterance. She continues with the word *wonder*, used three times, as if to echo or expand on the terms 'knowing' and 'understanding' *(verstaan)* – or perhaps intended as a juxtaposition? – to what we heard three times in the previous sentence:

This seems wonderful indeed,
but although I say that this seems wonderful,
I do know that it does not astonish you
(Letter 17, 112-114)

Doch schijnt dit wonder. / Mer al segghe ic dat dit wonder schijnt / Jc weet wel / dat v niet en wondert.

Hadewijch now returns to the communicative context in which she as a *magistra* speaks to her circle and tells them what she underwent in her oneness with God. This experience is so obvious that it far exceeds in clarity any other experience whatsoever. Both human perception *(sien)* and the clearest form of understanding and ability to express oneself – reasoning *(redene)* and speaking *(spreken)* – fall short of any comparison with this form of 'understanding'.

In the lines that follow, Hadewijch explains how human language lacks the capacity for expressing this experience. The opposition between earth

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and heaven is what gives structure to the statement: the language of heaven *(hemelsche redene)* cannot be understood by means of earthly things *(ertrike)*. But for what she has experienced, she does not know 'any Dutch or any language', although she does know all 'sensible speech of which a person can know' (*alle redene van sinne alsoe mensche connen mach*, 114-120)

> For all I have said to you
> is like no Dutch in regard to this,
> for no Dutch belongs to this, so far as I know. (Letter 17, 114-122)

> Want al dat ic v *gheseghet* hebbe / dat en es alse *gheen dietsch* daer toe / want daer en hoert *gheen* toe *dat ic weet*.

At the end of the letter she demands the works of love of her friend and disciple. She does so by means of a construction that in its form unites 'working' and 'resting'. At the centre of the same syntactic form repeated four times, are four verbs that in each case express activity but in the impersonal infinitive: 'to take upon', 'to work', 'to protect' and 'to further'. This active core is surrounded by the harmonising 'nothing else... than Love', in which the stress falls naturally on *Minne*:

> Nothing else to take upon one than Love,
> nothing else to work than Love,
> nothing else to protect than Love,
> nothing else to further than Love. (Letter 17, 131-134)

> *El niet* te onderwindene *dan Minne* / *El niet* te werkene *dan Minne*, / *El niet* te bescermene *dan Minne*, *El niet* in staden te stane *dan Minne*.

But then, her role as *magistra* ends:

> How you are to do and to leave undone each of these things,
> may God, our Beloved, point out that to you

> hoe ghi elc doen selt *ende* laten, / dat moet v god wisen, onse lief.

God himself must show her how to find her own balance.

Hadewijch uses a similar rhetorical device in her shortest letter, which I am going to quote from beginning to end below. Whereas in Letter 17 her conclusion is that the addressee must obtain knowledge from God by experiencing Him in unity, here she introduces the letter with the following topos. She starts with the remark that God himself must teach the 'beloved

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child' what He is and how He treats 'His maidens' *(meiskenen).* He must devour her, swallow her up, and there, in that unity the two shall dwell in each other. What is noticeable here is the spatial, the flowing and the sensual elements that emerge from the doxological, mystical litany:

> May God make known to you, dear child,
> who He is
> and how He deals
> with his servants
> and specifically with His handmaids;
> and devour you in Him:
>
> where the depth of His wisdom is,
> there He will teach you
> what He is,
> and how wondrously sweetly
> one beloved dwells in the other
> and so through and through indwells the other
> that neither of them recognizes himself,
> but they mutually enjoy each other
> mouth in mouth,
> and heart in heart,
> and body in body,
> and soul in soul,
> and one sweet divine nature flowing through them both,
> and both of them one through each other
> and also both remain,
> yes so they remain.

> God doe u weten, lieue kint/ wie hi es / Ende wies hi pleghet /met sinen knechten / Ende nameleke met sinen meiskenen; Ende verslende v un hem: daer de diepheit siere vroetheit es / daer sal hi v leren / wat hi es / Ende hoe wonderleke soeteleke /dat een lief in dat ander woent / Ende soe dore dat ander woent / Dat haerre en gheen hem seluen en onderkent / Mer si ghebruken onderlinghe ende elc anderen / Mont in mont / ende herte in herte / Ende lichame in lichame / Ende ziele in ziele / Ende ene soete godlike nature doer hen beiden vloyende / Ende si beide een dore hen seluen / Ende al eens beide bliuen / Ja ende bliuende.

Although she states that it is only God himself who can teach the 'dear child', she at the same time suggests to her what obtaining the knowledge would be like and in which space this would take place. The highest points of Hadwijch's creative mystical language generated by the experience of unity are the texts

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in which the sensual images are raised to a more abstract level by means of spatial images – here, as often when suggesting the ineffability of the union, described as 'divine nature flowing through them both'. The nature of the *unio* is on the one hand suggested through images of sensory experience and of spatiality (depth) and fluidity (flowing), and on the other hand emerges in the litany-like, repetitive structures connected by *ende* – the latter not only as a conjunction (and) but also echoed in the gerund *vloyende* (flowing) and *bliuende* (remaining), suggesting, through the sound, this flow.

Seeing and feeling the invisible

The introductory paragraph of Letter 22 refers to a non-speculative knowledge of God. This is given to persons who lose themselves and become one with Him. Hadewijch makes it clear that the knowledge of God – of who He is 'in his Name and his Being' *(name, wesen),* is only possible if one is 'completely His' (hi moet gode al gheheel sijn) by being 'wholly His' (...dat hi hem al is), and this being wholly His is only possible if a person surrenders herself, loses herself (*sonder hem seluen, verliese hem seluen,* 1-8).

Hadewijch then responds, in two stages, to the statement by Augustine which she translates as: 'anyone who knows little, can say little' *(die luttel weet, hi mach luttel segghen).* Her knowledge of God is limited and therefore she is able to say only little about Him. This inability to speak of God is generally true of all human beings: 'one cannot show God by means of human understanding' (*men mach gode niet toenen met menschen sinnen,* 13-14). But there is another type of knowledge of God that is part of the experience of being touched by God. Someone who receives this grace 'might be able to show something of Him' (*hi soudere yet af moghen toenen,* 15). Enlightened reason *(verlichte redene)* shows 'a little of God to the inward-turned faculties' *(den inneghen sinnen een lettel van gode).* Note that Hadewijch uses the word 'show' *(toenen)* in both cases.

Hadewijch clearly sets out one of her key themes, in which two important points come together. She understands how far the human capacity for understanding – and thus for speaking – falls short when it comes to God: 'I can disentangle a little bit of the riddle He is' *(een cleyne gheraetsel maghic van hem gheraden).* She assumes that as a person whose soul has been touched *(gherenen)* by God, she should be able to show something about God to those who 'understand with the soul' *(diet metter zielen verstonden).* This also implies, in the light of the first paragraph of the letter, that only a person who is touched by God can lose herself. Because these two aspects of mystical ineffability go hand in hand, the result is a tension between 'not being able to' and 'yet doing'; this is the fundamental paradox in the linguistic craft of

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the mystic. This kind of speaking is a speaking that 'shows' and that can only be received with and by the soul. In the rest of Letter 22 this form of speaking comes into force.

This speech mode, driven by the paradoxical force of mystical speaking, results here in a four-part paradox that is traditionally expressed through the elusive spatial image of the divine dimensions. Hadewijch uses the language of seeing when she speaks of God's *nature*, which is 'a wonder to contemplate' *(ane te siene van wondere).* 'Contemplate' is followed by an image that is incomprehensible, since it contains the four divine dimensions: 'He is all to all things and in all things wholly'.[18]

God is above all
        and not high;
God is beneath all
        and not low;
God is within all
        and not shut in;
God is outside all
        and wholly enclosed.

(Letter 22, 17-24)

... Ende dat hi *alle* dinc es te *allen* / Ende in *allen* gheheel. / God es bouen *al* / ende onuerhauen; / God es onder *al* / ende onuerdruct / God es binnen *al* / ende onghesloten / God es buten *al* / ende *al* omgrepen.

Hadewijch begins the letter with the ineffability of God that is the result of His incomprehensibility. She now combines the ineffable with the inconceivability of the divine space, giving form to the paradox of speaking of God by using paradoxical spatial images. Through the repeated phrase 'God is all' she removes the paradox with which the speaker is confronted and reduces the four dimensions into one. By using visual representation enclosed in rythmical speech, she moves beyond all images.

[18] The paradoxical spatial image is inspired by a hymn by Hildebert of Lavardin. On the ingenious manner in which Hadewijch transforms Hildebert's hymn – namely, with its repetitive *totus* – and on the connection between this passage and Gregory the Great and Isidore of Seville, see Daróczi 2007, ... The repetitive *'God es ... al (ende)'* was added by Hadewijch – *God es* does not appear in Hildebert's hymn, while in Hadewijch the repetition has an invocatory force.

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The modus mysticus

The repeated words in the quotation above form a euphonious whole; the dimensions may change, but what remains unchanged is: *God is ... all ... and...* This constant unites the four dimensions. Although the spatial images are unfathomable, there is nevertheless something about this way of speaking that one can grasp. That is, one can understand the fundamental rhythm that, even without understanding the content, puts everything in its rightful place; thus, the *dimensiones* become part of a structure that is imprinted in the whole body and memory.

The description of the unfathomable space structures this long letter – the way Hadewijch segments the text is very clear up to a certain point, and is more or less predictable when the topos of ineffability appears: there are five moments of silence, which can be divided up into those of 'keeping silent about' something and those of 'keeping silence'. Keeping silent about something is the result of the limitation of human beings who are unfamiliar with the experience of God, and indicates a boundary that cannot be crossed. Keeping silence, by contrast, is due to Hadewijch's own inability to express in human language that which is beyond our faculty of understanding. There are two reactions to this: the first is that the mystic recognises human limitations by humbly saying no more. The second reaction is to overcome this weakness by nevertheless speaking, but in a different language: speaking, as Letter 22 puts it, 'with an inspired soul to an inspired soul' *(ghegheest spreken te ghegheester zielen).*

There is one mysterious text, Letter 28, that is written in this inspired language that I call the real *modus mysticus:* a language driven by the tension between silence and speaking, a speaking that is not 'about' something but dwells 'in' and moves 'towards' something. She takes the reader/listener into the dynamics of this space of words and there, already taken up in this flow, she says: 'He who about this wants to say something, he must speak with the soul' (Letter 28, 92-93) *(Die hier toe iet spreken wilt, hi behoeuet metter zielen te sprekene),* and later on she states that the soul speaks with 'her wholeness'.

But before this is uttered, Letter 28 brings us, with the very first sentences, to the space where the encounter with God takes place:

> In the richness of the clarity of the Holy Spirit,
> therein the blessed soul celebrates blessed-making feasts.
>
> Jn de rijcheit der claerheit des heilichs gheests,
> Daer inne maket de salighe ziele verweende feeste.

The account begins in an overflowing 'clarity' *(claerheit),* which we know both from Letter 1 and Letter 17. The term 'therein' emphasises the spatial nature of

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this clarity given by God. Clarity—the word is repeated—is experienced here by regarding and seeing *(besien, sien).* This gift of sight renders God visible, a visibility that is expressed in a series of abstractions that are repeated and embellished:

She sees how God is in His everlastingness: God with natural Godhead.
She sees how God is in His greatness: mighty with natural might.
She sees how God is in His wisdom: blessed-making with natural blessedness.
She sees how God is in His nobility: clear with natural clarity.
She sees how God is in His presence: sweet with natural sweetness.
She sees how God is in His fluidity: rich with natural richness.
She sees how God is in His wholeness: abundance with natural profuseness. (15-28)

Si siet / hoe god es / in siere ewelecheit: / god met naturleker godheit
Si siet / hoe god es / in siere groetheit: / gheweldich met naturleker gheweldicheit
Si siet / hoe god es / in siere wijsheit / verweent met naturleker verweentheit
Si siet / hoe god es /in siere edelheit /clare met natuerleker claerheit
Si siet / hoe god es / in siere ieghenwordicheit: /soete met natuerleker soetheit.
Si siet / hoe god es / in siere vloyelecheit /rike met natuerleker rijcheit
Si siet / hoe god es /in siere gheheelheit / weelde met naturleker weldicheit.

Hadewijch turns this part of the letter into an incantation. On the one side of the symmetry are abstractions that suggest spatiality by means of the preposition *in:* 'in His everlastingness, in His greatness, in His wisdom, etc., and on the other hand, by the use of repetitions: 'She sees how God is' is repeated without variation. There is also a repetition of form, the central part of which – 'with natural' *(met naturleker)* – remains invariable. 'With natural' is surrounded in each case by a repetition that does vary. This process occurs seven times, in a litany-like repetition, while the flowing movement continues: 'natural' here echoes the 'understands in accord with their nature' *(naturlike versteet)* of the introduction.

If the reader/listener – the receiver of words – does not ponder each abstract term, she (or he) will quickly hear the regularity in the rhythm and will go along with it. The abstractions thus pass by the eye of the spirit in a seeing without images, a knowing without understanding. Space in Letter 28 thus seems more than a 'somewhere' or an extended space. It is, rather, the medium in which a phenomenon takes place, namely, that of the mystic becoming one with God. The space in which words are spoken, and the movement of words in that space, have a reciprocal influence. The same process can be seen repeating itself: the soul perceives something in the space in which she finds herself, and she sees and speaks – as Hadewijch puts it, the 'words well up' from the 'fineness of God' (*woerde…comen wallende uter fijnheit gods*, 81).

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The reader – receiver of unfathomable images through sounds – is taken up in the same movement that occurs over and over again. The text unfolds in a forward movement in which repetition occurs constantly, albeit in different forms: syntactic patterns are repeated as in a litany; particular spaces or activities of the soul are described repeatedly; speaking regularly ends in silence. We can feel frequent circular movements. These movements are not, however, independent of each other, but one moves further into the next, in which the same words and word combinations appear with variations.

The result is an organically structured syntax that gives order to the incomprehensible abstractions of which the images in this letter are made up, enabling the reader to follow and feel that development. Each part is a reflection of another, and while tracing one circle after another, one nevertheless does move forward. The content of the letter can either be reduced to a few words only – for example, to the first, introductory sentence or simply to the image of clarity – or, alternatively, can be further expanded by means of additive constructions. These groupings of words and the repetitive syntactic (and thus also rhythmical) patterns convey a sense of openness, but they are structured by the space in which they are spoken. The segmentation is expressed in an ever repeating circularity that gives the impression of an endless movement, where the midpoint of the concentric circles changes, through the forward movement, into the axis of a spiral. The two fundamental movements that characterise Letter 28 – the description of a series of successive circles and the growth from seeds – appear together, with now the one, now the other occupying the foreground, without any discernible rule.

The text/speech at a certain point moves to where the heavens are 'opened up' *(ontploken)* – a word rarely used but uttered in Letter 1 where the *magistra* commands the disciple to open up her eyes in clarity – and the soul is again led into a 'godlike clarity' that harks back to the first sentence of the letter – and to the very first letter of the collection. The soul sees, but as in Letter 22, which simultaneously offers an image and strips it away, this is a seeing without seeing (134):

Thus she sees, and she sees not.
Soe siet si; / Ende sine siet niet.

God, who cannot be seen by humans, 'gives', and the soul can 'receive' (138):

She stands,
and God gives
and she receives.

Si steet, / ende god gheuet / Ende si ontfeet.

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She finds herself in stillness: 'And she must remain in stillness in the freedom of that blessedness (*Ende si moet bliuen in stilheiden / Jn die vriheit derre verweentheit*, 141).

The freedom the soul receives goes hand in hand with the silence that makes listening possible:

> What God speaks to her then
> of lofty spiritual wonders,
> that nobody knows,
> except God,
> who gives this to her,
> and the Soul,
> who is spiritual like God,
> above all spiritualness.
>
> Wat god dan te hare sprect / van hoghen gheesteleken wondere, / dan weet niemand / dan god, / diet hare gheuet / Ende die ziele, / die gheestelec es alse god bouen alle gheestelecheit.

God's 'giving' in this freedom thus appears to be a speaking. God first speaks to the soul, and then the soul speaks herself 'in God'. The following passage reflects what is said by 'a human being in God' and takes the form of an incantatory, overpowering song of praise followed by yet another:

> A soul in God's friendship said this:
> I have heard the voice of blessedness,
> I have seen the land of clarity,
> I have tasted the fruit of gladness. (154-156)
>
> Dat seide ene ziele inde vrienscap gods:
> Jc hebbe ghehoert de stemme der verweentheit.
> Jc hebbe ghesien dat lant der claerheit,
> Ende Jc hebbe ghesmaect de vrocht der bliscap.

The situation of the soul which speaks 'in the presence of God' (196) suggests a strongly affective experience of God that is described here, like at the beginning of the letter, as that of the blessed soul that has received 'sensitivity, sweetness, gladness and blessedness'. These 'powers' *(crachticheiden)* appear to be heavenly ones. The soul is led into 'a blessed stillness' *(verweende stilheit)* that is reminiscent of the 'blessed soul' that must 'remain in stillness in the freedom of that blessedness'. There the soul perceives the following:

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And in that blessed stillness
she hears a great murmur from the wonder
which is God Himself in everlastingness. (211)

Ende in die verweende stilheit / hoertse een groet gheruchte van dien wondere, / dat god selve es in ewecheiden.

That murmur *(gheruchte)* is the sound that comes forth from God himself, and we also know that blessedness is not situated in a soundless space: cf. 'I have heard the voice of blessedness' (155). Now we see that the soul is raised up and is taken up in wonder, as it were, there to enjoy 'lofty blessedness' *(hoghe verweentheid)* (224).

The holiness that was one of the elements in the beginning that created a space in which words could be heard, at the end of Letter 28 leads the soul to keep silence. This enables her to sum up what she has hitherto said about hearing, speaking and keeping silence, and to add that it is God alone who moves her on occasion to break through that language barrier.

From this moment on she uses the past tense, which implies that the states she has described up to now had happened to herself and now she looks back at them. She has experienced 'wholeness' *(gheheelecheit)* at various levels: in her consciousness, her activity and her experience of the world. We see the same wordplay here as at the beginning of the letter: from silence comes hearing, from hearing comes holding back, and so on, culminating in silence. Here I quote the last paragraph of the letter:

Since God's holiness made me keep silence,
since then I have heard much.
And since I have heard much,
why did I keep it for myself?
I did not without reason keep for myself what I kept for myself.
I kept everything for myself, before and after.
Therefore I am silent and rest with God
till the moment when God commands me to speak.
I have healed all my distinction-making,
and I have appropriated all my wholeness,
and I have kept all that is proper to me enclosed in God
till the moment
when someone comes with that sort of distinction-making,
who asks me what it is,
that I mean and feel
with God
in God.

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> Then am I all the more distant [from God]
> in so far as I have to speak,
> and therefore I gently keep silent.
>
> (Letter 28, 247-263)

In the last paragraph of the letter (263-270) Hadewijch describes her consciousness now as 'healed', a consciousness that is no longer conditioned or limited by the type of knowing that proceeds by making distinctions. In the 'freedom of God' she understood 'all distinctions in a wholeness'. The 'feasts' of the introduction here become the 'delight in the dwelling of the Lord', and this 'dwelling' could be understood as referring back both to the beginning of Letter 28, and to the space formed, in Letter 22, by the coincidence of the four dimensions. Here space turns into time, the 'time of blessedness', in which 'all the regions of the land' were 'flowing into the land'. There, then, she remained 'standing above everything and in the middle of everything' and sees. Now, in these last sentences of the letter, it is not the *magistra* commanding the disciple to open up her eyes in the clarity of God and see herself in His light. The mystic herself shares her most intimate and highest experience and insight – a memory of a state of consciousness – with the one who can receive what she is saying: that in that time of the blessedness, standing in the unfathomable space she was dwelling in, with her wholeness, she did see the 'gloriousness without end'.

In the following letters – the last three – Hadewijch seems to prepare the 'dear child' to accept the fact that they might have to part. The reason is unknown to us, but she mentions 'wandering about in the country', and even imprisonment (Letter 29, 1-10). She first speaks comforting words with the tenderness and strength of a mother: 'Ah, dear child, your sadness hurts me, and your dejection and your sorrow'. But soon in this tender voice we also hear, as an overtone, that of the *magistra* from Letter 1: 'I pray you, (...) and admonish, and counsel and command like a mother her dear child' – she writes now (cf: Letter 1: 'I: pray you and I admonish you and I demand of you and I command you (...) that you open up the eyes of your heart in clarity and regard yourself holy in God'). She asks the 'dear child' to dismiss the sorrow from her because, 'however it may be, it is the work of Love'. In the next long letter Hadewijch once more elaborates on the essence of her mystical teaching and her view on human failure to live in Love. In the last letter, a short one, she informs the 'dear child' of a dream she had about her taking over the role of *magistra*. She then exhorts her to the 'most perfect freedom of love' and urges her to demand all those she can, 'with strength, effort and counsel' to honour God (Letter 31, 30-33).

In this light we may interpret the *modus mysticus* – 'inspired speaking to inspired souls' or 'speaking with the soul' – as offering entrance to a space

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of clarity where the reader can be prepared for a state of consciousness in which she can open herself up for the touch of the secret Word of God. It is as if in the long letters written in this modus (Letter 22 and 28), and a series of paragraphs in other letters, Hadewijch had said everything that she as *magistra* could say or 'teach' about the state a mystic can strive or hope for. By reading and rereading the texts she has in her possession, the disciple and would-be *magistra* may be able to undergo the words that have welled up in one who has already been touched by the Word and has dwelled in the unfathomable space of clarity. Reading can then be an intimate, always accessible ritual of initiation led by the words of the powerful mystic that Hadewijch was.

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A CHRISTIAN-HERMETIC-JUDAIC INITIATION INTO THE MYSTERIES: LODOVICO LAZZARELLI'S *CRATER HERMETIS* (CA. 1493)

György E. Szönyi

Abstract

While the rise of Florentine Neoplatonism is usually associated with the philosophers Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Lodovico Lazzarelli also made important contributions to the forging of Christian Hermeticism. Like Pico, he became attracted to Jewish mysticism and the Kabbalah and in his work Crater Hermetis *(c. 1493), he contributed to this intellectual trend with a passionate and poetical vision of ascension, the technology of which he partly borrowed from the mystical Judaica, at the same time creating (according to Wouter Hanegraaff) a particularly pure form of ecstatic Christian mystery. In my paper I introduce this text and point out the decisive meeting of Lazzarelli with Giovanni "Mercurio" da Correggio, whom he identified as the reborn Hermes Trismegistus, while he styled himself as a reborn Enoch. Their twin story is a fascinating example of early Renaissance Neoplatonic mysticism which synthesized high religiosity with classical philosophy and a fervent desire for the deification of man.*

Exaltatio—Definition

The main purpose of "initiation into the mysteries" is to reach a mental state (in modern medical terminology, an altered state of consciousness) in which human subjects are transported out of themselves *(ecstasy)* and receive intuitive, non-discursive knowledge *(illumination)* and may experience the presence of the divine *(epiphany).* All this may take the form of communal ritual, or individual practice. Elsewhere I have written about the English mathematician and "magus" John Dee, who in the late sixteenth century tried

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to attain such a state in order fully to understand God's plan for creation. His role model was the biblical patriarch Enoch, who according to some canonized loci but discussed extensively in the apocryphal *Books of Enoch* was elevated to God in his lifetime and was privileged to talk face to face with the Creator.[1]

While analysing Dee's esoteric practice I introduced the term *exaltatio* to denote a program to attain epiphanic ecstasy and offered a definition of it which I explain here. The term *exaltatio* was rather exceptional in Classical and Humanist Latin. The sense in which I use it, however, can be found in Latin dictionaries. The great Teubner, for example, lists meanings such as "mystical elevation" and "change of status or condition the opposite of which is humility." So it can be an esoteric experience which results in the (transcendental) elevation of the subject, a spiritual equivalent to promotion in rank in the social world. However, like most signs that have symbolic connotations, the term also includes negative meanings *(in malam partem)*. It may stand for *superbia* or *elatio*, i.e. "pride" and "conceit." All these meanings play an important role in the concept of magical *exaltatio*.[2] Passive as opposed to active elevation on the one hand, assertive enthusiasm as opposed to conceitful delusion on the other all contribute to the complicated cultural history of occult aspirations which are in close connection with the initiation into the mysteries. I examine these concepts, drawing on the example of two Italian Humanists from the time of the Renaissance, Lodovico Lazzarelli and Giovanni da Correggio. Both were esoterically and hermetically minded Neoplatonists, like Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola, but they are not as well-known, in spite of the fact that Lazzarelli's works in particular are no less intriguing than the writings of his great contemporaries. In the following I briefly introduce the ideas of these two eccentric early modern intellectuals and analyse some details of Lazzarelli's main work, the *Crater Hermetis*.

[1] Some works on ecstatic epiphany: Proclus, *On the Signs of Divine Possession* (in Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries*, 1989, 150); Gombrich, *Symbolic Images* (1975); Wind, *Pagan Mysteries* (1968). On Enoch: VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (1984) and also his *Enoch, A Man for All Generations* (1995); critical English edition of the three *Books of Enoch:* Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (1983); on Enoch in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Szönyi, The Reincarnations of Enoch... (2011).

[2] See my *John Dee's Occultism* (2004), Introduction.

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Lazzarelli as the New Enoch and da Correggio as Trismegistus

Pico's cabalistically oriented interest in Enoch/Metatron[3] gained a new dimension in the late fifteenth century, when Christian cabalists and Renaissance magi in increasing numbers claimed themselves either the heirs to the patriarch or even his reincarnation. A notable example was Lodovico Lazzarelli (1447–1500), one of those eccentric wandering Humanists who were in possession of great philological knowledge about ancient languages and philosophies while at the same time their minds were filled with syncretic and esoteric ideas about religious enthusiasm and magical *exaltatio*. These people thronged the roads of Europe as they travelled from court to court looking for prospective patrons, and they not infrequently ended up in the prisons of dissatisfied princes or representatives of the Inquisition.

Lazzarelli[4] was born in a Jewish neighborhood of San Severino. Like Ficino, he was the son of a medical doctor. At the beginning of his career, he resembled a typical Humanist, under the spell of Classical genres and rhetoric. Around 1466, he moved to Venice, where he studied Latin and Greek with the humanist Giorgo Merula. In 1468, Emperor Frederick III came to Italy, and in Pordenone (near Venice) Lazzarelli had the opportunity to greet the emperor with a Latin oration on the dignity of poetry *(De laudibus poesis et de dignitate poetica)*. Lazzarelli moved to Rome around 1469 and later joined the Societas Literatorum S. Victoris in Esquiliis, a reformed version of the former Roman Academy, which had been of dubious repute and had been dissolved by Paul II, who had accused the institution of having conspired against the pope and having practiced pagan rites and sodomy. In this period, Lazzarelli wrote his first major work, *Fasti christianae religionis*, which was

[3] In his famous 900 theses, in which he sought to lay new foundations for Christian philosophy, Pico della Mirandola, the first Christian Cabalist, identified Enoch with the archangel Metatron, the regent of God. This idea first appeared in *3 Enoch*, the Hebrew version of the *Book of Enoch*, and in the fifteenth century it was not common knowledge among gentile Humanists. See Copenhaver, Number, Shape, and Meaning in Pico's Christian Cabala... (1999), 36. On Pico's cabalist-Hermeticism see also Brach, Umanesimo e correnti esoteriche in Italia (2010), especially 262–70; Farmer, *Syncretism in the West: Pico's 900 Theses (1486)* (1998), 105–33; Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola's Encounter with Jewish Mysticism* (1989); on Jewish intellectual culture in the Italian Renaissance see Ruderman ed., *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy* (1992), especially Moshe Idel's paper, The Magical and Neoplatonic Interpretations of the Kabbalah in the Renaissance, 107–69; and Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery In Early Modern Europe* (1995).

[4] On Lazzarelli see primarily the critical edition of Hanegraaff and Bouthoorn (Lazzarelli, *The Hermetic Writings* (2005); and Hanegraaff's monographic introductory study in that volume (Lazzarelli, 1–151). Furthermore: Brach, Umanesimo e correnti esoteriche in Italia (2010), 271ff; Kristeller, Marsilio Ficino e Lodovico Lazzarelli (1938); Kristeller, Lodovico Lazzarelli e Giovanni da Correggio (1960); Rudermann, John Giovanni Mercurio da Correggio's Appearance in Italy (1975); Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (2000), 64–72; Thorndike *The History of Magic and Experimental Sciences* (1923–1958), 5:438.

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meant to be a counterpart to Ovid's *Fasti*, a poetical description of the pagan religious feasts, thus immortalizing in verse the celebrations of the Christian calendar year. In this poem, Lazzarelli mentioned Hermes Trismegistus three times, which foreshadows his later devotion to the works of the supposed *priscus theologus*.

1481 brought about great changes in Lazzarelli's life and thought. He met with, and was enchanted by, the wandering prophet and philosopher, Giovanni da Correggio (c. 1451–after 1503), a mysterious and enigmatic representative of quattrocento Italian esotericism.[5]

We know about da Correggio's debut on the Italian scene from the work of Lazzarelli entitled *Epistola Enoch*. This curious work, which was printed around 1490,[6] relates his astounding appearances in Rome in 1481 and 1484, Lazzarelli's first meeting with him, and the Humanist's spiritual conversion effected by this encounter. The events described in the following paragraphs are reconstructed on the basis of the *Epistola Enoch*.

The title informs the reader that the Letter is "about the admirable and portentous appearance of a new and divine Prophet to the entire human race." But who is this Enoch who writes the report? Clearly the author, Lodovico Lazzarelli, who transformed with the help of the Prophet into the Biblical patriarch, who had "walked with God." And now it is his task to record the miraculous events of the present day which can be compared to the workings of prophets of old: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or Isaiah. Contrary to the Renaissance Humanists, the author calls the age in which this new Christian prophet appeared a "final state of an unhappy and dark age" (EE 4.1). To understand all the mysteries which are going to unfold, one is warned to read the portents as veiled allegories and also to work for purification and *exaltatio*, which should result in deification. The quotation is a close paraphrase of the *Corpus Hermeticum* 10.6:

> It is impossible, brothers, for the soul of a man to assume a divine form while lying in the waste of the body; nor is it permissible to look at the beauty of God if one has not first been transformed into a god. For the supreme good of those who come to know themselves is to become a god. (EE 4.7, Lazzarelli, 117)

Then follows the account of da Correggio's two visits to Rome, apparently in reverse order. The 1481 episode is recalled after the detailed narrative of what happened in 1484 as follows:

[5] On da Correggio see Kristeller 1938; 1941; Brini, Lodovico Lazzarelli: Testi scelti (1955); Ruderman, Giovanni da Correggio's Appearance in Italy (1975); Hanegraaff, Lazzarelli.

[6] Only one copy has survived, presently in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, see Hanegraaff, Lazzarelli, 107.

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> This is the same man who, about three years ago, on the 12th of November, when the cardinals were coming together appeared on the stairs of the palace, holding a sacred Bible mystically closed with seven seals, on the front cover of which this sacred oracle could be read: "[. . .] This is my beloved and waxing son, in whom I am well pleased; hear him and obey him, speaks the Almighty." (EE 12.1, ibid., 141–43)

Giovanni came from a well-established family in Bologna, but nothing is known about how he turned into a prophet or why he decided to assault the Papal consistory in Rome. According to historical reconstruction, when Lazzarelli witnessed da Correggio's first entry into Rome, he recognized in him the reincarnation of Hermes, while he himself underwent a mystical transformation, recognizing himself as the "son of Hermes," actually Enoch, who now turned from the leaves of Parnassus to Mount Sion, meaning that from now on, he would leave profane poetry and "pursue the road of spiritual wisdom" (Hanegraaff, Lazzarelli, 24). The combination of Hermes and Enoch in this spiritual reunion is noteworthy and reminds us of one of the medieval speculations about the identity of the two sages.[7] Our present protagonists must have been aware of the tradition of the three Hermeses, one of them being Enoch.

In 1938, Paul Oskar Kristeller announced his discovery of a late-quattrocento codex preserved in the city library of Viterbo which contained an intriguing collection of Hermetica.[8] The codex in question includes a copy of Ficino's translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* I–XIV, together with his preface and commentaries. Added to this is Lazzarelli's own translation of another Hermetic tract unknown to Ficino (today it is labelled CH XVI, "The Definitions of Asclepius"). Among these texts, three dedications have been inserted to Giovanni da Correggio by Lazzarelli, whom he addresses as Giovanni "Mercurio" and who, from this time on, indeed adopted this name for himself. These prefaces are of utmost interest, because Lazzarelli not only outlined in them his theoretical opinion of the Hermetica, but also revealed his personal relationship with the wandering prophet. It is also revealed that Lazzarelli presented this codex to Mercurio in 1482 in order to provide him with a most complete anthology of the Hermetic corpus.

The first preface is in prose. In it, Lazzarelli-Enoch recommends the writings of Hermes Trismegistus together with those of Moses and Jesus Christ (i.e. the Old and New Testaments), as those who "are all sitting at one table, and with friendly faces serve their fellow guests the fragrant dishes of the gods"

[7] On the reinterpretations of Hermes and Enoch in the Middle Ages see Szönyi, The Reincarnations of Enoch...; on the origins of these contaminations see Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes* (2009).

[8] Cod. II D I 4, see Kristeller 1938 and 1960; Hanegraaff, Lazzarelli.

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(Lazzarelli, 153). Here, he announces his transfiguration due to the effect of Giovanni, and he calls himself his son. He also praises Ficino for his recovery of this ancient wisdom, but he corrects the Florentine philosopher by claiming that

> One thing only I considered incorrectly, namely what he tells us about the lifetime of this Hermes. For Trismegistus did not live after the times of Moses, but, rather, a long time before... (Ibid., 157)

In the following explanation, he locates Trismegistus among the first pharaohs, thus, apparently, placing him approximately at the time of Enoch. At the end of this text, Lazzarelli thanks Mercurio for the mystical teaching he gained from him: "for you know not only the origin, succession, duration, and end of the world, but also your generosity makes them known to me" (ibid.).

The second dedication is an Ode to Mercurio. It contains a very personal confession:

> Father Mercurius, teacher by fatherly love,
> Hail to you, who are like a god to me.
> You have begotten me anew by ethereal seed,
> And taught me to be born again without deceit. (Ibid., 159)

The third preface tells of how he accidentally stumbled upon this lost tract of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, the "Definitions of Asclepius." He translated it from Greek to Latin for Mercurio, but he adds that the original must have been the sacred language of the Egyptians, because it "does not smack of Greek eloquence, but looks more like some foreign manner of speech." Lazzarelli concludes his dedication with the following elevated comparison:

> Now, I am sending it to you, with a willing and jubilant spirit, because I feel that I must forever venerate, worship, and follow you the same way as our Hermetic Dionysius the Areopagite venerated, worshipped, and followed his most holy teachers Paul and Hierothus. (Ibid., 163)

Between 1482 and 1484, Giovanni Mercurio seems to have studied the *Hermetica* seriously, because on the occasion of his next appearance in Rome, he presented a syncretic, Hermetic-Christian-apocalyptic choreography and message. The main source on which our knowledge of the events is based is again the *Epistola Enoch*, but we have independent evidence, too. The town chronicle of Cesena (on the road between Bologna and Rome) recorded that a gentleman "went to Rome this year upon an ass and

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dressed in white, and he presented his clothing, on which was a dead man's bloodied head, and certain large gilt medallions, saying 'vacua vacuis, plena plenis' with certain prophecies, claiming to be the true Messiah."[9] Obviously, Mercurio was staging a prophetic-apocalyptic passage through Italy until he arrived in Rome on Palm Sunday, 11 April. In "Enoch's" description he was 33 years old and had long curly hair. He was allegedly lively and intelligent and, although he had never studied grammar or rhetoric, he was an eloquent speaker. This image could easily recall the Christ of the Gospels (EE 5.2; Lazzarelli, 119). First, he rode a black horse and he himself was dressed in black; also, he approached the Vatican with four mounted servants. Crossing the city centre, he then went to the other side of the river through the Marrano Gate, and on a grassy clearing, he changed his clothes. He put on sandals and dressed himself in a blood-stained linen. He parted his hair after the fashion of the Nazarenes and put a bloodstained crown of thorns on his head to which a silver plaque was affixed with the following inscription:

> This is my Servant Pimander, whom I have chosen. This Pimander is my supreme and waxing child, in whom I am well pleased to cast out demons and proclaim my judgement and truth to the heathens... (EE 6.2.2; Lazzarelli, 121)

Hanegraaff rightly noticed that this inscription is similar to that of 1481, but here the name of Hermes Trismegistus has been replaced by Pimander ("Lazzarelli," 28). In the *Hermetica*, it is clear that these are two different persons, and Pimander is higher in rank than his deified human disciple, Trismegistus.

Mercurio then adorned himself with an inkwell and a reed-staff, as if with a sceptre, and some more breastplates with various inscriptions on them. In his description of the scene, Enoch-Lazzarelli himself falls into an ecstatic state: "Immortal God! What secret mysteries and stupendous oracles were laid open there" (EE 6.3; Lazzarelli, 121). The following images of *exaltatio* are in fact paraphrases from the *Corpus Hermeticum* and even, at some points, from Ficino's "Argumentum" (i.e. Preface) to the *Pimander:*

> This is an image of the mind, or, more exactly, a translation or downpouring of all things that are governed and accomplished in the mind of God. And if I am to speak more clearly, this image is [...] truly the only drawing-down of the gods to earth, and the teacher of holiness and piety. (EE 6.4.2, cf. Lazzarelli, 123n49–51)

[9] Hanegraaff, Lazzarelli, 27; Kristeller, Marsilio Ficino e Lodovico Lazzarelli, 230–31; W. B. McDaniel, An Hermetic Plague-Tract by Johannes Mercurius Corrigiensis (1941–42), 219.

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Lazzarelli unfolds here an impressive list of portentous parallels to the powerful demonstration of Giovanni Mercurio. He says, in true syncretic manner, that "this is the book of Enoch, the vision of Hermes, Noah's Ark, and the tabernacle of Moses" (EE 6.4.4; Lazarelli 125), once again suggesting a close relationship among Enoch, Hermes, and Moses. More surprisingly, towards the end of the list, he also mentions prominent works of medieval magical literature: "this is the Almadel and Pentacle of Solomon, the ring of wisdom, the Semaphore of Raziel; this is the vision reflecting the glory of the Lord, [. . .] and a pleasant vision of all the prophetical and notary art" (ibid.).[10]

Epistola Enoch 7.1ff continues the story with an account of how Mercurio mounted a cheap white ass which was decorated with other paraphernalia, including a dried skull in a basket. Thus prepared, flanked by his mounted servants, da Correggio again rode into the city centre and admonished the passersby with strong apocalyptic words: "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of man. [. . .] Fire, prison, famine, and plague, all these created for punishment; the teeth of wild beasts and scorpions and snakes, and swords to bring the godless to ruin" (EE 8.1.1; Lazzarelli, 131). When he finished his sermon, he took the skull out of the basket and continued thundering, "Vengeance! Vengeance!" Finally, he threw pieces of paper into the crowd on which fragments of his speech were written, including the following title: "I, Giovanni Mercurio of Correggio, the Angel of Wisdom Pimander, in the highest and greatest ecstasy of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, evangelize loudly..." (8.3.1; Lazzarelli, 137).

Then he began heading again toward the Vatican in the midst of a crowd bearing palm branches, which had just been brought out of the churches after high mass. Lazzarelli cannot but admit that "Some said he was mad, but some—closer to the truth—acclaimed him as a prophet" (9.2; p. 139). On the Campo dei Fiori, he delivered yet another sermon. He then progressed to St. Peter's Square, where "he seriously disturbed the troop of men on horseback who stood waiting for the bishops to return from the service." The guards nonetheless let him through, and he led his ass up to the threshold of the Sanctuary. There, he placed his requisites on the High Altar, including the skull with a paper on which was written, "The Eternal Gospel." Having accomplished all this, he left the church. Then, he "returned to Bologna to his wife and children, where he is still living with his family" (EE 11.2; Lazzarelli, 141).

In 1484, the fate of the two initiates, Lazzarelli and da Correggio, parted ways. The former moved to Naples and tried his fortune at the court of King Ferrante as one of his Humanists, next to the famous and powerful Giovanni

[10] On these medieval magical texts and their relation to Hermes and Enoch see Thorndike 1923–58, volume 2 passim; Peterson, *The Lesser Key of Solomon* (2001) and Peterson, *Liber Juratus* (2009).

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Pontano, who had a spectacular career there, rising from a penniless scholar and poet to chancellor of the state. Lazzarelli was not so fortunate,[11] but at least for some years he secured for himself a cultured and quiet environment. This is where he wrote the *Crater Hermetis*, his major contribution to the literature of Italian Renaissance Hermetism.[12]

In the meantime, da Correggio suffered ups and downs. He was imprisoned several times, the first time in Rome, probably right after his extraordinary pageant, and later in Bologna and Florence. As Ruderman suggested, "The inherent danger to religion posed by the magical teachings of this Hermetic circle was that they claimed to produce the same effects without any divine agent. Faith in a figure like Mercurio threatened to present itself as a rival religion, challenging the basic contention of the Catholic Church that Christian revelation is unique and exclusive and that there is no other legitimate revelation. Moreover, prophecy was now taken out of the domain and control of the Church and placed in the hands of any individual who was capable and willing to prepare himself to master a natural art."[13]

At the same time, da Correggio's prophetic pageant can be seen as characteristic pre-Reformation apocalypticism, striving for individual pietistic revelation, which, of course, was also seen as a threat by the Church.

The *Crater Hermetis*

Around 1494 in Naples, Lazzarelli-Enoch finished his opus magnum, the *Crater Hermetis*, or *The Mixing Bowl of* Hermes,[14] which he dedicated to the king. The work is based on an extraordinary concept involving Enoch. *Crater Hermetis* is a Platonic-style dialogue in which the participants of the conversations are Ferdinand, Pontano, and the author himself. The subject matter of the conversations is the paths towards spiritual rebirth and the attainment of *gnosis*, i.e. an initiation into the mysteries. The instruction culminates in the supreme mystery of the "making of gods," echoing the Hermetic *Asclepius*. Already Kristeller recognized the importance of

[11] From his private correspondence we know that he actually felt embittered by the disinterest shown in his mission by the king and Pontano (Saci, *Lodovico Lazzarelli*,1999, 89).

[12] The terminology concerning Hermetism and Hermeticism is often confusing. I follow Wouter Hanegraaff's advice, who suggests using the former term restrictively about the direct influence of the *Corpus Hermeticum* and its ideology, while Hermeticism can accommodate all sorts of syncretistic esoteric and magical developments rooted in the Renaissance, no doubt often inspired (but not exclusively) by the original Hermetism, too. See Hanegraaff, Lazzarelli, 2–8; also the studies in Broek and Hanegraaff ed., *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times* (1998).

[13] Ruderman, John Giovanni Mercurio da Correggio's Appearance in Italy, 320.

[14] A full analysis of the work is in Hanegraaff, Lazzarelli, 57–96.

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the work in his history of Renaissance Hermeticism, but Hanegraaff's recent study identifies Lazzarelli as a characteristic and unmistakably individual voice next to the syncretism of Ficino and Pico.

The *Crater Hermetis* starts with Lazzarelli's announcement according to which he had been transfigured by the divine Piamander and thus received authorization to become a spiritual teacher. This is the same claim he had made in *Epistola Enoch*, however this time he does not identify himself as the biblical patriarch. In this capacity, he promises to reveal great mysteries to his audience, the king and his chancellor. The structure of the work can be summarized as follows:

01 Introduction (1.1–2.2)
02 Hermes on Self-Knowledge – A Prayer to God (2.3–5.3)
03 The Meaning of Paradise Trees (6.1–9.4)
04 The Meaning of the Woman in Proverbs (10.1–12.4)
05 The Spiritual Meaning of Myths (13.1–13.4)
06 The Meaning of the "Daughters of Men" (14.1–14.5)
07 The Fall of Man – A Sad Complaint (15.1–16.3, 17.1–17.2)
08 Knowledge of the Self and of God (18.1–20.5)
09 The Human Soul and the True Man – The Hymn of Contemplation (21.1–23.3)
10 The Fertility of God – The Hymn of Divine Generation (24.1–27.1)
11 The Mystery (28.1–29.8)
12 Conclusion – A Hymn of Praise (30.1–30.6)

The dialogues are dominated by the presence of Hermes Trismegistus, but the gnostic teachings are mixed with meditations on some biblical questions, such as "The Meaning of Paradise Trees," "The Meaning of the Woman in Proverbs," "The Spiritual Meaning of Myths," and "The Meaning of the 'Daughters of Men,'" recalling the Enoch theme from Lazzarelli's earlier mystical adventures.

Prior to the last meditation, Lazzarelli explained the allegorical meaning-creation of myths, using among others a metaphor from Plato, who had suggested that nature itself is "a poem full of enigmas, and not just anybody can read them correctly" (*Crater* 13.4, cf. Plato, *Alcibiades* 147b). Upon this, the king asks about "those women," and Lazzarelli here gives a figurative reading of the daughters of men, "unto whom the sons of God—or angels—came in." The reference, of course, is to Genesis 6:1–7, but the wicked race which was born of the union of the "baleful" angels and the daughters of men is also recalled in the *Asclepius:*

> How mournful when the gods withdraw from mankind! Only the baleful angels remain to mingle with humans, seizing the wretches and driving them to every outrageous crime—war, looting, trickery, and all that is contrary to the nature of

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> souls. Then neither will the earth stand firm, nor the sea sailable; stars will not cross heaven nor will the course of the stars stand firm in heaven. [. . .] The fruits of the earth will rot; the soil will no more be fertile; and the very air will droop in gloomy lethargy. (25, quoted from Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 1992, 82)

It is difficult not to notice how similar this apocalyptic image is to *1 Enoch*, when the results of the union of angels and women are described with similarly strong words and frightening images.[15] And indeed, in a much cited article, M. Philonenko suggested that the *Asclepius* might have been influenced by the Enoch myth; this was positively confirmed by Moshe Idel: "One must go a step further and reveal the real figure who is hidden under the name of Hermes: it is Enoch. In the *Asclepius*, Hermes tells the story of the creation of man and prophesizes the descent of the angels and the flood. In biblical terms, Hermes seems to be an antediluvian prophetic figure, and this view clearly points to the identification of Hermes of the *Asclepius* with Enoch."[16]

Lazzarelli's explanation concerning the "daughters of men" is that they stand for the degradation of the spirit and refer to an increasing distance from the essential One. Contrary to *1 Enoch*, Lazzarelli seems to believe that Original Sin consisted of the sexual union between Adam and Eve, and he brings quotations from Moses as well as the *Pimander* to illustrate the dangers of this degradation: "Man is above the cosmic harmony, but having fallen into that harmony he has become a slave" (cf. CH 1.15 in Copenhaver, *Hermetica*, 3).

As one would expect from a true Hermetist, Lazzarelli's main purpose with this work is to prove that not everything has been lost and the dignity of man can be restored. After all, the subtitle of the work is "A Dialogue on the Supreme Dignity of Man," and its tone indeed echoes Pico's elevated claims about human potential:

> Thus you will come to understand the excellence of your own essence, [... and] will rise up out of the body, [...] ascending absolutely and purely, to fly to that transcendent and most shining darkness where God dwells, to take your place among the number of the Powers; and having been received among the Powers you shall enjoy God, and henceforth begetting a divine offspring, you will procreate for God and not yourself. (*Crater* 21.4; Lazzarelli, 231)

[15] 1 Enoch, chapter 7. A recent detailed commentary of this chapter is offered by George W. E. Nickelsburg in his *1 Enoch 1* (2001), 182–187.

[16] See Philonenko, M. Une allusion de l'*Asclepius* au livre d'Hénoch (1975), 161–63; and Idel, Hermeticism and Judaism (1988), 60.

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To serve this purpose, five hymns are also inserted into the *Crater* which express with strong poetical beauty the author's rapturous understanding of self-knowledge, contemplation, and divine generation.

The king is increasingly impressed by the lofty philosophy, but he keeps urging the narrator to come to the pragmatics of the work, which is how to reach the exalted state of the self. Lazzarelli leads the treatise towards its climax by inserting a hymn to Divine Generation. At its start, the poem recalls Enoch, the predecessor-archetype of the narrator: "Where do you transport me, Father? Is this not the place where pious aged Enoch went[?]" (27.1; Lazzarelli, 249). The place is a place of magic, and by the end of the hymn we relive the god-making act of the *Asclepius*:

> This is certainly the newest novelty of novelties
> and a miracle far greater than all others,
> that man has discovered the nature of God
> and knows how to make it. [...]
> That is why the Begetter has given man
> a mind like his own, and speech,
> that he, like the gods, may bring forth gods,
> fulfilling the decrees of the Father.
> (Ibid., Lazzarelli, 253-55)

The supreme task of humans is thus to create gods, as is suggested in the *Asclepius* and passed on by Ficino in his *De vita coelitus comparanda*.[17] Ficino, however, was rather cautious in defining this god-making magic: he consistently tried to prove that it was simple *magia naturalis*. He also claimed only to have interpreted Plotinus and not really to have voiced his own opinion.[18] Lazzarelli seems to be much bolder. He expressly claims that "true man creates divine souls / which the ancient host used to call gods of the earth" (ibid., 255), and a few lines further on, he announces that these divine souls "create the Word of God."

One can ponder why in an earlier part of this hymn Lazzarelli used the phrase "newest novelty of novelties" about his revelation, when actually this god-making act was an old idea taken from the *Corpus Hermeticum*. According to Hanegraaff's plausible suggestion, although he took the idea of deification from the Neoplatonic and Hermetic literature, Lazzarelli consciously introduced a revolutionary innovation in this program, namely

[17] Critical edition and English translation is Ficino 1989, see also the in-depth study by Carol V. Kaske in that edition.

[18] Ficino, chapter 3.2; in the edition of Kaske and Clark see on p. 255.

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the infusion of elements from Jewish mysticism, in order to achieve a pure Christian solution free from pagan tints. Hence his talk about "creating souls," rather than "creating gods," become of utmost importance.

Sections 28–29 elaborate on the theme of the supernatural abilities of man by an act of remarkable syncretism, fusing Enoch, Hermes, and the most mystical cabbalistic book, the *Sefer Yetzira (The Book of Creation).*[19] Lazzarelli seems to have followed a path rather similar to that of Pico just a few years earlier, but it also seems that he discovered Enoch and *merkabah* mysticism quite independently of the Count of Mirandola.

Lazzarelli starts unfolding the "novelty of novelties" by referring to the mysteries of Eleusis, recalling the state of ecstasy in which one is transported out of the self. But this is a secret and should be hidden from profane, unqualified persons. Then Hermes is mentioned, who, in his *Teleios logos* (that is, the *Asclepius*) speaks more openly. From the Hermetic sage he then turns to the Old Testament patriarch: "Likewise, the wise men of the Hebrews say that Enoch in a book he wrote makes mention of the higher and lower king; and the one who unites them both will daily harvest the gladness from above. And in my opinion that is exactly the heart of this mystery" (29.1, Lazzarelli, 257).

There is a mention of Enoch's book in the New Testament (Jude 14–15) but there is nothing about its content there. We also know that neither of the three books today associated with the name of Enoch was known before the late eighteenth century.[20] What is behind Lazzarelli's reference then? Scholars have not been able to identify any concrete text yet, but it is known that during the Middle Ages, Hermes and Enoch were quite strongly intertwined with each other, and various magical texts were circulating under their names. It is also known that Lazzarelli had a good command of Hebrew by this time, and he had friends among Jewish intellectuals, quite likely even Yohanan Alemanno,[21] one of the most outstanding Jewish philosophers of the day. Through these acquaintances, he might have got access to *Sefer Hekhalot*, that is *3 Enoch*, but this remains pure speculation.

It is a fact, on the other hand, that together with Enoch, Lazzarelli also refers to the *Sefer Yetzirach*, at that time attributed to the Patriarch Abraham, an early medieval key mystical treatise behind the development of the *Zohar:*

> Abraham too, in his book entitled *Sepher Izira*—that is to say the Book of Formation—teaches that this is how new men are formed: one must go to

[19] For an English critical edition and commentary see Kaplan ed., *Sefer Yetzirach* (1997).

[20] See the historiographical introductions in Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*.

[21] On Alemanno see Idel, Hermeticism and Judaism, 66–67; Ruderman ed. 1992, passim; Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry* (2010), 119–22; Zinguer ed., *Hebraic Aspects of the Renaissance* (2011), 192–210.

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> a desolate mountain, and from its midst one must dig up Adama, that is to say red and virginal earth; then a man must be formed from it, and letters must be ritually inscribed on his limbs. In my interpretation this must be understood as follows: the desolate mountains are the godly sages, who are desolate because they are despised by the multitude... (29.2, ibid., 259)

This ritual is not actually included in the *Sefer Yetzirah*, and after a long philological search, Gershom Scholem and Moshe Idel identified the source in a commentary written by the thirteenth-century Jewish mystic Eleazar of Worms (the research is reconstructed in Hanegraaff, 86ff). This allusion to Hebrew esoterica asserts that an artificial man, a Golem, can be created from "red and virgin earth," and Lazzarelli supports the thesis by citing Hermes, Plato, Philo Judaeus, and the example of Christ, because, parabolically speaking, "Adama, the red and virgin earth, is the mind of the wise itself, that has been made virginal by the wine of the Messiah, that germinates virgins. A new man having been created in this manner..." (29.5, ibid.).

It is noteworthy that Lazzarelli intends to prove the ultimate truth appearing in Jesus Christ by the authority of some Jewish rabbi and Enoch:

> And it is said in the book *Berescith Raba* of Rabbi Moses Adersan that there was held a debate on sacred things amongst some Talmudists, and when Rabbi Jonah mentioned this secret, basing himself on the authority of Enoch, Rabbi Symeon both laughed and cried and finally said: "This is the will of God, which he does not want to be revealed to any generation until the King Messiah has come." Thus more than all others Jesus Christ has revealed his secret. [. . .] But the day is near that in the fullness of time he will make it manifest more clearly... (29.7–8, ibid., 261)

No matter how inquisitive the king is, at this point, Lazzarelli decides to postpone the teachings and closes his work with a hymn addressed to the "Light of the Father, radiant Word, Pimander," whom he finally identifies with Christ.

