Antika in krščanstvo:
spor ali sprava?

Antiquity and Christianity:
Conflict or Conciliation?

Picture on the cover:
Sarcophagus with scenes from the Passion of Christ
Probably from the Catacomb of Domitilla, mid-4th century A.D.
Museo Pio Christiano, Vatican

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Kazalo / Contents


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Antiquity and Christianity:
9. in 10. maj
Slovanska knjižnica

Predgovor

Knjiga *Antika in krščanstvo: spor ali sprava?*, druga v knjižni zbirki »Acta comparativistica Slovenica«, je zbornik mednarodnega simpozija z istim naslovom, ki so ga v sodelovanju s Slovansko knjižnico in v okviru Foruma Orient–Occident organizirali oddelki za primerjalno književnost in literarno teorijo, klasično filologijo in filozofijo Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani, KUD Logos, Društvo za antične in humanistične študije Slovenije in Inštitut Nove revije 9. in 10. maja 2007 v Ljubljani.

Povod za simpozij je bil slovenski prevod knjige Sergeja Averinceva *Poetika zgodnjebizantinske literature*, ki ga je naredil Pavle Rak in leta 2005 izdal KUD Logos. Organizatorji simpozija smo izhajali iz prepričanja, da vsakdo, ki je bral to véliko knjigo, deli z nami globoko občudovanje do pisca, ki je umrl leta 2004 star šestinšestdeset let. Averincev je znaten del svojega poslanstva, hermenevtičnega – hermesovskega – povezovanja evropskega Vzhoda in Zahoda na podlagi njune skupne, antične in krščanske dediščine, opravil v nenaklonjenih razmerah sovjetske Rusije. To poslanstvo se mu je po našem mnenju posrečilo še zlasti v *Poetiki zgodnjebizantinske literature* iz leta 1977, v kateri z izredno širokim védenjem, globokim uvidom in sugestivno močjo prikazuje srečanje med grško literaturo, filozofijo in kulturo ter krščanstvom v pozni antiki oziroma zgodnjebizantinskem obdobju.

Ko smo brali knjigo Averinceva, nam je nekaterim prišlo na misel, da njeno osrednjo témo povzamemo v obliki vprašanja, ki nekako odmeva alternativo Atene – Jeruzalem Leva Šestova. To ni bilo naključje: Šestovu je bil posvečen naš prejšnji mednarodni simpozij pred dvema letoma ob skoraj istem času in na istem kraju (zbornik tega simpozija je izšel kot prvi zvezek iste knjižne zbirke), alternativo Šestova pa je v sedemdesetih letih reflektiral tudi Averincev sam v spisu z naslovom *Atene in Jeruzalem*. Odločili smo se torej, da iz tako oblikovanega vprašanja – vprašanja o kontinuiteti oziroma diskontinuiteti med antiko in krščanstvom – naredimo vodilno načelo preiskovanja, ki naj bi seveda razširilo področje raziskovanja, kakršnega je zarisal Averincev.

Na tem področju se je torej na simpoziju zgodil shod disciplin, predvsem teologije, filozofije in literarne zgodovine. Nastali so referati, nekateri s široko zasnovo, drugi bolj specialistični, ki zborniku dajejo izrazito inter-

disciplinaren značaj. Prvi prevprašujejo razmerje med antiko in krščanstvom (ali med Atenami in Jeruzalemom) na splošno; drugi preiskujejo to razmerje pri grških in tretji pri latinskih cerkvenih očetih; četrti se na njegovi sledi podajajo v filozofijo; peti ga motrijo v literarni zgodovini antike in šesti poantičnega časa. Poleg referatov zbornik prinaša tudi zapis diskusije, ki jim je sledila.

Zaradi precejšnjega števila referatov in omejenih finančnih zmožnosti smo se organizatorji odpovedali temu, da bi zbornik izdali v slovenščini. Večina referatov je napisana v angleščini (dva v italijanščini), ki je bila osrednji sporazumevalni jezik simpozija, vsi pa imajo povzetke v angleščini in slovenščini.

Vid Snoj

V Ljubljani, 29. oktobra 2007

Foreword

The volume *Antiquity and Christianity: A Conflict or a Conciliation?* is appearing as the second in the series "Acta comparativistica Slovenica" and is a collection of papers delivered at an international symposium with the same title. In collaboration with Ljubljana's Slavic Library and within the framework of the Forum Orient-Occident, this symposium was organized by the departments of comparative literature and literary theory, classical philology, and philosophy of the University of Ljubljana's Faculty of Arts, the Logos Cultural and Arts Society, the Slovenian Society for Classical Studies and Studies of Arts, and the Nova Revija Institute on 9 and 10 May 2007 in Ljubljana.

The occasion for the symposium was the Slovenian translation of Sergei Averintsev's book *The Poetics of Early Byzantine Literature*, prepared by Pavle Rak and published in 2005 by the Logos Cultural and Arts Society. As the organizers of the symposium, we were guided by the conviction that everyone that has read this great book shares with us a deep admiration for its author, who died in 2004 at the age of sixty-six. Averintsev performed a considerable part of his mission—his hermeneutical (Hermesian) linking of Europe's East and West on the basis of their common, classical and Christian heritage—in the unfavorable conditions of Soviet Russia. In our opinion, the success of this mission is particularly represented by his 1977 book *The Poetics of Early Byzantine Literature*, in which he managed to present the encounter between Greek literature, philosophy, and culture on the one hand and Christianity on the other in late Antiquity, or the early Byzantine period, with extraordinarily broad knowledge, deep insight, and suggestive power.

Reading Averintsev's book, some of us came upon the idea of resuming its main subject in the form of a question that in some way echoes Leo Shestov's alternative of Athens and Jerusalem. This was no coincidence: a couple of years ago, our former international symposium was dedicated to Shestov almost at the same time and in the same place (and the collection of papers delivered at it was published as the first volume of this series). Furthermore, Shestov's alternative was reflected upon by Averintsev himself in his essay "Athens and Jerusalem" from the 1970s. Thus, we decided

to make this question—that of continuity or discontinuity between Antiquity and Christianity—the guiding principle of our endeavors, of course broadening Averintsev's field of research.

The symposium therefore hosted a gathering of disciplines, especially theology, philosophy, and literary history. The papers that were presented—some broader, others more narrowly focused—give the collection a distinctive interdisciplinary character. The first group of papers questions the relationship between Antiquity and Christianity (or between Athens and Jerusalem) in general; the second group investigates this relationship in the Greek Church Fathers, and the third group in the Latin Church Fathers. The fourth group follows its traces into philosophy, the fifth observes it in the literary history of Antiquity, and the sixth in the literary history of post-Antiquity. In addition to the papers, the collection also includes a record of the discussion that followed them.

Because of the large number of papers and limited financial resources, the organizers decided not to publish this collection in Slovenian. For the most part, the papers are written in English (two are in Italian), which was the main language of communication at the symposium, and all of them include summaries in English and Slovenian.

Vid Snoj

Ljubljana, 29 October 2007

Giovanni Grandi

Atene e Gerusalemme: vie del dialogo

Centro Studi Veneto «Jacques Maritain»
Università degli Studi di Padova

Oriente e Occidente: il cammino avviato da questo gruppo di ricerca nel 2001 quest'anno può fare idealmente tappa su un simbolo altrettanto suggestivo, il binomio «Atene-Gerusalemme». In fondo, proprio come voleva Sergej Averincev, continuiamo ad esplorare la *contrapposizione* e l'*incontro* di due principi creativi[1]; «contrapposizione» significa diversità, quella diversità che si fa quasi incommensurabilità nella lettura che il filologo russo proponeva all'inizio degli anni Settanta. Atene e Gerusalemme – intese come culture, come letterature ma anche come simboli – esigono misure diverse, e quindi l'una non può essere metro dell'altra, e l'orizzonte possibile è la coesistenza: insieme ed alla pari. Ma «contrapposizione» può significare anche inconciliabilità, avversità: qui Atene e Gerusalemme assumono il tratto della penna di Šestov, e la coesistenza difficilmente si fa orizzonte.

E tuttavia non c'è solo contrapposizione, per Averincev c'è anche «incontro»: un incontro che non è sintesi, non è fusione ma neppure semplice coesistenza e reciproca tolleranza. È qualcosa di diverso, è un camminare fianco a fianco, sostenendosi a vicenda.

Le suggestioni che proverei a raccogliere si muovono entro questi confini e provano a dar voce – una voce immancabilmente occidentale e latina – soprattutto a quelle intuizioni che hanno animato il percorso intrapreso insieme e che credo stiano via via, nel tempo, trovando espressione nel nostro incontrarci, ben al di là dei temi su cui si concentrano i nostri seminari.

* * *

1 S. Averincev, *Atene e Gerusalemme. Contrapposizione e incontro di due principi creativi* (1971–1973), Donzelli, Roma, 1998.

Il saggio "Atene e Gerusalemme" è una perla di grande valore nella riflessione di Averincev, perché assume una caratura culturale molto significativa: si tratta di accogliere la diversità (diversità culturale, intellettuale, religiosa, letteraria) di due principi creativi, ma appunto di imparare a leggerla come l'epifania di approcci alla realtà ugualmente fondamentali nell'umano, non come due «stadi» di un unico movimento evolutivo della cultura in cui uno – Gerusalemme – sarebbe la preistoria dell'altro – Atene –. L'universo ebraico-cristiano non è la preistoria dell'universo greco. È un'altra storia.

> Non è forse più esatto dire – osserva Averincev – che le letterature del Vicino Oriente antico, considerate nel loro complesso, e la letteratura dell'antica Grecia, presa anch'essa nel suo complesso, sono fenomeni di ordine concettualmente diverso, che non si prestano a nessun confronto nelle categorie del «livello» o della «stadialità»? Che insomma non si tratta di stadi di uno stesso cammino, ma piuttosto di due cammini differenti, che da un unico punto iniziale si sono separati, prendendo due diverse direzioni?[2]

L'interrogativo dinanzi a cui ci porta Averincev allora è questo: cosa accade quando due cammini, due storie si incontrano? Per capire ciò che può accadere è possibile considerare uno dei passaggi storicamente e simbolicamente cruciali dell'incontro tra la storia del Vicino Oriente e quella dell'antica Grecia – forse le uniche storie in grado di incontrarsi, proprio per la centralità che entrambe attribuivano alla parola, al *lógos*[3] – : si tratta della traduzione dei Settanta, la monumentale opera di redazione in greco dell'Antico Testamento. L'incontro tra Atene e Gerusalemme si sostanzia quindi in una parola: *traduzione*.

> I popoli dell'Oriente, desiderosi di esibire i tesori della propria saggezza nazionale al mercato ellenistico delle idee, col suo carattere universale, erano costretti a rivestire preliminarmente tali tesori con l'involucro delle forme lessicali, e per quanto possibile anche intellettuali, greche. L'epoca esigeva degli interpreti[4].

Molto opportunamente Averincev sottolinea che l'epoca *esigeva degli interpreti*, esigeva cioè la capacità di realizzare delle traduzioni efficaci, capaci di far riverberare in un idioma ed in categorie culturali ed intellettuali nuove lo spirito della lettera originaria.

2 Op. cit., p. 11.
3 Cfr. op. cit., pp. 40–41.
4 Op. cit., p. 48.

Per noi oggi è difficile cogliere il fascino della traduzione: la riteniamo spesso un puro espediente formale, più o meno agevole, per intenderci. I dizionari così ricchi di cui disponiamo ci offrono le varie corrispondenze lessicali e talvolta sembra che tutto si esaurisca nel realizzare qualche equazione terminologica; i traduttori automatici che vengono offerti dal web danno l'idea di un'operazione meccanica. Eppure, non appena li mettiamo alla prova dell'espressione letteraria o filosofica, scopriamo proprio quanto grande sia la componente umana che accompagna ogni traduzione. Lì dove un software genera equivalenze che sfociano nel ridicolo, l'intelligenza dell'uomo plasma capolavori: è il caso della traduzione dei Settanta, ed in tempi più recenti – per rimanere nel medesimo genere – come non pensare alla versione inglese della Sacra Scrittura voluta da Giacomo I e pubblicata nel 1611? Dice bene Averincev: l'epoca – epoca di incontro – esigeva interpreti, e l'arte del traduttore è l'arte *umana* dell'interprete[5].

A prima vista si direbbe che l'opera di traduzione avvenga a senso unico, quasi si tratti di passare da un *dialetto* ad una *lingua*[6]: traduciamo da

5 Non considereremo in questa riflessione il notevole apporto di P. Ricoeur al tema della traduzione, se non segnalando qui in nota, tra i tanti scritti, il saggio *La traduction, un choix culturel*, in "Esprit", n. 6, juin 1999, pp. 8–19, riproposto recentemente in traduzione italiana con il titolo *Il paradigma della traduzione*, in *Il giusto/2*, Effatà, Torino, 2007, pp. 133–149. Di fatto si coglierà come gli autori con cui qui ci si confronta abbiano tematizzato i medesimi snodi, forse con qualche affondo più deciso dovuto alla loro maggiore disponibilità per una riflessione di tipo ontologico.

6 Il rapporto tra *dialetto* e *lingua* rinvia sommessamente alla cornice proposta da J. Habermas, secondo cui – in fin dei conti – le prospettive culturali ed intellettuali facenti capo a tradizioni di fede (Gerusalemme) sarebbero dialetti che, per farsi intendere nella *pólis*, dovrebbero accettare di essere tradotti in termini laici (Atene), ovvero nell'unica lingua universale. Non ci soffermiamo su questa proposa, se non sollevando il dubbio che questa impostazione forse interessante dal punto di vista metodologico, di fatto porta con sé una certa precomprensione dei rapporti tra credenti e non credenti, quasi che i primi fossero la preistoria del pensare ed i secondi il suo progresso. Vi è l'idea che l'autentica prospettiva universale, a cui le altre vanno ricondotte, sia quella del non-credente: in quest'ottica ciò che si confonde facilmente è l'impegno per una argomentazione ragionevole (che è di tutti, ed anche dei credenti dacché sviluppano una teologia) con i contenuti ed il messaggio oggetto della comunicazione (ed in questo caso anche il non-credente di fatto si affida ad una ontologia, che il più delle volte non è in grado di esplicitare ed a cui, tecnicamente, crede). Ecco a tal proposito un cenno significativo di Habermas: «Ciascuno deve sapere ed accettare che oltre la soglia istituzionale che separa la sfera pubblica informale da parlamenti, tribunali, ministeri e amministrazioni, contano solo le ragioni laiche. È sufficiente a questo scopo la capacità epistemica di considerare le proprie convinzioni religiose anche dall'esterno, riflessivamente, e di collegarle a ragioni laiche. I cittadini credenti possono benissimo riconoscere questa "riserva istituzionale di traduzione" senza

Gerusalemme ad Atene perché Atene è il luogo dell'universale, è la lingua franca, mentre Gerusalemme è un luogo particolare, è una regione di periferia con il proprio dialetto. Gerusalemme – e con essa il Vicino Oriente – è il luogo delle tradizioni sapienziali, legate all'esistenza concreta; di fronte ad essa c'è Atene, luogo della speculazione dove il *lógos* contempla le idee, cioè che è stabile, che non cambia, che non soffre della mutevolezza tipica delle esperienze umane:

> Tutto il pensiero degli egizi, dei babilonesi e dei giudei nelle sue massime estrinsecazioni – annota Averincev – non è filosofia, poiché l'oggetto di questo pensiero non è l'"essere" ma la vita, non l'"essenza", ma l'esistenza, ed esso non opera per "categorie", ma attraverso gli innumerevoli simboli dell'autosensazione-nel-mondo dell'uomo, escludendo con tutto il suo modo di essere la "sistematicità" propria della filosofia[7].

Si direbbe allora che il passaggio da Gerusalemme ad Atene sia il passaggio dal particolare all'universale, dall'esistenza all'essenza. Indubbiamente questo passaggio può essere visto come una sorta di impoverimento, di dispersione nel generico, in ciò che freddamente ed astrattamente vale per tutti e non guarda in faccia a nessuno. Sarà questa la preocupazione di Šestov. Anche a questo proposito però è interessante notare ciò che rileva Averincev:

> Qualsiasi passaggio di un concreto fenomeno storico-culturale nella sfera dei valori comuni a tutta l'umanità, significativi per tutti e universali, comporta inevitabilmente un allontanamento dalla con-

dover scindere la loro identità in parti pubbliche e private non appena partecipino a pubbliche discussioni. Essi dovrebbero quindi poter esprimere e motivare le loro convinzioni in un linguaggio religioso anche quando non trovano per esse "traduzioni" laiche. Ciò non deve assolutamente estraniare i cittadini "monoglotti" dal processo decisionale della politica, perché anche quando adducono ragioni religiose, essi prendono posizione con intento politico. Anche quando il linguaggio religioso è l'unico che essi parlano, e quando le opinioni motivate religiosamente sono l'unico contributo che sanno o vogliono dare al dibattito politico, essi si sentono membri di una *civitas terrena* che li legittima come autori delle leggi cui sono soggetti come destinatari. Poiché hanno la facoltà di esprimersi in linguaggio religioso solo a condizione di riconoscere la riserva istituzionale di traduzione, essi, fidando nell'opera cooperativa di traduzione dei loro concittadini, possono sentirsi partecipi del processo legislativo, anche se in esso contano solo le ragioni laiche». Cfr. J. Habermas, *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion. Philosophische Aufsätze*, Suhrkampo Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 2005; tr. it.: *Tra scienza e fede* (2005), Laterza, Roma e Bari, 2006, p. 33–34.

7 Op. cit., p. 14.

> cretezza ed esige un briciolo di illusione ottica. Tale è la dialettica di ogni «influenza» e «influsso reciproco»[8].

Uscire da Gerusalemme ed entrare ad Atene significa certo *perdere* qualcosa della vita reale, della concretezza incarnata che si riflette in ciascun «dialetto», ma questa perdita è compensata dal fatto di *guadagnare* qualcosa di comune a tutta l'umanità. Con la traduzione, un fenomeno concreto entra nella sfera dei valori comuni a tutta l'umanità.

È davvero acuta questa osservazione e merita di essere sviluppata: con la traduzione non accade che Gerusalemme si trasformi in Atene, né che si riduca, si corrompa o si perverta in Atene. La traduzione invece mostra proprio ciò che vi è di comune in Atene e Gerusalemme, fa emergere cioè quella trama implicitamente condivisa che sostiene tanto l'ordito di Atene, quanto quello di Gerusalemme e che quindi *consente* la traduzione. La traduzione è possibile solo se *già c'è* qualcosa di comune, che nell'atto della traduzione viene alla luce. In questo senso l'universalità non è affatto distacco dalla vita, ma il ritrovamento di ciò che è *ugualmente vitale* a Gerusalemme come ad Atene.

Per i latini questa dinamica che sostiene ogni traduzione è più facile da mettere in risalto riferendosi alla dimensione gnoseologica, alla vita dell'intelligenza che si apre al mondo ed alla realtà: altro è il «termine», il supporto linguistico di cui si serve una certa tradizione culturale, altro è il «concetto», il supporto intellettuale a cui ogni uomo fa riferimento, proprio per concepire la realtà e le esperienze. Il supporto intellettuale – il concetto – può trovare diverse formulazioni linguistico-culturali, ma rimane sempre lo stesso, per il semplice fatto che non fa riferimento a nessuna lingua, ma fa riferimento alle cose. Il concetto è *id in quo cognoscitur*, è uno strumento, è il modo di essere delle cose stesse nello spirito; è uno strumento trasparente, che si condensa – per comunicare – in un termine, in un'espressione linguistica. Ora, ogni traduzione fa conto sul concetto, fa cioè conto sul fatto che – al di là dei diversi termini, ma anche al di là delle diverse sfumature culturali – ci sia *qualcosa di comune* a coloro che si incontrano e stanno cercando di intendersi. Anche quando racconto un'esperienza complessa o esprimo un sentimento, faccio conto che l'altro possa ritrovare qualcosa di analogo nella propria vita, che gli consenta di cogliere di cosa sto parlando. Ha senso dire all'altro che siamo felici o che soffriamo proprio perché l'altro – vivendo o avendo vissuto le stesse cose – può capirci, e capendoci sa anche cosa sta chiedendo una persona

8 Op. cit., p. 58.

che racconta di un dolore o che desidera condividere una soddisfazione. Edith Stein ha dedicato pagine stupende all'*empatia*, alla capacità umana di essere consonanti con l'altro nel sentire.

Ogni sforzo di traduzione fa quindi affidamento a qualcosa di comune: ecco perché ogni traduzione non ha come risultato solamente il fatto di essersi intesi o di aver reso accessibile un testo, ma più profondamente quello di aver fatto emergere proprio quel qualcosa grazie a cui – *id in quo* – ci siamo intesi, grazie a cui abbiamo condiviso, in cui ci siamo *ri*-trovati. Ciò che emerge non è né *mio* né *tuo*, ma è *nostro*: ecco perché nell'incontro autentico tra Gerusalemme e Atene non emerge l'una o l'altra, ma emerge ciò che è patrimonio comune, emergono quei vissuti e quei valori che – come scrive Averincev – sono «significativi per tutti e universali». Forse davvero potremmo ritenere, con il grande filologo, che dall'incontro di Atene e Gerusalemme nasce l'Europa, se l'Europa è lo spazio più ampio che accoglie i due principi creativi conservandone le diversità e facendone emeregere le più fondamentali convergenze.

Si capisce allora meglio quanto sia scorretto leggere un incontro tra storie, tra culture o tra principi creativi diversi come se si trattasse di una traduzione da un dialetto in una lingua, come se si trattasse di un passaggio dalla *preistoria* alla *storia*: non così deve essere inteso il rapporto tra Gerusalemme e Atene.

Eppure proprio il passaggio da Gerusalemme ad Atene talvolta si presta a questa lettura. Ciò accade più facilmente quando la traduzione viene assimilata al passaggio dal mondo della fede al mondo della ragione, dal mondo dell'irrazionale o del sentimento al mondo della razionalità e della scientificità. È la deriva lungo cui si smarrisce buona parte del dibattito sulla «laicità» che attraversa l'Europa e forse l'Italia in particolare.

Qui ritroviamo in parte la lettura e certo le preoccupazioni di Šestov:

> Non sarebbe meglio porre chiaramente il dilemma: Atene o Gerusalemme, religione o filosofia[9]?

Gerusalemme è religione, Atene è filosofia; Gerusalemme fede, Atene ragione. È una simbolica suggestiva, ma troppo facile; possiamo anzi osservare che si tratta di una simbolica mal posta, per una serie di motivi. Anzitutto perché ci rinchiude nella logica della «stadialità» opportunamente denunciata da Averincev, proponendo una prospettiva per la quale la ragione subentra alla fede, la scienza alla religione: d'un tratto ci si trova rinserrati nel teorema del positivismo ottocentesco. In secondo luogo è una

9 L. Šestov, *Atene e Gerusalemme* (1923–1935), Bompiani, Milano, 2005, p. 115.

simbolica mal posta proprio perché concepisce l'uomo secondo Atene come colui che scalza, dopo la traduzione, l'uomo di Gerusalemme: è cioè una simbolica che si fonda su una antropologia lacerata, incapace di contemplare le diverse forme di conoscenza dell'umano. L'uomo di Atene è l'uomo del raziocinio, non l'uomo dell'intelligenza: ed è quest'uomo (o questo progetto d'uomo) che – a ragione – spaventa Šestov. Ed in terzo luogo è una simbolica mal posta perché vede l'universalità come il prevalere dell'uno sull'altro, mentre l'universalità autentica è la vittoria di entrambi.

Šestov tuttavia invita a riflettere nella cornice di questa simbolica, che è diversa da quella suggerita da Averincev. Noi possiamo considerare questa cornice come una *distorsione* del rapporto tra Atene e Gerusalemme, così come lo abbiamo finora considerato; però non possiamo ignorare che la cultura europea talvolta si ritrova a ragionare proprio nell'ipotesi di una inconciliabilità dei due principi, di una loro reciproca esclusione. Per questo rimane interessante il discorso di Šestov, e vale la pena di trattenersi ancora per qualche istante con lui.

Religione e filosofia secondo questo grande autore si confrontano contendendosi il trofeo della verità. Quale delle due ha accesso al cuore della realtà, e dunque alla verità delle cose? Šestov propende per la prima, per la religione (o per la conoscenza di fede) ma è interessante capire il motivo di questa preferenza; il grande pensatore russo osserva la filosofia nel suo sviluppo e soprattutto nel suo corso occidentale e moderno e nota il prevalere di una mentalità razionalista, tesa a scomporre la realtà secondo il metro positivista: ciò che è rilevabile sperimentalmente, ciò che può essere costretto entro formule precise ed universali è reale, ciò che sfugge a questo approccio è illusorio, è superstizione, è irreale:

> La ragione che aspirava avidamente alla necessità e all'universalità ha ottenuto ciò che voleva, e i più grandi rappresentanti della filosofia moderna hanno espulso tutto ciò che poteva irritare la ragione in quella regione del «sovrasensibile» da cui non ci arriva nessuna eco, e in cui l'essere si confonde con il non essere in una spenta e tetra indifferenza[10].

La ragione che si avvita su se stessa tende inesorabilmente a smarrire la sensibilità intelligente per ciò che viene da Gerusalemme: Gerusalemme appare agli occhi di Atene come il luogo delle favole, la città degli illusi e degli sciocchi, dei creduloni. Gerusalemme non è più stimata, è preistoria. Ora, questa ragione che discredita ciò che viene dalla fede si direbbe

10 Op. cit., p. 131.

coincidere con la ragione ateniese che aspira ad universalità e necessità. Il punto chiave consiste nel fatto che questa ragione perde il contatto con la vita, e ciò accade fondamentalmente per due motivi: primo, perché espelle dalla vita tutto ciò che non può sottomettere al metro positivista della sperimentazione – e così si perde tutto ciò che vi era di più caro in Gerusalemme –. Lo sguardo sul mondo di questa ragione – divenuta raziocinio – è quindi parziale, incompleto, non è più integrale, a 360°; secondo, perché l'universalità – essendo stabilità, permanenza, immutabilità – è per questo astrattezza, incapacità di tener conto della particolarità e del movimento che, di fatto, caratterizzano il cammino dell'uomo. Dunque universalità è sinonimo di parzialità e di astrattezza. Giustamente allora Šestov rifiuta l'universalità, perché lamenta che *parzialità* e *astrattezza* non possono essere il volto di una verità vitale per l'uomo:

> La verità *an sich* e il bene *an sich* non possono essere conosciuti da colui che, in virtù delle condizioni della propria esistenza, si trovi nella necessità di «imparare» e di «adattarsi». La verità e il bene vivono su un piano completamente diverso. Quanto poco somigliano le parole della Bibbia – *signatus est super nos vultus tuus* – a quelle *rationes aeternae* con le quali la filosofia medievale, ipnotizzata dalla sapienza greca, le aveva scambiate[11]!

L'idea che la verità della vita sia legata all'universalità va decisamente in frantumi in questo quadro d'insieme. La verità che si circonda di formule universali ed astratte non può tener conto dell'umano, né della realtà nella sua vitalità. Allora semplicemente non è verità ma menzogna, inganno. L'uomo si trova quindi posto di fronte ad un *aut-aut*: o Gerusalemme o Atene; ma è avvertito: sulle strade di Atene non troverà la verità che cerca, troverà formule impersonali che finiranno per schiaciarlo. Scrive ancora Šestov:

> Ammaliato dalle parole del tentatore – *eritis scientes* – Adamo ha scambiato la libertà, che caratterizzava il suo rapporto con il Creatore che ascolta e comprende, con la dipendenza nei confronti delle verità indifferenti e impersonali, che non comprendono e non ascoltano niente, e attuano autonomamente il potere del quale si sono impadronite[12].

Con Šestov ci stiamo allora chiedendo se le *ragioni della vita* impongono di rinunciare alla tentazione di Atene e quindi all'universalità; ci chiediamo se il rispetto della persona e dei suoi vissuti non esiga la rinuncia a qual-

11 Op. cit., p. 939.

12 Op. cit., p. 941.

siasi pretesa di verità astratta ed universale: l'affermazione di una verità universale – e più ancora di un complesso di norme universali dedotte da questa verità – non finirà necessariamente per rendere sordi alle ragioni del particolare e per calpestare la persona? Non rischia di diventare invivibile, disumano, un mondo regolato da verità indifferenti e impersonali? Non è questo proprio – la disumanità – l'esito del progetto alternativo suggerito dall'antico serpente? La violenza non sorge proprio quando entra in campo l'idea di verità universale?

È interessante notare che anche Jacques Maritain rifletteva si medesimi interrogativi:

> Il problema della verità e della fraternità umana è importante per le società democratiche. [...] Se ognuno cominciasse ad imporre le proprie convinzioni e la verità nella quale crede a tutti i suoi concittadini, la vita comune non finirebbe forse per diventare impossibile? È evidente. Sì, ma è facile, troppo facile, fare ancora un passo e chiedere: se ognuno tiene fermamente alle proprie convinzioni, non prenderà ad imporle a tutti gli altri? Cosicché alla fine, la vita comune diventerà impossibile se un cittadino qualsiasi aderisce fermamente alle proprie convinzioni e crede ad una determinata verità[13]?

Giungiamo al nodo della preoccupazione in fondo sollevata da Šestov, precisandolo proprio grazie alle osservazioni di Maritain. Forse, il cuore del problema non risiede nella pretesa che vi siano delle verità universali o una «cornice antropologica» valevole per tutti gli uomini, ma piuttosto nel modo in cui gli uomini intendono raccordare i vissuti personali – propri ed altrui – a queste verità.

Ed allora usciamo dalla cornice di Šestov e ritorniamo nel solco delle riflessioni di Averincev, lì dove Atene e Gerusalemme non simboleggiano due approcci alternativi al reale, ma due storie chiamate a scoprire ciò che le accomuna, ciò che entrambe riconoscono come vitale, ciò su cui è possibile fondare la traduzione.

In effetti il problema del rapporto tra il particolare e l'universale a cui pure ci richiamava Šestov diventa il problema del rapporto tra uomini che radicano la propria esistenza in prospettive e valori non coincidenti o talvolta molto distanti: l'uomo di Gerusalemme e quello di Atene riusciranno insieme nello sforzo di *traduzione*? Riusciranno ad attingere a ciò che li lega, a ciò che già condividono e che per questo costituisce un «universale

13 J. Maritain, *Tolleranza e verità* (1957), in *Il filosofo nella società* (1960), Morcelliana, Brescia, 1976, p. 62.

vivente»? Oppure ingaggeranno una disputa accademica, fermandosi alle diversità dei termini e delle codifiche delle rispettive tradizioni, di fatto facendo quadrato – quasi paradossalmente – ciascuno attorno al proprio sistema di *particolarità astratte*, cioè non più viventi, non più incarnate ma incorniciate come un dipinto da guardare ma da non toccare?

Noi qui tocchiamo molto probabilmente un punto delicato, che in realtà si trova a monte di qualsiasi tentativo di traduzione e, nella traduzione, di dialogo tra persone appartenenti a culture e tradizioni diverse. Potremmo quasi dire che vi è un *necessario preliminare* al dialogo, e questo preliminare è il *vivere al cuore della tradizione*, della cultura e della lingua (anche intesa nel senso delle categorie intellettuali) con cui ci si esprime; vivere al cuore della tradizione significa impegnarsi a leggere ciò che passa nella propria esistenza secondo gli strumenti e la sapienza della tradizione, significa distendere la *mens* della tradizione su ciò che si vive, che si attende, su ciò di cui si soffre, su ciò di cui intensamente si gioisce; significa quindi rinnovare la tradizione, perché la si interroga continuamente dinanzi all'esperienza. Tutto questo, che effettivamente è vita, vita *meditata* del singolo – e certo del singolo inserito in una comunità – è ciò che potremmo chiamare «particolarità vivente». E con Šestov crediamo che Dio si pieghi sulla particolarità vivente, sulla persona, non su una categoria o su un'essenza.