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What sort of esotericism can be thus inferred from the *Crater Hermetis?* The origins and components of Renaissance Hermeticism as well as the actual standpoints of its Italian representatives are subjects of ongoing scholarly study and debate. Accordingly, Lazzarelli has been associated with Platonism, Hermeticism, Jewish mysticism, and any combination of the three. Undoubtedly, Lazzarelli shared Ficino's enthusiasm for the mystical teachings of Hermes, and like Pico, he was deeply influenced by the teachings of the Hebrew scholars. His knowledge of Hebrew is verifiable

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with certainty. D. P. Walker and Moshe Idel interpreted the soul-creating motive as if Lazzarelli were promising by a magical act to create a spirit to enliven the ailing king.[22] *Crater Hermetis* thus moves from the god-making of *Asclepius*, which meant that a demon or spirit had to be drawn to a lifeless statue, to the cabbalistic creation of a soul, when a wise man creates, by the power of his words, something of the same substance as his own, similarly to the creative generation of God himself.

According to Hanegraaff, soul creation is a symbol that refers to perfect *gnosis*, a non-magical but mystical illumination by which the practitioner indeed becomes equal with God. He developed his argument on the basis of Idel's reading of Pico's teacher and Lazzarelli's probable acquaintance, Yohanan Alemanno, who quoted Abraham Abulafia in his *Collectanaea*, according to whom the Kabbalah was more of an ecstatic and prophetic exercise than a practice of magic: "Since God made man perfect, in the image of God, [. . .] this is why every learned person is obliged to make souls, [. . .] this being the way a man can imitate the Creator."[23]

The most recent voice in the debate, that of Hanegraaff, has proposed that Lazzarelli represents the purest form of Christian Hermetism, because he rejected the questionable astral magic of the *Corpus Hermeticum* and of Ficino, and instead, influenced by allegorical interpretations of the *Sefer Yetzirah* and other cabbalistic works, asserted a purely spiritual, meditative, and transformative *generatio mentis*. Contra Idel, Walker, and Yates, according to Hanegraaff, Lazzarelli did not consider the making of the Golem a kind of magical procedure. It was to be understood figuratively, describing the process of *exaltatio*.

I personally do not think that with this proposition the question has been settled once and for all. Hanegraaff himself emphasized the importance of taking into consideration *complexity* and *contextuality* in such cultural historical investigations. Lazzarelli's cultural background was as complex as that of Ficino or Pico, and this complexity taught Renaissance thinkers that there could be many roads leading towards the ultimate goal of raptured transportation to God.

With respect to Enoch, we have seen that the Neoplatonic-Hermetic revival in Italy brought about a new appreciation of his writings, and his authority was reinforced in an esoteric-magical context. For this elevation of status, it was necessary that Christian philosophers discover the Jewish mystical heritage and develop a conviction that it could be useful for proving the ultimate truth of Christianity in a novel, modern way, at the same time referring back to an ancient, *prisca theologia*, or a timeless, perennial wisdom. The intellectual

[22] Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 67–71; Idel, Hermeticism and Judaism, 68–69.

[23] Abulafia, quoted via Idel, Hermeticism and Judaism, 70; see also Hanegraaff, 92.

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turn which boosted Enoch's reputation was initiated by Pico della Mirandola, who included a really radical idea among his famous 900 philosophical conclusions: "There is no science that assures us more of the divinity of Christ than magic and the Cabala" (9>9 in Farmer ed., 497). In order to prove this, he used the concept of Metatron, the transfigured Enoch, about whom he could learn, indirectly, via Abulafia and Mithridates, from *3 Enoch*. Thus, Pico can be considered the first modern gentile intellectual, who, although not directly seeing the text, became aware of the secretively hiding Books of Enoch.

Lazzarelli's case is perhaps even more complex. Above all, he must have been influenced by the medieval Arabic-Jewish-Christian tradition, which either strongly associated or even conflated Hermes and Enoch. This became particularly important in the context of the Hermetic revival initiated by Ficino. So, in a heated religious-psychological situation, triggered by the pageant of the wondering apocalyptic prophet, da Correggio, Lazzarelli came to identify himself as a reincarnated Enoch and da Correggio as Mercurius Hermes. A couple of years later, already separated from his spiritual father, Lazzarelli further developed his interest in a syncretic Christianized-Cabalistical-Hermetism and theorized about it in his *Crater Hermetis*. In it, Enoch is used as an example and authority to attest to the possibility of *exaltatio*, the mystical-magical deification of man and the union with God. Thus, in that work he endeavoured to offer an individual initiation into the mysteries.

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SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES IN ADVENTURE THERAPY

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Abstract

Religious mysticism has three forms: nature mysticism, theistic mysticism, and monist mysticism. In nature mysticism, the subject feels the whole of nature, in a sort of oceanic feeling, as if its ego were connected to something greater than their ego, i.e. as if it were connected with all living beings.

In this essay, we analyse the mystical-spiritual experiences of adventure therapy. We present our research findings on how hill and cave tours can prompt mystical experiences and how these experiences can be studied through a questionnaire and a projective drawing technique.

We organized hill and cave tours for more than 100 psychology students with adventure therapeutic exercises. The exercises included relaxation, spiritual singing and other music therapy exercises, and challenging climbing and crawling exercises (measures were always taken to assure the safety of respondents).

Our measurement techniques include Spiritual Health and Life Orientation Measurement (Fisher, 2009) and free drawing. Our research shows that adventure therapeutic exercises, especially in caves, offer mystical experiences which increase spiritual well-being.

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Introduction

Many positive human experiences have been characterized as transcendent, including mysticism,[1] ecstasy,[2] peak experience,[3,4] and states of flow.[5] These experiences share several key characteristics: absorbing moments of extreme happiness; overcoming the limits of everyday life; a sense of union with the universe or some other power or entity; immersion in the present moment; a sense of timelessness; loss of sense-of-self. Fredrickson and Anderson[6] note that these types of powerful or "transcendent" experiences are often experienced in natural outdoor settings, and are usually the result of intense physical and or emotional challenges.

There are numerous descriptions of transcendent experiences in nature. Zaehner[7] defines nature mysticism (pantheism) as the feeling of union with the natural world or "nature" as a whole.

In a qualitative study based on women's journal accounts of canoe and canyon tours, Fredrickson and Anderson[8] identified socially relevant and wilderness-related determinants that contribute to meaningful, spiritual experiences in nature. Group trust, emotional support, sharing common life changes, and being in a non-competitive atmosphere were found to be the socially relevant factors, and direct contact with nature, periods of solitude, and physical challenges were elements related to wilderness experience. Their results suggested that positive social environment and wilderness together would lead most effectively to spiritual experiences in nature.

Heintzman[9] tested these findings on a male group, using a qualitative setting. Like Fredrickson and Anderson, Heintzman also found that, for male subjects, being alone, sharing thoughts and experiences with others, being supportive, and getting support were also important. As was the case

1 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, New York, Collier Books, 1902/1961.

2 Marghanita Laski, *Ecstasy: A Study of Some Secular and Religious Experiences*, London, The Cressett Press, 1961.

3 Abraham H. Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences*, New York, Penguin Books, 1976.

4 Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward A Psychology of Being*, Princeton, D. Nostrand, 1982.

5 Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: the psychology of optimal experience*. New York, Harper & Row, 1990.

6 Laura M. Fredrickson and Dorothy H. Anderson, A qualitative exploration of the wilderness experience as a source of spiritual inspiration, *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 19 (1999), 21–39.

7 Robert C. Zaehner, *Mysticism: Sacred and Profane*, Oxford University Press, 1961.

8 Laura M. Fredrickson and Dorothy H. Anderson, A qualitative exploration of the wilderness experience as a source of spiritual inspiration, *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 19 (1999), 21–39.

9 Paul Heintzman, Men's wilderness experience and spirituality: a qualitative study, In: *Proceedings of the 2006 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium* (2006), 216–225.

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in Fredrickson and Anderson's study,[10] participants reported that a different environment, the constant feeling of awe, and a slight sense of vulnerability were spiritually inspiring. Both studies suggest that being in an unfamiliar, untamed natural environment in a community can easily lead to meaningful, spiritual experiences. Some aspects of the experience differed between genders: men stressed the importance of peacefulness more and did not prefer the same-gender group so much as women did.

A year later, Heintzman[11] led another investigation of men in a group which was homogenous from the following three perspectives: they lived in the same area, they were members of the same Church, and they participated in canoe or wilderness trips at least once a year. Subjects experienced elevated level of spirituality, which enabled them to forge lasting "spiritual friendships" according to the follow-up interviews, which were done 7–8 months later. Men reported that the wilderness reminded them continually of God's creation and created a stunning atmosphere, which, together with a sense of remoteness, facilitated the spiritual experience. As was found to be the case in previous studies, communication with one another (especially communication concerning religious beliefs) was a key determinant of this experience. This group of men also felt that being in a same-gender group further contributed to spiritual intimacy.

In summary, experiences in the wilderness may have a potential for evoking spirituality, and this process is facilitated by remoteness, unfamiliarity, and the feeling of awe in the observer. On the other hand, spirituality, or the capability of giving deeper meanings to the experiences, can also influence appreciation of nature-related experiences. This second statement can be paralleled with a study conducted with 190 subjects from Australia,[12] according to which spirituality is a strong mediator between experiences in nature and psychological well-being. Kamatsis and Francis suggest that spirituality is a path through which the positive effects of nature and the wilderness can influence well-being. Still, it remains unclear whether it is nature that leads to spirituality or spiritual openness which supports a sense of connection with nature.

Remarkable findings were described by Riley and Hendee,[13] who have been studying one type of vision quest program for a 10-year period. Vision quests

[10] Fredrickson and Anderson, A qualitative exploration of the wilderness experience, 21–39.

[11] Paul Heintzman, Men's wilderness experience and spirituality: further explorations, In: *Proceedings of the 2007 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium* (2007), 55–59.

[12] Ilias Kamatsis and Andrew J.P. Francis, Spirituality mediates the relationship between engagement with nature and psychological wellbeing, *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 36 (2013), 136–143.

[13] Marilyn F. Riley and John C. Hendee, Wilderness vision quest clients: motivations and reported benefit from an urban-based program 1988 to 1997, In: *USDA Forest Service Proceedings* 2000, 128–135.

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are ancient rituals practiced in many cultural groups, like Native Americans and Australian Aboriginals, with the original goal of assisting the transition of adolescents into adulthood by sending them into the wilderness with a safe mission to perform. This practice was adopted for commercial use, letting anyone into the mysteries of this experience for a certain amount of money. With more than 200 participants responding to follow-up questionnaires, the authors concluded that the participants' main motives for going on these quests was a search for self-discovery and personal renewal. Also, they reported that the wilderness experience (like solitude and naturalness) had first brought them closer to themselves, after which they had started to connect better with nature. Thus, nature first directed participants' attention towards themselves and, secondly, enabled a higher level of connection with "others" (e.g. being part of something bigger). Reported benefits were greater connectedness to the self (self-awareness, self-discovery, self-understanding, self-knowledge, self-acceptance), self-empowerment (self-confidence, facing fears, and increased sense of strength), and connection with others (nature, community, and the world as a whole). Interestingly, participants in the vision quest programs did not emphasize the significance of the group setting.

An insightful study by Schroeder[14] attempted to describe "The spiritual aspect of nature" and approached it from a Jungian perspective. Schroeder defined spirituality as something that refers to the experience of being related to or in touch with an "other" which transcends the individual's sense of self and gives meaning to one's life at a level deeper than the intellectual.[15] "Other" could be anything that evokes spiritual transcendence, and evidence suggests that nature may have this effect. Jungian psychologists view spiritual experiences in nature as projections of archetypes (e.g. Great Mother, Mother Nature); therefore, nature is deeply rooted in the collective unconscious. Schroeder, following this line of thought, suggested that in the predominant Western societal paradigm, rational, logical thinking is related to the Ego, which tries to repress the intuitive, spiritual part of personality, the unconscious, which is symbolized by nature and earth. Returning to nature can lead to spirituality because rationality is left behind, and a deeper, more whole self is revealed.

White and Hendee's[16] study suggests that the benefits of wilderness experiences can be grouped into three separate categories. (1) Development

[14] Herbert W. Schroeder, The spiritual aspect of nature: A perspective from depth psychology. In: *Proceedings of the 1991 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium* 1992, 25–30.

[15] Herbert W. Schroeder, The spiritual aspect of nature: A perspective from depth psychology. In: *Proceedings of the 1991 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium* 1992, 25–30.

[16] Dave D. White and John C. Hendee, Primal Hypotheses: The Relationship Between Naturalness, Solitude, and the Wilderness Experience Benefits of Development of Self, Development of Community, and Spiritual Development, *USDA Forest Service Proceedings RMRS-P-15,* 3 (2000), 223–227.

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of Self (DOS), (2) Development of Community (DOC), and (3) Spiritual Development (SD). They tested these categories on participants in three adventure programs (N=44) and found that self-reported benefits matched one of these categories. Some evidence was offered indicating that wilderness itself contributed to these experiences.

A review article by Heintzman[17] summarized in an interesting model how spirituality is experienced in the wilderness, more specifically in parks. The author suggests that there are "antecedent conditions," namely the personal characteristics of participants, including "history and current circumstances," motivation, socio-demographic characteristics, and spiritual tradition. So-called "requisite features" may trigger spirituality: naturalness, the feeling of being "away," and place attachment or "sacred" places. Furthermore, recreational activities, solitude, and free-time and group experiences may contribute to spiritual experiences. Possible outcomes of antecedents, setting, and recreational attributes include spiritual experiences, enhanced spiritual well-being, and spiritual coping.

Heintzman, like other researchers, suggested that solitude is a key feature in reaching spiritual experiences in nature. Long's study[18] surveyed 206 students, asking them to describe some positive and negative experiences of solitude. According to the results, both types of experiences occurred mostly at home or in a local environment, but positive experiences were more likely to take place outdoors, in local natural settings.

Lemieux *et al.*[19] investigated the motives of people who visited provincial parks in Canada and how they benefited from the experience. 166 subjects reported that spiritual well-being (connectedness to nature and the inspiration of nature and search for the meaning/purpose in life") was among the primary motives. About 42% of the participants perceived an improvement in their spiritual well-being as a direct result of the park visit.

In a study by Hegarty[20] based on individual narratives of "nature-connectedness and disconnectedness," it was found that connectedness to nature was associated with positive emotions, whilst disconnectedness to nature was linked to negative emotions like tension, isolation, bleakness, emptiness, stress, meaninglessness, and fear. Hegarty thought that there was

[17] Paul Heintzman, Spiritual Outcomes of Park Experience: A Synthesis of Recent Social Science Research, *The George Wright Forum* 30 (3) (2013), 273–279.

[18] Christopher Long, The subjective experience of solitude, In: *Proceedings of the 2006 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium* (2006), 67–76.

[19] Christopher J. Lemieux, Paul F.J. Eagles, D. Scott Slocombe, Sean T. Doherty, Susan J. Elliott, and Steven E. Mock, Human health and well-being motivations and benefits associated with protected area experiences: and opportunity for transforming policy and management in Canada, *Parks* 18 (1) (2012), 71–85.

[20] John R. Hegarty, Out of the consulting room and into the woods? Experiences of nature-connectedness and self-healing, *European Journal of Ecopsychology 1* (2010), 64–84.

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"an increasing interest in (re)connecting with nature," backed by the intuitive understanding of the need for this kind of relationship. The participants' narratives provided fine examples of this intuitive understanding.

Also, some remarkable examples of spiritual experiences can be found in the English literature of mysticism. In a review of examples from literature, Caroline Spurgeon[21] stated that "transcendental feeling," "imagination," "mystic reason," "cosmic consciousness," "divine sagacity," "ecstasy," and "vision" referred to the same or related experiential phenomenon. She suggested that all mystic writers depicted a feeling of unity as a result of contact with nature (see the quote from Blake below).[22] Also, in some mystic poems, Nature is portrayed as a source of divinity (like in the Wordsworth poem below);[23] and it is suggested by others (see the quote from Brontë)[24] that Nature may be the key to an understanding of the universe.

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.
William Blake: Fragments from "Auguries of Innocence"

And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.
William Wordsworth: "Lines Written in Early Spring"

What have those lonely mountains worth revealing?
More glory and more grief than I can tell:
The earth that wakes one human heart to feeling
Can centre both the worlds of Heaven and Hell.
Emily Brontë: "Stanzas"

Based on the earlier secondary literature, our study investigated whether exposure to various nature experiences (hill climbing and cave tours) can prompt spiritual experiences. We also wanted to gain more insight into the main factors of these spiritual experiences (e.g. the effects of different settings).

[21] Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, *Mysticism in English literature*, Cambridge University Press, 1913, reissued 2011, 9.

[22] Edwin J. Ellis and William B. Yeats, *The Works of William Blake, Poetic, Symbolic, and Critical*, Three vols., London, Bernard Quaritch, 1893.

[23] Lynne McMahon and Averill Curdy, *The Longman Anthology of Poetry*. New York, Pearson/ Longman, 2006.

[24] Emily Brontë (1818–1848). Complete Poems, ed. Shorter, Hodder and Stoughton, 1910. The Three Brontës, by May Sinclair, Hutchinson, 1912.

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The aim of our study

We aim to examine how hill and cave tours can prompt mystical-spiritual experiences.

Methods

We organized adventure tours for students at the Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church, which included hill and cave tours with challenging climbing and crawling exercises along with relaxation and spiritual singing and other music therapy exercises. 73 students participated in hill tours, 27 in cave tours (3-4-hour tours).

After the adventure tours, we asked participants to fill out the Spiritual Health and Life-Orientation Measurement.[25] After the hill tours, participants were also asked to draw a free drawing based on their most memorable experience.

Spiritual Health and Life-Orientation Measurement has four scales: personal, social, environmental, and transcendent domains of spiritual health. The personal domain refers to meaning, purpose, and values in life, along with self-awareness. The communal domain includes love, forgiveness, trust, and hope, and thus it refers to the quality and depth of interpersonal relationships. The environmental domain refers to the care for the environment, to a sense of awe and wonder in nature, and to unity with the environment. The transcendental domain refers to the relationship of the self with some-thing or some-One beyond the human level. This includes faith in and adoration and worship of the source of mystery of the universe.

Results

According to paired samples t-tests, both hill and cave tours significantly prompted positive experiences of personal, communal, environmental, and transcendent dimensions (see Table 1).

A sense of identity, joy in life, inner peace, love for others, forgiveness toward others, trust among individuals, respect for others, connection with nature, awe at a breathtaking view, oneness with nature, harmony with the environment, a sense of magic in the environment, worship of the Creator, and prayer and the presence of God were all observed at higher levels during the tours than on ordinary days.

[25] John W. Fisher, Leslie J. Francis and Peter Johnson. Assessing spiritual health via four domains of spiritual wellbeing: The SH4DI, *Pastoral psychology 49* (2) (2000), 133–145.

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We also compared participants in hill and cave tours to see if there were significant differences between the two groups (see Table 1). Independent sample t-tests showed that hill tour participants had significantly higher scores on the communal dimension (on the total score of love for other people, forgiveness toward others, trust among individuals, respect for others, and kindness during the tour). However, at the subscale level, only trust in others during the tour yielded significant differences between the two groups. On the other hand, there was a tendency towards higher transcendent dimension scores during cave tours. At the subscale level, significantly higher scores were observed on the personal relationship with the Divine/God among cave tour participants during the tour.

Table 1. Results of Spiritual Health and Life Orientation Measurement on comparing hill and cave tours and on comparing scores during tours and on weekdays.

	Independent Sample Test: Hill vs. Cave tour			During hill tour vs. weekdays			During cave tour vs. weekdays		
	t	df	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	t	df	Sig.
personal	-.126	93	.900	-9.316	70	.000	-2.910	23	.008
communal	-2.059	93	.042	-1.552	70	.000	-4.271	23	.000
environmental	-.997	94	.321	-9.449	71	.000	-5.664	23	.000
transcendent	1.633	94	.106	-3.611	71	.001	-2.154	23	.042
sense of identity	-.738	95	.462	-6.789	72	.000	-2.387	23	.026
self-awareness	.356	95	.722	-4.496	72	.000	-1.635	23	.116
joy in life	.046	95	.964	-7.321	72	.000	-2.318	23	.030
inner peace	-.273	95	.785	-10.183	72	.000	-4.047	23	.001
meaning in life	-.149	93	.882	-1.891	70	.063	-.327	23	.747
love for other people	-1.271	93	.207	-5.433	70	.000	-2.541	23	.018
forgiveness toward others	-.729	95	.468	-4.547	72	.000	-1.904	23	.070
trust among individuals	-2.504	95	.014	-8.931	72	.000	-5.100	23	.000
respect for others	-1.253	95	.213	-5.965	72	.000	-3.391	23	.003
kindness	-1.199	95	.234	-8.544	72	.000	-1.366	23	.185
connection with nature	-1.410	28	.170	-9.094	72	.000	-5.412	23	.000
awe at a breathtaking view	.880	95	.381	-2.702	72	.009	-3.651	23	.001
oneness with nature	-1.243	94	.217	-8.992	71	.000	-5.100	23	.000
harmony with the environment	-.838	30	.409	-8.242	72	.000	-4.527	23	.000
sense of magic in the environment	-.515	95	.608	-7.789	72	.000	-3.800	23	.001

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	Independent Sample Test: Hill vs. Cave tour			During hill tour vs. weekdays			During cave tour vs. weekdays		
	t	df	Sig.	t	df	Sig.	t	df	Sig.
personal relationship with the Divine/God	2.094	95	.039	-1.000	72	.321	-1.072	23	.295
worship of the Creator	1.026	95	.308	-3.087	72	.003	-2.304	23	.031
oneness with God	1.412	95	.161	-2.484	72	.015	-1.446	23	.162
peace with God	1.269	94	.208	-4.392	71	.000	-1.072	23	.295
prayer and presence of God	1.829	95	.071	-2.592	72	.012	-2.584	23	.017

After analysing questionnaire scores, we examined the free drawings.

The figures below are drawings based on the experiences of the participants done immediately at the end of the tours. The first two drawings symbolize paths toward the inner world in accordance with the Jungian archetypic perspective of Schroeder.[26] These qualitative data suggest that the tendency toward contacting the inner Self is supported by the natural setting. On the third drawing, the colourful butterfly symbolizes transformation of the Self, as well as identification with a small and beautiful natural creature. The fourth drawing shows opening towards Nature, a higher reality (identification with the blossoming colourful flower, suggesting an experience similar to that found in mystical poems as mentioned by Spurgeon.)[27] The fifth drawing expresses a symbolic figure in contact with Nature, a higher entity, suggesting feelings of awe and transcendence. Finally, in the last drawing there is a symbolic expression of a group of people heading toward the sun, in contact and union with the light, suggesting a deep experience of insight.

[26] Herbert W. Schroeder, The spiritual aspect of nature: A perspective from depth psychology. In: *Proceedings of the 1991 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium* 1992, 25–30.

[27] Spurgeon, Mysticism, 9–14.

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Figure 1. Free drawings done after the hill tour.

Discussion

We aimed to examine how hill and cave tours can prompt mystical-spiritual experiences.

According to our quantitative results, both hill and cave tours prompt such experiences and enhance all four (personal, social, environmental, and transcendent[28]) domains of spiritual health. At the personal level, a sense of identity, joy in life, and inner peace increased during tours. At the communal level, we observed that love for other people, forgiveness toward others, trust among individuals, and respect for others were all more prevalent during tours

[28] Fisher, Francis and Johnson. Assessing spiritual health, 133–145.

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than on weekdays. At the environmental level, connection with nature, awe at a breathtaking view, oneness with nature, harmony with the environment, and a sense of magic in the environment were all characteristics of both tours, and at the transcendent level, worship of the Creator, prayer and presence of God were also observed during the tours more than on weekdays.

When comparing hill and cave tours, growth in the communal level of spiritual health was higher during hill tours, whereas deeper relation with the Divine/ God was present during the cave tours. During hill tours, participants could continuously see one another, had more opportunities to talk with one another, and in one exercise climbed together with all of the participants linked by a rope. These factors may have enhanced the social aspects of the experience and enabled the participants to feel love, trust, respect, kindness, and forgiveness towards others. On the other hand, cave tours offered a chance to experience a transcendent state (with relaxation in complete darkness and silence) which could help foster a sense of one's relationship with the Divine/God.

Our qualitative data showed that adventure tours offer an opportunity both to contact the inner Self and to contact the "Other" (others, Nature, transcendent power), as Schroeder concludes.[29] We could see examples of how transformation of the inner self and identification with nature can happen simultaneously. Identification with nature or part of nature as presented in the drawings was similar to that in the mystical poems.[30] In conclusion, we can state that the drawings reflect archetypical, mystical feelings of awe and transcendence and insightful, deep experiences.

In summary, both our quantitative and qualitative results showed that both hill and cave tours can prompt spiritual experiences and enhance spiritual health.

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[29] Herbert W. Schroeder, The spiritual aspect of nature: A perspective from depth psychology. In: *Proceedings of the 1991 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium* 1992, 25–30.

[30] Spurgeon, Mysticism, 9–14.

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MYSTICISM AND RATIONALITY. A NEOPLATONIC PERSPECTIVE

GERD VAN RIEL

ABSTRACT

It is often argued that later Neoplatonists, and especially Proclus and Damascius, were mystics rather than philosophers, meaning that, despite their rational philosophical endeavours, they ultimately engaged in an irrational encounter with the divine. This claim is easily made on the basis of the emphasis these authors put on theurgy, on worshipping the gods as instances of the One ineffable principle, etc.

This contribution aims to challenge overly facile views of Damascius' mysticism. Starting from explicit references to the need to find the right balance between theurgy and philosophy (in Damascius' Vita Isidori *and in his* Phaedo *commentary) and studying Damascius' account of the ascent towards the highest principle, I argue that mysticism in this case is the outcome of a thoroughly rational project, which explores the limits of rational discourse and which, in its mystical experience, never fails to account for the mystical experience in a rational way.*

When Europe was trembling—as it always seems to be doing—at the beginning of the 20th century, various attempts were made to uncover ideology, unmask nonsensical but genuinely dangerous language, and allow scientific rationality to prevail as a safe haven in which the distinction between true propositions and nonsense could be made. Today, I have to add, a similar nonsensical discourse seems to have taken the lead in Europe, driven not so much by ideology but by populistic tenets, and the outcome seems to be the same all over again: the detriment of the most vulnerable people—will we ever learn?

In any event, in this early 20th-century endeavour to unmask nonsensical language, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* played a major role. He provided philosophers and scientists with a helpful tool to demarcate the boundaries

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between meaningful language and *Geschwätz*. Wittgenstein's analyses had an important influence on the conceptualization of mysticism. His famous last propositions (6 and 7) opened the way for the acceptance of some kind of reality which cannot be spoken of in any meaningful way but which is nevertheless part of our being. The mystical is, thus, an inaccessible realm which can only be shown, but never argued for or discussed in meaningful language.

According to this analysis, mysticism is not seen as an illegitimate project, but it falls outside the scope of philosophy as something about which we cannot talk. Wittgenstein's treatise thus establishes a bifurcation between the real world and its states of affairs on the one hand and the world of the unsayable, i.e., ethics, values, aesthetics, religion, etc. on the other.

The effect is that mysticism is often seen as inexplicable per se, and that any attempt to discuss it is doomed to fail, because we would use language for purposes for which it cannot be of any use. As a consequence of this view, discourses *about* the mystical—i.e., other than the mystical experience, or the *showing* of the mystical—must be disqualified as meaningless, as talking when we would do better to remain silent. The tradition of mysticism that has existed since Antiquity is thereby set outside the limits of meaningful discourse, and it would *a priori* be impossible to retrieve it within philosophical language.

Yet we should not forget that all mysticism known from the tradition has come to us through texts, through philosophical or theological discourse in which the authors try to explain their mystical experiences. According to the judgment described above, the whole corpus would have to be considered meaningless *Geschwätz*. There are reasons to believe that this might be the case, as mystics always stress their inability to explain in an adequate way the experience they are trying to communicate. But should that render their language meaningless?

Some people within this Wittgensteinian mindset would say it does not, but they still stress that language is not sufficient, as our rational discourse can only express some kind of scepticism *vis-à-vis* the mystical. This is true, for instance, of scholars like Sara Rappe, who studied Neoplatonism as an attempt to express the inexpressible, focusing on what the Neoplatonists call "non-discursive" thinking, i.e., what one could also call contemplation: an insight into the whole of reality, not by means of distinct ideas (that is, discursivity), but as a view of truth in itself. According to this view, our discursive language is only a stumbling expression, or, as she put it in the conclusion to her work on non-discursive thought:

> In the preceding chapters, I have tried to show that this doctrine of intellectual, or unitive, knowing entails precisely that truth is not structured like language and is not a product of any discourse. Hence, intellectual knowing does not posit

> an intentional object that is directed toward some state of affairs in the world, nor does it admit of the subject-object dichtomy [sic] that lies at the heart of, for example, Western grammar. More than this, intellectual truth is not available for transmission in any discursive form.[1]

Although she does not refer to Wittgenstein, it is clear that Rappe is touched by his influence more than superficially. This becomes even clearer when, a few pages further on, she writes the following:

> One could go further in this discussion of the fictionality of tradition and suggest that the highest form of Neoplatonic hermeneutics might posit philosophy as, in the last result, mere fiction. After all, is this not fundamentally the position of Damascius, for whom the foundational premises of first philosophy, including causal explanation and the existence of a first principle, are shown to be the creations of ignorance?[2]

Especially in the case of Damascius, the last headmaster of the Athenian Academy upon the closure of all pagan schools by the emperor Justinian in 529 AD, Rappe refers to this ignorance as a specific sort of scepticism; Damascius' reference to a "reversal of discourse" (περιτροπὴ τῶν λόγων, Damascius, *De Principiis [DP]* I 21, 18) would amount, in her words, to "arguments overturned by means of premises internal to them" and a way of indicating the "limit of philosophical discourse" (πέρας τοῦ λόγου, Damascius, *DP* I 22, 2).[3]

In this contribution, I wish to inquire into the basic presuppositions of this interpretation of Damascius' Neoplatonism. First, I seek to determine the degree to which the Neoplatonists can be seen as mystics, in order to come to a better understanding of this "reversal of discourse" and to examine the possibility of connecting this with scepticism. Finally, from what we will have gained, I will return to the relationship between philosophy and mysticism. Thus, the case of Neoplatonism may hopefully serve to further a better understanding of what is at stake in any mystical tradition.

The question is, really, about the status of language. Are the Neoplatonists indeed indicating the limits of philosophy, in a Wittgensteinian vein? And is the point of Damascius' terminology indeed that there is a mystical reality beyond language, which no expression whatsoever is capable of communicating, as truth is not structured like language and is not the product of any discourse? And does the mystical indeed turn philosophy into mere fiction?

[1] Sara Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism. Non-discursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus, and Damascius*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, 234-235.

[2] Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism*, 242.

[3] Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism*, 212-213; also 219 and 222.

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From this introduction, one may expect my reply to be in the negative. What I shall argue is, more precisely, that there is no Neoplatonic mysticism without a rational project, that Damascius' "reversal of discourse" (περιτροπὴ τῶν λόγων) is not a sceptical endeavour, and, most importantly, that the expression of ignorance or of the shortcoming of discourse presupposes the highest expression of rational analysis, before yielding to mystical experience.

1. The Tension between Philosophy and Mysticism

We first need to tackle the question of how far the Neoplatonists went in embracing mysticism. There are two ways in which their views can be qualified as mystical. The first one, which is specific to late Neoplatonism, is their way of dealing with what they call "theurgy", i.e. religious practice, rituals, and magic designed to unite with the gods and with the Highest Principle. The *Chaldaean Oracles*, written in the 2nd c. AD by two Julians, father and son, served as the sacred text cited during those rituals. Syrianus was not too keen on them, but others, like Iamblichus and Proclus (a pupil of Syrianus'), took them very seriously. As Proclus testifies, philosophy and mystical theology are seen as complementary exercises. In his *Platonic Theology*, Proclus explains that "all of these doctrines [i.e. Greek theological traditions expressed in Plato's dialogues] are in agreement with Plato's first principles, and with the secret traditions of the theologians, for the entire Greek theology is the daughter of the mystagogy of Orpheus" (Proclus, *Theologia Platonica [TP]* I 5, 25, 24-27). This theological tradition would then be handed over from Orpheus to Pythagoras, and from Pythagoras to Plato. That is to say, philosophy and the secret theologies (meaning mystic cults derived from Orphic texts, including the *Chaldaean Oracles*) serve the same purposes. Still, there is a difference in approach between these different texts. According to Proclus, a distinction must be made between texts that use an allusive language (δι᾽ ἐνδείξεως) and texts that explain reality in an unveiled way (ἀπαρακαλύπτως). Each of the two has two further subdivisions, giving way to four types of theological speculation: the Orphic, which uses symbolic and mythical language, the Pythagorean, using images (δι᾽ εἰκόνων) and mathematics—those two are the allusive ones, while the unveiled ones are, on the one hand, the *Chaldaean Oracles*, which give a direct revelation of the divine truth in the celebration of the mysteries, and Plato, on the other, who presents a scientific (κατ᾽ ἐπιστήμην) account of the divine principles.[4]

[4] Proclus *TP* I 4, 19, 23-20, 25.

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The interesting thing for our purposes is that the *Chaldaean Oracles* and Plato are set on a par, as representatives of a direct revelation of truth "in an unveiled way". This amounts to saying that theurgy is coextensive with philosophical speculation, the latter being scientific, the former religious. It can be shown, however, that in Proclus' case, this does not mean that theurgy became more important than philosophy. Quite the contrary: the truth of the revelation of the *Oracles* is always judged on the basis of Plato's scientific doctrines, not the other way around.[5]

The same can be inferred about Damascius' way of dealing with theurgy. Damascius himself wrote a history of the late Academy, titled *Vita Isidori*, in which he explains how after the death of Proclus, the school was in decay and had a really bad reputation, especially because of its predilection for theurgy and neglect of philosophy. Damascius seems to have been the one who set things right by reinstating the balance between philosophy and theurgy (also called hieratic practice). As he writes in his commentary on Plato's *Phaedo*, the relationship between the two has always been going back and forth between two extremes:

> To some philosophy is primary, for example, Porphyry and Plotinus and a great many other philosophers; to others hieratic practice, for example, Iamblichus, Syrianus, Proclus, and the hieratic school generally. Plato, however, recognizing that strong arguments can be advanced from both sides, has united the two into one single truth by calling the philosopher a "Bacchus" (*Phaedo* 69 D 1); for by using the notion of a man who has detached himself from genesis as an intermediate term, we can identify the one with the other. (Damascius, *In Phaedonem* I, § 172, 1-5, tr. Westerink)

This passage shows that Damascius did indeed want to establish a balance between the two. His remark that "Plato has united the two" is a direct appeal to the authority of the founder of the school to prove the point. It is, thus, safe to say that, in contrast to his immediate predecessors, Damascius re-established the importance of philosophical discourse, without doing away with theurgy. Yet, here again, the balance between the two means that the foundational insights are laid by philosophy and then confirmed by hieratic texts:

> Just as the other arts and sciences appeal to philosophy for corroboration, philosophy resorts to hieratic science to confirm her own doctrines. (Damascius, *In Phaed.* II, § 109, 1-3, tr. Westerink)

[5] Cf. Gerd Van Riel, Le divin Platon: texte et sacralité dans le néoplatonisme grec, in D. De Smet, G. de Callatay, J.M.F. Van Reeth (eds.), *Al-Kitab: la sacralité du texte dans le monde de l'Islam*, Bruxelles (Société belge d'études orientales), 2004, 83-92.

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This means, I take it, that the scientific theology of philosophy does have a distinct epistemic priority: its doctrines are confirmed by the sacred texts, not founded by them (contrary to what is at stake, e.g., in the Judeo-Christian or Islamic tradition, where reason is used to explain holy Scripture). Consequently, then, if one climbs up towards unification with the highest principle, this should be argued for, not just by having recourse to theurgy, but by philosophical reflection, which is then confirmed by hieratic practice.

2. *Via Negativa* and Reversal of Discourse

This brings us to the second way in which Neoplatonism can be called a mystical doctrine: not by having recourse to secret theological doctrines, but by philosophical discourse itself. From Plotinus onwards, the Neoplatonists have stressed the apophatic nature of their determinations of the first principle. How do we reach the One?—asks Plotinus at the end of his treatise titled *On the Knowing Hypostases and That Which is Beyond*. The answer is short but says it all: "Take away everything" (Ἄφελε πάντα, Plot., *Enn.* V 3 [49], 17, 38). And when, in the hands of Syrianus and Proclus, the *Parmenides* comes to be read as a treatise on philosophical theology, the whole analysis of the first principle is built on the negations Plato's *Parmenides* puts forward in what is called the first hypothesis. In this way, Neoplatonic theology is negative theology:

> It is better, as Plato did, to stick to the negations, and to indicate through them the transcendent superiority of the One, namely that it is not intelligible nor intellective, nor any other of those things that we cognize by our pluralized conceptualization (δι' ἐπιβολῆς μεριστῆς). For as the One is the cause of all things, it is nothing of all things. (Proclus, *In Parm.* VI 1108, 19-29)

The first One can only be discussed in a negative way: it is not many, not divided, not in time, etc.; it cannot even have being, as Plato concludes. And even the name "One" would be too much to affirm—as a name, this label remains attached to our conceptualization, and has no referent in the reality "up there". Hence, Proclus asserts that it is not possible to grasp the ineffable by reason:

> It does not come as a surprise, then, that those who want to know the ineffable by reason, render reason itself impossible: any knowledge that tries to grasp an object to which it is not connected, destroys its own power. If for example we were to say that sense perception connects to the object of knowledge, it would render itself

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> impossible; or that knowledge connects to the intelligible; and likewise with all other forms of cognition. So, if there would be a rational account of the ineffable, it would constantly undermine itself and be in conflict with itself.[6]

Damascius reiterates this, by saying that in itself, the One should be called "nothing" rather than "one" (Damascius, *DP* I, 6, 16-8, 5), and he applies the same to the ineffability of the Ineffable (which in his system transcends the level of the One):

> Perhaps the absolutely ineffable is ineffable in the sense that one cannot even state of it that it is ineffable. (Damascius, *DP* I, 10, 22-24)

If we want to approach the ineffable principle, it can only be reached through a mystical experience. As Proclus points out:

> We must honour this cause by silence, and by the unity that precedes silence, so that it may shine upon our souls the appropriate share of the mystic goal. (Proclus, *TP* III 7, 30, 7-10)

But if the negations mean nothing, then why do we need them? In answering this, Proclus gives an interesting and important clue about the connection between negations and affirmations. First of all, the negations are designed to indicate, *ex effectibus*, how reality derives from the ineffable principle. This principle is so powerful that, just by being there (τῷ εἶναι μόνῳ παράγειν, Proclus, *In Parm.* VII, 1167, 30), reality produces itself as an emanation from it. It is like a compressed existence of everything at once, which is gradually decompressed and plurified so as to constitute reality. The negations may not be determiners of the first principle itself, yet they do indicate the realms that first derive their existence from the ineffable One:

> As far as I am concerned, I have the impression that by this second mode [i.e., the way of negations], Plato reveals the procession of all other things out of the First, and primordially the procession of the divine realms. On the basis of that, the First is transcendent to all the things it produces, because a cause always surpasses its effects. And on the basis of that, it is nothing of all things, as everything proceeds from it. (Proclus, *TP* II 5, 37, 19-25)

[6] Proclus, *TP* II 10, 64, 2-9: Καὶ θαυμαστὸν οὐδὲν τὸ ἄρρητον τῷ λόγῳ γνωρίζειν ἐθέλοντας εἰς τὸ ἀδύνατον περιάγειν τὸν λόγον, ἐπεὶ καὶ πᾶσα γνῶσις τῷ μηδὲν αὐτῇ διαφέροντι γνωστῷ συναπτομένη τὴν ἑαυτῆς ἀπόλλυσι δύναμιν· καὶ γὰρ τὴν αἴσθησιν εἰ τοῦ ἐπιστητοῦ λέγοιμεν, ἑαυτὴν ἀναιρήσει, καὶ τὴν ἐπιστήμην εἰ τοῦ νοητοῦ, καὶ ἑκάστην τῶν γνώσεων· ὥστε καὶ εἰ λόγος εἴη τοῦ ἀρρήτου, περὶ ἑαυτῷ καταβαλλόμενος οὐδὲν παύεται καὶ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν διαμάχεται.

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The negations are thus designed, in their specific order, as indications of the order of procession. In other words: those attributes that are negated about the One can be affirmed about the realms that posit themselves beneath the first principle. The key to the order in which these attributes come into existence is provided by the second hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*, in which the negations of the first are taken up as affirmations. If it makes no sense to say that the One *is*, as stated in the negations of the first hypothesis, then this means that being is something that emanates from the One, i.e., as an affirmation in the second hypothesis. That allows Proclus to state that the affirmations are *produced* by the negations:

> As the One is the cause of everything, so are the negations the cause of the affirmations.[7]

Thus, the Neoplatonists' *via negativa* presupposes a clear-cut and precisely ordered *via affirmativa*. If the negative way were the only one, then it would make no difference what one negates. One might say of the highest principle that is it not being, not intelligible, but equally that it is not mud or tooth or worm, etc. There would be no urge to negate one thing rather than another. Yet in a *via negativa* the importance of the order of the negations is paramount because of its link with the *via affirmativa*. No one will negate that God is dust-like, as it makes no sense to affirm the dustlikeness of God in the first place. We need a clear succession of those terms that are eligible for being negated, in a logical order which reflects the ontological position of the realities indicated by them. Those realities are the bearers of the affirmations of the attributes that are denied of the One, in a strict parallel between negations and affirmations. The affirmations are summed up in the *Parmenides*, whereby each of them constitutes a distinct level of divine existence. Despite the emphasis that is put on the insufficiency of our concepts, this mechanism of the relationship between negations and affirmations indicates the importance of our concepts after all. The negations and affirmations in the *Parmenides* constitute a logical and ontological hierarchy of those concepts that bring us to the point where the rational account undermines itself, which we would never reach without the affirmations. This means that, ultimately, the Neoplatonists' mystical experience (in the ineffability of the highest principle) relies on their philosophical analysis (in affirmative theology leading up to the negations). We shall have to come back to this.

[7] Proclus, *In Parm.* VI 1075, 14-15. See also *In Parm.* VI 1075, 26-29 and 1076, 23-24; *TP* II 10, 63, 8-17.

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3. The Question of Scepticism Revisited

We have seen earlier that the late Neoplatonists recognized different theological approaches to divine truth. Damascius often points out that the different theologies provide different answers to a question. The point is not that they are to be disbelieved, but rather that philosophical inquiry and argument must be the judge, not so much in order to decide who is right, but to discern that they are all expressions of a truth that lies beyond their reach. This truth, Damascius says, is known only to the gods:

> Someone could adduce evidence for either hypothesis from the theologies: from the Chaldaean and Orphic he could maintain the second thesis, but from the Egyptian and from the Phoenician the first. The gods alone would know the truth. But let this point be the end of our deliberation concerning these matters. Perhaps we shall make some investigation again concerning them.[8]

This echoes a point that was made by Plato himself, namely that our human knowledge is not sufficient to understand all reality. In the *Parmenides*, one of the self-criticisms of Plato's theory of ideas has it that we cannot know the true nature of the ideas, as that would require a divine viewpoint.[9] And in his many references to the traditional gods, Plato always leaves open the question of their nature, as we cannot know such things.[10] That does not prevent Plato, however, from scrutinizing the gods' nature or the ideas. It is more like a *caveat* that indicates that there will always be more to it than what our human capacities can achieve.

Also, in the case of Damascius, this *caveat* does not mean that rational discourse, or philosophy, has no role to play. Reason remains a true guide to the contemplation of truth. This may become clear, for instance, from Damascius' discussion of the principles of limit and the unlimited (πέρας and ἄπειρον), which stem from Plato's *Philebus*, but which have an equivalent in different theological traditions: the Orphics talk about aether and Chaos that come after Chronos, the *Chaldaean Oracles* want there to be a dyad of father and power after the one god, etc.[11] According to Damascius, these terminologies are interchangeable:

[8] Damascius, *DP* II 212, 13-19: Ἔχοι δ᾽ ἄν τις ἑκατέρᾳ ὑποθέσει μαρτύρια ἐπαγαγεῖν ἀπὸ τῶν θεολογιῶν, ἀπὸ μὲν τῆς χαλδαϊκῆς τε καὶ ὀρφικῆς βεβαιῶν τὴν δευτέραν, ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς αἰγυπτίας καὶ τῆς Φοινίκων τὴν προτέραν. Τὸ μὲν οὖν ἀληθὲς αὐτοὶ ἂν εἰδεῖεν οἱ θεοί· ἡμῖν δὲ μέχρι τοῦδε διηπορήσθω περὶ τούτων· τάχα γὰρ ἂν καὶ αὖθις αὐτῶν ποιησόμεθά τινα ζήτησιν.

[9] Plato, *Parm.* 134 b-e.

[10] See, e.g., Plato, *Tim.* 40 d-e; *Phaedrus* 246 e.

[11] Cf. Damascius, *DP* II 24, 1-24: "Let us now say something about this subject, opposition. Should we then, as virtually all philosophers and even more theologians, hold that the dyad should be placed after the celebrated first principle, also place the dyad here, speaking now

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> As, therefore, monad and limit and father and subsistence and aether, if you like, are all different from each other among the determinate realities in this world below, just as their names in fact indicate, yet in the higher realm they are all illustrations or symbols that belong to a unique nature, so too is the One [such a symbol], even if it is different from each of these [symbols], and yet there, the One is also a manifestation of this same nature. (tr. Rappe)[12]

The terminology does not seem to matter; what matters is that we must inquire, because our λόγος needs to understand things:

> This is the origin of its also being called the One-many, because it contains in its own many the complete cause of the things that proceed from it by means of every division. And thus the Chaldaeans call it the "Source of Sources", and Orpheus calls it "Metis, pregnant with the seed of the gods", and the Phoenicians call it the "Cosmic Aion", since it has gathered all things into itself. But we are accustomed to attributing these names to the lower limit of the intelligibles, whereas the intelligible is One and being together, yet this is One-many but not One-Being. Plato showed that the One-Being is the indefinite dyad, but not the One *absolutum*. Yet our reason seeks further the nature of this so-called absolute One-many, which is not the One-Being.[13]

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as we are attempting, quite literally? And why not, someone might aver. For what ought to have proceeded after the One, if not the two, and after the monad, the dyad, and in this way for the remaining number to proceed? This, at least, is [what Orpheus] has in mind when he brings in aether and chaos after Chronos. The gods [that is, the *Chaldaean Oracles*] reveal the father and the power as the sole dyad after the one god, and almost all traditional theologies agree in doing the same. But apart from [the weight of tradition], the argument itself demands [this view], since Being is from the limit and the unlimited, as Plato says in the *Philebus* and Philolaus says in his *On Nature*, and in general, since the concepts of "one" and "being" are different, Being should not be the same thing as the One. And yet Being participates in the One; therefore it possesses what is not one, as well."

[12] Damascius, *DP* II 10, 3-12: Ὡς οὖν μονὰς καὶ πέρας καὶ πατὴρ καὶ ὕπαρξις καὶ αἰθήρ, εἰ βούλει, ἐν τούτοις μὲν τοῖς διωρισμένοις ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλο καθάπερ καὶ τὰ ὀνόματα ἔχει, ἐκεῖ δὲ μιᾶς φύσεως πάντα ἐστὶ παραδείγματα ἢ σύμβολα, οὕτω καὶ τὸ ἕν, εἰ καὶ ἀλλὸ παρ᾽ ἕκαστον τούτων, ἀλλ᾽ ἐκεῖ τῆς αὐτῆς ἔνδειγμα καὶ τοῦτο φύσεως. See also *DP* III 109, 4-14.

[13] Damascius, *DP* II 210, 6-17: ὅθεν καὶ ἓν πολλὰ λέγεται, ὡς συνειληφὸς κατὰ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πολλὰ τὴν πάμφορον αἰτίαν τῶν ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ προϊόντων καθ᾽ ὁποιονοῦν μερισμόν· ὅθεν πηγὴν μὲν πηγῶν αὐτὸ Χαλδαίων παῖδες ἀνευφημοῦσιν, Ὀρφεὺς δὲ Μῆτιν σπέρμα φέροντα θεῶν, Φοίνικες δὲ αἰῶνα κοσμικόν, ὡς πάντα ἐν ἑαυτῷ συνῃρηκότα. Ἀλλὰ ταῦτα τῷ πέρατι τῶν νοητῶν ἐπάγειν εἰώθαμεν· τὸ δὲ νοητόν, ἓν καὶ ὂν τὸ συναμφότερον, τοῦτο δὲ ἓν πολλὰ καὶ οὐχ ἓν ὄν. Ὁ δὲ Πλάτων τὸ ἓν ὂν ἐδείκνυ πλῆθος ἄπειρον, ἀλλ᾽ οὐχὶ μόνον τὸ ἕν. Ἐπιζητεῖ δὲ ὅμως ὁ λόγος καὶ τοῦτο τὸ ἓν πολλὰ ἁπλῶς λεγόμενον, ἀλλ᾽ οὐχὶ ἓν ὄν. See also *DP* II 174, 1-11: "After these [investigations into procession], we must inquire about the intelligible and that which is called the completely unified, and ask if it contains a differentiation in itself and an order that [consists in] a first, middle and final pleroma, or whether as the philosophers say it consists of Being and life and intellect, or whether [its composition is] as the theologians say, who in various ways fill out the intelligible principles, or as the Chaldaeans say, who speak reverently of the paternal triad. If we intend to pursue this discussion skillfully, we must take

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Ultimately, then, philosophy has the final say: *our reason seeks further*. It judges the merits of all terminologies (including Plato's, which has now lost its privileged position) in terms of accessing the truth that lies beyond language. In this operation, however, rational language cannot ultimately maintain itself, as Proclus had already pointed out (see above).

Does this destroy the power of language and reason altogether, as the aforementioned reference to scepticism might suggest? No: without this philosophical enquiry, the mystic would never attain the stage where discourse is turned against itself. The object of mystical experience, whatever it may be, is never without context. It is not as if anyone could go and sit out there, waiting for a mystical experience to happen, apart from their engagement within a specific cognitive and dogmatic tradition. The Sufi mystics strive for perfection of their worship of Allah, mediated through the text of the *Quran*, just like Jewish mystics come to an elevated understanding of the revelation of the *Torah*, and Christian mystics worship the Triune God. Likewise, Neoplatonic mystics come to unity with the First Principle, or the One, which is not completely unknown to them. On a psychological level, one can obviously maintain that, in the end, they have all had a similar experience in which they have united with a point of no reference. Yet they would not have come so far without the rationality of their theological or philosophical doctrines. In Damascius' case, this means more in particular that he is following the lines of the late Neoplatonic system as established by Syrianus and Proclus. That is the rational and cognitive starting point he always presupposes. He then continually interrupts this system, by stating that this and that discursive analysis cannot apply literally to a level where no distinctions can be made.

If one wants to call this a "scepticism", one should eschew the easy assumption that Damascius would take the standpoint of the Ancient sceptics, let alone of Hume's scepticism. He is certainly not saying that there is an epistemological problem with the way in which our sense perception and cognition come into contact with the world. But it is not even a case of mitigated scepticism, which would have it that rationality cannot unravel the final mysteries of reality. For rationality does have a role to play. The discursive analysis of the different levels of the system is not doubted, not even at the highest levels of the system. Damascius elaborates new distinctions on this level, precisely to indicate that one can and should climb very high up, before λόγος is overturned. Whereas Proclus was saying that the One as a First Principle is ineffable, Damascius tells us that "One" still is a term that has a definite meaning; contrary to his predecessors, he even accepts a differentiation between two levels of the One:

up again the discussion surrounding the investigation of multiplicity and of plurality. Then perhaps [we can discuss] whether plurality pertains to that intelligible order or not, and how it would or would not pertain."

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the One-Many and the Many-One, in order to explain how multiplicity can derive from the existence of the One (Damascius, *DP* II, 39, 8-25). That is hardly the language of a sceptic. Ultimately, he positions the Ineffable as the first principle above and beyond the One, and then of course he has to question its nature as a principle, as something entirely separate from the system cannot be seen as a principle in the literal sense (which is the opening question of the *De Principiis:* Damascius, *DP* I, 1, 4-2, 20). It is true that Damascius also emphasizes the fact that all discursive language about the intelligible world (which by definition transcends the discursive intellect) can only be an "indication" (ἔνδειξις), and that we should not "count the intelligible on our fingers" (Damascius, *DP* III 136, 8-9). In that sense, too, one could maintain that he reverses λόγος on the level of the intelligible. But that does not do away with the fact that the discursive analyses are taken seriously *as indications.* In other words, they are still the best way to explain to our own mind how the intelligible world operates.