Ciò che non è particolarità vivente, ma al contrario particolarità astratta è la semplice conoscenza di una tradizione, l'essere informati sulla storia, sugli usi sulle categorie intellettuali. Anche tutto questo è prezioso, ma non è manchevole dell'essenziale perché avvenga una traduzione: è manchevole di vita.

Volendo accogliere le preoccupazioni di Šestov ed insieme le acute osservazioni di Averincev noi potremmo forse dire che *solo chi vive al cuore di una tradizione può riuscire nella traduzione e nella scoperta dell'universale*, appunto perché conosce e sperimenta ciò di cui parla, ed è interessato a scoprire se l'altro ospita e coltiva le stesse cose, pur codificandole diversamente. È interessato a capire come vengono espressi altrove i propri vissuti, con quali sfumature, con quali ulteriori scorci. In una parola può tradurre e dialogare chi è interessato all'universale vivente, non certo chi intende ingaggiare una disputa per far prevalere la propria posizione.

Atene e Gerusalemme si incontrano – come ricorda Averincev – nella felice opera dei Settanta perché in quel momento prevale una traduzione ispirata, in cui due diversi mondi si adoperano perché i nuovi termini e le nuove categorie esprimano al meglio gli antichi concetti, e possono farlo

perché appunto si tratta di uomini che, al di là della loro mitizzazione, certamente vivono la tradizione[14].

Non appena verrà meno l'intuizione del valore dell'universale vivente che impercettibilmente affiora, ecco che Atene e Gerusalemme si divideranno ancora, Gerusalemme si rinchiuderà su se stessa e sulla propria particolarità[15]. Ma c'è da chiedersi se ormai questa particolarità non sia disseccata, non sia divenuta astratta.

Occorre ancora precisare qualcosa: cercare l'universalità vivente non è mirare a sincretismi artificiali. Il punto è che il risultato più interessante dello sforzo di traduzione è che ciascuno ritorni alla propria tradizione portando con sé qualche luce in più, in modo quasi da rendere più luminoso ciò che si è scoperto essere patrimonio condiviso tra gli uomini. Non è forse questa l'anima di quell'altra impresa di traduzione, molto più recente, che ha portato alla codifica dei Diritti universali dell'uomo? Uomini di tradizioni diverse, uomini appassionati che vivevano le rispettive tradizioni, sono riusciti ad esprimere insieme l'universalità vivente[16], tornando poi ciascuno alla propria storia ma portando con sé qualcosa dell'altro.

Ogni sforzo di traduzione trova la propria verità in questo *movimento di andata e di ritorno*, e probabilmente questo vale ad ogni livello: lingui-

14 «Per l'ebreo credente, permeato delle idee sulla santità dell'incarnazione orale e scritta del verbo divino, la seconda nascita della Torah rappresentava un avvenimento tanto importante , da porre il suo intelletto di fronte a una scelta: vedere in quanto si era verificato un sacrilegio o un miracolo. Gli ebrei di quell'epoca preferirono considerare i *Septuaginta* un miracolo, una nuova manifestazione della rivelazione. [...] Per gli autori giudaici del I secolo d. C. i *Septuaginta* sono la Scrittura autorevole, in tutto il senso religioso del termine. A ciò si giunge attraverso seri progressi nello spirito stesso del giudaismo: nell'epoca dell'ellenismo e nei primi decenni dopo la nascita di Cristo questo spirito era così universalistico e vasto come mai in precedenza e mai successivamente». Cfr. S. Averincev, *Atene e Gerusalemme* (1971–1973), cit., pp. 51–52.

15 «Solo quando la tragedia delle due guerre giudaiche (66–73 d.C. e 132–135 d.C.) pose fine ai sogni universalistici, e i circoli rabbinici, bruscamente rinserratisi nella propria esclusività nazionale, si trovarono a dover disputare con gli eredi degli universalisti alessandrini, i cristiani, l'atteggiamento del giudaismo ortodosso verso i *Septuaginta* mutò nettamente». S. Averincev, *Atene e Gerusalemme* (1971–1973), cit., p. 52.

16 Al tempo stesso non è da trascurare il fatto che proprio lì dove viene meno l'attenzione genuina all'umano ed alla sua piena realizzazione, anche lo sforzo di traduzione viene compromesso. È accaduto qualcosa di simile all'atto della traduzione della Carta dei Diritti nella lingua russa: lì alcune pressioni ideologiche hanno prodotto una resa terminologica diretta non più a tradurre i concetti (l'universale vivente) ma a tradirla. E tuttavia proprio la possibilità di un tradimento è un'ulteriore segno che l'universale vivente è stato colto, ma appunto si è voluto ignorarlo o cancellarlo.

stico, culturale, filosofico e religioso. Maritain sottolineava tutto questo a proposito della reciproca apertura tra prospettive di pensiero:

> Voglio notare, *en passant*, che una tale apertura presuppone uno sforzo dell'intelletto per trascendere, per un istante, il suo proprio linguaggio concettuale al fine di entrare nel linguaggio concettuale degli altri, ritornando poi da quel viaggio dopo aver colto l'intuizione di cui vive la filosofia nuova in questione[17].

Con Averincev possiamo allora chiederci se effettivamente l'Europa sia stata il luogo in cui Atene e Gerusalemme si sono nel tempo incontrate[18]. Con Šestov possiamo condividere qualche preoccupazione.

Se osserviamo la storia è difficile negare che il cristianesimo abbia fatto emergere l'universale vivente differentemente celato in questi due principi creativi. Tuttavia, dinanzi alle sfide dell'oggi, la domanda che dobbiamo porci non è tanto se questo patrimonio storico sia o meno reale, ma se sono vive e vivaci le tradizioni che lo custodiscono; non solo, dobbiamo anche chiederci se l'Europa contemporanea sia fotografabile in termini di tradizioni viventi, perché forse questo è il vero problema del dialogo tra diversi.

Al pensiero che vorrebbe promuovere il dialogo attenuando le identità, al pensiero che propende per i sincretismi artificiali ed astratti (tra cui talvolta anche quelli delle Carte Costituzionali scritte con bilancino burocratico) occorre opporre una prospettiva di rivalorizzazione delle tradizioni; non si tratta però – come più spesso accade – di puntare su una valorizzazione tutta concentrata sui simboli esteriori: occorre alimentare la particolarità vivente, incoraggiare alla riscoperta della propria tradizione, ad attestarsi al cuore di essa nel vivere, perché questo è il presupposto dell'incontrarsi e del dialogare. Occorre far capire che l'universalità a cui può tendere l'Europa non è l'universalità astratta delle regole o della media delle aspirazioni nazionali: ben più profondamente è l'universalità vivente data dal patrimonio incarnato di *senso dell'umano e del divino* che ciascuna tradizione a proprio modo coglie ed a proprio modo esprime.

Paradossalmente diremo persino che se vogliamo trovare ciò che ci accomuna, se vogliamo scoprire l'universale vivente e su questo costruire una casa comune – comune ed aperta ad altre tradizioni – il passo da fare

17 Op. cit., p. 44.

18 «Gli interpreti alessandrini non risolsero il problema, superiore alle loro forze, della sintesi tra "Atene" e "Gerusalemme"; saremo loro grati per averlo almeno posto. A risolverlo doveva essere, con tutta la sua esistenza, la cultura europea». S. Averincev, *Atene e Gerusalemme* (1971–1973), cit., p. 63.

è quello che ci conduce risolutamente ciascuno a rivitalizzare la propria particolarità, ad esplicitare il proprio vivere la tradizione nel confronto con altre tradizioni. Ancora una volta rientrare in se stessi (e nella propria tradizione) è il modo migliore per dialogare con gli altri.

Ho voluto raccogliere queste suggestioni da Averincev e più marginalmente da Šestov, provando ad esprimerle secondo la *forma mentis* che mi è più propria, in cui si trova molto Maritain e più profondamente ancora San Tommaso. A tutti è chiaro che non si tratta di una ricostruzione di ciò che ciascuno di questi autori potevano pensare del rapporto tra fede e ragione, tra religione e filosofia: piuttosto si tratta della sforzo – sempre appassionante – di pensare in compagnia di voci diverse, provando a captarne le intuizioni ed a lasciarsi provocare. Nessuno però creda che questo sia un gioco: la possibilità e la modalità dell'incontro tra diversi è uno dei «casi seri» della vita dell'uomo, su cui è e sarà importante continuare a riflettere e soprattutto ad esercitarci assieme.

Athens and Jerusalem: Paths of a Dialogue

Summary

According to Sergei Averintsev, "Athens and Jerusalem" represent "the contrast and meeting of two creative principles." These two principles must be read as the epiphany of different—and equally fundamental—human approaches to reality, not as two "stages" of the unique evolutionary movement of culture in which the first principle (i.e., Jerusalem) is the prehistory of the second (i.e., Athens). The Hebraic-Christian universe is not the prehistory of the Greek universe. It is another history. From this perspective, one can understand that a meeting of different *creative principles* is not a matter of translation from a *dialect* into a *language*, as the passage from *prehistory* to *history* could be understood.

Moreover, it becomes clear that every translation effort counts on something common between those that are involved in translation. Thus every translation does not have as a result only mutual understanding, but also the emergence of those elements that make understanding and sharing possible. What comes to the surface is neither *mine* nor *yours*, but *ours*. And what is really *ours* is a real life and its deep values that we all share, although we express them in different ways.

The problem of the relationship between universality (what we deeply share) and particularity (the way we express it) becomes the problem of the relationship between men whose existence is grounded in different experiences and sets of values. The following question arises: will Jerusalem and Athens succeed in their translation? Will they discover what they already share, and what we can call *living universality*?

Here a sensitive point surfaces, which is a fundamental premise of every attempt at translation and every effective dialogue between men that belong to different cultures and traditions. One could say that there is a *preliminary condition* for dialogue and that this condition *lives in the heart of a tradition*. It is an effort to read what happens in one's own existence according to the wisdom of the tradition within which one lives. This, however, simultaneously means the renewal of tradition, which is continuously questioned by experience. This individual capacity to live and think within tradition is what can be called *living particularity*. Taking into account some concerns of Shestov and remarks by Averintsev, one can therefore say that only the man that lives in the heart of a tradition (in living particularity) can succeed in translating and discovering *living universality*.

Atene in Jeruzalem: poti dialoga

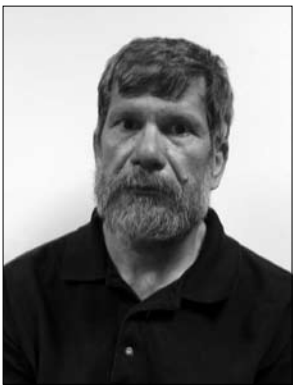
Povzetek

»Atene in Jeruzalem« po Sergeju Averincevu pomenita »nasprotje in srečanje dveh ustvarjalnih načel«. Ti načeli moramo razbrati kot epifanijo različnih – in enako temeljnih – človeških pristopov k resničnosti, ne kot »stopnji« enega in edinega razvojnega gibanja kulture, v katerem bi bilo prvo načelo, tj. Jeruzalem, predzgodovina drugega, tj. Aten. Hebrejsko-krščanski univerzum ni predzgodovina grškega. Je drugačna zgodovina. V tej perspektivi lahko razumemo, da srečanje različnih ustvarjalnih načel ni stvar prevoda iz *narečja* v *jezik*, kot bi bilo mogoče razumeti prehod iz *predzgodovine* v *zgodovino*.

Poleg tega postane jasno, da vsako prevajalsko prizadevanje računa ne nekaj, kar je skupno tistim, ki so vpleteni v prevod. Rezultat vsakega prevoda zato ni le medsebojno razumevanje, ampak tudi pojavitev tistih prvin, ki omogočajo razumevanje in medsebojno deleženje. To, kar vznikne, ni ne *moje* ne *tvoje*, ampak *najino*. In kar je v resnici *najino*, je resnično življenje, globoke vrednote, ki si jih delimo, čeprav jih različno izražamo.

Problem razmerja med univerzalnostjo (tem, kar si delimo v globini) in partikularnostjo (načinom, kako to izražamo) postane problem razmerja med ljudmi, katerih bivanje je utemeljeno v različnih izkušnjah in vrstah vrednot. Vstaja vprašanje: se bo Jeruzalemu in Atenam posrečilo v njunem prevajanju? Bosta odkrila to, kar si že delita in kar lahko imenujemo *živa univerzalnost*?

Tu prihaja na spregled občutljiva točka, temeljna premisa vsakega poskusa prevoda in vsakega učinkovitega dialoga med ljudmi, ki pripadajo različnim kulturam in izročilom. Lahko bi rekli, da obstaja *vnaprejšnji pogoj* za dialog in da ta pogoj *živi v osrčju izročila*. Gre za prizadevanje, da se to, kar se človeku godi v njegovem bivanju, razbira v skladu z modrostjo izročila, znotraj katerega živi. To pa hkrati pomeni obnavljanje izročila, ki ga izkušnja nenehno dela vprašljivega. To individualno zmožnost življenja in mišljenja znotraj izročila lahko imenujemo *živa partikularnost*. Če upoštevamo to, kar je skrbelo Šestova in kar je opazil Averincev, bi zato lahko rekli, da se le človeku, ki živi v osrčju izročila (v živi partikularnosti), lahko posrečita prevod in odkritje *žive univerzalnosti*.



Pavle Rak

The Question That Should Be Better Avoided

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Some years ago there was talk of building a new church in the center of Athens to alleviate the problems of the Metropolitan Church, which had become too small for its growing needs. But where could an appropriate space be found in the town center? Some very Orthodox Christians said there was a good space, but unfortunately it was occupied by a temple dedicated to demons. The idea was to destroy the Parthenon and convert this land, which had been dedicated to Satan for more than two thousand years, into a temple of God.

Almost at the same time, I was present when one of the two most famous *gerondas* of late 20th-century Greece told a small group of his disciples how he had God's gift (*chárisma*), which seemed rather peculiar even in his eyes: he sensed the existence of ancient sculptures underground and could indicate to archeologists where to dig and what they would find. He felt that those sculptures were radiating positive energy. Was it possible, wondered the *geronda*, that there was some good in these sculptures that we Christians took for demonic sculptures? However, he added, things were not so simple. With all due respect to our Christian predecessors, that is, with all understanding for their polemical fervor against paganism, it was possible that God had found a particular pedagogical way of talking to the people that left us these sculptures that are to be found all over Greece. And for the *geronda* there was no dilemma: God was talking to them in positive terms.

It seems, then, that there are two diametrically opposed ways of answering the question posed at our symposium, and there is nothing new about this situation.

One of the early fathers of the Church, Clement of Alexandria, wrote that Plato was "in all senses almost equal to Moses" (*Pedagog.* 3, 11). In other words, Plato was elevated to the position of a Church prophet. This is the best example of continuity. At the same time, we have hundreds of examples of the destructive attitude of Christian activists towards ancient sculptures because they considered them to be sculptures representing devils. The destruction was generally followed by arguments that were meant to demonstrate the falsity of pagan gods: namely, that sculptures were not capable of defending themselves, an argument that could be easily used in the case of iconoclast destruction of Christian icons.

Sergei Averintsev, who was the reason for our gathering here in Ljubljana, once wrote that the Greek world had a "strong nostalgia for Eastern wisdom."[1] Greek culture was capable of looking at itself from a distance, capable of self-criticism, capable of correcting itself using the experience of others. Greek culture was open to Eastern influences. In the beginning, Eastern Christian culture was also open to the influence of Hellenic culture, which was dominant at that time. But later, the new needs of the new and growing culture prevailed, and with them came a predominance of Eastern poetics and sensibility. Classical Greek expression was gradually abandoned (with the exception of certain philosophical concepts and terminology that proved irreplaceable). So, there was some degree of continuity, when and where needed, and some degree of discontinuity, when and where the new culture emancipated itself.

I wanted to be original and try and answer the question posed at our symposium in the most direct way: like a good secondary-school pupil, if possible, with a simple yes or no. Was there continuity or was there a conflict? But, in all those cases, what really matters is not the force of the argument from which we could deduce whether the answer is yes or no. We have to deal with a paradigmatic type of relationship between different religions and civilizations, and they are never simple. So I failed. Human relations, relations between civilizations, are such that they do not allow a simple answer. Those relations do not include a single dilemma: there is always a complex of dilemmas, the result of which is in most cases some kind of compromise; and, if there is no compromise, then there is no question either: before any question, one partner "in dialog" destroys the other.

To begin with, as we were told at school, and as contemporary philosophy (of deconstruction, for example) insists even more strongly, before

1 Sergei Averintsev, *U istokov poeticheskoi obraznosti vizantiiskogo iskustva. Drugoi Rim*, Moskva: Spb. Amfora, 2005, p. 229.

asking any question we should analyze the terms of the question, the categories we use. What is Antiquity and what is Christianity? How do they conceive their respective identities? The questions multiply themselves. What relationship could entities thus defined have? Whom are we questioning? Antiquity or Christianity? In situations similar to that encountered in our symposium, the attitude of Antiquity is mostly neglected: Antiquity is dead, and Christianity still lives and needs to define itself. However, Antiquity had its answers too. To start with, there was the answer given by Celsus, then the Decree of Tolerance, and last but not least the answer given by Julian the Apostate.

Nevertheless, we are going to stay with Christianity, not because Antiquity's concepts of continuity or conflict are not interesting to us, but because I lack both competence and experience in this matter. However, the Christian answers are, as we know, multiple. At a certain stage and in a certain field of activity, a civilization—say, a Christian one—does not concern itself with the question of compatibility, and happily utilizes the fruits of other civilizations; at other times, it gives dogmatically clear and decisive answers, if the question is also posed explicitly and clearly.

In the case of the relations between different civilizations, cultures, or political entities, they either succeed one another (one emerging out of the ruins of the others, or on the more or less carefully preserved remains of others), or harmoniously flow into each other, or live parallel lives (in more or less conflict-free relations). Conflict—or cooperation—depends on many elements, not only on the logic of difference and identity. If the only element for judgment were the persuasion that one's philosophy or religion were right and true, a fight would always be inevitable because rightness usually does not recognize the notion of compromise.

A special case of relations between different civilizations or religions (but not an isolated case) was the one analyzed by Assmann in his book *Moses the Egyptian*,[2] the very case of self-persuasion in one's absolute rightness. Assmann wrote about Akhenaten's religious reforms and continued with the author of the Pentateuch, who had the same attitude as the reformists, namely the attitude of "anti-religion," as Assmann calls it. That is to say that both the Pharaoh and Moses constructed their religious concepts as systematically opposed to the religion previously in place, persuaded by the absolute rightness of their own and the absolute wrongness of the traditional Egyptian religion. That persuasion gave them the right to destroy "the enemy" —without mercy.

2 Cf. Jan Assmann, *Moïse l'Égiptien*, Paris: Aubier, 2001.

Assmann demonstrated the option that when one civilization from the very beginning defines itself as opposed to another, then there is no room for compromise. However, such cases are extremely rare. Christianity, even if disposed to present itself as the "anti-religion," in practice mostly applied the art of compromise, as I shall attempt to demonstrate in the case of the attitude towards Antiquity of one of the most uncompromising late-Byzantine authors—St. Gregory Palamas.

As far as Antiquity is concerned, we have to deal with two different attitudes of St. Gregory: when the question of attitude is posed directly, his stand is adamantly strict; when the question is indirect, we see St. Gregory entering into an open-minded dialogue (such as his tolerant discussions with Muslim theologians when he was captured in Turkey, which were referred to in descriptions of his life), freely using the conceptual apparatus of ancient philosophy from Aristotle to Neoplatonism.

In the polemics against Barlaam, the question of natural knowledge, Greek philosophy, and the sciences was posed directly in terms of their compatibility with Christian practice and attitudes, and St. Gregory's answer was as direct as possible:

> Plato himself, praising those he considered the best amongst poets and thinkers, said that if someone wants to create poetry without being inspired by demons, neither he nor his poetry can have any success; also, before starting to think about the nature of creation in his *Thimaios*, Plato was praying not to say anything that would be unpleasant to gods—but could philosophy that was pleasant to demons be given by God? Socrates had his demon, who certainly initiated him into his secrets; obviously, this demon witnessed that Socrates was the most wise among all men. Homer also called upon the "goddess" to sing through him the murderous anger of Achilles, allowing that demon to use him as a tool and attributing to the same "goddess" the source of his wisdom and literary talent. It seemed not enough for Hesyodes, when he was creating *The Theogony*, to be possessed by only one demon, so he called upon himself no less than nine demons at the same time.
>
> (*Triada* 1, 1, 15)

In *Triada* 2, 1, 13, St. Gregory wrote: "Paul said that no one could drink from the chalice of demons and from the chalice of God, so how can anyone be in possession of the wisdom of God and be inspired by demons? Those who recognize that their wisdom is inspired by demons, we call demonic wise men." There is no need to offer further quotes here, but the text continues in the same vein.

What about secular knowledge in itself, not only Greek? "Do they [Barlaam and his followers] ever think that, once we had turned towards the tree of knowledge and eaten from it, we were thrown out of the divine place of pleasure?" (1, 1, 6). "Don't you see that knowledge alone [that of Greek philosophy] is of absolutely no use? Even worse, it causes the greatest possible harm. The first of all evils, the principal sin of the devil—haughtiness—is caused by knowledge" (1, 1, 9).

We see two different arguments against Greek philosophy and culture in general: one is based on a strict way of interpreting original ancient claims of divine inspiration (the demon is the devil, all "gods" are satanic idols), the other on the rejection of all secular knowledge, even if it is not of "demonic" origin. For our argument, the second case is even more important. It reflects the very situation of "anti-religion" that says the only true knowledge is our revealed truth. The revealed truth can only be complete truth, so there cannot be any partial truth—its very partiality proves that it is a lie. Consequently, everything that is not the knowledge of revelation is a lie, most directly opposed to the salvific truth, and must be opposed by all means or ignored. If and when we want to have any sort of continuity with other cultures, any sort of compromise with the surrounding world that does not share all our opinions, we had better not pose the question about ultimate truth. Once posed, that question leads to an everlasting conflict.

Now, I am not going to analyze further the content of those declarations of St. Gregory. My primary intention is simple enough: to draw your attention to the attitude that is potentially (always?) present in a (monotheistic) religious discourse—the attitude of anti-religion.

I would like to end with one contemporary example. A month ago, at Easter, a prominent Greek theologian and spiritual leader issued an epistle with following conclusion:

> The risen Christ-Truth could not be identified (equated) with the "truths" of other religions and faiths. Christ is the entire Truth. He is not a half-Truth to be completed with other truths. . .
> Heresies were terrible enemies of the Church. More terrible than any other is Syncretism, that is the mixing and interconnecting of all beliefs. Syncretism subverts not one dogma, but all dogmas; it subverts all-Truth [*panalétheia*], God-men and our Lord, with the ultimate goal of relying on the force of the Almighties of this world, open the way to all-religion [*panthriskía*] of the New Age.
> Our answer to that total war against the Christ-Truth should be our open confession that only Christ is the ultimate Truth and therefore

> the Savior of the world, and that only the Holy Orthodox Church is truly apostolic and the continual presence of the Church of Prophets, Apostles and Fathers.
> We confess our faith even if we are going, now or in the future, to suffer the worst social isolation.
> It is the time for confession and suffering for the sake of the Crucified and Risen Christ, our Truth and Salvation.
> Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

In the face of this confession I am more than embarrassed. Yes, I am an Orthodox Christian. But, at the same time, I would like to stay open to other cultures and civilizations, to Antiquity, among others. Is this schizophrenia? Maybe.

But as we are still in the Easter period, I will finish with greetings that, in my eyes, should liberate us from any dilemma:

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

For the Resurrection is far greater than any conflict or even cooperation.

The Question That Should Better Be Avoided

Summary

While St. Cyril of Alexandria called Plato "divine and equal to Moses," St. Gregory Palamas writes that all the knowledge and reputation of Plato is of satanic origin. Moreover, Gregory claims that all knowledge that is not revealed is mortal for the soul. However, in other contexts he largely uses the concepts that were elaborated by (Neo)platonist philosophers. Equally, the entire Christian culture is constantly oscillating between the appropriation of the achievements of other cultures and their explicit and total rejection. So, is there a conflict or continuity between Antiquity and Christianity?

Historically, we have no solution to this schizophrenic situation. We can only describe it and try to cope with it in each and every individual case. Here, Assmann's notion of "anti-religion" could be of some help. However, we can make the problem less dangerous by avoiding posing this question explicitly, for, once posed, it generates a clear attitude. Namely, the attitude of any believer of "anti-religion" is an explicit condemnation of all others that do not share his belief.

For this reason, the question of the symposium is designated as a "question that should better be avoided."

Vprašanje, ki naj bi se mu raje ogibali

Povzetek

Sveti Ciril Aleksandrijski je Platona imenoval »božanskega in enakega Mojzesu«, sveti Gregor Palamas pa zapiše, da sta vse Platonovo védenje in sloves satanskega izvora. Še več, Gregor trdi, da je vse védenje, ki ni razodeto, smrtonosno za dušo. Toda v drugih kontekstih na veliko rabi pojme, ki so jih razdelali (novo)platonistični filozofi. Prav tako tudi celotna krščanska kultura nenehno niha med tem, da si prisvoji dosežke drugih kultur, in tem, da jih izrecno in povsem zavrne. Ali torej med antiko in krščanstvo obstaja spor ali kontinuiteta?

Zgodovinsko gledano za to shizofreno situacijo nimamo rešitve. Lahko jo le opisujemo in se v vsakem posameznem primeru skušamo kosati z njo. Pri tem nam je lahko v pomoč Assmanov pojem »anti-religija«. Vendar problem lahko naredimo manj nevaren, če se ognemo temu, da izrecno postavimo to vprašanje, kajti brž ko je izrecno postavljeno, porodi jasno zadržanje. Zadržanje vsakega vernika »anti-religije« je namreč izrecna obsodba vseh drugih, ki ne delijo njegovega prepričanja.

Zato je vprašanje simpozija označeno kot »vprašanje, ki bi se mu morali ogibati«.


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Antiquity and Christianity: A Contestable Conciliation

Logos Cultural and Arts Society,
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In my short contribution to the debate on the relationship between Antiquity and Christianity, I wish to present an intentionally radicalized view of some key differences between the two topics. This further evolves into a criticism of their reconciliation, which is found in theology from patristic times onwards. For the purpose of this presentation, the term "Christianity" is taken to mean the time and the worldview of the early Church, as expressed in the New Testament and other early Christian documents that still maintain its initial Jewish characteristics. By "Christendom" I designate the theological, philosophical, and political cluster of ideas that appeared in the times of Emperor Constantine and that is still often not clearly distinguished from "Christianity." As far as "Antiquity" is concerned, I concentrate mainly on Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophy as its essential worldview; other Greek philosophical schools such as Epicureanism, Cynicism, Stoicism, and so on will not be considered. Because Christians primarily interacted with the Platonic segment of the world of Antiquity, this limited focus should be sufficient for the current purpose. In a way, my approach here is exactly the opposite of Averintsev: he compared the Christendom of the early Byzantine era with pagan Antiquity and found considerable differences due to Christian influence. I am comparing Byzantine Christendom with earlier Christianity and in doing so I discover differences that are due to the influence of Platonic philosophy.

I perceive the main area of difference between the two paradigms—that of Christianity and that of Antiquity—to be in their attitude towards physical, created matter, which includes the human body and sexuality. A typical Platonic worldview could be summarized along these lines: the human soul is trapped in a cage of the body and limitations of material

existence. The soul is "entombed in this which we carry about with us and call the body, in which we are imprisoned like an oyster in its shell."[1] The essence of the soul is understood as eternal and capable of pure knowledge and, therefore, in opposition to the carnal and material body, which only hinders it in this endeavor. The only way for the soul to escape is to realize this essential difference and to contemplate the eternal, abstract realities that are comprehended by "mind alone" and are absolutely transcendent of any mode of being in the body. The purpose of philosophy is, therefore, to "dissever the soul from the body. . . . The philosopher dishonors the body; his soul runs away from the body and desires to be alone and by itself."[2] Salvation is only possible at the point of complete denial and elimination of everything bodily, corporeal, and carnal, and can therefore be directly associated with death. "What is that which is termed death, but this very separation and release of the soul from the body?"[3] According to Socrates in *Phaedo*, true philosophy is actually the study and practice of dying. According to this paradigm, human sexuality is also viewed unfavorably because it is seen only in the function of reproduction and prolongation of human bodily existence. Therefore, a dualism of the material and the spiritual exists in Platonic thought; the two are opposed without any possibility of reconciliation.

In contrast to this, early Christianity has maintained an essentially Jewish worldview that is significantly different in these points. The material world and the human body were created directly from the one God and were pronounced "very good" at the beginning.[4] The first sin, which took place after the creation of the material world, made this "goodness" problematic, but never really obliterated it. Exactly the contrary: God's free and gracious actions to save human beings were always worked out in concrete manners with material means and encompassed the body as well as the soul.[5] Salvation in the Judeo-Christian paradigm is a personal "turning" to God, a change in relating to God and to fellow humans, which finally results in renewal not only of man's spiritual existence, but in the

1 Plato, *Phaedrus* 250c.

2 *Phaedo* 65.

3 *Phaedo* 67d.

4 The goodness of creation is a recurring theme in its account; cf. Genesis 1.10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31.

5 Even the distinction between body and soul is a later development; in most Old Testament texts, the term "soul" (Hebrew *nephesh*) has a connotation of ordinary human existence, an individual's life, and so on. Only later, under Greek influence, does it begin to denote the inner, incorporeal dimension of a human being.

resurrection of the body as well.[6] In this world view, evil is not primarily associated with matter and the body; instead, it is located in the spiritual center of the human being: in the heart[7] and the mind.[8]

Nevertheless, it is true that one finds a certain dualism in some New Testament texts: the opposition between the "flesh" and the "spirit."[9] Traditionally, this was understood in Platonic terms, as can be also seen from certain Bible translations.[10] In some way, the interpretation of these two New Testament terms is crucial for this argument. First, one should note that the term "flesh"[11] is a broad one; it is often used in a neutral, non-negative meaning of bodily existence. It can denote the human condition, with special stress on its weakness, limitedness, and temporality. The third meaning, the one that is associated precisely with the passages of concern here, is man's sinful nature, which is expressed mainly in selfishness, self-centeredness, and being closed to God and to fellow humans. This "sinful nature" is a spiritual entity, in the sense that it is not located in the human body, but in the human mind[12] or soul.[13]

The other member of this pair, the "spirit," needs some qualification as well. In the New Testament context, it cannot be understood as an abstract and generic term for a transcendent, immaterial dimension. On the contrary, it is very particular: it means God's Holy Spirit, Jesus' personal and manifest presence among believers. The antagonism of the flesh versus the Spirit therefore does not connote the dualism of the material and the immaterial, but the difference between two modes of existence, two ways

6 It is telling that the main New Testament verb used to describe "salvation," *sózo*, means both 'to heal' and 'to save' and therefore encompasses both dimensions.

7 Cf. Mark 7.14–23; in biblical language, the "heart" denotes the hidden center of the entire person, the seat of will and thoughts.

8 Cf. Romans 1.18; Ephesians 4.17, and so on. The Greek word used here (*noûs*) denotes the capability of intuitive and direct knowledge or apprehension; it was regarded by the Greeks as the peak of human spiritual capabilities. Some translators even prefer to render it with the English word *spirit*.

9 See, for example, John 3.6, 6.63; 1 Corinthians 3.1; Galatians 5.17; and so on.

10 Especially in certain South Slavic translations (Serbian, Croatian, and Macedonian), the term *sárx* is simply translated as 'body'.