4. Mysticism and "Open Metaphysics"

Where does this access to mysticism leave us, finally, in our philosophical quest for understanding the world? I believe it works only in an *open metaphysical system.* The term "open metaphysics" usually refers to an anti-dogmatic metaphysics that does not accept one single truth claim and which thus allows for diverse and manifold answers to metaphysical questions. In doing so, it is thoroughly immanentistic and tends to dismiss transcendence, as the recognition of transcendence always seems to lead to the acceptance of an absolute, transcendent realm. Or, as Jan Patočka formulates it:

> Transcendence is, fatally and irreversibly, converted into a transcendent, supra-worldly reality, a transcendent divinity.[14]

I allow myself here to give the term "open metaphysics" a different meaning, based on the way in which a metaphysical system relates to its own dogmatic principles, while at the same time accepting the fundamental role of transcendence. I take it that the claims of an open metaphysics can be exclusive and dogmatic; the openness depends on the cognitive status of the metaphysical principles in place. A "closed metaphysics" would be a metaphysical system that allows one to have a final access to the truth, such as Aristotelian metaphysics. It should in principle be possible to grasp

[14] Jan Patočka, *Sebrané spisy,* 1: *Peče o duši,* I [*Collected Works,* vol. 1: *Care of the Soul,* Part I], Praha, Oikumene, 1996, 311, quoted by Johann P. Arnason, The Idea of Negative Platonism: Jan Patočka's Critique and Recovery of Metaphysics, *Thesis Eleven,* 90 (2007), 6-26 [here: p. 12].

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the full truth about the first principle (the unmoved mover, self-thinking thought), and even if Aristotle admits that we cannot contemplate all the time, he would accept that, if and when our contemplation is successful, we do become gods by performing this divine activity.[15] One could represent this type of metaphysics as a pyramid with a closed top, where the principles gradually become more encompassing, until one finally reaches the highest principle itself.

By contrast, an open metaphysics is a system that has an open top, where our cognition leads us towards metaphysical principles, but where the ultimate meaning of reality remains hidden, as there is no closed rooftop. In my reading, this is the view of Plato: his metaphysics is not a closed hierarchical system that would culminate in our knowledge of the idea of the Good—even though I am well aware of the fact that many interpreters are convinced of the opposite. I think, rather, that Plato's Good is ultimately indeterminate. We have some markers along theway, as Plato says in the *Philebus:* as the Good cannot be captured in one form, it reveals itself through three instances at its threshold (ἐπὶ τοῖς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ προθύροις, *Phil.* 64 c): beauty, proportion and truth (*Phil.* 64 a-66 a). This allows Plato to say, for instance, that "the force of the Good has taken refuge in an alliance with the nature of the beautiful" (64 e). That amounts to saying that the Good remains hidden for us, and that no one can claim to have final knowledge about the highest principle, which is situated "beyond being" (*Rep.* VI, 509 c). The metaphysical system is thus open-ended, whereby there is always more to be said than what we have reached.[16] The same basic view has been taken over in Neoplatonism: the names of "One" and "Good" are not determinations of the First Principle, but only names derived from our own categorial understanding, whereby the true nature of the highest principle will always transcend these notions.

I believe a closed metaphysical system leaves no room for mysticism. For indeed, the rules of the game of this type of metaphysics allow for a full coverage of reality by our cognitive faculties. An open metaphysics, on the other hand, is the enabling precondition for mysticism: a mystic must acknowledge the fact that our knowledge always falls short of fully revealing the nature of the highest principle. It has to do, in other words, with the recognition of

[15] See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* X 8, 1178 b 20-32.

[16] Similarly, as Arnason (Negative Platonism, 19) indicates, Patočka does allow for a positive role to be played by an "appeal of transcendence" (Patočka, *Péče o duši* I, 333, quoted by Arnason), which opens the way to a questioning of the ultimate meaning of human existence. Patočka does not allow for an objectification of this transcendence, which indeed is a necessary condition for having an open metaphysics. My point is that every tradition, be it intellectual, religious, ideological or philosophical, has its own objectified tools (vocabulary, conceptualisation, etc.) by which it reaches this point of transcendence. Hence, no access to transcendence will ever be possible without an objectified referential framework through which reality is interpreted.

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transcendence, and of a *via negativa* and *via eminentiae*, whereby the highest is always seen as more than we can achieve. Is this, ultimately, a form of scepticism? No: as we have seen, a *via negativa* presupposes that there are things to be negated. And negating an affirmation comes down to recognizing the value of the affirmation in the first place. Accepting the terms of the negation implies an ontological promotion of the reality that is negated. If a mystic denies God's being or beauty, he or she is saying that being or beauty is a valuable marker along theway, that they are intelligible realities of high rank which we need to unravel in full before it will even make sense to deny them of God. In that sense, mysticism exists by the grace of positive affirmations, the nature of which needs to be examined by reason.

That is where negations and affirmations play their role: they are markers, arrows that point us in a direction, and which we can and must fully unravel in a rational way before we finally surrender to the mystical experience. The Wittgensteinian dichotomy is not an accurate description of what is going on. The point is not whether one is either rational or mystical. If you do not apply both, then mysticism does not work.

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TRANSCENDING TRANSCENDENCE: THE MYSTERY OF GOD IN PART IV OF ST DENYS THE AREOPAGITE'S *ON THE DIVINE NAMES*

Miklós Vassányi

Abstract

In this paper, I am looking into how Pseudo-Denys the Areopagite articulates the concept of divine bounty in Part 4 of the De divinis nominibus, and arguing that his reasoning is an intellectual initiation into the mystery of God. As is known, Denys first describes God in Platonic terms as "the Good" here, gradually enlarges this divine name into the hendiadyoin-like structure "the Beautiful-and-Good" and argues for the identity of the Good and the One in the wake of Proclus and Plotinus. I intend to analyze on what grounds Denys proves that God is good, and what he exactly means by divine bounty and beauty. This analysis of the Dionysian concept of God as the Beautiful-and-Good will allow us to realize that there is a fundamental tension in this openly Platonizing idea. I shall name this tendency of productive contradiction or creative tension in God—especially recognizable in the Dionysian idea of divine Love—the transcending of transcendence, and on this basis, I shall try to characterize the relationship between Denys' Platonic inspiration and Christian identity.

1. Proposition

In this paper, I would like to look into how Pseudo-Denys the Areopagite articulates the concept of divine bounty in Part 4 of the *De divinis nominibus*, and to argue that his reasoning is an intellectual initiation into the mystery of God. As is known, Denys first describes God in Platonic terms as "the Good" (τἀγαθὸν) in that text, and gradually enlarges this divine name into the *hendiadyoin*-like structure "the Beautiful-and-Good" (τὸ καλὸν

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καὶ ἀγαθόν, kalon-kai-agathon). Arguing for the identity of the Good and the One in the wake of Proclus (*Elementatio theologica* 12-13) and Plotinus (*Enneads* 54),[1] he formulates his theodicy based on the doctrine of the accidental existence, *parhypostasis*, of evil following chiefly Proclus' *De malorum subsistentia*.[2] Leaving the question of theodicy aside here, I will try

[1] While Plotinus and Proclus perform an outright identification of the One and the Good, there is at least one indication that Plato had already done the same. One of Aristotle's direct disciples, the musical theoretician Aristoxenus of Tarentum (*floruit* around the middle of the 3rd century BC) casually remarks that in Aristotle's account, Plato used to teach in his lectures that the Good is the One: …Ἀριστοτέλης ἀεὶ διηγεῖτο τοὺς πλείστους τῶν ἀκουσάντων παρὰ Πλάτωνος τὴν περὶ τἀγαθοῦ ἀκρόασιν παθεῖν. …ὅτε δὲ φανείησαν οἱ λόγοι περὶ μαθημάτων καὶ ἀριθμῶν καὶ γεωμετρίας καὶ ἀστρολογίας καὶ τὸ περὰς ὅτι ἀγαθόν ἐστιν ἕν, παντελῶς οἶμαι παράδοξόν τι ἐφαίνετο αὐτοῖς (Ἁρμονικὰ στοιχεῖα / *Elementa harmonica*, Book 2, 30-31 = Henry S. Macran (ed.), *The Harmonics of Aristoxenus*, Edited with translation, notes, introduction and index of words, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1902, 122; cited passage mistranslated on page 187).

[2] Denys' dependence on Proclus for the theory of evil was noticed as soon as the *editio princeps* of Guillelmus de Moerbeka's 13th-century Latin translation of *De malorum subsistentia* had been published by Victor Cousin in 1820 (*Procli philosophi Platonici opera e codd. mss. Biblioth. Reg. Parisiensis, tum primum edidit, lectionis varietate, versione Latina, commentariis illustravit Victor Cousin*, Tomus primus, continens tria opuscula de libertate, providentia et malo, Parisiis, J.-M. Eberhart, 181-288). Namely, the German church historian J. G. V. Engelhardt wrote in the same year that "Venerunt interea ad manus, quae hucusque inediti in bibliotheca Parisina latuerunt, tres Procli libri, in quibus de malo vnus, quos edidit Victor Cousin hoc ipso anno, eosque ad illustrandum et explicandum hunc nostrum de malo locum <=*De divinis nominibus* IV, 18-35> multum facientes" (*Dissertatio de Dionysio plotinizante, praemissis observationibvs de historia theologiae mysticae rite tractanda*, Erlangae, Typis Hilpertianis, 1820, 76). This is a clear acknowledgment that the *Tria opuscula*, and among them especially the *De malorum subsistentia*, had been the sources of Denys' theodicy. Three years later Engelhardt published a full, two-volume German translation of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, in which he flatly stated that Denys' theory of evil had entirely been drawn from Proclus: "Seine <=of Dionysius> ganze aus dem Proclus geschoepfte dialektisch-spitzfindige Lehre vom Boesen findet er in der Stelle vom guten und argen Baume, Matth. 7, 18" (*Die angeblichen Schriften des Areopagiten Dionysius, uebersetzt und mit Abhandlungen begleitet von J. G. V. Engelhardt*, Sulzbach, J. E. von Seidel, 1823, Volume I, 271). He also offered a good line of historical reasoning for why Denys had utilized Proclus in general (*ibidem*, 212-214).—Around the middle of the century, then, the French scholar Léon Montet concluded that the Areopagite depends on Proclus for his idea of ontological hierarchy, and on Plotinus and Proclus for his theory of evil: "pour le faux Denys comme pour Plotin et Proclus, … c'est … la même doctrine ou plutôt la même négation du mal…" (*Des livres du Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite*, Paris, Joubert, 1848, 115).—Next, *De malorum subsistentia* was amply proved to have been Denys' immediate source in a bipartite 1895 article written by the Jesuit scholar Joseph Stiglmayr (Der Neuplatoniker Proclus als Vorlage des sogen. Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Uebel, *Historisches Jahrbuch* <der Görres-Gesellschaft> 16/2, 253-273; sequel *ibidem*, 721-748). Stiglmayr points out that Denys borrowed ideas "directly and often slavishly" from Proclus (*ibidem*, 257), and demonstrates step by step Denys' dependence on *De malorum subsistentia*, arguing convincingly that Denys looted Proclus' text in a desultory manner, very often depriving arguments from their context: "Dabei wird natürlich manches verschoben, umgebogen, und zerknittert; statt des feinen Organismus der Vorlage <=Proclus> erhalten wir zusammengewürfelte Bruchstücke" (*ibidem*, 733).—Independently of Stiglmayr, Tübingen scholar Hugo Koch essentially reinforced the same thesis in an article published in the same

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to analyse only the specific grounds Denys on which proves that God is good, and what exactly he means by divine bounty and beauty. The analysis of the Dionysian concept of God as the Beautiful-and-Good will allow us to realize that there is a fundamental tension or even twoity in this openly Platonizing idea. I shall name this tendency of productive contradiction or creative tension in God—especially recognizable in the Dionysian idea of divine Love—the transcending of transcendence, and shall try to characterize the relationship between his Platonic inspiration and his Christian identity, as mirrored in Part 4 of the *De divinis nominibus*.

2. Principles of Denys' Theology of the Good

The fundamentals of Dionysian positive (causality-based) theology are exposited in Parts 1 and 2 of *On the Divine Names.* Here, Denys is making a preliminary difference between, as it were, an ultra-transcendent fundament and an outward-oriented periphery in God. A distinction is hereby made between a unificationist fundamental theology and the trinitarian theology of the divine persons. Unification *(henōsis)* is for Denys the first determinative momentum in the divine nature: he anticipates here that God is, in a first approach, the (Plotinian-Proclean, perhaps even Platonic) One. But a full-fledged theory of God as the One is not offered in Parts 1 or 2—this is developed later, gradually, in the course of Parts 8 to 12, with a climax in Part 13, where it is also at once abandoned for an open-ended vista of the infinity of God.[3] Part 3 being, in essence, a call to prayer and a eulogy of Denys' unidentified master Hierotheos, the first entirely worked out interpretation of a divine name comes in Part 4. This is the theology of the Good conceived as an eminent cause. It is one remarkable feature of this causal theology that as the text advances, it increasingly attributes even the character of universal efficient cause to the Good—which is at the same time also considered to

year, though he lay greater accent on Denys' creative differences from Proclus than probably any author before him (Proklus als Quelle des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Bösen, *Philologus* 54 (1895), 438-454).—The most significant philological development on Proclus' *De malorum subsistentia* today is the English translation with extensive introduction and notes by Jan Opsomer – Carlos Steel, *Proclus, On the Existence of Evils*, London, Duckworth–Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003 (Ancient Commentators on Aristotle).

[3] On the gradual rise to a philosophical climax in *De divinis nominibus*, see Endre von Ivánka's classic *Plato Christianus. Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter*, Einsiedeln, Johannes Verlag, 1964, Chapter 6: "Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita," 225-289. From the recent literature, see Christian Schäfer's *The Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite. An Introduction to the Structure and the Content of the Treatise* On the Divine Names, Leiden–Boston, Brill, 2006 (Philosophia antiqua, vol. XCIX), *passim*, but in particular 84-88.

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be a final cause by our author (and by the Peripatetic tradition in general).[4] In a way, this identity of the efficient and the final cause already prefigures the fundamental circular pattern of the universal motion induced by God, in Dionysian metaphysics: the cosmic cycle of outflow from, and return into Him. But the important point for now is that Denys consecrates his first serious theological analysis to the Good—and not to the One, nor to Being—conceived as the first efficient and final cause of all that there is.

It is a presupposition of Denys' that God is good intrinsically and by nature, insofar as creativity seems an essential feature of God; and in that it is self-evidently good that there be a broad range of different existents. In other words, God is good essentially insofar as He is the Creator. An analytical description of the seamless spectrum of created beings is therefore part and parcel of Denys' theology of the Good because the Good and Being are in correlation: It is characteristic of the Good to produce Being, and all Being characteristically turns towards and strives after the Good.

This correlation helps us to fine-tune our understanding of the Good, which, in order to qualify as Good, must first reveal its goodness by producing Being. Hence although for Denys, God conceived as the Good takes precedence over God conceived as (the source of) Being—which is the subject of Part 5 of *On the Divine Names*—in the order of discussion, still the Good may theoretically be no more than the paramount aspect of God, the first divine attribute in the order of human cognition, the *primum quoad nos*. In other words, the Good is a facet of God which depends on the goodness of Being; the notion that Being as such is more perfect—and so more valuable—than non-being seems an implicit but absolute axiological premise underlying Denys' system of values. That premise itself may rely on an understanding of perfection in terms of reality, if perfection is considered to be the most complete realization of a thing's potencies.

On the other hand, in historical terms, the Good and Being had already been brought into a relationship of cause and effect by Plato in Book 6 of the *Republic*, where he asserts that the Good causes at least the intelligible realities to be.[5] Later, Plotinus, in *Ennead* 1, 8, also brought goodness and being into correlation as he suggested that Being and the realm beyond it (that is, the One) are intrinsically good.[6] Proclus, then, broadened Plato's perspective

[4] Aristotle himself calls God ἡ ἀρίστη οὐσία in *Metaphysics* XII/9 (1074 B 20), describing the divine thinking as τὸ ἄριστον, and the object of divine thinking as τὸ θειότατον καὶ τιμιώτατον (*ibidem*, 1074 B 33 and 26, respectively).

[5] Καὶ τοῖς γιγνωσκομένοις τοίνυν μὴ μόνον τὸ γιγνώσκεσθαι φάναι ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ παρεῖναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ εἶναί τε καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν ὑπ᾽ ἐκείνου αὐτοῖς προσεῖναι, οὐκ οὐσίας ὄντος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, ἀλλ᾽ ἔτι ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας πρεσβείᾳ καὶ δυνάμει ὑπερέχοντος. (*Respublica* 509 B 6-9)

[6] Εἰ δὴ ταῦτά ἐστι τὰ ὄντα καὶ τὸ ἐπέκεινα τῶν ὄντων, οὐκ ἂν ἐν τοῖς οὖσι τὸ κακὸν ἐνείη, οὐδ᾽ ἐν τῷ ἐπέκεινα τῶν ὄντων· ἀγαθὰ γὰρ ταῦτα. (*Quae sint et unde mala?* = *Ennead* 1, 8, 3, 1-3.) See also *Ennead* 1, 7 where Plotinus, again, correlates the Good and Being: Τὰ δὲ ἄλλα πάντα

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on the dependence of Being on the creativity of the Good as he pointed out in *The Elements of Theology* that absolutely all existence derives from the One-and-Good.[7] In the same manner, he elaborates on Plato when he interprets the Analogy of the Sun in Book 2 of his *Platonic Theology*, departing from Plato's more restricted understanding of the Good as the cause of the *noēta* only, to arrive at the universal efficient causality of the Good.[8] This intimate connection Platonism had established between the Good and Being was certainly noticed and self-evidently utilized by Denys as an important sideline to the Gospel's teaching that only God may be named good (Mark 10, 18; Luke 18, 19). In terms of further Christian sources, he could draw on Origen's fundamental as well as Scriptural theology for this divine name (*De principiis* 1, 2, 13: *principalis bonitas sine dubio Pater est*;[9] and *In evangelium Johannis* 1, 35 [253]: τοῦ δὲ πατρὸς ... εὐεργετοῦντος, τὴν "ἀγαθὸς" προσηγορίαν ἔργοις δείξοντος),[10] and then on the Cappadocian Fathers.[11]

As Denys starts to articulate his hierarchical ontology, the thesis that the Good and Being are correlated is first exemplified in the class of the angels, who are pure unchanging spiritual beings, immediately emanating from the Good and directed from the very beginning towards the Good. By first addressing

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πρὸς αὐτὸ <τἀγαθὸν> πῶς;Ἢ τὰ μὲν ἄψυχα πρὸς ψυχήν, ψυχὴ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸ διὰ νοῦ.Ἔχει δὲ τι αὐτοῦ τῷ ἕν πως καὶ τῷ ὄν πως ἕκαστον ἔιναι. Καὶ μετέχει δὲ καὶ εἴδους· ὡς οὖν μετέχει τούτων, οὕτω καὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ. (*De bono primo et aliis bonis = Ennead* 1, 7, 2, 1-4.)—An immensely helpful online resource of especially older editions and commentaries of the *Enneads* is found at https://www.john-uebersax.com/plato/enneads.htm

7 § 11: Πάντα τὰ ὄντα πρόεισιν ἀπὸ μιᾶς αἰτίας, τῆς πρώτης. § 12: Πάντων τῶν ὄντων ἀρχὴ καὶ αἰτία πρωτίστη τὸ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν. (E. R. Dodds (ed.), *Proclus, The Elements of Theology*, A Revised Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963, 12 and 14.)

8 Alongside several other statements to the same effect in Book 2, Chapter 7, consider the following comprehensive proposition, which plays up the all-embracing creativity of the Good: Πολλῷ δὴ οὖν μειζόνως τὸ πάσας τὰς τελειότητας ἐν ἑνὶ συνέχον καὶ ὃ μὴ τὶ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν ἀλλ' αὐτοαγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ὑπερπλῆρες, εἰ οἷόν τε φάναι, γεννητικὸν τῶν ὅλων ἔσται καὶ ὑποστατικὸν αὐτῶν, τῷ τῶν πάντων ἐξῃρῆσθαι τὰ πάντα παράγον καὶ τῷ ἀμέθεκτον εἶναι πάντα ὁμοίως τά τε πρῶτα καὶ τὰ ἔσχατα τῶν ὄντων ἀπογεννῶν. (*Theologia Platonica* 2, 7 = H. D. Saffrey – L. G. Westerink (eds.): *Proclus, Théologie platonicienne*, Livre II, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2003, 50.)

9 Paul Koetschau (ed.), *Origenes, Werke* V. Band: *De principiis*, Leipzig, Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1913, 47.

10 Erwin Preuschen (ed.), *Origenes, Werke* IV. Band: *Der Johanneskommentar*, Leipzig, Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1903, 45.

11 Though St Gregory of Nyssa, in a significant passage of *De vita Moysis*, utilizes the term "Beautiful" to designate the divine nature, the context makes it clear that he is referring to divine bounty as opposed to evil: Ἀλλὰ μὴν καλὸν εἶναι τὸ Θεῖον ὡμολόγηται τῇ φύσει· τὸ δὲ πρὸς τὸ καλὸν ἑτεροφυῶς ἔχον, ἄλλο τι παρὰ τὸ καλὸν ἐστί· τὸ δὲ ἔξω τοῦ καλοῦ, ἐν τῇ τοῦ κακοῦ φύσει καταλαμβάνεται (PG 44, 404 C 1-4). Like Denys, St Gregory of Nazianzus also derives divine creativity from goodness in *Oratio 38: In theophania*, 9 as he argues that ἐπεὶ δὲ οὐκ ἤρκει τῇ ἀγαθότητι τοῦτο, τὸ κινεῖσθαι μόνον τῇ ἑαυτῆς θεωρίᾳ, ἀλλ' ἔδει χεθῆναι τὸ ἀγαυὸν καὶ ὁδεῦσαι, ὡς πλείονα εἶναι τὰ εὐεργετούμενα (τοῦτο γὰρ τῆς ἄκρας ἦν ἀγαθότητος), πρῶτον μὲν ἐννοεῖ τὰς ἀγγελικὰς δυνάμεις καὶ οὐρανίους κτλ. (PG 36, 320 C 6-11)

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angelology, the Areopagite actually begins a full induction here in order to prove systematically that God can be called good because absolutely every class of being is good: angels, souls, animals, plants, down to simple matter (in contrast to Plotinus' doctrine). Even the ordered character of celestial mechanics proves that the planetary orbits also derive from the Good[12] Thus, Goodness has a cosmic presence—it is a cosmic Good, overarching and pervading the corporeal universe from one end to the other.

On a deeper level, however, not only are the existing species and genera good in themselves, considered as pure essences, but all conditions of their being—such as identity and difference—are likewise good. Then again, the Good is also benign in a spiritual sense insofar as it is the source of sublime cognition and saving elevation. By virtue of its beneficial irradiation, human souls are systematically upwardly mobile in the frame of a sacred guidance (hierarchy). Their ever growing degree of cognition, which is an enlightenment by the intellectual light of the Good, is just ontological elevation. Denys' anagogically structured text itself is certainly designed to

[12] This passage in *On the Divine Names* 4, 4 might go back to Plato's thesis in the *Timaeus* where he postulates that the heavens revolve along a circular path (34 A 1-5) and planetary orbits are perfect circles (38 D 1-E 1) because the structure of the universe is a changing image of an eternally unchanging archetype (οὕτω δὴ γεγενημένος πρὸς τὸ λόγῳ καὶ φρονήσει περιληπτὸν καὶ κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἔχον δεδημιούργηται· τούτων δὲ ὑπαρχόντων αὖ πᾶσα ἀνάγκη τόνδε τὸν κόσμον εἰκόνα τινὸς εἶναι, 29 A 6-B 2). But a passage in the *Philebus* (28 E 2-5) and Book 10 of the *Laws* may have been inspiring for Denys too. Plotinus, then, in the natural philosophical investigations that make up the first three treatises of the second *Ennead*, treats of the indestructibility of the cosmos (2, 1: *De coelo*), reduces the circumvolution of the heavens to the circular self-motion of the Soul as he interprets Plato's *Timaeus* (2, 2: *De motu caeli*), and discusses astrology as irrational belief in the causal powers of the stars and planets (2, 3: *Utrum stellae aliquid agant*). In so doing, however, he never really emphasizes the perfection of the celestial motions—and Denys as a Christian would have had difficulty accepting the existence of a Mind-hypostasis and a Soul-hypostasis anyway (on Plotinus' cosmology in general, see James Wilberding's *Plotinus' Cosmology: A Study of Ennead II.1 (40)*, Oxford, OUP, 2006, 41-70; and Gary M. Gurtler's *Plotinus Ennead IV.4.30-45 & IV.5: Problems Concerning the Soul*, Las Vegas, Parmenides Publishing, 2015, 22-24). Next, Proclus examines the regularity of planetary motions in the introductory part of his *Hypotyposis astronomicarum positionum* (Ὑποτυπώσεις τῶν ἀστρονομικῶν ὑποθέσεων), though in the bulk of his account he is clearly more interested in the technical explanation of the irregularities. On the other hand, his *Elementatio physica* (Στοίχειωσις φυσική) is an axiomatic and geometrical deduction of the indivisibility, immateriality and infinite power of the First Unmoved Mover, ultimately from the concepts of spatial continuity and contiguity, on the basis of Aristotle's *Physics* and *On the Heavens*. This refined but terse reasoning could hardly render Denys enthusiastic. Hence rather than Plotinus or Proclus, Plato himself could inspire Denys here, at least as far as Platonism is concerned. As for Christian cosmic theology, the following long passage in St Gregory of Nyssa's seminal dialogue *De anima et resurrectione (Περὶ ψυχῆς καὶ ἀναστάσεως) could serve as a model for our author: τήν τε ὀξυτάτην τοῦ πόλου περιφορὰν καὶ τῶν ἐντὸς κύκλων τὴν ἐπὶ τὸ ἔμπαλιν κίνησιν, τάς τε ὑποδρομὰς καὶ τὰς συνόδους, καὶ τὰς ἐναρμονίους ἀποστάσεις τῶν ἄστρων· ὁ ταῦτα βλέπων τῷ διανοητικῷ τῆς ψυχῆς ὀφθαλμῷ, ἆρα οὐχὶ φανερῶς ἐκ τῶν φαινομένων διδάσκεται, ὅτι θεία δύναμις ἔντεχνός τε καὶ σοφὴ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐμφαινομένη, καὶ διὰ πάντων ἥκουσα τὰ μέρη συναρμόζει τῷ ὅλῳ...; (PG 46, 26 C 8-28 A 6. Tangentially, see also St Gregory of Nazianzus' Oratio 20: De dogmate et institutione episcoporum*, 11.)

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contribute to such an illumination of the reader's mind. On a larger scale, this Neo-Platonic ascent and return to the Cause of Causes is due to the operation of universal providence, which leaves no unsupervised area in the entire range of existence.

Hence, Being as such is a field whose function it is to display and demonstrate the goodness of its First Cause. Being is therefore essentially revelation for the Areopagite. Even the first emanation, the order of angels, has as its particular mission to reveal the hidden divine essence, the supra-intelligible nucleus of God, in order to give word of the otherwise completely tacit and transcendent centre. In this particular sense, they shed light on and illuminate the Good, by which they are, in turn, intellectually illuminated. Revelation and providence, thus intertwined, alike point to divine bounty as the cause of Being.

3. God as the Beautiful

From Chapter 7 of Part 4, Denys goes on to explain that God conceived as the Good is also beautiful. At this point, our author openly introduces the Platonic theory of participation *(metochē)*, and cites word for word the most detailed description Plato ever gave of the concept of idea, from the *Symposium*.[13] The Biblical God is hereby defined as the Platonic idea of the Beautiful, *to kalon*. This Beautiful is, then, essentially an aspect or variation of the Neo-Platonic One in that it is characterized as a principle of unification—it is simple, so it simplifies and unifies; it exerts an attractive force, whereby it draws together and, again, unifies, especially as a final cause that is an object

[13] *De divinis nominibus* 4, 7: …καλὸν δὲ ὡς πάγκαλον ἅμα καὶ ὑπέρκαλον καὶ ἀεὶ ὂν κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ὡσαύτως καλὸν καὶ οὔτε γιγνόμενον οὔτε ἀπολλύμενον οὔτε αὐξανόμενον οὔτε φθίνον, οὐδὲ τῇ μὲν καλόν, τῇ δὲ αἰσχρὸν οὐδὲ τοτὲ μέν, τοτὲ δὲ οὔ, οὐδὲ πρὸς μὲν τὸ καλόν, πρὸς δὲ τὸ αἰσχρὸν οὔτε ἔνθα μέν, ἔνθα δὲ οὔ ὡς τισὶ μὲν ὂν καλόν, τισὶ δὲ οὐ καλόν, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς αὐτὸ καθ᾽ ἑαυτὸ μεθ᾽ ἑαυτοῦ μονοειδὲς ἀεὶ ὂν καλὸν καὶ ὡς παντὸς καλοῦ τὴν πηγαίαν καλλονὴν ὑπεροχικῶς ἐν ἑαυτῷ προέχον. (Beate R. Suchla [ed.], *Corpus Dionysiacum I. Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita: De divinis nominibus*, Berlin–New York, W. de Gruyter, 1990, 151 = PG 3, 701 D 2-704 A 4.) Cf. *Symposium* 210 E 6-211 B 2: …πρῶτον μὲν ἀεὶ ὂν καὶ οὔτε γιγνόμενον οὔτε ἀπολλύμενον, οὔτε αὐξανόμενον οὔτε φθίνον, ἔπειτα οὐ τῇ μὲν καλόν, τῇ δ᾽ αἰσχρόν, οὐδὲ τοτὲ μέν, τοτὲ δὲ οὔ, οὐδὲ πρὸς μὲν τὸ καλόν, πρὸς δὲ τὸ αἰσχρόν, οὐδ᾽ ἔνθα μὲν καλόν, ἔνθα δὲ αἰσχρόν, ὡς τισὶ μὲν ὂν καλόν, τισὶ δὲ αἰσχρόν· […] ἀλλ᾽ αὐτὸ καθ᾽ αὑτὸ μεθ᾽ αὑτοῦ μονοειδὲς ἀεὶ ὄν, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα πάντα καλὰ ἐκείνου μετέχοντα…—Cryptic references to the *Symposium* are not unique in early Christianity as, for instance, St Gregory of Nyssa also describes this Platonic desire for the transcendent Beautiful in the *De vita Moysis:* Δοκεῖ δέ μοι τὸ τοιοῦτο παθεῖν ἐρωτικῇ τινι διαθέσει πρὸς τὸ φύσει καλὸν τῆς ψυχῆς διατεθείσης, ἣν ἀεὶ ἡ ἐλπὶς ἀπὸ τοῦ ὀφθέντος καλοῦ πρὸς τὸ ὑπερκείμενον ἐπεσπάσατο, διὰ τοῦ πάντοτε καταλαμβανόμενου, πρὸς τὸ κεκρυμμένον αἰεὶ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἐκκαίουσα· ὅθεν ὁ σφοδρὸς ἐραστὴς τοῦ κάλλους τὸ ἀεὶ φαινόμενον ὡς εἰκόνα τοῦ ποθουμένου δεχόμενος, αὐτοῦ τοῦ χαρακτῆρος τοῦ ἀρχετύπου ἐμφορηθῆναι ποθεῖ. (PG 44, 401 D 4-12)

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of desire. The Beautiful is hence not only the One but also the Good as the *kalon-kai-agathon*. Denys here carries out a fusion of leading Platonic ideas which was never made by Plato himself in any written text but which is implied in many passages of Plotinus and Proclus.

Further, this many-faceted One is represented here as a universal generative principle which is also a universal formal cause: It is a source not only of existence but also of essence.[14] This aspect probably accounts for the often-repeated Dionysian thesis that God is *hyperousios*—that He is above the essences of things in an eminent sense, as their continuously creative cause. Therefore, the attribute of supra-essentiality actually emphasizes divine creativity again: God as the Beautiful-and-Good-and-One is a source of essence and existence, unity, universal order and harmony alike. His productive super-eminence is, like that of the Leibnizian *ens extramundanum*, beyond the concatenation of all finite things (which is the world). Since, in this manner, God maintains the universe because of an over-abundance and overflow of Goodness, He, in fact, must have decided to rise above His own transcendence and to cross over into a generative excess or overflow, γενητικὴ ὑπερβολή (*De divinis nominibus* 4, 10, *ad fin.*).

4. Creative contradiction inside the One

This internal tendency towards self-revelation and self-transcending is best expressed by the complex idea of divine Love, which appears to be the point of culmination of Denys' treatise on God conceived as the Good. The little treatise-within-the-treatise on divine Love (*agapē* as well as *erōs:* 4, 11-17) is apparently the paramount, as well as the most paradoxical, description of divine nature the Areopagite has to offer in Part 4.

Beauty and Love, he argues for a start, are closely linked because Beauty induces Love. From a divine perspective, in turn, the outbound motion, the outreach, of the Good is also Love. On the one hand, this surge of Love from within the Good is not surprising, if the essence of goodness lies in a self-transcending outreach—*bonum est diffusivum sui*. But the outpouring of Love from God conceived as the essentially extramundane Good implies a rebuttal of divine transcendence. By virtue of Love, the Good, which is also the One and the Beautiful at the same time, transcends its own transcendence, renouncing its own original splendid isolation, even though so far the Good

[14] Καὶ γὰρ «ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ δι᾿ αὐτοῦ» καὶ οὐσία καὶ ζωὴ πᾶσα καὶ... τὸ ποιόν, τὸ ποσόν, τὸ πηλίκον, τὸ ἄπειρον, αἱ συγκρίσεις, αἱ διακρίσεις, πᾶσα ἀπειρία, πᾶν πέρας, οἱ ὅροι πάντες, αἱ τάξεις, αἱ ὑπεροχαί, τὰ στοιχεῖα, τὰ εἴδη, πᾶσα οὐσία, πᾶσα δύναμις, πᾶσα ἐνέργεια, πᾶσα ἕξις, πᾶσα αἴσθησις, πᾶς λόγος, πᾶσα νόησις, πᾶσα ἐπαφή, πᾶσα ἐπιστήμη, πᾶσα ἕνωσις. (*De divinis nominibus* 4, 10 = Suchla [ed.], *Corpus Dionysiacum I*, 154 = PG 3, 705 C 4-D 2)

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has always been seen as being beyond creation in a super-eminent causal order. This divine move—essentially, an act of condescension—contradicts or, better, overwrites the above-endorsed conception of God as an otherworldly Platonic idea (as the unchanging idea of Beauty), which is characterized first and foremost by self-identity (ταὐτόν) understood in terms of unchangeability (ἀμετάβλητον) over time.A logical contradiction thus arises between divine sameness and immutability on the one hand, and this radical turn towards the Different, on the other, which is the essence of Love. Hence, if God has been unknowable (ἄγνωστος) and unspeakable (ἄρρητος) from the very beginning because of His being utterly remote from the sphere of human cognition, now He is doubly unknowable (ὑπεράγνωστος) and doubly unspeakable (ὑπεράρρητος) as He quits His isolated abode and transcends His own transcendence. In a historical respect, it may be pointed out that this duality or "reflection" which is perceived in God in the momentum of divine Love is just like the initial desire for self-manifestation—*Begierde* in Böhme's and Schelling's respective terminologies—that the Godhead conceives in its transcendent depths, according to Christian philosophical Cabbala (a tradition also ultimately inspired by Neo-Platonic metaphysics).

The notion of divine Love may be the reason why God conceived as the Good is *really* otherworldly and incomprehensible. Thus represented, the divine nature appears paradoxically simple in a complex way as it is self-identical in the mode of a Platonic idea while at the same time it creates and loves that which is different. In Dionysian theology, this turning towards the Different is, apparently, not a peripherical move in God even though His transcendent kernel still appears to be in complete isolation: Denys—as well as his outstanding spiritual disciple St Maximus the Confessor—warns us several times that divine *philanthrōpia* stems from the innermost of God. If we consider that this self-overriding tendency in God is a sort of offer of the divine Self, then we may want to see this thesis of God's creative self-denial as a point of intersection between Christian soteriology and Neo-Platonic theology—a vantage point for Denys to dwell on.

Further, talking about Love in theology implies talking about a divine person with interpersonal faculties and interests. Denys' God, fundamentally an impersonal Platonic idea, is thereby personalised, and becomes, at least, an impersonal person or a featureless face—a Platonic idea still conceived as a person displaying loving kindness.

While discussing the creative outflow of the Good, Denys reminds us in 4, 14 that it is not simply a one-directional, outbound motion: since the Good has the character of a final cause, too, its emanations move in a cycle eternally returning upon itself, in an *exitus* which invariably crosses over into a *reditus*. This eternal circularity of divine Love "through the Good, from the Good,

within the Good, and into the Good" (described in Chapters 15-17 with the Neo-Platonic terminology of Hierotheos) once again contradicts the eternal immutability of a Platonic idea.[15]

5. Conclusion: A Platonic ontology with a Christian summit theology

In light of the above, we are entitled to talk about the presence of a creative contradiction within the Dionysian One. This is a tension that builds up between the fundament and the periphery in God, as the Areopagite gradually unfolds his doctrine of divine Love. Starting from the Good as the predominant aspect of God, and adding Beauty and the One to the list of the aspects together constituting God, Denys is actually constructing a doctrine of the transcendentals *(unum, bonum, ens, pulchrum)* by putting together piecemeal an idea of God that is difficult to see as a (perfect) unity. The difficulty rises to a paradox when he insists that the Good—despite its supra-essential, ideal character and place in an eminent order of existence (or even beyond existence)—displays providence toward creation under the aspect of divine Love.

This consideration raises the old question of what the relationship is ultimately between Platonic ontology and Christian theology in Denys' secret and original combination of doctrines. It does appear to me that the most "vivid" or "live" aspect of the God described in Part 4 of *De divinis nominibus* is divine Love. This is the passage where our author is most intuitive and inspired, and also, where he is the most creative and paradoxical. So I think it is right to say that while his concept of God is essentially based on a Platonic idea, still, by virtue of his theses on divine *agapē* and *erōs*, he applies a Christian "summit theology" onto the Platonic fundament. The topping off of a (Neo-) Platonic metaphysical substrate with a characteristically more Christian theology of Love does seem to me to indicate a preference, a ranking or a judgment of value, a kind of a conscious choice on Denys' part. At this point, we may also remind ourselves that (erotic) Love for Plato in the *Symposium* is no more than a *daimōn*, while for Denys it is God Himself. This is, to my mind at least, an important dogmatic difference, which points to a preference for an ultimately Christian concept of God. Though in a metaphysical context, it may be argued that even the general idea of originating the Many from the One is Platonic in origin (see the *Parmenides* and the *Philebus*), still Denys'

[15] Ἐν ᾧ καὶ τὸ ἀτελεύτητον ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἄναρχον ὁ θεῖος ἔρως ἐνδείκνυται διαφερόντως ὥσπερ τις ἀΐδιος κύκλος διὰ τἀγαθόν, ἐκ τἀγαθοῦ καὶ ἐν τἀγαθῷ καὶ εἰς τἀγαθὸν ἐν ἀπλανεῖ συνελίξει περιπορευόμενος καὶ ἐν ταὐτῷ καὶ κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ προϊὼν ἀεὶ καὶ μένων καὶ ἀποκαθιστάμενος. (Suchla [ed.], *Corpus Dionysiacum I*, 160 = PG 3, 712 C 15-713 A 2.) From 4, 18 on, Denys goes on to discuss the problem of evil, which is beyond our scope of interest here.

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presentation emphasizes the "added value" there is in a personally conceived God, and reveals that a personal act of Love somehow ranks higher, in his eye at least, than an impersonal emanation of the One.

Though even up to the end of Part 4 of *On the Divine Names*, the Areopagite maintains that it is undecided and undecideable what exactly God's essence is (as He is supra-essential), still he describes God's supra-essentiality as a condescendence into essence (or immanence) by transcending transcendence; and he also makes it clear that divine Love derives from God's essence. So despite all his Neo-Platonic agnosticism, Denys nontheelss asserts that the divine essence creates and loves—which are essentially the same because the only motivation for creation is love.

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INITIATION INTO MYSTERIES IN PICO'S WORKS

Monika Frazer-Imregh

Abstract

After the Synod in Florence in 1439, a new call arose in Italy for the renewal of the Christian religion as an effect of the presence of Greek theologians and philosophers like Gemistos Plethon and Ioannes Bessarion. According to Ficino, Platonic philosophy was one possible tool with which to give back to Christianity the depth and significance which it had lost because of the lack of a philosophical background in the Church's everyday life. Pico agrees with Ficino's ideas about the so-called prisca theologia and the docta religio. In his work On the Dignity of Man, *he shows how to get closer to God until the final step, when the human soul is allowed to become the dwelling of God. In this essay, I examine the different stages through which a person has to go in cleansing and elevating their mind. The source of these steps and their sequence is partly Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, partly the contemporary Greek thinkers: Plethon and Argyropulos. Obviously, there can be no doubt about Pico's originality in how he builds up this amazing construction of self-educating when finding the way to proper initiation. The same issue can also be found in Pico's Heptaplus, especially in the Fourth Exposition, in which he explains the nature of man, and in the Seventh Exposition, the topic of which is bliss, i.e., eternal life.*

In the first half of this paper, I define Pico's sources on the topic. In the second half, I examine his ideas about initiation into mysteries.

When speaking about Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's concept of mysteries and initiation, we have to mention his older friend and predecessor, Marsilio Ficino, whose *Platonic Theology*, published in 1482,[1] was basically

[1] Marsilio Ficino, *Theologia Platonica de immortalitate animorum* (1468–1474), Firenze 1482, *Opera omnia*, Basel, Peter Heinrich, 1576, 78–424. Reprinted by P. O. Kristeller and M. Sancipriano, Torino, w. p., 1959. Critical edition: Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, I–VI,

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an introduction to and reference book for Platonic thinking for Pico. Ficino himself proclaimed a totally new way of Christian thinking not only by looking back at the Church Fathers and the great Scholastics but also by trying to reconcile Platonism with Christianity.[2] Ficino's main sources, apart from Plato, are the Neoplatonic Plotinus from the 3rd century A.D. and Proclus from the 5th century, whose greatest work has the same title as Ficino's: *Platonic Theology.* Ficino's choice in giving an identical title to his work was clearly deliberate.[3] How did Ficino learn of Proclus's masterwork? How did he get the idea of pursuing a new Platonic and Hermetic evangelising?

After the Council in Florence of 1439,[4] a new call arose in Italy for the renewal of the Christian religion as an effect of the presence of Greek theologians and philosophers like Gemistus Plethon, his ex-pupil Basilios Bessarion, and, later (from 1453 on), John Argyropoulos.[5] Sebastiano Gentile proves in his preface to the first book of Ficino's *Letters* that Cosimo de' Medici, Ficino's protector, gave him all the works of their Greek contemporary, Gemistus Plethon.[6] Plethon came to Italy with the Greek emperor and Patriarch to discuss a proposed union of the Roman and Greek Churches in Florence. Plethon was a politician and a thinker. In his book entitled *Laws,* he offers a vision of the ideal state (clearly following Plato's great attempt) in which the principles of policy come from Platonic philosophy.[7] He also urges fundamental reforms in religion, recommending not only simplifying the ceremonies and taking away superstition, but also abolishing the power of the Greek Church and ending monasticism. Indeed, he even suggested a return to the cult of ancient

English translation by M. J. B. Allen with John Warden; Latin text edited by J. Hankins with W. Bowen; Cambridge, Mass., London, Harvard University Press, 2001–2006.

[2] Ficino's main argument is that every ancient religion had a philosophical background and the priests were also philosophers. See his *De christiana religione*, in *Opera omnia* I, 1.

[3] Paul Oskar Kristeller, Marsilio Ficino and His Work After Five Hundred Years, *Quaderni di Rinascimento* 7, Firenze, Istituto Internazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1987, 7.

[4] The Council began in Ferrara, but because of many problems, the Pope accepted Cosimo de' Medici's help, and they moved it to Florence.

[5] Gemistus Plethon (1355–1452), Basilios Bessarion (1403–1472). John Argyropulos (1415–1487), born in Constantinople but driven out by the Turks in 1453, found refuge in Florence, in the cultivated circle of the Medici, whose guest he was for fifteen years. He had held the professorship of Greek at the university of Florence, and Lorenzo il Magnifico made him a citizen of Florence, which had become the city of his choice. When Argyropulus was called to Rome by Sixtus IV, he continued to regard himself as a Florentine, and Domenico Ghirlandaio portrayed him as such.

[6] Sebastiano Gentile, Introduzione, in Marsilio Ficino, *Lettere I. Epistolarium familiarium liber I*, a cura di S. Gentile, Firenze, Olschki, 1990, XVI–XXVI.

[7] Giorgio Gemisto Pletone, *Trattato delle leggi, o raccolta dei frammenti, in parte inediti, di questa opera: Nomon Sungraphé ta sozomena*; testo verificato sui manoscritti, preceduto da una prefazione storica e critica corredato da appendici raccolte da C. Alexandre; versione italiana a cura di A. Pellissier; con un saggio introduttivo di L.M.A. Viola. Forlì, Victrix, 2012. See also François Masai, *Pléthon et le Platonisme de Mistra*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1956, 393–404.

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Olympic gods, but merely in a philosophical way. Later, the Greek Patriarch Scholarios banned Plethon's book (for political reasons), but this did not stop the local ruler Cosimo de' Medici from giving it to the young Ficino in about 1462. Cosimo was impressed by Plethon's knowledge of Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophy and also by his concept of ancient wisdom which persists through different civilizations. In Plethon's opinion, religion and philosophy began together with the Persian Zoroaster and were spread throughout Greece by Orpheus and Pythagoras. Ficino borrowed many ideas from Plethon's work and made his plan for translations according to Plethon's list of the greatest philosophers.[8] In 1462, when he started his monumental undertaking to translate all Plato's dialogues, he prepared several other translations, including translations of Orpheus's and Homer's hymns and Hesiod's *Theogonia*, and he also made comments on the *Chaldean Oracles*. In the same year (1462), Cosimo also gave him the 14 lectures and dialogues from the *Corpus Hermeticum* to translate urgently before completing his translation of Plato's works.

According to Ficino, Platonic philosophy was a tool which could be used to give back to Christianity the depth and significance that it had lost because of a lack of philosophical background in the Church's everyday life. His most important work, besides his Platonic and Hermetic translations and commentaries, is surely *Platonic Theology*, in which he merges the knowledge acquired not only from these ancient authors, but also from Plotinus, Proclus, and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite[9]. The latter is one of the key figures, given his attempt to reconcile Platonism with Christianity. Ficino did not doubt that the Areopagite was St. Paul's Athenian convert, and he considered him a perfect example of the concordance of Platonism and Christianity. Among the Church Fathers, his ideal was Augustine for the same reason. The subtitle of *Platonic Theology* is *On the Immortality of the Souls*, and it refers to Augustine's work *On the Immortality of the Soul*. This subtitle also goes back to Plotinus's 7th treatise from the 4th *Ennead: On the Immortality*

[8] Gentile, Introduzione alle *Lettere I.* di Ficino, XXV. See also Brigitte Tambrun, Ficin, Gémiste Pléthon et la doctrine de Zoroastre, in *Marsilio Ficino – Fonti, testi, fortuna.* Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Firenze, 1–3 ottobre 1999. A cura di Sebastiano Gentile e Stéphane Tuissant, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2006, 121–143.

[9] For a thousand years it was not doubted that the works attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite *(Corpus Dionysiacum* or *Corpus Areopagiticum)* were written by Paul the Apostle's convert (Acts 17:34). The author pseudonymously portrays himself as such. Although Thomas Aquinas, Peter Abelard and Nicholas of Cusa expressed some suspicions about the authorship's authenticity, the first textual criticism was made by Lorenzo Valla in 1457 in his *Commentaries on the New Testament.* William Grocyn pursued his work, and from 1504 onward Erasmus accepted and publicized their view that the author of the *Corpus Dionysiacum* could not have been St. Paul's Athenian convert. Ficino did not accept Valla's opinion, or at least he did not write about this issue, so he quotes this author as Dionysius the Areopagite.

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of the Soul: Polemic Against Materialism. The latter title is important too, showing Ficino's polemic with the Paduan Averroists, who suggested that the human soul is material and perishes with the body's death. Ficino also advances several arguments from Aquinas's *Summa Theologia,* but as Allen points out, he was very careful to ensure that his wording is not scholastic.[10] I cite one example of how Ficino argues by refering to a row among "ancient theologians":

> [...] man's soul is something divine, that is, something indivisibile, wholly present to every part of the body and produced by an incorporeal creator such that it depends only on the power of that agent [...]. The ancient theologians teach us this: Zoroaster, Mercury, Orpheus, Aglaophemus, Pythagoras, and Plato, whose footsteps Aristotle, the natural philosopher, for the most part follows.[11]

Pico learned Ficino's ideas about the so-called *prisca theologia* and *docta religio* within the framework of Platonic and Hermetic evangelizing. On the first pages of his work *On the Dignity of Man*, he quotes the authorities mentioned above and their writings about the undetermined nature of human beings, and he presents God's speech giving Adam free will as the most precious gift in the universe. Among the roles they can choose for their lives, the philosopher and the contemplator are on the highest levels: "If, however, you see a philosopher, judging and distinguishing all things according to the rule of reason, him shall you hold in veneration, for he is a creature of heaven and not of earth; if, finally, a pure contemplator, unmindful of the body, wholly withdrawn into the inner chambers of the mind, here indeed is neither a creature of earth nor a heavenly creature, but some higher divinity, clothed in human flesh."[12] The main purpose of human life, thus, is to free ourselves from material wishes and worries and fly in our thoughts to a divine point of view: "Let a certain holy ambition invade the mind so that we [...] may aspire to the highest things and strive with all our forces to attain them:

[10] M. J. B. Allen, Introduction, in Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, I–VI, English translation by M. J. B. Allen with John Warden; Latin text edited by J. Hankins with W. Bowen; Cambridge, Mass., London, Harvard University Press, 2001–2006, vol. I, ix.

[11] Marsilio Ficino, *Platonic Theology*, vol. II, book VI. chapt. 1. pp. 125–127.

[12] Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man.* Translation by A. Robert Caponigri, introd. by Russel Kirk, Chicago, H. Regnery Co.,1956. See also : Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man.* Translations by Charles Glenn Wallis, Paul J.W. Miller and Douglas Carmichael. Introduction by Paul J.W. Miller. Indianapolis/Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company, 1998, 6. In Latin: "Si [videris] recta philosophum ratione omnia discernentem, hunc venereris; caeleste est animal, non terrenum. Si purum contemplatorem corporis nescium, in penetralia mentis relegatum, hic non terrenum, non caeleste animal; hic augustius est numen humana carne circumvestitum." Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate, Heptaplus, De ente et uno e scritti vari,* a cura di Eugenio Garin, Firenze, Vallecchi Editore, 1942, 108.

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for if we will to, we can. Let us spurn earthly things; let us struggle toward the heavenly. Let us put in last place whatever is of the world; and let us fly beyond the chambers of the world to the chamber nearest the most lofty divinity."[13] Pico refers here, by word, to the mysteries that can show us what kinds of beings are near the divinity: "There, as the sacred mysteries reveal, the seraphim, cherubim and thrones occupy the first places."[14] Our aim has to be to reach the same position: "Ignorant of how to yield to them [...] let us compete with the angels in dignity and glory."[15] In Pico's opinion, success is guaranteed if we really want it: "When we have willed it, we shall not be at all below them."[16] His next question is, what method should we choose? What should we do to reach this place? He suggests that we have to see what they are doing, what kinds of lives they are living, and we have to do so in order that we may then be equal with them. The source of the following description about the angels' features has to be Pseudo-Dionysius' *Celestial Hierarchy*, and Pico subsequently quotes Pseudo-Dionysius by name[17]: "The seraph burns with the fire of charity; the cherub shines with the radiance of intelligence; the throne stands in steadfastness of judgement."[18]

Translating these tasks or conditions into human possibilities, he says that, just as there are three different types of angels, so we have three choices too: one is the active life, taking care of other beings below us and thereby showing the steadfastness and justice of the thrones. Another is contemplation for those who are tired from having led an active life. Through their meditation, they will be able to see the creator in the creation and the creation in the creator, and thus they will radiate with cherubic light. The third is charity: "If we burn with love for the Creator only, his consuming fire will quickly transform us into the flaming likeness of the Seraphim."[19] Pico does not explain this in detail, but presumably loving the Creator also includes loving the creation for the same reason that the contemplator will see the creator in the creation and vice versa: because, at a lower level, the cherubim (that is the contemplator), whose characteristic is radiance, have the capacity and the knowledge of seeing the creator and the creation in each other as though they were one, which is the sign of being enlightened. Book IV of Ficino's

[13] Pico Della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man*, 7. Translation by Wallis, Miller and Carmichael.

[14] Ibidem.

[15] Ibidem.

[16] Ibidem.

[17] Like Ficino, Pico did not discuss the authenticity of the authorship, so he quoted the author by the name of Dionysius the Areopagite. See below.

[18] Ibidem.

[19] Caponigri's translation. In Latin: "Si ab actionibus feriati, in opificio opificem, in opifice opificium mediantes, in contemplandi otio negotiabimur, luce cherubica undique corruscabimus. Si caritate ipsum opificem solum ardebimus, illius igne, qui edax est, in saraphicam effigiem repente flammabimur." Pico Della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate*, 110.

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De amore (the Banquet commentary) concludes with this idea. Pico knew the book very well, well enough, indeed that he disputed some of Ficino's points in his *Commentary on Benivieni's Canzona d'amore*.[20]

Pseudo-Dionysius does not assume any difference of rank among the first circle of angels: seraph, cherub, and thrones,[21] but Pico does. So on the highest level of the angels, that is on the seraph's level, we have to become the source of this light, which is fire. Why is the fire the highest? This question is raised frequently in Platonic and Neoplatonic works. Plato, Plotinus, and Proclus discuss it in several treatises. Pico also covers this topic from a Platonic perspective in his *Commentary* on Benivieni's *Canzona d'amore*. Fire, like the sun, gives heat, light, and life in the material world, and that is why it can be a symbol of love in spirituality as the closest thing to God, so close to him that it seems to be connected to and one with him. As I mentioned, Pico depicts a definite hierarchy of angels in which the thrones are the lowest, the cherubim are in the middle as the transmitters of God's light, and the seraphim are the highest as fire or love itself: "Whoever is a Seraph, that is a lover, is in God and God is in him; even, it may be said, God and he are one."[22] If one looks at Pseudo-Dionysius' *Celestial Hierarchy*, Chapter VII, in which he explains the meaning of the term seraph on the basis of the Hebrew word for burn, *saraf*, one finds the elements of Pico's description: "For the designation seraphim really teaches this–a perennial circling around the divine things, penetrating warmth, the overflowing heat of a movement which never falters and never fails, a capacity to stamp their own image on subordinates by arousing and uplifting in them too a like flame, the same warmth. It means also the power to purify by means of the lightning flash and the flame. It means the ability to hold unveiled and undiminished both the light they have and the illumination they give out. It means the capacity to push aside and to do away with every obscuring shadow." [23]

Surely Pico also remembered Aquinas' explanation of Pseudo-Dionysius' definition of the seraph in *Summa Theologiae*,[24] because he quotes him

[20] Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *A Platonick Discours upon Love*, translated by D. B. Updike, edited by Edmund Gardner, London, Grant Richards Ltd., 1914. Kindle ed.: 2010. The Latin original is published among his other works in the above cited: Pico Della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate*, 458–556.

[21] "They constitute an entirely uniform hierarchy." *Celestial Hierarchy*, VII, 1; 208B, 163.

[22] Caponigri's translation. "Qui Saraph, idest amator est, in Deo est, et Deus in eo, immo et Deus et ipse unum sunt." Pico Della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate*, 110.

[23] Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Complete Works*, translated by Colm Luibheid, New York–Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1987. *Celestial Hierarchy*, VII, 1; 205C, 162.

[24] "The name 'Seraphim' does not come from charity only, but from the excess of charity, expressed by the word *ardor* or *fire*. Hence Dionysius (Coel. Hier. vii) expounds the name 'Seraphim' according to the properties of fire, containing an excess of heat. Now in fire we may consider three things. First, the movement which is upwards and continuous. This signifies that they are borne inflexibly towards God. Secondly, the active force which

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more than any other philosopher in his *900 Theses:* he cites 45 theses from Aquinas.[25] It is worth noting that Pico learned Aramaic and studied Kabbalah with his tutor Flavio Mitridate, and in Kabbalah the seraphim are the higher angels of the World of Beriah, "Creation," that is the first created realm which is divine understanding.

According to Pico's explanation, before we could reach this highest level of love, we need to prepare ourselves by meditation, that is by imitating the cherub when contemplating. As we are humans, he says, we do not know how the cherub can contemplate God immediately. Thus, we have to learn this from the Church Fathers: from Saint Paul, who ascended into the third heaven, and his disciple, Dionysius the Areopagite, who explained in the *Celestial Hierarchy* (Chapter VII, 1-4.) what Paul could see there.[26] Again, at this point Pico defines an order, where Pseudo-Dionysius specificed parallel activities. This is Pico's definition: "[Paul] saw them [the cherubs] first being purified, then illuminated, then finally made perfect."[27] In the Areopagite's description, these three actions are peculiar to all three types of angels, which for me seem to be one, that is the same one having three different aspects: "the first hierarchy of heavenly minds [...] is filled with its due measure of utter purification, of infinite light, of complete perfection."[28] When Dionysius explains in more detail, he does not offer a strict order of action: "Purification, illumination and perfection are all three the reception of an understanding of the Godhead, namely, being completely purified of ingnorance by the proportionately granted knowledge of the more perfect initiations, being illuminated by this same knowledge, (through which it also purifies whatever was not previously beheld but is now revealed through the more lofty enlightement), and being also perfected by this light in the understanding of the most lustrous initiations."[29]

is 'heat,' which is not found in fire simply, but exists with a certain sharpness, as being of most penetrating action, and reaching even to the smallest things, and as it were, with superabundant fervor; whereby is signified the action of these angels, exercised powerfully upon those who are subject to them, rousing them to a like fervor, and cleansing them wholly by their heat. Thirdly we consider in fire the quality of clarity, or brightness; which signifies that these angels have in themselves an inextinguishable light, and that they also perfectly enlighten others." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* Cristian Classics Ethernal Library, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.pdf 1st part, Treatise on the angels, Question 108. Of the angelic degrees of hierarchies and orders. Article. 5 – Whether the orders of the angels are properly named? 1187–1188.

[25] Only Proclus and the Kabbalist philosophers are cited more frequently, with 55 references to Proclus and 47 references to the Kabbalist philosophers.

[26] Like Ficino, Pico did not share Lorenzo Valla's doubts about the author of these books being Paul's disciple.

[27] Caponigri's translation. "Respondebit utique Dionysio interprete: purgari illos, tum illuminari, postremo perfici." Pico Della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate,* 110.

[28] Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy,* VII, 209C. *The Complete Works,* 165.

[29] Ibidem.

The idea of ranking or setting up an order of the steps of initiation comes from Dionysius himself: in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* he talks about people's initiation and defines three different steps or tasks which three different ranks of the Church are supposed to have: "The holy sacraments bring about purification, illumination, and perfection. The deacons form the order which purifies. The priests constitute the order which gives illumination. And the hierarchs, living in conformity with God, make up the order which perfects."[30] Consequently, according to the Areopagite's teaching, for humans there are three different levels of being initiated: "As for those who are being purified, so long as they are still at this stage of purification they do not partake of the sacred vision or communion. The sacred people is the contemplative order. The order of those made perfect is that of the monks who live a single minded-life."[31] The reason why Pico assumed the first heavenly order to be structured by different ranks is the same as the following justification from Dionysius: "Thus our own hierarchy is blessedly and harmoniously divided into orders in accordance with divine revelation and therefore deploys the same sequence as the hierarchies of heaven."[32] This is contradictory to what I discovered about the *Celestial Hierarchy*'s description, so it has to be a result of his later thinking. However, his motivation in the next sentence makes him the ideal authority for Ficino and Pico regarding initiations, because his view is very close to the *Corpus Hermeticum*'s starting point: "as above, so below": "It carefully preserves in its own human way the characteristics which enable it to be like God and conform to him."[33]

The same issue can also be found in Pico's *Heptaplus*, especially in the Fourth Exposition, in which he explains the nature of man, and in the Seventh Exposition, where the topic is bliss, i.e. eternal life.

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[30] Pseudo-Dionysius, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy,* Chapter VI, III (Contemplation), 5, 536D. *The Complete Works,* 248.

[31] Ibidem.

[32] Ibidem.

[33] Ibidem, 537A.

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IS THE MYSTICISM OF GIORDANO BRUNO A FORM OF INITIATION?

Antonio Dall'Igna

Abstract

If one considers initiation as a radical gnoseological and ontological transmutation, it is possible to examine the thought of Giordano Bruno (especially in its mystical consequences) from the perspective of whether it can be interpreted as a form of initiation. The main features of a metaphysically founded initiation (i.e. in which the transmutation does not represent merely social and human reintegration) are the close connection with a supernatural plane, the adaptation of the divine sphere to the human level, the preliminary presence of the divine in humankind, the ideas of ritual death and second birth, the ritual nature of the process of initiation, the radical reformation of the human soul, the strong speculative nature of the mystical work, the importance of the human inner deed, the enduring effect of the initiation, the transmission of the hidden gnosis, the close relationship among the initiates inside an esoteric organization, the ability to exert an influence in the mundane sphere, and the presence of a gradualness in the initiation process.

In the present study, I affirm that the mysticism of Giordano Bruno can be associated with this kind of initiation, since it can be considered the highest intensification of knowledge and will, which allows humankind to realize a conscious and transfiguring conversion to its metaphysical origin by means of a mystical inner deed and to reach a preeminent position in the social and political sphere. Some differences between Bruno's mysticism and this kind of initiation as to this framework can be identified in the non-ritual character of transmutation, the instability of the mystical meeting (the effects of which are not permanent), and the establishment of a brotherhood of wise men, on which Bruno does not take a clear stand.

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The present article aims to examine the question raised in my title. My examination leads to a provisional definition of a certain kind of initiation and an investigation of the relationships between initiation and mysticism, exposing in particular some specific features of the latter.

In this context, one concept of initiation which relates the moment of initiation to authentic contact with the supernatural and metaphysical plane will be examined insofar as metaphysically founded initiation is understood as standing for a radical gnoseological and ontological transmutation. Therefore, it is possible to examine the thought of Giordano Bruno (especially in its mystical consequences) in order to determine whether it can be persuasively interpreted as a form of initiation.

I will dwell upon initiation as a radical transmutation within a metaphysical scheme, and not in the sense of a merely social and human reintegration within an anthropological framework. Obviously, if one considers metaphysics the fundamental domain from which any other domain comes, it is possible to subordinate the social and anthropological meanings of initiation to the metaphysical sense. Nevertheless, I will consider solely the gnoseological and ontological transmutation of a human being who achieves superior knowledge and a particular status, bringing into effect his or her authentic placing inside the divine and original plane. This kind of "metaphysical" initiation concerns the knowledge and experience of the divine, and, apparently, it is situated in a sphere which differs radically from the sphere of the rite of passage considered as a moment of social transition and mutation. Hence, if one adopts a perspective according to which reality in its entirety is founded on a metaphysical cause, the profane plane can be considered a feeble reflection of the sacred sphere or the field of expression of divine and supersensible principles.

I will now raise a hypothetical consideration concerning the meaning of initiation.[1] The main features of a metaphysically founded initiation are the following:

[1] The definition of "metaphysical initiation" used in this essay is mine. I have taken into consideration, in this definition, the anthropological and historical-religious debate on this matter in light of philosophical and, more specifically, theoretical considerations. See e. g. the following works: R. Guénon, *Aperçus sur l'initiation*, Paris, Editions Traditionnelles, 1946; R. Caillois, *L'homme et le sacré*, Paris, Gallimard, 1950; J. Cazeneuve, *Les rites et la condition humaine*, Paris, PUF, 1958; M. Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation. The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*, New York, Harper & Row, 1965; Idem, Initiations, in *Studies in the History of Religions*, vol. X, Leiden, Brill, 1965; A. van Gennep, *Les rites de passage*, Paris, Emile Lourry, 1909, Mouton, 1969; M. Meslin, *L'expérience humaine du divin*, Paris, Le Cerf, 1988; P. Scarduelli, *Il rito. Dei, spiriti, antenati*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1983; V. Turner, *The Drums of Affliction*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968; Idem, *The Forest of Symbols. Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, Ithaca-London, Cornell University Press, 1970.

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1. Close connection with a supernatural plane.

The idea of this type of initiation entails the difference between a natural and a supernatural domain; between the plane of being and the reign of becoming; between the level of the causes and the sphere of the things caused. Initiation has a divine nature, and it provides for the connection of the effect with its cause, of the human being with the divine cause.

2. Adaptation of the divine pole to the human level.

In order to realize the above-mentioned determining supernatural connection, a preliminary feature of initiation lies with the adaptation of the divine qualities to different times and spaces, i.e., the adaptation of the unicity of the cause to the multiplicity of human beings. This kind of adaptation does not overcome the hierarchical relationship between the cause and the effect. Connection and adaptation represent the way in which access is established from the natural to the supernatural domain.

3. The preliminary presence of the divine in man.

Initiation is not an act of a divine cause on a human being who is completely foreign, as compared to the divinity. In order to achieve radical ontological transmutation, the human being has to be many-sided from the outset. A divine element, if not a divine nature, must be present in humankind and is required for the process of initiation.

4. Ritual death and second birth.

Radical ontological transmutation entails a crucial interruption of ordinary life. It is possible to consider this mechanism as a ritual death. In this context, death represents a clear rift between the condition of the initiate and his or her ordinary life. This death relates to the individual who is able to reconnect to his or her divine origin and make such a reconnection actual and operative. The ritual death thus also represents a second birth, because it is the beginning of a new kind of life, marked by the manifestation of a supernatural nature.

5. Ritual nature of the process of initiation.

Since it creates a new personality, initiation implies the passage to a new temporal order, in which the articulation of time does not represent a limitation but is assumed as a field of expression for the individual. This kind of different relationship to time implies, furthermore, a different conception of space: the initiate is able to rule the spatio-temporal coordinates by virtue of a radical, qualitative mutation. The moment of initiation represents the separation from the ordinary articulation of time, a separation which is accomplished through a series of normed ritual actions, permitting the instauration of an original moment within a new spatio-temporal threshold.

6. Radical reformation of the human soul.

Initiation entails a radical transmutation on a gnoseological and ontological level. The initiate reaches a metaphysical level which is different from her or his ordinary status. Initiation is a condition which enables the activation of

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the inner divine element or nature of man. This activation of the divine quality, which remains latent in ordinary existence, implies a radical reformation of the human soul and a hierarchical structuring of its faculties.

7. The strong speculative nature of mystical work.

Initiation is a kind of sacred science. It involves both intellect and will, knowledge and action; it relates both to the powers of the rational sphere and to those of the affective domain. Nevertheless, intellect is the function which allows humans to achieve a superior knowledge, so that this kind of initiation can be defined as an experience related to the speculative plane rather than to the affective plane, i.e. an experience in which love follows knowledge and the depths of the heart are subordinated to the apex of mind.

8. The importance of the human inner deed.

The human inner deed, aimed at a radical change of the human soul, is the indispensable point of departure for the initiation process. However, the human deed does not mean a human act on the divinity. Instead, it can be conceived as a human act on an original plane in which the human soul is able to grasp the divine nature without overcoming the hierarchical relationship between God and humankind.

9. The enduring effect of the initiation.

Initiation represents a permanent achievement. It is permanent and final, indelible and definitive. This means that the initiate cannot go back across the boundary established by ritual death in order to revert to and restore ordinary and common life. Since it implies passage into a new life, ritual has a transitory function, although the clear separation from the former personality and the passage to a new one it provokes are permanent and irreversible.

10. The transmission of the hidden *gnosis*.

Since initiation is related to supernatural knowledge, it consists of a kind of hidden *gnosis*. Usually, it is not possible to realize a solitary initiation. The initiate, in order to obtain his or her new status, has joined an organization, through which he or she has found the possibility of being integrated into the chain of transmission of such special *gnosis*.

11. The close relationship between the initiates within an esoteric organization.

The special condition produced by initiation makes for a human being who is, *lato sensu*, lonely, hidden, and unreachable compared to ordinary human beings. She or he is loyal to the sacred bond of silence, since the sacred nature of the knowledge he or she has gained cannot be communicated to profane individuals. Nevertheless, the initiates may have the possibility to establish *inter pares* communication and gather in a group. Due to the detachment typical of the initiate, this group should be considered an esoteric organization.

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12. The presence of gradualness in the initiation process.

There are different kinds of initiation which correspond to different degrees of hidden *gnosis* and different degrees of achievement within the original divine plane. The gradualness of the initiation process is reflected by the hierarchy of the organization.

13. The capability to exert an influence in the mundane sphere.

Despite the detachment of the initiate and the esoteric features of the organization, human beings who obtain initiation continue to live in the ordinary world and, when necessary, they can try to influence the mundane sphere. This influence represents a form of adaptation of the divine to the mundane.

Since my research focuses on Giordano Bruno and his mysticism, now I would like to answer the following question: in light of the aforementioned features of initiation, is the mysticism of Giordano Bruno a form of initiation?

The term "mysticism" refers to the part of philosophy which concerns the upper levels of knowledge and will and man's conversion to the origin. From a theoretical perspective, conversion provides, on the one hand, for a metaphysical structure, within which the subject of the conversion (of humankind) is placed and, on the other, for an origin towards which the subject has to elevate him- or herself, to which he or she has to return.

As far as point 1. is concerned, Bruno's mysticism provides for a strong connection between the human being and the divinity, in order to establish a transmutation of the human soul. The divine human (which Bruno calls *eroico furioso*) does not become a god. He or she reaches the state of human excellence: in other words, he or she is able to express a divine quality through a human form. The superior human being remains a human, but he or she benefits from a special bond with the divinity and is authentically placed at an original level. The *eroico furioso* is the divine human, able to accomplish "the excellence of their own humanity".[2]

Regarding point 2., Giordano Bruno speaks in terms of a kind of adaptation of the divine pole to the human level. The human being does not overcome the divinity, but, by being placed authentically inside it, is able to adapt the divine qualities to a human form. The divine human is a kind of living theophany, which can express being into becoming. Bruno uses the expression "sacred thing"[3] to describe the situation of the divine human. When the human, through the appropriate inner deed, binds to the divinity, he or she becomes divine, i. e. a *cosa sacra:* the divine sacred human does not lose

[2] "L'eccellenza della propria umanitade": cf. G. Bruno, *De gli eroici furori* (= *Furori*), parte I, dialogo 3, in Idem, *Opere italiane*, a cura di G. Aquilecchia, Torino, UTET, 2002, 2007², vol. II, 554–555.

[3] "Cosa sacra": *Furori*, I, 3, 555.

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his or her human form, which remains related to becoming, continuing to operate in the world and in history, but, although remaining an intermediate being, he or she is completely aimed at the divinity, consciously placed within the original horizon, and authentically moved by a heroic frenzy.

This adaptation, as stated in point 3, entails the preliminary presence of the divine in humankind. As in the mysticism of Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa (two authors who had a massive influence on Giordano Bruno), the human being is endowed with a divine nature. This divine element is hidden and deactivated in humans who lead a common and ordinary life. As far as the ideas of Bruno are concerned, it is possible to state that humankind is placed within an impersonal divinity, and that the divine element is present, although hidden, in the *lume razionale* (lamp of reason, the noblest component of rationality) and the "meridiano del core" (meridian of the heart – the "highest part" of will): "divine light is always present; it is always given by itself, it always calls and pounds the doors of our senses and of the other cognitive and affective powers".[4] Bruno maintains that "God is near, He is with us, He is within us. A certain consecrated intellect and intelligence is found within us",[5] "and we are taught not to seek a divinity removed from us, once divinity is near to us, or rather within us, even more than we are within ourselves".[6]

As far as point 4 is concerned, according to Bruno, the mystical moment is based on a radical interruption of the ordinary condition. The *eroico furioso* is "dead in comparison with common people, with the multitude, untied from the perturbed senses, released from the carnal jail of matter".[7] The fact that they are considered as dead-in-life and that they are starting a new divine and intellectual life refers to the ideas of ritual death and second birth. Through the depiction of death, Bruno aims to represent the "salvific" separation from the multiplicity, i.e. separation from the existence that is subdued to creaturality and determination, to enter the new existence of the divine human. Nevertheless, this kind of separation represents neither a disintegration of the physical existence nor a dissolution of the soul of the *furioso*, of his or her rational and intellectual human form.

4 "La divina luce è sempre presente; s'offre sempre, sempre chiama e batte a le porte de nostri sensi et altre potenze conoscitive et apprensive": *Furori*, Argomento, 501.

5 "Dio è vicino, è nosco, è dentro di noi. Si trova in noi certa sacrata mente et intelligenza": *Furori*, I, 5, 626.

6 "et abbiamo dottrina di non cercar la divinità rimossa da noi: se l'abbiamo appresso, anzi di dentro più che noi medesmi siamo dentro a noi": G. Bruno, *La cena de le Ceneri*, dialogo I, in Idem, *Opere italiane*, vol. I, 455–456. See also *Furori*, I, 5, 628: "[...] perché l'anima essendo cosa divina [...]".

7 "Morto al volgo, alla moltitudine, sciolto dalli nodi de perturbati sensi, libero dal carnal carcere della materia": *Furori*, II, 2, 695–696.

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As far as point 5 is concerned, it is possible to state that Bruno, according to the speculative conception of mysticism, does not provide for a sequence of actions which humans must perform in order to establish and cross the threshold separating the two states of being involved in initiation. In the mysticism of Bruno, as in other related authors, the only action required is the inner deed of detachment, involving intellect and will and directing them towards divinity.

Regarding point 6, mysticism is a radical reformation of the human soul. The human who attains a divine condition (i.e. the *eroico furore*) does not commit suicide. He or she brings to accomplishment a full reform of his or her soul, a rectification of his or her inner self. Such people do not annihilate their bodies but they work to realize a special connection in which the body becomes the vehicle of the soul.

In this context, it can be advantageous to refer to the concept of *contractio*, which Bruno uses in its mystical meaning to indicate a sort of introflection,[8] leading to the contraction of the Absolute in a human being, allowing humankind to establish rationally the divine part within us and allows us to direct our love toward divinity.[9] The term *contractio* is conspicuously present in the dialogues *De gli eroici furori*, where it is related to the mystical deed, to the *furioso*'s turning into God: "because [the intellectual species] contracts the divinity in itself, by being in God in as much as it is driven by the purpose of penetrating the divinity (as far as is possible) and by being God in itself, as far as, after penetrating it, it conceives the divinity and (as far as is possible) it receives and comprehends the divinity in its concept".[10] And "if they strive for the high splendour, they retreat to unity as far as it is

8 See F. Tocco, *Le opere latine di Giordano Bruno esposte e confrontate con le italiane*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1889, 77: "man can reach the superior degree of intellectual life solely by means of concentrations or auto-retreat. Bruno calls such a concentration contractio" ("al grado superiore della vita intellettiva non si arriva se non per via di concentrazioni o ripiegamenti su di sé. Questa concentrazione del Bruno è chiamata contractio").

9 On the concept of contraction in Bruno, see F. Papi, *Antropologia e civiltà nel pensiero di Giordano Bruno*, Napoli, Liguori, 2006 (original edition: 1968), 115–119, 163; S. Mancini, *La sfera infinita. Identità e differenza nel pensiero di Giordano Bruno*, Milano, Mimesis, 2000, 67–68; L. Catana, *The Concept of Contraction in Giordano Bruno's Philosophy*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2005. See also A. Ingegno, *La sommersa nave della religione. Studio sulla polemica anticristiana del Bruno*, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 1985, 89–93; Idem, *Regia pazzia. Bruno lettore di Calvino*, Urbino, Quattro Venti, 1987, 133–143; L. Spruit, *Il problema della conoscenza in Giordano Bruno*, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 1988, 147–149.

10 "Perché contrae la divinità in sé essendo ella in Dio per la intenzione con cui penetra nella divinità (per quanto si può), et essendo Dio in ella, per quanto dopo aver penetrato viene a conciperla e (per quanto si può) a ricettarla e comprenderla nel suo concetto": *Furori*, I, 3, 564–565.

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possible, and contract in their own self as far as it is possible, so that they are not akin to many, because they are many".[11] "By the contraction of the divinity in themselves, [the *furioso*] is changed into god".[12]

As stated in point 7, this radical inner change and rectification in the thought of Bruno has a strongly speculative character. The mysticism of Giordano Bruno results from the interaction between intellect and will. Nevertheless, in my opinion, will is always subordinated to intellect, as stated here: "love moves and pushes intellect, so that the latter precedes the former like a lantern".[13] Intellect precedes will, in order to identify the object toward which will must be directed: will is an impulsive urge toward this object, which can intensify itself to the point that it generates frenzy in the human soul.[14] Therefore, the mysticism of Bruno can be defined as a speculative mysticism.

As to point 8, speculative mysticism is based on the human inner deed, as in the thought of Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa. Humankind should avoid the application of intellect and will to the external *determinatio* (objects of desire: *entia naturae*, or concepts of reason: *entia rationis*). We should bring to accomplishment an inner deed consisting in a detachment from the *determinatio* in order to return to the inner divine element and activate it. The rising movement of the human soul consists of being "insensitive and unperturbed regarding those things which the human usually and mostly feels and by which many others are troubled; [the *furioso*] fears nothing and disregards any other pleasure because they love divinity, and they are not concerned about life".[15] The inner deed is performed through a human choice, but it is possible and it is brought to accomplishment only by the divinity.

[11] "Se aspira al splendor alto, ritiresi quanto può all'unità, contrahasi quanto è possibile in se stesso, di sorte che non sia simile a molti, perché son molti": *Furori*, II, 1, 657.

[12] "[Il furioso] avendo contratta in sé la divinitade, è fatto divo": *Furori*, II, 3, 712–713.

[13] "L'amore è quello che muove e spinge l'intelletto acciò che lo preceda come lanterna": *Furori*, I, 4, 576.

[14] For different interpretations, see for example M. A. Granada, in *Furori*, II, 3, 713 n. 39; W. Beierwaltes, Actaeon. Zu einem mythologischen Symbol Giordano Brunos, in *Denken des Einen. Studien zum Neuplatonismus und dessen Wirkungsgeschichte*, Frankfurt a. M., Klostermann, 1985, 424–435; A. Ingegno, *Regia pazzia. Bruno lettore di Calvino*, 140–143; Idem, L'unità dell'opera bruniana e il significato degli *Eroici furori*, in D. Bigalli – G. Canziani (eds.), *Il dialogo filosofico nel '500 europeo. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Milano, 28–30 maggio 1987*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1990, 235–243; Idem, Il perfetto e il furioso, in *Il piccolo Hans* LXXV-LXXVI (1992–1993), 29–30; Idem, Cardano e Bruno. Altri spunti per una storia dell'uomo perfetto, in M. Bucciantini – M. Torrini (eds.), *La diffusione del copernicanesimo in Italia, 1543–1610*, Firenze, Olschki, 1997, 218; Idem, Observations sur le concept de furor et sur celui de métamorphose dans l'oeuvre italienne de Bruno, in P. Magnard (ed.), *Fureurs, héroïsme et métamorphoses*, Louvain, Peeters, 2007, 17; S. Mancini, *La sfera infinita*, 19–107.

[15] "Insensibile et impassibile in quelle cose che comunmente massime senteno, e da le quali più vegnon altri tormentati; niente teme, e per amor della divinitade spreggia gli altri piaceri, e non fa pensiero alcuno de la vita": *Furori*, I, 3, 556.

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"By means of the intellectual operation and of the will following that operation, [the soul of the *furioso*] refers to divine light and to the beatific object":[16] It is an operation of intellect, which, "after leaving any care and concern about them [*scil.* the secondary images], is completely turned towards and focused on the contemplation of the one".[17]

The analysis of point 9 calls attention to an important difference between initiation and mysticism. While initiation is permanent and definitive, mystical achievement is not a definitive state. The human condition is reversible: in fact, the mystical state can easily cease because of the loss of the bond between the human being and God. Should the soul lose its perfect structure, in which intellect and will are bound to the divinity and the will is subordinated to the intellect, a fall to a merely human condition can occur, in which the human is subdued to determination. If the *eroico furioso* desists from his or her inner deed, the superior human being leaves the divine condition of the few, embracing the slumber of the many.

Points 10 and 11 reveal another difference between the mysticism of Bruno and the metaphysical kind of initiation. According to Bruno, the divine human can establish a mutual dialogue in order to inspire self-knowledge. However, this is not a crucial element for the inner deed, and the divine human is not placed inside a chain of transmission of a special or hidden *gnosis*.

The idea of community can be found in the mysticism of Bruno, both as an *inter pares* group (i.e. a brotherhood of wise men) and in accordance with the political organism (where a cooperative community encourages and supports the role and the work of the *pauci optimi*).[18] Nevertheless, in my opinion, it is not possible to refer to this concept in terms of an esoteric organization.

Regarding point 12, in contrast with the mysticism of Meister Eckhart,[19] Giordano Bruno speaks in terms of a gradualness of the ascent. Therefore, according to Bruno, the inner deed is mostly considered as the final step on the path leading to the *unio mystica;* nevertheless, he admits a kind of ladder of intellectual species through which the intellect should proceed in order to achieve the summit.[20] The ascent of humans in knowledge is characterized

[16] "Per l'operazione intellettuale e la voluntà conseguente dopo tale operazione, si riferisce alla sua luce e beatifico oggetto": *Furori*, I, 3, 566.

[17] "Lasciata ogni cura e pensiero di esse, tutto è volto et intento a considerar quell'uno": *Furori*, I, 3, 565.

[18] Cf. *Furori*, II, 2, 684–685, 687–689. See also F. Papi, *Antropologia e civiltà nel pensiero di Giordano Bruno*, 172.

[19] Generally speaking, in the mystical conception of Meister Eckhart, humankind is either detached and noble or subdued to creaturality: *tertium non datur.* Nevertheless, Eckhart hints in some passages at a certain graduality in the ascent process leading man to an authentical placing in God.

[20] See in particular some passages of *Eroici furori* which were influenced by the thought of Averroes: *Furori*, I, 5, 614–615, 620–621. See L. Spruit, *Il problema della conoscenza in Giordano Bruno;* S. Mancini, *La sfera infinita. Identità e differenza nel pensiero di Giordano*

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by both continuity and discontinuity, by both linearity and separation:[21] the passage from one intellectual grade to another occurs, and knowledge is acquired in accordance with the continuity of "scientific" development. Although different, the grades are continuous with each other, and the passage from one to the another occurs in a gradual and continuous manner. In this context, discontinuity is subordinated to continuity. On the contrary, as the highest grade is achieved, i.e. as intellect is united with the divine soul, the discontinuity and the ultimate separation of the *unio mystica* are preeminent.

As far as point 13 is concerned, despite the inner characterization of the mystical process, the divine human has an "outer" side. In order to respect the principle of the *operari sequitur esse*, the outer deeds of the superior human are divine, because their nature is radically turned to the divine thanks to the inner deed. It is necessary to point out that proper mystical experience does not exclude the outer deeds. The accomplishment of the inner deeds in fact implies a qualitative mutation of the outer deeds: they are now no longer negative (so that humankind must detach itself from their influence), but positive, i.e. able to express the divine nature which has been assumed by the excellent human.

Therefore, by means of this kind of outer-divine-deed, the *eroico furioso* can exert an influence in the mundane sphere. This feature is of capital importance in the magical works of Bruno, where the *magus* can change the natural and social environment because he or she has brought to accomplishment a kind of mystical inner deed. In the philosophy of Bruno, mysticism and magic are

Bruno. On the relation between Bruno and Averroes see: F. Tocco, *Le fonti più recenti della filosofia del Bruno*, Rend. Acc. dei Lincei, Cl. di sc. morali, vol. I, fasc. 7–8, 1892, 27–29; A. Corsano, *Il pensiero di Giordano Bruno nel suo svolgimento storico*, Galatina, Congedo, 2002 (original edition: 1940), 76–77, 79, 81, 122, 165, 174–176; N. Badaloni, *La filosofia di Giordano Bruno*, Firenze, Parenti, 1955, 21, 94, 132–133; F. Papi, *Antropologia e civiltà nel pensiero di Giordano Bruno*, 15–16, 73, 148–149, 251, 265–276; L. Spruit, *Il problema della conoscenza in Giordano Bruno*, 77 n. 142, 115–116 n. 46, 138 n. 113, 146 n. 146, 232–235; Idem, Motivi peripatetici nella gnoseologia bruniana dei dialoghi italiani, in *Verifiche* XVIII (1989), 367–399; R. Sturlese, *'Averroè, quantumque arabo et ignorante di lingua greca…'*. Note sull'averroismo di Giordano Bruno, in F. Niewöhner e L. Sturlese (eds.), *Averroismus im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, Zürich, Spur Verlag, 1994, 319–350; A. Gagliardi, *Scritture e storia: averroismo e cristianesimo. Lorenzo de' Medici – Sperone Speroni – Torquato Tasso – Giordano Bruno*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubettino, 1998, 173–213; M. A. Granada, Introduction, in G. Bruno, *Des fureurs héroïques*, Texte établi par G. Aquilecchia, Introduction et notes de M. A. Granada, Traduction de P.-H. Michel revue par Y. Hersant, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1999, LXVIII-XC; A Gagliardi, Averroismo nel Cinquecento da Leone Ebreo a Giordano Bruno, in M. Palumbo e A. Saccone (eds.), *Tempo e memoria. Studi in ricordo di Giancarlo Mazzacurati*, Napoli, Fridericiana, 2000, 155–186; M. A. Granada, *Giordano Bruno. Universo infinito, unión con Dios, perfección del hombre*, Barcelona, Herder, 2002, pp. 34–61, 307, 318–329; E. Canone, Giordano Bruno lettore di Averroè, in A. Baffioni (ed.), *Averroes and the Aristotelian Heritage. Atti del convegno di Napoli del 1999*, Napoli, Guida, 2004, 211–247.

[21] See L. Spruit, *Il problema della conoscenza in Giordano Bruno*, 229.

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indeed tightly related. The work *De vinculis in genere* expresses the political nature of the magic of Bruno:[22] the human who is bound to the divine by means of the inner deed can rule the natural beings and bind profane human beings, exercising a sovereignty over part of the vicissitudes.

In conclusion, it is possible to maintain that the mysticism of Giordano Bruno is connected to the kind of initiation outlined above, since it can be considered the highest intensification of knowledge and will, which allows humankind to realize a conscious and transfiguring conversion to its metaphysical origin by means of a mystical inner deed and to reach a preeminent position in the social and political sphere.

Some differences can be identified in the nature of transmutation, which is not ritual, and in the instability of the mystical meeting, the effects of which are not permanent, and the establishment of a brotherhood of wise men, whereon Bruno does not take a clear stand.

By means of an accurate comparison, the present analysis can be extended to other authors whose thought is characterized by relevant mystical elements in order to examine whether and to what extent the concepts of initiation and sacred knowledge can be related to the higher levels of the knowledge and the experience of the divine.

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[22] See *De vinculis in genere; De magia naturali; Theses de magia*.

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WHICH INITIATION DOES NOT LEAD ASTRAY FROM THE TRUE MYSTERIES? THE LATER SCHELLING'S QUEST FOR A TRUE METHOD COMPARED WITH THE PRE-CRITICAL AND CRITICAL KANT

Martin Moors

Abstract

My article focuses on the recurrently questioned meaning of an "introduction" when it is meant to initiate someone into the mysteries philosophically, either according to their representational content or according to mystagogical praxis. In particular, F. W. J. Schelling's Introduction to his Philosophy of Revelation (Berlin Lectures 1832/33), in connection with Kant's pre-critical Nova Dilucidatio *(1755), provides the guiding framework of my inquiry. The thesis of my paper can be formulated as follows: only a positive philosophy grounded in the maxime cognoscendum –* das Seyende selbst *– can completely introduce believers into the mysteries (of being and existence) by which human reason is somehow already possessed.*

For F. W. J. Schelling (1775–1854), a genuine initiation into the mysteries can principally not be the proper initiative of philosophy. The way in which philosophy, in general, defines its proper practice—an intellectual discernment led by principles of reflective and abstractive reasoning on, for instance, the ground of all existence—can hardly be considered a real initiation. Schelling states:

> With regard to ultimate knowledge *[höchsten Erkenntnis]*, the difference between philosophy and mysteries is such that in mysteries the ultimate knowledge emerged from an antecedent material or real process, whereas in philosophy knowledge

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> is indeed also acquired by a gradual liberation, though in this case it concerns a knowledgeable ascension from the concrete to the spiritual, toward the pure causes.[1]

Philosophy cannot *really* initiate into the mysteries in the way mythology does. The philosophical point of departure, which is shaped by principles of self-conscious logical comprehension, does not allow any access to mysteries lying beyond the scope of reason. This is particularly true in philosophical inquiries rationalistically shaped by mere logical principles of science, as is the case in Modernity *(neuere Philosophie).*

Part I: The later Schelling's Presentation of an Account of Mysteries *[Mysterienlehre]* and his "Positive" Philosophy of Revelation

A. Searching for Access to Mysteries: Philosophy Faced with an Immanent Paradox

As a paradox, the main operative faculty of philosophical comprehension cannot reflectively perform a time-lapse into a pre-reflective state in order to enter the mystagogical realm in which mythology is lived as true reality. Yet the mysteries as such can very well be conceived of as items that belong specifically to a philosophy of mythology and revelation. The philosopher's reflection can very well reach a domain of representations which—as in mythology—positively manifest themselves. Without falling into the trap of ideology, the philosopher can investigate the mysteries that lie before him (in given religions) only in a deictic mode which values their proper positivity. The said domain of representations thus wavers between two modes of knowing. On the one hand, there is the knowing which is positively expressed in its tautegorical[2] self-manifestation, i.e. the knowing logos of the mytho-logos, which represents an "account of mysteries" (Schelling's idea of *Mysterienlehre*). On the other hand, all that which is—in one way or another—cognizance of positive reality can without contradiction become subject of a logos which knows itself, i.e., can become subject matter for an investigation according to principles that are valued in philosophy, i.e., the philosophy of mythology. Consequently, it is appropriate to study by close

[1] F.W.J. Schelling, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, Hrsg. Walter E. Ehrhardt, Hamburg, Meiner (Philosophische Bibliothek Band 445a), 1992. We abbreviate as *Urfassung* and indicate the number of the Lecture and pagination— here *41st Lecture*, 315. All English translations from this book are mine.

[2] For an elucidation of the meaning of this neologism, see footnotes 419-420 below.

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examination a true method that would allow the philosopher to find a way toward a realm beyond mere thought, where mysteries host an unalterable truth on existence. Furthermore, any initiation into the mysteries (which, for Schelling, "contain the truth of mythology"[3]) will necessarily share in that same wavering status proper to the representations to which (the account of) these mysteries refer.

B. From Exoteric to Esoteric Mythology: The Origin of an "Account of Mysteries"

In his lectures on mythology and its mysteries—his *Basic Outline of a Philosophy of Revelation* (*Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung*, 1831-32)—Schelling distinguishes the ceremonial happenings or scenic occurrences, which are the mystagogical side of the mysteries, from the knowledge *[Erkenntnis]* yielded by this praxis, which is the "account of the mysteries" *[Mysterienlehre]*, accounting for the truth or the understanding of them.[4] In a commentary which refers to Proclus' commentary on Plato's *Alcibiades*, Schelling states about the purpose of mystagogical praxis—and by this, about initiation as well—that the fear and trembling (not to speak of the *orgia*) emerging from exposure to the *phantasmata* "must make the soul receptive to the divine and let the soul sense its future restful state as a higher blissfulness."[5] For Schelling, Greek mysteries derive their name *(teletai)* from their purpose *(telos)*, anticipating, namely, a future and completed initiation. This signification is complemented, in Rome, by the term *initia* (hence: initiation), referring to a transitional endeavour (Übergang), understood as *principia* of mysteries.[6] Regarding the knowledge which emerges in consciousness by mystagogical praxis and actually makes consciousness itself emerge, Schelling states that mysteries emerge in consciousness at the moment in the mythological process when exoteric deities figuring in exoteric mythology become esoteric. He refers, namely, to the moment in which all materiality and manifoldness are overcome and, through this, consciousness itself becomes *eo ipso* possessed in itself by spiritual deities *(geistige Götter)*. It is the moment at which in the initiates the real violence *(reale Gewalt*[7]*)* of mythological necessity on behalf of exoteric deities turns into a state of inner, free encounter with spiritual deities. This moment represents the birth of an esoteric account of mysteries. It is important to notice how this esoteric *Mysterienlehre* is designed after two matrices:

[3] *Urfassung, 36th Lecture*, 265.
[4] Id., *40th Lecture*, 298.
[5] Id., *40th Lecture*, 301.
[6] Id., *41st Lecture* 315, also *48th Lecture*, 385–386.
[7] *40th Lecture* 301.

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- the noetic matrix comprises the following aforementioned elements: *consciousness, spiritualness freedom, cognizance;*

while the noematic matrix comprises:

- *facticity:* "All in the mysteries is factum: from the beginning to the end, as is displayed in a tragedy, all is based on an event *[Ereignis]*";[8]
- *priority:* "Content of the account of mysteries *[Mysterienlehre]* are [...] the pure causing divinities [...]. The esoteric of mythology can only be the pure principles, the causes, also only the pure potencies, which we have put forward at work throughout the whole mythological process";[9]
- *one-ness:* "The apex of the account of mysteries was the fact that the causing divinities [...] were the mere different shapes of one and the same God who was moving by itself, through itself, and in itself";[10]
- *pure spiritualness:* "The main content of the mysteries was nothing else than the history of the religious consciousness itself, or, stated objectively, the history of God himself, who had himself elucidated and sublated from the original state of non-spiritualness unto complete spiritualness. The final content of the mysteries is thus the pure spiritual God."[11]

These two matrices—the noetic and the noematic—are designing *by themselves* an "account of mysteries" *[Mysterienlehre].* I explicitly emphasize "by themselves" because the account which manifests the truth indwelling in esoteric mythology is altogether a subject-less (also pre-historical) account of truth and cognizance. In his *Historical-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology,*[12] Lecture eight, Schelling borrows a neologism, coined by "the well-known Coleridge" to express the itself-positing actuality of mythology and its gods: "Mythology is not *allegorical;* it is *tautegorical.*"[13] Schelling elucidates the meaning of the expression "tautegorical" as follows: "Because consciousness chooses or invents neither the ideas themselves nor their expression, mythology emerges immediately *as such* and in no other sense than in which it articulates

[8] *45th Lecture*, 357, also 298: "die Mysterien waren etwas, was begangen wurde – res, sacra, quae fiebant."

[9] *42nd Lecture*, 318–319.

[10] *42nd Lecture*, 320.

[11] *5th Lecture*, 351.

[12] This is Book I of the *Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology (Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie, Erstes Buch: historisch-kritische Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie),* which is itself Volume I *(Erster Band)* of his *Philosophy of Mythology (Philosophie der Mythologie)* in *Schellings Werke: Nach der Originalausgabe in neuer Anordnung*, ed. Manfred Schröter, Berlin, Beck'schen Verlag, 1927–1959 und 1962–1971 (abbreviated *SW*). We are using the English translation by Jason M. Wirth (Foreword) and Mason Richey – Markus Zisselberger (main text), State University of New York Press, Albany, NY, 2007 (SUNY Series in Contemporary Continental Philosophy).

[13] *Op. cit.*, 136 (*SW* XI, 195–196).

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itself."[14] Mythologies tautegorically manifest their truth in mysteries so as mysteries are tautegorical manifestations of truth with respect to consciousness and world. Needless to say, "tautegorical" as a *proprium* of real truth must firstly be stated—at the noematic side of the *Mysterienlehre*—with respect to the one, pure spiritual god *[rein geistiger Gott]*.

C. *Tautegory* and initiation

What is remarkable in Schelling's theory of mysteries and truth intertwined with consciousness and causing deities *[verursachende Götter]* is the fact that he lets mysteries and, hence, truth and cognizance of man, world, and God emerge from a subject-less self-consciousness and freedom. He states: "In the mysteries, mythology was conscious of itself—in the mysteries it understood itself and this understanding consisted in the fact that the entire history of deities turned into a history of God himself."[15] A mytho-logical subject-less self-consciousness thus operates—throughout a progressive meta-historical history toward monotheism—according to a logos that is able to see *[Anschauen]*.[16] With respect to initiation, this implies that the initiates are brought into a condition of seeing not by virtue of a captative vision by dint of an apprehensive intellect. Rather, their seeing is preceded by the tautegorical self-manifestation of truth and, hence, it concerns a seeing of truth (a state of cognizance) for which the eyes must be made receptive. With lyrical wording, Schelling states: "This futurity, the future religion [of the One Spiritual God] did close off the mouth of the initiates, and understanding of it was kept as a secret—at the very most one ventured to let it be contemplated by the eyes, but not dared to entrust it to the ears in words."[17] What has made itself apparent to the initiates amounts, firstly, to the spiritual (the esoteric) reality as indwelling in the material (the exoteric), and, secondly and foremost, the One [God] of monotheism, spiritually realized in the many (polytheism). Being brought into this blessed state of complete initiation or completed freedom, the higher cognizing consciousness *[das Höheres begreifenden Bewusstsein]*[18] of the initiates in its intercourse with the One, is living through its *Ursein*, i.e., its original paradisiacal state of being. No earlier state of consciousness—for instance: the object-consciousness and self-consciousness thought of by the philosophers as emerging from the split between object and subject—can ever be thought. The "higher cognizing consciousness" of the initiates is identified as its or their unprethinkable *[unvordenkliche]* state of being.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Urfassung, 45th Lecture*, 352.

[16] Id., *40th Lecture*, 303, also *46th Lecture*, 367.

[17] Id., *47th Lecture*, 367.

[18] Id., *42nd Lecture*, 320.

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The unprethinkable being of consciousness—its *Ursein*—is living through its being as a consciousness which *eo ipso* is cognizing itself as prepossessed by the content of the *Mysterienlehre*. The account of mysteries, which is in the end an account of itself-positing truth on man, God and world, accounts *eo ipso* for the truth of the being of consciousness itself. The noematic matrix by which we have designed the *Mysterienlehre* as such will evidently *eo ipso* also design the truth of the being of "the higher cognizing consciousness" in which this account culminates. Put in other words, the mytho-logos by which a mythology-based account of self-consciousness moves toward its completion, evidently translates its matrices into a future philosophy-based account of self-consciousness. A philosophical logos, as such not moved by causing spiritual esoteric deities in its journey toward full cognizance of truth, will, however, not move itself in a void. The *Urtat*,[19] as Schelling calls it, by which consciousness as cognizant of itself emerges out of the mythological process, is not the originating creative act of a will *ex nihilo*. The state of being prepossessed by the mysteries and their truth-cognizance, the unprethinkable intercourse with the One, amounts to the onto-logical condition wherein mytho-logos and philosophical logos as well, will process.

D. From *Mysterienlehre* to a Philosophical Cognizance of it

The *noetic* matrix wherein the *Mysterienlehre* moves for its truth-manifesting dynamics— I recall the coordinates: conscious – free – cognizant – spiritual— also applies to the logos at work in philosophical reflection. So, too, does the *noematic* matrix designing the content of those manifestations of truth. I recall them: facticity – priority – One-ness – pure spiritualness.

The initiation through which one reaches this state of consciousness together with its content can be a mystagogical initiation into the mysteries or a philosophical initiation into reflective thought. Both modes of initiation share the following common characteristics:

First, they both ascend, and their ascent is patho-logically dynamized by enthusiasm *[Gottesbesessenheit]* or orgies of knowing *[orgiasmos]*.[20] The differing characteristic, however, on this point of pathos is the following: the patho-logical ascending in the mythological process occurs *a tergo*[21] whereas in the reflective philosophical process the ascending occurs by a prehensive attraction.[22]

[19] Id., *45th Lecture*, 357.

[20] Id., *40th Lecture*, 302.

[21] Cf. id., *34th Lecture*, 249.

[22] Cf. Aristotle's *hōs erōmenon* (*Metaphysica* XII, 1072a26) or, in modernity, the pathos of curiosity (see Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, translated by Robert M. Wallace, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, The MIT Press, 1983, 229–452).

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Second, both modes of initiation issue in a highest cognizance which is highest in virtue of highest ends. In Schelling's words: "The resemblance of the true philosophy with the initiation into the mysteries can be derived by the fact that the Romans called the mysteries by the notion of *initia*. *Initia*, however, means *principia*. The mysteries thus ascend toward the causes themselves."[23]

Third, the initiates indwell in a state of freedom—freedom by liberation, liberated from matter and materiality. The awakening of spiritualness or the awakening of a higher consciousness in esoteric mysteries is experienced as a liberating death. In its spiritual intercourse with the One, consciousness discovers—by experience—its being brought into a position of *free* encounter with the truth. Schelling states:

> In the mysteries really died or expired the principle according to which, in the mythological process, consciousness was submissive and pulled down into the material world. [...] That liberation of consciousness from all that is material in the mythological process can very well be called dying. This was the purpose of the *telete*.[24]

As is commonly known, throughout its history, pre-modern and modern alike, philosophical thinking has constantly focused—in historically changing profiles—on the intrinsic linkage that exists between truth and freedom, in a metaphysics of the knowing soul.[25]

E. Schelling's *Introduction* (as Initiation) into a "Positive" Philosophy of Revelation

What has been exposed thus far, first, on mythology and the truth of mythology which becomes conscious in mysteries, and, second, on the nature of a true initiation into the mysteries, might suffice to prepare the transition (a *metabasis*) to philosophy, i.e., philosophy of revelation. Schelling has presented this "critical" transition from the tautegorical truth of mythology toward a reflective grasp of truth in philosophy as a dying in a double respect: "In the same way as the Greek mysteries are the true end *[das wahre Ende]* of mythology, so also is the philosophical presentation *[Darstellung]* of the account of mysteries the end of the philosophy of mythology."[26]

[23] Id., *41st Lecture*, 315, also *48th Lecture*, 386.

[24] Id., *40th Lecture*, 303.

[25] References can be made to Plato's doctrine of the human soul as a self-moving motion (*Sophist* 246a–249d, *Phaedrus* 245c–d), Aristotle's *De Anima* III on *nous poiëtikos;* Thomas Aquinas' *De Veritate* on the *intellectus agens*; Descartes' *IVth Meditation*; Kant's idea of transcendental freedom of the understanding; etc.

[26] *Urfassung, 48th Lecture*, 388.

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In other words, for Schelling, the philosophical presentation of the account of mysteries reveals the principles by which a philosophy of revelation can be elaborated. For the philosopher, the mysteries of Christianity are mysteries—self-presentations of truth—according to the same principles that determine the mode of self-presentation by which the mysteries dawned from mythological consciousness. This being stated, my presentation will continue to explore these principles, especially from the point of view of initiation. As a reminder of the focus of my investigation, I restate the question that appears in the title: which initiation does not lead astray from the true mysteries in philosophy? By which initiation should reason be prepared to become receptive to genuine religious mysteries? Which initiation prevents reason from becoming intrusive in the domain of revelation and wrongfully take possession of the properties of religion?

Along this line of questioning, we enter into the later Schelling's argument in favour of a positive philosophy. From now on, I am no longer relying on his *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung* (1831/32), Part I, in which he exposed the principles (or potencies) of the mythological process up to its self-understanding in mysteries. Regarding these principles, Schelling states that they should be formally taken as principles of the process of Revelation too, up to its self-understanding in a philosophical Christology (Part II). As he puts it, "The reality of those principles from which Revelation understands itself is already known to us, independent of Revelation, by the philosophy of mythology."[27] It is not my purpose to discuss Schelling's philosophical Christology from the perspective of its content from within the frame of the philosophy of revelation. But the theme on which I will dwell in this study is the issue of philosophical initiation. I will focus on the way (the method) by which Schelling's philosophical comprehension of Revelation has brought to light how an initiation into positive philosophy is shaped. To discuss this specific issue of initiation, we have to study the *Berlin Lectures* which Schelling gave during the winter semester of 1842–43 entitled *The Introduction to the Philosophy of Revelation, or the Grounding of Positive Philosophy.*[28] *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy* presented as *Introduction* is, to our interpretation, intentionally meant to be a genuine philosophical

[27] *Urfassung, 48th Lecture*, 390.

[28] We will refer parenthetically to *Sämmtliche Werke* (ed. K. F. A. Schelling, Stuttgart, 1856–61, abbreviated *SW* with indication of Division and Volume, the number of the Lecture and pagination). Schelling's *Einleitung in die Philosophie der Offenbarung oder Begründung der positiven Philosophie* is included in *SW II. Abteilung, Volume 3* (abbreviated *SW II/3*) in *Schellings Werke*, hrsg. Manfred Schröter, München, C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1960. The *Berlin Lectures, SM 1743–44* are to be found in *Sechster Ergänzungsband*, 1–174. We are using the English translation *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy. The Berlin Lectures*, translated and with an Introduction and Notes by Bruce Matthews, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2007. Our references to the English translation are given as follows: *Grounding*, number of Lecture, pagination from *SW* II/3.

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initiation. It is, namely, meant to function as a preliminary exercise to bring philosophical consciousness into a position that allows for cognizing any self-positing truth, for instance the truth of Revelation. Only an initiation into positive philosophy does not lead reflective consciousness astray from the true mysteries of existence.

The *Introduction* to which I am referring is thus not just a preliminary commencement of a book, usually previewing or defining the subject matter that will be discussed. On the contrary. Before entering into the philosophy of Revelation as such and commencing its full exposition, *a fortiori* before entering into the "special" philosophy of Revelation, i.e., Schelling's Christology (in *Book III* of *The Philosophy of Revelation*[29]), we have to set our philosophical mind in an appropriate "position." Schelling refers to a position which allows reflective consciousness to comprehend the event of Revelation (in general) adequately in order to let it be what, according to its positive *Realdefinition*, it truly is with emphasis on "existence," experience, and facticity. No Revelation whatsoever, among the realities of experience (for instance: real nature, real humanity, real consciousness, the entire history of the human race, or Christianity) with which positive philosophy deals, can ever become the subject matter of a positive philosophical comprehension if the philosopher's mind has not acknowledged in advance the undeniable authority with which these events positively give themselves to us in experience. The transcendental logic of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, which authorizes itself by itself in constituting what it calls "objective experience," is not apt ever to comprehend any phenomenon of Revelation in nature. Indeed, Kantian critical reason takes a position by which it is prepossessed by the sheer potency of being (Kant calls this *"omnitudo realitatis"* with reference to "transcendental matter"). Kant thinks of the *omnitudo realitatis* in such a way that this potency has been "liberated" not merely from every religious signification (revelation) but even from everything that has reality.[30] According to its idealistic definition, transcendental philosophy "flees—Schelling states—into a complete wasteland devoid of all being, where nothing is to be encountered but only [...] the sole immediate content of thought in which it moves only within itself as within its own ether."[31] In Kant's critical view, "any future metaphysics that will be able to come forward as science,"[32] will, however, definitely defend some positivity in the doctrine of empirical realism but it will do so only under the prior formal authority of a science of

[29] SW II/14. In *Schellings Werke*, hrsg. Manfred Schröter, München, 1965, *Sechster Hauptband, Philosophie der Offenbarung, Drittes Buch: Der Philosophie der Offenbarung Zweiter Teil*, 389–726.

[30] *Grounding, Lecture V* (*SW* II/3, 75–76).

[31] *Grounding, Lecture V* (*SW* II/3, 76).

[32] Full title of his *Prolegomena* (1783).

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reason. Consequently, such a science (i.e., metaphysics) will *demonstrate* but does not *prove (erweisen).* To "prove" anything, according to its positivity, takes place only on the condition which states that being is *prius* to essence. With its critical overtone, Kant's transcendental logic can certainly serve as an introduction or—as he calls it—a preparation (*CrpR* B 26), or propaedeutics (*CrpR* B 25). But it can merely be an introduction with a negative utility, namely as "purification of our reason" (*CrpR* B 25) or for the sake of "supplying the touchstone of the worth or worthlessness of all cognitions a priori" (*CrpR* B 26). Transcendental logic in its critical, i.e., preparatory, signification may promise "a future metaphysics" and ultimately prepare for a "practico-dogmatic metaphysics of freedom,"[33] but it remains entangled within the negativity of mere thought. Hence, it can be considered as one of the showpieces of negative philosophy.