11 Hebrew *basar*, Greek *sárx*.

12 See Colossians 2.18, where the phrase "mind of the flesh" (*noûs tês sarkós*) is employed: "A surprising expression, which shows how the apostle transcends the dualism of body and spirit typical for Antiquity. Even the purest mind can become 'carnal' if it is estranged from God" (Gorazd Kocijančič, note to Colossians 2.18 in the Slovenian Standard Version of the Bible, p. 1764, Svetopisemska družba Slovenije, Ljubljana ²1997).

13 Cf. 1 Corinthians 2.14; James 3.15.

of life: that which is characterized by selfishness and self-aggrandizement, and which is ultimately limited by death, and that which is marked by openness to the otherness of God and fellow human beings, by freedom and by limitless life.

This interpretation is held by the majority of contemporary biblical scholars. Whereas the New Testament does contain rigorous ethical demands and radical challenges to overcome the limitations of one's own nature, it should be observed that these happen inside a paradigm that is fundamentally different from Platonic philosophy. Therefore, if one could speak of the asceticism of the early Christians, this should be clearly separated from other forms of asceticism, which normally presuppose the opposition between material and incorporeal.

New Testament texts contain explicit affirmations of the sanctity of the body and of the sexual union of husband and wife. These were understood as concrete, tangible occasions of holy mysteries. The spiritual and the bodily, even the sexual, were not seen as opposites, but rather as parallels. The most vivid examples of such an attitude can be taken from the Pauline epistles. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God," says Paul in 1 Corinthians 6.19 regarding the body. In addition, in Ephesians 5.28–32 he continues to include sexuality: "In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the Church, because we are members of his body. 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the Church." The relationship of husband and wife is, therefore, a holy image of Christ's relationship to the Church. The precursor to this understanding is almost certainly to be found in the Old Testament book Song of Songs.

This briefly sketches out the difference between the worldview of Antiquity and Christianity. However, from the 3rd century onwards it can be observed how these two very distinct models started merging, to form the typical worldview of what I call "Christendom."

I believe the most important figure in this process was Origen. It is true that even before him Christian apologists used the language of Greek philosophy to describe the Christian faith. With Origen, however, something more important happens: philosophical terminology and concepts are used not only to explain Christianity to *others*, but now they become

tools used for Christian internal self-understanding. This change of language was not merely superficial. With great conviction, Origen stated that, what the prophets were to Israel, Socrates and other philosophers were to Greeks, and thus somehow elevated the texts of the Greek philosophers to the same level as those of the Old Testament. This opened the doors for Christians to explore and employ certain aspects of this great philosophical tradition. With the help of certain Platonic philosophical elements, Origen constructed the first systematic representation of Christian belief and teaching, one that was quite appealing to his contemporary intellectuals. It could be argued that this was the birth of theology, in the sense of the word as is now commonly used, and especially systematic theology.

It is therefore not surprising that Origen's speculations about the beginnings of the world run exactly as one would expect from a Platonic thinker: the story of creation is reinterpreted symbolically: the entire material world was due to the fall of souls from God. The material nature of the world is perceived as merely an episode in the spiritual process of development, whose end should be the annihilation of all matter and return to God. As far as humans are concerned, the first sin is, therefore, understood as the cause for man to acquire his physical body. This "sarkosis" happens at the point at which God clothes the fallen Adam and Eve with garments of skins.[14]

Another important consequence of Origen's approach is seen in the transfer of Greek philosophical notions of what is proper for the abstract deity (*theoprepés*) to the personal God of the biblical revelation: the characteristics of impassability (incapacity to suffer) and immutability (incapacity for inner change) now become projected into the Godhead. Biblical passages showing God as expressing grief and even changing his mind[15] are now explained away as crude anthropomorphisms that were necessary because of the limitedness of the original audience. The constancy of God's character, which is affirmed in the Scriptures, is now replaced by absolute changelessness and lack of inner motion.

Nevertheless, to be fair to Origen, one must recognize the importance of his achievement. In a time when Christianity had no political back-

14 Cf. Genesis 3.21; referred to by Origen in *Against Celsus* 4, 40 as containing "a certain secret and mystical doctrine (far transcending that of Plato) of the soul losing its wings, and being borne downwards to earth, until it can lay hold of some stable resting-place." This is actually a direct quote from Plato, *Phaedrus* 246c, where it is also clearly stated that this is the moment when the soul acquires an "earthly body."

15 Cf. Exodus 32.9–14; Jonah 3.10; 4.2, and so on.

ing and was still regarded as a weird and dangerous sect in Greek and Roman societies, his synthesis represented a major apologetic triumph, which clearly showed that Christianity was actually the true peak and fulfillment of the highest aspirations of contemporary culture. Origen's brilliant knowledge of the Bible, his learned scholarship, the remarkable intuition of his Christocentric symbolic interpretations, and his firm and coherent exposition of the Scripture made it almost impossible for anyone in his age to criticize him. One should also note that Origen repeatedly stressed the difference between the core teachings of the Church on the one hand and his speculations on the other; in various places he clearly states that his opinion is not a dogma; that is, it is not normative for all Christians. It is actually quite amazing that his rejection by the imperial Church happened so late, in 553, three centuries after his death, under quite uncertain circumstances.[16] In the meantime, his approach and his works made an enormous impact on almost every significant Christian thinker of the Greco-Roman world, even on the most orthodox ones that came to be called "Church Fathers" in most Christian traditions.

In the time of Emperor Constantine and his successors, Origen's bold linking of Greek philosophy with Judeo-Christian revelation started to serve a new and important political purpose. Emperors that wanted all of their subjects to embrace Christendom certainly found it useful because it helped to make the transition smoother, especially for the better-educated. Furthermore, even teachers and theologians inside the Church became so accustomed to the use of philosophical terminology and concepts that they seemed to be unable to do without them. It appears that in the Greco-Roman world there were almost no objections towards this linguistic and paradigmatic shift. This can be clearly shown from the history of the early Ecumenical Councils, where the dogmas of the nature of Christ and the Trinity were discussed.

At the First Council of Nicaea, which took place in AD 325, the philosophical concepts of *homooúsios* and *homoioúsios* were subject to fervent debate as to which of them properly described the relationship of Christ to God the Father. Both of these terms come from philosophy and are not found in the Christian Scriptures. It is amazing that for the bishops at the

16 This happened at the Fifth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople. Some scholars argue that the condemnation actually did not take place at the council, but it was later misunderstood as one of the conciliar decrees; others point to the fact that the condemnation mainly dealt with a later development of Origen's thought that had nothing to do with Origen personally.

council there was simply no other way; they had to decide between one of these. It seems it was completely impossible to go back to biblical language, which was rooted in the Jewish worldview and lacked precision but was, on the other hand, less abstract, and more direct and lively[17] than the terms chosen. One can only wonder at the absolute absence of any voice trying to show that the abstract philosophical terminology was simply inadequate or inappropriate for expressing the paradoxes and intimacy of the personal relations that were in question.

It is important to note that these expressions were not understood as additional explanations of the revelation for those interested; this language was constituted as an absolute norm for every Christian—an important difference since the time of Origen. Accepting the proper philosophical term and rejecting the wrong one was a matter of salvation or damnation, and all those that did not accept the *homooúsios* formula were expelled from the imperial Church. Furthermore, although this terminology was thought to supply a level of precision that was not possible with the biblical language, it soon became obvious that it needed more explanation with the same philosophical language to make it more precise. Another council was necessary, with new formulations and with a new Church-splitting damnation of those that did not accept the new definitions. This cycle was then repeated several times, and each time a part of Church was cut off from the rest because of its disagreement with the proposed formulation.

One can see this unquestioned synthesis of Christianity with Antiquity everywhere in the early Byzantine Church, both in its eastern and its western parts. It made its way not only into normative theology, but also into the practical spirituality of Christians. The body was again understood as a cage for the soul and sexuality was again disfavored and reduced to a reproductive function. Instead, stern asceticism and virginity were honored and put in prominent positions.

To show how drastically the attitude of the mature Byzantine era differed from that of the Apostle Paul, quoted earlier, I can refer to one of its most distinguished representatives: the writer, theologian, and mystic Maximus the Confessor. His *Centuries on Love* includes statements like this: "He that has his mind attached to the love of God despises all visible things and even his own body as something foreign" (1, 6). It is quite

17 See, for example, John 1.18, where the Son's closeness to the Father is expressed by Him being "in the bosom of the Father." The word *kólpos* which is used here, can also mean 'womb' and comes from Semitic idioms that link inner parts of the body, such as the womb and intestines, with tenderness and other intimate affections.

difficult to imagine any New Testament writer expressing himself in such terms! As it logically follows, Maximus' view on sexuality between husband and wife is strictly functional: ". . . the correct use of sexual intercourse is the purpose of begetting children. He that looks at the pleasure has missed the use . . . he is abusing his wife" (2, 17). The difference between the apostle and the confessor is obvious and it shows how well integrated Neo-Platonic elements had become in most representative works of Byzantine times.

Here one should note Averintsev's remarkable observation in the introduction to his book. He shows that imperial Christendom was neither the first nor the strongest propagator of dualistic ideas in early Byzantine society. Quite to the contrary: Christians were ridiculed by the Neo-Platonists because they believed in resurrection of the body. Almost all of the known heresies and cults of the time advocated a much more radical asceticism than the official Church. It seems that these ideas and the value system associated with them were so integral to the *Zeitgeist* that the Church was unable to oppose them entirely—it could only correct some of their extremes. Alternatively, from a more critical standpoint, it could be argued that the Church *could not* oppose these trends because it needed to maintain a good public image in a society in which the emperor had assigned it the prominent role of the state religion.

Whatever the reason, one can only observe that this amalgamation of Christian and Platonic ideas in imperial Christendom became a standard and a norm and was unquestioned almost up to today. It became a part of Christian "collective unconscious." It was so persistent that it mostly survived even the Reformation's endeavors to return Christendom to the Bible. Possibly due to Luther's and Calvin's appreciation of Augustine and the Church Fathers in general, this paradigm can still be traced in various Protestant traditions and movements, including some recent ones. Only in recent decades is there a noticeable increased scholarly and pastoral stress on the *Jewishness* of the New Testament texts, their authors, and Jesus himself. Part of this awareness is the recognition of a typical Hebraic or Semitic paradigm underlying the New Testament, which compels a rethinking of exegesis and its theological and anthropological implications.

This is also the purpose of this text: it is not to criticize or contradict Origen, the Church Fathers, or the Ecumenical Councils. I am the first to admit to their great contributions and achievements, from which all Christians should learn—learn mostly in the positive sense but, in the case of uncritical acceptance of a foreign paradigm, one should learn from their mistakes as well. The problem does not lie in the particular conclu-

sions that they formulated, but in the fact that these were made normative and thus defined the identity of Christianity. It is time to realize that this synthesis or reconciliation of paradigms of Antiquity and Christianity is indeed contestable and problematic, and that the earlier Christian worldview is more appropriate for the identification of Christianity.

Antiquity and Christianity: A Contestable Conciliation

Summary

The paper presents an intentionally radicalized view on the essential differences between Antiquity and Christianity. It criticizes their reconciliation as found in theology and Church practice from the early Byzantine era onwards. The key area of difference is perceived to be in the attitude towards physical, created matter, which includes the human body and sexuality. Whereas the predominant worldview of Antiquity regarded the corporeal and the physical as something negative, something to be dishonored and escaped from, early Christianity viewed it as something created by God and therefore inherently good and fully partaking in the salvation and sanctification that is wrought by Christ. However, from the 3rd century onwards one can observe how these two very distinct anthropological models started merging. Through Origen, Greek philosophical notions were fully welcomed in Christian discourse and self-understanding, and the Platonic rejection of matter was one of these. Because of Origen's genius as a scholar and exegete, this linguistic and paradigmatic shift encountered almost no opposition and very little correction from the Church Fathers and later theologians almost up to the present day. However, it is argued that the earlier Christian worldview, which is essentially Semitic, is more appropriate for the identification of Christianity.

Antika in krščanstvo: sporna sprava

Povzetek

Tekst predstavlja namenoma radikaliziran pogled na temeljne razlike med antiko in krščanstvom. Gre za kritiko njune sprave, ki jo srečujemo v teologiji in cerkveni praksi od zgodnjega bizantinskega obdobja naprej. Poglavitna razlika se kaže v pogledu na fizično, ustvarjeno snov s človeškim telesom in spolnostjo vred. Po prevladujočem antičnem svetovnem nazoru je bilo vse telesno in fizično vrednoteno kot nekaj negativnega, nekaj nečastnega, od česar je treba pobegniti, zgodnje krščanstvo pa je v tem videlo nekaj, kar je ustvaril Bog in je zato v temelju dobro ter popolnoma udeleženo v odrešenju in posvečenju, ki ga uresničuje Kristus. Vendar od 3. stoletja naprej lahko opazujemo, kako sta se ta dva zelo različna antropološka modela začela mešati. Z Origenom so grški filozofski pojmi in predstave postali popolnoma sprejemljivi za krščanski diskurz in samorazumevanje; mednje spada tudi platonistično zavračanje materialnega. Ta jezikovni in paradigmatski premik zaradi Origenove strokovne in eksegetske genialnosti skoraj ni naletel na odpor. Cerkveni očetje in poznejši teologi ga zvečine vse do zdaj niso doživljali kot odmik, ki bi ga bilo treba popraviti. Tekst pa po drugi strani dokazuje, da je svetovni nazor zgodnjega krščanstva, ki je v bistvu semitski, ustreznejši za določanje tega, kaj je krščansko.

Franci Zore

The Relationship between Philosophy (Knowledge) and Religion (Faith) in St. Justin Martyr's Foundation of Christian Philosophy

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1. Origins of St. Justin's apologetics

From the very beginning, the question of the relationship between knowledge and faith has been the key question concerning the establishment and even possibility of something called "Christian philosophy." Is Christian philosophy a "wooden iron," one of the periods in the history of philosophy, one of many philosophical orientations, or simply a pleonasm? Starting with the first authors, this relationship is presented mostly as the relationship between ancient (in those days, pagan) philosophy and Christian (in those days, new) religion. There are certain passages in the New Testament that already refer to philosophy as the fundamental form of education (παιδεία) at that time. However, this question reaches its acute form in the Christian apologists, and among them extreme significance and influence is credited to St. Justin, known also the Philosopher and the Martyr, from the second century.

As Claudio Moreschini puts it, St. Justin is very important not "because of the originality of his conceptions, but mostly because in him we meet—for the first time—the figure of the 'Christian philosopher.'"[1] Giuseppe Girgenti puts it in a similar vein: "The Christian philosophy actually begins with Justin."[2] Moreschini furthermore states: "In Justin the meeting between the Greek culture and Christianity produces a synthesis, certainly

1 C. Moreschini, *Storia della filosofia patristica*, Brescia 2004, p. 77. St. Justin, of course, was not the first to try to link together Greek philosophy and religious elements; speaking in absolute terms, one must mention at least the exegesis of the Old Testament by Philo of Alexandria. Cf. G. Girgenti, *Giustino Martire. Il primo cristiano platonico. Con in appendice "Atti del martirio di San Giustino,"* Milan 1995, p. 30.

2 G. Girgenti, ibid., p. 37; cf. also p. 39.

not a very deep one, but in a way new and such that it exerted influence on the later thought."[3] Leaving aside the question of the "originality of conceptions" in philosophy and the "depth of synthesis" in St. Justin, we are mostly confronted with the question what this "synthesis" is actually supposed to mean. Undoubtedly, St. Justin was a genuine Christian—not only in life, but also in death, which is not only an outward gesture, but something that is essentially connected with the attitude of a Christian believer as well as with the attitude of a philosopher—for instance, in the Socratic sense. As Moreschini correctly states, what is very important is also that St. Justin was not only an intellectual of the Greco-Roman culture of his time, but also "a true and genuine 'philosopher.'"[4]

Although St. Justin's pre-Christian search is mostly familiar from the autobiographical elements in his works, one could conclude here that he was a genuine philosopher not only as a Christian, but that—conversely—he reached Christianity precisely through his search for genuine philosophy. The background of his conversion is thus a very specific life experience that refers to St. Justin's personal history as well as to the actual situation of the life of the Christian community in the second century.[5] St. Justin's biography itself already corresponds to the historical moment of transition from pagan to Christian philosophy, whereby his pre-Christian position could possibly be located as something that is in a certain way close to Middle Platonism, which represents one of the most influential thoughts in the history of Western thought.[6] At the level of the Christian community, however, St. Justin's motifs are apologetic; one must deal with the discussion of two dangers that threaten genuine Christianity: the outward persecutions that can—at their best—refer to pagan philosophy, and the inward heresies that threaten to transform the essential message of Christianity.[7] At both levels, the personal as well as the level of community, one can thus trace a fundamental existential motivation in his discussion of philosophy and Christianity.

3 C. Moreschini, ibid., p. 77.

4 Ibid.

5 As Heidegger says in his analysis of the earliest Christianity, the notion of factual life experience is "fundamental" to philosophy (cf. M. Heidegger, *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, Frankfurt am Main 1995, GA 60, p. 8) and is the real place where philosophy begins and where it returns; whereby "situation" becomes the place and the horizon of understanding the world in which the factual life experience occurs and is exercised (cf. ibid., p. 10).

6 For the main characteristics of Middle Platonism, cf. G. Girgenti, ibid., p. 32.

7 Cf. G. Girgenti, ibid., pp. 37–38.

After mentioning St. Justin's "synthesis" of philosophy and Christian faith, one can try to describe its nature only after answering two fundamental questions: what is philosophy and what is Christianity? By St. Justin's time, the answers to these questions were not taken for granted and are even less so nowadays, when more or less self-proclaimed philosophies and Christianities—alongside other "manifestations of the spirit" (and non-spirit)—are multiplying with unprecedented speed and diversity. Phenomenologically speaking, at the level of principles, the plurality of "philosophies" in "Christianities" can be confronted with *genuine* philosophy and *genuine* Christianity, but in doing so one has in fact remained within the scope of the same questions: what are true and genuine philosophy and Christianity?

2. What is philosophy?

Philosophy's need for self-foundation and establishing a distance from what is very similar to philosophy, but basically different (i.e., false, mistaken), is already known from ancient philosophy. What is paradigmatic here is the role of the Socratic-Platonic discussion on Sophism, through which the contents of genuine philosophy are established.[8] Nowadays it seems almost incredible that St. Justin thought it necessary to write down that Christ "was no sophist" (οὐ γὰρ σοφιστὴς ὑπῆρχεν; *1 Apol.* 14, 5).[9] The historical fact that, after the sophists, nobody wanted to be called sophist any more, but everybody called himself a philosopher, can be misleading. In fact, already in Antiquity the term *philosophy* had also became a cover

8 This question is paradigmatically posed in Plato's dialogue *The Sophist*.

9 The abbreviations used for St. Justin's writings are: *1 Apol.* = *First Apology*, *2 Apol.* = *Second Apology,* and *Dial.* = *Dialogue with Trypho*. The text is quoted from the Greek-Italian edition of Giuseppe Girgenti: Giustino, *Apologie. Prima Apologia per i Cristiani ad Antonio il Pio. Seconda Apologia per i Cristiani al Senato Romano. Prologo al "Dialogo con Trifone,"* Milan 1995. I also used the English translation by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson from *Online Texts for Justin Martyr* (http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/justin.html), and the Slovene translation: "Razgovor z Judom Trifonom" (Predgovor), "Prva apologija," "Druga apologija," translated by F. K. Lukman and Gorazd Kocijančič, preface and notes by Gorazd Kocijančič, in: *Logos v obrambo resnice. Izbrani spisi zgodnjih krščanskih apologetov*, Celje 1998, pp. 143–251.

for non-philosophical and anti-philosophical positions,[10] which resulted in the plurality of totally diverse philosophical schools. The contradictions evince an incorrect understanding of truth (cf. *1 Apol.* 44, 10).

St. Justin thus had reason to complain that philosophy became "many-headed" (πολύκρανος) (*Dial.* 2, 2), although philosophical knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) is "being *one*" (*Dial.* 2, 1). This split is brought about because certain philosophers follow and admire their teachers and devote their lives to the heritage of philosophical schools instead of searching for truth itself (cf. *Dial.* 2, 2). St. Justin thereby expresses his concern about externalizing philosophical wisdom, which moves away from the philosophical experience of the one that philosophizes and becomes a mere learned "theory" perpetuated without ever being experienced. Such an attitude was known even in Plato, although later it tended to be forgotten. St. Justin also draws a strict distinction between the philosopher (φιλόσοφος) and his related (or better, degenerated) forms: φιλόξοφος and φιλόκομπος 'lover of bravado and boasting' (cf. *2 Apol.* 3, 1), and φιλόδοχος 'lover of glory and outer appearance, opinionated man' (cf. *2 Apol.* 3, 6).

All of this of course does not imply the refusal of philosophy as such "for philosophy is, in fact, the greatest possession, and most honorable before God" (*Dial.* 2, 1). However, this only holds true when one must deal with a philosophy that is "safe and profitable" (*Dial.* 8, 1).[11] What is this philosophy like and whence originates the possibility of knowledge—be it perfect or imperfect—that is inherent to philosophy?

One thereby reaches the central point of St. Justin's view, which is —according to Girgenti—in "identifying Greek logos with Jesus Christ."[12] On this occasion I cannot go into the details of St. Justin's extremely important teaching on logos[13] but, as far as philosophy is concerned, what matters most is that the seed of logos has been and is present in all people: "the seed of reason [the Logos] is implanted in every race of men" (*2 Apol.* 8, 1); some live "according to a part only of the word diffused [κατὰ σπερματικοῦ λόγου μέρος] (among men)," but the Christians live "by the knowledge and

10 "For of philosophy, too, some assume the name and the garb that do nothing worthy of their profession; and you are well aware that those of the ancients whose opinions and teachings were quite diverse are yet all called by the one name of philosophers" (*1 Apol.* 4, 8).

11 ... ταύτην μόνην εὕρισκον φιλοσοφίαν ἀσφαλῆ τε καὶ σύμφορον (*Dial.* 8, 1).

12 G. Girgenti, ibid., pp. 24–25.

13 On St. Justin's teaching of Logos and his reference to older ancient sources, see ibid., pp. 102–105, and the translator's note by G. Kocijančič in: *Logos v obrambo resnice. Izbrani spisi zgodnjih krščanskih apologetov*, Celje 1998, p. 244, n. 604.

contemplation of the whole Word, which is Christ [κατὰ τὴν τοῦ πάντος Λόγου, ὅ ἐστι Χριστοῦ]" (*2 Apol.* 8, 3).

St. Justin's understanding of logos and the seeds of logos at the same time enables him to attain insight into the unique truthful basis of all civilizations, primarily the Greek one, and into the uniqueness of Christianity. Because the Greeks knew logos only partially (i.e., because they had discovered only "some part of the Word"), they achieved only a partial, imperfect, and consequently contradictory knowledge. "But since they did not know the whole of the Word, which is Christ, they often contradicted themselves" (*2 Apol.* 10, 2–3). It is even more important, however, that they were able to attain knowledge at all and thus live according to logos. This is why St. Justin can say for the Greeks (he mostly puts forward Socrates and Heraclitus) as well as for barbarians: "Those who lived reasonably [i.e. in accordance with logos] are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists" (*1 Apol.* 46, 3).[14] Even more radical is his statement about "Christ, who was partially known even by Socrates" (*2 Apol.* 10, 7).

With the help of this option, he can reconstruct partial truths from Antiquity (cf. *1 Apol.* 20) and come to the conclusion that "we say things similar to what the Greeks say [τὰ ὅμοια τοῖς Ἕλλεσι λέγοντες]" (*1 Apol.* 24, 1). It is thereby necessary to point out the complexity of the relationship between Logos as Christ and the seeds of logos, as well as the internal complexity of the meaning of logos itself. Although this is not the place for a broader discussion on the historical development of the Greek philosophical background and the position of St. Justin's thought, allow me to fragmentarily draw attention to two possible misunderstandings. The first one concerns potential pantheism, which could be recognized in the statement about the seeds of logos; here it would probably be more accurate to talk about the proximity of the godlike in human beings. The other possible misunderstanding concerns the equating of logos with reason; logos not only implies the human capability of reasoning, but in a certain way the totality of man's humanity, which includes ontological as well as ethical aspects—perhaps here one could even interpretatively speak of human "integrity."

This is why, for St. Justin, the love of wisdom (philo-sophy) is the same as the love of logos (philo-logy). However, does philosophy as a merely "theoretical life" suffice? The question raised in St. Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* is: "'Are you, then, a philologian [φιλόλογος],' said he, 'but no lover

14 Καὶ οἱ μετὰ λόγου βιώσαντες Χριστιανοί εἰσι, κἂν ἄθεοι ἐνομίσθησαν (*1 Apol.* 46, 3).

of deeds [φιλεργός] or of truth [φιλαλεθής]? and do you not aim at being a practical man [πρακτικός] so much as being a sophist?'" (*Dial.* 3, 3). The sphere of action, the realm of ethical is an organic part of human totality, the essential aspect of logos. The essentiality of the question about the ethical, which is already posed in philosophy, is emphasized once again in Christianity, with even more stringency. As St. Justin puts it: "The Father teaches them by the word to do the same things as Himself" (*2 Apol.* 9, 2). Logos demands from those that are truly pious and philosophical, as St. Justin likes to describe real philosophers and Christians, love towards what is truth, love stronger than love towards one's own life—it demands that the lover of truth should "by all means, and if death be threatened, even before his own life, choose to do and say what is right [τὰ δίκαια λέγειν τε καὶ πράττειν]" (*1 Apol.* 2, 1).

3. The difference between Christianity and philosophy

In a certain way, on many points I have already addressed the transition of philosophy into Christianity and indicated the reasons for which St. Justin can say that Christian teachings are indeed "more lofty than all *human* philosophy" (*2 Apol.* 15, 3). Faith cannot be limited to what bears the character of probability for a human being (cf. *1 Apol.* 19, 6). Christian faith is divine revelation, but the firm foundation even then—and the more so nowadays—does not lessen the hermeneutical troubles in understanding Christianity. At a certain level, this raises the same problem as in philosophy: "And this we acknowledge, that as among the Greeks those who teach such theories as please themselves are all called by the one name 'Philosopher,' though their doctrines be diverse, so also among the Barbarians this name on which accusations are accumulated is the common property of those who are and those who seem wise. For all are called Christians" (*1 Apol.* 7, 3).[15] The self-proclaimed Christianity is not yet genuine Christianity.

However, in which point does genuine Christianity differ at all from genuine philosophy? And how is it—taking into account what has been said before—possible to view the relationship between philosophical knowledge

15 Cf. also: "All that take their opinions from these men, are, as we before said, called Christians; just as also those that do not agree with the philosophers in their doctrines have yet in common with them the name of philosophers given to them" (*1 Apol.* 26, 6).

and Christian faith? One certainly can see a certain fundamental proximity between them, but one can also see some important differences. Or shall this question be answered differently only according to the conception of the philosophy accepted? Philosophy in the time of the ancient pagan world and philosophy in the time of the beginnings of Christianity (i.e., in a certain relation with Christianity) undoubtedly do not imply quite the same thing. However, does it make any sense at all to make a declarative choice between the principle of continuity or discontinuity between philosophical and Christian tradition?

Following St. Justin's itinerary through pagan philosophical schools, which hierarchically ends with Platonism (cf. *Dial.* 2), to be continued and completed in Christianity, together with Girgenti, one can of course pose the question of what this last transition means: continuity or change of perspective?[16] According to Girgenti, "the rational itinerary [λόγος]" *is completed* by "divine intervention [χάρις]" (i.e., mercy),[17] whereby one must deal with *complementarity* (not alternatives) between the Platonic "natural theology" of human logos and the search for God and the Christian "revelation theology" of God's mercy and the finding of God.[18] Girgenti thus differentiates three kinds of knowledge: sensible knowledge, "intellectual" (i.e., noetical) knowledge, and knowledge based on faith and mercy.[19] Leave aside the question whether this structural scheme is also actually historically applicable and to what degree Platonism can be reduced to the rational and intelligible because this does not alter the thesis on the complementary and completing role of Christianity. Or, as Cornelia Johanna de Vogel puts it: "For Justin the platonic metaphysics is incorporated

16 Cf. G. Girgenti, ibid., p. 56.

17 Ibid., p. 62.

18 Cf. ibid., p. 86, where Girgenti refers to *2 Apol.* 10, 5–6 and 13, 5.

19 Cf. ibid., p. 137. He thereby refers to Reale's division of philosophy into the "first navigation" of early Greek thought of φύσις, the "second navigation" (δεύτερος πλοῦς; *Phd.* 99 D1) of Plato's philosophy with Logoi, and the "third navigation" of Christian philosophy, which Reale based on the passage from Augustine's commentary on the Gospel of John (*Nemo enim potest transire mare huius saeculi, nisi cruce Christi portatus*; 2, 2). Cf. G. Reale, "Il concetto dell'amore e della croce in Agostino e il capovolgimento rivoluzionario di alcuni concetti cardine del pensiero Greco in generale e di Platone in particolare," in: Agostino*, Amore assoluto e "terza navigazione",* Milan 1994, especially pp. 53–55; G. Reale, *Storia della filosofia antica: IV. Le scuole dell'età imperiale*, Milan ^{8}1991, p. 701. What is most dangerous in this division is perhaps the reduction of "Presocratic" thought to perception and of Platonic logos to the rational.

into Christianity."[20] However, it is not incorporated as something outward, but as an attempt that followed the same task: "Christian faith is the gift of redemption, which fully realizes what platonic philosophy searches for, but does not fully reach."[21] One therefore does not have to deal with discontinuity, but with completion.[22]

St. Justin treats himself as a philosopher (cf. *Dial.* 8, 2). For him, authentic Christians are also authentic philosophers.[23] According to de Vogel, in St. Justin Platonism and Christianity have a common "metaphysical basis:" "both were concerned with the same truth."[24] However, this metaphysical aspect in itself is not everything and does not suffice because for St. Justin philosophy is not (expressed in words of Norris) a "set of speculative ideas."[25] As St. Justin puts it: "He [God] made the human race with the power of thought and of choosing the truth and doing right" (καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν νοερὸν καὶ δυνάμενον αἱρεῖσθαι τἀληθῆ καὶ εὖ πράττειν τὸ γένος τὸ ἀνθρώπινον πεποίηκεν; *1 Apol.* 28, 3). As far as the human race is concerned, one thus originally must deal with the fundamental inner relation of knowledge and ethical attitude, as well as choice, which is not only the starting point for human activity but also for the acceptance of truth.[26] The knowledge of the divine—should it preserve its firmness—is inherently related to this ethical attitude (cf. *1 Apol.* 58, 3).

The approval of philosophy is of course not the same as approval of human wisdom. Human wisdom does not guarantee divine wisdom because illiterate people can also be "wise and believing in mind" (σοφῶν δὲ καὶ πιστῶν τὸν νοῦν ὄντων; *1 Apol.* 60, 11), which—on the one hand—indicates where the actual source of wisdom is (not in man, but in God), and—on

20 C. J. de Vogel, *Platonismo e cristianesimo. Antagonismo o comuni fondamenti?,* Milan 1993 (translation of the work *Platonism and Christianity: A Mere Antagonism or a Profound Common Ground?, Vigiliae Christianae* 39 [1985, 1–62]); quoted by G. Girgenti, ibid., p. 23, n. 24.

21 With these words, Girgenti (ibid., p. 23) resumes the thought of C. J. de Vogel.

22 C. J. de Vogel, "Problems Concerning Justin Martyr," *Mnemosyne* 31 (1978, 360–388), quotation from p. 381; quoted by G. Girgenti, ibid., p. 78, n. 43.

23 Cf. G. Girgenti, ibid., p. 76.

24 C. J. de Vogel, ibid., p. 388; quoted by G. Girgenti, ibid., p. 91, n. 14.

25 R. A. Norris, *God and World in Early Christian Theology*, London 1966, p. 10; quoted by G. Girgenti, ibid., p. 91, n. 13.