Schelling's *Introduction* also "prepares" and "purifies" and "supplies a touchstone of the worth or worthlessness of all cognitions a priori" but it does so *toto caelo* differently from Kant's. In our interpretation, Schelling's *Introduction* that precedes his philosophy of Revelation by providing a grounding of positive philosophy is truly an initiation. Indeed, Schelling's a priori brings forward a *prius* of which, *per posterius,* one can comprehend scientifically "the real God, the actual chain of events, and a free relationship of God to the world."[34] Preparing the philosopher's mind to such a comprehension of the real, fulfils the task *(Aufgabe)*[35] of an initiation. A philosophy of revelation which must come forward as a real science about the real becomes prepared for this task by an introduction which initiates. Differentiating negative from positive philosophy, and faced with the task of identifying a grounding for the latter, Schelling's *Introduction* also purifies (but without rejecting) the universal possibility (being as the immediate content of reason) of its antecedent logical preformation.[36] It even supplies the touchstone of the worth or worthlessness of bringing the said task to completion. For Schelling, there is no other touchstone for philosophy (which must be a real science) for assessing worth or worthlessness than what he calls "the *maxime cognoscendum,* that which is most worthy of knowing [...] that which is known in the purest knowing [...] that which is the most, indeed, that which is alone worthy of *existence.*"[37]

[33] See his so-called *Fortschritte* essay: *What Real Progress has Metaphysics Made in Germany since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?* (1793/1804) in The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, general editors: Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. The English translation of the *Fortschritte* essay is included in the volume *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781,* edited by Henry Allison and Peter Heath, translated by Gary Hatfield, Michael Friedman, Henry Allison, Peter Heath, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, 349–424. In Ak. 20, 259–351, see especially 293–296.

[34] *Grounding, Lecture VII* (SW II/3, 132).

[35] *Grounding, Lecture V* (SW II/3, 93).

[36] See *Grounding, Lecture VIII* (SW II/3, 148).

[37] *Grounding, Lecture VIII* (SW II/3, 149).

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As Schelling's *Introduction* ends with Lecture VIII on the grounding of positive philosophy, we may ask: what grounds did he actually disclose? Is it still a *cognoscendum*, the most worthy of all that can be known? In which experience (presentiment, *Ahndung*)[38] can these grounds reveal themselves as the most worthy of existence? In which position does reason find itself immersed after the moment when its *entelecheia* has been oriented toward an ultimate *[Letztes]* existence *[das Unvordenkliche]?* The negativity which Schelling puts to the test in the negative "science of reason," causes—as he calls it—"a constant overthrow *[Umsturz]* of reason"[39] in order to pass over into real knowledge. It involves passing over *a potentia ad actum*. On the rebound, positive philosophy also yields a reverse "overthrow of reason." Indeed, when from "that which just is *[das bloss Seynde or das Seyn]*, every idea, that is every potency, is excluded,"[40] reason is set *outside* itself or is "absolutely ecstatic."[41] In the orientation toward the Absolute *Prius* or *das* Überseynde, or the *unprethinkable*, reason is overthrown into ecstasy. In this position, reason will thereafter, a posteriori, acquire "that which just is" *[das bloss Seyende]* as its content, "and in this way return to itself at the same time."[42] Negative philosophy (or the science of reason) joins positive philosophy, but only afterwards, as *posterius*, after having experienced ecstatically the absolute transcendence[43] in which things in their *Seyendes-sein* come to be comprehended. Respecting this order, philosophy as a science can be a philosophy of revelation. It is scientific not simply because a "science of reason" (for instance a transcendental logic) is, so to say, put to work, but also because philosophy has—prior to this logic, prior to this potency—posited itself within what posits itself as pure actuality, i.e., "that what is genuinely and properly true, Truth itself."[44] This position, having posited itself into the cognizance of "Truth itself," marks the initiation into the mysteries of existence as being completed.

Part II: The pre-critical and critical Kant on "positive" Philosophy and Mysteries, respectively

I continue my analysis with two inquiries on Kant (1724-1804). The first refers to his pre-critical work *Nova Dilucidatio* (1755) and, in particular, to his demonstration of the existence of God *(Propositio VII),* focussing on

38 *Grounding, Lecture VI* (SW II/3, 111).
39 *Grounding, Lecture VII* (SW II/3, 152).
40 *Grounding, Lecture VIII* (SW II/3, 162).
41 *Grounding, Lecture VIII* (SW II/3, 163).
42 *Grounding, Lecture VIII* (SW II/3, 163).
43 *Grounding, Lecture VIII* (SW II/3, 169).
44 *Grounding, Lecture VIII* (SW II/3, 150).

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the "positive" (in Schelling's meaning of this term) basis which Kant brings to light as a basis of proof. A second investigation will focus on Kant's *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793), in which he treats the issue of Mysteries *[Geheimnisse]*.

A. Kant's "positive" thinking on God in his pre-critical *Nova Dilucidatio*

In *Propositio* VII of his *Habilitationsschrift*, Kant states: "There is a Being, the existence of which is prior to the very possibility both of Itself and of all things. This Being is, therefore, said to exist absolutely necessarily. This Being is called God."[45] The following elements upon which the proof is based remind us immediately of what we stated in our presentation of the noematic matrix by which Schelling designed the true mysteries in esoteric mythology. This matrix also holds for the early Kant (1755).

1. *Facticity*. Both the early Kant and the later Schelling take a "positive"—which means *real*—factum into account: "that which indubitably exists" *[das unzweifelhaft Existierende]*,[46] on the basis of which, as their ontological condition, all potency or possibility can be proved *(erweisen) per posterius* to be the possibility of something real. In Kant's early work, this reality is called "the real within the notion of the possible" *(das Reale der Möglichkeit; das, was im Begriff real ist; quicquid est in omni possibili notione reale)*.[47] In the *Scholion* to the proof, Kant qualifies this reality as *documentum maxime primitivum*.[48]

2. *Priority*. "Existence," which is defined as "absolute Position,"[49] must be affirmed *prior* to the very possibility of God and of all things. Kant states: "Of all beings, God is the only one in which existence is prior to, or, if you prefer, identical with possibility."[50] Positing existence *(absolute Position) prior*

[45] For the English translation of the works of Kant, we use *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant* (general editors Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992-2016. The English translation of *Nova Dilucidatio* is included in the volume *Theoretical Philosophy, 1755–1770*, translated and edited by David Walford, in collaboration with Ralf Meerbote, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, 5–45. The original Latin is to be found in *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, herausgegeben von der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, Georg Reimer, 1910–, Vol. 1 (abbreviated Ak 1), 385–416.

[46] *Grounding, Lecture VIII* (SW II/3, 158).

[47] *Nova Dilucidatio*, Ak 1, 395.

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] See also (for a more extensive elaboration of existence as "absolute position"): *The only Possible Argument in Support of a Demonstration of the Existence of God. First Reflection: Of Existence in General, Chapter Two: Existence is the Absolute Positing* [absolute Position] *of a thing*, in Ak 2, 73–75.

[50] *Nova Dilucidatio*, Prop. VII, Ak 1, 396.

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to possibility or essence entails "that nothing can be conceived as possible unless whatever is real in every possible concept exists and indeed exists absolutely necessary."[51]

3. *One-ness*. The absolutely necessary Being is predicated of *omnitudo realitatis* which itself is identified as "an Infinite Being" *[ein unendliches Seiendes]*.[52] It contains in itself *"whatever is real in every possible concept [was in jedem möglichen Begriff real ist]"* or "so to speak, [contains] the material of all possible concepts."[53] Based on the fact of its absolutely necessary existence, "it must be concluded that only one such Being exists absolutely necessarily."[54] Following the principle of determining grounds *[Realgrund]*, "one must conclude that this *omnitudo realitatis* exists in God as its *Realgrund*."[55] Kant's fundamental question "How it comes about that there is, in general, something which can be thought" is answered in a manner to which Schelling would also subscribe: "how that should come about is something which cannot be conceived at all, unless it is the case that whatever is real in the concepts exists in God, the source of all reality."[56]

4. *Spiritualness*. In another work of the pre-critical Kant, his *Only Possible Ground of Proof for a Demonstration of God's Existence* (1763), his argument from 1755 is presented more extensively. In this work, one finds an argument for the following proposition: "The necessary Being is a mind *[Geist]*."[57]

If the later Schelling had checked Kant's pre-critical works—written antecedent to when, as he says, "Kant was pulling himself entirely back within the limits of the negative of *just* the logical"[58]—he would have been surprised to discover in a concise way what he himself was propounding in his later works on positive philosophy. It is definitely the effect of his Copernican revolution toward a science of reason in the shape of a transcendental idealism that the early Kant's "positive" thinking on existence turned into a—for Schelling "negative"—transcendental logic of the pure understanding's categories of modality and their corresponding principles.

B. The Critical Kant on "Reason also has its Mysteries"

An intriguing case in the history of philosophical investigations on mysteries is Kant's critical discussion of this theme in his *Religion within the Boundaries of mere Reason* (1793) in connection with his *On the Miscarriage of all*

[51] *Nova Dilucidatio*, Prop. VII, Ak 1, 395.
[52] *Ibid.*
[53] *Ibid.*
[54] *Ibid.*
[55] *Ibid.*
[56] *Nova Dilucidatio*, Prop. VII, Ak 1, 395–396.
[57] *Only Possible Argument in Support*, Ak 2, 87.
[58] *Grounding, Lecture V* (SW II/3) 84.

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Philosophical Trials in Theodicy (1791) and *The End of all Things* (1794). In this last work, Kant states: "Reason also has its mysteries."[59] This is not an admission one would have expected from a critical philosopher of the Age of Enlightenment, who claimed to have cleansed reason from all illusions and mystical dreams concerning transcendent representations, especially in the domain of metaphysics and religion. But still, reason also has its mysteries "because it is not easily satisfied with its immanent, i.e., practical use, but gladly ventures into the transcendent."[60] Ventures of this kind in the religious domain are critically treated in the four *General Remarks* at the end of each Part of which the *Religion* book is composed. After having elaborated in four Parts his "philosophical doctrine of religion," Kant puts the following religious themes to a critical test: Effects of Grace[61] (in connection with the issue of moral conversion), Miracles[62] (in connection with philosophical Christology), Mysteries[63] (in connection with the issue of faith in philosophical ecclesiology), Means of Grace[64] (in connection with acts of cult and liturgy). All four are called "*Parerga* to religion within the boundaries of pure reason."[65] In relation to moral religion ("the recognition of all duties as divine commands"[66]), *parerga* emerge from "reason, conscious of its impotence to satisfy its moral needs, [and thus] extends itself to extravagant ideas which might make up for this lack, though it is not suited to this enlarged domain."[67] Among the four *parerga*, the issue of *mysteries [Geheimnisse]* arises as connected with ecclesiastical faith which, under the critical condition of being "within the boundaries of mere reason," has to fit with "the pure faith of religion [as] its supreme interpreter."[68] As it is of a merely subjective nature, the pure *faith* of reason clings to the subjective facet of morality, namely the moral predisposition,[69] and hence it is not subject to the objective principles of universal communication. For Kant,

[59] *The End of all Things*, in *Religion and Rational Theology*, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, translated and edited by Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, Ak 8, 335.

[60] *Ibid.*

[61] *Religion within the Boundaries of mere Reason*, in *Religion and Rational Theology*, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, translated and edited by Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, henceforth abbreviated: *Religion*), Ak 6, 44–52.

[62] *Religion*, Ak 6, 84–89.

[63] *Religion*, Ak 6, 137–147.

[64] *Religion*, Ak 6, 190–202.

[65] Id., Ak 6, 52.

[66] *Critique of Practical Reason*, in *Practical Philosophy*, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, translated and edited by Mary J. Gregor, General Introduction by Allen Wood, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, Ak. 5, 129.

[67] *Religion*, Ak 6, 52.

[68] *Religion*, Ak 6, 109.

[69] See *Religion*, Ak 6, 138.

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> investigation into all forms of faith that relate to religion invariably runs across a *mystery* behind their inner nature, i.e., something *holy,* which can indeed be cognized *[gekannt]* by every individual, yet cannot be professed *[bekannt]* publicly, i.e., cannot be communicated universally.[70]

Regarding mysteries, cognizance must be of practical use and, hence, it touches upon practical reason. Seen from the subjective side, however, it is "not something that can be imparted universally, each individual will have to look for it (if there is any such thing) in his own reason."[71] Regarding "the inner, the subjective part of our moral predisposition,"[72] Kant states that one is "not allowed to count among the holy mysteries the *grounds* of morality, which are inscrutable to us."[73] For him, what cannot be considered a mystery is the inscrutable though objectively (i.e., law) and subjectively (i.e., respect) clearly cognized determining grounds of our moral willing, which imperatively ought to format the maxims of our will by the representation of the moral law. Though the originating grounds of such moral willing remain forever hidden in the depths of every human heart, the property that allows human willing to be moral is clearly known and communicable to everyone. Freedom, namely, is apodictically known *(ratio cognoscendi*[74]*)* by the fact of the moral law. Kant states: "Thus freedom [...] is no mystery, since cognition of it can be *communicated* to everyone."[75] Only the *ratio of the final end* of freedom, "the grounds of this property, which is inscrutable to us, is, however, a mystery, since it is *not given* to us in cognition."[76] Kant refers these final grounds to God and by doing so, he makes freedom and specifically its final grounds into an issue within the domain of (moral) religion. By the same token, as a religious issue, the grounds of freedom are made an issue of faith. In this regard, it is important to notice the fact that Kant does not consider the mysteries in religion to be an issue of faith in God "as the almighty creator of heaven and earth, i.e., morally as *holy* lawgiver."[77] The moral attribute of holiness pertains to God's inner nature in connection with his wisdom which, "considered theoretically, signifies *cognition of the highest good*, and practically, *the fitness of the will for the highest good*."[78] In the concept of divine wisdom is the attribute of holiness (God as lawgiver) is, hence, united with

[70] *Religion*, Ak 6, 137.
[71] *Religion*, Ak 6, 138.
[72] *Ibid.*
[73] *Ibid.* Meant are the *formal* grounds of morality (the objectively and subjectively determining grounds, respectively, the law and the feeling of respect). Regarding the *final* ground (the highest good), see infra on this page.
[74] *Critique of Practical Reason*, Ak 5, 4n.
[75] *Religion*, Ak 6, 138.
[76] *Ibid.*
[77] *Religion*, Ak 6, 139.
[78] *Critique of Practical Reason*, Ak 5, 130–131.

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the attribute of justice (God as just judge). For Kant, there is nothing mysterious regarding the "cognition of the highest good," nor can it be considered to be mysterious that God will judge "the fitness of the will for the highest good"[79] according to principles of justice. Considered in their practical signification, both these attributes—lawgiver and judge—and their moral qualifications—holiness and justice—are "perfectly cognized" as they are thoroughly revealed by objective principles of reason. Kant states: "With respect to that which is universal human duty to have cognition of (namely anything moral) there can be no mystery."[80] In the religious domain, mysteries can only reside with respect to what God alone can do: first, in accordance with the holiness of his moral lawgiving; second, in accordance with the benevolence of his moral guardianship; third, in accordance with the justice of his moral judging. Differing from our thorough cognizance with respect to what God as Legislator and Obligator has commanded us as moral duties, it completely exceeds our human capacities to know anything about three things: first, how in his holiness God will cooperate with human moral beings to attain the final end of moral freedom; second, how in his benevolence God will rule and love *[amor benevolentiae]*[81] the world; third, how in his justice God will judge the fitness of the disposition for the highest good. In his *Religion* book, Kant states: "with respect to that which God alone can do, for which to do anything ourselves would exceed our capacity and also our duty, there we can have a genuine, i.e., a holy, mystery of religion *(mysterium)*."[82] In order for humans to attain the final grounds of moral freedom as conditioned by his legislation, i.e., happiness, under the conditioning rule of justice assessing the human being worthy to this happiness, "an omnipotent moral being must be assumed as ruler of the world, under whose care this would come about."[83] For Kant, mysteries are thus located in "that which God alone can do"[84] in his threefold capacity of legislator, ruler of the world, and judge in order for finite moral human beings to make attainable what is purposively set out to be realized as the final moral end. In this respect, Kant states: "Since by himself the human being cannot realize the idea of the supreme good inseparably bound up with the pure moral disposition [...], he finds himself driven to believe in the cooperation *[Mitwirkung]* or the management *[Veranstaltung]* of a moral ruler of the world, through which alone this end is possible. And here opens

[79] *Ibid.*

[80] *Religion*, Ak 6, 138n.

[81] For more on this issue of love, see my chapter "Kant on 'Love God above all, and your neighbour as yourself'," in *The Concept of Love in 17th and 18th Century Philosophy*, edited by Gábor Boros, Herman De Dijn, Martin Moors, Leuven, Leuven University Press, and Budapest, Eötvös Loránd University Press, 2007, 245–269.

[82] *Religion*, Ak 6, 139n.

[83] *Religion*, Ak 6, 8n.

[84] *Religion*, Ak 6, 139n.

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up before him the abyss of a mystery regarding what God may do, whether *anything* at all is to be attributed to him and *what* this something might be in particular."[85] An answer to the question "whether *anything* at all is to be attributed to him" "appears to reason dishonest or impudent"[86] and—even worse—is of no practical use, either if one tried to figure it out objectively, on the basis of a representation of "what God is in himself,"[87] or as a "profession of a creed of ecclesiastical faith totally unintelligible to human beings."[88] Rather, Kant's answer to the question under investigation is oriented toward a *parergon* to *Religion within the Boundaries of mere Reason. That* anything at all is to be attributed to the divine benevolent ruler of the world, i.e., *that* mysteries do have their legitimate status in relation to[89] moral religion, can be accepted by reason in *reflective* faith which admits that "in the inscrutable field of the supernatural there is something more than it [reason] can bring to its understanding."[90] The next question points to "what in particular" the divine Legislator, Ruler of the world, and Judge can do by assisting the finite human being's freedom to reach the final moral end.[91] In this regard, Kant correspondingly enumerates the following three mysteries:

1. The first is the mystery of the *call [Berufung]*. By divine legislation, human beings are, according to the laws of freedom, *called on* to be citizens of an ethical state. Kant states: "So the call to this end is morally quite clear; for speculation, however, the possibility of beings who are thus called is an impenetrable mystery."[92] In fact, as to its content, this first mystery of the call refers, as a *parergon*, to Kant's philosophical ecclesiology: "the founding of a kingdom of God on earth."[93] In this context, Kant puts forward the theme of the call, as a mystery, on the basis of his argument, according to which the concept of an ethical community or invisible church, considered as "a universal union *(omnitudo collectiva)*"[94] of moral human beings, requires "someone other than the people whom we can declare the public lawgiver of an ethical community."[95] This conclusion entails that the concept of an ethical

[85] *Religion*, Ak 6, 139.

[86] *Religion*, Ak 6, 52.

[87] *Religion*, Ak 6, 142.

[88] *Religion*, Ak 6, 142.

[89] "In relation to" here concretely means, in the case of the *parerga*: "bordering on" (*Religion*, Ak 6, 52).

[90] *Ibid.*

[91] We pass over Kant's intriguing attempt to interpret the three divine attributes as a designation of divine Trinity and to interpret correspondingly the saying in the Johannine Gospel: "God is love" (*Religion*, 6, 141–147).

[92] *Religion*, Ak 6, 143.

[93] *Religion*, Part III, Ak 6, 93–137, especially Chapter III: The Concept of an Ethical Community is the Concept of a People of God under Ethical Laws (Ak 6, 98–100).

[94] *Religion*, Ak 6, 157.

[95] *Religion*, Ak 6, 99.

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state becomes a religious concept by which God as lawgiver is thought as the constitutive principle of such an ethical community. On their behalf, moral human beings may consider their citizenship in "a people of God"[96] as a call, the possibility of which reason has no grasp at all.

2. The second is the mystery of *satisfactio [Genugtuung]*.[97] The mystery of *satisfactio* is another issue concerning "what God alone can do," this time with regard to human beings whose new life (after conversion to good) is still burdened with guilt for the transgressions committed by the corrupted disposition while living in sin and hence liable to punishment. Atonement before God cannot occur by either sacrificial or ritual performances on behalf of finite human beings who are born with the natural propensity for evil. Hence, not even striving for good works of whatever sort[98] can wipe away, before heavenly justice, the guilt that burdens the converted heart. The problem of satisfaction, redemption and reconciliation with God concentrates ultimately on the fact that the human being "finds no capacity in him sufficient to improve things in the future."[99] On condition that the human being must do everything that lies in his power, i.e., will, in order to convert unto a total change of heart—though this will remain inadequate for the intended effect—only the concept of divine grace can bring relief in this "remarkable antinomy of human reason with itself."[100]

"Here then," says Kant, "is that surplus [Überschuss] over the merit from works [...], one which is imputed to us by *grace*."[101] It is in the context of Christology that Kant elaborates the religious meaning of the concept of satisfaction from the perspective of content. Referring to the *symbola* of the traditional religious creeds, he states:

> this very *Son of God* – bears as *vicarious substitute* the debt of sin for him [the converted] and also for all who believe (practically) in him: as *savior*, he satisfies the highest justice through suffering and death, and, as *advocate*, he makes it possible for them to hope that they will appear justified before their judge.[102]

"What God alone can do" for the full attainment of the final moral end—under the primal condition that the human being must have made himself by his proper freedom worthy of this—amounts, in a Christological context, to "standing in for another by virtue of the superabundance of his own good conduct and his

[96] *Religion* Ak 6, 99.

[97] *Religion*, Ak 6, 143, also 72–74, 116–118.

[98] Kant is manifestly a proponent of Reformation theology on atonement as he rejects, in particular, the connection between punishment of God and acts of penance.

[99] *Religion*, Ak 6, 117.

[100] *Religion* Ak 6, 116.

[101] *Religion* Ak 6, 75.

[102] *Religion*, Ak 6, 74.

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merit."[103] For theoretical reasons, the assumption of this Christological article of faith is completely beyond Kant's scope ("an unfathomable mystery"[104]), though not assuming this mystery of a saving faith[105] "might be disadvantageous to reason in many respects, most of all morally."[106]

3. The third mystery which Kant discusses is the mystery of *election [Erwählung]*. It concerns an issue that pertains to Kant's eschatological doctrine of "the last judgment," namely "some unconditional *decree [Ratschluss]* [issuing in] electing one part of our race to salvation, the other to eternal reprobation."[107] As election is also a matter of grace—granted to one human being, yet denied to another—in this case it concerns "what God alone can do" according to his attribute of judge and taking into account the moral property of justice. What complicates any understanding of this third type of grace is the fact that references to God as lawgiver and as author of salvation must also be taken into account as being united. In the fear of God as lawgiver, this first reference entails unconditional obedience to the law and categorical observance of duty. In this respect, according to principles of justice, any sentence of the judge (the divine above us and conscience within us) will be of guilty and not guilty. Before the law, it is impossible that any merit can be accrued over and above the strict observance of duty. This judge does not know anything about moral advantage. Hence, the verdict will be damnation or absolution. In this case, no possibility is opened up for anything "which God alone can do" regarding the attainment of the final moral end for one and the same person. On the other hand, God in his goodness (benevolence) and love for humankind (the beneficient Ruler of the world) will "judge human beings insofar as a merit can yet accrue to them over and above their guilt, and here his verdict is: *worthy* or *unworthy*."[108] Worthiness (as merit) must be won by love of the law, and under this moral condition it implies moral receptivity to God's goodness (salvation). Hence, if a human being, though guilty of sin, through conversion has made himself meritorious and worthy to be loved by God, "then the pronouncement of the judge proceeds *from love*"[109] and by this, he *elects* human beings "as his own" and brings them to salvation. Kant concludes: "this again does not yield the concept of a divine justice but must at best be deferred to a wisdom whose rule is an absolute mystery to us."[110]

[103] *Religion*, Ak 6, 143.
[104] *Religion*, Ak 6, 143.
[105] See *Religion*, 6: 115: "We call the faith of every individual receptive of [worthy of] eternal happiness, a *saving* faith."
[106] *Religion*, Ak 6, 76.
[107] *Religion*, Ak 6, 143.
[108] *Religion*, Ak 6, 146n.
[109] *Religion*, Ak 6, 146n.
[110] *Religion*, Ak 6, 142.

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Conclusion

In contrast to what has been said on the later Schelling's *tautegorical* paradigm for interpreting the manifestation of truth of, or respectively, in mysteries, Kant's philosophical discourse on mysteries in religion, which is critically determined by the rationalized matrices of his moral philosophy, puts itself completely outside of any positive philosophy about revelation. In no way does the critical Kant's dealing with mysteries cling to any consciousness of self-positing truths of existence. On the contrary, in order not to fall prey to sheer aberrations of a reason that has strayed beyond its limits, Kant does not leave off warning the philosopher never to incorporate the mysteries of religion into the maxims of thought and action. In the particular case of mysteries (as one of the four *parerga* to *Religion within the Boundaries of mere Reason*), such an aberration of reason is called *illumination (Illuminatismus)*, i.e., "presumed enlightenment of the understanding," which is, as he states, "the delusion of the initiates *[Adeptenwahn]*."[111] With this critical warning which is addressed to the initiates into the mysteries of religion, Kant proves himself a herald of Enlightenment-thought making philosophical thinking on religion and its mysteries dependent on "the maxim of a reason that is never *passive*."[112] But if reason may never be passive, how then can it be receptive to the mysteries of existence which, in revealed religion, are acknowledged as that which really matters in human life? Can, finally, philosophy at all survive if it self-conceitedly puts its principles of truth-cognizance over and against the positivity of existence?

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[111] *Religion*, Ak 6, 53. Illumination *(Erleuchtung)* is also an important issue in Kant's essay *What does it Mean to Orient oneself in Thinking?* (1768), where he ironically ascribes it to "those favored by beneficent nature" (Ak 8, 145).

[112] *Critique of Judgment*, translated, with an introduction, by Werner S. Pluhar, with a foreword by Mary J. Gregor, Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Company, 1987, 160–161, in Ak 5, 294.

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HERMENEUTICAL BORDERLINE SITUATIONS—KIERKEGAARD AND THE *COMPELLING SIGN*

Orsolya Horváth

Abstract

In his 1945 lecture L'Existentialisme est un humanisme, *Sartre looks at Kierkegaard again and again while trying to outline an ethics based on atheistic existentialism. Reflecting on Kierkegaard's* Fear and Trembling, *he sees the situation of the decision in the story of Abraham as a hermeneutical one. Accordingly, the decision whether to sacrifice his son lies in Abraham's hands; however, an original decision precedes this one: should the voice heard by Abraham be understood as the voice of God? In Sartre's view, there is no "convincing sign" which would prove the divine origin of the voice. Therefore, Abraham has to make a decision about the origin of the voice. This original decision then determines the act. However, Kierkegaard's meditations – as I see them – tend to go in the direction that there can be such a compelling sign – an expression which, as far as I know, is not used by Kierkegaard – in connection with which there is no doubt about the divine origin, which is impossible to interpret and makes man reach the decision. In my study, I try to analyse the compelling sign in a phenomenological way on the basis of Kierkegaard's interpretation of the story of Abraham.*

In his 1945 lecture *Existentialism is a Humanism,*[1] Sartre articulated before a large audience what he sees as the essence of existentialism. His aim, of course, was not to sum up existentialism itself, but rather to give answers to the criticism directed against it at the time. He wished to show the possibility of an ethical concept based purely on existentialist grounds. More precisely, he sought to present an ethics which is not afraid to take the radicalism of

[1] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, trans. Carol Macomber, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2007, 17–54.

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existentialism as its starting point, namely, that in its way of thinking about existence, it consistently maintains the element of atheism. Sartre takes Dostoevsky's statement as a principle: "If God did not exist, everything would be permitted." However, for Sartre, there is no God, so there is no forgiveness, no determinism, and no norm; therefore, as Sartre says, "we are left alone, without excuses," so "we are condemned to be free." This freedom is the only basis for ethics. Atheistic existentialism makes it clear to the individual that responsibility – for how his decisions form his existence – rests on him alone. According to Sartre, as the human being creates himself in these decisions and – at the same time – stands as an example before others, these decisions weigh heavily on him. As a consequence, he trembles in the moment of decision-making precisely for this reason. Sartre refers to Kierkegaard's notion of "the anguish of Abraham," who also trembles when he faces God's command to sacrifice his son.

In Sartre's view, Kierkegaard explains Abraham's anguish by pointing out that the decision about the origin of the voice which commands Abraham to sacrifice his son is Abraham's decision alone. Abraham is in anguish because his personal decision determines his act and, furthermore, his decision is – though unintentionally – a model for others. The stakes are high, but the decision is Abraham's alone. He cannot turn to anybody or anything for help: he cannot have an adviser, since by choosing the adviser he would already be making the decision. Moreover, it would be fruitless to look for a sign proving the divine origin of the voice; such a convincing sign, as Sartre writes, could not be found. Therefore, Sartre's concludes that Abraham is in anguish as a consequence of having to make the decision on his own about the origin of the voice. After all, the challenge, which relates to the way in which Abraham interprets the voice he has heard, is a hermeneutical one.

This interpretation seems obvious. The only person who has heard the voice is Abraham. What he thinks he heard is the horror itself: the command to sacrifice his son. And his son is not just any child, he is Abraham's only son. He is the guarantee of the divine promises, and Abraham had to wait so long for him that conception itself was a miracle. If the voice has a divine origin, God is contradicting himself: he asks for the sacrifice of someone who was his gift to Abraham, given after a long time. On top of it all, God commands Abraham to commit a murder, furthermore, the murder of a child. This cannot be justified from an ethical viewpoint. Abraham is absolutely alone in this situation. The challenge seems clear: how does Abraham interpret the message? Or to be more precise: based on the contents of the instructions, what is Abraham's conclusion about the origin of the message? The statement seems evident, but the declarer doubtful. Nevertheless, how is it possible to make a decision in favour of the act commanded in the statement if the doer does not clarify for himself the identity of the declarer? Abraham's main

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decision is therefore directed at the specification of the origin. If the origin is divine, there is no doubt about how Abraham should act – while at the same time, even in this case, acting itself is not at all evident. These are Sartre's reflections.[2] In what follows, I compare these reflections with Kierkegaard's explanation, as I myself interpret it.[3] However, considering the complexity and the belletristic aspiration of Kierkegaard's philosophy, my aim is not overly ambitious; I will be satisfied if I can identify some main lines of Kierkegaard's philosophy and take these lines further.

The motto of *Fear and Trembling* is thought-provoking, if we approach the text from Sartre's perspective. The motto is from Hamann: "What Tarquinius Superbus spoke in his garden with the poppies was understood by his son, but not by the messenger."[4] So there is someone who understands the message through the poppies, and there is someone else who does not. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the son and the messenger determine if there is a message or not. In this case, the reality of the message is not created by the interpreter through his own understanding. The message in the poppies does not become a message because of the "in-understanding" of the son. Rather, the message is really in the poppies, according to the motto. If neither the messenger nor the son had understood it, the message would still have been there. So now the main consideration for us hidden in the motto is that the message itself is not created or proved to be nothing by the understanding or the non-understanding. Rather, the relationship to the message is articulated. Why is this worth mentioning from the perspective of Sartre's reading? Because it signals, before the body of Kierkegaard's text, that human understanding has its boundaries (and I hope this viewpoint does not derive from my repeated study of the text, but from the motto itself). These boundaries are outlined – still using the expression of the motto – by the message alone or, more closely, by the reality of the message. The son and the messenger might understand the message or not understand the message, but they do not judge the reality of the message. The realness of the message stands above human reason.

[2] These intentions relate critically to Kierkegaard's interpretation of Abraham. Though there is an insoluble tension between atheistic and theistic philosophy, in 1964, Sartre, as a key speaker in the 'Living Kierkegaard' conference in Paris, spoke about Kierkegaard's philosophy with the warmest appreciation. (Julia Watkin, *The A to Z of Kierkegaard's philosophy*, Lanham, The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2010, 'Sartre, Jean-Paul'.)

[3] It is Johannes de silentio's explanation. (On the problem of pseudonimity of Kierkegaard see John D. Caputo, *How to Read Kierkegaard*, New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 2008, 67–80.) In this study, I refer to Johannes de silentio's thoughts under Kierkegaard's name.

[4] Søren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling, in *Fear and Trembling* and *The Sickness unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2013, 30. (On Hamann's influence on Kierkegaard see Ronald Gregor Smith: Hamann and Kierkegaard, *Kierkegaardiana* 5 [1964], 52–67.)

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This is why Kierkegaard refers to Descartes at the beginning of his train of thought.[5] Descartes is a forerunner for Kierkegaard in so far as he sets boundaries for human reason, which means he takes God's authority above the judgement of human reason. Why is this an essential discretion for Kierkegaard's chain of thought? Not because it represents a type of dogmatism, which from the perspective of atheistic existentialism can be valued as a negative attitude and which does not prove the existence of God, but because it supposes it. If this is true, the philosophical value of the thoughts under discussion could become doubtful. That God is incomprehensible for human reason is not a precondition for Kierkegaard, but a consideration the source of which lies in the reality of the experience of the factical human life. Naturally, this could also be stated by dogmatic thinkers: the *origo* of their philosophy is in fact not a dogma, but a consideration based on everyday experience. However, Kierkegaard takes this concrete human life as the basis of his thoughts. He does not presuppose that the reality of God is incomprehensible to human reason, but instead works this notion out from concrete human life as the only basis for his ideas. This is why the story of Abraham has an extraordinary importance for him, since the experience of Abraham illustrates in a particular way how the human being exists when God enters the space of human experience.

Sartre says there is no convincing sign which could define with unambiguous certainty the origin of the voice heard by Abraham. Kierkegaard also says: "Whether the individual is in temptation *[Anfechtung]* or is a knight of faith, only the individual can decide."[6] That means Abraham has to decide whether the given experience is a challenge of a deception or a situation in which the steadfastness of faith is being tried. If so, is what Kierkegaard says not the same as Sartre's interpretation of Kierkegaard? As far as I see, Kierkegaard's intention is quite different from Sartre's interpretation. It is quite different but at the same time this does not mean that it would be easy to capture the difference.[7] The starting point of *Fear and Trembling*

[5] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 31–33.

[6] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 148.

[7] There are two main directions in interpreting Abraham's story, which can contradict each other: the first looks at the positive content of faith as paradox, the second concentrates on the possible negative ethical consequences. In my view, it is the essential character of the story that it opens the space of misunderstanding in a special way, as this is the nature of paradox. In order to discover the real ethical perspectives of Abraham's story, as the first step, one must approach the paradox itself. See for example Sharon Krishek's study, which understands the narrative of Abraham as a universal positive answer for the human being's pain of loss (Sharon Krishek, The existential dimension of faith, in Daniel Conway (ed.), *Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling, A Critical Guide*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, 106–121.); or John Lippitt's thoughts about hope in Abraham's faith (John Lippitt, Learning to Hope: The Role of Hope in *Fear and Trembling*, in Daniel Conway (ed.), *Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling, A Critical Guide*, Cambridge, Cambridge University

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is, as I tried to outline above, the reality of God, namely that it is God who speaks in the experience of Abraham. Kierkegaard – or to be more precise, Abraham in Kierkegaard's interpretation – does not need a convincing sign for this. The basis for the whole train of thought is the fact that God speaks to Abraham.[8] I have thoroughly studied the text, but I have not found any references or allusions expressing even the slightest doubt about this. For that reason, looking at Sartre, I call this divine reality and speaking, which are indisputable for Abraham, a *compelling sign* to differentiate them from Sartre's definition of a *convincing sign*.

In this regard, we face two questions. 1) What is the unique characteristic of the compelling sign as opposed to the convincing sign? 2) If we can accept the differentiation between the compelling and the convincing sign, what is the decision really about, i.e. what is the real challenge for Abraham, if not the one about which Sartre speaks?

When Sartre speaks about the convincing sign, he states that there is not nor can there be a fact – the expression is not used by Sartre – which would prove the divine origin of the voice unquestionably. This is also the way Kierkegaard thinks. There is indeed no proof, and there cannot be one which would give certainty about the divine origin for the reason of the individual. However, for Kierkegaard this does not mean that human reason should have to make a judgement about the origin of the voice, and, in the end, about the existence of God. According to this approach, as I see it, faith (I owe the reader a definition of this concept) and madness would not be separable. Instead, Kierkegaard speaks (or hears!) about original experiential evidence, which somehow – from beyond the individual – testifies to the divine origin of the voice for the individual himself. I should emphasise: not for the individual's reason. This testimony is compelling in so far as the human being cannot make a decision about being included in the experiential space of the testimony. In that moment, God decides about the speaking, and God enters the circle of the experience of the human being's everyday life. This entry, this speaking, is given as an original act to the human, who at that moment is not in the situation of making a decision. It is not human reason that is affected by the entry of God, but the concrete, whole personality of the individual. Or rather, the entry of God affects the former: it affects human reason especially, in so

Press, 2015, 122–141.); at the same time, on the contrary see among others Lukács György's interpretation of the tradition of irrationalism and its influence on the history of Europe in the 20th century (György Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason,* trans. Peter R. Palmer, London, Merlin, 1980).

[8] The voice of the angel as angel of the Lord also represents the voice of God. Abraham in Kierkegaard's view already knows this voice. If it were the first time that God revealed his Will to Abraham, the voice would not be familiar. The familiarity of God's presence is the condition for Abraham's submission. (See Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 48–51.) However, at the same time, this familiarity is the condition for the possibility of offense.

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far as human reason proves insufficient in the given situation. In this sense, this situation is not a hermeneutical one, but is beyond the hermeneutical. The compelling sign in question does not give certainty in the sense in which a convincing sign would. However, the compelling sign does give a certainty in an absolutely different way, which, from a certain perspective, is more powerful than the certainty of the convincing sign.[9] The compelling sign has its foundation in its testimony for the individual, which reaches its special certainty by undertaking itself to meet the concrete human – not human reason – and at the same time taking on the risk of ambiguity hidden in this meeting.

When we talk about the risk of ambiguity, we have moved on to our second question mentioned above. What is, then, the real challenge for Abraham, if not to deermine whether God has spoken or not? While trying to answer this question, we could also take into consideration Kierkegaard's concept of faith. God talks to Abraham and gives him the horrible command: to sacrifice his son. After Abraham hears the divine order, he takes Isaac and begins an approximately three-and-a-half-day journey, at the end of which he raises his hand against his son. In this narrative, the original experience about the reality of God is followed by a long journey. During this journey, the original compelling experience lies in the past. Its directness (or indirect directness?) is further and further away. Meanwhile, the anguish caused by the content of the divine statement is nearer and nearer. This content continually tortures Abraham, and throughout the journey, it holds him in the possibility of offense.[10] As the original God-experience moves away, reason,

[9] From this differentiation, the speciality of so-called "Christian ethics" or "the ethics of faith" can be seen. (See for example Seung-Goo Lee, The Antithesis between the Religious View of Ethics and the Rationalistic View of Ethics in *Fear and Trembling*, in Robert L. Perkins (ed.), *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition*, Macon, Georgia, Mercer University Press, 1993, 101.) Namely, the compelling sign cannot serve as grounds for any kind of ethics, whereas the convincing sign can; however, the compelling sign is the only basis for faith itself, which does not have any ethics, but is an "ethics," a concrete act, or chain of acts in itself. From the perspective of the compelling sign, it is clear that there is no such thing as "Christian ethics," as the Christian faith is an act, i. e. "ethics" in itself.

[10] In Kierkegaard's *Training in Christianity*, the theme of offense, which is the most persistent concept in Kierkegaard's works (Robert L. Perkins, Introduction, in Robert L. Perkins (ed.), *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition*, Macon, Georgia, Mercer University Press, 1993, 3.), is in focus. The middle piece of the collection is organised around the topic of offense, between the main themes of invitation (part I.) and drawing (part III.). (Søren Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity*, trans. Walter Lowrie, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1944. Part I.: 11–72.; Part II.: 79–144.; Part III.: 151–254. See also Jesus' words as central statements in each part: Part I.: "Come hither, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, I will give you rest" [Matthew 11,28]; Part II.: "Blessed is he whosoever is not offended in Me" [Matthew 11,6]; Part III.: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Myself" [John 12,32]). Kierkegaard, or more precisely Anti-Climacus, claims that the birth of faith has a necessary requirement, namely

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which in the experience has proven insufficient before, becomes more and more dominant. Here is the key to Kierkegaard's interpretation of Abraham. The challenge for Abraham from this viewpoint is whether or not he can hold on to the original God-experience every second of the three-and-a-half-day period. Hence, the challenge is not what kind of decision he makes about the origin of the voice, as we could see was the case with Sartre. It is rather whether he can stand by his decision made in favour of the original God-experience – and here is the focus of the challenge: against his own reason.

The message of the voice, in the light of the reason, is nothing but scandal. It contradicts not only ethical norms but also God's purpose. God makes himself the subject of a possibility of offense in this message by presenting himself to human reason in a curious ambiguity. This ambiguity hides a huge risk in itself, namely the possibility of offense. It does so not in the original directness of the God-speaking, where, as we have already seen, human reason is compelled to be silent, but during the journey following the original directness. The stake in this definitely hermeneutical situation is whether Abraham reinterprets the original experience later, in order to avoid the tremendous offense to human reason, or not. The challenge, therefore, is really a hermeneutical one, as can be seen in the case of Sartre. However, while the latter thinks that the essence of the situation lies in Abraham's interpretation of the origin of the voice, in Kierkegaard the issue seems to be whether Abraham, in his interpretation, stands by his experience of the original hearing of the voice or reinterprets it. The direct situation of the experience is now followed by an indirect hermeneutical situation. Standing by the original God-experience against the offense to reason is in this context faith, which is mute, after all, exactly for this reason. Faith is beyond the boundaries of the hermeneutical. As Kierkegaard writes: "Faith begins precisely there where thinking leaves off."[11] It lies not in irrationality, but in the field of the paradox. Kierkegaard says, surprisingly, "Here again it appears that one may have an understanding of Abraham, but can understand him only in the same way as one understands the paradox."[12] So the paradox could have a hermeneutics, but it would not be hermeneutics in the ordinary sense. It has to be a new one.

the confrontation with the possibility of offense. Without this condition, what is born is not faith in its original meaning, as only in the experience of the possibility of offense realises Jesus Christ's presence. In this context, the contemporaneousness with Christ opens the possibility of offense and, thus, the potential for faith itself. It could be fruitful to attempt to specify the difference between the place of the possibility of offense in *Fear and Trembling* – as I try to interpret it – and that of offense in *Training in Christianity*. While in the latter the contemporaneousness with Christ and the possibility of offense go hand in hand, in the former, the situation of the possibility of offense appears precisely through the passing of the contemporaneousness.

[11] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 106.

[12] Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 214.

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AUTHENTIC PRESENCE: A PHENOMENOLOGY OF INITIATION

Kate Larson

Abstract

In this text I trace Simone Weil's reading of Plato "as a mystic" through the eyes of phenomenology and specifically a phenomenology of initiation. In this, I am inspired by Pierre Hadot and Aryeh Kosman, although they would both rather describe my project in terms of "authentic presence."

In the Phaedo *we find Socrates' famous description of philosophy as training for death. Pierre Hadot has pointed out that this spiritual exercise of the philosopher has its foundation in the form of Platonic philosophy, the dialogue, and in its method, dialectics. In every spiritual exercise we must let ourselves be changed, as in a genuine dialogue in which, through the meeting with another, we ourselves become other.*

In the Platonic dialogues we can discover a phenomenology of initiation, a change of point of view, ranging from the dictum "know thyself" to "becoming like God." Weil parallels this movement in her concepts of reading, attention, and decreation. In the text I turn to passages in Plato's writing as a form of phenomenology of initiation and locate their influence on Weil's thinking. I also want to show their respective and deeper understanding of the mystery of incarnation: there is no elsewhere; rather, there is a change of vision, of seeing the world aright.

The French philosopher Simone Weil suggests that Plato is a mystic, and that through his texts we have, perhaps not all of the wisdom of the ancient world, but at least the essentials of this wisdom.

My aim is to discuss this thought together with an idea of a phenomenology of initiation inherent in Plato's philosophy, both in its form and content.

There are several connections between Weil's notion of decreation and Plato's concept of virtue. Although Weil speaks of love and Plato of reason,

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they share the concept of attention and the need for the transformation of the whole individual soul as a reorientation and shift of vision. This transformation is depicted, for example, in Plato's allegory of the cave and formulated by Weil as the wrenching away from individual perspective. The turning around and wrenching away is described as a violent change of direction and even of the composition of the soul.

Pierre Hadot, in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, turns our attention to a more everyday aspect of this sudden externality of ourselves. Dialogue, the form Plato chose for his philosophical writings, is in itself a spiritual exercise, a transcendence of oneself in the authentic meeting with another. In several ways the turning towards in dialogue can be understood in terms of the turning of the soul in Plato's parable of the cave. Plato says in the *Republic* (518c), "the instrument with which each learns is like an eye that cannot be turned around from darkness to light without turning the whole body."[1]

A Phenomenology of initiation

Pierre Hadot describes dialogue, the very form of Plato's philosophy, as one with an idea of philosophy as a way of life, as a spiritual exercise: "As a dialectical exercise, the Platonic dialogue corresponds exactly to a spiritual exercise (...) The dialogue guides the interlocutor – and the reader – towards conversion."[2]

The specific aspect of dialogue which singles it out as not just an example of a form of spiritual exercise but a phenomenology of initiation is, firstly and most importantly, the interlocutor. Because of the presence of another, the dialogue is prevented from falling into dogmatism or purely theoretical propositions. The subject matter of the dialogue is of less value than the way travelled together in investigating it. The latter pinpoints a second important phenomenological trait: the joint struggle presupposes the desire and the will to let oneself be changed. The concrete and practical exercise of dialogue is at the same time an exercise in authentic presence, to oneself and the other.[3]

The conversion aimed at in the Platonic dialogues is a change of point of view; liberation from a partial, passionate perspective and from a formal and conventional one. The goal is virtue, a virtuous life, the understanding of which rises above individual preferences and attitudes, but nonetheless

1 Plato, *Republic* 518c, trans. G.M.A Grube, *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper, Indiana, Hackett Publishing Company, 1997, 1136.

2 Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Michael Chase, Oxford, Blackwell, 1995, 93.

3 Ibid. 91.

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remains something only an individual is able to live and encompass. The latter will give us a clue as to how, in the Platonic dialogues, the two imperatives "know thyself" and "become like God," are able to stand side by side.

Immanence or transcendence

Julia Annas has discussed a tension in Plato's view of virtue, seldom commented upon in modern times, due to academic classifications of the different topics of the dialogues.[4] The tension is between virtue in the domain of ethical behaviour, on the one hand, rising above the immediate or conventional understanding of good and bad, pleasure and pain. This constitutes a perception of virtue, we would say, as rational behaviour, good in itself despite any immediate consequences. It is an attitude with an eye for the theoretical as well as the practical; the virtuous person is a person living in the world and changing it by holding a different perspective. On the other hand, we find in Plato's description of virtue the notion that true virtue is becoming like God, or rather assimilating to God, for example in Theaetetus 176 a-b.[5] Here the focus is on a transformation of the virtuous person himself or herself, which entails fleeing the world rather than participating in it and affecting it.

These at least apparently conflicting understandings of virtue, Annas suggests, can be described as the difference between an ethical and a spiritual strand in Plato's thinking. Annas does not investigate this difference in depth, apart from stating it alongside her historical research, which shows that in ancient times, among the middle Platonists, this view of the goal of human life, always considered in terms of happiness, was not questioned. The main question that Annas leaves us with is that the ethical perspective seems to disappear if the virtuous is to become of another kind than the human.[6]

But if this is the case, why do Socrates, and with him Plato, put so much stress on self-knowledge, when discussing the different virtues, as a prerequisite for understanding them at all? Remember Socrates' insistence on "care for oneself" in the *Alcibiades* as necessary for skill in taking care of others, as well as his contention that the discussion of *sofrosyne* in the *Charmides* is ultimately a discussion of self-knowledge.[7] The latter dwindles through questions about whether and what kind of knowledge it can be said to be. Ultimately it is not

[4] Julia Annas, Becoming like God: Ethics, Human Nature and the Divine, *Platonic Ethics, Old and New,* New York, Cornell University Press, 1999.

[5] "But it [evil] must inevitably haunt human life, and prowl around this earth. That is why a man should make all haste to escape from earth to heaven; and escape means becoming as like God as possible (...)" Plato, Theaetetus 176a-b, trans. M.J. Levett, *Complete Works*, 195.

[6] Annas, Becoming like God, *Platonic Ethics, Old and New,* 71.

[7] Plato, Alcibiades trans. D.S. Hutchinson, Charmides trans. Rosamond Kent Sprague, *Complete Works*.

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knowledge of self as an object but rather being present to oneself, something which enables receptivity to the other rather than self-occupancy and self-control, transcendence rather than immanence. I will borrow the words of Aryeh Kosman from his essay on the dialogue to illuminate this notion and its importance. The quote serves to point back to Hadot's idea of the status of dialogue, but it also offers a bridge to Simone Weil and her concepts of detachment and decreation, a self-abnegation which at the same time offers true participation in the world. Kosman writes:

> Like the empty mindlessness of the fully mindful and enlightened sage, sofrosyne is a virtue of self without self, a virtue of wisdom and self-mastery in which wisdom, self, and mastery vanish, and there remains only the quiet, orderly, and effortless grace of skilled living.[8]

Naked and dead already in this life

Simone Weil was from her early years a profound reader of Plato. Inspired by her teacher Alain (Émile-Auguste Chartier), she avoided the common conception of Plato as a dualist; she focussed on the moral psychology of Plato, which convincingly disproves the dualist reading. Weil, however, goes beyond Alain when she offers her interpretation of Plato: "Plato is an authentic mystic, and even the father of Western mysticism."[9]

In a late, unfinished text entitled "God in Plato," Weil considers Plato's notion of "assimilation to God" flight from the "mixed human world," in which good and evil are always co-produced. It is contact with or separation from God which produces good or evil, or their mixture, according to her, which make imitating or assimilating experimental concepts rather than abstract ones. This may appear distant from Plato's own words, as assimilation to God in *Theaetetus* is said to consist of becoming "just and pure" with the help of reason. But when Weil moves on to a discussion of a passage in the *Gorgias*, she is able, without introducing the concept of decreation, to show the experimental aspect of reason in Plato.

"Plato does not say, but he does imply, that in order to become just, which requires self-knowledge, that it is necessary to become naked and dead already in this life."[10] Weil is referring to paragraphs 523-525, in which Plato suggests that, in judgement, the one judged as well as the judge should shed

[8] Aryeh Kosman, Self-knowledge and Self-control in Plato's Charmides, *Virtues of Thought*, Massachusetts/Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2014, 245.

[9] Weil, God in Plato, *Late Philosophical Writings*, ed. Eric O. Springsted, trans. Eric O. Springsted & Lawrence E. Schmidt, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 2015, 48.

[10] Ibid. 52

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all attributes in which they are dressed to be truly seen and able to see.[11] Weil understands these attributes as attachments, and knowledge of self is understood here as presence to self, enduring its void.

She is connecting this image, this linking of death and nakedness (a true mystical thought, she writes) with the passage in the *Phaedo* in which Socrates speaks of philosophy as nothing other than training for death.[12] This passage is close in its implications to the one in *Theaetetus* about the philosopher "escaping" this life, and thus it is seen by Annas as an example of the spiritual (non-ethical) side of Plato and in common reception as the unworldly strand of his thought.

In another late, also unfinished essay entitled "Some Reflections on the Concept of Value," Weil discusses her understanding of death in relation to philosophy, which shows that there are threads between the ethical and spiritual side of Plato, and that they are not severed.

In this text she argues that value is at the centre of philosophy. It is, she contends, the true object of reflection, as it cannot be an object of experience, being our ground. The mind, always and essentially, she says, strives towards value. You cannot step outside the order of values to reflect on them objectively, so how is philosophical reflection even possible? It is a form of detachment, she concludes, and so has to posit detachment itself as a superior value. As value connects not only to knowledge but to sensibility and action as well, all philosophical reflection aims at and affects the whole soul, the way of living. Weil writes, "Detachment is a renunciation of all possible ends without exception, a renunciation that puts void in the place of the future just as the imminent approach of death does."[13] Therefore, she continues, "The initiation into wisdom has been regarded as a passage towards death."[14]

Still, detached thought has as its object, as all philosophical reflection, a way of living, a better life, not somewhere else but here on earth and immediately. In this way, philosophy is oriented towards life through death. Translated into Weil's terminology, the decreative process, which reaches into the nothing, the no-thing, of God, transforms life "here and now." It is not a turning away, but a deepening of our presence. This better life may seem indifferent to what we usually look upon as human attachments, yet it creates new ways of solidarity.

[11] Plato, Gorgias, 523-525, trans. Donald J. Zeyl, *Complete Works*, 865-67.

[12] Plato, Phaedo, 64a, 67e, trans. G.M.A Grube, *Complete Works*, 55, 59.

[13] Weil, Some Reflections on the Concept of Value, *Late Philosophical Thinking*, 33.

[14] Ibid.

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The mystery of incarnation

At one point in her assessment of Plato, Weil writes: "The perfect imitator of God first of all disincarnates himself, then incarnates himself."[15] Thus, Plato and Weil, alike and ultimately, offer a description of an initiation into the mystery of incarnation. Furthermore, at least on the surface, beauty is an easier path to this than death and detachment. Essentially, these paths coincide, but initially beauty is offered graciously and radiantly all around us. The distinction that Plato draws between appearance and reality is often stressed as shadows/illusions compared with light and truth. Still, Plato is certainly not disregarding appearances/phenomena, our everyday living. He is urging us to pay attention to them, to see them in truthful vision, in their beauty. Weil writes in her notebooks, "This world is the closed door. It is a barrier, and at the same time it is the passage-way."[16]

Both Plato and Weil seem to stress the necessity of connecting initiation/transcendence to recognition, attention to the here and now. I have always read Plato as advising a form of life rather than a vision of forms. One might consider the final paragraph of Diotima's speech to Socrates in the *Symposium;* she says, arriving in her description of the ladder of love to the vision of beauty:

> In that life alone, when he looks at beauty in the only way that Beauty can be seen—only then will it become possible for him to give birth not to images of virtue (because he's in touch with no images), but to true virtue (because he is in touch with the true Beauty).[17]

This final, intellectual, perhaps mystical vision of Beauty becomes the touch of beauty on the beholder's life. Beauty can no longer, as earlier, be praised in words, poems, treatises, or laws. It is beyond articulation other than in lived action or context. The ladder of love, thus, moves from momentous delights/pleasures and actions through intellectual understanding to vision and a lived, new perspective on life.

The fullness of vision, seeing the world aright, changes the soul of the beholder and ultimately calls for a way of living.

[15] Weil, God in Plato, *Late Philosophical Thinking*, 69.

[16] Weil, *The Notebooks of Simone Weil*. Trans. Arthur Willis. 2 vols. London, Routledge, 2004, 492.

[17] Plato, Symposium 212a, *Complete Works,* 494.

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INITIATION DRAMA IN RUSSIAN SYMBOLISM

György Zoltán Józsa

Abstract

The paper aims to reveal the origins of various codes embedded in Alexander Blok's The Rose and the Cross *and Valery Bryusov's* The Pythagoreans. *As has long been established, Russian Modernism is profoundly saturated by the Gnostic teachings of Sophia, which are partially transmitted by the mystic religious philosophy of Vl. Solovyov. The act of initiation, the main medium of which was the genre of drama, is the focus of theoretical writings on the subject of the moods which renewed Russian drama. Nevertheless, this process is not purely artistic. In the early 20th century, Russian literature began to seek a model of creation in which the poet creating his or her own microcosm is identified as the Demiurge. This model thus faces the conflict between philosophy and ancient patterns of religious conscience. This tendency, which came to the surface in the era of Symbolism, leads to hidden meanings made overt by a set of unambiguous patterns, which deliberately create an atmosphere of mystery. Experimentation in Russian Symbolist drama limited itself to conceptions of the wholeness of structure, style, personae, and action, which offers a way to individual Gnosis. The reader or audience is supposed to decipher the secret code. Analysis of the two types of initiation hidden in Blok's and Bryusov's respective texts not only reveals a tendency to reconstruct ancient functions of literature, but also suggests a reconsideration of the notion of the reader's perception.*

Initiation as a path to knowing higher realms was a key focus of the Russian Symbolists, ardent adherents as they were of the theurgical model of art, i.e. creation contingent on the participation of heavenly forces. Surprisingly,

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this focus found its manifestation primarily in engendering the so-called "initiation novel" (a term coined by Léna Szilárd),[1] hallmarked by Andrei Bely's *The Silver Dove* and *Petersburg.*

Driven by an intention to reach a synthesis of human culture in its history and urged by an ultimate principle of God-seeking, Russian Symbolists were profoundly involved in the study of a wide range of systems of esoteric teachings. Andrej Bely and Alexander Blok, prompted by the spiritual heritage of Vladimir Solovyov, who prophesized the descent of the Holy Sophia, systematically dealt with medieval European mysticism (Theosophy, Philosophical Alchemy), Occultism, Magic, Spiritism, Freemasonry, Rosicrucianism, and modern Theosophy. The poet Maximilian Voloshin's records of his spiritual schooling are documented in his autobiographical notes. Vj. Ivanov and Bely, responding to the urging of Minclova, were intent on establishing a spiritual Rosicrucian brotherhood. Men of letters also sought a spiritual renewal in exploring the doctrines and practices of Russian sectarianism. In addition, works by Swedenborg, Boehme, and Paracelsus and volumes of comparative studies and history of religions (Frazer) widely circulating among the Symbolists came as episthemes on the road to new Gnosis. In addition to serving as sources of inspiration, these works stimulated a more proper cognition of the creative processes of symbolization. Ivanov, who in his scholarly research endeavoured to bridge the gap between paganism and Christian faith, appealed to the Dionysian rite as a vehicle of collective unity between God and man. Thus, Ivanov, who also classified Dostoevsky's novels as tragedies, positioned the literary genre of drama, a descendant of the Eleusinian mysteries, in the focus of Russian Symbolist belles-lettres. No wonder in Bely's declaration this primordial genre is specified as the *sine qua non* of culture: "Dramatic culture *is* culture."[2]

In approaching Russian Symbolism, one should also recall Bely disaffirming Symbolism as limited to a pure concept of an artistic trend and style and redefining it as an "understanding of the world." In his formula S. Solovjov, the great Russian philosopher's nephew, laconically summarizes his uncle's teachings, still holding respect for Symbolist poetics and the Symbolist *Weltanschauung:* "Mysticism is prior to any other way of cognition."[3]

[1] For a comprehensive list of works published on the subject by L. Szilárd see her article "A beavatásregény forrásai az orosz irodalomban" in Hetényi, Zsuzsa – Kalafatics, Zsuzsa – Józsa, György Zoltán (eds.), *"A ja sz vami..." Tanulmánygyűjtemény Szőke Katalin születésnapjára,* Budapest, ELTE BTK "Orosz irodalom és kultúra Kelet és Nyugat vonzásában" PhD program, Dolce Filologia, 2016, 141–152.

[2] Андрей Белый, Символизм как миропонимание, Москва, Республика, 1994, 153. (All translations from the Russian unless otherwise indicated are mine – Gy. Z. J.)

[3] Сергей М. Соловьев, Владимир Соловьев: жизнь и творческая эволюция, Москва, Республика, 1997, 171.

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Whereas Bely sought his "way to Damascus," his "brother," Blok made his spiritual way to Damascus, relying on some achievements of August Strindberg's version of the theme. A follower of Solovyov's mystic philosophy, Blok was later obsessed with Strindberg's art, the influence of which can be detected in the drama *The Rose and the Cross*.[4] Aware of their spiritual kinship, Blok was fascinated with the Swedish writer's *Inferno*, which is permeated with the teachings of Swedenborg and reminiscences of Dante. In his necrology, he regards Strindberg's workshop as a "laboratory" – a hint at the writer's interest in alchemy. Blok also inserts in the text an imaginary picture of an old volume covered with dust, which lies there in a corner of the laboratory, affirming that its author was Swedenborg.

Strindberg's *The Road to Damascus*, a milestone in modernist drama, presents a striving to surpass aesthetics for the sake of the spiritual, the latter completely coinciding with Russian Symbolist poetics, commonly referred to as religious symbolism. In the concluding act of the drama, the protagonist, a once famous author and a version of Everyman modelled on the English medieval mystery play, joins a Catholic monastery and undergoes a ritual of initiation which involves lying in a coffin. Blok studied Strindberg in part because of his deep interest in Swedenborg's theory of a universal, transcendental language (a kind of metalanguage offering prospects to Symbolists' ambitious experimentations with the recreation of language), which enables the elect to converse with the otherworldly. Swedenborg is known to relate colloquies with angels and spirits in half-dream trances, including Plato, Luther, etc. His scattered commentaries on this universal means of communication are embedded in his translation of the book of Genesis, which he annotated himself.

One can therefore assume that it is not by accident that Blok, in his article *On the Present State of Russian Symbolism* (1918), addresses the theurgical mission of the poet as the improvement of his ability to *perceive* the spiritual: "As artists, we must observe all sacred conversations (santa conversazione) and the Antichrist's dethronement, like Bellini and Beato."[5]

The higher status of the initiated in the act of the mystery, roles of which are distributed among Aliscan representing the body, Bertran the soul, Gaetan the spirit (all to be united by the Universal Soul, Izora),[6] is oriented

[4] The proposal to write an opera libretto was put forward to Blok by Tereshchenko, a prominent leader of contemporary Russian freemasonry.

[5] Александр Блок, Собрание сочинений, Vol. 8, Москва–Ленинград, Художественная литература, 1963, 131.

[6] Диана Оболенска, Имагинация голубого цветка. Драма Александра Блока Роза и Крест, Europa Orientalis, 29 (2010), 91–92.

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towards the act of the refinement of verbal perception. This idea is conveyed in the scene of the mystery play in which the Fisherman fails to recognize the impoverished Lord of Traumenek, mistaking him for a ghost:

> The power of cross be with us! I can't see anything in this
> snow. There was a knight here, now — you! I thought it was my
> voice echoing off the cliffs. Or are you a ghost?[7]

This very pattern bears a striking resemblance to Strindberg's text containing esoteric implications of the same type, which are relevant as motifs of perceiving the presence of the otherworldly and communicating with it:

> The place might be bewitched. No, it's not death I fear, but solitude, for then one is not alone. I don't know who is there, I or another, but in solitude one's not alone. The air grows heavy and seems to engender invisible beings who have life and whose presence can be felt.[8]

Set in heretical Provence and Languedoc, the conflict of Blok's drama is supplied by music in harmony with his concept of art, in which music is a supra-rational, elemental force giving inspiration to the poet. Izora and Bertram are haunted by a summons, an otherworldly[9] song of Gaetan's echoing the words "Joy-Suffering." The unique position attributed to music draws not only on Nietzsche's formula in his treatise *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik*,[10] but can also be ascribed to the Pythagorean cult of music. In Blok's drama, Izora, the chatelaine who encounters the knight Gaetan in her dream, is falsely accused by her jealous husband and is consequently imprisoned in "the Tower of the Inconsolable Widow." In harmony with the Gnostic mythologeme of Sophia inherited by the Russian symbolists from Vl. Solovyov, the images of the Tower and the Lady of the Castle allude to Sophia languishing in the embrace of Chaos, the imprisoned soul waiting to be freed from matter.

In building the structure of *The Rose and the Cross*, Blok relies on divergent yet congruent traditions of mysticism. Rosicrucian Symbolism is thus fused in the drama with imagery borrowed from Alchemy. It is, in fact, the first

[7] Fragments from Blok's play are supplied in the translation by Lance Gharavi. Alexander Blok, *The Rose and the Cross*, Александр Блок, Роза и Крест, Москва, Центр книги Рудомино, 2013, 71.

[8] August Strindberg, *The Road to Damascus*, Hamburg, Tredition Classics, 2014, 21. (tr. by G. Rawson)

[9] Cf. R. D. B. Thomson, *The Non-Literary Sources of Roza i Krest*, The Slavonic and Eastern European Review, Vol. XVL (1967), No. 105, 298.

[10] Cf. e. g. Mária Gyöngyösi, *A. Blok und die deutsche Kultur*, Frakfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2004, 87–106.

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stage of the alchemical process, of the work, the Opus, termed *nigredo*, that is systematically transmuted into an elaborate literary text.[11] The process of purification is associated with the black colour of the Rose on Gaetan's chest. Explicating the symbolism of the colour, Léna Szilárd quotes Papus, who links blackness to the black colour of the first hall, where the masonic ritual of initiation starts. In this rite, the colour symbolizes the beginning of ascension to spirituality. This idea also corresponds to Robert Graves' conclusions, who identifies black as a colour of wisdom in several pre-Christian religions, which manifested itself in the cult of "black goddesses".[12]

This process, which essentially corresponds to the act of creation in accordance with the credo of the Russian symbolists, complies with an act of initiation. In addition to modelling the process of creation, it also suggests the performance of a hermeneutic act on behalf of the reader or audience. In Blok's play this idea is thematized by ill-fated Bertran, nicknamed Knight-Misfortune, who comments on Gaetan's words:

> Your strange words surely have some
> Hidden meaning that is unclear to me...[13]

Initiating Bertran, Gaetan narrates a story about the sunken city, Ker-Is, a legend of the Breton Atlantis.

For Bertran, the spiritual faculties of sight and of hearing are definitely not developed at this stage:

> G. Now, do you see
> the roses playing upon the waves?
> B. The sun is rising from the mist.
>
> G. Do you hear the moans?
> The sirens' treacherous song...
> B. I hear only the mournful voice of the waves.[14]

In the final act of the play, however, his initiation is accomplished. After sacrificing himself for the sake of the idolized mistress, assisting her *affaire*

[11] Диана Оболеньска, Роза и роса. Об алхимическом коде драмы А. Блока «Роза и Крест» in В. Д. Кастрель (ed.),Шахматовский вестник. Выпуск 14. Александр Блок «Роза и Крест». Исследования и интерпретации, Москва, ИМЛИ РАН, 2016, 101.

[12] Л. Силард, «Роза и Крест» в свете розенкрейуерских традиций in В. Д. Кастрель (ed.), Шахматовский вестник. Выпуск 14. Александр Блок «Роза и Крест». Исследования и интерпретации, Москва, ИМЛИ РАН, 2016, 263–264.

[13] Blok, *The Rose and the Cross*, 93.

[14] Ibid., 101.

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de coeur with the young page Aliscan, Bertran achieves purification on the battlefield for his true faith. In his agony, entering into a spiritual realm he is already in the possession of his spiritual organs.

> The Trumpets, born from the roar of the waves
> Call louder and louder!
> A rosy light gleams
> on the white crests
> of the leaden, nocturnal waves![15]

The magic number *four* is given a high priority in Blok's drama. *The Rose and the Cross* is divided into *four* acts, Izora, whose name implies an anagram of the mystic Rose, is surrounded by *four* male dramatis personae. The number *four* is predominantly associated with the four arms of the Cross. The mystic meaning of the number *four* had fascinated Blok's imagination long before the project to write the play. Ample evidence for this is found in Blok's correspondence with Andrej Bely. Blok first addresses the hidden implications of the number *four* by asking Bely to "explain the fourth initiation" to him. While enumerating facts which will the prove the sacred nature of the number *four,* Blok points out that the Vedas, "the most ancient script" ever written, consist of four books, Buddha teaches four truths, "the fourth is about the Way [?], the ultimate approximation of Nirvana". Blok also declares that "four is his own number", and that "to guess one's own number is a way to know oneself and to give up self-assertion here."[16] Let it be added that Blok's musing over this subject is prompted by Bely's compendious remark, in which he explicitly, still with some uncertainty, identifies "the symbol of the 4th initiation of Egyptian mysteries" with "the Cross".[17]

Little research has been done on Bryusov's dramatic heritage, which has only become accessible thanks to a recent edition. The dramatic etude titled *The Pythagoreans*, first published in 1920, is preeminent as an inventory of themes and problems with which Bryusov had been preoccupied throughout his career as a poet and writer. There are certain parallelisms with the issues discussed in the case of Blok. At the time of his work on the play, these problems, modulated by the historical cataclysm, led Bryusov to attempt to synthesize the concept and potential of interpreting the phenomenon of culture. The one-act play is harmonized with the sacral code of Russian Symbolist dramaturgy. Bryusov appeals to the mystic roots of the dramatic genre, including the rite of initiation, and incorporates his philosophical prism.

[15] Ibid., 101.
[16] Андрей Белый и Александр Блок: Переписка 1903–1911 А В. Лавров (ed.) Москва, Прогресс–Плеяда, 2001, 38–39.
[17] Ibid., 26.

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Although Bryusov kept denying his metaphysical inclinations, his pronouncements deserve a closer look. Not only did he contribute to the journal on Spiritism entitled *Rebus*, he also undertook a profound study of esoteric traditions. The American researcher Martin P. Rice, who highlights the formal aspects of Bryusov's evolution as a poet, suggests that the early stage of Bryusov's poetry is characterized by an opposition to metaphysics: "Briusov had very little inclination towards metaphysics *in the beginning*" (italics added).[18] According to memoirs by Georgy Chulkov, Bryusov's interest in Spiritism led him to familiarize himself with works on mysticism by Agrippa von Nettesheim, Paracelsus, and Swedenborg, and "on his desk one could find books by Schuré, Kardek, DuPrel."[19] The mention of Schuré's name is of cardinal importance, since his description of the initiation rite practiced by Pythagorean communities, which is outlined in his book *The Great Initiates*, was incorporated into the one-act play *The Pythagoreans*. Although Schuré is traditionally regarded as a teacher and mystic, Russian Symbolists valued his work as a source for establishing the theoretical foundations of their aesthetic views. Accordingly, in his essay *The Theatre and Contemporary Drama* (1908), Bely puts Schuré's name alongside that of Wagner. Despite the fact that Schuré's approach to interpreting culture does not meet the high standards of Nietzsche's theory, claims Bely, his ideas are nonetheless noteworthy: Nietzsche "discerned [culture] more correctly than Wagner or, for instance Schuré did."[20]

As precursors to the dramatic etude, scattered references to the theme of Pythagoreanism appear in texts in the early period of Bryusov's career. Evidence of this can be seen in the epigraph in which he quotes from Pythagoras in the poem *Chisla (Numbers)* (1898), in which "free, bodiless" numbers, taken as sacred perfection, are accessed in "forbidden ways" and become associated with poetic "inspiration." Furthermore, Pythagorean doctrines are addressed twice in *The Fiery Angel*, in which the conjuration of spirits, independent of the ironical polemics embedded in the novel, is subject to "the magic meaning of numbers." In his ceremonial address, Ruprecht greets Count Geinrikh as an expert on "secret orders" and as someone who has "penetrated into all arcane teachings beginning with Pythagoras to Plotinus."[21] Pythagoras is featured as a "teacher," having recognized and conveyed to his apprentices "the idea externalized by pyramids" in Bryusov's *Teachers of Teachers*,[22] a long essay inappropriately mislabelled in commentaries as a "scientific study." Bryusov's

[18] Martin P. Rice, *Valery Briusov*, Ann Arbor, Ardis, 1975, 110.

[19] Н. А. Трифонов (ed.), Брюсов и его корреспонденты, Vol. 1, Москва, Наука, 1991, 93.

[20] Белый, Символизм как миропонимание, 156.

[21] Валерий Брюсов, Собрание сочинений Vol. 4. Москва, Художественная литература, 1974, 144.

[22] Валерий Брюсов, Собрание сочинений Vol. 7. Москва, Художественная литература, 1975, 364.

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renewed interest in the field of Esotericism is eminently demonstrated by a product of the last period, the screenplay *Kharma*, originally entitled *An Occult Drama in 5 Parts*. He also includes Pythagoras in the catalogue of names, alongside Dante and Nostradamus.[23]

When analysing *The Pythagoreans,* one should pay attention to the problem of the "bookish" versus the "oral" aspects of culture. This problem is presented as a cause of the dramatic conflict: a scroll from Atlantis will kill the protagonist. This idea recuperates the quintessential specifics of the Pythagorean teaching, which lies in a refutation of writing. As a matter of fact, the lack of a written corpus in the case of Pythagoras and the practice of the community (members were sworn to keep the doctrine secret) suggest that they would militate further against the development of a written tradition. Implications of this can be deduced from Bryusov's list of the dramatis personae, including the name of Philo, known as the founder of the school of allegorical interpretation of sacred texts. Preserved in the form of oral teachings, Pythagorean doctrines can be chiefly reconstructed on the basis of recountings in Aristotle, Philolaus, Plato, and Empedocles. Consequently, true knowledge is conveyed by means of oral communication. At this point, the principle of dialogicity comes to the fore, which is associated with the ancient genre of initiation dialogues and also with the notion that the genre of drama originated in mystery.

Pythagoreanism as a word-emblem is intertwined with the problem of the search for the origins of culture. Via the utterances of the dramatis personae, culture is envisaged to have originated in Atlantis, Egypt having been merely its successor. With the plot evolving, Bryusov's scrutiny is evidently directed at the most archaic forms of culture. Bryusov holds, similarly to his contemporaries, that archaic forms of culture preserve the archaic states of consciousness, which allows one to dig down to the innermost depths of the human soul. This poetic ideal of the purpose of drama is phrased in the posthumously published essay *Toward a History of Symbolism* written in 1897, which contains Bryusov's theoretical conclusions on the narrative techniques typically occurring in the last play by Maeterlinck, an author of mystery plays. Bryusov underscores the *"weakness" of words* uttered by the characters: their meaning needs to be decoded. "They almost seem to possess other means to get in touch with each other, not just *frail* words. Their dialogue is merely *a hint* at the conversation between their *souls*."[24]

[23] Мочульский Константин, Валерий Брюсов, Париж, YMCA Press, 1962, 180.

[24] Валерий Брюсов, Интервью о символизме in Павел Лебедев–Полянский (ed.), Литературное наследство, *Vol. 27–28.*, Москва, Журнально-газетное объединение, 1937, 274.

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The tragic conclusion of the etude, which fits in the Symbolist canon of one-act plays,[25] can be viewed as related to a notion of death as a path for initiation and knowledge of the self. This notion, modelled in *The Pythagoreans*, is to some extent related to Bryusov's early definition of the ultimate function of Art. The isolation of the individual is overcome via Art. As Rice says,

> The soul is ordinarily isolated because each man's perception of the world around him is unique. From an awareness of this isolation comes the need to communicate one's vision to the souls of other men, and, ideally, to find a unity with them. According to Bryusov, such a unity of souls is possible only through art.[26]

Alongside aspects of initiation implicated in the history of the secret community, the tragic play resurrects the antique genre of the tragic rite, which results from the masked authorial intention to depict a conflict between the individual and the community. The antagonism anticipates a tragic conclusion, thus creating suspense. Regardless of stylization and verisimilitude in reconstruction of the *realia* of the era of Antiquity, and in spite of the all too obvious topical messages encoded in dialogues, Bryusov's dramatic etude is positioned on the borderline between the dialogue of adept and mystagogue, and the Ancient Greek genre of the philosophical dialogue. Sinaret's conflict with his brethren turns out to be a short-lived revolt against hierarchy, which actually masks a ritual.

Apart from engaging in a systemized reconsideration of various stages of human culture, Bryusov is in search of an answer to the ever-present question of the purpose of art, and he ventures to arrive at a final version of his creed. Instead of surveying the process of creating a work of art, the author in *The Pythagoreans*, as was so frequently the case in earlier writings by this *maître* of Russian Symbolism, focuses on the future fate of the artefact accomplished. More precisely, Bryusov is intrigued by the specific question of the ontology of belles-lettres. As we see in the conclusion, Sinaret is deprived of the manuscript, which he himself has discovered and ventured to decipher, and he dies speaking the words:

> Having lost the manuscript
> Now what am I to live for?[27]

[25] In her research on the play *Putnik (Traveller)*, Kabargerova, comparing one-act Symbolist plays, indicates the popularity they enjoyed and draws a parallel between Blok's lyrical plays and the Bryusovian work of art. The theme of all three centred on the approach and expectation of death. Е. В. Карабегова, *Пьеса В. Я. Брюсова «Путник» в контексте западноевропейской одноактной драматургии*, in С. Т. Золян (ed.), *Брюсовские чтения 2006 г.* Ереван, Лингва, 2007, 289.

[26] Rice, *Valery Briusov*, 73.

[27] Валерий Брюсов, *Заря времен*, Москва, Панорама, 2000, 442.

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The Pythagoreans ought to be considered a further development in Bryusov's project to write the play entitled *The Fall of Atlantis*, which remained unfinished. The main conflict, which lies in the protagonist's dilemma over the correct reading of the text, foreshadows an early Russian version of the contemporary branch of science known as *Rezeptionsästhetik*. The hero's death is looked upon as the loss of the interpreter, and here Bryusov touches upon the question of the recipient as co-author. It is well-known that Russian Symbolists viewed the process of reception as a creative act on the part of the reader. The exclusivity of initiation is proclaimed by Prognost and Gorgij, adherents of the esoteric status of knowledge and brethren of Sinaret, the tragic hero. For them, the ritual is supposed to be an indispensable prerequisite to obtaining the right to interpret a text.

The narrative elements of the dramatic etude thematize a problem of hermeneutics in a way that makes this problem perceivable for common readers. Nonetheless, it becomes complicated, given the problem of proclaiming culture as memory, and a reference is made to the Platonic idea of the optimal creative literary process, which is governed by the perfect functioning of memory. This very idea, which provokes controversial associations with Vj. Ivanov's orthodox theory of the poet as "an organ of the people's memory," comes to the fore due to the specific activity of the protagonist: he is trying to decrypt a text written by the dwellers of Atlantis. The code for deciphering it, thus, has vanished. Consequently, the presence of this hermeneutic principle momentarily elevates the play into a symbolic space. Utterances on the lips of the dramatic characters are thus to be distinguished on the level of their esoteric and anagogic meanings. In spite of archetypal schemes exploited in the dramatic situation, the potential connotative meanings are perceived by means of surveying the religious philosophical context of the play. It is no accident that the problem of this or that reading of a text or oral utterance is pre-coded by the "profession" of the hero, who considers himself capable of finding the code to the heritage of Atlantis. The dramatic hero is cast simultaneously in the role of the mirror image of the recipient, i.e. reader or viewer, who, in the same fashion, is involved in a situation of decoding, which is realized in the process of perceiving the play. The hero's death with which the dramatic etude comes to a conclusion, however, comes as a turning point, which is associated with contemporary echoes of the dying of the spirit of the Silver Age of Russian Culture. The motif of death thus acquires the meaning of the death of the learned, erudite, intelligent reader. Finding the adequate code is turned into a task and privilege which belongs to the leaders of the Pythagorean brotherhood, that is, those in possession of power within its hierarchy. Here, we have the idea that power will predetermine the landmarks of values which can serve as a basis for the process of interpretation.

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In *The Pythagoreans,* great store is set by the problem of the verbal and the bookish, which also shows an authorial reflection on the avant-garde experimentations that had taken place in Russian literature shortly before the play was written. At its core, Bryusov's great "theorem" of the evolution of culture, anticipating Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, concentrates on the moment of the destruction, concealment, or loss of a manuscript of cardinal importance. As a rule, from that moment on there is a shift, a change in the cultural paradigm. A complete or incomplete loss of verbal heritage, inducing oblivion, is equal to death, as reflected by the protagonist's fate in the dramatic etude. Uniquely, in his survey of Pythagoreanism, the Hungarian classical philologist Károly Kerényi did not fail to take note of the fact that this particular type of culture presents itself as a special pattern, where the role of writing is repositioned. Kerényi arrives at the conclusion that the body of Orphic religion is made of paper. On the other hand, in contrast with the religion of the Pythagoreans, Orphism specifically gave preference to the cult of "sacred books." In accordance with the Bryusovian model, though the hero's tragic end is presented either as the death of a devoted researcher, the "elite" reader, or as punishment for the vanity and self-sufficiency of the naïve or innocent hero, the concept of culture is primarily inseparable from verbality, since culture is maintained in a written form, as it is created by the Sacred Logos.

The final scene of the etude concludes with Prognost's words expressing discontent in general and simultaneously foretelling "backstage" events that are about to begin, only now in another dimension, in the consciousness of the reader or theatre goer. These events are understood as the journey of the dead in the otherworld.

> He is dead. (Thinks)
> I esteemed him to be more honourable.
> May the Judge of Hell have mercy on him.[28]

The Bryusovian conclusion is puzzling, as ever. Is it the thought of responsibility or the naïve vanity and self-sufficiency of the young exegete that kills Sinaret, who dares to refuse his fellow brethren? A *Weltanschauung* resembling traits of Gnostic teachings is manifested in the Pythagorean concept of death, taken as "the third stage" of initiation. It is envisioned in Shuré's book as follows:

> What happens at death? At the beginning of the death agony, the soul generally senses its imminent separation from the body. [...] If it is a holy or pure soul, its spiritual senses are already awakened by the gradual separation from matter.

[28] Ibid., 42.

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> Before dying, in one manner or another, even if only by a looking into its own state, it has the feeling of the presence of another world. At the silent urgings, the distant calls, the dim rays of the Invisible, earth has already lost its solidity, and when the soul finally escapes the cold body, joyful because of its deliverance, it feels itself lifted in a great light toward the spiritual family to which it belongs.[29]

As we learn from the words of Prognost, Sinaret is "on the threshold of hidden secrets," the Aeromakh "has undergone all the stages of initiation long before," of which, in harmony with Pythagoras' sacred Tetraktys, there are four. The symbolism of the number *four*, having been termed "The Godly Tetrasomia" in C. G. Jung's analytical psychology,[30] features as a recurring constructive principle governing the architectonics of Bryusov's play: apart from the slave, there are four dramatis personae, and the play consists of four parts indicated by the numbering of scenes. The number four as the sign of God symbolizes the apotheosis of the mortal. Sinaret, having undergone the second stage – this is voiced by Gorgij –, faces the third stage of initiation, the one which Schuré calls the "knowing of the other world."

The era in Geistesgeschichte marked by the standing of Pythagorean communities may have attracted Bryusov as something akin to his time for numerous reasons. Pythagoreanism came from a complex of wanderings, initiations, and real-life experiences of the founder of the religion. In his book *The Great Initiates*, Schuré says: "His experience showed him mankind threatened by the greatest calamities, by the ignorance of priests, the materialism of scientists and the lack of discipline of democracies."[31]

The period following the foundations of the Pythagoreans' academy is famous for the treason of the poet Empedocles, who pronounced the secret teachings of Pythagoras in his verse. If Pythagoras, who, as we learn from Schuré, merged morality, religion, and science into a single system of synthesis, personifies the ideal of Russian Decadents and Symbolists, who rejected the Satanic world, seen by them as disintegrated due to the conflicting

[29] Edouard Schuré, *The Great Initiates: A Study of the Secret History of Religions.* Blauvelt, Steinerbooks, 1976, 332–333.

[30] In his work *Philosophical Tree*, Jung, providing a reading of symbolic alchemy, lists the semantic layers of the Symbolism of the number four and asserts a link to the making of the *lapis* which is conceived as the unification of two conflicting principles (it is produced from four elements): "The aim of the tetrasomia is the reduction (or synthesis) of a quaternion of opposites to unity" [Carl Gustav Jung, *Alchemical Studies,* London, Henley, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981, 278]. The number four is the sign of God [ibid., 281], man's wholeness and the healing effect of unification (synthesis) is symbolized by the four corners of the cross. Jung also states that this tradition of the cult of Tetraktys is deeply rooted in the teachings of the Pythagoreans, and it dates back to Egyptian Antiquity [Ibid., 283]. By including the same symbol in his work *Aion*, Jung demonstrates how it is associated with the status of reaching into the depth of human consciousness, into the Self.

[31] Schuré, *The Great Initiates*, 282.

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principles of scientism versus spirituality and art, then Empedocles also personifies the dilemma of the Symbolist artist, the boundaries of magic aesthetics, the secrecy of magic spells, the belief in the transformation of the world by means of art. Russian Symbolists came face to face with this dilemma owing to their individual attempts to search for God and to create societies and brotherhoods.

In Bryusov's play, the semantic field of the picture of the legendary Atlantis is expanded as a result of painful historical experience, and it is elevated to the level of a philosopheme. At the same time, it is converted into a symbol of eternally shifting paradigms, both individual and social. The loss of the manuscript suggests that the same fatal scheme is being repeated in compliance with the philosopheme of "the eternal return." In other words, Atlantis is sinking again. Not only does Bryusov supply a reinterpretation of the Myth of the Golden Age, but he also offers the reader a path of cognition, a version of gnoseology, which is represented by Art. In the light of this idea of the dramatic etude, the moment of serving the "common cause," i.e. Christian solidarity, is revealed.

The concept of Magic Art is also underscored by the fact that the hero's end is marked by the act of descending into the depths of the underworld and losing his bodily attributes, which signals his future rebirth. Kerényi's research suggests that according to the Pythagorean doctrine of *psychogony*, the birth of the soul is envisaged as a result of harmony achieved.[32] In Bryusov's etude, the rebirth of the soul via initiation is reached by the loss of the mortal flesh. This notion corresponds to the teachings of the Neo-Pythagorean Philolaus, who, much in the manner of the Gnostics, asserted that the body is a coffin and prison to the spirit. The researcher attributes the epithet "Apollonic" to Pythagorean religion, since its main principle is superior to soul and life.

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[32] Károly Kerényi, *Pythagoras und Orpheus*, Amsterdam, Akademische Verlagsanstalt, 1940, 33.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GENRE OF THE INITIATION NOVEL IN 20TH-CENTURY RUSSIAN LITERATURE—MIKHAIL BULGAKOV'S *THE MASTER AND MARGARITA*

Léna Szilárd

Abstract[1]

In accordance with the poetics of the genre of the initiation novel *(invented by Andrey Bely), at the core of the plot of Mikhail Bulgakov's* The Master and Margarita *lies the road to the spiritual enlightenment* (via illuminativa) *of Ivan Ponyrev. At the beginning of the novel, Ponyrev is presented as a stupefied Soviet poet who uses the pseudonym "Bezdomny," or "Homeless," a typical type of pseudonym of the time. In the epilogue, however, he is a historian-philosopher who, having been freed of the manipulative influences of the social environment, which made him go to a mental asylum, is led by the lunar light, a symbol of cosmic order.*

The impulse to Ivan's ascension is given by his encounter with the "overturned master" Woland, who opens up the via purgativa *by punishing "the pseudo-master" Berlioz and taking Ivan to meet the nameless Master in the clinic headed by Doctor Stravinsky (a mental institution where consciousness is being cleared).*

The symbolism of the hero's path in Book I is saturated with the signs of Freemasonry. Book II, on the other hand, by accentuating the details of the road as a via illuminativa, *emphasizes the transition to Rosicrucianism. The shift from the symbol of the mimosa (Freemasonry) to the symbol of the rose, Rosicrucianism) is of paramount importance.*

The epilogue of the novel, by hinting at the probability of the perspective of the via unitiva, *makes the following principal idea explicit: Ivan Ponyrev is the student of the nameless Master, so he is on the road to realizing*

[1] Mikhail Bulgakov, *Master i Margarita*, München, POSEV, 1969.

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the existence of the True Teacher who appears in three forms: as Jeshua of real life, as Jesus of the Gospel of Matthew, and as the Teacher of the world of the Light. He is not named, but he is also recognized by Woland (see the dialogue on the roof of "Pashkov's house").

In my article, I address the history of the genre of the *initiation novel* in 20th-century Russian literature, which, I contend, emerges as a response to the domination of the *Bildungsroman* (novel of education), so characteristic of 19th-century European and Russian literature.[2] As a theoretical basis, I selected the philosopher M. M. Bakhtin's conclusions about the specifics of the initiation novel in Andrey Bely, which were presented in M. M. Bakhtin's lectures delivered to a group of students and committed to paper by one of them, R. M. Mirkina.[3] To my knowledge, none of the literary historians who have touched on the specifics of the initiation novel has ever made reference to Bakhtin's conclusions. This may be in part because Bakhtin does not use the term "initiation novel," and his train of thought in this respect is not outlined explicitly. Nonetheless, Bakhtin's conclusions, in my opinion, are of considerable value, since his remarks on the potential distinctive features of Bely's novels, made in connection with *Kotik Letaev*, can be integrated into Bakhtin's ideas about the differences between the traditions of the novel of education and the specific arrangement of Fyodor Dostoevsky's last novels. According to Bakhtin, the arrangement was continued by Bely from at least one perspective. It is also important to note that Bakhtin stressed the differences between the depictions of the hero's path in the process of formation in the novels of Lev Tolstoy and Dostoevsky:

> In Lev Tolstoy a child's life is rendered in a purely biographical context... Dostoevsky strives to transform his heroes' lives into hagiography. This is clearly demonstrated in the depictions of the boys in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Here we have an attempt to understand every moment of life in a cosmic plane: in crucifixion. In the same fashion are rendered the events in the lives of Alyosha Karamazov and Prince Mishkin. It is not by accident that the Prince will lose his orientation and himself and get lost, but does not die. But with Dostoevsky the attempt to understand everything in a cosmic plane can only be groped and everything is placed into the framework of the inherited literary tradition. Andrey Bely will bring every moment

[2] This article has been translated from the Russian original by Emese Nyíri and György Zoltán Józsa.

[3] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Sobranije Sochinenij (Collected Works)* vol. 2, Moscow, Russkie Slovari, 2000, 560–573.

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> of life to cosmic dimensions. This is (...) a refutation of biography: all moments of life will have their meaning not in an ancestral or national plane, but in a cosmic one.[4]

Bakhtin's differentiation between the "biographic context" and "cosmic laws" and also his observations concerning the differences between Tolstoy's novels of "reaching manhood" and *The Brothers Karamazov,* which is oriented around the genre of hagiography, may prompt us to interpret more extensive literary traditions: in all types of the European novel of education, the biographical context prevails, whereas the initiation novel will come into being as an alternative and will ascend to the cosmic origins of existence.

Bakhtin's reference to Dostoevsky's essential role is convincing. One recalls the scene from *The Brothers Karamazov* which, "like spots of life out of darkness," is forever remembered by Alyosha: "He remembered one still summer evening, an open window, the slanting rays of the setting sun (he recalled the slanting rays most vividly of all); in a corner of the room the holy image, before it a lighted lamp, and on her knees before the image his mother, sobbing hysterically with cries and shrieks (...) holding him out in both arms to the image as though to put him under the Mother's protection."[5] This almost symbolically composed picture has visibly exposed the forces which determine Alyosha's path: motherly love, the protection of Our Lady and the participation of the cosmos, which is modestly manifested through "the slanting rays of the setting sun."[6]

According to Bakhtin, "in Germany expressionists also try to build life, exceeding the boundaries of biography. This trend is represented by Werfel and Meyrink. But they were preceded by Andrey Bely, and, in addition, their works are less significant in terms of artistry and, judging from their spirit, they appear outdated."[7]

But despite his eminent insights, Bakhtin did not have the opportunity to follow up on how Russian literature brought forth ample works, which are in some way related to the genre of "initiation," He specified, however, Bely's role as the creator of this specific genre in European literature.

Judging from Bely's articles and correspondence, he thoughtfully strove to create a new genre of novel, supplying a theoretical and culturological basis. This was in part inspired by the fact that Bely sensed the dangers of "secret knowledge" being available for a morally unprepared society as early

[4] *Zapisi lektsij po istorii russkoj literatury,* in Bakhtin, *Sobranije Sochinenij,* vol. 2., 333-334.

[5] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov,* trans. Constance Garnett, New York, The Lowell Press, 1912, 17.

[6] Compare the thought of St. Bernard of Clairvaux in his *Sermo super Cantica canticorum,* 31, 3 (J. Leclerq [ed.], *Sancti Bernardi Opera,* vol. 2, Roma, Editiones Cistercienses, 1958).

[7] Bakhtin, *Sobranije sochinenij,* vol. 2, 334.

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as the very beginning of the 20th century. Thus, with the arrival of great technical inventions, he stressed the absolute necessity of introducing moral regulations and distinctive principles and the importance of keeping in mind facts of the times (the invention of dynamite and the experiments of Marie Curie). "Dynamite is only useful in the hands of a morally developed master, but it is devastating in the hands of the comrades. Dynamite is a means to explode granite blocking the way; in the hands of the comrades it is a means to blow up people... Should secret knowledge be grabbed by a morally infirm society, it could blow up mankind and the globe, too."[8]

Bely regarded the ethical foundations of the practice of initiation established in ancient Egypt as a pattern for ethic differentiation and distinction. "He who was initiated into the mysteries of Egypt had to remake himself... to have the right to being engaged in Astronomy, Mathematics, Magic, etc. serious studies were granted merely for those whose spirits were elevated."[9]

In Bely's opinion, given the conditions of the 20th century, this task could and should be assumed by literature. In contrast with Vjach. Ivanov, who, starting from his interpretation of the Eleusinian mysteries, dreamed of the resurgence of this tradition via the "mystical theatre," Bely insisted that the perception of the "poetic Word" inaugurate the way to initiation. Essentially, all novels by Bely narrate a successful or unsuccessful approach to the act of initiation, which is drawn up via the juxtaposition of two types of models: Masonic and Rosicrucian. In other words, the perception of a literary text will offer spiritual "ascent" and will lead to the birth of the inner man, preparing the path for transcendence from time into eternity.

Bely's conclusion is illustrated by the end of his protagonist's earthly life. In his first novel, *The Silver Dove*, the detailed description of the pitiful death of the hero is contrasted with the novel's structure of motifs (following the traits of Pythagoreanism and Platonism). Thus, the reader is led beyond the horizons of pragmatic life and into a world connecting time to eternity.

In the epilogue of his following novel, entitled *Petersburg*, Bely stresses that his hero, who stayed next to the Sphinx and the Egyptian Pyramid, is now reading not Kant, but the Ukrainian philosopher Gregory Skovoroda, who was regarded as a Rosicrucian by the Symbolists (perhaps initiated in Tokaj) and who claimed that "the second birth" (that is, the birth of "the inner man" in man) is imperative. This key element was emphasized by Bely in his novels by means of motifs and a structure, reflecting symbolization, which

[8] Letter of Andrey Bely to Morozova, January 1913. In Andrey Bely, *Vash rytsar (Your Knight)*, Moscow, Progress-Pleiada, 2006, 240.

[9] Andrey Bely, *Simvolizm (Symbolism)*, Moscow, Musaget, 1910, 514.

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served to show the trials of man by way of initiation. Thus, Leonid Katsis was partially right when he contended, "It is not difficult to see that Bely keeps searching for 'his road to Damascus' on the paths of initiation."[10]

But Katsis was right only in part, because Bely's path was not only his, as it has given a stimulus to many authors. Thanks to his efforts, a new literary genre came into being, the texts of which, in the new and extremely unambiguously determined historical conditions of the Soviet regime, still dared to assume the functions of the ritual of initiation.

In the Soviet era of Russian literature, several versions of this genre were conceived, among the most notable authors of which we find Velimir Khlebnikov, Boris Pilnyak, Mikhail Bulgakov, Boris Pasternak and others. One of the novels by these authors is most noteworthy in following Bely in the exact reconstruction of and no less precise differentiation between Masonic and Rosicrucian initiation: Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*.

It is important to note that Bulgakov's oeuvre shows that he inherited many patterns from the Symbolist setting. This can be clearly seen in his capacity to link the "rare" and the "obvious." This means was developed by Bulgakov into a unique art of blending the techniques of cryptography and uncoded writing, and thus he was able to contribute to preserving the memory of culture in an era of aggressively spreading amnesia.

Of late, experts on Bulgakov have frequently cited his characterization of himself: "I am a mystical writer." However, they have failed to point out that Bulgakov drew the limits of his mysticism, saying, "I am not a clergyman or a theosophist." A great many studies exist in which the novel *The Master and Margarita* is considered as a myth-novel, a gnostic novel, a transcendental novel, or a mystery novel, and the Cathar associations and Masonic motifs in the novel are discussed. But peculiar as it might seem considering the abundant secondary literature, there is no study on Bulgakov which has considered the path of the initiation of one of the novel's main protagonists, Ivanushka. The primitive Soviet poet, who as noted earlier uses the pseudonym Bezdomny ("Homeless"), turns into a pacified historian called Ivan Ponyrev (the surname meaning "One who has been immersed in water"). The main line in the narrative, which is stressed by the first scene and the scene in the epilogue, will tell a lot about the essence of this path. Its details coherently recreate the grades of Masonic initiation (the first part of the novel) and Rosicrucian initiation (the second part of the novel), following the model designed by Bely.

[10] Leonid Katsis, *Smena paradigm i smena paradigmy. Ocherki russkoj literatury, isskustva i nauki XX-go veka (Changing Paradigms and Paradigm Shift. The Main Lines of 20th-Century Russian Literature, Art and Science)*, Moscow, Rossiiskij Gosudarstvennyj Gumanitarnyj Universitet, 2012, 421.

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In the first part of the novel, in harmony with this model, Ivanushka Bezdomny is brought to the beginning of a three-stage process of initiation which arches through the book: *via purgativa, via illuminativa*, and *via unitiva*.

From the perspective of symbols and signs, the following scenes are of great significance:

The house number 13, the flat number 47. Here Bulgakov plays by linking the "rare" and the "obvious." The number 13 is a well-known symbol in almost all cultures, but the symbolic meaning of the number 47 is not familiar to everyone. It is a hint at the postulate of Euclid, which has a special meaning in Freemasonry.

Details of Soviet life, such as the dark and narrow corridors of the communal apartment 47 and the naked woman in the bathtub, who tries to seduce the man who unexpectedly turns up, can be understood as the first test on the road of initiation. It is a well-known element in the Egyptian type of initiation, where the stripped "Nubian" beauty represented a moral trial: he who chose his way to her (and not the other corridor) would immediately fall underground and die. Bulgakov's Ivanushka was not seduced. He kept chasing Woland with a paper icon on his breast, which he had picked up in the kitchen, and then rushed to the Moscow River. This can be understood as an acting-out of the following steps of initiation:

Submersion in water in its varying forms is an act characteristic of the majority of rituals: In a carnavalised depiction, Bulgakov shows Ivanushka bathing (in the Moscow River). As noted before, the surname of the hero, Ponyrev, refers to this indispensable part of almost any initiation rite. However, the description of Ivanushka descending the stones of the amphitheatre draws on the Egyptian, not the Eleusinian version.

The subsequent "loss of clothes" (which were stolen) marks a very important moment in the Masonic rite. Untidy clothes symbolize the confusion of the uninitiated in approaching the Temple. At the same time, since clothing represents the cover outside, losing it symbolizes the disintegration of the outer shell. Following this, the stages of "disintegration as the death of the outer shell" are represented by descent. In *The Master and Margarita*, this descent is expressed metaphorically as Ivanushka descends through the bars into the hell of the restaurant, which can be understood as the depths of the earth. One recalls the acronym used in the insignia of the alchemists' guild: "V.I.T.R.I.O.L.U.M." This was a reference to the Latin phrase "Visita Interiora Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem Veram Medicinam," which means, "Visit the interior of the earth, and by rectifying you will find the hidden stone, which is the true medicine."

And, finally, concluding the phase of preparation, Ivanushka meets the Master in the psychiatric hospital (Chapter 13). The depiction of this meeting reconstructs the rules of the Freemasonic code, and it is precisely in

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the locus of the mental institution that Ivan is "split into two" and, as a result, goes through the second stage, intuitively moving towards the Truth. In his dreams in the mental asylum, he sees the events of Golgotha, and the self-identification of the master is clarified. This is achieved by means of flower symbolism in the Master's narrative when he recounts to Ivanushka the first time he met Margarita.

Roses versus mimosas. Everybody will remember the scene in which, in answer to Margarita's question, "Do you like the flowers in my hands?" the Master says "No," supplying a comment without naming the mimosas, as this would refer only to the situation in which these yellow flowers appear (in Moscow in the spring). However, thanks to the fact that the mimosas are unnamed, the reader gets involved in the act of recollecting the name of these flowers. (The names of the mimosas only appear in the text after a few pages, and it is these flowers that the Master contrasts with roses.) This might sound banal at first (is there anyone who does not love roses?), but when the name of the yellow flowers is uttered—mimosa—the meaning of the contrast between flowers liked and disliked will in a moment transpose the problem to an "esoteric plane," since the mimosa (that is, *acacia vera*) represents a symbol-emblem of Freemasonry, whereas the rose is an equally well-known permanent symbol of Rosicrucianism, as was said before. So through the structure of his novel (and through its set of motifs, and by introducing this language of flowers in its banalized and esoteric forms), Bulgakov succeeds in accentuating the similarities and differences between the stages of initiation in Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism, because it is with the explicit contrast of the mimosas and roses that the transition begins from the first part of the novel (in chapter 13, entitled "Enter the Hero"), with its pre-initiation motif of Freemasonry, to the second part of the novel, which specifies the details of Rosicrucian initiation.

In chapter 19 of the second section of the novel, which is entitled "Margarita," the accentuated role of the feminine principle becomes prevalent in the text. The feminine principle has appeared in different ages and different cultures, and it has been given expression in different ways. It has borne numerous names, including Mother-Goddess, *anima mundi*, the Eternal Feminine, Sophia (meaning wisdom in Hellenistic philosophy and religion, and coming to be understood as "Holy Wisdom" in the Christian tradition), but the Russian Symbolist concept of the Eternal Feminine comes nearest to this motif in Bulgakov's novel, which also serves as the most obvious indication of the Rosicrucian type of initiation.

The idea of the Eternal Feminine is brought forward in the feminine personae of the second part of the novel, which opens with the significant name of the female protagonist Margarita (not Sophia or Sofja) together with the shadowy alter ego, Natasha.

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It is also important to note that the second part of the novel shows the Master in the role of the Initiator, not only to Ivan, but to Margarita as well, as it is after his words that Margarita leaves mimosas and comes under the sign of the rose. This motif appears in the text both as an imitation of everyday life (Margarita keeps dry rose petals together with the yellowed leaves of the Master's manuscript) and as a complicated reminiscence (in the scene at Satan's ball, Margarita appears wearing shoes of rose petals fastened with golden clasps, which is a bold hint at the Mystic Rose in Dante's *Paradise*, the petals of which make up the souls of the righteous, but simultaneously this will prompt associations with some names of the Order of the Golden and Rosy Cross, the German Rosicrucian organization founded by Freemason and alchemist Hermann Fichtuld in the mid-18th century).

It is even more important that the only means possessed by the Master, while initiating Margarita into the Truth, is his book about Yeshua. The text of the book acquires a means of influence which equals the power of ritual. Margarita states that "her life" is in the Master's novel, and the reader witnesses how quotations from the novel work like a password. (One need merely recall the scene with Azazello, after which Margarita is made to approach initiation via the Master and his novel.) And after the password has worked, the stages of tests begin ("We have put you to the test"—says Messire Woland to Margarita), and initiation is carried out immediately on a higher level.

The initiation is visualized in the scene of the Satan's ball, when Margarita is set on a platform and there is "another platform" opposite her own, which has been "prepared for Woland." The "two platforms" directly refer to the structure of convocation not in Freemasonry, but in Rosicrucianism, where opposite the platform of the Master stands the platform of the Mother of the Lodge. The bond between masculine and feminine principles is reaffirmed by the uttering of the sounds "Ra-Ma."

In the conclusion of the novel, this stage of initiation determines the super-active part Margarita plays because it is Margarita, i.e., the feminine principle (similarly to Dante's Beatrice in the *Divina Commedia*) which plays a determining role in respect of the Master ("I shall watch over your sleep"), and in respect of the pupil, Ivanushka, whom the Master—leaving "pragmatic life"—entrusts with carrying on with his work.

Finally, the conclusion articulates the motif of moonlight. Critics have written a great deal about this, but I would like to consider it from the perspective of the well-known depiction of the lunar path by William Blake. In order to comment on this image by Blake, I begin by noting Mircea Eliade's[11] concepts

[11] See his *Mephistopheles and the Androgyne: Studies in Religious Myth and Symbol*, Translated by J. M. Cohen, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1965. See also Léna Szilárd, *Tajnopis M. Bulgakova i nasledija simvolizma. Problemy romana initsiatsij (The Cryptic Code of*

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of light and the symbols of the threadstring as the signs of the link between immanence and transcendence, a link which keeps human memory awake and will not let it sleep.

It has been asserted by critics that the motif of the Moon can be understood as a symbol of intuition, but it must be added that it also reflects the difference in the understanding of this symbol by Freemasonry and Rosicrucianism. With its rationalism, Freemasonry is more oriented around the Sun and its light, while Rosicrucianism accents the nocturnal, irrational aspect of our existence. (This is why, in Bulgakov, motifs of dream function actively, and the Master exclaims: "I have guessed!" However, we should not forget that in the systems of the Rosicrucians, the Sun is also important, but mainly when it rises.)

At the same time, the moonlit path as the connection between immanence and transcendence makes evident the possibility of ascent "up the staircase to the Moon" *(ad realiora),* a reward granted to Pilate. This possibility of ascent is inherent in different people to differing extents, as shown by Bulgakov in the final scenes of the novel.

But Bulgakov's novel also shows that transcendence is manifest in the text of the novel as such, the written text being an eternal entity in the collective memory of mankind. An ancient Egyptian text dating back to the 19th dynasty (the 13th century B.C.) expresses the same idea of life`s transition into a text and memory preserved in a written text:

> A man died, his body turned into ashes, and his folk left the land. But his writings will be preserved in the memory and on the lips of the living. The book is more useful than a spacious house, [...] better than the palace of the rich, better than a gravestone in the temple... The wise have foretold what is to come... It is sealed in their dictums and books... Others' children have become their inheritors... They passed away, but did not forget their names, and live in their writings and human memory. [...] A man is dead, his corpse is in the ground: when all his family are laid in the earth, it is his writing that lets him be remembered...[12]

Mikhail Bulgakov's Work and the Tradition of Symbolism. The Problems of the Intiation Novel), Roma, Russica Romana X, 2003, 105-125.

[12] Chester Beatty Papyri IV, sheet 4 recto 9-10-12 verso 1-3, 10684. Translation by Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, Volume II: *The New Kingdom*, Berkeley – London, 1976.

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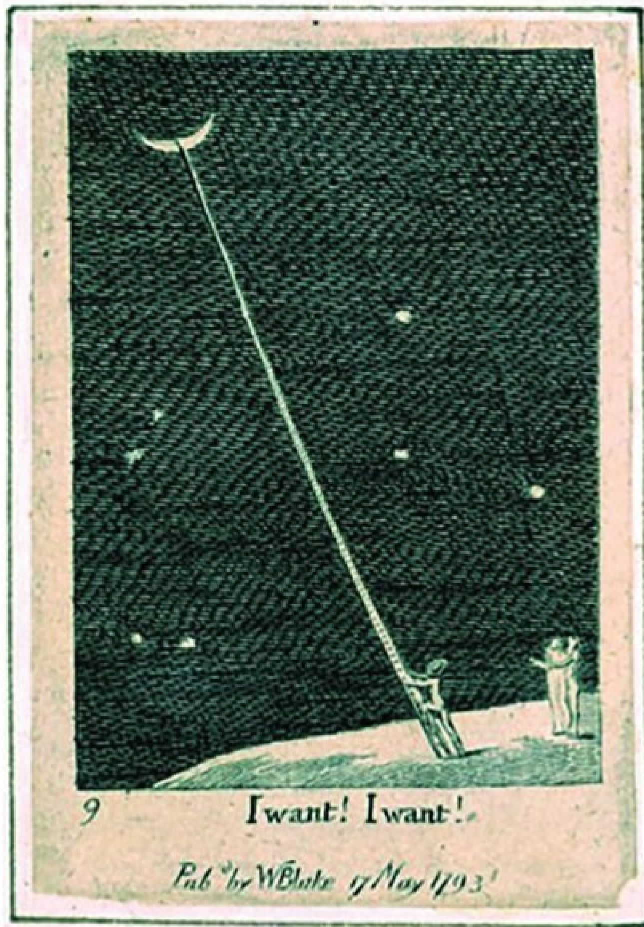
Finally, let me add the aforementioned illustration to the meaning of the Lunar Path by William Blake, which preceded Bulgakov's use of the same image, and which testifies that nocturnal light has multiple symbolic meanings.[13]



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[13] The illustration is taken from William Blake's *For Children: The Gates of Paradise*, Lamberth, W. Burke, 1793.