26 Cf. G. Kocijančič, ibid., p. 200, n. 321. On human free decision, cf. also *1 Apol.* 43. When making a choice we decide by means of the rational faculties (λογικαὶ δυνάμεις) bestowed on us by God (cf. *1 Apol.* 10, 4), and a rational man (ὁ νουνεχής) will not choose against Logos (cf. *1 Apol.* 12, 8).

the other hand—calls attention to the danger of relying solely on human intellectual capabilities.

With all this, St. Justin does not give only the "first" or important answers to what "Christian philosophy" is, but also an important "remembrance" of what philosophy is as such. He is a Christian, as he says, "not because the teachings of Plato are different from those of Christ, but because they are not in all respects similar" (*2 Apol.* 13, 2). The oblivion—and by "oblivion" I do not have in mind a historical event, but ongoing forgetting, which refers to the demand for ongoing remembering (ἀνάμνησις) of the original meaning of philosophy and the oblivion of the original meaning of Christianity are as close as philosophy and Christianity themselves. St. Justin was undoubtedly a witness to the authentic life experience of both.

The Relationship between Philosophy (Knowledge) and Religion (Faith) in St. Justin Martyr's Foundation of Christian Philosophy

Summary

In view of the fact that St. Justin founded Christian philosophy, one is first confronted by the question of his understanding of philosophy as well as of Christianity. It appears that St. Justin made a clear distinction between a genuine philosophy and apparent, or perverted, "philosophies," which are actually no longer philosophies although they still bear this name. In his opinion, genuine philosophy that proceeds from the seeds of the divine Logos was in a certain way Christian even before Christ. However, he also warns against different self-proclaimed "Christianities" because Christianity can be a complement of philosophy only in its genuine form. It is thus possible to say that, for Justin, Christian philosophy is not an artificial formation. Both elements of Christian philosophy, Christianity and philosophy, organically refer to each other, especially from the viewpoint of the basic connection between the knowledge of the Supreme and the human ethical attitude.

Razmerje med filozofijo (védenjem) in religijo (vero) v utemeljitvi krščanske filozofije pri sv. Justinu Mučeniku

Povzetek

Glede na to, da je sv. Justin utemeljil krščansko filozofijo, se najprej postavlja vprašanje v zvezi z njegovim razumevanjem filozofije, pa tudi krščanstva. Pokaže se, da sv. Justin jasno razločuje med pristno filozofijo in navideznimi ali sprevrnjenimi »filozofijami«, ki to pravzaprav več niso, čeprav si še vedno nadevajo ime »filozofija«. Pristna filozofija, ki izhaja iz semen božjega Logosa, je bila po njegovem že pred Kristusom na določen način krščanska. Prav tako pa svari tudi pred različnimi samooklicanimi »krščanstvi«, saj krščanstvo lahko dopolnjuje filozofijo le v svoji pristni obliki. Zato je mogoče reči, da krščanska filozofija za sv. Justina ni umetna tvorba. Oba elementa krščanske filozofije, krščanstvo in filozofija, organsko napotujeta drug na drugega, posebno kar zadeva temeljno povezanost spoznanja Najvišjega in človekove etične drže.

Vladimir Cvetković

The Refutation of the Eternity of the World in the Writtings of St. Methodius of Olympus

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The first critique of Origen's teaching on the eternity of the world appeared at the end of the third century. This first refutation of the theory of Origen came from the pen of an obscure third-century author, Bishop Methodius of Olympus, who was martyred in 311. St. Methodius dealt with Origen's philosophy in some of his works. His most developed critique of Origen's system is presented in his work *De creatis*,[1] but an echo of Origen's teaching can be found in other works such as *De resurrectione* and *Symposium*.[2]

At the beginning of his refutation of the eternity of the world, St. Methodius challenged Origen's exegetical method applied to the interpretation of verses: "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs" (Matt 7.6). According to Origen, the pearls are the mystical teaching of our God-given religion and the pigs are those that roll in the impiety of their carnal lust, like pigs in the mud. St. Methodius is against such an elitist interpretation of Christianity, arguing that, if one withholds and hides the teachings of the apostles, how can Christians be converted from their impiety by these teachings? Therefore, according to St. Methodius pearls are virtues such as chastity, temperance, righteousness, and truth, which

1 This work is preserved only in fragments (*Ex libro de creatis excerpta*) and some of them can be found in chapter 235 of St. Photius' *Bibliotheca* (see Photius, *Bibliothèque*, Paris: Les belles lettres, 1958). Nathanael Bonwetsch reconstructed the text of *De creatis* to some extent and published it in *Methodius,* herausgegeben im Auftrage der Kirchenväter-Commission der königl. Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften von G. N. Bonwetsch, Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1917.

2 This work resembles Plato's *Symposium* and it belongs to ascetic literature because it deals with the questions of virginity and spiritual purity. Nevertheless, Methodius introduces some of his ontological and cosmological attitudes in it.

are not to be cast to impure pleasures.[3]

It is a matter of question why St. Methodius' work, which treats the problem of creation, refutes Origen's exegesis of evangelical teaching. There could be many reasons for such a refutation and I analyze at least two of them. First, according to St. Methodius, Origen's interpretation of this biblical passage is *par excellence* an example of his attitude that the deepest truths of Christian religion belong to a small group of people that could take part in biblical mysteries. On the contrary, St. Methodius maintains that Christian life is life according to virtue. The second reason could be St. Methodius' intention to undermine Origen's authority in biblical exegesis, in which Origen was distinguished, before he commenced his refutation of Origen's doctrine of the eternity of the world. For St. Methodius, the doctrine of creation is also a question of biblical exegesis of the passages from the book of Genesis and other books of the Old Testament. He therefore begins every argument by quoting a passage from Scripture as a starting premise.

Proceeding further in his attack on Origen's exegesis, St. Methodius exposes his refutation in the form of a dialogue between two characters. The first is a follower of Origen and the second is presumably St. Methodius himself. The first evokes the idea from *Perì archôn* that "the workman must be so called from his work, and the maker from what he makes, and the Almighty Ruler from that which He rules over."[4] He continues, saying that "the world was made by God from the beginning, and there was no time in which it did not exist." If there was a time when the world was not, then it means that God was not a creator from the beginning but he became creator later. It also means that unchangeable and unaltered God has altered and changed from non-Creator into Creator. Therefore, according to Origen's followers, it is impious to conclude that the world is not without beginning and coeternal with God.

St. Methodius develops his argument against the eternity of the world from the same premise as Origen—that is, God's omnipotence. He asks

3 *Ante-Nicene Fathers,* vol. 6: *Gregory Thaumaturgus, Dionysius the Great, Julius Africanus, Anatolius and Minor Writers, Methodius, Arnobius*, edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, p. 379. The Greek text is from *De creatis* 1, 12, in: G. N. Bonwetsch, *Methodius*, p. 494.

4 *De creatis* 9, *ANF* 6, p. 380. The quotation resembles passage from Origen's *On First Principles* 1, 2, 10: "As one cannot be a father apart from having a son, nor a lord apart from holding a possession or a slave, so we cannot even call God almighty if there are none over whom he can exercise his power" (Koetschau's text of *De principiis* translated into English by George William Butterworth, New York: Harper & Row, 1966, p. 23).

his opponent whether he agrees that God is "the beginning and fountain of wisdom and glory, and in short of all virtue in substance and not by acquisition." After mutual agreement on this definition, he continues to develop his argument. If God is perfect and independent, his independence could not be dependant on another. If the perfect things possess their perfection by themselves and not through anything else then God is perfect, Creator and Omnipotent (Παντοκράτωρ) not by means of the world but by Himself. If a wise man is called wise not as being wisdom itself, but as being a possessor of substantial wisdom, then God, who is something different than the world, is called Creator not on account of the world but of Himself. If we consider God Almighty (Παντοκράτωρ) on account of the world, and not of Himself, then He will be imperfect and He will need these things through which He is marvelously Almighty and Creator.

After this train of arguments about God's omnipotence, with which St. Methodius' opponent agreed, he switches to the next argument, which deals with the change in God's being. This problem bothered Origen and he tried hard to avoid any alternation in the divine being. St. Methodius focuses on Origen's argument that the Creator will be exposed to change if the world is not eternal because He must pass from not creating to creating the world. St. Methodius again finds the starting premise of his argument in Holy Scripture, specifically in Genesis 2.2, where God rested on the seventh day from creating the world. They both agreed about the assertion that God rested. St. Methodius further claims that God would not be at rest if the world were not completed. If God completed the world, He finished with creating, which implies that he passed from the act of creating to the act of not creating. It is certainly a change, according to St. Methodius, but not necessarily a change in divine being because God did not change when He made the world from what He was when He was not making it. There is no need to claim that the world is coeternal with God because divine nature does not depend on the existence or nonexistence of the world.

The next argument against Origen is about the beginning of creation. St. Methodius asks his opponent whether he would call a thing created if it had no beginning to its creation, and he denied this possibility. St. Methodius proceeds by speculating that, if things do not have a beginning to their creation, they are uncreated. However, if they are created they must be created by some cause because it is hard to imagine existence without cause. Thus, if the world was created, and it did not exist before, could there be any other cause for its creation than God? The core of St. Methodius' argument is that it is "impossible that that which is limited by an existence

that has a beginning should be coexistent with the infinite."

What follows could shed a different light on the previous three arguments. Although St. Methodius' arguments were accepted by Origen's follower, there still remains the problem of the preexisting matter in which Origen's God creates. Thus, according to Origen, the main characteristic of creation, which gives it an attribute of eternity, is not in fact that it is created, but that it is material. Origen's Creator, like the Demiurge of Plato, brings forth order in a state of chaos of primordial matter. Therefore, St. Methodius emphasizes the role of divine knowledge in creation in order to stress the fact that there is no creation without the Creator and that the material elements, which Origen considers coeternal with God, could not be the principles of existence. Nevertheless, further discussion on this matter is interrupted by Origen's disciple because his acceptance of the affirmation that created creation has a beginning inevitably contradicts his original claim of creation being coeternal with God.

The core of St. Methodius' argument is focused against the eternity of the world, which is not the premise of Origen's teaching, but its consequence. One could say that in regard to this question Origen is not Platonist because he does not intend to establish pre-existing matter as coeternal with God. According to Origen, the matter necessary exists from eternity only because God, as the eternal Creator, must exercise His power eternally over something. Origen is much more concerned with the question of the idle God than the question of eternal or created matter. According to Origen, the first solution implies alternation in divine being, which jeopardizes His perfect nature. Thus, Origen's solution is to confer to the material world its preexistence in God. George Florovsky made a significant remark concerning the question of the preexistence of the world in God. According to Florovsky, the blade of St. Methodius' critique targets not only the eternity of matter, but is also directed against the divine knowledge of "the image of the world" if it is conjointly present with God in eternity.[5] If the world in unalterable completeness of all its particular predicates existed from eternity as a possibility in God, then this means, according to Florovsky, that God in His eternal self-contemplation also necessarily contemplates even what *He is not.* Therefore, God would be forced to "think of and to contemplate Himself as a creative principle and as a source of the world, and the world as an object of and participant of His good pleasure."[6] This remarkable observa-

5 G. Florovsky, "Creation and Creaturehood," in: *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky,* vol. 3: *Creation and Redemption*, Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1976, pp. 43–78, 55.

6 Florovsky, "Creation and Creaturehood," p. 55.

tion by Florovsky is plausible only if God contemplates the world as something foreign to His being, but not in the case when God contemplates the world as His will. If the world is a matter of divine will, then the problem of the change of divine will makes us return again to the problem of divine alternation. We face a few alternatives. The first is to accept that God had "the image of the world" in His divine knowledge from eternity, which Florovsky denies. In this case, the plausible question will be why God did not create the world sooner. Of course, the language of sooner or later is not applicable because it deals with temporal categories and one cannot speak of time before creation because time came into the world with creation. Therefore, the use of terms such as *sooner*, *later*, *before*, or *after* is strictly in a logical sense and these terms describe not temporal, but logical precedence or subsequence. In any case, this still leaves the problem that God first allowed there not to be the world, and then made it begin. As stated above, God could have "the image of the world" in His divine knowledge that He used as a pattern when He decided to create the world or He could begin to act without any model. In both cases, changeless God endures change. The former solution reflects a change in the divine decision concerning the "right moment" to begin the act of creation, and the latter reflects the change of divine will to create at all. Origen, as we know, applied the former solution by teaching about two creations. The first creation is from eternity, when intellects had contemplated the divine substance. The second creation occurred not because of divine will, but because of the will of creatures that had a "surfeit of the divine vision and turned to the worse and therefore being cooled with regard to the love of God and hence being named souls and sent down into bodies for punishment's sake."[7] However, Origen preserved the divine changelessness but he challenged not only the questionable "biblical" doctrine of creation out of nothing, but also the teaching that the world is a perfect offspring of the divine will. Therefore, Florovsky argues against the existence of the world even in ideal form because it necessitates that God create and make the world not as a result of his will. Accepting the alternative that God literally creates out of nothing, not only without matter but also without any ideal pattern, again raises a change in divine will. The classic reply to this problem is given by Stump and Kretzmann in their highly influential article "Eternity:"[8] willing a change is not changing one's will or, better, if God does will change, He can will it changelessly. Then it is plausible

7 *Acta conciliorum oecumenicotum* (edited by Schwartz) 3, 191; 3, 213.

8 Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity," *Journal of Philosophy* 78, 1981, pp. 429–458, especially 447–453. See also Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation, Continuum*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993, pp. 240–244.

to say that the world is not a result of an "ideal model" in divine foreknowledge, but of God's changeless will.

What is St. Methodius' position in regard to this? Although Origen's disciple gave up on further dialogue, St. Methodius continues his argument. He compares God with an artist, and creation with a statue. First, the statue is made on account of itself and not on account of the artist, who is considered as never resting from his work. Second, if the statue is not made by the artist, then we have to consider that the statue has its cause in itself. If the statue was always made, then what has the artist contributed to it? St. Methodius concludes that, if this statue has need of nothing, and has no beginning of existence, then a maker never made it, nor will any maker be found.

According to St. Methodius, if the example of the statue is applied to the world then an inevitable conclusion would be that the world is unchangeable and perfect in itself, and it will have need of nothing, and be free from corruption. It will also imply that the world, being perfect, is incapable of change, which is not the case.

This is the last argument against Origen by which St. Methodius wants to prove not only that the world is not eternal, but also that the idea of the world in divine foreknowledge is not eternal. The eternity of the world, even at the level of ideal existence, is closely tied up with ideas of perfection and independence and it challenges the role of the Maker because there is nothing to add to perfect nature that exists from eternity.

St. Methodius clearly shows that God created the world by His will out of nothing in the following words:

> The saint says: We said there are two kinds of formative power in what we have now acknowledged; the one that works by itself what it chooses, not out of things which already exist, by its bare will, without delay, as soon as it wills. This is the power of the Father. The other is that which adorns and embellishes, by imitation of the former, things that already exist. This is the power of the Son, the almighty and powerful hand of the Father, by which, after creating matter not out of things which were already in existence, He adorns it.[9]

9 *De Creatis* 9, *ANF* 6, p. 381. *De Creatis* 9 24–30, p. 498: "Οτι φησὶν ὁ ἅγιος, Δύο δὲ δυνάμεις ἐν τοῖς προωμολογημένοις ἔφαμεν εἶναι ποιητικῆς, τὴν ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων γυμνῷ τῷ βουλήματι χωρὶς μελλησμοῦ ἅμα τῷ θελῆσαι αὐτουργοῦσαν ὃ βούλεται ποιεῖνῥ τυγχάνει δὲ ὁ Πατήρῥ θατέραν δὲ κατακοσμοῦσαν καὶ ποικίλλουσαν κατὰ μίμησιν τῆς προτέρας τὰ ἤδη γεγονόταῥ ἔστι δὲ ὁ Υἱός, ἡ παντοδύναμος καὶ κραταιὰ χεὶρ τοῦ Πατρός, ἐν ᾗ μετὰ τὸ ποιῆσαι τὴν ὕλην ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων κατακοσμεῖ.

St. Methodius established God's freedom in creation by the phrase that God "creates by Himself what He chooses." God is not forced at all to follow a certain pattern. The fact that he also creates out of nothing absolutely rejects the possibility of the preexistence of matter as a limit to divine freedom in creation. St. Methodius emphasizes that God creates through bare will, which clearly denies the preexistence of the world in divine foreknowledge. Finally, St. Methodius provides an answer to the question "why not sooner" in the words "without delay, as soon as God wills." This means that there is no delay between a divine decision to make the world and the actual act of making it. Thus, God did not change his will by deciding to create, but His changeless will was to create as soon as he wanted to create. The second formative power, or the Son, shows more about the nature of the relationship between God and the world. The words "the other is that which adorns and embellishes, by imitation of the former, things that already exist" can be interpreted in terms of the subordination of the Son to the Father and they resemble Gnostic and Origen's teachings about the Son as a semi-God or an instrument of the Father in creation. However, such an interpretation is highly unlikely because in his other works St. Methodius describes the Son as "the first-born of God, the parent and artificer of all things, [who] brings forth everything into the world; whom the ancients called Nature and Providence, because she, with constant provision and care, gives to all things birth and growth."[10] In *Symposium* Christ is seen as "a man filled with the pure and perfect Godhead, and God received into man"[11] and that "He was declared to be His [God's] Son unconditionally [ἀιρίστος], and without regard to time (ἀχρόνως)."[12] Therefore, the previous passage in an "orthodox" interpretation says more about governing and the providential role of the Son in creation. The role of the cosmetician does not in any way put into question the power of the Son because St. Methodius clearly states that He is Almighty (Παντοδύναμοσ), but this instead shows that the world is dependent on His divine power, which keeps it in existence.

St. Methodius' attack on Origen's teaching about eternity of the world was not only the attempt to refute doctrine inconsistent with biblical beliefs, but also the display of an offensive position taken against Greek philosophical tradition on this matter.

10 *De ressurectione* 1, 15, *ANF* 6, p. 369.

11 *Symposium* 3, 4, *ANF* 6, p. 318.

12 *Symposium* 8, 9, *ANF* 6, p. 338.

The Refutation of the Eternity of the World in the Writings of St. Methodius of Olympus

Summary

The first systematic critique of Origen, the founding father of the Alexandrine catechetical school and Alexandrine theology in general, came from the pen of an obscure author from the 3rd century, St. Methodius of Olympus. This bishop and martyr attacked the teaching of the eternity of the world, which Origen, the heir of classical Greek metaphysics, acknowledged and developed for the purpose of the theological system in his *Perì archôn*. St. Methodius unfolded his critique of Origen's views mainly in his work *De creatis*, which is preserved in fragments in Photius' *Bibliotheca*, and also in his two other works, *Symposium* and *De resurrectione*. The blade of his critique is directed against the possibility of the existence of two first principles; that is, God and matter. He deduces his refutation from the widely accepted arguments on behalf of the perfect and omnipotent nature of God. The core of his argumentation is, however, that created things must have their beginning because otherwise they would not have been created.

This paper shows the train of Methodius' arguments against the two *agéneta*.

Ovrženje večnosti sveta v spisih sv. Metodija Olimpskega

Povzetek

Prva sistematična kritika Origena, utemeljitelja aleksandrijske katehetske šole in aleksandrijske teologije na splošno, je prišla izpod peresa manj znanega pisca iz 3. stoletja, sv. Metodija Olimpskega. Ta škof in mučenec je napadel nauk o večnosti sveta, ki ga je Origen, dedič klasične grške metafizike, sprejel in v spisu *Perì archôn* razvil v teološki sistem. Sv. Metodij je kritiko Origenovih pogledov zvečine razgrnil v delu *De creatis*, katerega fragmenti so se ohranili v Fotijevi *Bibliotheci*, pa tudi v dveh drugih delih, spisih *Symposium* in *De ressurectione*. Ost njegove kritike je uperjena zoper možnost obstoja dveh prvih počel, tj. Boga in snovi. Svoje ovrženje izpeljuje iz široko sprejetih argumentov v prid popolne in vsemogočne Božje narave. Jedro njegove argumentacije pa je, da ustvarjene stvari morajo imeti začetek, saj sicer ne bi bile ustvarjene.

Namen referata je pokazati sklop Metodijevih argumentov zoper dve *agéneta*.

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The Paganism of Latin Christian Historical Apologetics

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I

Given the title of my paper, one could easily ask: How could ancient Christian apologetics, whose main aim was to reject everything pagan or at least to show the complete superfluity of pagan worship, itself be pagan as it is suggested by my topic? It is clear that this is only one of the many paradoxes that characterize the difficult but also manifold relationship between the early Church and its environment in Classical Antiquity—which was of course greatly determined by its polytheistic religion, a natural target of Christian polemics.

Most paradoxes of this relationship are rooted in the simple fact that both the pagans and Christians shared the same climate of the late Roman Empire in which they lived. At the peak of the mutual polemics—in the 3rd, 4th, and early 5th centuries—this climate was often marked by strong feelings of fear and uncertainty. In these situations, they both also shared expectations that were basically very similar. Not only the pagans, but also the Christians expected instant solutions, as noted by Johannes Straub. Furthermore, there was little doubt on both sides about how to achieve such a solution. The magic remedy for all problems was believed to be the choice of the proper (or better, the only proper) form of worship or the only correct deity.[1] This is the starting point of pagan attacks on Christianity (which in the eyes of pagan adversaries represented a serious deviation from the correct and established religious practice that had served Rome well for such a long time), but this is also the starting point of the Christian apologetical response to these attacks, at least among the apologists writing in Latin, starting with Tertullian, the founder of Latin theology.

1 See Goetz 1980, 36.

This development of Latin Christian apologetics cannot be understood without knowing some key features of the Roman version of polytheistic paganism, or rather of the religion of the Roman state.[2] It is well known that Roman religion was particularly defined by ritual rigorism. In Roman imaginary, to be devout meant to perform religious rites strictly along the lines prescribed by the ancient forefathers, the famous *maiores*. If a certain rite was performed duly and according to tradition, in Roman opinion there was absolutely no reason for the gods not to fulfill the wishes expressed by the individual or community that had performed the rite. There was little doubt about this nature of Roman worship among theorists of religion such as Cicero in his treatise *De natura deorum*. These elements were already praised by the Greek historian Polibius, although a lack of any real devotion did not remain unknown to him.[3] Another important feature of Roman religion was its desire to absorb as many foreign cults as possible, a development that started as early as 396 BC with the conquest of Veii and achieved one of its most famous culminations in the introduction of the cult of the Phrygian Magna Mater in 207 BC. Thus the Roman religion is also commonly characterized as extremely tolerant and non-exclusive. However, this was certainly not always the face it showed to the Christians. The reasons for this cannot be explained in detail, but one important reason was certainly an immediate consequence of the aforementioned ritual rigorism. Because the Romans believed that they performed rites better than any other people in the world (which was also acknowledged by Polibius, saying that "the Romans are more devout than gods themselves"),[4] they easily came to the conclusion that their ritualism and connection to the gods was also a major reason for their political and military success. All the main points of the specifically Roman view on religion were expressed by Caecilius, one of the participants in the dialogue *Octavius* by the early Latin apologist Minucius Felix, who says:

> We see through all empires, and provinces, and cities, that each people has its national rites of worship, and adores its local gods: as the Eleusinians worship Ceres; the Phrygians, Mater; the Epidaurians, Aesculapius; the Chaldaeans; Belus; the Syrians, Astarte; the Taurians, Diana; the Gauls, Mercurius; the Romans, all divinities. Thus their power and authority has occupied the circuit of the whole world: thus it has propagated its empire beyond the paths of

2 For this, I rely on Muth 1997, passim.

3 See, e.g., Demandt 1998, 384.

4 Poliby 6, 56; see Muth 1997, 221, note 578.

> the sun, and the bounds of the ocean itself; in that in their arms they practise a religious valour; in that they fortify their city with the religions of sacred rites, with chaste virgins, with many honours, and the names of priests; in that, when besieged and taken, all but the Capitol alone, they worship the gods which when angry any other people would have despised; and through the lines of the Gauls, marvelling at the audacity of their superstition, they move unarmed with weapons, but armed with the worship of their religion; while in the city of an enemy, when taken while still in the fury of victory, they venerate the conquered deities; while in all directions they seek for the gods of the strangers, and make them their own; while they build altars even to unknown divinities, and to the Manes. Thus, in that they acknowledge the sacred institutions of all nations, they have also deserved their dominion.
>
> (Min. Fel. 6, 2s.; translated by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson)

Thus—at least at later stages as shown by examples of Emperor Alexander Severus and Porphyry—the pagans were probably ready to accept Christ as one of the members of their broader pantheon, but of course they were not ready to abandon all the other gods that in their opinion had served Rome so well in the past (as shown in the passage cited above) in favor of the sole god of the Christians. Because the Christians for their part also could not reach any real compromise with such views, conflict was inevitable, particularly after the imperial cult rose in prominence and became an important part of the empire's common identity, as stressed by Leo Koep and others.[5] There the main conflict issue was the Christians' refusal to worship the emperor, instead worshipping a common carpenter's son that was executed on the cross, no less.

II

Of course, the Christians tried to counter pagan accusations through prolific apologetical activity. However, their weak theology and especially Christology was of little help to a possible pagan reader, who was in one way or other rarely reached by this.[6]

In Latin Christian apologetics, there were some attempts to overcome the self-sufficient Roman explanation of the connection between their religion and political success. Instead Christian writers warned their environ-

5 See Koep 1971.

6 As particularly stressed by Heck 1987, 14.

ment that the success of Rome was not based on extraordinary piety, but had instead been a result of crime. As Minucius Felix wrote:

> Nevertheless, you will say that that very superstition itself gave, increased, and established their empire for the Romans, since they prevailed not so much by their valour as by their religion and piety. Doubtless the illustrious and noble justice of the Romans had its beginning from the very cradle of the growing empire. Did they not in their origin, when gathered together and fortified by crime, grow by the terror of their own fierceness? For the first people were assembled together as to an asylum. Abandoned people, profligate, incestuous, assassins, traitors, had flocked together; and in order that Romulus himself, their commander and governor, might excel his people in guilt, he committed fratricide. These are the first auspices of the religious state!
>
> (Min. Fel. 25, 1s.;
> translated by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson)

Tertullian used similar argumentation as well (e.g., he mentioned Romulus' fratricide in his writing *De spectaculis* 5, 5s.). However, although the notes on the alleged criminality of Rome's founding fathers became a popular *locus communis* of Latin apologetics (also used by Augustine), this kind of defense against pagan charges did not prevail. Arnobius also found almost no followers with his attempts to show that (the true) God does not need any worship at all because he does not know any emotions (and so he does not show any anger either; thus the Christians could not be blamed for the calamities in the world).

The apologetical mainstream used a traditional pagan scheme that was only slightly modified. This is also true to a great extent for those apologists that in some passages of their texts tried to avoid the famous formula *Do ut des*. The traditional views probably entered the Christian understanding of history with the early apologist Melito of Sardes, who wrote in Greek. In his apology, addressed to Marcus Aurelius about AD 170, he linked the Roman success to the simultaneous rise of Christianity. According to him, proper worship helped Emperor Augustus found a stable, prosperous empire. In Melito's own words, (preserved only by Eusebius in his *Church History*):[7]

> Our philosophy formerly flourished among the Barbarians; but having sprung up among the nations under thy rule, during the great reign of thy ancestor Augustus, it became to thine empire espe-

7 On Melito's views, see Klein 2000, 212 ff.; cf. also Meinhold 1967, 48.

> cially a blessing of auspicious omen. For from that time the power of the Romans has grown in greatness and splendor. To this power thou hast succeeded, as the desired possessor, and such shalt thou continue with thy son, if thou guardest the philosophy which grew up with the empire and which came into existence with Augustus; that philosophy which thy ancestors also honored along with the other religions.
> And the most convincing proof that our doctrine flourished for the good of an empire happily begun, is this—that there has no evil happened since Augustus' reign, but that, on the contrary, all things have been splendid and glorious, in accordance with the prayers of all.
>
> (Eus., *Church History* 4, 26; translated by Arthur Cushman McGiffert)

The bishop's views were widely embraced by later apologists. They are the background of their widespread statements that the Christians were the only ones that helped maintain the Roman Empire because they were also the only ones that worshiped the right God (and the pagans worshiped only demons). Tertullian went a step further by saying that only the Christians accorded the emperor his proper place—that is, second place, immediately after God. He also did not forget to declare that the emperor belongs more to the Christians than to the pagans because he was installed by the Christian God:

> A Christian is enemy to none, least of all to the Emperor of Rome, whom he knows to be appointed by his God, and so cannot but love and honour; and whose well-being moreover, he must needs desire, with that of the empire over which he reigns so long as the world shall stand—for so long as that shall Rome continue.[2] To the emperor, therefore, we render such reverential homage as is lawful for us and good for him; regarding him as the human being next to God who from God has received all his power, and is less than God alone. And this will be according to his own desires. For thus—as less only than the true God—he is greater than all besides. Thus he is greater than the very gods themselves, even they, too, being subject to him. We therefore sacrifice for the emperor's safety, but to our God and his, and after the manner God has enjoined, in simple prayer. For God, Creator of the universe, has no need of odours or of blood. These things are the food of devils.
>
> (Tert., *To Scapula* 2, 6–8; translated by Sydney Thelwall)

The message could not be clearer: the Christians guarantee the Emperor's success by performing the proper (i.e., Christian) worship. Their adver-

saries—on other hand—venerate only demons. The paradigm has not changed at all: prayers to the right divinity have maintained their decisive function.

There is another very important theme introduced into Latin apologetics by Tertullian's *To Scapula*. This theme—the theme of neglected religion (*religio neglecta*)—is linked to the traditional Roman scheme as well. Because the apologists maintained that worship of the Christian God was obviously the correct form of worship, everyone that neglected it, or even persecuted it like the African governor Scapula, easily equaled the impious figures of Roman tradition (an outstanding example being Publius Clodius Pulcher) and also—as stressed by Tertullian—became a target of God's punishment.[8] This issue was further developed by Cyprian in the second half of the 3rd century and almost brought to perfection by Lactanius in his lampoon *De mortibus persecutorum* (*On Deaths of Persecutors*) from the second decade of the 4th century.

III

Despite its horrible start with great persecution, the 4th century brought major relief for the Christians. They found themselves in a privileged position now, which made much earlier apologetical activity obsolete (this fact in turn heavily influenced the further fate of some apologetical writings).

However, the beginnings of the final crisis in the western half of the empire changed this favorable situation. Already in the last years of Theodosius' reign there was a new rise of paganism and some kind of pagan revival embodied particularly by the circle around Symmachus.[9] The decisive ammunition for the pagans came from the Gothic sacking of Rome in 410. The questions and accusations from over a century earlier were fashionable again with the question of the correct form of worship and the correct divinity becoming the focal point once more. The Christians did not hesitate with their answers, and the crucial answer came from St. Augustine. However, although he challenged the sacrosanct position of the Roman Empire in Christian thought and although he broke with his predecessors by showing that no earthly kingdom could claim its position within the sacred history that ended with Christ,[10] there are still many passages in his *City of God* full of the Christian version of pagan Roman con-

8 For a comprehensive study of this theme in Christian apologetics, see Heck 1987.

9 Probably still the best study of the pagan revival is Bloch 1971. See also Klein 1971.

10 See Markus 1989, especially pp. 1–21.

ceptions about the connection between true religion and happiness. Thus the sacking of Rome in Christian times could not be compared with earlier sackings because the Christian God—now duly venerated—guarantees the mitigation of disastrous situations.

After arguing earlier that the pagan gods venerated in Rome before the victory of Christianity could not protect Troy from her disastrous end, St. Augustine reminds his readers:

> All the devastation, the butchery, the plundering, the conflagrations, and all the anguish which accompanied the recent disaster at Rome were in accordance with the general practice of warfare. But there was something which established a new custom, something which changed the whole aspect of the scene; the savagery of the barbarians took on such an aspect of gentleness that the largest basilicas were selected and set aside to be filled with people to be spared by the enemy. . . . This is to be attributed to the name of Christ and the influence of Christianity. Anyone who fails to see this is blind; anyone who sees it and fails to give praise for it is thankless; anyone who tries to stop another from giving praise is a madman.
>
> (Aug., *City of God* 1, 7; translated by Henry Bettenson)

If the great bishop of Hippo in the later books of his monumental work refrained from such views and probably even changed his perspective,[11] this is certainly not the case with his alleged pupil, author of the *Seven Books of History against the Heathen*, a surprising peak of both Latin Christian historiography in late Antiquity and Christian historical apologetics.

He was originally asked by St. Augustine to provide a kind of historical supplement to his *City of God*. However, the Spanish priest both exceeded and disappointed Augustine's expectations.[12] He created the first preserved universal history from the Christian point of view, whereby a surprising monument of Roman patriotism was also born. He also gave secular history a much more prominent place than St. Augustine would have liked to. In his polemics, Orosius remained strictly in line with earlier apologists, and thus staunchly pagan. He showed that the extent of disasters occurring on Earth had considerably decreased since the birth of Christ and the rise of Christianity (which was essentially already Melito's idea). The idea of proper worship as a guarantee for prosperity reached another peak (as shown earlier, Augustine himself was not immune to such ideas, particularly in first books of his *City of God*). As a true Roman, Orosius

11 As argued by D'Elia 1980, 401.

12 Rohrbacher 2002, 148.

stressed the importance of the first Roman emperor, Augustus, as contemporary with the birth of Christ for the successful spread of Christianity. In this sense, his mystification of three important events of Augustus' reign (triumph over the East, closing the temple of Janus, assuming the title of *Augustus*) has been particularly famous. According to Orosius, these occurred on 6 January, the date of the Epiphany of Christ, in 29 BC (the date stressing a strong connection between Augustus and Christ):[13]

> In the year 725 AUC, when the Emperor Caesar August himself was consul for the fifth time and Lucius Apuleius for the first time, Caesar entered the city on the 6th of January in a triple triumph upon his victorious return from the east and on this occasion he closed the door of the Temple of Janus for the first time after he had brought all civil wars to the end. On that day he was first saluted as Augustus. . . . Every believer and even adversary of the faith knows that this very day, the sixth of January, is also the day when we observe Epiphany; it is the apparition or manifestation of the Lord's sacrament.
>
> (Or., *History* 6, 20; translated by author)

Another well-known example of Orosius' ardent wish to express the happiness of Christian times is his depiction of the battle at the Frigidus River in 394 not only as a complete Christian victory but also as a victory without any bloodshed (see *History* 7, 35). His description therefore stands in direct contradiction to that of Tyrannius Rufinus in his translation of the *Ecclesiastical History* by Eusebius of Caesarea,[14] thus serving the purpose of the author's writing well.

Orosius' historical work remained the most important history textbook of the Christian West until the Enlightenment.[15] Even though Orosius has commonly been perceived as fool since that time, his ideas decisively shaped the European image of history for more than one thousand years, thus maintaining the authentic Roman religious ideology of the connection between rites performed well and individual or collective success long after the formal (and also factual) end of Roman paganism. To conclude, I would like to add that, like all apologists, he was certain he had decisively helped destroy a hated religious practice.

13 Paschoud 1980, 115–118.

14 Zecchini 1987, 49.

15 Zecchini 2003, 329.

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The Paganism of Latin Christian Historical Apologetics

Summary

The paper briefly discusses the influence of traditional Roman pagan conceptions of the connection between proper worship and the political success of the Roman state based on the apologetical writing of Latin Christian apologists in their representation of Roman history.

The first part of the paper analyzes some key features of Roman pagan religion, particularly its ritual rigorism and its consequences for the pagan-Christian relationship because it contributed importantly to frequent accusations according to which the Christians were to be blamed for the calamities of the time. Various possible answers to these accusations used by the apologists are then sketched out. It is shown that they simply reversed the pagan scheme and stressed that, in fact, the Christians were the only ones engaged in proper worship, thus maintaining the existence and success of the Roman state.

Such argumentation was used not only by the early apologists of the 2nd and 3rd centuries (when, among others, Melito of Sardes expressed his famous thesis about the close link between the rise of Christianity and the rise of the Roman Empire under Augustus), but also by later ones after the revival of pagan opposition to Christianity as a consequence of the sack of Rome in 410 and the general crisis of the Western Empire. The pagan Roman conceptions are even echoed in the early books of St. Augustine's *City of God*, and particularly in the *Seven Books of History against the Heathen* by his alleged pupil Orosius. This work can be seen as a late peak in the Christianized pagan scheme of the connection between proper worship and the prosperity of Rome.

Poganstvo latinske krščanske zgodovinske apologetike

Povzetek

Referat na kratko obravnava vpliv, ki so ga tradicionalne rimske poganske predstave o povezavi med »pravim« bogoslužjem in političnim uspehom rimske države imele na apologetsko pisanje latinskih krščanskih apologetov pri predstavljanju rimske zgodovine.

V prvem delu referata obravnavam nekatere ključne značilnosti rimske poganske religije, zlasti njen obredni rigorizem in njegove posledice za odnose med kristjani in pogani, ker je pomembno prispeval k pogostim obtožbam na račun kristjanov, ki naj bi bili krivi za nesreče časa. Potem orisujem odgovore na omenjene obtožbe, ki so bili apologetom na voljo. Ob tem pokažem, da so se največkrat odločili zgolj obrniti pogansko shemo in poudariti, da so v resnici kristjani edini, ki opravljajo pravo bogoslužje ter s tem vzdržujejo obstoj in uspešnost rimske države.

Takšne argumentacije niso uporabljali le zgodnji apologeti 2. in 3. stoletja (ko je – med drugimi – Meliton iz Sard postavil znamenito tezo o tesni povezanosti med rastjo krščanstva in vzponom rimskim cesarstva pod Avgustom), marveč tudi tisti poznejši po oživitvi poganske opozicije proti krščanstvu, ki je nastala kot posledica zavzetja Rima leta 410 in splošne krize zahodnega dela cesarstva. Poganske rimske predstave odmevajo celo v zgodnjih knjigah Avguštinovega *Božjega mesta*, še zlasti pa v spisu *Zgodovina proti poganom* njegovega domnevnega učenca Orozija. To delo je mogoče imeti za pozni vrhunec pokristjanjene poganske sheme povezanosti med pravim bogoslužjem in uspehom Rima.

Carmen Angela Cvetković

Rereading St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Book 7, in the Light of His Early Dialogue *Against the Academics*

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St. Augustine's relationship with Neoplatonic philosophy, especially in his early days as a Christian, came under frequent and intense scholarly scrutiny in the 20th century. Some claimed that leaving the Manichean sect and growing unsatisfied with skepticism, St. Augustine's next conversion was not to Christianity, but to Neoplatonism.[1] Other modern scholars, while denying the proper conversion of St. Augustine to Neoplatonism, nonetheless appeared to allow a stage of autonomous Platonism in St. Augustine's evolution towards Christianity.[2] In addition, St. Augustine's early works—especially those written from 386 to 390—were considered to pertain to his phase of Christian Platonism. In the period that separates St. Augustine's first encounter with Platonist texts and the writing of his *Confessions,* which relates this episode, scholars argued for a new drastic turning point in his intellectual evolution, marked by his reading of the epistles of St. Paul in the early 390s. Peter Brown was the proponent of this theory[3], and for decades this standpoint was widely embraced by scholars, who were eager to see a sharp distinction between the young St. Augustine, the author of the early dialogues, and the mature St. Augustine, the author of the *Confessions.* There were, however, a few voices that did not join the chorus of those supporting all these dramatic divisions and

1 Neoplatonism is an anachronistic term dating from the 19th century, which St. Augustine most probably would not have recognized. Instead he uses the term *platonicus* to designate not only Plato's works or ideas, but also the followers of his philosophy. Cf. Alfaric, *L'Évolution intellectuelle de saint Augustin: du Manichéisme au Néoplatonisme* (Paris 1918), in which it is argued that "moralement comme intellectuellement c'est au Néo-Platonisme qu'il s'est converti, plutôt qu'à l'Évangile."

2 Brown, *St. Augustine of Hippo. A Biography*, London 1967, p. 104.

3 See Brown (1967), the chapter "The Lost Future."

revolutions in St. Augustine's thought. For a long time, the main discordant voice was that of Goulven Madec[4], who refuted the theory of a drastic revolution in St. Augustine's thought in the early 390s as a result of his reading of the epistles of St. Paul. He agrees with Étienne Gilson, who wrote in 1929 that, although there are many changes in the details of St. Augustine's thought, the central elements of his teaching are fixed from the very beginning.[5] More recently, in an overview of the problems contained in Book 7 of the *Confessions*, Philip Cary urges caution when confronted with what scholars labeled "St. Augustine's early Platonism," as if this involvement with Platonism were merely a short phase that applied only to his early dialogues, whereas his later works need be seen as dealing with more Christian themes.[6] Similarly, Carol Harrison denies the existence of a Christian Platonism or a Christian Neoplatonism in St. Augustine's time.[7] She is also the author of the most substantial critique of Brown's theory of St. Augustine's dramatic turning point in the early 390s.[8] It is the thesis of her book to demonstrate that the young St. Augustine and the author of the *Confessions* is one and the same person. At the other extreme, in a recent and controversial biography[9] J. J. O' Donnell accuses St. Augustine of misleading his readers by having them believe in the *Confessions* that he had not been a faithful Christian until he was baptized in Milan on Easter eve 387, whereas in reality St. Augustine probably "never missed church on Sunday in his life." [10]

Leaving aside the extreme views concerning St. Augustine's engagement with both Platonism and Christianity, it is especially from the perspective of continuity that this paper seeks to address the account of the *Confessions*, Book 7 with passages from St. Augustine's first extant work, *Against the Academics*, written during his retreat at Cassiciacum, when he was already a convert to Christianity but not yet baptized. In reading these works in parallel, suspicion loomed large over Book 7 of the *Confessions* written ten years later, which was not considered a reliable account of the events taking place in 386. The most tendentious interpretations argued

4 Madec, *Saint Augustin et la philosophie*, Paris 1996.

5 Gilson, *Introduction à l'étude de saint Augustin*, Paris 1929.

6 Cary, *Inner Vision as the Goal of St. Augustine's Life*, p. 116, in: *A Readers' Companion to St. Augustine's Confessions*, edited by Paffenroth and Kennedy, Westminster 2003.

7 Harrison, *St. Augustine: Christian Truth and Fractured Humanity*, Oxford 2000, p. 13.

8 Harrison, *Rethinking St. Augustine's Early Theology: An Argument for Continuity*, Oxford 2006.

9 O'Donnell, *St. Augustine, Sinner and Saint: A New Biography*, London 2005.

10 Ibid., p. 53.

that the bishop of Hippo served to his readers a distorted and manipulative story of his early years as a Christian, bringing as argument the long gap of time separating the events of 386 from the time when they were recounted. The question that arises under such circumstances is how accurate and credible the narrative of his encounter with Platonism is in the central book of the *Confessions*.

Let us begin by looking at the context of Book 7 and St. Augustine's sinuous relationship with Christianity, as described in the *Confessions*. When treated with caution, this may provide significant evidence on this subject. Although one should not expect to encounter a precise historical account of St. Augustine's conversion days, I argue that one can nonetheless rely on the information furnished by the *Confessions* and this that reliance should be confirmed by a comparison with some of the facts presented in St. Augustine's early thought.

It is a misreading to claim that St. Augustine was converted from paganism to Christianity.[11] From his first encounter with wisdom and philosophy, while reading Cicero's lost dialogue *Hortensius*, St. Augustine inaugurated a series of failed attempts to embrace his mother's religion. The only thing that adumbrated his enthusiasm for Cicero's work was that the name of Christ was not contained in his books, because any book that lacked this name, however well written or polished or true, could not entirely grip him.[12] Later, he became a Manichean because he thought of this sect as representing an authentic form of Christianity. For a long time, St. Augustine found more satisfactory solutions in Manicheism to three intellectual problems that preoccupied him intensely: the righteousness of the Patriarchs, the nature of God, and the origin of *evil*.[13] These were the problems that hindered his approach to orthodox Christianity and determined him to embrace an esoteric Christian sect whose followers believed in the existence of two opposite principles as the basis of reality. To the first of these problems, St. Augustine found a solution in the previous books of the *Confessions*.[14] It is especially the idea of God's transcendence that St. Augustine appears to have found difficult to accept. As a Manichean, although he did not think of the Supreme Being *in figura corporis humani*,[15] he thought of God as an infinite physical mass; moreover, he believed that

11 Harrison (2006), p. 22.
12 *Conf.* 3, 4, 8.
13 *Conf.* 3, 7, 12.
14 *Conf.* 5, 14, 24; 6,4, 6.
15 *Conf.* 7, 1, 1.

everything that existed was material.[16] Lacking a conception of spiritual substance, he could not liberate himself from the Manichean idea that evil is an independent physical entity. While his enthusiasm for Manicheism diminished and he was experiencing a phase of skepticism, it was mainly these two problems that kept him from totally embracing Christianity. The solutions to his questions came not from the reading of the Scriptures, but from what he calls "books of the Platonists" (*libri Platonicorum*) in Book 7 of the *Confessions*, introduced to him by "a man puffed up with monstrous pride (*per quendam hominem immanissimo typho turgidum*)."[17] St. Augustine's tantalizing elusiveness concerning the identity of these books made modern scholars intensely debate their content. However, St. Augustine mentions that they were translated into Latin from Greek by Marius Victorinus. It is universally accepted among scholars today that probably, in reading these Platonic books, St. Augustine had not read Plato, but rather some books by Plotinus and Porphyry.[18] Whatever the identity of these codices, their reading had profound consequences for the evolution of St. Augustine's thought. In the *Confessions*, St. Augustine himself recognizes

16 *Conf.* 5, 10, 19.

17 *Conf.* 7, 9, 13. Cf. also Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin*, Paris 1968, pp. 153–156. Courcelle identifies this man with Manlius Theodorus. Although this identification is not universally accepted, it nonetheless remains the most convincing. St. Augustine dedicated his dialogue *De beata vita,* also written at Cassiciacum, to Manlius Theodorus. He also recognizes Manlius Theodorus as a reader of the Plotinian texts. See *B. vita* 1, 4 : *lectis autem Plotini paucissimis libris, cuius te esse studiosissimum accepi.*

18 The case for St. Augustine's reading of Plotinus was given classic expression by Henry, *Plotin et L'Occident* (1934). Using the method of textual parallels, Henry convincingly demonstrated the literary dependence of St. Augustine upon four treatises in *The Enneads*: 1, 6 (*On Beauty*), 3, 2 (*On Providence*), 4, 3 (*On the Soul*), and 5, 1 (*On the Divine Three Hypostases*). Since then, this method has been used by others. O'Connell, "Ennead VI, 4 and 5 in the Works of Saint St. Augustine," *Révue d'Etudes Augustiniennes* (1963), pp. 1–39, demonstrated that St. Augustine must have read treatises 6, 4 and 5. Olivier du Roy, *L'Intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon saint Augustin: Genèse de sa théologie trinitaire jusqu'en 391*, Paris 1966, pp. 157–158, demonstrated the influence of treatise 5, 5 on St. Augustine's early theory of the Trinity. The classic work for the relationship between St. Augustine and Porphyrios is Theiler, *Porphyrios und Augustin* (1933). More recently, in *Porphyry's Philosophy from Oracles in St. Augustine* (Paris 1959), O'Meara argued that the *Philosophy from Oracles* and the work quoted by St. Augustine as *De regressu animae* are one and the same work. For more studies on the relationship between Porphyry and St. Augustine, see Courcelle, *Les Confessions de saint Augustin dans la tradition littéraire: antécédents et postériorité*, Paris 1963, pp. 33–42, and Eugene TeSelle, *St. Augustine the Theologian*, London 1970, pp. 49–54.

that these books enabled him to understand the incorporeal nature of God[19] and to find an answer to the problem of evil as lack of being or lack of good—*privatio boni*.[20] Modern scholars have argued about the nature of these consequences, some of them interpreting this event as a conversion to Neoplatonism. However, there is not much evidence for such an interpretation. St. Augustine's early works and especially the dialogues of Cassiciacum do not contain quotations from these books; in turn, they explicitly cite the Scriptures and Virgil. There is no evidence that St. Augustine discusses these books, or that he uses them as authoritative sources. In his first extant work, *Contra Academicos*, written during his retreat at Cassiciacum, St. Augustine mentions certain books (*libri pleni*) whose effect on him he compares with a conflagration and that led him curiously not to becoming a Platonist himself, but instead admonished him to return to himself and to remember "the religion that is implanted in us in our childhood days and bound up in the marrow of our bones."[21] Surprisingly, he did not turn to the books of the philosophers, for instance Plotinus, whose name he mentions in the same work, but "stumbling, hastening, yet with hesitation I seized upon the Apostle Paul. For truly, I say to myself, those men would never be able to do such great things nor would they have lived as evidently they did live, if their writings and deeds were opposed to this so great a good. I read through all of it with the greatest attention and care."[22] The immediate consequence of his encounter with *libri pleni* and *libri Platonicorum* is identical; St. Augustine turns inward: "By the Platonic books I was admonished to return to myself."[23] In the *Confessions*, he finds, by returning to himself, a confirmation of the spiritual nature of God and he becomes aware of the transcendental gap between the Creator and creature: "When I first came to know you, you raised me up to make me see that what I saw is Being and that I who saw am not yet Being."[24] The doctrine of God's spirituality and that of evil as non-being or lack of good enabled St. Augustine to reconcile with the religion that he had imbibed with his mother's milk.[25]

In both accounts, the next move is to indicate his attentive and careful readings of the Apostle Paul: "With avid intensity, I seized the sacred

19 *Conf.* 7, 10, 16.
20 *Conf.* 7, 12, 18.
21 *C. acad.* 2, 2, 5.
22 *C. acad.* 2, 2, 5.
23 *Conf.* 7, 10, 16.
24 *Conf.* 7, 10, 16.
25 *Conf.* 3, 4, 8.

writings of your Spirit and especially the Apostle Paul. Where at one time I used to think he had contradicted himself and the text of his words disagreed with the testimonies of the law and the prophets, the problems simply vanished."[26] The *Confessions* appear to differ from the early dialogue because in the former work St. Augustine compares at length the Prologue of the Gospel of St. John with the Platonic books, insisting on the Christological differences between the two texts. Citing only passages from St. John both as evidence for the Platonic books and for the Christian text, St. Augustine argues that he was able to read in the former that "In the Beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God," that the world was made by the Word, that the Word is not born of flesh or blood but of God, that the Son was equal by nature with the Father, and that the Son immutably abides eternal with the Father. However, the Platonic books did not teach about the Word made flesh; they did not mention the humble descent of the Son of God, his crucifixion, death, and resurrection.[27] These elaborated parallels of the differences and similarities between Platonism and Christianity were mainly attributed to the mature St. Augustine.[28] However, although deemed implausible, this reading against the standards of Christianity is exactly what both *Against the Academics* and *The Confessions* seem to imply. Moreover, in my opinion St. Augustine could not had done otherwise because he became acquainted with these books in the Christian circle in Milan and, as we know, they were also translated by a Christian convert.

It was argued that the lack of the name of Christ and St. Augustine's predominant Neoplatonic terminology in his early dialogues are more indicative of a Neoplatonic than Christian early theological reflection. Carol Harrison challenges these allegations, contending that St. Augustine's early Christological reflection is fully Christian and orthodox.[29] Two passages from *Contra academicos* confirm this claim:

> After many generations and many conflicts there is strained out at last, I should say, one system of really true philosophy. For that philosophy is not of this world—such a philosophy our sacred mysteries most justly detest—but of the other intelligible world. To which intelligible world the most subtle reasoning would never recall souls blinded by the manifold darkness of error and stained deeply by the slime of the body, had not the most high God, because of a certain

26 *Conf.* 7, 21, 27.

27 *Conf.* 7, 9, 14.

28 O'Donnell, *St. Augustine: Confessions*, 3 vols., Oxford 1992.

29 Harrison (2006), pp. 252–263.

> compassion for the masses, bent and submitted the authority of the divine intellect even to the human body itself. By the precepts as well as deeds of that intellect, souls have been awakened, and are able, without the strife of disputation, to return to themselves and see once again their fatherland.[30]

Christianity is referred to here as the "true philosophy," not of this world but of a transcendent realm. The mention of "the sacred mysteries" is also evidence, as O'Donnell has rightly pointed out, that after the reading of the Platonic books St. Augustine did not indulge in theurgy.[31] The context elucidates that here "the sacred mysteries" stand for the Eucharist, the Christian liturgy, which can be considered a counterpart of theurgy because its role is to make God present. Next, St. Augustine explicitly contends in this paragraph that subtle reasoning, which he identifies with Platonic philosophy in the same work, is not sufficient for leading fallen souls to the intelligible world that is their fatherland. Mentioning God's compassion towards his creatures, St. Augustine clearly positions himself in a tradition that is more Christian than Platonic because Plotinus' One was never concerned about the souls that struggled to return to himself. Moreover, the highest expression of God's compassion and care towards his creatures is to be found in Incarnation, which is described here as the "submission of the authority of the divine intellect even to the human body itself." The incarnate intellect acts as a mediator through deeds and precepts, and leads souls to their fatherland. To sum up, it is possible to say that St. Augustine was already aware in his early dialogue, before his conversion to Christianity, of the incarnate Son of God, of his role as mediator, and of the necessity of divine assistance in leading fallen souls to the intelligible world of God.

He was more optimistic than in the *Confessions* when he considered Platonism and Christianity to be consonant, but it is beyond doubt that he was already aware of the primacy of Christianity:

> I, therefore, am resolved in nothing whatever to depart from the authority of Christ—for I do not find a stronger. But as to that which is sought out by subtle reasoning—for I am so disposed as to be impatient in my desire to apprehend truth not only by faith but also by understanding—I feel sure at the moment that I shall find it with the Platonists, nor will it be at variance with our sacred mysteries.[32]

30 *C. acad.* 3, 19, 42.

31 See the commentary on *Conf.* 7, 9, 13 in O'Donnell (1992), vol. 2.

32 *C. acad.* 3, 20, 43.

In his search for truth, St. Augustine combines two principles: that of faith or authority, which corresponds to Christianity, and that of reason or understanding, which corresponds to Platonism. He genuinely believed that these principles can coexist and that they are compatible, but he denied to reasoning the possibility to lead to the ultimate goal. Holte has identified three stages of St. Augustine's argument: 1. The philosophers have correctly determined the goal, 2. The skeptics or academics recognized the incapacity of human beings to attain this goal, and 3. The goal is reached by Christ.[33] In this early work, St. Augustine already appears to be conscious of the main difference between Platonism and Christianity. In the *Confessions*, Book 7, he does not say anything new when he claims that philosophers can see the goal of the journey, but they do not know the way that leads there because they reject as scandalous the Incarnation of the Word:

> It is one thing from a wooded summit to catch a glimpse of the homeland of peace and not to find the way to it, but vainly to attempt the journey along an impracticable route surrounded by ambushes and assaults of fugitive deserters with their chief the lion and the dragon. It is another thing to hold on to the way that leads there, defended by the protection of the heavenly emperor.[34]

The context in which this idea figures is more loaded rhetorically in the later work because St. Augustine had by now probably became more aware of the discrepancies between "reason" and "authority." The emphasis is no longer on their consonance, but on their difference, illustrated by the contrast between pride and humility. However, St. Augustine neither minimizes the effect the reading of the Platonic books had on him nor rejects them. Instead he interprets his encounter with the *libri Platonicorum* that preceded his reading of the Scriptures as providential. Thus, he can appreciate the difference between pride and humility, between presumption and confession, or "between those that see what the goal is but know not how to get there, and those that see the way that leads to the home of bliss, not merely as an end to be perceived, but a realm to live in."[35]

Finally, the most accurate description of this period of intellectual turmoil comes from Book 7, in which St. Augustine observes that, in spite of the many questions and anxieties that occupied him at the time of his conversion, "there was a firm place in my heart for the faith, within the

33 Holte, *Béatitude et sagesse. Saint Augustin et le problème de la fin de l'homme dans la philosophie ancienne*, Paris 1962, p. 93.

34 *Conf.* 7, 21, 27.

35 *Conf.* 7, 20, 26.

Catholic Church, in your Christ, 'our Lord and savior.' In many respects this faith was still unformed and hesitant about the norm of the doctrine. Yet my mind did not abandon it, but daily drank in more and more."[36]

Rereading St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Book 7, in the Light of His Early Dialogue *Against the Academics*

Summary

The parallel reading of Book 7 of St. Augustine's *Confessions* and his early dialogue *Against the Academics* shows that his ideas did not suffer dramatic changes because of the gap of time that separates these two works. St. Augustine's ideas follow the natural evolution of his thought, and this is the reason why one need not see any significant cataclysms here. Moreover, some of St. Augustine's chief Christological concepts, as well as his ideas of divine grace and fallen humanity, are already encapsulated in his first extant work. A growth in his awareness of the discrepancies between Platonism and Christianity did not make him entirely reject the former movement. Paradoxically, the main difference between the early works and the *Confessions* is that the latter is both a more Christian and a more Platonic work.

Vnovično branje sedme knjige Avguštinovih *Izpovedi* v luči njegovega zgodnjega dialoga *Proti akademikom*

Povzetek

Vzporedno branje sedme knjige Avguštinovih *Izpovedi* in njegovega zgodnjega dialoga *Proti akademikom* kaže, da njegove predstave niso pretrpele dramatičnih sprememb zaradi časovne vrzeli, ki ločuje ti dve deli. Avguštinove predstave sledijo naravnemu razvoju njegove misli, zato v njih ni treba videti nobene pomembne kataklizme. Še več, nekateri Avguštinovi osrednji kristološki pojmi, pa tudi predstave o Božji milosti in padlem človeštvu, so *in nuce* navzoče že v njegovem prvem ohranjenem delu. Čeprav je njegova zavest o razhajanjih med platonizmom in krščanstvom rasla, zato platonizma ni povsem zavrgel. Poglavitna razlika med njegovimi zgodnjimi deli in *Izpovedmi* je, paradoksno, v tem, da so *Izpovedi* bolj krščansko in hkrati bolj platonistično delo.

36 *Conf.* 7, 5, 7.


Christianity: A Conflict or a Conciliation?
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Gorazd Kocijančič

The Identity of Dionysius the Areopagite: A Philosophical Approach*

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One of the authors mentioned most often and also brilliantly commented upon by Sergei Averintsev in his *Poetics of Early Byzantine Literature* is Dionysius the Areopagite.* This is no coincidence. Dionysius (or Denys, or Pseudo-Dionysius, as he is called by the Russian philologist in accordance with contemporary scholarly convention) has profoundly influenced spirituality, theology, and philosophy in the East and the West, and still represents an intriguing challenge.[1]

On this occasion I would like to present a new, philosophical approach to the question of Denys' identity and—let me divulge in advance my hidden agenda—to assist him in getting rid of the prefix *Pseudo-*, and this without underplaying his pseudonymity by invoking literary conventions of Antiquity or by pushing him back to first-century Athens. This idea—the novelty of my approach—would probably not have been admired by Denys because novelty sells today; the author of *Corpus areopagiticum* displaces us to spiritual words, where the greatest value is Antiquity itself (although, to be honest, he was an extremely daring innovator himself in many regards). Perhaps he would have appreciated the epithet "philosophical" because it was not without reason that Johannes Scotus Eriugena called him *divinus philosophus*.

* The article—in a slightly different version—was first published in *Sobornost. Eastern Churches Review* 2 (2007).

1 I am alluding here above all to the very interesting exchange of thoughts on apophaticism between Marion and Derrida that started with Marion's chapter on Denys in his *Idole et distance* (Paris 1977) and lasted until Derrida's death; for ongoing scholarly *dissensus* on Denys, cf. Adolf Martin Ritter, *Dionysius Pseudo-Areopagita und der Neuplatonismus (im Gespräch mit neuerer Literatur)*, *Philotheos* 4 (2004), pp. 260–275.

I do not wish to attempt to define philosophy itself on this occasion, or to determine what makes a certain thought a philosophical one. I merely wish to stress with this adjective that my approach to Denys' identity will not be bound to the scientific historical method, but to sensitivity to (I hope) a different, alien, "crazy" horizon called by Denys himself *alétheia* 'the truth'. In his text *On Divine Names*, he says:

> The man in union with truth knows clearly that all is well with him, even if everyone else thinks that he has gone out of his mind [*exestekós*]. What they fail to see, naturally, is that he has gone out of the path of error and has in his real faith arrived at truth. He knows that, far from being mad, as they imagine him to be, he has been rescued from the instable and the constant changing movement along the multiform variety of errancy and that he has been set free by simple and immutable stable truth.
>
> (DN 872d–873a)[2]

I use a philosophical approach to challenge the fundamental presuppositions of the scientific approach to history that resides in this "multiform variety:" the entire field of history, the common time in which the historical event is inscribed, and the basic network of space and time where historical imagination finds it self-evident what identity is. If I may, I would like to ask for something difficult: a philosophical approach that demands the power of the abstraction of everything that is self-evident—and this precisely because of its openness to *alétheia*.

It has been said that Bertrand Russell once asked Ludwig Wittgenstein to admit that there was no rhinoceros in the room.[3] When Wittgenstein refused to believe this, Russell looked under the table and said that he was sure that there wasn't one. Wittgenstein was devastated. I now beg my readers not to push me to this kind of devastation. Try to forget for a moment what such a self-evident identity in history is, and try not to turn your eye to the past while listening to my weird deliberations.

2 I am quoting (sometimes in slightly modified form) Colm Luibheid's translation of Denys' texts (Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Complete Works*, translated by Colm Luibheid, foreword, notes and translation collaboration of Paul Rorem, preface by René Roques, introduction by Jaroslav Pelikan, Jan Leclerq, Karlfried Froehlich, London 1987), p. 110.

3 Cf. Brian McGuinness, *Young Ludwig*, Oxford 1988 (2005), p. 89.

History and agapic hermeneutics

Who in fact was Denys? This question with its distinction between the name and facts, truth and fiction, apparently points towards history. I argue here that appearance is only an appearance: this question introduces *ontology*. Scholarly recourse to history without the radical ontological turn here—and also everywhere else—proves to be an "errancy," if I may use Denys' term. Awareness of the ontological dimension of this question demands a new, still undeveloped but necessary hermeneutics that allows the other of history to speak without putting answers concerning the fundamental questions of being into his mouth.

The claim for philosophically suspending the common horizon of understanding the past when trying to understand a text and its author does, of course, evoke the well-known topics of contemporary hermeneutics and its heroes; for example, H. G. Gadamer and Paul Ricśur. Here, however, I do not want to apply the *loci communes* to the question of Denys' identity. My intention is to make a very different move. If I may simplify matters here, the fundamental concept of modern hermeneutics derives from the interplay of two different horizons, and the fusion of these horizons allows the creative modification of our own understanding. *I am convinced that the very presupposition of the co-related horizons hides from us the ontological presuppositions in which we inscribe both horizons, our own and that of the other.* In this case, these presuppositions are the following: universal time, history, identity in history, chronological sequence of events, and so on. The other paradigm of understanding that I would like to suggest here consists of man's ability to radically question his own ontology, which lies at the foundation of this presupposed horizon of the very constitution of historical reality. This is not due to the mere act of skepticism or the phenomenological *epoché*, but because of the very self-constructed facticity of the other in history. The reality of history does not demand the fusion of two horizons, but the annihilation of our own horizon and a racial intrusion—which in the logical sense is in fact impossible—of the other. It demands the annihilation of common history, of time and identity as already understood—and the thought of that very annihilation.