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INITIATION AND ITS TRAVESTY IN *THE RIVER* BY FLANNERY O'CONNOR

KATALIN G. KÁLLAY

ABSTRACT

My paper investigates the extent to which Flannery O'Connor's story The River *is a deliberate travesty of the ritual of baptism and the extent to which the initiation is indeed to be taken seriously. Can the fact that it happened in search of the kingdom of Christ ease or alter the tragedy of a little boy's suicide? As the author, a deeply devoted Catholic writer of the American South claims, most of her stories contain a "moment of grace." The challenging question is if and where this moment is to be found in this particular text. O'Connor's texts are imbued with a subtle humour and a sense of self-irony, which is also highlighted in the paper. Her choice of symbolic names is examined as well, and this leads to my suggestion in the conclusion of the paper.*

Flannery O'Connor, a deeply devoted Catholic writer of the American South, deals with the problem of initiation into the mysteries in many of her short stories. She is also famous for her frequent themes of violence and tragedy, which she handles with a special sense of grotesque humour. In "The River,"[1] Harry Ashfield, a four- or five-year-old boy, is taken to a religious meeting by Mrs. Connin, his babysitter, at which he is ceremonially immersed in the river by a faith healer, Bevel Summers, to be free and to "count." The day after the event, he goes back to the river by himself to repeat the immersion in search of the kingdom of Christ, and he drowns. My paper investigates the extent to which the text is a deliberate travesty of the ritual of baptism and the extent

[1] All references to the text of the story are based on the following edition: Flannery O'Connor, *The Complete Stories*. Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 1971, Forty-first printing, 1996, 157-175.

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to which the initiation is indeed to be taken seriously. As the author claims, most of her stories contain a "moment of grace." The challenging question is if and where this moment is to be found in this particular text.

It is significant that in the morning, when she takes the child from home, Mrs. Connin does not know his first name, and Harry, after hearing about the faith healer, says his name is also Bevel, which the babysitter takes literally, thinking of it as a special coincidence. Thus, in terms of naming, the child might unconsciously or jokingly baptize himself, at least in the sense of repeating and taking up the name of the preacher before being immersed in the river.

Like in many of O'Connor's works, names are symbolic here: the Ashfields, Harry's quite negligent parents, live a life of partying. Their apartment is full of dirty ashtrays, and they do not seem to care much about where exactly their sleepy son is going at 6 AM on Sunday with the drowsy babysitter (who is taking the boy after a night-shift of cleaning somewhere else). In the chilly autumn morning, it is only the preacher's last name, Summers, that might remind the boy (and the reader) of warmth. Later in the story, at the healing event, the sceptical criticism of the preacher's words comes from a man with a scary and distorted face called Mr. Paradise. At the end of the story, it is Mr. Paradise who tries to save the child from drowning by running after him with a one-foot-long candy stick, but in vain. Through the homophone, Mr. Paradise's name seems to *parodize*, i.e. make a parody of, any Christian message, thus turning the moment of grace into its travesty. I will return later in this essay to the possible interpretations of the name Bevel.

Ralph C. Wood, in his careful and thorough analysis of the story,[2] says the following:

> In "The River" as with all of her stories, O'Connor presses her readers to drastic conclusions. In this regard, they share the hard-edged quality of Jesus' parables and sayings. For example, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God (Mark10:25); or "Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor" (Luke 18:22). So must we decide whether Preacher Summers and Mrs. Connin have done Harry a terrible and final violence, or whether they have given him the most important of all gifts—eternal life. There is no humanistic way of avoiding such a drastic either-or. The story's dire outcome cannot be justified by insisting that the child unfortunately literalized the preacher's message and thus mistakenly ended his own life. The story would thus become a trite exercise in the sentimentality that

[2] Ralph C.Wood, The Scandalous Baptism of Harry Ashfield in Flannery O'Connor's "The River," in: *Inside the Church of Flannery O'Connor Sacrament, Sacramental and the Sacred in Her Fiction.* Ed. Joanne Halleran McMullen and Jon Parrish Peede. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press 2007.

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> O'Connor despised. She likened sentimentality in both morality and religion to pornography in art: it is a cheap and easy way of achieving a bogus effect. Yet neither does O'Connor encourage any quick and conveniently Christian verdict.[3]

The drastic either-or seems to suggest a division between religious or secular interpretations: one either believes that the young boy is truly baptized and in his case the long human search for the kingdom of Christ is radically hastened, i.e. "short-circuited," or one sees the case as a tragedy, as the outcome of human irresponsibility on the part of the parents, the babysitter, and the preacher. If Harry's case is shown up against a culture in which "death is the ultimate enemy and remaining alive at all costs is the ultimate good," as Wood argues, then to die a "meaningless" death "in devotion to a non-existent kingdom" must be "the ultimate lie."[4] But it is also debatable to what extent a religious reading might allow a positive interpretation and whether any responsible religious adult can rejoice in the drastic conclusion.

So perhaps the either-or refers to the division between the perspective of the adult and the perspective of the child: Flannery O'Connor seems to focalize almost entirely on the child's perspective. All the more so because the adult characters, especially the parents, are shown to be more like children in their irresponsibility. As Richard Giannone points out,[5]

> Where parents are children—as are the Ashfields—their children must parent themselves, for children's basic inner needs cannot be grasped or answered by the parents. O'Connor points up the spiritual chasm by having the narrator call Harry "the little boy" (155) to remind us of his neediness, whereas Harry's father calls his son "old man" (166) to hasten the child's independence. The paternal endearment is accurate. In Harry's need to be taken seriously, the four-or-five-year-old is more mature than his parents. Harry hears no call from the pulpit, [...] since church is not part of the Ashfields' social faith. But the call to flee nevertheless comes to Harry. Before he hears the words, he feels the need to count—which is the need for God without using the word *God*.[6]

From the adult's perspective, Harry's weakness, abandonment, and vulnerability is shown by the narrator and felt by the reader, making the reading experience almost impossible to bear. Harry is introduced half asleep, with a runny nose and runny eyes, his arms stuck in the sleeves of his

[3] Ibid. 190.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Richard Giannone, *Flannery O'Connor, Hermit Novelist*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

[6] Ibid., 93.

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coat. No wonder that Mrs. Connin's first remark is: "He ain't fixed right,"[7] to which Harry's father answers "Well then for Christ's sake fix him,"[8] though he is unaware of the terrible possibility that the babysitter will try to do precisely what he asks of her. To what extent does Harry get "fixed" "for Christ's sake"?

From the child's perspective, this day is full of new experiences. He carefully studies everything he encounters: the flowery handkerchief of Mrs. Connin, which he can "borry," the pictures on the wall of Mrs. Connin's apartment, the old book about the life of Jesus Christ for readers under twelve, which he hides in the lining of his coat. He learns that he was made by this carpenter, whereas earlier he had thought it had been "a doctor named Sladewall," and the name Christ "was a word like 'oh' or 'damn,' or maybe somebody who had cheated them out of something sometime."[9] Before they start out for the healing, he encounters Mrs. Connin's four children, Sarah Mildred, "who had her hair up in so many aluminum curlers that it glared like the roof,"[10] and the three boys, who play a nasty trick on him by telling him to loosen the plank of the pigsty to see the pigs, and he is knocked over and chased to Mrs. Connin by a young, long-legged, humpbacked hog with a distorted ear. All the more can he appreciate the picture in Mrs. Connin's old book, in which he sees Jesus chasing many pigs out of a man. On the way to the river, he is amazed by nature: as an urban child, he had never been in the woods before. He takes his steps carefully in the forest, as if he were entering "a strange country," and as they get to the clearing by the river, he feels exhilarated by the sunny landscape. He observes the congregation gathered around the young preacher standing in the river from the shelter of Mrs. Connin's coat and listens to the song and to the repeated words of the faith healer.

> "Listen to what I got to say, you people! There ain't but one river and that's the River of Life, made out of Jesus' Blood. That's the river you have to lay your pain in, in the River of Faith, the River of Life, in the River of Love, in the rich red river of Jesus' Blood, you people!"
> His voice grew soft and musical. "All the rivers come from that one River and go back to it like it was the ocean sea and if you believe, you can lay your pain in that River and can get rid of it because that's the River that was made to carry sin. It's a River full of pain itself, pain itself, moving toward the Kingdom of Christ, to be washed away, slow, you people, slow as this here old red water river round my feet."[11]

7 The River, 157.
8 Ibid.
9 The River, 163.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 165.

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When Mrs. Connin holds him up to be baptized by the preacher, he repeats his chosen name in a loud jaunty voice, but when he tries to make a joke of it in the crook of the preacher's arm, saying "My name is Bevvvuuuul," letting "the tip of his tongue slide across his mouth,"[12] he is surprised to see that the preacher doesn't smile. So far, he had only been picked up by adults for the sake of joking. Now that he sees something serious is going to happen, he quickly adds a lie to the joke: "My mother named me that."[13]

> "Have you ever been Baptized?" the preacher asked.
> "What's that?" he murmured.
> "If I Baptize you," the preacher said, "you'll be able to go to the Kingdom of Christ. You'll be washed in the river of suffering, son, and you'll go by the deep river of life. Do you want that?"
> "Yes," the child said, and thought, I won't go back to the apartment then, I'll go under the river.
> "You won't be the same again," the preacher said. "You'll count."[14]

Then the preacher turns him upside down and holds him under the water while saying the words of baptism. The shock of the gesture makes the boy silent, and the next day, after experiencing that at the apartment he doesn't "count" (in the evening, the parents make mocking remarks about what happened to him during the day, and he sleeps in his wet clothes and wakes up to see the ruins of a party and his parents in an exhausted sleep), he makes a peanut butter sandwich for himself, eats it, carefully rubs the contents of an ashtray into the carpet, takes a bus token and half a pack of "life savers" candies from his mother's purse, and starts on his fateful journey.

The careless parents are far from being "evil": they simply take the boy to be a part of their belongings, and they think that they provide for him as best as they can: he has a lot of toys (as soon as he destroys them, he gets new ones), there is food in the fridge, they often take him to restaurants, and if they have no time for him, his care is a problem to be solved. They try to turn his whims into jokes, perhaps in the hope that through humour, all the anomalies of their lives can be dissolved. In their sleep, they, too, are vulnerable, exposed to the horrible surprise of losing their "belonging." The boy leaves the house behind without taking anything except the candies (the "life savers" will prove useful against the candy-stick of Mr. Paradise) and lets his feet guide him back to the river.

Richard Giannone also observes that the child's half-conscious drive toward the Kingdom of Christ happens through a series of *gestures:* it is hands and

[12] Ibid., 167.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., 168.

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feet that guide him, not thoughts or conviction. Flannery O'Connor herself found the role of gestures decisively important in her works. In *Mystery and Manners*,[15] she says the following:

> I often ask myself what makes a story work, what makes it hold up as a story, and I have decided that it is probably some action, some gesture of a character that is unlike any other in the story, one which indicates where the real heart of the story lies. This would have to be an action or a gesture which was both totally right and totally unexpected; it would have to be one that was both in character and beyond character; it would have to suggest both the world and eternity. The action or gesture I'm talking about would have to be on the anagogical level, that is, the level which has to do with the Divine life and our participation in it. It would be a gesture that transcended any neat allegory that might have been intended or any pat moral categories a reader could make. It would be a gesture which somehow made contact with mystery.[16]

It is remarkable that in the first paragraph of "The River," the father pushes the boy "toward a pale spotted hand that stuck through the half-open door,"[17] Mrs. Connin is only later shown as a full (skeleton-like) figure. And when the child finally plunges under the water, "the waiting current caught him like a long gentle hand and pulled him swiftly forward and down."[18] These two gestures seem reliable in getting the child somewhere, making contact with both the world and eternity. In the text, hands are mentioned several times, and when the boy doesn't speak, he communicates through the pressure of hands. His feet are equally important: the idea of returning to the river comes through feeling his still wet shoes, and it is his feet that will remember the way. Faces, however, seem to be obstacles on the journey: the face of the pig pushed towards his own, the eyes of an owl or a squirrel frightening him in the forest, the distorted face of Mr. Paradise. Before the river accepts him, it, too, "pushes him back in the face" several times. Does this mean that the story upholds something that is impossible to face? That the mystery into which the boy is initiated will never be shown face to face?

In the conclusion of my paper, I would like to return to Ralph C. Wood's implied imperative of either-or, referring to the hard edge of Flannery O'Connor's stories and Jesus Christ's parables. In this context, I examine the meaning of the word *bevel*. From the point that the child names himself this

[15] Flannery O'Connor, *Mystery and Manners. Occasional Prose.* Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 1970.
[16] Ibid., 111.
[17] The River, 157.
[18] Ibid., 174.

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way, the narrator calls him Bevel, although it has been stated that his real name was Harry. Perhaps the either-or refers to this seemingly insignificant distinction, i.e. whether he is to be seen as Harry or as Bevel.

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary,[19] *bevel* is a slanted surface or edge on a piece of wood or glass. A bevel is typically used to soften the edge of a piece for the sake of safety, wear resistance, or aesthetics; or to facilitate mating with another piece.

Would this definition soften the hard edge of the parable? Or does it perhaps make it even harder to accept? It seems that by definition a bevel facilitates the mating of two surfaces, perhaps turning the imperative of the either-or to an acceptance of both, conjoined. In my interpretation, both the travesty and the mystery are to be taken seriously: one cannot exist without the other in this story, and it is precisely the unconsciously or jokingly chosen name, Bevel, that connects them. Can we then call the boy's experience a true revelation? I think this cannot be stated from an earthly dimension, and it must be kept in mind that all responses to the story are inevitably from an earthly dimension! I would suggest the word "Bevelation" instead: which would be true to the individual story, the child's own, unique, unrepeatable case, which cannot under any circumstances be universalized, only to the extent to which each and every human being might experience the surprising, shocking, unique, and unrepeatable case of his or her own.

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[19] https://www.merriam-webster.com/

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DENIALS OF THE DIVINE: TRACES OF INELUCTABLE PRESENCE IN THE ANTECEDENTS OF SAMUEL BECKETT'S *FIN DE PARTIE, ENDGAME,* AND *FILM*[1]

Anita Rákóczy

Abstract

Samuel Beckett's fervent anticlericalism and scepticism in matters of religion are detectable in his dramatic works. However, instead of denying and therefore omitting the subject of the divine altogether, Beckett's plays are interwoven on multiple levels with religious imagery and his deep knowledge of Scripture. At the same time, these images, which convey Beckett's anger and rage, are inexhaustible attacks on his non-existent God. Beckett's most common approach to addressing the divine is blasphemy. Whenever a religious reference appears in his plays as part of the action, set, text, or dramaturgy, it is paired with irony, mockery, grotesque inappropriateness, or verbatim negation. Some of his early Fin de partie-related fragments and manuscripts and the published play itself provide examples of Beckett's treatment of the divine as a playwright. In Film, *O destroys God's image by tearing it into four pieces and treading on its remains on the ground. However, the imprint of the picture remains on the wall: a clear white spot with a nail protruding from it. My paper explores traces of divine presence in a number of dramatic works by Samuel Beckett, who, through denial, provokes and creates God in his plays.*

[1] Excerpts from manuscripts and unpublished preliminary fragments of Samuel Beckett's *Fin de partie* reproduced by permission of the Estate of Samuel Beckett c/o Rosica Colin Limited, London. Special thanks to Bernard Adams for proofreading and translating the manuscript quotations from French to English with the permission of the Estate of Samuel Beckett. All manuscript quotations are subject to copyright. (c) The Estate of Samuel Beckett.

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HAMM	The bastard! He doesn't exist!
CLOV	Not yet.[2]

Despite his devout Protestant upbringing, Samuel Beckett's fervent anticlericalism and scepticism in matters of religion are detectable in his dramatic works. However, instead of denying and therefore omitting the subject of the divine altogether, Beckett's plays are interwoven on multiple levels with religious imagery and his deep knowledge of Scripture. As Mary Bryden points out, Biblical references in Beckett's dramas are taken from both the Old and New Testaments, and in each case, the source is the King James version. Sometimes they appear as "muted and fully integrated subtextual scriptural resonances" that do not "detach themselves from the texture of Beckett's own writing. At other times they are more self-advertising."[3] In this essay I examine a number of images in *Endgame*, *Film*, two early stages of the genesis of *Fin de partie*, an untitled fragment in which the main character's name is Ernest, and *Avant Fin de partie*, which fall into the latter category, conveying Beckett's anger and rage as examples of his inexhaustible attacks on his non-existent God.

Beckett's frequent approach to addressing the divine is blasphemy. Whenever a religious reference appears in his plays as part of the action, set, text, or dramaturgy, it is often paired with irony, mockery, grotesque inappropriateness, or verbatim negation. In *Being and Nothingness*, in relation to negation, Sartre explains that "there exist more subtle behaviours [...]. Irony is one of these. In irony a man annihilates what he posits within one and the same act; he leads us to believe in order not to be believed; he affirms to deny and denies to affirm; he creates a positive object but it has no being other than its nothingness."[4] Beckett's ambivalent treatment of the divine as a playwright is detectable in some of his early *Fin de partie*-related fragments and manuscripts; during the act of negation, certain images of God ("verbal or visual structures which believers have evolved in order to understand and communicate their perceptions of God"[5]) are exposed at the centre of attention which either visually or verbally define the spectator's theatrical experience through their exaggerated presence and, at the same time, their rejection.

In an unpublished, untitled, undated, and abandoned dialogue fragment, one of the first antecedents of *Fin de partie* (to which I henceforth refer as the "Ernest & Alice Fragment"), the main character, Ernest, spends his days

[2] Samuel Beckett, *The Complete Dramatic Works*, London: Faber and Faber, 1990, 119.

[3] Mary Bryden, *Samuel Beckett and the Idea of God*, London, Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998, 102.

[4] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, London, Routledge, 2003, 70. I would like to express my gratitude to Péter Dávidházi and his paper *József, Illyés, Jób. Párhuzamos verselemzés bibliai fénytörésben* for drawing my attention to Sartre's work.

[5] Bryden, *Samuel Beckett and the Idea of God*, 125.

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in a crucified position on a mechanical cross which is erected in the morning and lowered at night. The fragment is primarily a conversation between Ernest and Alice, a couple, foreshadowing the relationship between Hamm and Clov in *Fin de partie*. In the exposition of the play, the time is after lunch. We see Ernest lying asleep on his cross, snoring.[6] The strong, provocative opening image draws a parallel between Christ and Ernest (also, at a later point Alice calls her husband "mon petit Jésus"[7]), but at the same time its blasphemous overtones cannot be ignored. If one had any doubt of the play's burlesque nature with respect to Christian imagery, the sound of snoring and the sight of Ernest sleeping comfortably on *his* cross with a full stomach indicates the perspective at once. Furthermore, this opening tableau suggests that we spend our entire lives attached to our personal cross, and there is no difference between birth and death in that respect: Calvary begins in the maternity ward. As Pozzo puts it in Act II of *Waiting for Godot*, women "give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more."[8]

On this particular day, a day different from any other, a change takes place in the *Ernest & Alice Fragment*—a change that one does not expect in a work for the stage: the machinery is out of order, and the cross fails to rise. It is jammed. Then, unexpectedly, it rises of its own accord, as soon as Alice goes offstage to fetch the oil with which to fix it. Ernest blames Alice for the rough rise.

Alice	Ta croix ne vaut pas un clou. On t'a eu.
Ernest	Comment elle ne vaut pas un clou? C'est toi qui ne sais pas t'y prendre.
Alice	Je te dis que c'est de la sale camelote. Ca vous fout plein la vue – tant qu'on n'est pas dessus. *(Elle secoue la croix.)* Regarde-moi ça!
Ernest	Ne fais pas ça!
Alice	Elle ne tient pas debout. Ah je le regrette, je t'assure, ton vieux gibet en chêne. Avec lui je pouvais dormir tranquille.[9]

Alice's response suggests that there is a temporal aspect to Ernest's malfunctioning cross, namely that it has a past. Its function had previously been filled by an oaken gibbet, but Ernest replaced it with a cross, as the gibbet

[6] Samuel Beckett, untitled, unpublished, undated typescript, in the folder Abandoned Theatre in French, Beckett Manuscript Collection, University of Reading, MS 1227/7/16/2, 1.

[7] Ibid., 4. Quoted in Stanley E. Gontarski, *The Intent of Undoing in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Texts*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1985, 26.

[8] Beckett, *The Complete Dramatic Works*, 83.

[9] Samuel Beckett, MS 1227/7/16/2, 6. "ALICE Your cross is no good at all. You've been swindled. ERNEST What do you mean, no good at all? It's you that can't handle it. ALICE I tell you it's filthy rubbish. It blocks the view – if you're not up there. *(She shakes the cross.)* Just look at it! ERNEST Don't do that! ALICE It won't stay upright. Ah, I do miss your old oaken gibbet, I tell you straight. With that I could sleep in peace." English translation: Bernard Adams.

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was killing him, and his shoulder blades were hurting. There is a fine line here between burlesque and sarcasm: although technically both objects serve as means of execution, the interchangeability is not particularly complimentary to the cross. Still, the cross is *present.* It is in the centre throughout the fragment, the largest part of the set, visually dominating the entire stage, whether it is erected or lowered.

In *Avant Fin de partie*, another undated, early manuscript of *Fin de partie*, the Holy Bible is a highlighted stage prop. The dramatic fragment is a dialogue between X, the master, and F, his factotum. X, pre-Hamm, has a strong connection with the Bible. He asks for it four times, and he throws it on the floor four times. At a dramaturgically elevated moment of the play, X asks F, his servant, to fetch the Bible and the syringe. In X's world, the practice of numbing pain with an injection and the Bible usually go together. Keeping an account of his belongings, X lists them both as two of his five precious possessions: "Cinq choses, voilà que j'ai cinq choses à present. [...] Un tambour. *(Silence)* Une baguette. *(Silence)* Une seringue. *(Silence. Plus bas)* Une seringue. *(Silence)* Une cuiller. *(Silence)* A soupe. *(Silence)* Et enfin... enfin... [...]... ah... la parole de Dieu." [10]

X quite openly seeks succour from this stage property, and luckily for him, substances are still available, as opposed to *Endgame*, in which supplies are running out, the painkiller in particular. So X can give free rein to his imagination. When F brings him the syringe, but it is empty, X orders him to fill it quickly. To F's question, "With what?", he gives the following reply.

X De morphine. De cocaïne. De hachich. De cyanure. [...] *(Il caresse la bible, en tourne les pages)* Si on n'a pas la foi on est foutu. *(Un temps)* Et si on l'a on est baisé. *(Il jette la bible)* Sale opium, va![11]

In addition to the apparent humour, there is more to this playful passage than meets the eye. Beckett connects the syringe with the Bible on a physical as well as a metaphorical level. By likening the Bible to a psychoactive drug (ironically, opium of all substances), he evokes Marx's imperishable views on religion: "Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of

[10] Samuel Beckett, *Avant Fin de partie.* Undated, unpublished typescript. Beckett Manuscript Collection, University of Reading, MS 1227/7/16/7, 12. "Five things, that's what I've got, five things these days. [...] A drum. *(Silence)* A drum-stick. *(Silence)* A syringe. *(Silence. More quietly)* A syringe. *(Silence)* A spoon. *(Silence)* A soup-spoon, that is. *(Silence)* And last of all... last of all... [...] ah... the word of God." English translation: Bernard Adams

[11] Ibid., 8. Quoted in Stanley E. Gontarski, *The Intent of Undoing in Samuel Beckett's Dramatic Texts*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1985, 37. "Morphine. Cocaine. Hashish. Cyanide. [...] *(He strokes the bible, turns the pages.)* If you've no faith you're fucked. *(Pause)* And if you have you're shagged. *(He throws the bible away)* Filthy opium, go away!" English translation: Bernard Adams

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real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people."[12] X's ambiguous relationship with religion is further emphasized by Beckett's stage directions: he strokes the Bible, turns the pages with great care, and then a moment later throws it to the ground, "as Hamm treats his dog in *Fin de partie*,"[13] as György Kurtág points out (Kurtág is currently working on his *Fin de partie* opera). The scathing irony of the passage is grasped most intensely by the rhetorical paradox expressed in two symmetrical sentences, separated by a pause. Symmetry, pause, and rhythm are devices about which Beckett cared a great deal. As he put it, "it is the shape that matters."[14] The two sentences seemingly contradict each other, with the vulgar synonyms increasing the sarcastic tone in their second part, but they even out in the broader context and make perfect sense, like the 1936 poem "Two Hexameters" by Hungarian poet Attila József: "Why should I be honest? I'll be laid out, anyhow! // Why should I not be honest! I'll be laid out, anyhow."[15]

The pre-publication genesis of *Fin de partie*, of which there were over fifteen preliminary versions and early drafts, was completed with the first publication of the play by Editions de Minuit in 1957. A year later, Beckett's English translation, *Endgame*, was published by Grove Press and Faber and Faber. In *Endgame*, Beckett's use of visually striking religious imagery recedes compared to the preceding *Fin de partie* manuscripts. However, the characters' fight against God continues more subtly, mainly on the level of dialogue. Ruby Cohn argues that "as the cross disappears from Beckett's stage, so does the physical Bible, but the biblical echoes abound."[16] It is in *Endgame* that Hamm denies God explicitly, after the collective prayer scene; but at the same time, it is also in *Endgame* (in fact one sentence later) that Clov restores the possibility that the divine might exist in some undetermined time in the future.

The characters of *Endgame* do not have the intention to live. In other words, their aim is to achieve non-meaning, non-existence, the end of the game. Hamm, survivor of an unknown world disaster, of which the twentieth century produced an array from which to choose, considers his principal task the extermination of every living creature that has the ability to reproduce,

[12] Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, Paris, 7 and 10 February 1844 https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm, accessed on 3 December 2014

[13] György Kurtág's marginal note on a typescript of my PhD thesis, *Towards the Creation of* Endgame, written in black ballpoint pen, July 2014, page 9.

[14] Harold Hobson, *Samuel Beckett: Dramatist of the Year*, International Theatre Annual 1 (1956), 153.

[15] Attila József, *Two Hexameters*, accessed 14 January 2014, http://www.magyarulbabelben.net/works/hu/J%C3%B3zsef_Attila-1905/K%C3%A9t_hexameter/en/36743-Two_Hexameters?interfaceLang=en. Translation: Katalin N. Ullrich

[16] Ruby Cohn, *A Beckett Canon*, Michigan, The University of Michigan Press, 2005, 226.

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in addition to finishing his Opus Magnum. The father is not the only being in the story who owes his death to Hamm; so do rats, fleas, and Mother Pegg, who died of darkness, as Hamm refused to give her oil in her lamp.

CLOV	*(Anguished, scratching himself.)* I have a flea!
HAMM	A flea! Are there still fleas?
CLOV	On me there's one. *(Scratching.)* Unless it's a crablouse.
HAMM	*(Very perturbed.)* But humanity might start from there all over again! Catch him, for the love of God![17]

The conflict between Hamm and Clov is intensified by the fact that, whatever the nature of the catastrophe, Hamm appears to have played an important role in it.[18] As Beckett expressed during the rehearsals of *Endgame* in Berlin, "Clov holds Hamm responsible for everything connected with death." [19] Progenitors are not popular either, as they are responsible for the perpetuation of mankind. Hamm blames and curses his parents, Nagg and Nell, too, most pronouncedly the former, for all his miseries, and, in return, Nagg repays his fatherly curse on Hamm. As Stanley Cavell explains in his essay "Ending the Waiting Game," "the old are also good at heaping curses on their young and at controlling them through guilt, the traditional weapons of the weak and dependent. Nagg uses the most ancient of all parental devices, claiming that something is due him from his son for the mere fact of having begot him."[20] However, Hamm is, euphemistically, not a suitable subject for being made grateful for his life: in fact, he cannot wait to call it a day. Jack MacGowran, when interviewed by Richard Toscan after the 1964 Paris production of *Endgame*, was asked about Beckett's attitude towards Hamm's parents in the dustbins. He gave a most interesting reply:

> I think he feels that's the way most of us, in later life, treat our own parents—we put them into homes and we give them the minimum kind of treatment to keep them alive for as long as we can. The human race generally does that to an aging parent and this was his conception of how stark it could be—putting them into dustbins and giving them a biscuit or a biscuit and a half a day, anything to keep them going just for a while.[21]

[17] Beckett, *The Complete Dramatic Works*, 95.

[18] Alan Astro, *Understanding Samuel Beckett*, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1992, 134.

[19] D. McMillan – M. Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre*. London, John Calder Ltd, 1988, 232.

[20] Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, 118.

[21] McMillan – Fehsenfeld, *Beckett in the Theatre*, 174–175.

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Hamm's fight against the continuation of life might be explained by his having encountered an existence full of suffering, so he aims to put an end to the passing on of suffering from generation to generation. If progenitors, mothers and fathers, are so ill-treated in *Endgame*, it comes as no surprise that the divine Father is given the cold shoulder.

Beckett draws a deliberate distinction between *silence* and *pause* in his dramatic writing; it is significant that *"Silence"* as stage direction appears only once in *Endgame*, in the collective prayer scene. It follows Hamm's monologue, in which, for the first time, he attempts to tell his story about the man who begged him for bread for his son. However, when Hamm reaches the most delicate issue and is about to touch upon some of his untold past secrets and sins, he quickly changes the subject instead of finishing his story. Then, all of a sudden, he has an urge to pray to God, and he commands Clov and Nagg to pray with him in silence.

HAMM [...] In the end he asked me would I consent to take in the child as well – if he were still alive. *(Pause.)* It was the moment I was waiting for. *(Pause.)* Would I consent to take in the child ... *(Pause.)* I can see him still, down on his knees, his hands flat on the ground, glaring at me with his mad eyes, in defiance of my wishes. *(Pause. Normal tone.)* I'll soon have finished with this story. *(Pause.)* Unless I bring in other characters. *(Pause.)* But where would I find them? *(Pause.)* Where would I look for them? (*Pause. He whistles. Enter* Clov.) Let us pray to God. [...]

NAGG (Clasping his hands, closing his eyes, in a gabble.) Our Father which art –

HAMM Silence! In silence! Where are your manners? *(Pause.)* Off we go. *(Attitudes of prayer. Silence. Abandoning his attitude, discouraged.)* Well?

CLOV *(Abandoning his attitude.)* What a hope! And you?

HAMM Sweet damn all! *(To NAGG.)* And you?

NAGG Wait! *(Pause. Abandoning his attitude.)* Nothing doing!

HAMM The bastard! He doesn't exist!

CLOV Not yet.[22]

At the point where Hamm begins to look for other characters, in MS 1660 (another preceding, untitled, two-act manuscript version of *Fin de partie*) the lid of the black, on-stage chest, practically a coffin, opens and a head emerges, looking straight at the audience. However, Beckett cut this surreal element, a direct reference to death, and inserted the prayer scene where

[22] Beckett, *The Complete Dramatic Works*, 118–119.

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the coffin was. A high sense of remorse might have led Hamm to perform and conduct this spiritual exercise, praying, which is unlike him. As Bryden points out, "when in *Fin de partie* Clov and Nagg are prompted by Hamm [...] to join him in the attempted contact with the Deity, the experiment proves futile. All report blank encounters, and abandon their attitudes of prayer." Hamm's openly blasphemous remark, "the bastard! he doesn't exist," is "immediately rendered provisional, [...] by Clov's extension of timeframe, 'not yet', which restores God to a position of waiting in the wings."[23]

However, the traditional way of reaching out to God does not function anymore; the prayer in *Endgame* is conducted in an entirely echoless space, where God has abandoned mankind. As András Visky points out, "God has gotten beyond the boundaries of addressability; human language does not remember the means of approaching the Divine anymore."[24] Visky argues that the *sacred* announces itself exclusively through blasphemy and is altogether unrecognizable. His views apply to Beckett's denials of the divine in particular, although the search for the *sacred* in Beckett's dramatic writing remains to be examined elsewhere. This paper goes so far as to document his various forms of negation and, at the same time, his constant attacks and ceaseless textual and visual representations of the divine, which are expressive of the impossibility of letting go of God, or the absence of God. As Bryden argues, "this cursing of God is rarely countervailed in Beckett's writing by the blessing of God. Yet, as the Book of Job demonstrates, cursing provides a kind of continuity of engagement. It represents sparks and interferences in the current, but not cessation. Beckett's people seem, despite their resentments and wrestlings, unable to stamp out the God-hypothesis definitively."[25]

In Beckett's *Film,* written in the spring of 1963 and shot, starring Buster Keaton, in New York in 1964 under the direction of Alan Schneider, the main character, O, the Object, takes the necessary precautions to avoid being observed or seen by anybody, especially by E, the observing Eye, which follows him everywhere like a shadow. E of course turns out to be the same person as O. One of O's main motives throughout the film is to avoid the encounter with his own self. Beckett built the film around George Berkeley's thesis, *esse est percipi*, to exist is to be perceived. Therefore, O's greatest desire is to be entirely unseen, or in other words, to be gone. Arriving at his mother's unoccupied flat, O aims to eliminate all external, inquisitive disturbances; he draws the window-curtains, but the fabric has eye-socket-like holes; then he covers the mirror, locks out the dog and the cat, whose

[23] Bryden, *Samuel Beckett and the Idea of God*, 116.

[24] András Visky, *Art Vital. The Theatre of Prophet Ezekiel*, Conference paper delivered on 8 May 2015, Religion and Art Conference, Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary.

[25] Bryden, *Samuel Beckett and the Idea of God*, 131.

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eyes disturb him greatly, and covers the parrot and the goldfish, as both have eyes which grow and look at him. Interestingly, as soon as he blocks these animals and disturbing factors out of sight, they become non-existent for him even, though they are physically there. Berkeley's thesis applies both to the perceivers and to the perceived. O's primary aim is to avoid the eyes. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre examines in detail the notion of "Being-seen-by-the-other." He explains that "of course what *most often* manifests a look is the convergence of two ocular globes in my direction. But the look will be given just as well on occasion when there is a rustling of branches, of the sound of a footstep followed by silence, or the slight opening of a shutter, or a light movement of a curtain."[26]

While preparing the room in order to ensure that he will be entirely safe, O catches sight of an old picture hanging on the wall, a worm-like figure with vestigial arms and bulging eyes. James Knowlson reveals that the photo was suggested to Beckett by Avigdor Arikha, and it was in fact a reproduction of the head of Abu, a Sumerian god.[27] He destroys God's image not simply by tearing the paper off the wall and into four pieces, but also treading repeatedly on its remains (God's eyes) on the ground. As Sartre says, "the look which the *eyes* manifest, no matter what kind of eyes they are, is a pure reference to myself. What I apprehend immediately when I hear the branches crackling behind me is not that *there is someone there*; it is that I am vulnerable, that I have a body which can be hurt, that I can occupy a place and that I can not in any case escape from the space in which I am without defense – in short, that I *am seen*."[28] At a later point, O takes out six photos depicting him always while being observed by others (mother, God, dog, public, young man, daughter, and the photographer) at different ages from childhood up to the present, and he tears them up in reverse order one by one. In a letter to Alan Schneider sent from Paris on 29 June 1964, Beckett explains that "the photos and their destruction parallel triple perception (human, animal, divine) from which he seeks to escape and his efforts to obliterate it."[29]

However, the imprint of God's destroyed image remains on the wall—a clear, almost shining white spot with a nail protruding from it, which evokes both the crucifixion and the resurrection. It is hard to determine the degree of artistic awareness regarding the divine presence created by Beckett, which becomes even stronger dramaturgically through the absence of God's image. The wound on the wall emerges as a new character in the script, who cannot

[26] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 281. Quoted in Péter Dávidházi, *József, Illyés, Jób I.*, in Holmi, 2008/5. 614.

[27] James Knowlson, *Damned to Fame. The Life of Samuel Beckett*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1996, 465.

[28] Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 282. Quoted in Dávidházi, *József, Illyés, Jób I.*, 614.

[29] Harmon, Maurice (ed.), *No Author Better Served. The Correspondence of Samuel Beckett and Alan Schneider*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1998, 159.

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be ignored. However, in Beckett's case there are no accidents of such kind: in the copy of the original shooting script of *Film* in the University of Reading's Samuel Beckett Collection, after the destruction of God's image, Beckett deliberately returns to the "wall where print was and nail"[30] three times, in three close-ups (no. 159, 169, and 199). In the remaining part of *Film*, O is compelled to face the embodied absence of the divine, an indestructible presence even in its absence. At the end, when Object can no longer avoid Eye, their encounter is not a pleasant one. O's features are filled with horror, when he sees his own one-eyed face and the black patch. However, at the devastating moment, the two selves of the same person become one and unite again, and the absent image of God, the clear white spot with the nail, appears on the wall once more, signalling not annihilation but a new beginning.

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THEATRICAL APPROACHES TO MYSTERY: "KENOSIS" IN VALÈRE NOVARINA'S WORKS

Enikő Sepsi

Abstract

Organic theatre (Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski's term) tries to reach the via negativa, the state at which the actor is a vehicle, an empty vessel ready to take in and carry transcendence. The debates on sacrality in Europe and America and the increasing interest in rituals outside Europe have compelled twentieth-century artists to abandon traditional theatre and the classical dramatic text (Grotowski, Tadeusz Kantor, Ariane Mnouchkine, etc.). Valère Novarina's writerly practice, for example, is like a linguistic sink. His theatrical practice and the theatre revealed in his essays draw on the act of the creative word burnt and revived by the actor lending him- or herself to action, the hidden liturgy of the word in space. Not denying the relevance to this subject of other Far Eastern sources of inspiration, I would like to offer an analysis of Valère Novarina's theatre in which self-emptying becomes an important element in the direction of actors (i.e. the work done with the actors) and in which the Christian theological term kenosis is relevant in the context of rituals taking place on stage. For references to "mystery" and "self-emptying," I will rely on some excerpts from Talking with Angels *as transcribed by Gitta Mallasz.*

Introduction

In this essay, I offer a short overview of theatre forms in which, through the work with the actors (i.e. directing), self-emptying becomes the basis of a new approach, *"imitatio Christi,"* and not simply in a theological or ethical sense, but also as an aesthetic application of *kenosis* to theatre. Not denying the relevance to this topic of other Far Eastern sources of inspiration, I offer an analysis of Valère Novarina's theatre, in which self-emptying becomes an important element in directing the actors (i.e. the work done with the actors)

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and in which the Christian theological term *kenosis* is relevant in the context of rituals taking place on stage. These rituals, to use the vocabulary of figuralistic typology, are the antitypes of Christ's kenotic act, which is the type. Figuring, which can also mean recreating, in this case means *"imitatio Christi."*

Having translated some texts by Novarina and secondary literature written on his work in French and in Hungarian, I would like to add to my research on Novarina's work and essays by presenting and defining phenomena of "kenotic" theatre in which open-ended "saintly" (instead of "sacred") and profane elements overlap. I have presented my research in Hungarian in my book *Kép, jelenlét, kenózis a kortárs francia költészetben és Novarina színházában* and also in French at the symposium *Valère Novarina: les quatre sens de l'écriture*, which was organized in Cerisy-la-Salle in 2018 (the proceedings of which will be published as a book).

Kenosis

According to Christian theologies (Christology), *ekenōsen (κένωσις, literally emptiness)* is a primary action of self-revelation of the Trinitarian God. It also denotes the self-emptying of one's own will and the process of becoming entirely receptive to God's divine will. The word ἐκένωσεν *(ekénōsen)* is used in Philippians 2:7: "[Jesus] made himself nothing" in the New International Translation, but translated as "but [he] did empty himself" in Robert Young's 1862 Literal Translation. The Greek text uses the verb form κενόω *(kenóō),* "to empty." The New International Version continues: "rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name[.]"[1]

In his commentaries written to this letter (2, 7-8), John Calvin highlights that following Christ also means self-abasement in connection with kenosis. Compared to other authors (Martin Chemnitz, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Xavier Tilliette), Calvin has a different understanding of kenosis, which in his view is not self-diminution or the abandonment by Christ of his divine nature, but rather the act of keeping this divine nature hidden (crypsis).

In his *Church Dogmatics*, the Protestant theologian Karl Barth refers to the Latin text of Calvin's *Institutio* when he contends that the incarnation of Christ does not constitute any kind of confinement, because even in his self-abasement, Christ did not cease to be God's Son:[2]

[1] New International Version (NIV), 2011.

[2] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Volume IV/1: *The Doctrine of Reconciliation* (translated by G. W. Bromiley), Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1956, 179–180.

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> The word *ἐκένωσεν* in Phil. 2:7 certainly does not mean this. It says that 'being in the form of God,' enjoying it, freely disposing of it (ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ὑπάρχων) He carried through a self-emptying, that is, He took the form of a servant (μορφὴν δούλου). The *κένωσις* consists in a renunciation of His being in the form of God alone. (…) As God, therefore, (without ceasing to be God) He could be known only to Himself, but unknown as such in the world and for the world. His divine majesty could be in this alien form. It could be a hidden majesty. He could, therefore, humble Himself in this form. (…) He had the freedom for this condescension, for this concealment of His Godhead. He had it and He made use of it in the power and not with any loss, not with any diminution or alteration of His Godhead. That is His self-emptying.[3]

To sum up the theological introduction, *imitatio Christi* also means the possibility of repeating kenosis, being created as images of Christ means (for humankind) a condescension and the deconstruction of the human idol (images) and its exaltation. On the other hand, the word "imitation" suggests that there is some volitional act in this. In his work *Systematic Theology,* Paul Tillich distinguishes four ways of self-salvation: the legalistic, the ascetic, the mystic, and the sacramental-dogmatic-emotional. The sacramental presence of God is the opposite of self-salvation, Tillich suggests in the conclusion of his chapter: "The mere performance of the accepted rites or the mere participation in a sacramental act is considered to have saving power. The sacrament is given, and, as such, it is understood to negate self-salvation. But the way in which it is used opens wide the door for a self-saving attitude."[4]

Apart from some allusions and references in Balthasar and Tilliette's works, Western scholarly literature does not discuss the connection between kenosis and literature or kenosis and theatre.[5] It was the Japanese theologian Kazoh Kitamori who, in his book *Theology of the Pain of God,*[6] presented the analogy of the father and son's conflict (i.e. the father sacrificing his son) in traditional kabuki theatre[7] to explain God's hatred of sin and love for humankind, which are unified in the pain of God sacrificing his Son on the cross.[8]

[3] Ibid., 180.

[4] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology,* Vol II., Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1957, 85.

[5] Apart from two exceptions: Larry D. Bouchard, Playing Nothing for Someone: 'Lear,' Bottom, and Kenotic Integrity, *Literature and Theology,* vol. 19. No. 2 (June 2005), 159–180, and J. Edgar Bauer's study. But these studies use the adjectival form of the word (i.e. kenotic) in a metaphorical sense, and not in its theological complexity.

[6] Richmond, Va., John Knox Press, 1965.

[7] Ibid., 177.

[8] In *Der Gekreuzigte Gott*, Jürgen Moltmann criticizes several of Kitamori's statements. At the same time, the above-mentioned work by Kitamori sits well with nineteenth-century and twentieth-century Russian thinkers like Nikolai Berdyaev and Sergei Nikolaevich Bulgakov, who also hold that God's suffering is an inevitable part of experiencing love and connecting with others, which is a basic characteristic of God's nature.

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Theatrical forms and training

The debates on sacrality in Europe and America and the increasing interest in rituals outside Europe compelled twentieth-century artists to abandon traditional theatre and the classical dramatic text. The revolution of the ritualistic theatre, which took place in Europe in the second half of the 1960s, is connected primarily to Jeržy Grotowski. While Peter Brook and Eugenio Barba had reformed Western theatre by researching its archaic forms, Grotowski had in turn been establishing the foundations of actor-pedagogy, which has been in use up to the present day and is applied in theatrical practice.[9] His organic theatre (to use his term) tries to reach *via negativa*, the state at which the actor is a *vehicle*, an empty vessel ready to take in and carry transcendence. The aim of the physical training is to achieve this condition by reaching out to and training the maximal boundaries of the body.

As one of Kantor's younger colleagues, Grotowski created a so-called "poor theatre" characterized by its search for a "secularized *sacrum*" and demanding from its actors the sort of total commitment usually expected from saintly men in traditional religions ("secular saint"). Instead of the mercantile attitude of actors trying to "sell" themselves to an audience, Grotowski propounded an ascetic *via negativa* of acting by elimination. He demanded that the actors take off the mask of everyday life and perform an act of total self-revelation.

1. Training at Grotowski's Teatre-Laboratorium in Wroclaw with Ryszard Cieślak. Plastic and Physical Training (1972) – Picture taken from Odin Teatret Film, director: Torgeir Wethal

[9] See J. Edgar Bauer, Tadeusz Kantor, Kenotic Theatrology and the "Reality of the Lowest Rank", a paper presented at The 2000 CESNUR International Conference, University of Latvia, Riga, Latvia, 2004, http://www.cesnur.org/2004/bauer_kantor.htm, accessed on November 20, 2018; Peter Brook, *The Empty Space. A Book About the Theatre: Deadly, Holy, Rough, Immediate*, New York, A Touchstone Book published by Simon & Schuster, 1996; Tadeusz Kantor, *A Journey Through Other Spaces. Essays and Manifestos*, 1944–1990, ed. and trans. by Michal Kobialka, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1993.

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Acting poorly and acting non-acting are characteristic of Tadeusz Kantor's *Zero Theater*, but they can also be seen as part of the heritage of Indian and Chinese cultures (Bhagavad-Gita and Taoism).

The "kenotic" theatre of Valère Novarina and *Talking with Angels*

While writing this paper, I read *Talking with Angels*, first published in France with the title *Dialogues avec l'Ange*. The work is the transcription of spiritual instructions received by four Hungarian friends over a period of 17 months during the Second World War, from June 1943 to November 1944. Gitta Mallasz, Lili Strauss, Joseph Kreutzer, and Hanna Dallos held weekly meetings on Friday afternoons. During these meetings, over the course of 88 conversations, Hanna Dallos transmitted voices which, she said, did not emanate from her, but rather from four distinctly different personalities or entities. They were transcribed word for word by Gitta Mallasz and Lili Strausz. Three of the four were Jews who perished during deportation. The only survivor, Mallasz, who took refuge in France in 1960, spent years translating these conversations into French. The first edition was published in 1976, followed by a second, complete edition in 1990. The original Hungarian notes were published in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The most recent edition was published in 2010 by Fekete Sas. It is entitled *Az angyal válaszol*. (The first editions were preceded by a samizdat in the 1990s by the Reverend Farkas József of the Reformed Church.)

While reading the book, I realized that some of the themes are profoundly related to Novarina's work, as is the case with writings by several other mystic authors and philosophers. I have already analysed the affinities of thought between Novarina's work and the ideas of Simone Weil.[10] However, the analogies with *Talking with Angels* came as a surprise to me. After having drafted the essential points of this paper, I conversed with Valère Novarina about the books in question. Eventually, he wrote to me and informed me that he had read the book and it is the "livre de chevet" (bedside reading) of his principal actor, Claire Sermonne, in *Le Vivier des noms*.

[10] Poésie sans « je » dans l'espace: le théâtre de Valère Novarina et de János Pilinszky, in József Fülöp – Zsuzsanna Mirnics, Miklós Vassányi – Gabriella Szilvia Kuhn (eds.), *Kapcsolatban–Istennel és emberrel: Pszichológiai és bölcsészeti tanulmányok* (Getting Connected—with God and Man. Papers in Psychology and Philology), Budapest, KRE – L'Harmattan, Károli Könyvek, 2014, 361–371.

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I offer examples of relevant passages from these dialogues transmitted in a rhythmic and poetic form:[11]

	English	**Hungarian**
mystery	"L. It is unclear to me what 'spiritism' and 'mysticism' are. *By 'mysticism,' Lili means exaggerated interpretations of sensational, inexplicable, paranormal phenomena.* – It is its nature to be unclear! Do you know what a genuine *mystery* is? A SMILE ORIGINATING IN THE DEPTHS OF THE SOUL. THAT IS A MYSTERY. Teeth-chattering, slobbering, despair of the shipwrecked, that is what 'spiritualism' is. They want a sign and it is not given to them. NOT THE DEAD SHOULD BE CONJURED, BUT LIFE: ETERNAL LIFE! The sacred teaching is not hidden in darkness and obscurity; it radiates in bright daylight. What they call up, they receive. Leave the dead with their dead! So often did they summon death that finally it came. Let us summon joy, and the Divine Realm will come! Call not trembling with fear but with jubilation! COULD ANYTHING BE MORE NATURAL THAN OUR TALKING TOGETHER? Where is that thing you call 'mysticism'?"[12]	"L. Olyan zavarosak a fogalmaim arról, hogy mi a spiritizmus, miszticizmus? *Lilinek a miszticizmusról – a közfelfogásnak megfelelő – kissé dagályos és homályos képzetei voltak.* – Mert nem világos. Régi ködök és gőzök, melyek eltakarodnak, ha jön a hajnal. Tudod, mi egy 'titok'? EGY LÉLEKBŐL FAKADT MOSOLY – EZ A MISZTIKUM. Hajótöröttek vacogó nyavalygása – ez a spiritizmus. Jelt kívánnak, és jel nekik nem adatik. Ne halottakat idézzünk, hanem Örök életet! S a szent tan ne rejtőzzön homályban, hanem fennen ragyogjon! Ki mit idéz, azt nyeri. Hagyd a halottakat az ő halottjaikkal! Addig idézték a halált, míg eljött. Idézzük az örömet, és eljő az Ő országa. Ne reszkető félelemmel, hanem ujjongó örömmel! VAN-E TERMÉSZETESEBB VALÓSÁG, MINT HOGY MI BESZÉLGETÜNK? Hol a misztikum?"[13]

[11] The homepage of the manuscripts is available online at the following website: https://plus.google.com/photos/100973688777859081342/albums/5655913998192006401 (Accessed on November 16, 2015).

[12] 28. Dialogue with Lili in Gitta Mallasz, *Talking with Angels, A document from Hungary transcribed by Gitta Mallasz*, trans. by Robert Hinshaw, Daimon Verlag, Einsiedeln, 2006, 200–201.

[13] 28. Beszélgetés, Lilivel in Mallász Gitta: *Az angyal válaszol, Dokumentum*, Budapest, Fekete Sas Kiadó, 2010, 185–186.

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	English	Hungarian
saying "I"	"– One word explains it: You said, 'I.' That was the end. A curtain descended between you and Eternal Truth. You could not have awareness, for you were in the dark. The curtain is called 'I.' Pull it away and you become Ő!"[14]	"– Egy szó elzár. Azt mondtad: 'én'. – Vége! Függöny húzódik közéd és az örök Igazság közé. És így nem ismerheted fel, mert homályban vagy. "Én" a függöny neve. Ha félrehúzod, Ő leszel."[15]
The body	"Teach playing – not *with* the body but *through* the body… EVERY ORGAN, EVERY LIMB IS ONE WITH A FORCE OF THE UNIVERSE… THE PLAYING CHILD FORGETS ITSELF."[16]	"Taníts játszani, nem a testtel, hanem a test által… MINDEN SZERV, MINDEN TAG EGY VILÁGERŐVEL EGY… A gyermek, ha játszik, önfeledt. Elfelejti énjét."[17]

Novarina also considers it a mystery when strong light is shed upon you.[18] The actor is someone who offers his or her human body by acting (playing). And the importance of the body is highlighted in Novarina's essays (see *Lumières du corps*) and his interviews (the body has a more elevated status in the Orthodox Church[19]). As Mallasz states in the book *Les Dialogues tels que je les ai vécus:*[20]

> Alors que dans nombre d'ascèses traditionnelles – mais n'ont-elles pas été déformées au cours des siècles? – l'épanouissement spirituel s'accompagnait souvent de la mortification du corps, donc de la mutilation d'une partie de l'être humain, l'évolution enseignée par l'Ange passe par la plénitude de l'homme dans sa globalité.
>
> Pendant les dix-sept mois des « *dialogues* » la notion du corps est devenue miraculeuse pour moi, car l'univers s'y révélait.[21]

> While in several traditional forms of asceticism – but have they not been deformed over the course of the centuries? – spiritual fulfilment was often accompanied by the mortification of the flesh, thus the mutilation of part of the human being, the path taught by the Angel runs through the fullness of man in its entirety.
>
> During the seventeen months of the 'dialogues,' the notion of the human body became miraculous to me; the universe itself is revealed in it.

14 29. *Dialogue with Gitta* in *Talking with Angels*, 207. The pronoun "Ő" can either be He or She in Hungarian (it stands for God).

15 29. Beszélgetés, Gittával in *Az angyal válaszol*, 191.

16 26. Dialogue with Lili, in *Talking with Angels*, 184–185.

17 26. Beszélgetés, Lilivel in *Az angyal válaszol*, 169.

18 Valère Novarina, Les cendres, in Mgr André Vingt-Trois (ed.), *Qu'est-ce que la vérité?*, Éditions Parole et Silence, 2007, 81–93.

19 *L'Amour est voyant*, film directed by Attila Mispál, Duna Television, 2011.