Such a thought might be called an *agapic* hermeneutics. This is the skill of interpretation as expression of the impossible possibility that is *agápe*—the radical openness to the other in his or her aloneness.

Let me explain what I mean by this.

The question of history in a philosophical sense is connected with *man's ontological understanding of absence in time*.

How does that which I posit as the modus of being of beings exist? How do beings exist that are no longer present, but which I assume exist and postulate on the grounds of some other things (e.g., a text), which enter into the realm of my sensations and/or spiritual perception)? In the commonsensical perception of the "past," in the act of imagination of the being of something that is no more, I return that-which-is-no-more to reality. When, for example, I think of the author of the *Corpus areopagiticum*, I think of one of those people that I meet in everyday life—or that I met and has already passed away: as another of the others. With this return—with my act of memory—I somehow return him to what he was—what he was independent of my memory. However, if I reflect on this gesture of mine, I see that the absent one—despite the self-obliterating act of onto-thetical imagination—remains in himself utterly nonexistent. In the act of historical imagination I myself am bestowing existence on the non-existent. Making the absent present does not change the way of being, but radically moves the non-being into being. However, this is only one possibility of thinking about history—the other is the complete opposite. When I *really think* of the author of this corpus, I think of his hypostacity, regardless of whether I place him in a particular century on the basis of this or that historical lead. I think of him as a totality of beings and the only being itself. He is like me. This is an impossible hermeneutical act—I disappear in him. I am being annihilated. The subject of history demands annihilation from me. The reality of the historical being is the paralogical synthesis between these two paradoxes: between the non-being made present in my hypostasis, and the hypostasis that demands my annihilation in order to be understood. Scholarly historiography does not take this *paradoxical reality of the historical* into account; there remain only the constant jotting down and cataloguing of traces that enable this double jump. If the reflection of the paradox is open to the being of the historical itself, historiography is being-less in the strict sense of the word.

"Above-worldly pulling together of othernesses"

The table is—I hope not too cryptically—clean. There is only the text by Denys left on it. The text that is in us, in me. The text that is—in me—the expression of the being of the other. The only being. The text that—regardless of all my ideas on identity—tells me something that is completely its own.

The text that faces us is the text of the author that identifies himself as Dionysius, the disciple of Paul. In the semantics of the philosophical styles, in their scholarly historical syntax, this identification seems impossible. Assume for a moment that the texts as traces of the only Being cannot be placed in any context. That Dionysius—in other words—may have known Proclus and other Neoplatonists, and that, in spite of the fact that he read them, those thinkers were not prior to him but were his contemporaries, hypostatized in his—the only, incomparable—time. That all the concepts he used to articulate his vision are simply hypostatized in his Being—and that they express it at the same time.

To put this in more concrete terms: see what the text itself reveals as the understanding of authorial identity. Allow the textuality of the corpus itself to construct the ontological identity that it expresses.

First, it seems that Denys attempted to maintain the identity of individual beings; that is, also that of his own. In his explanation of God's name "Peace," he writes:

> "How is it that everything wishes for peace?" someone may ask. "There are many things that take pleasure in being other, different, and distinct, and they would never freely choose to be at rest." This is true, assuming that what is meant here is that being other and being different refer to the individuality of each thing and to the fact that nothing tries to lose its individuality. Yet, as I will try to show, this situation is itself due to the desire for peace. For everything loves to be at peace with itself, to be at one. and never to move or fall away from its own existence and from what it has. And perfect Peace is there as a gift, guarding without confusion the individuality of each, providentially ensuring that all things are quiet and free of confusion within themselves and from without, that all things are unshakably what they are and that they have peace and rest. If all moving things wish never to be at rest but aim always for their own appropriate movement, this too is because of a wish for that divine Peace of the universe which keeps everything firmly in its own place and which ensures that the individuality and the stirring life of all moving things are kept safe from removal and destruction. This happens as a result of the inward peace which causes the things in movement to engage in the activity proper to themselves.
>
> (DN 952b–952d, translated by Colm Luibheid, p. 123)

Despite the God-given yearning of all beings for identity with themselves, the corpus emphasizes the other eros that is in marked opposition to the first one: the eros to return to one's own origin and unite with it. Many

textual references could be made here; suffice it to quote here the famous passage from *The Mystical Theology*, in which the author describes Moses' ascent of Mount Sinai:

> But then (Moses). . . renouncing all that the mind may conceive, wrapped entirely in the intangible and the invisible, belongs completely to him who is beyond everything. Here, being neither oneself nor someone else, one is supremely united to the completely unknown by an inactivity of all knowledge, and knows beyond the mind by knowing nothing.
>
> (MT 1001a, translated by Colm Luibheid, p. 137)

For the author of the corpus, this unification is *a possibility*: a possibility that could or could not be put into realization. He does not, however, allow any doubt that he, as a link in the hierarchical chain, is heading towards this union. That he does not speak about it as something that is exterior to his experience, but as something that is his most intimate message. I see in this the articulation of his own self-constructed being. The only being that is referred to in the prayer, *gígnesthai* 'becoming', is not an optional alternative, but the path from the less-real to the more-real and towards Reality itself.

What happens to human identity on this path? Recall the text: "being neither oneself nor someone else." The subject of the description of the ecclesiastical, celestial, and divine landscapes that lead to the union does not have a fixed identity—precisely because it is the subject of narration and at the same time the subject heading towards union. Someone that, in the ideal sense of the word, "completely belongs to the one that is beyond all realities."

In such a changed horizon, there is no longer a unified field of history if one can open up to the experience expressed in Denys' texts in such a way as to renounce one's own ontological presuppositions. By annihilating us as *subiectus unionis*, the subject of *periégesis*—theological descriptive narration—places us in the world where our commonsensical or scientific historical theories of identity no longer apply.

The fact that the author as the subject of union is not himself or someone else enables him to become himself and someone else in mystical inversion.

This inversion has its (meta)ontological foundation in Denys' world, in his expression of his own experience of being. Recall the text *On Divine Names*, although one may be confused again by "the excesses of the sty-

listic exuberance" of the author, "who was really unable to utter even one simple word" (Averintsev):

> And so all these scriptural utterances in a holy way celebrate the supreme Deity by describing it as a monad or henad, because of its simplicity and unity of supernatural indivisiblity, by which unifying power we are led to unity. We, in the diversity of what we are pulled together in one and are led into god-imitating oneness, into a unity reflecting God.
>
> (DN 1, 4, 589d, ibid., translated by Colm Luibheid, p. 51)

In Denys' view, otherness is undoubtedly what gives me identity, what distinguishes me from the *other* other. How is one to understand this mysterious *com-plicatio* of othernesses in "god-imitating oneness, into a unity reflecting God"? Undoubtedly, this "com-plication" is the disappearance of the othernesses that constitute the identity of beings separated from their origins. István Perczel argues that this is a case of "clear-cut heretical Origenism"[4] and refers to the fourteenth anathema of the Fifth Ecumenical Council. However, such a claim is too rash.

Here Denys uses Platonic terminology, there is no doubt about it—but with what intent? The entirety of his works clearly shows that this "oneness" does not mean the demise of the radical difference that separates all creation from its Principle. The radical destabilization of identity takes place beyond the metaphorics of fusion as a new identity. Drawing from his own spiritual experience, in his own way and using his idiosyncratic terminology, Denys articulates the doctrine about deification, *théosis*, which is one of the most fundamental messages of the Eastern Church.

"Our redemption is possible only through our deification" he writes in *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (EH 376a). This is followed by: "God came to us in his love towards humanity. . . and assimilated us to himself as fire" (EH 393a). In her article "Mystères, unification et divinisation de l'homme selon Denys l'Aréopagite,"[5] Ysabele de Andia comes to the following conclusion: "The new perspective brought by Hierarchies is deification. The very aim of the hierarchy is to unify and deify intellects, human and divine . . . . Deification is participation in Divine life and the transmission of this life is enacted in rites that are hierarchical and symbolic at the same time."[6]

4 István Perczel, *Denys l'Aréopagite et Symeon le Nouveau Théologien*, in: *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa posterité en Orient et en Occident. Actes du colloque international*, Paris 21–24 September 1994, edited by Ysabele de Andia, Paris 1997, p. 347, footnote 20.

5 *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 63 (1997), pp. 273–322.

6 Ysabele de Andia, op. cit., p. 322.

One of the crucial passages in *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, which speaks of this process of deification in an ecclesiological and openly Christological context, again uses the expression "pulling together" (*sýmptyxis*, *com-plicatio*), which was already encountered in the explanation of divine names:

> Indeed the Word of God teaches those of us who are its disciples that in this fashion—though more clearly and more intellectually—Jesus enlightens our blessed superiors, Jesus who is transcendent mind, utterly divine mind, who is the source and the being underlying all hierarchy, all sanctification, all the workings of God, who is the ultimate in divine power. He assimilates them, as much as they are able, to his own light. *As for us, with that yearning for beauty which raises us upward (and which is raised up) to him, he (Jesus) pulls together all our many othernesses, thereby making our life, disposition and activity something one and divine, and bestowing on us the power appropriate to a sacred priesthood.*
>
> (EH 1, 1, 372a–b, ibid., translated by Colm Luibheid, pp. 195–196)

In addition to unification with the Origin, deification, participation in divine life has the feature of mutual union, community, *koinonía*. "The com-plication of othernesses" in the process of deification also enables the mutual unification of beings that are on their way towards deification, without introducing any kind of chaos that would replace *táxis*, "order." However, one should not mitigate the radicalism of Denys' thesis. Although Perczel wrongly connects Denys' doctrine with Origenism, his claim nevertheless reveals the radical atopical, displaced understanding of identity in Denys' discourse on deification. This radically understood theosis with an atopical identity of the subject of deification allows the author of the corpus to take over the other name, which is neither fiction nor historical reality, and to write from the factually experienced prolepsis of the eschatological *koinonía*.

This destabilization of identity in the intimate, paralogical "logics" of deification implies the *evacuation* of the text itself written by the subject of *théosis*. Usually the verification of that which is written is sought in the experience of the writer. Denys' unhistorical self-identification, grounded in his ontology of deification that annihilates our own ontology, withdraws this certitude.

If Denys *is not* Paul's disciple, then he is Paul's disciple in the very experience of being deified—which happens at the level of identity that transcends every historical ascertainment of identity. When God is *pantónymos* and *anónymos*, when he has all names and none, then the person

that is experiencing the deification is ontologically entitled to assume any name—including the name "Denys, the pupil of Paul." Nonetheless, he remains utterly without a name and, in the gesture of writing—being alien to every historical identity—he invites the reader into that very same mystical *être sans papier.*[7]

The Identity of Dionysius the Areopagite: A Philosophical Approach

Summary

Who in fact was Denys the Areopagite? The author argues that this question, with its distinction between the name and the facts, truth and fiction, is only apparently directed towards history. It introduces us into *ontology*. The awareness of its ontological dimension, however, demands a *new*, still undeveloped but necessary *hermeneutics*, in which we allow the other of history to speak, without putting into his mouth the answers that concern the fundamental questions of being. In the case of Denys' writings, the identity of the author is revealed by his doctrine of deification and the paradoxical dialectics of identity and difference that are thereby implied.

Istovetnost Dionizija Areopagita: filozofski pristop

Povzetek

Kdo je v resnici bil Dionizij Areopagit? Avtor dokazuje, da to vprašanje s svojo razločitvijo imena in dejanskosti, resnice in fikcije le na videz napotuje v zgodovino – v resnici nas pelje v ontologijo. Zavest o ontološki dimenziji vprašanja pa narekuje novo, še nerazvito, vendar nujno hermenevtiko, v kateri pustimo spregovoriti drugemu zgodovine, ne da bi prejudicirali odgovore na temeljna vprašanja o biti. Kar zadeva spise Dionizija Areopagita, nam njegovo istovetnost razkrivata nauk o pobožanju in paradoksna dialektika identitete in razlike, ki jo ta nauk implicira.

7 Some far-reaching implications of such an understanding of Denys' identity will be presented in the introduction and commentaries to my forthcoming Slovene translation of Denys' complete works.

Luca Grion

Le regioni dell' anima: il rapporto tra fede e ragione a partire dal pensiero di Gustavo Bontadini

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Permettetemi una piccola confessione (siamo tra amici e so di potermela permettere): prima di ricevere l'invito a questa due giorni dedicata a Sergej Averincev non avevo avuto modo di confrontarmi direttamente con l'opera di quest'autore. L'occasione si è rivelata quanto mai preziosa, regalandomi la piacevole sorpresa di un pensiero ricco di suggestioni e di spunti di riflessioni. Alcune di queste le vorrei oggi condividere con voi. Premetto fin d'ora il carattere non certo specialistico del mio intervento, non ne avrei la competenza. Non intendo cioè affrontare criticamente l'opera di Averincev quanto piuttosto provare a sviluppare una riflessione ispirata dalla lettura di alcune pagine del pensatore russo. Non un discorso *su* Sergej Averincev, dunque, bensì un dialogo ideale *con* Sergej Averincev (e col mondo spirituale di cui egli è espressione).

Personalmente mi sono dedicato a lungo allo studio della così detta metafisica neoclassica, erede di quella tradizione di pensiero che affonda le sue radici nell'Atene del sesto secolo avanti Cristo. Un pensiero, quello neoclassico, caratterizzato da un approccio speculativo estremamente razionale, che ha nel *lógos* il suo stile intellettuale e nell'*epistéme* il proprio fine agognato. Un pensiero, tuttavia, animato dal desiderio di riscattare con gli strumenti della ragione una fede che ha altrove il proprio luogo d'origine: in Gerusalemme – per restare alle suggestioni del testo di Averincev – ovvero nell'ascolto della buona novella.

Atene e Gerusalemme simboleggiano pertanto in modo efficace quanto suggestivo il rapporto tra fede e ragione, tra il senso ultimo dell'esistenza e la necessità di una sua intelligibilità razionale. Gustavo Bontadini, uno degli autori più rappresentativi della riflessione neoclassica, amava parlare di fede e ragione come di due "luoghi dell'anima", due istanze che abitano

l'esperienza umana e che richiedono una sintesi capace ad un tempo di essere rispettosa delle differenza ma altresì arricchente per entrambe. Con compiaciuta sorpresa mi sono dunque ritrovato nelle pagine di Averincev quando questi ci parla di Atene e di Gerusalemme come di "due principi creativi". In quelle pagine ho scorto infatti la preziosa tensione tra l'ascolto fiducioso della rivelazione e l'esigenza di una sua traduzione razionale.

Le assonanze possono però nascondere anche modulazioni diverse di uno stesso tema e, talvolta, esse possono declinare in modo sensibilmente diverso un'unica idea di fondo. Proprio su questo vorrei ora provare a svolgere un breve ragionamento.

Il nucleo centrale di questo mio contributo credo sia ormai palese: esso è rappresentato dalla dialettica fede/ragione, dalla necessità di una loro integrazione e dalle difficoltà connesse al loro dialogo reciproco. Entrambe anelano infatti la stessa meta: il possesso sicuro della verità. Entrambe ritengono di possedere le chiavi giuste per raggiungerla e si contendono vicendevolmente la primazia nell'ordine conoscitivo. Rispetto a tale dialettica la posizione di Averincev è abbastanza chiara: egli è convinto del ruolo ancillare della filosofia, incapace da sola di giungere al fondo del reale in quanto viziata da un astrattismo che tende ad isolarla dalla concretezza della vita. Queste considerazioni lo spingono a denunciare i rischi cui inevitabilmente si espone Atene nel momento in cui non sa (o non può) porsi in ascolto dell'annuncio salvifico di Gerusalemme. Rischi resi concreti nello stile intellettuale inaugurato dalla riflessione greca ed ereditato dal pensiero moderno. Per primi i filosofi greci «estrassero dal flusso vitale dei fenomeni l' "essenza" stabile e uguale a se stessa […] e cominciarono a manipolarla intellettualmente»[1]. Nel far questo essi disincarnarono il pensiero dal suo legame con la vita, trasformandolo «per la prima volta da pensiero-nel-mondo a pensiero-sul-mondo»[2]. L'autonomia e l'universalità rivendicata come titolo di merito dal pensiero filosofico divennero così la cifra di un approccio al reale perennemente tentato dall'arroganza dell'autosufficienza, sordo a quelle verità che il logo, da solo, non è in grado di raggiungere. Averincev sembra dunque proporre l'incontro tra Atene e Gerusalemme nella forma di un dialogo nel quale la ragione si dimostra capace di rinunciare alla sua pretesa autosufficienza e di mettersi in ascolto della parola rivelata, accogliendo così la verità di fede quale premessa irrinunciabile ad una efficace ricerca speculativa.

1 S. Averincev, *Atene e Gerusalemme. Contrapposizione e incontro di due principi creativi* (1971), Donzelli, Roma, 1999.

2 Ibid.

Rispetto a questo approccio in cui la conoscenza di fede ordina e guida i passi della ragione, l'esempio bontadinino si muove in una direzione per certi aspetti antitetica. Il maestro della Cattolica si è sempre dimostrato insoddisfatto rispetto alla soluzione fideista (da lui abbracciata negli anni giovanili). Non la critica a livello di scelta esistenziale, né esclude ch'essa possa rivelarsi una preziosa *chance* per l'uomo. Bontadini nega piuttosto che un approccio filosofico marcatamente fideista possa fornire una base solida alla costruzione di una metafisica razionale (obiettivo al quale egli dedicò la vita). A suo avviso bisognerebbe avere maggior fiducia nella ragione: se ciò a cui si mira è la verità (intesa come verità stabile, come *epistéme*[3]) non si può che confidare nella forza del *lógos* ed accettare ch'esso assurga a giudice *anche* della ragionevolezza della fede.

Utile quindi nel corso di questa nostra due giorni di studio, il confronto con un autore che, pur condividendo con Averincev un comune orizzonte di fede, sembra gestire la dialettica fede/ragione in modo sensibilmente diverso. Cercherò di farlo in modo, per quanto possibile, schematico.

Conoscere e volere, verità e fede

1.1 Alcuni rilievi preliminari.

Chiedere alla riflessione filosofica di sciogliere le aporie legate al rapporto tra fede e ragione significa, in fondo, riconoscerle un "primato conoscitivo". Come a dire: se ciò che andiamo cercando è una verità stabile, capace di superare le mere opzioni soggettive (ed in grado di dar conto della propria validità) è al *lógos* che dobbiamo rivolgerci. Il filosofare – e segnatamente la riflessione metafisica – tende naturalmente alla verità stabile (all'*epistéme*) come suo fine agognato e la ragione è lo strumento attraverso cui il pensiero cerca di appagare tale desiderio di verità. Come esseri razionali, come filosofi, ovvero come amanti di un sapere capace di dimostrare la veridicità delle proprie affermazioni, noi aspiriamo infatti ad una tale verità incontrovertibile.

In quanto persone coinvolte nel flusso della vita, però, noi non desideriamo una verità qualsiasi: ciò cui aspiriamo realmente è una verità in grado di dar senso alla nostra esperienza, una verità capace di riconoscere la razionalità della vita stessa. In questo nostro indagare noi *scommettiamo* sull'intelligibilità dell'esperienza, sul suo valore e sulla possibilità di un suo fondamento razionale. Se siamo onesti non possiamo non riconoscere

3 In questa sua solidità, in questa sua capacità di "stare" (*stéme*) e di imporsi "sulle" (*epí*) proprie possibili negazioni, risiede il senso originario della verità come *epistéme*.

come noi tutti – con le forme, i modi, le certezze e le debolezze proprie di ciascuno – quando ci apprestiamo ad affrontare il nodo del rapporto tra ragione e fede non lo facciamo certo da spettatori disinteressati, bensì come parti in causa. Questo problema ci interroga direttamente e, per così dire, "integralmente", in quanto una parte di noi ha già deciso "la sua verità" ed ora chiede conforto alla ragione circa la ragionevolezza di questa sua scelta di campo. Siamo, per così dire, già "imbarcati" prima ancora di cominciare a riflettere filosoficamente. La nostra opzione (scommessa!) sull'esito sperato fa parte del nostro stesso cominciamento.

Come uomini e donne di fede, infine, noi crediamo nella possibilità di un fondamento trascendente capace di salvaguardare e difendere il senso ed il valore dell'esperienza umana. Lo facciamo in quanto abbiamo avuto notizia di una simile possibilità grazie all'annuncio offertoci da testimoni attendibili; grazie all'esempio di una comunità che ci ha accolti nel seno di una tradizione autorevole; grazie all'insegnamento di maestri che si sono guadagnati la nostra fiducia ed ai quali ci siamo affidati. Lo facciamo, anche, grazie ai frutti di quella stessa speranza che, sotto diverse forme e modalità d'espressione, abbiamo voluto/saputo riconoscere nel corso della nostra vita.

La complessità dell'esperienza umana si articola quindi su di una pluralità di dimensioni, distinte tra loro ma, nel contempo, profondamente interconnesse. L'umano *è* questa complessità originaria, fatta di ragione, di desiderio, di fede.

1.2 Provando a discriminare le coordinate essenziali di tale complessità, penso si possa iniziale distinguendo le due principali dimensioni su cui si articola l'esperienza umana. Da un lato il conoscere, quale espressione consapevole del *logos* (ragione); dall'altra la volontà, forza motrice dell'azione pratica (desiderio). Queste due dimensioni si caratterizzano per una loro propria "grammatica", oltre che per una specifica "tensione intenzionale". Sarà quindi nostra cura provare a indicarne gli aspetti peculiari. Successivamente, cercheremo di metterne in luce i punti di contatto e le reciproche connessioni.

1.3 In prima approssimazione possiamo così definire i due pilastri essenziali attorno ai quali si costruisce la complessità dell'esperienza umana:

Il conoscere in primo luogo. Esso si caratterizza per un approccio teoretico/contemplativo alla realtà. Il conoscere vive, per così dire, di evidenze. Il suo regno è quello dell'incontrovertibilità, dell'evidenza, della trasparenza dell'essere.

Il conoscere aspira alla verità delle cose più che ad una loro possibile fruizione. Il suo arco intenzionale termina infatti nella realtà in quanto conosciuta, ovvero nel possesso concettuale (ideale) della realtà stessa. Il conoscere, inoltre, si caratterizza per una propria tensione interna: *formalmente* esso si costituisce come sapere della totalità, nel senso che esso si determina come il luogo (l'orizzonte) entro il quale l'Intero si rivela[4]. Tale darsi dell'essere al/nel conoscere, tuttavia, è sempre un darsi determinato, parziale. Si conosce l'ente – al più gli enti – mai l'essere nella totalità concreta delle sue determinazioni. Di qui l'incessante superamento del dato immediato da parte del conoscere, la sua insoddisfazione, la continua tensione verso un ampliamento della sua conoscenza dell'Intero. La coscienza, in questo modo, si ritrova avvinta in una contraddizione insanabile: *formalmente* essa è apertura all'Intero (identità di essere e pensiero); *di fatto*, essa ha invece a che fare solo con la parte, col frammento o, la più, con una gran massa di frammenti. La coscienza è quindi spinta ad un'incessante superamento di tale posizione di steresi, mossa dall'esigenza di ritrovare una propria equazione con l'Intero. Questa la radice del dinamismo tipico del conoscere.

La volontà (desiderio). Essa si contraddistingue, rispetto al conoscere, in virtù del suo strutturale sporgersi oltre il piano dell'immediatezza. Il desiderosi caratterizza, infatti, per il suo tendere verso ciò che non si offre nell'immediato ma che, al limite, in esso si lascia solo annunciare[5].

Notiamo fin d'ora che – contrariamene a quanto avviene per il conoscere – quando si desidera qualcosa la coscienza ha a che fare in modo

4 Mi rendo conto del tratto brachilogico di questi passaggi. Una loro esaustiva determinazione costringerebbe però a superare i limiti imposti a queste note. Per una loro trattazione più articolata si rimanda a G. Bontadini, *Saggio per una metafisica dell'esperienza*, Vita e pensiero, Milano, 1995; idem, *Conversazioni di metafisica*, Vita e pensiero, Milano, 1995; P. Gregoretti, *Sul rapporto tra filosofia e religione*, Edizioni università Trieste, 2000; idem, *La religione nell'incontro di ragione e fede*, Aa.Vv., *La questione di Dio oggi*, Piemme, Casale Monferrato 1989, pp. 61–74; E. Severino, *La struttura originaria*, Adelphi, Milano, 1981; idem, *Studi di filosofia della prassi*, Adelphi, Milano, 1984; C. Vigna, *Ragione e religione*, Celuc, Milano, 1971; idem, *Il frammento e l'intero*, Vita e pensiero, Milano, 2000.

5 La volontà muove infatti dalla presenza "ideale" (concettuale) dei suoi *desiderata*. In questo caso il concetto rappresenta un semplice rimando al vero oggetto del desiderio (la realtà concreta). Mentre il conoscere tende ad un possesso concettuale ("ideale") della realtà, il desiderio, per dirsi soddisfatto, non si accontenta di cogliere il concetto della cosa, esso vuole la realtà "in natura". "Volere", "desiderare" sono verbi che esprimono un bisogno, denunciano una mancanza che chiede d'essere colmata. Si vuole ciò che non si ha. Si desidera ciò di cui ci si sente bisognosi.

immediato col significato della cosa e solo tramite esso (quindi mediatamente) con la realtà. La volontà, dunque, sceglie per l'esistenza reale (*in re*) di ciò cui il significato rimanda. Rispetto alla sfera del conoscere, dove il sapere è visto come il fine cui tendere, nel caso del desiderio il sapere rappresenta pertanto il mezzo (in quanto anticipazione ideale) attraverso il quale "agganciare" praticamente la realtà desiderata.

In ragione di questo sporgersi della volontà oltre l'orizzonte dell'evidenza e dell'immediatezza – e dunque dell'incontrovertibilità – essa è necessariamente esposta al rischio dell'errore. Quante volte, infatti, il desiderio deve fare i conti con la frustrazione!

1.4 Su questa struttura bipolare si radica la distinzione tra verità e fede. Proviamo ad offrirne una prima, schematica, definizione.

La verità è il fine cui tende la ragione epistemica. Qui il termine verità viene assunto in senso forte, ovvero non soltanto come dizione del vero, ma come sapere veritativo capace di dimostrarsi tale in modo incontrovertibile[6]. In questa specifica accezione – tipica dell'indagine metafisica – la verità si configura come *un sapere incontrovertibile dell'incontrovertibile*. Un sapere, quindi, che non può essere negato in virtù dell'immediatezza e dell'incontrovertibilità con la quale si offre al pensiero. Tre le forme che un tale sapere può assumere:

a) come **evidenza fenomenologica**: ovvero come presentarsi di ciò che è, nei limiti e nelle modalità in cui questo si offre (entità logica, fattuale, mentale). Siamo qui sul piano della datità immediata di coscienza.

b) come **evidenza logica**: ovvero come immediatezza logica. Esempio principe di tale tipo di evidenza è il principio di non contraddizione. Altri esempi sono le verità analitiche (quali "il tutto è maggiore delle parti") le quali altro non sono se non individuazioni del principio di non contraddizione.

c) come **mediazione necessaria**: ovvero come quel contenuto di coscienza che appare incontrovertibile – e dunque evidente – al termine di un discorso dimostrativo necessario (verità inferenziale). Si tratta quindi di un'immediatezza *per aliud*.

L'*evidenza* e l'*incontraddittorietà*, dunque, rappresentano i "parametri"

6 Osserva Severino: «Verità è *sintesi* dell'asserto e della validità o fondazione assoluta dell'asserto (dove 'validità' e 'fondatezza assoluta' significano capacità assoluta di toglimento di ogni negazione dell'asserto): *sintesi* di *ciò che è detto* e del *valore assoluto* di ciò che è detto. […] pertanto la semplice posizione dell'asserto […] non è 'verità': se 'verità' è la sintesi del contenuto e del valore del contenuto, un momento della sintesi non è 'verità'». E. Severino, *Studi di filosofia della prassi*, cit., p. 99.

in base ai quali è possibile garantire la verità di ogni singolo passo condotto lungo il cammino speculativo.

La fede (o certezza) rappresenta invece la *convinzione pratica* nella veridicità di un determinato stato di cose. Essa, agli occhi della ragione speculativa, appare come un sapere trattato *in actu exercito* come incontrovertibile, ma che, in sé, non è in grado di mostrare la propria incontrovertibilità, restando in tal modo speculativamente controvertibile (e dunque suscettibile di errore).

In altre parole la fede "tiene per vero" ciò che, di per sé, non è capace di dimostrarsi tale. Essa rappresenta dunque un sapere *di fatto incontrovertibile* di ciò che *per sé* si mostra come logicamente controvertibile[7].

1.5 Si faccia attenzione: qui non stiamo ancora parlando specificatamente di fede religiosa (la quale rappresenta tuttavia un tipo particolare di certezza), ma in generale di un contenuto di coscienza vissuto *praticamente* come vero (in virtù di ragioni non riconducibili strettamente alla ragione speculativa) benché incapace, per sé, di dimostrare razionalmente la propria incontrovertibilità. Così intesa, la fede si rivela quindi come la situazione tipica della nostra esperienza quotidiana. Noi viviamo comunemente nella fede e solo occasionalmente nella verità.

La fede è dunque quell'atteggiamento pratico in base al quale si acconsente a qualcosa (reputandolo conforme al vero) senza che se ne abbia evidenza razionale. La sua verosimiglianza – quanto alla stabilità ed all'incontrovertibilità (soggettiva) con la quale viene vissuta – poggia non su un "vedere", bensì su un "volere": (ci) si decide per la verità di ciò in cui si crede, e lo si fa sulla base di una serie di ragioni diverse dall'evidenza epistemica. In questo senso la fede *anticipa* l'evidenza del conoscere, *scommettendo* in favore della verità creduta.

Sulla circolarità di fede e ragione

2.1 Torniamo ora al rapporto tra il volere e conoscere e soffermiamoci a guardare la loro reciproca relazione. Quando il desiderio raggiunge il suo bene voluto, non è solo il volere ad essere soddisfatto. Lo è pure il

7 «È inerente nella posizione problematica la credenza (proprio nel senso di 'far credito') nella possibilità di arrivare a conoscere tanto della realtà intorno a cui si discute, quanto basti per dare una risposta al problema. Nella stessa guisa colui che cammina crede nel terreno che sosterrà il suo passo, che non gli ceda innanzi. Senza tale credenza, senza tale disposizione che diremo aggressiva, la coscienza non si accingerebbe a risolvere il problema». G. Bontadini, *Saggio di una metafisica dell'esperienza*, cit., p. 29.

conoscere. Infatti col raggiungimento dell'oggetto desiderato il conoscere vede dischiudersi una determinazione dell'essere cui, sulla base della sola evidenza immediata (o mediata in modo necessario), non sarebbe mai giunto.

Alla fine dell'arco del desiderare (*se* quest'ultimo giunge al possesso reale del bene voluto) si assiste infatti ad un ampliamento d'orizzonte dell'attualità presente. Da qui emerge la connessione (circolarità) tra sapere e volere; tra la dimensione contemplativa del conoscere e la dinamicità propria dell'azione[8].

2.2 Il sapere si dimostra *interessato* al dinamismo del desiderio ed alla spregiudicatezza dell'azione, in quanto quest'ultima è in grado, di fatto, di ampliare l'orizzonte dell'apparire, portando all'evidenza determinazioni dell'essere sempre nuove. Di più: la fede è lo strumento soggettivamente più efficace in vista di un ampliamento progressivo della nostra conoscenza epistemica sull'essere[9].

La verità, dunque, non può fare a meno della fede: non solo perché quest'ultima rappresenta una dimensione originaria dell'umano, ma anche (e direi soprattutto) perché la fede si rivela strumento necessario al progressivo dischiudersi dell'essere al conoscere. Senza di essa il *lógos* si vedrebbe limitato entro poche (benché preziose) verità prime e schiacciato sull'evidenza del mero dato immediato, senza possibilità di ampliare il suo sguardo sull'Intero.