20 Gitta Mallasz, *Les dialogues tels que je les ai vécus*, trad. par Françoise Maupin, Aubier, France, 1994 (1984), 53.

21 Gitta Mallasz, *Les dialogues tels que je les ai vécus*, 53.

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The "kenotic" rituality in Valère Novarina's works

Antonin Artaud's complaint that "actors in France no longer know how to do anything but speak," is reflected in contemporary French playwright and director Valère Novarina's taking aim at articulatory cruelty and linguistic carnage. Novarina represents the contemporary French language in its state of mutation, distortion, and transformation. His theatrical practice and the theatre revealed in his essays focus on the act of the creative word burnt and revived by the actor, who lends him or herself to action, the hidden liturgy of the word in space. Man created in God's own image becomes a creator through the Logos (Word) in this theatre.

For the notion of self-emptying and the abandonment of the ego of the actor, a text by Novarina entitled "Work for the Uncertain" (a title which alludes to a passage in Blaise Pascal's Pensées) could serve as an example (Novarina reformulates this image of the actor in several ways in several texts):

> It's an enclosure where we come to see the actor thrown onto the stage, forcefully and alone, wrenching himself away from himself, always like a blind one, a foreigner, an exile, as if fallen from his true place. He speaks like an animal surprised by the very act of speaking. We come to the theater to take fright with the actor, relive our entry into the incomprehensible body along with him; to breathe through an other, to recapture the taste for living words.[22]

For Louis de Funès, an essay by Valère Novarina, was adapted for the stage by the author, translated into Hungarian by Zsófia Rideg, and directed by Adélaïde Pralon in Budapest and Debrecen in 2016. The figure of the French actor (Louis de Funès) is a constant reference in Novarina's works, but the sentences and dialogues attributed to him are imagined. During a rehearsal and workshop at Károli Gáspár University in Budapest two months before the Hungarian première, Novarina explained that, while in the painting of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries the human face had already been deconstructed (for instance in works by Pablo Picasso, Francis Bacon, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Chaim Soutine), in theatre, no one had undertaken this. His *ars poetica* is to show the proliferation, the multiplicity of human figures, like the Cubists did. As if in Novarina's theatre the representation of humankind would be prohibited as a mere "imitation" of the truth. The actor Dominique Pinon says in *Unknown Act:* "Il resterait à dire ce qui distingue l'acteur véritable de l'imitateur d'homme" ("It remains to be determined what distinguishes the real actor from the imitator of man.")

[22] Valère Novarina, Work for the Uncertain, in idem, *The Theater of the Ears*, trans. by Allen S. Weiss, Sun &Moon Press, Los Angeles, 1996, 115–116.

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The actor's dance in *For Louis de Funès* is a dance scene in which the puppet of Louis de Funès takes the role of the actor more vividly than the real actor, Tibor Mészáros. The dance acquires the same function as the sheer logological proliferation and numerical mania in Novarina's other performances. (For instance, Novarina writes the following in *The Drama of Life:* "The action takes place in the Arseman Factory, in the Assman Fictory, in the Aceman Rictory, in the Raceman Frictory ... The action takes place in a melodrome that measures one hundred meters by one hundred meters by one hundred meters by one hundred meters by one hundred meters by one hundred meters by one hundred meters."[23]) The text of *For Louis de Funès* adapted for the stage begins with an appeal ("The theatre should not restart!") followed by a list, like in classic comedies such as Molière's *La malade imaginaire [The Imaginary Invalid]* or *The Marriage of Figaro,* with the purpose of putting the audience into a hypnotic state, and the actor ruptures the ordinary use of language. As Weiss notes, citing Novarina, these kinds of lists, presented in the form of a litany, have as their goal to "repeat the names until a whirling drunkenness" sets in, "instantiating an incantatory, often exorcistic, use of language"[24] that leads to resurrection.[25] The dance is a non-dancing, an exhausting exercise performed by an awkward body thrown into the world, i. e. into André Malraux's "condition humaine" [human condition]. This use of language and the dancing to death have roles in his actor's training that is similar to the role of physical exercises in Grotowski's method.

The comic and medieval-style profane music of Christian Paccoud contrasts with sacral allusions, and the alternation between the music and the sacral allusions forms a circular dramaturgy specific to Novarina's theatre which, like a spiral, ends in renewal. This ritual borrows a great deal from the discontinued medieval tradition[26] and the breath-taking courage and acrobatics of the world of circus.

Returning to *For Louis the Funès,* the text then makes statements about the actor's work, creating neologisms introducing hundreds of metaphors. The actor not only says things, he also acts out the process of annihilation, the transition from death to resurrection, which constitutes the basis of Novarina's dramaturgy. As his double, the puppet of Louis de Funès helps the actor in this process. In the most climactic moment from a dramaturgical point of view, Tibor Mészáros pulls out a puppet to illustrate the doubling of his person. The image of the perfect actor, the marionette as such is not unknown

[23] Valère Novarina, The Drama of Life: Prologue, in idem, *The Theater of the Ears,* 11.

[24] Allen S. Weiss, In Praise of Solecism, in ibidem, 32–33.

[25] See the Resurrection scene from *Unknown Act* presented in Avignon in 2007.

[26] N. Koble, M. Séguy, Désoubli. Rencontre avec Valère Novarina, in *Passé présent, Le Moyen Âge dans les fictions contemporaines,* Nathalie Koble, Mireille Séguy (dir.), Paris, ENS rue d'Ulm, « Aesthetica », 2009, 83-95.

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in theatre history, and it appears in several of Novarina's productions. Among the ones performed in Hungary, the *Imaginary Operette* can be mentioned as an example, in which the child of a small family living in a box-house is making his puppet's head peek out of the wall of his cardboard home.

2. József Jámbor, Kinga Újhelyi and Artúr Vranyecz in Imaginary Operette (Opérette imaginaire) at the Csokonai Theatre in Debrecen, 2009, directed by Valère Novarina, translated by Zsófia Rideg (photo credit: András Máthé)

Mészáros's work is helped by stage assistant Sándor Horváth, or "drama-worker," to use Novarina's terminology. As if the performance were a rehearsal, at the right moment, Horváth brings in a sheep or a folding screen as if this were a perfectly natural part of the course of events. The folding screen covered with translucent, off-white paper is the main instrument to prompt the obscuring of the actor's person, his becoming translucent, and his "imaginary" breakthrough (literally, the actor breaks through the folding screen and becomed a galanty show, or pantomime shadow play).

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3. Imígyen szóla Louis de Funès (Pour Louis de Funès), Csokonai Theatre in Debrecen, 2016, directed by Adélaïde Pralon and Valère Novarina (photo credit: András Máthé)

In Novarina's theatre, the actor's body is the temple and a vessel of the soul, while the ego of the actor is a curtain and barrier to be transcended through an act of self-emptying through the language offered to the space and the audience. This act helps him or her burn out the body by respiring (see "esprit"), like in some saintly practices in Far Eastern cultures or psychological and spiritual trainings. Novarina refers to the self-emptying of Christ as follows: "*Personne*. C'est ce que vient faire le Christ. (*Mashia'h*: le messie); la figure humaine, il l'apporte vide. Il vient non seulement faire l'homme avec nous mais aussi poser le divin vide sur notre face."[27]

[27] The text translates as "[n]obody. That's what Christ does. (Mashia'h: the messiah); the human figure, he empties it. He comes not only to do the man with us but also to put the divine emptiness on our face." "C'est par ce double mouvement d'incarnation et d'évidement – de kénose et de matérialisation charnelle – qu'il est en nous le *principe* qui renverse, palpite, pense, respire: en négatif-positif. En réversibilité, comme est offerte devant nous l'image double et *négative* d'un corps *x* sur le suaire de Turin." (V. Novarina, "Les Cendres", in idem, *L'Envers de l'esprit*, Paris, P.O.L., 2009, 168–169.)

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Conclusion

In his work *Performance Theory,* Schechner highlights that the attention paid to the manner of theater-making is already an experiment in the ritualization of performance. In a period when authenticity is difficult to define, "when public life has been theatricalized," Schechner elaborates, "the performer was asked to doff his or her traditional masks—to be not an agent of 'playing' or 'fooling' or 'lying' (public masquerades) but one who 'tells the truth'. If not this, then at least she or he should show how the masks are put on and taken off—perhaps in that way educating the public about the theatricalized deceptions practised on them by political leaders and media dons. Instead of mirroring the age, performers were asked to remedy it. The professions taken as models (and frequently enough cited by Grotowski and others) included the priesthood and medicine."[28] Questioning, constructing and deconstructing anthropoglyphs, Novarina's theatre also aims at the resultative aspect of rites. In fact, it also has a liturgical purpose in the above sense of remedy. There is a certain anamorphism in understanding kenotic ritual.[29] In other words, the spectator must have the correct angle, i.e. he/she must be involved in order to see a comprehensible form or figure. Compared to the scripted (written) rituality, there is a "liminoid" state of receptivity of the live theatre performance, i.e. the performed.

There is a recurrent cognitive metaphor in Novarina's work: Christ is the Word/Logos, and the stage is the place where words are eaten. It is the place of the Last Supper. But the Last Supper is not simply a metaphor or historical allusion, but a figure of speech which has two parts: the type and the antitype linked with the "radical openness towards the future."[30] According to Northrop Frye, compared to the metaphor, typology is not a simultaneous figure of speech. Rather, it is a figure which moves in time: even antitypes have a progress that is an intensification where newer and newer perspectives are opened up until they reveal the apocalypse. This movement describes Novarina's circular or rather spiral-like dramaturgy well (he also uses names like ANTI-Personne, spiral-woman, etc.). For Novarina, the theatre is the place for the renewed form of the Last Supper, the communion of the actors. In typology and in Novarina's dramaturgy, there is both a horizontal movement forward and also a vertical leap.

[28] Richard Schechner, Theater for Tourists in idem, *Performance Theory*. Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004, 136-137.

[29] See the same statement about rituals in general and especially poetic rituals: Enikő Sepsi, On Bearing Witness to a Poetic Ritual: Robert Wilson's *Deafman Glance* as seen by János Pilinszky, in Jay Malarcher (ed.), *Text & Presentation, 2017,* McFarland, 2018, 177.

[30] Tibor Fabiny, *Figura and Fulfilment. Typology in the Bible, Art, and Literature*, Eugene [Oregon], Wipf and Stock, 2016, 153.

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The theological approach to Novarina's theatre which I have presented is rather unusual in French theatre criticism; religion and religious issues are met with so much hatred in France that, as Novarina himself noted in an interview, he was afraid of publishing one of his texts entitled *Cendres [Ashes]* for Ash Wednesday in 2007, in which he wrote about the meanings of the term kenosis.

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ENDURANCE RUNNING AS INITIATION INTO THE MYSTERIES A CASE STUDY BASED ON THE FICTION OF JARI EHRNROOTH

Johanna Domokos

Abstract

In several of his works, the Finnish philosopher, writer, and athlete Jari Ehrnrooth (b. 1959) describes how endurance running can serve as a means for transcending the everyday state of mind and experiencing the "unattainable Holy Absolute." Unit One *(Neurobiology and cultural traditions of endurance running) of the present study offers a short heuristic view of running as mystical method in different traditions throughout documented human history and tangentially considers endurance running through the lens of Christian theology. By closely investigating the works of Jari Ehrnrooth,* Unit Two *(Major works by Ehrnrooth related to endurance running, creative writing, and mystical experience) shows how these works verbalize the experience of an endurance runner, while also providing examples of endurance running as a method of mystical initiation. The literary analysis of* Unit Three (Juoksu *and* Palvelijan loikka / The Serving Stride) *approaches the concept of "mystical initiation" not from a top-down perspective (invoking religious discourse), but rather from the bottom up, offering a philological investigation of the way an author describes certain phenomena.* Unit Four *(Closing thoughts) concludes the study with reflections on mapping the postmodern mystical terrain in literary production.*

During the savannah stage the genus homo evolved into a biped endurance runner with a slender torso and upright posture. Venting our deepest spiritual longings, this form of movement so instinctive to our species has witnessed the birth of the praying runner. What could be a more natural form of worship? In tests of physical

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endurance, when pushing ourselves to the limit, we can achieve harmony, unity of mind and body, peace. Every serious runner has gleaned an inkling of this natural miracle, the stride of a mystic.[1]

Neurobiology and Cultural Traditions of Endurance Running

According to the endurance running hypothesis, long-distance running played a major role in human evolution, though many details of this process remain uncertain.[2] Yet there is no doubt that endurance running is a longstanding cross-cultural phenomenon, and one of its most ancient forms, that of persistence hunting, can be still found in many cultures across the globe: e.g. the Kalahari Bushmen of Botswana, the indigenous Sámi of Europe, the Aborigines of Australia, the Maasai of Kenya, or the Rarámuri / Tarahumara people in Mexico. Moreover, the oral traditions and older written texts of these cultures include poems and stories on the topic of the running hunt, in addition to religious traditions featuring rituals in which running allows an individual to attain unity with the transcendental.[3]

As a sport, long-distance running or endurance running is a form of continuous running over distances of at least three kilometres. Throughout human history, people have engaged in it as a means of travel, for economic reasons, for various cultural, mental or religious reasons, and, most recently, for physical exercise. In ancient times, for example, foot messengers would run to deliver information to distant locations. Running has also long been a part of religious traditions or ceremonies, and it still serves this purpose today, among e.g. the Hopi and Rarámuri / Tarahumara people and different Buddhist groups in Tibet and Japan.[4]

A large body of research has demonstrated that the neurobiological effects of physical exercise are plentiful and implicate a wide range of interrelated neuropsychological changes. A daily 30-minute run can contribute to increased neuron growth and neurological activity, improved ability to cope with stress, and structural and functional improvements in brain structures

[1] Jari Ehrnrooth, Jari, Kaipaava askel / The Yearning Stride, in: Leevi Haapala, Kati T. Kivinen, Mika Taanila (ed.), *Time Machines.* A Museum of Contemporary Art Publication 140/2013, 77–88.

[2] Dennis Bramble – Daniel Lieberman, Endurance Running and the Evolution of Homo, *Nature* 432, 2004, 345–52.

[3] Johan Turi, *An Account of the Sámi* (orig. *Muitalus Sámiid birra*, 1910), trans. by Thomas A. DuBois, Chicago, Nordic Studies Press, 2011. Alexandra David-Neel, *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*, London, Souvenir Press, 1965.

[4] Peter Nabokov, *Indian Running: Native American History and Tradition*, Santa Fe, Ancient City Press, 1987. Catherine Ludvik, In the Service of the Kaihōgyō Practitioners of Mt. Hiei: The Stopping-Obstacles Confraternity (Sokushō kō) of Kyoto, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 33/1, 2006, 115–142. Christopher McDougall, *Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen*, New York, Knop, 2009.

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and pathways associated with cognitive control and memory[5]. Running can produce short-term euphoria, an affective state associated with feelings of profound contentment, elation, and well-being, which is colloquially known as "runner's high" or a "rower's high."

According to George Sheehan, for many runners, be they theologians, writers, or others, running is "a retreat, a place to commune with God and oneself, a place for psychological and spiritual renewal."[6] Indeed, many runners consider roads and trails places of worship, where they reflect, dream, give thanks, and even dwell in the grace of the divine. An increasing number of lifestyle books support this view, such as Roger D. Joslin's *Running the Spiritual Path*.[7] The specific link between spirituality, mysticism and athletic performance is definitely worth further exploration, as is the role religion has played in physical exercise and, conversely, the role physical exercise has played in religious traditions, including a comparison of the somewhat similar states people achieve during religious and sporting activities and rituals.

Of the academic works dealing with these aspects, the 2007 published volume *Sports and Spirituality* is worth mentioning.[8] In a chapter entitled "Nature and Transcendence: the Mystical and Sublime in Extreme Sports", Nick J. Watson addresses the relationship between religion and sports with a robust theological grounding, arriving at the conclusion that extreme athletic experience cannot provide access to the realms of the Holy, at least not in the sense in which Rudolf Otto, St Paul, Jonathan Edwards, or St John of the Cross variously refer to it.[9] Another critical contribution worth mentioning here is a volume edited by Robert J. Higgs and Michael Brasell.[10] Entitled *An Unholy Alliance: The Sacred and Modern Sports*, the book offers a dissenting view to the claim made by a growing number of scholars, that sports can be analysed in terms of religious experience. When dealing with the prehistoric mythological parallels between sports and religion, it is definitely important to distinguish between religion and mysticism in the literal sense and the metaphorical sense.

[5] Fernando Gomez-Pinilla – Charles Hillman, The influence of exercise on cognitive abilities, *Comprehensive Physiology 3 (1), 2013, 403–428.*

[6] George Sheenan, *Running to Win: How to Achieve the Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Victories: How to Achieve the Physical, Mental and Spiritual Victories of Running.* New York, Rodale Press, 1994, 212.

[7] Roger D. Joslin, *Running the Spiritual Path: A Runner's Guide to Breathing, Meditating, and Exploring the Prayerful Dimension of the Sport: Practices that can Enrich your Communion with God and Open your Heart while you are Exercising*, London, St. Martin's Griffin, 2004.

[8] Jim Parry – Simon Robinson – Nick J. Watson – Mark Nesti, *Sports and Spirituality. An Introduction*, London-New York, Routledge, 2007.

[9] Nick J. Watson, Nature and Transcendence: the Mystical and Sublime in Extreme Sports, in Jim Parry, Simon Robinson, Nick J. Watson, Mark Nesti (ed.), *Sports and Spirituality. An Introduction*, London-New York, Routledge, 2007, 12.

[10] Robert J. Higgs – Michael Brasell, *An Unholy Alliance: The Sacred and Modern Sports*, Macon, Mercer University Press, 2004.

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The present study will analyse the relationship between endurance running and mysticism by examining the topic of endurance running in contemporary literary works from Finland. It thus focuses on creative writing as a method for describing situations of initiation into sacred mysteries. In order to get closer to this tripartite setup of sports, literature, and mysticism, it will look to some of the works by the contemporary Finnish author and philosopher Jari Ehrnrooth, whose approach—according to some of his Spanish critics, as well as information from the author himself—can be best described as *realismo místico / mystic realism*. Here "realism" refers to the style and the attitude of writing, while "mystic" refers to its topic; thus the style can be defined, in the words of Ehrnrooth himself, as "taking the mystical experiences as part of a person's inner reality and in writing describing it in a realistic way" (cited from an e-mail of 13 November 2015). This analysis concentrates especially on his 2013 poetic, essayistic work *Juoksu (The Run)*, along with the reworked Finnish essay *Palvelijan loikka* (English version by the author entitled *The Servant Stride*), since both works are included in a forthcoming Hungarian translation at Pluralica Publishing house.[11] This hybrid work, which comprises an autobiographical narrative, poems, and an essay, explores the intimate relationship between the mind and body of a committed runner, thus uniting the sensual drama of physical life with the innermost sensibilities of the yearning soul. The appended essay excellently distils the book's main ideas, offering an even more intense reading experience. The work has garnered Ehrnrooth considerable recognition in his home country of Finland, where it was nominated for the Sport Book Award of the year in 2012. The appended essay *Kaipaava askel / The Yearning Stride*, meanwhile, was first published as part of a 2013 bilingual (Finnish and English) exhibition catalogue on the Finnish director Mika Taanila.[12] Jari Ehrnrooth wrote this essay in connection with Taanila's film *Six Day Run* on Pekka Aalto, the Finnish endurance runner and devotee of Sri Chinmoy. The running philosophy of Sri Chinmoy is also worth considering in a more detailed analysis regarding the spiritual practice of endurance running. For the Hungarian publication, however, Ehrnrooth decided to rework the piece under the title *The Yearning Stride* (in Finnish: *Kaipaava askel*), omitting the immediate references to Aalto and Taanila's film. Ultimately, the essay will be translated into Hungarian from the edited or, more precisely, adapted version that Ehrnrooth entitled *Palvelijan loikka* in Finnish and *The Servant Stride* in English.

[11] Jari, Ehrnrooth, *Juoksu*, Helsinki, Lurra Editions, 2012a. Jari Ehrnrooth, *A futás*, trans. István Kozmács, Budapest, Pluralica (upcoming).

[12] Jari Ehrnrooh, Kaipaava askel / The Yearning Stride, in: Leevi Haapala, Kati T. Kivinen, Mika Taanila (ed.), *Time Machines*. A Museum of Contemporary Art Publication 140/2013, 77–88.

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Major Works by Ehrnrooth related to Endurance Running, Creative Writing, and Mystical Experience

Jari Ehrnrooth was born in 1959 in a small lakeside village near the eastern border of Finland. He was raised with a physically active outdoor lifestyle, and if the weather made it impossible to go outside, he stayed indoors reading adventure books like *Tarzan*. At a young age, he started to read Kafka and Dostoyevsky, as well as philosophical works and the texts of world religions.

At the University of Joensuu, Ehrnrooth studied history, sociology, philosophy, and literature. His 1992 doctoral thesis *Sanan vallassa, vihan voimalla (The Power of the Word and the Force of Hatred)* offers an analysis of the dynamics of hatred and revolutionary doctrines in the Finnish working class movement before the revolution and civil war of 1918.[13] The book gave rise to a public and academic debate, and it was awarded a prize for best academic book of the year. Ehrnrooth began his career as a creative writer in 1995 with the collection of essays *Asentoja (Positions),* which received the prestigious Kalevi Jäntti Literary prize in Finland.[14] By now, he has published more than a dozen books, including novels, free prose, essays, and drama. He has also been active as an intellectual commentator, writing in catalogues and debate books for newspapers and monthly magazines, as well as in radio and television productions.

Before considering Ehrnrooth's relevant works, the following paragraphs will outline the dense social and literary contexts of endurance running in Finland. Athletes—the so-called "flying Finns," an expression which grew to be used as a parallel to "flying Buddhist monks"[15]—played a crucial role in the growing international reputation of Finland over the course of the past century. The term "flying Finn" was first used to Hannes Kohlemainen for his repeated success in the beginning of the twentieth century, and later expanded to include other successful distance runners from Finland—as the 1989 book "Flying Finns" also reveals.[16] It was written by Matti Hannus, the present editor of the journal *Juoksija (The Runner),* published since 1971. Thanks to the recent "sporting turn" that began in the 1970s, presently 14% of the Finnish population trains regularly in endurance running. As Jouni Tossavainen, the author of the recent successful novel about the first "flying Finn," Hannes Kohlemaninen,[17] reports in a 2014 study, in Finnish academic scholarship we find several outstanding works reflecting on

[13] Jari Ehrrooth, Sanan vallassa, vihan voimalla: sosialistiset vallankumousopit ja niiden vaikutus Suomen työväenliikkeessä 1905-1914, *Historiallisia tutkimuksia* 167. 1992.

[14] Jari, Ehrnnrooth, Asentoja. Muistelmia nykyajasta. Helsinki: WSOY, 1995

[15] David-Neel, *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*, 161.

[16] Matti Hannus, *Flying Finns. Story of the Great Tradition of Finnish Distance Running and Cross Country Skiing*, Helsinki, Tietosanoma, 1989.

[17] Jouni Tossavainen, *New Yorkin Lentävä suomalainen*, Helsinki: Like, 2014.

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the interrelationship of sports, religion, and philosophy. The 1697 doctoral thesis by Gustavus Starck, Professor of Eloquence at the University of Turku already used source material from Aristotle, Plutarch, and Terentius, as well as several ideas from the Bible, to reflect on sports in terms of their influence on the worldviews and lifestyles of their practitioners.[18] More recent publications by Finnish authors include *Juoskemisen filosofia (Philosophy of Running),* a 2005 book on the philosophy of running by Tapio Koski, whose theoretical framework draws from the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Martin Heidegger[19], and also *Suomalaisen kestävyysjuoksun historia* (*The History of the Finnish Endurance-Running*, 2014) a work on the history of endurance running in Finland by Erkki Vettenniemi.[20]

And what is the case with sports in Finnish literature? In the above-quoted 2014 article in the prestigious literary journal *Parnasso,* dedicated to the century-old tradition of Finnish sporting literature *(urheilukirjallisuus),* writer and runner-athlete Juoni Tossavainen lists twenty Finnish authors who have contributed to this genre, like Jari Ehrnrooth, Paul-Erik Haataja, Laila Hietamies, Juha Hurme, Pekka Jaatinen, Anja Kauranen, Sami Keski-Vähälä, Tuomas Kyrö, Leena Lehtolainen, Marjo Niemi, Miika Nousiainen, Kalle Veirto, Maarit Verronen, Kjell Westö and Mika Wickström, and from the younger generation Elisabeth Aho, Anneli Kanto, Tuija Lehtinen, Kirsi Pehkonen and Jorma Ranivaara. Three works from the present oeuvre of Jari Ehrnrooth could also be considered core contributions to this genre: *Kaksi syntymää ja yksi kuolema* (*Two Births and One Death*, 2002, essays), *Lähemmäksi kuin lähelle* (*Closer than Close*, 2007, novel), and *Juoksu* (*The Run*, 2012a story-essay-poems).[21]

In Ehrnrooth's work, these three titles and the spiritual prose of his two recent books *Tietämättä uskon* (*Faith Without Knowledge*, 2012b, essays on personal faith) and *Toivon tarkoitus* (*The Meaning of Hope*, 2014, essays on enduring hope) can be interpreted as a subtle transition from the genre of the novel to the genre of essayistic, theological-philosophical commentaries

[18] *De pancratio indeq*[ue] *viro forti arte, natura, marte et moribus disputabit, ex consensu Ampliss*[imae] *Fac*[ultatis] *Philosoph*[icae] *in Regia Academia Aboënsi, sub moderamine ... d*[omini] *m*[agistri] *Christierni Alandri, eloq*[uentiae] *profess*[oris] ... *ad d*[iem] *3 Nov. anno 1697. Gustavus Starck*. Impr. apud Jo. Wallium. Doctoral thesis. See Jouni Tossavainen, Urheilukirjailijoiden jäljillä. Urheilufiktiota on julkaistu Suomessa sata vuotta, *Parnasso* 6-7/2014, 48–53.

[19] Tapio Koski, *Juokseminen filosofia*, Tampere, Tampere University Press, 2005.

[20] Erkki Vettenniemi, *Suomalaisen kestävyysjuoksun historia*, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2014.

[21] Jari Ehrnrooth, *Kaksi syntymää ja yksi kuolema*, Helsinki, WSOY, 2002. Jari Ehrnrooth, *Lähemmäksi kuin lähelle. Kertomus toisesta ihmisestä*, Helsinki, Kirjapaja, 2007. Jari Ehrnrooth, *Juoksu*, Helsinki, Lurra Editions, 2012a.

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on endurance running and spiritual life.[22] By positioning Ehrnrooth's 2007 novel *Lähemmäksi kuin lähelle* 2007 *(Closer than Close),* which focuses on the tragic love story of two endurance runners, on the left side and the two essay books from 2012b and 2014 on issues of faith, religion, and mysticism on the right side of a scale, Ehrnrooth puts *Kaksi syntymää...* and *Juoksu* somewhere between these two poles. However, the postmodern essayistic *Juoksu* exemplifies most clearly how the boundaries between these poles and genres dissolve.

Given the recurring topics in all of the above-mentioned works by Ernrooth, it is worth mentioning three common ones:

(1) "all out" performance in sport (both in exercising and in racing),

(2) the experience of becoming empty (exhausted) and meeting the "nada" (cf. Miguel de Unamuno) as a liminal state of body and mind for the mystic who is yearning for holiness, and

(3) the poetic expression of such mystic experiences as treasures lying at the bottom of "nada" or which come to fill the "nada" state.

While topic (1) dominates the 2002 and 2007 novels, topic (2) is discussed in more detail in the 2012 books, and topic (3) in the 2014 book. All three topics appear to some degree in all of the books. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that parallel to *Juoksu,* in 2012 the author published another essay collection entitled *Tietämättä uskon*, which describes *inter alia* several of his other mystic experiences. The book's polysemic title demonstrates how strongly our thoughts and experiences are formed by the language we use to express them. The phrase could be translated as 'to believe is not to know', 'faith without knowledge', 'I do believe I do not know', or 'I do believe yet I do not know'. In this book, Ehrnrooth describes his concept of *uskontunto*, yet another expression strongly rooted in the Finnish language. The word for "conscience" *(omatunto)* is built on the same final root as *uskontunto*, while *tunto* by itself also means "touch," "feeling," or "sensation," and *oma* means "own," *usko* means "faith," and *uskonto* means "religion." Thus, *uskontunto,* referring to the same kind of deep human sensation as "being conscious," is imbued with a more complex meaning in Ehrnrooth's usage, simultaneously signalling what one really believes in (his or her inner sense of what is true), as well as a sense of the uncanny, unattainable holiness that a believer holds inside of his or her religious mind.

[22] Jari Ehrnrooth, *Tietämättä uskon*, Helsinki, Kirjapaja, 2012b. Jari Ehrnrooth, *Toivon tarkoitus*, Helsinki, Kirjapaja, 2014.

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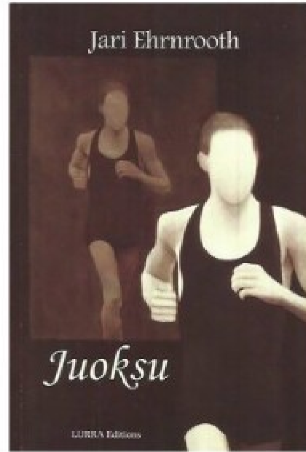
Juoksu and *Palvelijan loikka* / *The Serving Stride*

Susanne Gottberg's image of a faceless runner, which appears on the cover of *Juoksu* (see the picture below), suggests the heightened psychological state of emptiness that can come from physical exercise. Clearing the mind can lead to a mystical experience, to the so-called union with a higher consciousness. Both the book and the essay are connected through this painting.



Picture no.1. Cover of Jari Ehrnrooth's novel, which features a painting by Susanne Gottberg

In his essay *The Yearning Stride*, Ehrnrooth comments on the painting:

> In the photo the running servant would have a face but he has none. Image is to the soul as the clock is to the time. The faceless runner finds an ally he can trust, not in his inner moans, but in the gushing of the wind, the beating of the rain, the splash and slap of his footfalls. Running is about surrendering and forgetting and forgetting what one is surrendering. It is the sea that offers room for emptiness. But emptiness will never come. Something is always left—that which is most valuable.[23]

As many of Ehrnrooth's titles immediately demonstrate, he often plays with the multiple meanings of words, not only in his mother tongue but across languages. For the English edition of this work, Ehrnrooth suggested the title of *The Servant Stride* for *Palvelijan loikka*, (literally, 'the stride of the servant')—which binds together the nominal and adjectival meanings of the word "servant" as well as the nominal and verbal meanings of "stride."

[23] Jari Ehrnrooth, *Kaipaava askel / The Yearning Stride*, 80.

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In addition to expressions strongly determined by the history of ideas and rooted in the history of language, *Juoksu* also contains a plenitude of metanarrative and stylistic references to the mysteries and challenges of the writing process itself. In the following section I will briefly touch on this topic, though I consider it an important area for further investigation in the future.

Writers such as Tomas Tranströmer, Haruki Murakami, and Imre Kertész have often affirmed in their novels and interviews that, for a writer, the process of writing is "on" all the time. It happens inside the mind of the writer without rest. In the case of Ehrnrooth's *Juoksu*, the writing process—the search for the right words, the right metaphors, the polyphony of the aesthetic text, the strides and breaths of the run created by the narrative process—goes hand in hand with the steps, breaths, and the simultaneous joy and agony of the fictional runner. The work consists of 42 chapters—the number of kilometres in a marathon—which are framed and rhythmically cut by the reccurring figure of a gardener. Constructed in this way, the plot line employs multiple, hybrid planes of reality that intersect in the arenas of movement and stasis, outer and inner worlds, and the natural and the transcendental.

In addition to the runner's reflections on his immediate surroundings and inner world, the figure of the gardener triggers a description of the meditative aspects of running. Given that mystical realist literature tends to be read at an intensified level, the reader of *Juoksu* must also let go of pre-existing ties to conventional exposition, plot advancement, linear time structure, and scientific reasoning in order to be catapulted by an aesthetic experience into a state of heightened awareness of life's connectedness and transcendental dimensions. Luis Leal articulates this feeling as seizing "the mystery that breathes behind (the) things," and supports this claim by saying a writer must heighten the senses of the reader to the point of *estado límite*—a "liminal state," in which one can catch a glimpse into the multiple levels of reality, most importantly that of mysticism.[24]

In the final third of the run, from chapter 33 on, the runner-narrator detaches more and more from the concreteness of his immediate context, taking longer and longer strides from one word to the next. In chapters 35, 37, 41, and 42, as the empty spaces on the page increase, the text turns into a prose poem. When asked about the mysteries of writing, of the urge to write and put down the words into letters in order to see what they really become, Ehrnrooth explains (cited from his e-mail of 13 November 2015):

[24] Luis Leal, Magical Realism in Spanish American Literature, in: Louis Parkinson Zamora, Wendy B. Faris (ed.), *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1995, 123.

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> I feel this is partly the nature of the Language itself, of the verbal ocean, and how this flows inside the writer's language. The writer in me often asks, what if this is the creation itself, the cosmic and never ending evolution? Is this mystery going on inside of the author in the form of verbal creativity? In what ways does the act of writing—to which the writer is delivered—qualify, as a matter of fact, as a real initiation to the mystery of creation?

Following the symbolic steps of this argumentation, we arrive at the heart of the theme of this work. Moreover, in the major motifs—the servant, emptiness, time, the love of the mystic, and the concept of God—we find strong intertextual ties to Christian mysticism. As we can see from the areas of the essay marked in grey below, the author invokes a mysticism rooted in the long history of European thought:

> Humans are the **chosen species**. In search for a transcendent knowledge, *homo sapiens* evolved into a practitioner of higher levels of consciousness and so he became *homo religiosus*, a **servant** of the Absolute. That was the greatest invention of all... The runner is now like **a human god** of **new kingdom** in a crown of light, but he does not vanish into the twilight of the idols, furiously though the **devil's tail** pounds upon his eardrums... The servant groans and gasps to continue that which **his master** will shortly bring to an end.[25]

The ideas embedded in the text above, with its accompanying connotations of Christian mysticism, express artistic and aesthetic values culminating in a compelling final sentence, which serves as the closing thought of the Hungarian adapted version of *Juoksu:* "The servant groans and gasps to continue that which his master will shortly bring to an end." These images of emptying oneself, and the idea of emptiness, can also be interpreted as reminiscent of Buddhist or Sufi mysticism. As Ehrnrooth puts it:

> Not in time, but through time the mind empties itself, chasing that elusive point, expanding and contracting endlessly like a jellyfish... Emptying the mind must be practiced and re-practiced daily. Feet drum Mother Earth to recollect the eternal calm outside the universe. One stride, million strides, until the remorseless fatigue presses its cold lips to servant's forehead. As his mind empties, the runner smiles, his face bathed in beatific light. He knows there is an obstacle to overcome, yet he also knows there is the one to overcome it. (2013, 86)

As this excerpt also demonstrates, drumming is another reoccurring motif. Here it serves not only as a reference to the Finnish or Finno-Ugric shamanic

[25] Jari Ehrnrooth, *Kaipaava askel / The Yearning Stride*, 84, 86.

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traditions, or to an expressive poetic image, but it can be considered in relation to the African drumming practice of the author. And as we know from the confessional chapter of his 2012 book *Tietämättä uskon,* Ehrnrooth once had a profound mystical experience during a drumming performance in the mid-1990s. But that is another "textual moment" worth further engagement later.

Closing Thoughts

Throughout human history, long-distance or endurance running has been used for various purposes. Not only is it an effective means of improving physical and mental health, but it has also been used as a method of mystical initiation. In several of his works the contemporary Finnish philosopher, writer and runner-athlete Jari Ehnrooth (b. 1959) describes how to go beyond the everyday state of mind and experience the "unattainable Holy Absolute" through endurance running. In Ehnrooth's work it is also evident that the process of writing and reading can be seen as part of the initiation. By casting a heuristic view on running as mystical method in different traditions throughout documented human history, as well as bringing the related works of Jari Ehrnrooth under closer investigation, I intended in this study to show how some literary works verbalize the experience and present the kinds of references which are used to argue for endurance running as a possible gateway to mystical initiation. As this investigation also demonstrates, the idea of mysticism has been undergoing something of a revolution in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. It has begun to break loose from the structures of meaning which held it together for centuries, not least of which is the framework of organized religion. Mapping the postmodern mystical terrain in literary production is not a straightforward or simple task. However, by examining Ehrnrooth's synthesis of the physical, ethical, aesthetic, and mystical, we can demonstrate the seriousness and openness with which twenty-first century authors deal with this topic.

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THE AESTHETICS OF SILENCE IN GYÖRGY RÓNAY'S POETRY

Melinda Sebők

Abstract

"It is silence I have always loved"—Hungarian poet György Rónay wrote in his Ars antipoetica. Rónay was a poet, novelist, critic, translator. He was a member of the so-called third generation of the Nyugat Movement, in whose thinking theology and poetry were inseparable. He translated numerous authors into Hungarian and his poems represent Catholic views of modern writers. His mind was partly influenced by Teilhard de Chardin's philosophy, Paul Claudel's poetry and Pierre Emmanuel's discourses. The Catholic ideology heavily shaped Rónay's religious poetry. In his art, transcendent tranquility gives expression to ontological questions. He considered the uniformity of theological and literary ideas in his essay: On Issues of Our Modern Catholic Literature (Modern katolikus irodalmunk kérdéséhez). *He believes the most important thing in poetry is if the poet's experience has been impressed by Catholicism. In his poetry the metaphysical suspicion of silence implies the dialogue between a human and a godlike soul. The secret of silent moments yields transcendent metaphors to his poetry. Beyond expressions (without words), the metaphysical suggestion provides ontological questions. The aim of my paper is to respond to some of these questions.*

When Ferenc Szabó[1], in his volume *Solar Eclipse—Christianity and Modernity (Napfogyatkozás—Kereszténység és modernség)*, in the chapter titled *Beyond Nihilism (Túl a nihilizmuson)* analyses the central issues of Christianity in the intellectual context of modernity, he points out that literature, in its own discourse, always reinterprets its doubts (originating in its existential experience) pertaining to God, the transcendent. Christian literature, from

[1] Ferenc Szabó (1938–) is a Jesuit monk, theologian, teacher, poet, publicist.

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Augustine to the present day, has provided opportunity for various ways of interpretation in its search for the justification of subjectively transformed variants of any given authorial experience of faith. György Rónay[2]—the most versatile lyricist of the third generation of *Nyugat*[3]—belonged, in his thinking, to the modernizing masters of Hungarian Catholic poetry. He possessed the most classical taste of his generation of poets, while his literary horizon was wide enough to include the most modern surrealist-expressionist poetry. As an intellectual lyricist, he was able to compound the neoclassicism of Babits[4] with the surrealist vision in his colourful poetic world. As a true "poeta doctus", he acquired the erudition of various eras and cultures. Experientially, he harmonised the literature of earlier periods with contemporary art. His exemplary career can be regarded as traditional modernity, that is, the synthesis of classicism and modernity. As he explained in his critique of Babits's literary translations, published in the review *Nyugat:* poetry was a "moment of grace" for him. In *The Faith of Babits (Babits hite)*, an essay theologically discussing Babits's notion of classicism, he quotes Babits's confession of faith describing his internal doubts and struggles: "I was born a Catholic; it was in the halls of that religion where I met and wrestled with God; it was Catholicism that gave body, colour and words both to my doubts and to my most mystical hopes. I could not keep these colours and words external to my writings: but lyric and religious confessions are different."[5]

The differentiation between literary and denominational selves is discussed by Pilinszky[6] as well, a contemporary of Rónay: when stating that "I am a poet and a Catholic", he intends to picture the interrupted nature of the theological tradition of interpretation in literature.

In the thinking of Rónay, faith and literature form an indivisible unit; he calls attention to the parallel deliberation of theological and literary-aesthetic ideas in his essay, *On Issues of Our Modern Catholic Literature (Modern katolikus irodalmunk kérdéséhez):* "Concerning whether a poet is Catholic or not, only one definitive principle is acceptable: namely, whether the experience

[2] György Rónay (1913–1978) was a Hungarian poet, writer, literary translator, essayist, literary critic, literary historian, and member of the third generation of the seminal review *Nyugat*. He translated much from French.

[3] *Nyugat* ("West," 1908–1941) was an important Hungarian literary journal in the first half of the 20th century.

[4] Mihály Babits (1883–1941) was an epochal Hungarian poet, writer and literary translator, and an editor of *Nyugat*. He also wrote essays and translated much from English, French, German, Greek, Italian, and Latin. His poems were also translated into several languages.

[5] György Rónay, Babits hite (The Faith of Babits), in Pók, Lajos (ed.), *Babits Mihály száz esztendeje (Mihály Babits's hundred years)*, Budapest, Gondolat, 1983, 412.

[6] János Pilinszky (1921–1981) was a Hungarian poet, His poems were translated into several languages. Most notably, his English translator was Ted Hughes, while most French translations were made by his friend Pierre Emmanuel.

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expressed in their art is Catholic or not."[7] In *Saints, writers, directions*, his collection of essays, Rónay paints a detailed picture of the spirit of modern Catholic literature. He perceived the postulate of modern Catholic thinking partly in grace as a supernatural gift, partly in the universe, the cosmos as a drama of grace. The "divinely created stage for the drama of grace—in which we move and play our part—possesses meaning, purpose, goal, and also significance and destiny pertaining to salvation history to be realised by the participation and contribution of humanity."[8]

"The thoughts of Teilhard compel me to examine my faith in Providence; for it is not enough to believe in it as if we were operating in the internal life of each and every individual soul, we need to learn to see and respect it in the evolution of matter and the development of life."[9] The French Jesuit philosopher Teilhard de Chardin expounds the dilemma of faith and science when speculating on the infinity of micro- and macrocosm, while recollecting the angst of Pascal terrified by the eternal silence of infinite space. A similar phenomenon is observable in *The Sounds of the Night (Az éjszaka hangjai)* by György Rónay, the first poem in the volume *The Graveyard of Winter (Téltemető):*

> above the silence of the lake,
> with cool and persistent rustling,
> star-forests wuther in the cosmic wind.[10]

The Christian worldview of Teilhard de Chardin's scientific phenomenology, that is, the recognition of the cosmic universe and transcendental silence, influenced the worldview of György Rónay as well. His Christian thinking, however, was not formed solely by translations of prose; he also studied the poetry of Paul Claudel and Pierre Emmanuel in depth. In addition to translating Teilhard's philosophical treatise titled *The Human Phenomenon*, he translated several poems from volumes of Paul Claudel and Pierre Emmanuel. The dreadful silence of Claudel's weltering lyric torrents and the depleting words of Emmanuel's *Ars poetica* also influenced the aesthetics of his final poetic period. Since György Rónay lived and created in the circulation

[7] György Rónay, Interjúk, nyilatkozatok, vallomások, Modern katolikus irodalmunk kérdéséhez (Interviews, Declarations, Confessions: On Issues of Our Modern Catholic Literature), Budapest, *Vigilia*, 2004, 325.

[8] György Rónay, *Szentek, írók, irányok (Saints, Writers, Directions)*, Budapest, Szent István Association, 1970, 164.

[9] Rónay quotes Mauriac's thoughts, in Chardin, Teilhard de, *Hit az emberben: Morál és misztika (Faith in the Human: Moral and Mysticism)*, Budapest, Szent István Association, 1968, 15.

[10] All translations by the author of the present article.

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of world literature, his thinking, in search of the ways of Christian humanism, and his art were shaped partly by the philosophical-theological-ethical view of 20th-century French Christian worldview.

Rónay's awareness of philosophy and of poetical theory is represented in that the Christian commitment of his poetry is formulated after Teilhard de Chardin, Paul Claudel and Pierre Emmanuel, among others. Apart from his works adapting biblical stories, he also gives voice to the desire for grace in the fallible man. At some points, his Catholicism and his Christian approach shine through the level of his metaphoric-metonymic expressions, while elsewhere they are present only implicatively, unnoticed, like pore breathing:

> In the cold-looming mystery
> the pinewoods emanating
> the resin-scent of reconciliation.

The poet, in harmony with nature and God, raises his lyric pieces into the heavenly sphere. His landscapes are coloured by looming mysticism. *Transfiguration (Transzfiguráció)* is one of the masterpieces among his poems implying a transcendental experience. This four-lined piece is a superb work of doom-preceding splendour, of completeness before death:

> The silence. The last flush of the gardens.
> The unwordly falling of the leaves.
> The motionless shine. As the beauty
> is dooming to failure.

Transfiguration (Transzfiguráció) is a significant poem of death-boding, of the last-but-one moment of existence, of a minute-long stop, of the art of reticence. Teilhard de Chardin likes contemplating the radiance of divine light which shines on the transparent and unreachable fields of Reality, and suggests resolutely submerging in the deep waters of cosmic happening. In Rónay's poem, the excess of light-symbolism counterweighs the threatening approach of passing. For a moment, eternity radiates through. A subtle glow paints the falling leaves gold. This impersonal lyric work contains no grammatically marked subject, the negative aspects of autumn (a final rapture, the loss of leaves, depletion, destruction) still evoke the image of death. Only still images of silence in the garden are shown, yet, despite its briefness, the words not said carry further meaning, reaching from universal experience to personal questions of fate, from momentary silence to passing away. Metaphysical implications can be realised through the synthesis of spectacle, the apparition of the intoxicating brilliance of autumn light and the affirmation of life in the last moments before final destruction, in the

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unfailing internal experience of hope. Cosmic vision and the implication of ending are expressed through the dialectic dichotomy of view and vision, of the earthly and the heavenly.

In Rónay's ever-enriching world of experience, the 1960s and 1970s meant the period of fulfilment, when he reached the heights of his poetry. The 1973 volume *The Graveyard of Winter (Téltemető)* was received with adequate praise by contemporary criticism. *The Graveyard of Winter (Téltemető)* can be seen as a ripe fruit of a poet ready for reckoning, richly processing a vast education. Cultural and existential experiences show a combined predominance in his lyric pieces, serving as a summative synthesis of the Rónay *oeuvre*. *The Graveyard of Winter (Téltemető)* presents the expansion of the nature-related experiences in these summative lyric works into a whole universe. The blade of grass, the branch, the wind, the rippling fountain, the garden, the starry sky are not merely objects of the gaze but vehicles of grasping a momentary existence. Rónay is searching for meanings in the landscape, contemplating his own existence. Every natural phenomenon possesses an existential meaning. Thus, the scenery becomes a secret system of symbols for this world beyond existence. The aging poet lyricises his elderly years with the garden in Szárszó as its island. Its lyric and personal nature becomes a confession of self, as his solitude triggers contemplation.Warnings about passing and reckoning frequently appear. His last poetic period is a synthesis of confessional and personal poetry, of monologuising long poems woven through with epic elements, but also of concise, closed, impersonal poetry, bringing about an ensemble which enriches and renews the *oeuvre*. The behaviour of old and contemporary poets serve as a model for his lyric style. In his visionary poems of synthesis, he finds the basic metaphor for his life in the figure of Odysseus: the experience of infinity and limitlessness while searching for inner silence. Starting from the volume *The Graveyard of Winter (Téltemető)*, his poetry is gradually simplified and surfaces in a more succinct form. Thus, in his final poetic period, the longer pieces give way to more gaunt poems suggesting an epigrammatic taste of life. Certain lyric pieces possess a footing pertaining to the philosophy of language which refers to the relation between God and the language. On the publication of *The Graveyard of Winter (Téltemető)*, he commented on the poetic role of silence as follows: "There is no absolute poetic purity, only in silence [...] Poems are made from words and silences – silences in and between words; that is my material."[11] In his poem *Ars antipoetica*, he claims: "It's been silence I've ever loved / submerging in myself." Predominantly, the figure of silence is verbally fixed, but on other occasions it is only implied, yet through its aesthetic-metaphysical essence, it realises the possibility of communication

[11] György Rónay, *Szentek, írók, irányok (Saints, Writers, Directions)*, 104-105.

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with the transcendent. Paul Claudel writes: "silence may be solitude, but it's also communion / communication, connecting us with others. It is in poems where pure dialogue unfolds the infinite wealth of ancient-original silence."[12] With Rónay, the metaphysical anticipations of silence realise the dialogue between God and humanity. In some of his poems, meaningful objects and natural phenomena are used to express his personal experience. In the impersonal locution of his poetry, only silence, occurring in contemplation, provides occasional signs of life. The unique symbolism of his reduced poetic dictions, the secret of moments of silence make the poems of *The Graveyard of Winter (Téltemető)* suggestive in their scarcity of words, and his faith is confessed particularly in the poems where he is searching for inner silence. The short poems operate with the simplicity of prose, yet mystical meanings lie beyond the momentary phenomena. His poetry is permeated by the suggestive gleam of the landscape – mediating the human psyche – and by the metaphoric character of the divine light.

The lyric pieces in the volume *The Graveyard of Winter (Téltemető)* present the figure of silence in several senses. In one group of poems, in the so-called Szárszó cycle, silence is observed as opening up cosmic distances while suggesting passing away. The contemplative poet, in the silence of the lake, on his Szárszó island, evokes the sense of passing in *Enchantment (Varázslat), October in Szárszó (Október Szárszón), The Approaching Winter (A közelítő tél).* The autumn landscape in the four-line poem *The Mist (Köd)* is also a prime example of this phenomenon.

In the remaining cycles of the volume, the aesthetics of silence conveys two contrasting feelings – hope and angst: "in the great silence of the world", the pinewoods emanating "the resin-scent of reconciliation" suggest an internal redemption, a silence providing solace; while the speechlessness of the contemplative subject in "the suffocating silence" suggests a terrifying, "dreadful" silence. God's soothing silence permeates his lyric pieces like *Martyrdom (Martirium), Calm (Szélcsend), Landscape with Rainstorm (Tájkép zivatarral), Changes in Scenery (Tájak változása)* and *Ars antipoetica*, which all confess his Christian faith; meanwhile, the *poetica* of numb silence and a "dissolving dread" are perceptible in such poems from the volume as *Swallows (Fecskék), Prometheus* and *Numen adest.*

Heidegger says in *What is Metaphysics?*: "Amidst the strangeness of dread we often try to shatter the empty stillness with mindless chatter."[13]

[12] Ferenc Szabó quotes Claudel in *Silence is the Source of Words*, Rome, Ugo Detti Publisher, 1985, 7.

[13] Sheehan, Thomas, *Reading Heidegger's What is Metaphysics?*, in Burt Hopkins–Steven Crowell (eds.), *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, London–New York, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2001, 191.

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"Suffocating silence" serves as a primary motif for Rónay's later poetry. The speechlessness of misunderstood words, the fear of the rejection to be heard are expressed in *Prometheus:*

> You'd make an attempt at words
> Every word's stuck in your throat
> I'd speak but my words fall back on me.

Here, human communication fails to connect. The poet's sources are mythology and the Bible, and this art has its "human face" painted rich in meaning "through the web of events in biblical parables."

It is faith in redemption which connects Rónay to Pilinszky, but while for Pilinszky silence is predominantly a state of speechlessness bereft of the acoustic side of the sign, for György Rónay's poetry articulate silence, the signified nature of sonority is contrasted with its conceptual muteness. *The Silence (A csönd)* is a tiny masterpiece full of emotional-spiritual content:

> Sometimes there is silence.
> Then a rushing vehicle is destroying it again.
> Though, you can
> preserve it inside.
> A flutter.
> A whisper.
> An unspoken silent word.
> The nothing.
> The everything.

Pierre Emmanuel, in his theoretical text on art, highlights that "noise kills inner silence, making contemplation impossible. [...] Art is a struggle against pollution, an effort to give life to silence."[14] For Rónay, silence is the source of art. Only infinite inner silence can bring a human being close to God. Soothing silence provides his poem *Martyrdom (Martirium)* with metaphysical-ontological surplus. A sudden burst of radiance, the pinewoods emanating "the resin-scent of reconciliation" suggest a certainty-beyond-existence. Upon suspecting the transcendental secret, communicative silence befalls. The unspeakable divine glory, "the resin-scent of reconciliation" can be sensed only by the soul; so God's silence becomes more perfect that human speech. The warning hidden in Rónay's succinct, seemingly impersonal poetic utterances is also an existential reality. In *Half-sleeps*

[14] Ferenc Szabó quotes Emmanuel in *Szavak forrása csend, (Silence is the Source of Words),* Rome, Ugo Detti Publisher, 1985, 15.

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of Infarction (Az infarktus félálmai) the lyric subject mediates between its internal and external experiences, its realisations during the illness, the implications of passing, the inner silence of the soul, while perceiving, with conviction, the world beyond existence. One reads in *Changes in Scenery (Tájak változása)* that

Everything remained the same:
the calm heart-beat of life,
the preparing death in the bones,
the coming winter, the silence inside,
and the peace and the trust
stronger than everything.

The transcendental experience of the poetry of György Rónay is conveyed through the transfer of the metaphor of silence, through internal speech, through the saturation of existential understanding. The Christian-humanist spirit, the suggestive transcendence of the landscape, reconciliation in God's silence are expressed, in some of his lyrics masterpieces, through the transverbal meaning of the figure of silence and its ontological transparency. Throughout the process of understanding, neither the total imposition of silence nor minimal disclosure is meant – the essence of Rónay's transcendental poetry is the transition between announcing the silence and the mysticism of unspeakable infinity, thus his range spans from the mysticism of visible phenomena to invisible infinity. He states in his poetic creed: "According to my sense and conviction, literature possesses truly great metaphysical duties, more precisely, true literature is metaphysics, it is an explanation of existence, it means the grasping of the essential, [...] the secrets of existence and the universal. Hungarian literature is [...] a confession of how we face the final events, life, death, God, and the ultimate principle of our myths and mysteries."[15]

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[15] György Rónay, Cím nélküli válasz Kézai Bélának (An Untitled Reply to Béla Kézai), *Vigilia*, Vol. 4 (1938), 239.

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BIO-NOTES

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Monográfia

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Császár-Nagy Noémi, Demetrovics Zsolt, Vargha András (szerk.): *A klinikai pszichológia horizontja. Prof. dr. Bagdy Emőke 70. születésnapjára készített emlékkötet*

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