D'altro canto, neppure l'azione è estranea al conoscere. Al contrario, essa si radica sulle conoscenze già acquisite dalla ragione, utilizzandone i concetti come mezzi per l'ottenimento dei suoi fini. L'azione, inoltre, presuppone come sua condizione essenziale, la consapevolezza della possibi-

8 Detto per inciso: il conoscere non sempre, necessariamente, un "volere conoscere". Il pensare, in quanto relazione intenzionale all'essere, si rivela, in prima battuta, come coscienza del dato d'esperienza la quale, appunto, si offre al conoscere come un che di *dato*, di rivelato alla coscienza senza che questa possa dirsi potente sul dato stesso. La realtà dell'esperienza ci interpella anche senza il nostro consenso, e molte volte non vorremmo "conoscere" ciò che è dato esperire. Tuttavia, la logica di queste nostre riflessioni, tende a sottolineare il valore conoscitivo della volontà intesa come strumento prezioso per ampliare consapevolmente le determinazioni dell'esperienza immediata.

9 Il conoscere mosso dalla mera ragione speculativa è infatti incapace di decidersi di fronte a opzioni in sé incontraddittorie e, quindi, ugualmente possibili. In questo senso la volontà, se da un lato mette a rischio di errore la ragione col suo forzarla in favore dell'opzione creduta, dall'altro le offre la possibilità – qualora la volontà riesca a fruire del suo oggetto di desiderio – di godere di una porzione dell'Intero altrimenti inaccessibile.

lità reale del termine cui tende; dipende quindi dalla razionalità del *lógos* quanto alla ragionevolezza del proprio desiderio (desiderare ciò che si sa impossibile significa infatti cadere nella follia).

2.3 Cominciano così a delinearsi i tratti della circolarità originaria tra fede e ragione: da un lato sappiamo infatti che la verità vive (anche) del suo rapporto strutturale con la fede, ovvero che essa non può fare a meno di un uso consapevole della certezza quale possibilità pratica al dischiudersi di determinazioni sempre nuove dell'essere (*inevitabilità della fede*). Dall'altro, abbiamo messo in luce come la fede si regga sulla ragionevolezza e sull'incontraddittorietà dei propri *desiderata*, sulla loro vero-simiglianza (*razionalità della fede*).

2.4 L'intimità di fede e ragione non deve però far scordare ciò che le distingue: la ragione speculativa si sostanzia della sicurezza e dell'indubitabilità dell'*epistéme*. La fede, al contrario (benché cerchi di garantirsi una propria solidità razionale) non può mai divenire altro da sé, senza con questo negarsi (facendosi, essa stessa, verità epistemica). La fede non può infatti liberarsi dal rischio dell'errore, al quale è strutturalmente esposta, se non al prezzo di cadere nella gnosi.

La fede, benché capace di offrire al conoscere delle *chances* che altrimenti gli sarebbero precluse, opera propriamente su una dimensione diversa rispetto a quella del sapere speculativo. Essa ha infatti a che fare con la dimensione pratica dell'esperienza umana e può quindi costituirsi come certezza, di fatto, indubitabile a dispetto (o al di là) delle possibili riserve sollevate sul piano prettamente speculativo. La fede gode cioè di ragioni (e per i più fortunati di evidenze) le quali – pur non riconducibili a formalità dimostrativa incontrovertibile – sono sufficienti a "cementare" una certezza esistenziale capace di resistere alle insidie del dubbio. Ciò non di meno la fede pur non essendo necessariamente abitata dal dubbio (come invece vorrebbe Emanuele Severino) è strutturalmente esposta al rischio dell'errore. Ciò nonostante essa vive tale rischio non come un freno, bensì come una sfida nella quale mettersi in gioco, convinta della bontà della propria scelta.

2.5 Da quanto detto fino ad ora emerge come fede e ragione "funzionino" e siano reciprocamente fruttuose solo quando operano all'interno della suddetta circolarità e nel rispetto delle rispettive peculiarità. Allora esse si alimentano e sorreggono l'un l'altra. Altrimenti?

La ragione isolata porta ad un intellettualismo sradicato dalla vita, ad una chiusura nella mera formalità logica, sorda agli stimoli ed agli appelli

dell'esperienza quotidiana. In questo Averincev coglie senza dubbio nel segno. La posizione di Severino può apparire in tal senso paradigmatica: stando al dettato del suo magistero, qualora le certezze dell'esperienza concreta dovessero opporsi alla verità del *lógos*… tanto peggio per la vita! Certo l'inconveniente potrà risultare spiacevole, ma sempre e soltanto di mero inconveniente si tratterebbe[10].

D'altro canto la sola fede, la quale rifiutasse la "protezione" della ragione ritenendola eccessivamente rigida e formalistica, cadrebbe inevitabilmente in un fideismo incapace di dar ragione delle proprie convinzioni. Una fede muta rispetto alla possibilità di giustificare la proprie certezze, di argomentare ragionevolmente le proprie speranze, si rivelerebbe inoltre disarmata nel confronto le fedi altrui – religiose o meno che siano – divenendo in tal modo facile preda dell'irrazionalità e del fanatismo.

2.6 Passando poi ad analizzare il particolare rapporto che lega la fede religiosa al *lógos* epistemico, si nota come anche in questa specifica configurazione del rapporto tra verità e certezza la "relazione nella diversità" continui a rappresentare la cifra distintiva della buona reciprocità. La fede chiede infatti alla ragione garanzie di senso quanto alla possibilità (non-contraddittorietà) della rivelazione. Se possibile, la fede chiede alla ragione non solo una "garanzia negativa", ovvero l'incontraddittorietà dell'esistenza di Dio, ma una positiva affermazione circa la necessità di un fondamento trascendente. In quest'affermazione (per quanto astratta, e povera di determinazioni concrete) la fede trova infatti conforto e conferma alla sua decisione di accogliere l'annuncio della rivelazione. La fede ha quindi bisogno (anche) di una metafisica capace di aprire, per quanto possibile, lo spazio di senso entro il quale può venir vissuta (ragionevolmente) la fede religiosa.

Considerazioni sul conflitto tra *fides et ratio*

3.1 Cosa fare quando fede e ragione si trovano in conflitto? Come sanare l'eventuale contrapposizione tra verità di fede e verità di ragione? Benché

10 Un'ulteriore osservazione sulla posizione severiniana può risultare illuminante: in lui la fede gioca la sua partita esclusivamente sul piano del conoscere. Essa rappresenta cioè una forma (imperfetta) di sapere e, sulla base di questa riduzione, viene sottomessa e negata dalla ragione. La fede, però, non rappresenta *propriamente* una forma di conoscenza, bensì un'esperienza vissuta. Essa descrive una dimensione esistenziale soggetta ad una formalità diversa (benché non opposta!) rispetto alla ragione epistemica e le cui ragioni di fondo – pur soggette al principio di non contraddizione – si radicano su motivazioni diverse rispetto alla logica dell'incontrovertibilità.

la due domande appaiano simili, siamo in realtà di fronte a problemi che vanno affrontati secondo prospettive diverse.

Proviamo a vedere più da vicino la prima questione: cosa succede quando fede e ragione confliggono? È opportuno aggrapparsi con fiducia alle convinzioni di fede, oppure bisogna corrispondere con coraggio al dettato di un freddo razionalismo? A mio avviso, interrogarsi sul problema in questi termini significa affrontare una questione mal posta: non esiste, infatti, una ragione in generale cui si oppone una fede in generale. Non siamo cioè costretti ad una scelta netta tra due atteggiamenti antitetici. In realtà ciò che accade è, più banalmente, il conflitto tra alcune determinate convinzioni di fede cui si contrappongono alcune obiezioni razionali. In questi termini, appare evidente come il conflitto vada sanato – caso per caso – attraverso il riconoscimento delle rispettive prerogative e dei rispettivi "limiti di campo".

Qualora l'oggetto del contendere riguardasse propriamente la sfera della fede, oggetto sul quale la ragione epistemica non è in grado di pronunciarsi incontrovertibilmente, è chiaro che il conflitto potrebbe derivare da un'immotivata ingerenza della ragione oltre i confini della sua giurisdizione. Di converso, la fede entra in conflitto con la ragione ogni qual volta pretende di porre sulle proprie certezze il sigillo della verità incontrovertibile. Questo avviene quando la fede non si accontenta di vivere la propria certezza con speranza e convinzione, ma la vorrebbe anche al sicuro dall'errore e solida al punto da poter negare (incontrovertibilmente) ogni possibile obiezione[11].

3.2 Per quanto concerne, poi, la contrapposizione tra verità di fede e verità di ragione, essa si fonda su un uso improprio del termine "verità" quand'esso viene riferito alle convinzioni di fede.

La verità, in termini rigorosi (ovvero intesa come *epistéme*), si predica infatti della sola ragione, in quanto affermazione incontrovertibile dell'incontrovertibile. Nel caso della fede, invece, il termine "verità" viene im-

11 Questa capacità di ridurre al silenzio la tesi opposta è caratteristica propria della verità (epistemica), la cui solidità si regge proprio sulla negazione incontrovertibile della propria contraddittoria. Se un tal sicurezza la si pretende per la fede (e certo è una tentazione molto forte quando ci si confronta con le fedi altrui, religiose o meno), allora si corre il rischio di usare la "verità" di fede come una spada, cercando di tradurre la propria certezza soggettiva in regola oggettiva cui chiunque è tenuto a piegarsi. D'innanzi alla verità vi può essere solo l'assenso che sgorga dal riconoscimento dell'innegabile. La fede, al contrario, può contare soltanto sulla sua vero-similgianza, sulle sue buone ragioni, sulla sua capacità di convincere. La verità, quando si esprime, è assertiva. La fede è dialogica!

piegato in modo analogico e serve a sottolineare la solidità soggettiva del contenuto di fede: la "verità" della fede fa infatti riferimento all'incontrovertibilità con la quale si vive (praticamente) la propria certezza. Questo, tuttavia, non può far dimenticare la controvertibilità logica dell'oggetto creduto (la sua incapacità di negare, incontrovertibilmente, la possibilità della propria tesi contraddittoria e, quindi, di mettersi al sicuro dal rischio dell'errore).

Se si parla di verità in senso forte ci si pone necessariamente sul piano del *lógos* e non si può che riconoscere il primato della ragione sul suo terreno proprio. Una "verità di fede", a rigore, è un ossimoro, sarebbe come affermare un'incontrovertibilità controvertibile[12].

3.3 "Verità di fede" rappresenta dunque un'espressione metaforica, capace di svelare il suo "contenuto di verità" solo una volta collocata sul terreno che le è proprio, ovvero sul piano della fede vissuta (e non del conoscere inteso come sapere stabile). Tale espressione indicherà allora quel contenuto di coscienza esperito esistenzialmente con la solidità e la concretezza di una verità epistemica. E questo sulla base di ragioni non riconducibili strettamente alla sfera del *lógos*[13].

12 Come porsi, dunque, di fronte alla dottrina che predica l'armonia tra fede e ragione? Semplicemente riconoscendola come un'esigenza naturale della fede, la quale crede nella possibilità di conciliare il proprio credo (proprio in virtù della sua ragionevolezza) con il dettato del *lógos*. Tale fiducia nell'armonia tra fede e ragione esprime dunque un postulato essenziale della ragion pratica ma, in quanto tale, esso resta soggetto, quanto alla sua verità, al giudizio della ragion speculativa. Lungo questa linea, fino a che non se ne possa offrire prova incontrovertibile, anche la comune radice *a quo* di *fides* e *ratio* resta, per la ragione speculativa, un problema.

13 Si pensi per un attimo al rapporto di coppia: quando amo e scommetto sul rapporto che mi lega alla persona amata – al punto da voler formare con lei una famiglia – sono certamente convinto dell'amore di chi mi sta a fianco. Non ne dubito, altrimenti non costruirei la mia vita su quel rapporto. Eppure non posso provare incontrovertibilmente la verità di questa mia fiducia (non solo perché il marito …è sempre l'ultimo a sapere le cose, ma più radicalmente perché la coscienza d'altri resta per il soggetto un mistero sondabile). Non posso quindi affermare la verità (epistemica) del nostro amore – ed infatti sono sempre esposto al rischio della delusione – eppure "so" di non ingannarmi, "sento" che la mia fiducia è ben riposta, "vivo l'evidenza" dell'amore che riconosco nei gesti, nelle prove e anche nei silenzi della quotidianità. Posso dire di non essere certo dell'amore della mia compagna? E mi cambia qualcosa non poterlo dimostrare?
Nel contempo, però, quanta arroganza nasconderebbe l'affermazione circa la verità indiscutibile dell'amore altrui nei miei confronti; quanta sfrontatezza dietro alla volontà di non riconoscere la possibilità della delusione!

In quest'ottica si chiarisce anche il riferimento alla "retta ragione", spesso indicata come doveroso *habitus* intellettuale, necessario per conciliare i dettami del *lógos* con gli insegnamenti della rivelazione.

In realtà la ragione, di per sé, non può essere che retta. Definirla tale è ridondante… a meno che, di nuovo, non si usi tale espressione in senso metaforico, per indicare cioè quella disponibilità della ragione a lasciarsi guidare dalla fede qualora da sola non fosse in grado di giungere ad un possesso sicuro della verità. Una ragione che, pur senza abdicare a se stessa, sappia dunque riconoscere i propri limiti. Una ragione che, anche qualora dovesse trovarsi ad affrontare un conflitto pratico tra ciò che crede di sapere razionalmente e ciò che la fede le insegna, sia sempre disposta ad interrogarsi con umiltà sulla solidità delle proprie costruzioni logiche, consapevole dei suoi limiti e della facilità di confondere l'illusione con la verità.

È chiaro però che, di fronte all'incontrovertibile, la fede non può che piegarsi (i beati non credono in Dio, conoscono Dio); ma qualora non vi fosse una simile evidenza, la "retta ragione" è quella che sa prestare credito alla fede. Non certo per pensare di meno, ma per pensare di più, sciogliendo i nodi dell'apparente contraddizione tra ciò che la ragione sembra implicare e ciò che la fede invita a credere.

Dire il vero e conoscere la verità

4.1 Ritengo utile introdurre ancora una distinzione che reputo strategica al fine di una corretta impostazione del rapporto tra fede e ragione. Essa riguarda la distinzione tra **verità saputa** (ovvero quel sapere capace di dar ragione di sé, la verità come sapere incontrovertibile dell'incontrovertibile) e **"verità" creduta o voluta** (ovvero la certezza intesa come sapere soggettivamente incontrovertibile di ciò che, alla luce della sola ragione, è incapace di dar prova della propria incontrovertibilità e che deve quindi la sua saldezza ad un atto di volontà). È infatti possibile dire materialmente il vero senza saperlo formalmente come tale. È cioè possibile dire il vero (quanto al contenuto materiale del giudizio) indipendentemente dalla capacità di possederlo (dimostrandolo) secondo la formalità epistemica della ragione speculativa[14].

14 Provo a chiarire con un esempio. Se dico: "la mia macchina è parcheggiata in strada", ma io sono seduto comodamente nel mio salotto, posso certamente affermare qualcosa di "vero in sé" (*se* effettivamente la macchina è ancora parcheggiata là dove io l'ho lasciata), ma non posso mostrare l'incontrovertibilità della mia affermazione. In fondo, io *credo* che la mia macchina sia ancora là, ma non è in contraddittorio (ovvero impossibile) pensare che qualcuno me l'abbia rubata.

4.2 Bisogna quindi distinguere la **verità logica**, espressa nel giudizio, ovvero la conoscenza incontrovertibile del vero espressa dal *lógos* (la verità in senso proprio, epistemico), da quella che potremo chiamare la **verità ontologica**, intesa come la verità dell'essere (il suo essere così e non altrimenti) a prescindere dal suo darsi come contenuto incontrovertibile di coscienza[15].

Diverso, infatti, è dire una cosa vera senza saperla (o poterla) dimostrare – e, quindi, senza poter dimostrare di dire il vero – dal poter affermare qualcosa, mostrando nel contempo, l'impossibilità della sua negazione. Nel primo caso la formalità del discorso non riesce a tenersi in pari col suo contenuto; nel secondo si assiste alla perfetta equazione tra forma (l'incontrovertibilità del logo) e contenuto (l'innegabilità del vero).

4.3 La fede crede dunque nella verità delle proprie certezze; crede cioè di affermare *il vero*, di esprimere correttamente la realtà dell'essere (vero ontologico). Nel far questo, però, non può pretendere che la sua fede esprima, formalmente, una verità in senso rigoroso (ovvero una verità epistemica), altrimenti non sarebbe più espressione di fede ma *gnosi*.

La fede ha certamente un contenuto di sapere, in quanto si riferisce ad uno stato di cose sulla base di determinate ragioni. Essa, però, non rappresenta propriamente un sapere in senso forte (rigoroso), in quanto non è in grado di eliminare la possibilità dell'errore attraverso la negazione

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Un altro esempio: credo nella sincerità di un amico. Dal suo comportamento abituale *penso* di poter trarre buone ragioni per fidarmi di lui e *credo* che i segni esteriori della sua amicizia corrispondano alla sua vera disposizione nei miei confronti. Sono quindi convinto della verità del suo sentimento di amicizia. Ma posso dire di sapere *veritativamente* (cioè in modo incontrovertibile) ciò che lui prova effettivamente per me? Il suo mondo interiore, non mi appare. Del resto, so della possibilità di restare deluso; so bene che, anche nella valutazione delle amicizie, l'errore è tutt'altro che impossibile. Alla luce di queste considerazioni non posso quindi affermare *secondo verità* (cioè in modo epistemico) la genuinità del suo sentimento, e tuttavia *sono convinto* della verità della nostra amicizia. Confido cioè nel fatto che le cose stiano effettivamente così come credo (e non altrimenti), che alla mia fede corrisponda un identico stato di cose.

15 In questo senso la verità rivela il suo lato trascendentale (secondo il dettato scolastico) in quanto si predica universalmente di ogni ente (ogni ente è ciò che è, nei modi e nei limiti in cui è, a prescindere dal suo essere oggetto di sapere stabile). Volendo usare un'immagine, potremmo dire che la verità logica è un sottoinsieme della verità ontologica, nel senso che non vi può essere verità logica che non esprima, contenutisticamente, una verità ontologica. D'altro canto, è non è affatto contraddittoria la possibilità di dire il vero (materialmente) senza poterlo dimostrare formalmente come tale.

della propria contraddittoria[16]. Questo margine d'errore, questa distanza che separa la conoscenza di fede dal sapere epistemico dovrebbe quindi esprimersi nelle forme di una "verità indebolita", dove il termine "verità" è utilizzato in senso analogico per sottolineare la solidità pratica della convinzione (l'indubitabilità soggettiva) e la "debolezza" – ben lungi dal cedere a mode deboliste – sta ad indicare la necessaria consapevolezza della non incontrovertibilità della fede stessa. Di qui ne consegue anche la consapevolezza dello iato che inevitabilmente separa la fragilità della fede dal possesso esaustivo della verità[17].

Questo deve renderci avvertiti rispetto alla tentazione di un uso "arrogante" del termine verità quando riferito ai contenuti di fede. Isolare la fede dal rischio cui è costitutivamente esposta, pretendere di esaurire il mistero della trascendenza entro i confini di una determinata espressione di fede (per quanto autorevole) rappresenta una tentazione cui l'uomo fatica a resistere.

4.4 All'uomo di fede, troppo spesso, non basta la speranza nella verità. La certezza con la quale aderisce alla rivelazione sembra una forma troppo debole rispetto alla grandezza dell'annuncio. Nasce quindi spontaneo il desiderio di far corrispondere alla maestà del vero creduto (sul quale, non a caso, viene costruita un'intera esistenza personale) la solidità della verità epistemica. In questo modo, nel suo essere attivo testimone della rivelazione, il credente è tentato di porsi nell'atteggiamento di colui che si fa portavoce di una verità innegabile – al cui cospetto chiunque è tenuto a piegarsi – piuttosto che nell'atteggiamento di colui che annuncia con l'esempio e la testimonianza la ragionevolezza della propria speranza.

Nel primo caso, sia detto per inciso, il dialogo con chi non si riconosce in quella stessa fede risulta estremamente difficile. L'uomo infatti si piega (e neppure sempre) solo innanzi alla verità innegabile, mosso dalla ragione, oppure di fronte alla violenza dispotica, mosso dalla paura.

Nel secondo caso, invece, il credente si apre al dialogo intersoggettivo sulla base di una forte motivazione interiore, ma anche con la consapevolezza del rischio che ogni fede porta con sé. In questo caso il credente

16 Ovvero negazione del giudizio posto in relazione di contraddittorietà rispetto al contenuto affermato come vero. Sia x il giudizio affermato come vero, per poter giustificare la pretesa di verità di x devo poter negare $\neg x$, cioè dimostrarne la contraddittorietà. Stessa cosa per affermare la verità di $\neg x$ (ad esempio la non assolutezza del divenire) devo dimostrare la contraddittorietà della sua contraddittoria, ovvero di x (nel nostro esempio, l'assolutezza del divenire).

17 La fede correttamente intesa rappresenta quindi una forma sapienziale, una sorta di saggezza pratica e non certo una scienza (nell'accezione greca del temine *epistéme*).

si dispone in un atteggiamento di apertura rispetto alle (possibili) buone ragioni dell'altro, anche quando queste fossero critiche. Nel contempo, però, egli è capace a sua volta di dar voce alle proprie convinzioni sorrette da buone ragioni, di evidenze (per quanto *sui generis*), di fiducia.

Concludendo

5.1 Il primo punto mi sembra chiaro: l'invito che queste mie riflessioni – sulla scorta dell'esempio bontadiniano – vorrebbero suggerire è quello di un uso molto prudente della parola "verità". Pochissime proposizioni (spesso povere ed astratte, per quanto fondamentali) possono fregiarsi di un titolo simile. Di qui l'opportunità di maturare un certo **pudore per la verità**. Essa richiede infatti di essere rispettata, evitando di voler affermare come (formalmente) vero ciò che non siamo in grado di possedere in modo incontrovertibile.

La verità possiede tuttavia una grande potenzialità liberante (e non certo violenta, come vorrebbe parte della cultura contemporanea): la verità libera infatti l'uomo dalla contraddizione, rende sicuro il suo conoscere e retto il suo agire. Bisogna quindi avere anche il **coraggio del vero**, ovvero la fiduciosa consapevolezza che esso rappresenta un oggetto possibile per l'intelligenza[18].

5.2 Pudore per la verità significa inoltre onorarne il valore anche quando non siamo in grado di raggiungerla appieno. Significa avere di mira la verità anche quando il suo guadagno risulta difficile. Come? Chiedendo sempre ragione delle proprie affermazioni, mettendole alla prova, cercando di saggiare la loro resistenza dinnanzi alle opinioni contrarie.

In questo senso, rispettare la verità non significa certamente dover rinunciare alle buone ragioni che sorreggono le nostre convinzioni ma, semplicemente, mantenere viva in noi la consapevolezza che ciò che affermiamo (quasi sempre) non è una verità epistemica. Se vogliamo essa è, al più, una "verità umana", limitata e contingente.

5.3 Rispettare la verità significa, infine, cercare di dar vita ad un sapere vero-simile anche quando, come nel caso dell'etica, saremo chiamati ad

18 Qui il riferimento va alla vulgata debolista che vorrebbe il conoscere costretto entro l'angusta prigione del mero frammento e della sua ermeneusi infinita. Non posso sviluppare in questa sede un confronto diretto col pensiero debole; permettetemi dunque un rimando al mio *Il problema etico nel pensiero di Gianni Vattimo. Considerazioni su forza e debolezza, tolleranza e carità*, in *Etiche e politiche della postmodernità* (a cura di C. Vigna), Vita e pensiero, Milano, 2003, pp. 283–301.

interrogarci su fatti che non hanno carattere di necessità. Fatti sui quali il giudizio non riesce a costituirsi come espressione di un sapere incontrovertibile. Anche in questi casi, infatti, interrogheremo l'esperienza sapendo che non tutte le opinioni sono equivalenti (contro il relativismo) e cercando di discriminare, alla luce degli insegnamenti del *lógos*, le ragioni che si riveleranno migliori delle altre (maggiormente simili al vero quanto a stabilità e forza).

5.4 Concludendo, non credo che si debba restare all'interno del conflitto tra il *credo ut intelligam* e l'*intelligo ut credam*, bensì occorre mettere questi due atteggiamenti in circolo: devo credere per cercare la verità (per conoscere). Se il mio filosofare non fosse mosso dall'interesse per una data verità, se non avessi fiducia nella sua possibilità, volgerei infatti altrove le mie energie. Del resto, come ricorda l'adagio, nessuno è più cieco di chi non vuol vedere (e ciò vale per tanta parte dell'antimetafisica contemporanea). Dall'altro lato, per credere consapevolmente e ragionevolmente devo conoscere, devo cioè provare la razionalità della mia fede. Questo è un compito non banale; questa la sfida a cui il dialogo tra Atene e Gerusalemme ci invita.

The Regions of the Soul: The Relationship between Faith and Reason on the Basis of the Thought of Gustavo Bontadini

Summary

The relationship between faith and reason is a central issue of Christian thought. However, from the philosophical perspective, can one adopt a fideistic position as a point of departure for arguments? To what extent can faith accept the judgment of reason? Or must reason exclusively serve revelation?

The history of Christian thought has repeatedly focused on this question and attempted to reconcile the autonomy of rational speculation with fidelity to the doctrine. Within the tradition of this thought, Sergei Averintsev stands out with the strength of his metaphors and images. He symbolizes the relation between faith and reason as a dialogue between Athens and Jerusalem, evaluating Athens as an icon of philosophical thought and Jerusalem as a symbol of theological thought.

Averintsev is strongly convinced that this dialogue can be fruitful only if Athens humbly acknowledges that Jerusalem is the source of truth. Otherwise, philosophy is condemned to profess a sterile arrogance. From this perspective, Averintsev firmly supports the supremacy of faith over reason.

However, is this a satisfying solution? Looking at this position through the eyes of logos, one experiences a feeling of unease; a fideistic perspective appears untenable with regard to its own demand of truth. What if reason cannot prove the reasonableness of faith?

A possible solution seems to require the establishment of a "positive loop" of faith and reason. The features of such a relation between them should be both autonomy and complementarity: there should be no servant and no master, neither excluding the other nor fighting for supremacy. Both faith and reason are the founding paradigms in their own fields: reason in epistemic knowledge, and faith in wishes and desires. They are two paradigms that should help each other enlarge and strengthen their respective domains.

The meaning of such a mutual strengthening of faith and reason can be clarified by comparing Averintsev's proposal and the thought of Gustavo Bontadini, the main representative of "neo-classic" metaphysics in Italy. Namely, Bontadini believes that the relation between faith and reason can be a kind of counterpoint, according to which the melody of faith accepts the judgment of reason in the cognitive domain.

Območja duše: razmerje med vero in razumom na podlagi misli Gustava Bontadinija

Povzetek

Razmerje med vero in razumom je osrednji problem krščanske misli. Toda ali kot izhodišče za svoje razpravljanje v filozofski perspektivi lahko privzamemo fideistično stališče? Koliko lahko vera sprejme sodbo razuma? Ali mora razum po drugi strani služiti le razodetju?

Krščanska misel se je v svoji zgodovini zmeraj znova ukvarjala s tem vprašanjem in skušala avtonomijo razumske spekulacije uskladiti z zvestobo nauku. V tradiciji te misli se Sergej Averincev pojavlja z močjo svojih metafor in podob. Razmerje med vero in razumom simbolizira z dialogom med Atenami in Jeruzalemom, s tem da Atene ovrednoti kot ikono filozofske, Jeruzalem pa kot simbol teološke misli.

Averincev je trdno prepričan, da je ta dialog lahko plodovit le, če Atene priznajo, da je izvir resnice Jeruzalem. V nasprotnem primeru je filozofija obsojena na to, da izpoveduje jalovo nadutost. Averincev iz te perspektive trdno podpira premoč vere nad razumom.

Toda ali je to zadovoljiva rešitev? Če na to stališče pogledamo z očmi logosa, nas prevzame občutek nelagodja; fidestična perspektiva se pokaže kot nevzdržna glede na svojo lastno zahtevo po resnici. Kaj če razum ne more dokazati razumnosti vere?

Zdi se, da mogoča rešitev terja vzpostavitev »pozitivne zanke« vere in razuma. Značilnosti takšnega razmerja med njima naj bi bili avtonomija in komplementarnost: nobeden izmed njiju naj ne bi bil sluga in nobeden gospodar, niti naj ne bi bilo med njima izključevanja in boja za prevlado. Oba, vera in razum, sta utemeljevalni paradigmi na svojih lastnih področjih: razum na področju epistemskega védenja, vera na področju želje/hrepenenja. Sta paradigmi, ki naj bi druga druga pomagali širiti in krepiti svoji območji.

Kaj je smisel takšne medsebojne krepitve vere in razuma, je mogoče razjasniti s primerjavo Averincevega predloga in misli Gustava Bontadinija, osrednjega predstavnika tako imenovane neoklasične metafizike v Italiji. Bontadini namreč verjame, da je razmerje med vero in razumom lahko nekakšen kontrapunkt, v skladu s katerim bi melodija vere v spoznavnem območju sprejemala sodbo razuma.

Alen Širca

From Rome to Edessa: An Introduction to the Poetics of Early Christian Poetry

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As can be seen from the title, this discussion ought to briefly examine the three most important traditions of Christian poetry, namely Latin, Greek, and Syriac. Unfortunately, however, this title is somewhat misleading because the information provided here is not only scant, but even incomplete: because there is not much time (or better, space?), I will confine myself mainly to Syriac and to some extent Greek tradition. Latin tradition will mostly be omitted because it is generally much better known than the "exotic" Syriac, although, as I shall show, Syriac Christian tradition is by no means exotic. On the contrary, it is fundamental for understanding the complex history of early Christianity.

There are many perplexing questions with regard to early Christian poetry, especially with regard to the relationship between the pagan poetry of Antiquity and Christian poetry. One crucial question to keep in mind when reading this article may thus be the following: Within the scope of literary history, could Christian poetry be regarded as a radical *novum*, or solely as a new adaptation of ancient poetics within the new social, cultural, and religious context of Christianity?

Let me begin this would-be introduction with the Bible; more precisely, with the New Testament. There are several poetic passages that modern scholarship considers clearly poetic. These include the "Christ-hymns" (*Christushymnen*)[1] that can be found in the epistles to the Philippians (2.6–11) and Colossians (1.15–20). It has been proposed that these hymns were created as an orthodox reaction to the widespread threat of Gnosticism,

1 Cf. R. Deichgräber, *Gotteshymnus und Christushymnus in der frühen Christenheit*, Göttingen 1967.

which also articulated its main beliefs in hymns. The most problematic issue with regard to the orthodox position was of course the denial of Christ as the mediator between God and man. Such an opinion, accepted by many scholars, is not only hard to prove, but also misleading, because it not only alleges the Gnostic context to be crucial for understanding the New Testament hymns, but also implies that it is the conflict with the other religious community that provides the main impact on articulation of faith—which in this case, of course, is Christianity.

Hymns (or, better, hymnic passages) can also be found in Revelation, especially in the fourth and fifth chapters. Although these lines were written in Greek, they have nothing in common with classical Greek poetics, nor with Hellenistic poetry; instead, they are profoundly Semitic in character. The motif of ascent to heaven and especially the overall prophetic and apocalyptic atmosphere is very similar to some Dead Sea (Qumran) and early Jewish mystical hymns that (according to Gerschom Scholem, who first drew attention to this kind of poetry) are called *Hehalot-* or *Merkava*-hymns. This reveals the specific Jewish context of the New Testament hymns, and the "Christ-hymns" point to the same context.

In fact, the beginnings of Christian poetry can be seen as wholly merged with Semitic literary production at that time. I thus propose—as a mere conjecture, of course, that I will not be able to prove—that the phenomenon of Christian poetry is chiefly Semitic in nature. However, could this really also be true for the Greek and Latin Christian poetic tradition?

To answer this question, it is necessary to examine Syriac poetry, which is not only thoroughly Semitic, but also very close to the New Testament poetic passages, and thus in a way fundamental for understanding early Christian poetry in general.

Syriac is a dialect of Aramaic that Christ himself spoke, and in which the Gospels were first preached before they were written down in Greek. Therefore during the first centuries Syriac Christianity developed in a Semitic milieu that was comparatively little Hellenized. As Sebastian Brock puts it, Syriac Christianity cannot be regarded as solely a historical curiosity:

> It is only in the light of the subsequent history of mainstream Christianity, for the most part tied up with the course of the Roman Empire and the subsequent history of Europe, that early Syriac Christianity takes on its true significance, for here is a genuinely Asian Christianity which is free from the specifically European cultural, historical and intellectual trappings that have become

> attached to the main streams of Christianity with which we are familiar today.[2]

It is no wonder that the first authentic Christian poetry has come down to us in Syriac. *The Odes of Solomon* offer a glimpse into the psalmody of the apostolic period.[3] These hymns, which were presumably composed for liturgy in a Johannine context, are surprisingly very close to the Old Testament psalms and also to the Dead Sea hymns (*Hodayot*). Although many scholars have tried to prove the intrinsic Gnostic character of these poetic compositions, I believe that they are profoundly Christian, and I may add also eminently Semitic in character, which can be seen not only from the formal poetological point of view, but also from content—that is, from their motifs, themes, and use of symbols. It should be pointed out that *The Odes of Solomon* employ astonishing mystical erotic imagery that is lacking in early Greek and Latin Christian poetry. Their beauty can surely captivate a wide range of readers. One example suffices:

> A cup of milk was brought near to me,
> and I drank it in the sweetness of the Lord's gentleness.
> The Son is the cup;
> and he who was milked, the Father;
> and she who milked him, the Spirit of holiness;
> because his breasts were filled,
> and it was necessary that his milk might not be
> cast out without cause.[4]

The first known poet that wrote in Syriac was Bardaisan (a.k.a. Bardesanes). He lived in the third century (154–222). Known as "the Aramean philosopher," he had a speculative mind and some of his views on theological problems, such as creation, did not fit in well with what was later to become orthodox Christian teaching. Later writers thus condemned him as a heretic, "some associating him with Valentinian doctrine, while others (among them, Ephrem) saw him as providing the basis for Mani's teaching."[5] Nonetheless, he had major poetic impacts on St. Ephrem the

2 S. Brock, *The Luminous Eye. The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem*, Kalamazoo 1984, p. 15.

3 Since the discovery of an almost complete Syriac text in 1909, the original language, genre, and religious identity of these compositions have been endlessly debated. Scholars are usually divided between Greek and Syriac as the original language.

4 From *Ode* 19. Translated by Majella Franzmann, in: idem, *The Odes of Solomon. An Analysis of the Poetical Structure and Form*, Freiburg Schweiz–Göttingen 1991, p. 147.

5 S. Brock, "The earliest Syriac Literature," in: *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, edited by F. Young, L. Ayres, and A. Louth, Cambridge 2004, p. 162.

Syrian. Among the fourth-century writers, one should mention Aphraat, who did not write poetry, but homilies. Another important poet in early Syriac tradition that lived at the end of the fourth century was Qurilona (Cyrillonas). He left six poems (*memre*) on various topics with a fresh theological message. Some have argued that he could have been St. Ephrem's nephew.[6]

The most prominent early Syriac poet is undoubtedly St. Ephrem the Syrian, who was called also "The Harp of the Spirit." He lived in the fourth century and spent most of his life in Edessa (now Urfa in southeast Turkey), which became the home of early Syriac literature. The most important parts of his poetic work are *memre* and *madrashe*. These are two different verse forms. The *memra* is based on freer, more biblical patterns that are very similar to Aphrahat's rhythmic prose, but in St. Ephrem's use they have been regularized to a syllabic count (seven plus seven syllable couplets), so that they could be called "verse homilies." In contrast, *madrashe* are stanzaic poems, employing various syllabic patterns that were meant to be sung—they may simply be called "hymns." Unfortunately the original melodies to which *madrashe* were sung did not survive. In fact, it seems that Syriac poetry was from the first based on syllabic principles, and this certainly applies to the two archaic poems incorporated into *The Acts of Thomas*: *The Hymn of the Bride of Light* and *The Hymn of the Pearl*. Moreover, both Bardaisan, who can be considered the first known Christian poet, and Mani already wrote *madrashe* in syllabic versification. They both influenced St. Ephrem.

It should be pointed out that in St. Ephrem's writings there are three main cultural traditions: he is an heir of ancient Mesopotamian tradition; this can be seen in his employment of old Sumero-Akkadian literary genres, such as the dispute poem, and a number of themes, motifs, and symbols from ancient Mesopotamia, thus hinting at the continuity of "bardic" culture in Mesopotamia. He is also an heir of Judaism because, as a speaker of a Semitic language that is very close to Hebrew, he is able to make subtle verbal allusions to the Old Testament; moreover, he is indirectly influenced by post-biblical Jewish literature; for example, *targumim* and *midrashim*.

6 The Syriac text was edited by G. Bickell in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 27 (1873), pp. 566–598. Translations: S. Landersdorfer, *Ausgewählte Schriften syrischer Dichter*, Kempten 1912, pp. 1–54; C. Vona, *I Carmi di Cirillona*, Rome 1963; F. Graffin, Deux poèmes de Cyrillonas: "Le lavement des pieds, Le discours après la cène," *L' Orient Syrien* 10 (1965), pp. 307–330; D. Cerbelaud, *L'Agneau veritable—Hymnes, cantiques et homélies de Cyrillonas*, Chevetogne 1984.

Nonetheless, St. Ephrem is also an heir of the Greek world, with which he was indirectly acquainted.

The style of St. Ephrem's hymns is usually very complex. He makes free use of typology, symbol, repetition, paradox, metaphor, and so on to initiate the reader or listener into the mystery of visible phenomena that are treated as *raze*, which could be approximately translated as 'sacrament'.

Let us try to gain some flavor of his poetry and of course the euphony of classical Syriac. The following passage is taken form the first poem of the hymn cycle *Madrashe d-pardajsa* (*The Hymns on Paradise*). This hymn cycle employs a specific syllabic pattern for each stanza; the main meter is pentameter. In St. Ephrem's poetry, rhyme is used very rarely, but here we encounter amazing play with assonances and rhymes that is quite unique. The first stanza sounds like this:

Muše mtalmed kul l-seprav šmajane,
raba d-'ebraje, talmdani l-julpaneh
'urajta d-'iteh simta d-geljane.
d-bah 'etgli šarbah d-ganta,
ktibat b-galjata, šbihat b-kasjata,
'mirt b-karjata, tmihat b-šetlata.[7]

Let us now hear the translation by Sebastian Brock:

Moses, who instructs all men
with his celestial writings,
He, the master of the Hebrews,
has instructed us in his teachings—
the Law, which constitutes
a very treasure house of revelations,
wherein is revealed
the tale of the Garden—
described by things visible,
but glorious for what lies hidden,
spoken of in few words,
yet wondrous with its many plants.[8]

Although we may, from our own historical horizon, evaluate St. Ephrem's poetry as too didactic and, consequently, less poetic, it is important to know that his *poesia docta* is often very impregnated with mysticism. As Robert Murray convincingly puts it: "Ephrem is the greatest poet of the

7 F. Uhlemann, *Syrische Chrestomathie*, Berlin 1857, p. 39.

8 St. Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise*, translated by S. Brock, New York 1990, pp. 77–78.

patristic age and, perhaps, the only *theologian-poet* to rank beside Dante."[9] This can be seen from a group of five poems with the title "On the Pearl," which occur at the end of the cycle of hymns *On Faith*. At a glance it is obvious that the symbolism of the pearl is pointing at the *theologoúmenon* of Incarnation (i.e., the birth of Christ from the Virgin Mary), but there is something more to it: we are dealing here with genuine *raze*—that is, mystery, symbol, sacrament, the Eucharist, and so on—and thus the pearl points to the *mystery* of Incarnation, the totally incomprehensible act of God. The second hymn from the cycle *On the Pearl* begins like this:

> What is it you resemble? Let your silence speak
> to one who listens to you; with silent mouth
> speak with us, for to him who hears
> the whisper of your silence
> your symbol proclaims in silence our Savior.
>
> Blessed is He who compared
> the Kingdom on high to a pearl!
>
> Your mother is the virgin [bride] of the sea
> —without its having married her; she fell into its bosom
> —without its being aware; Your conception was in it
> —though it knew her not. Your symbol
> will rebuke the Jewish girls when they wear you.[10]

St. Ephrem's genius has become leaven in the dough of eastern and western Christian poetry.[11] His influence on Latin poetry can, of course, not be proven. However, as Joseph Szövérffy has shown,[12] considering especially the poetics of Hilary of Poitiers and St. Ambrose, it can be assumed with good reason. Nonetheless, Oriental impacts on Latin Christian poetry, which appeared as late as the fourth century,[13] are more than obvious. In addition, many scholars had pointed to the fact that hymnography, which is generally seen as the chief literary innovation of Byzantium, was inspired

9 R. Murray, "Ephrem Syrus," in: *Catholic Dictionary of Theology*, vol. 2, edited by J. H. Crehan, London 1967, p. 220.

10 Ephrem the Syrian, *Selected Poems*, translated by S. P. Brock and G. A. Kiraz, Provo 2006, p. 249.

11 For detailed information on Ephrem, see especially the article "Éphrem le Syrien," in: *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, vol. 4, Paris 1960, col. 788–822.

12 Cf. his major work *Die Annalen der lateinischen Hymendichtung I. Die lateinischen Hymnen bis zum Ende des 11. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 1964.

13 The earliest known Latin hymn is *Gloria in excelsis*. Cf. W. Stapelmann, *Der Hymnus Angelicus*, Heidelberg 1948.

by Syriac poetry.[14] Sergei Averintsev too demonstrates that, because of its inherent mnemotechnic function, the syllabic metrics (or, as Averintsev says, "tonic," which is in fact hard to prove) has passed from Syriac into Byzantine poetry.[15] It is no small wonder that the most prominent Byzantine poet, St. Romanos the Melodist, was very likely of Syrian origin, although he wrote exclusively in Greek. Recently, Lucas van Rompay has convincingly shown that one can distinguish between his Syrian and Constantinople period.[16] (The place of Romanos the Melodist is in a way comparable to that of St. Ambrose, who created the most influential paradigm of Christian poetry in the Latin West.)

There are a number of striking similarities between Syriac and early Byzantine poetry. Syriac literary forms, such as the *madrasha*, *sogita* (a sort of *madrasha* but with a simpler syllabic structure), and *memra* (i.e., an isosyllabic couplet used for narrative poetry), could have inspired the Byzantine *kontákion*.[17] According to Brock, "the kontakion must be ultimately inspired by a Syriac model, and this model is undoubtedly the *madrasha*; but at the same time the model is certainly not taken over slavishly: it has been adapted to the Greek language in a number of different ways, most notably by the introduction of homotony, a feature absent from its Syriac model."[18] There is, however, evidence that Greek isosyllabic *katà stíchon* verse was influenced by early translations of St. Ephrem's *memre*, with isosyllabic seven plus seven meter, into Greek (the "Ephraem Graecus").

For a very brief examination of early Greek Christian poetics, it is im-

14 See especially W. Meyer, *Anfang und Ursprung der lateinischen und griechischen rythmischen Dichtung*, Munich 1886, pp. 267–450; W. L. Petersen, *The Diatessaron and Ephrem Syrus as Sources of Romanos the Melodist*, Louvain 1985; idem, "The Dependence of Romanos the Melodist upon the Syriac Ephrem: Its Importance for the Origin of the Kontakion," *Vigiliae Christianae* 39 (1985), pp. 171–187.

15 Cf. S. Averincev, *Poetika zgodnjebizantinske literature*, translated by P. Rak, Ljubljana 2005, p. 240.

16 Cf. L. Van Rompay, "Romanos le Mélode: un poète syrien à Constantinople," in: *Early Christian Poetry. A Collection of Essays*, edited by J. Den Boeft and A. Hilhorst, Leiden, New York, & Cologne 1993, pp. 283–326.

17 The kontakion (*kontákion*) is "a sermon in verse, usually celebrating major feasts and saints. From the late 5th to 7th centuries it was chanted during the *orthros* by a preacher or *psaltes* (singer) and a choir. It consists of an introduction (the *prooimion* or *koukoulion*), followed by a varying number of *oikoi* (stanzas) connected to the *prooimion* by a refrain; the *oikoi* are linked by an acrostic as well as by their shared and complex metrical structure, which is based on patterns of corresponding stressed syllables" (*The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. 2, edited by A. P. Kazhdan, New York & Oxford 1991, p. 1148).

18 S. Brock, "From Ephrem to Romanos," *Studia Patristica* 20 (1989), p. 141.

portant to know that from the beginning (under Syriac influence, of course) there has been a tight connection between hymnography and homiletics. The earliest Christian poems in Greek are of course to be found in the New Testament, such as the "Magnificat" and the "Song of Symeon." An important early example of hymn, which is in a way a precursor of *kontákion*, is *The Homily on Pascha* by the Church Father Melito of Sardis and the anonymous *Phôs hilarón* (*O, Gladsome Light*). The earliest hymn writers known by name are Anthimos and Timocles, though none of their works are preserved.[19]

Hymns were also written in classical meters. Here two major poets should be highlighted, Synesius and St. Gregory of Nazianzus. Both tried to achieve a kind of cultural synthesis of Antiquity and Christianity in poetry. This can be seen in the fact that both composed hymns in classical meters. Synesius is especially known for his nine hymns in the Doric dialect using anapestic mono-, di-, and trimeters. As a Neo-Platonic Christian, Synesius syncretistically blends ideas taken from Neo-Platonic philosophy and Christian religion. These poems are thus an "excellent example of the 'contamination' technique of the poetry of late Antiquity, expressed in the form of a multi-dimensional perspective of a Christian and mythological cosmology,"[20] based mainly on *The Chaldean Oracles*. Thus, as a kind of poet-philosopher, he occupies an important and unique role in the development of early Christian poetry. In this he is to be compared with Marius Victorinus and, later, Boethius in the Latin West.

The most important poet that wrote Christian poetry in classical meters is undoubtedly St. Gregory Nazianzus (and in the Latin tradition, of course, Prudentius). He composed his poems primarily in hexameters (in the Homeric and Callimachean tradition), distichs, trimeters, etc. He also tried to imitate classical poetic genres, such as the elegy, epigram, diatribe, gnome, and so on. According to his own testimony,[21] "Gregory's purpose was not merely to place the profane *lógoi* (i.e., culture, literature, rhetoric, etc.) in the service of Christian *lógos*, but also to offer an equivalent counterpart to the non-Christian poetic tradition, also from a formal point of

19 The original texts of early Greek hymnography are published in E. Follieri, *Initia Hymnorum Ecclesiae Graecae*, 6 vols., Rome, 1960–1966. The main work on this subject in English is E. Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, Oxford 1961; cf. also K. Mitsakis, *Byzantine Hymnographia*, Thessalonike 1971.

20 J. H. Barkhuizen, "Synesius of Cyrene, Hymn 8: A Perspective on His Poetic Art," in: *Early Christian Poetry*, p. 270.

21 Cf. PG (= Patrologia Graeca) 37, 1333.

view."[22] Although mythology and scene of earthly love are not totally absent from his poetry, he decidedly claims (or, better, sings) that his themes are of a totally different order:

> I do not celebrate the madness of love and the beauty of ephebes
> For whom the lyre of men of former times was softly struck.
> I celebrate the great God ruling on high, and the shining
> Of my brilliant Triad, gathered together in one (Godhead).[23]

Here one encounters consciousness of the radical *novum* of Christianity, and thus, if not at a formal level, at least at the level of content, in Christian poetry as well. Furthermore, Gregory realized that there is one crucial difference with regard to the initial source of poetry, the real foundation of poetics: pagan poetry was said to be inspired by the Muses, but Christian poetry was inspired exclusively by the Holy Spirit.

One could also verify this fact within Latin tradition. The early Latin Christian poet Paulinus of Nola clearly inverts the traditional *fons Musarum* of the pagan poets:

> Non ego Castalidas, uatum phantasmata, Musas
> Nec surdum Aonia Phoebum de rupe ciebo;
> Carminis incentor Christus mihi, munere Christi
> Audeo peccator sanctum et caelestia fari.
>
> I shall not summon Castalian Muses, the ghosts of poets,
> Nor rouse deaf Phoebus from the Aonian rock.
> Christ will inspire my song, for it is through Christ's gift
> That I, a sinner, dare to tell of His saint and heavenly things.[24]

However, if one takes a close look at the Ancient Greek poets such as Homer, Hesiod, Archilochus, and Pindar, they all believe themselves to be the spokesmen of the Muses. The poets of course continued, throughout Hellenistic times, to repeat their claims to divine inspiration, but this was now largely convention. Let me conclude by presenting to last voice of Antiquity, that of Proclus Diadochus, who also composed profoundly personal Neo-Platonic hymns in hexameters to various deities. To my taste, these hymns are the most excellent Hellenistic poetry. He experienced the inspiration of the Muses for the last time and integrated it in his

22 K. Demoen, "The Attitude towards Greek Poetry in the Verse of Gregory Nazianzen," in: *Early Christian Poetry*, p. 239.

23 *Eis tèn en taîs nesteíais siopén* 2, 1, 34 (PG 37, 1312–1313).

24 Quoted after W. Evenepoel, "The Place of Poetry in Latin Christianity," in: *Early Christian Poetry*, p. 45.

unique Neo-Platonist metaphysics. In his third hymn called *Eis Moûsas* (*On Muses*), Proclus asks the Muses (the goddesses), who in general help erring souls escape from the realm of matter, to make him a Bacchant (the verb *bakcheúo* 'to be mad as bacchants' is used, which in the Neo-Platonic context means to be in a state of perfection of the human soul)[25] and let him feed on their honey, which in Greek mythology is a traditional symbol for *manía*, 'divine ecstasy':

> allá, theaí, kaì emeîo polyptoíeton eroèn
> paúsate kaì noeroîs me sophôn bakcheúsate mýthois.
> medé m' apoplánkseien adeisithéon génos andrôn
> atrapitoû zathées, epiphengéos, aglaokárpou,
> aieì d' eks homádoio polyplánktoio genéthles
> hélket' emèn psychèn panalémona pròs pháos hagnón,
> hymetéron bríthousan aeksinóon apò símblon
> kaì klèos euepíes phrenothelgéos aièn échousan.
>
> But, goddesses, put an end to my much-agitated desire too
> and throw me into ecstasy trough the noeric words of the wise.
> That the race of men without fear for the gods may not lead me
> astray from the most divine and brilliant path
> with its splendid fruit;
> Always draw my all-roving soul towards the holy light,
> away from the hubbub of the much wandering race
> heavy laden from your intellect-strengthening beehives,
> and everlasting glory from its mind-charming eloquence.[26]

In his theoretical works, Proclus speaks of the madness of poetry, which is identical with the madness of the Muses mentioned in Plato's *Phaedrus*, as follows:

> This madness [*manía*], in a word, is better than sanity and is limited only by the measure of God; and just as other kinds of madness bring men to gods, so this one fills the inspired soul [*tèn entheázousan psychén*] with due measure; and therefore it adorns its last activities with metre and rhythm. And so, just as we say that prophetic madness exists in relation to truth and the madness of love in rela-

25 *On the Republic* 1, 181, 26. Proclus defines *bakcheía* as follows: *he dè bakcheía kínesis éntheos kaì choreía perì tò theîon átrytos, telesiourgòs tôn katechoménon* ("Bacchic frenzy is a divinely inspired movement and an indefatigable dance around the divine, which perfects those that are possessed").

26 *Eis Moûsas* 10–17. Text and translation by R. M. van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns. Essays, Translations, Commentary*, Leiden–Boston–Cologne 2001, p. 209.

> tion to beauty, so we say that poetic madness [*tên poietikên manían*] is defined by reference to divine measure or proportion.[27]

Have I now answered the question that was posed at the very beginning of this paper? I believe this is not the case. The question itself fragments into more questions. It seems that the most perplexing ones with regard to the conflict between Antiquity and Christianity as seen in the horizon of poetry are: Does the difference between ancient pagan and Christian poetry have its source in a different experience; more precisely, in the acknowledgment whether the poetic logos comes from the Muses, or from the Holy Spirit? Is, then, the conflict between Antiquity and Christianity the conflict between the Muses and the Holy Spirit? How is the (presumably) different source of inspiration reflected in the text? Furthermore, is the phenomenality of this *how* the measure of the difference between both phenomena: the pagan poetry of Antiquity on one hand, and early Christian poetry on the other? Moreover, is there any difference and is the question of such difference and non-difference pertinent at all for insight into both phenomena?

27 *On the Republic* 1, 178–179, translated by D. A. Russell, in: *Criticism in Antiquity*, London 1981, 1995, reprint 2001, p. 200.

From Rome to Edessa: An Introduction to the Poetics of Early Christian Poetry

Summary

The paper seeks to answer whether Christian poetry can be regarded as a radical *novum* or solely as an adaptation of the classical poetic tradition within the new cultural and religious context. An investigation of Syriac poetic tradition is pursued for this purpose. On account of its Semitic character, this tradition is most closely linked to the Judaic biblical world and to the tradition of the first (Judeo-)Christian communities. Attention is primarily given to one of the greatest Syriac poets, St. Ephrem the Syrian, whose poetry had a direct impact on Greek hymnody, particularly on Romanos the Melodist as one of the greatest representatives of Greek liturgical poetry, while it indirectly influenced the Latin West, where the new paradigm of poetry was invented by the Church Father Ambrose of Milan. By way of comparison between Christian poets—Synesius, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Paulinus of Nola—on the one hand, and the pagan poet Proclus Diadoch on the other, the chief distinction is finally set out between the sources of inspiration of both poetic worlds. This distinction is, in fact, religious in character, and leads to the title dilemma of the symposium: *Antiquity and Christianity: Conflict or Conciliation?*

Od Rima do Edese: uvod v poetike zgodnjekrščanskega pesništva

Povzetek

Referat skuša odgovoriti na vprašanje, ali je krščanstvo pesništvo radikalen *novum* ali pa le adaptacija antične pesniške tradicije v novem kulturnem in religioznem kontekstu. V ta namen preiskuje sirsko pesniško tradicijo, ki je zaradi svojega semitskega značaja najtesneje povezana z judovskim bibličnim svetom in izročilom prvih (judeo-)krščanskih skupnosti. Največ pozornosti je namenjeno enemu izmed največjih sirskih pesnikov, Efremu Sirskem, ki je s svojim pesništvom neposredno vplival na grško himnodijo, zlasti na Romana Meloda kot enega izmed največjih predstavnikov grškega liturgičnega pesništva, posredno pa tudi na latinski Zahod, kjer je novo paradigmo pesništva ustvaril cerkveni oče Ambrozij Milanski. Na koncu je prek primerjave krščanskih pesnikov – Sinezija, Gregorja iz Nazianza in Pavlina iz Nole – na eni strani ter poganskega pesnika in filozofa Prokla Diadoha na drugi izpostavljena poglavitna razlika med viroma navdiha obeh pesniških svetov. Ta razlika je v resnici religiozne narave in nas pelje k naslovni dilemi simpozija: *Antika in krščanstvo: spor ali sprava?*

Brane Senegačnik

Tragedy: A Song of the Illness That Is Not unto Death

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I

The title of my paper is composed of the Greek word "tragedy" and a syntagm taken from the Gospel of John (11.4), "illness unto death," but the latter is used only metaphorically. It is not my purpose to search for close parallels, linguistic or otherwise, to this biblical phrase in the texts of the extant Greek tragedies, nor does this Gospel phrase serve as a starting-point or inspiration for my own philosophical meditations in the style of Kierkegaard's famous treatise. Rather, I attempt to show that the human condition (to be more precise, the condition of the human individual) in the cosmos as depicted in the majority of the extant Greek tragedies is not utterly hopeless. What is revealed by the dire sufferings and deaths of the tragic characters are not only the limitations and futility of human beings, but also new dimensions of human existence, new perspectives on human life as a whole. These offer at least vague hints of redemption—in a much narrower and very different sense from the one proposed by the Gospel, to be sure, but these dimensions or perspectives are nevertheless connected to transcendence. Needless to say, the meaning unveiled by such a reading of tragedy contrasts with the usual meaning of this word and its derivatives in everyday speech. Moreover, this reading is rather alien to the majority of contemporary interpreters,[1] although it does have important precursors.[2]

1 A particularly radical ontological refutation of the meaningfulness of such an interpretation is expressed by Hegel (cf. *Philosophie der Religion*, in: *Sämtliche Werke* 16, edited by Hermann Glockner, Stuttgart 1928, pp. 133–134, and *Aesthetik* II, in: *Sämtliche Werke* 13, Stuttgart 1928, pp. 51–52); cf. also Bradley 1963, 69–92. For the history of Hegel's influence on the interpretation of *Antigone*, see H. Funke, 'KREON APOLIS', *A&A* 12 (1966), pp. 29–66.

2 In addition to Nietzsche (especially, of course, his work *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* and his lecture in *Das griechische Musikdrama*), I am thinking above all of Max Scheler (1923) in philosophical analysis and Ana Savić-Rebac in literary history.

II

The themes of Greek tragedies are manifold, and so are their endings, the fates of their characters, and the transcendent dimensions or perspectives mentioned above. The extreme experiences of the tragic heroes often destabilize the limits of reality, which may lead to different consequences. In Sophocles' *Antigone*, for example, it leads to the relativization of *prae mortem* life, of the upper world and its values and norms, and corroborates the importance of the eternal laws founded upon the will of the mythological gods and deities.[3] Euripides' *Hippolytus* presents two goddesses in the most explicit form possible; namely, that of a *deus ex machina* (Aphrodite at the beginning[4] and Artemis at the end[5] of the play), but still pronounces myths to be an extremely precarious guide through life. In the profoundest philosophical passage of this play, Phaedra's nurse asks herself what life really is. This is by no means self-evident: there seems to be a kind of afterlife[6] that people might love more than life, but they are ignorant of it because, as the nurse states, *the life below* [emphasis B. S.] is not revealed to them and therefore "they are borne along foolishly by mere tales (*mýthois*)."[7] Yet the fact that the boundary of death is impassable does not relegate the latter to the fringe of consciousness, to the sphere of the irrelevant (as attempted later in the philosophy of Epicurus).[8] On the contrary, death is thus endowed with even more significance, implicitly pervading the tragic atmosphere as the only "absolute" determinant in life.

Moreover, there emerge new perspectives on the nature of the gods, which are of the utmost importance to the reorganization of life in the *pólis*. In Aeschylus, for example, the gods become increasingly civilized and

3 Antigone's words often point to the unstable boundary of the "upper world," of "terrestrial" reality as she experiences it (e.g. vv. 560–561, 851–853); she pronounces her belief in the superiority of divine laws to human ones and explicitly names Dike, the goddess of justice, who rules the entire cosmos jointly with Zeus, "the Justice who dwells with the gods below" (cf. 450–460); moreover, her dialogue with Creon expresses the belief that the law of Hades relativizes the human (political) moral criteria (cf. 519, 521). Her "wisdom" lies in her acknowledgment of death—the absolute human limitation in *Antigone* (361–362) and in (Sophoclean) tragedy in general (cf. for example *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1528–1530, *Trachiniae* 1–3 and 1173, *Oedipus Coloneus* 1124–1227)—as the only truly valid way of cognition.

4 Cf. 1–57.

5 Cf. 1282–1439.

6 "The one the mystery-cults and the Orphics were promising in the 5th century to the initiate and the virtuous." Cf. Barrett 1964, 197.

7 Cf. 191–197 (translated by D. Kovacs).

8 Cf. Epicurus, *Epistulae* 1, 124ff.; cf. also Lucretius 3, 1077–1094.

cultured, be it as a result of the chain of suffering and deaths in *Oresteia* or of the contradictions inherent in the divine world itself (in the Prometheus tragedies). Evidently, the development of society and new forms of political organization is projected onto the divine level to gain more authority, but this projection can also be understood as an expression of faith and of the deep human need for a religious foundation underlying all events and all forms of social life: such foundations are "discovered," most poetically, through the peripeties undergone by the tragic characters and through the poet's intuition.

Suffering, particularly in Euripides, leads some of the tragic characters to become highly critical of the mythological gods, but their words hint at a need for refined theological concepts rather than at a sophisticated skepticism and relativization. This critical attitude develops because the characters discover higher principles of moral behavior in their human nature than those shown by the mythological gods. A good example is Euripides' interesting reinterpretation of the Amphitryon myth: the hero of the tragedy *Hercules Furens* rejects Zeus' paternity because of the latter's indifference, proclaiming the mortal Amphitryon as his father, who takes better care of him and thus shows higher moral qualities.[9] Evidently, the notion of a true godhead should include these higher standards.

It follows that the Greek gods should not simply be interpreted as naive anthropomorphized conceptions of objective natural forces. In fact, the notion of a deity becoming more civilized and refined becomes more (and not less!) mysterious, in which sense the Greek gods resemble somewhat the *Deus absconditus et revelatus* of Christianity. Their mysterious and transcendent nature is aptly summed up by one of the most important contemporary interpreters of Aeschylus' drama, Alan Sommerstein, who does not hesitate to borrow a phrase from Christian theology for their characterization: "To Aeschylus in this mood the gods were equated with what Bishop John Robinson in his book *Honest to God* called 'the ultimate reality behind the universe.'"[10]

9 Cf. *HF* 1264–65. The extant interpretations do not seem to pay due attention to this motif, developed throughout the play (cf. 1–3, 170–173, 184, 212, 339–347, 352–356, 498–501, 521–522, 696–700, 798–814, 825–826, 876, 887, 1019–1020).

10 Sommerstein 1996, 380.

III

Most contemporary studies lay great stress upon the otherness of the Greek world, of its social and cultural institutions. This can be justified as a reaction to the prevailing uncritical stance of 19th- and early 20th-century scholars. The problem is, however, that some modern anthropologists not only view this otherness as the sole possible starting premise, but even seem to direct their (research) efforts almost exclusively at proving its validity. When such an approach is applied to the main topic of this symposium, the question "Antiquity and Christianity: Conflict or Conciliation?" is somehow answered in advance. In my opinion, however, the problem is far more complicated. I shall very briefly set forth my own views on the problem of otherness, on our capacity for understanding literary works belonging to distant cultures (especially those treating religious questions), and on our hermeneutic limitations.

An attempt at compiling a (necessarily incomplete) list of the innumerable differences between Greek culture and ours, either Christian or postmodern, would be futile and redundant because most of them are more or less self-evident to anyone with a basic humanities education. On the other hand, there is also considerable danger in establishing similarities and drawing analogies—the danger of being too speculative or conjectural: sometimes there are no substantial grounds for analogy or they are purely formal and rather irrelevant. It is certainly not my intention to baptize the great Greek tragedians or to assert that they were preaching the Gospel, when all evidence points to the unfavorable attitude of early Christian writers to the theater.[11] This attitude, properly an issue of literary and cultural history, is closely related to the fact that a more complex Christian theory of culture had not yet been formed and elaborated (in their criticism of the theater, Christian writers form an interesting—and doubtlessly unintentional—alliance with pagan writers, whose criticism mostly stems from patriotic motives).[12] The relatively long survival of the theater despite the sharp criticism of the Church Fathers may be attributed to its change of form in late Antiquity, its evolution into a kind of ballet.[13]

11 Cf. Tertullian, *De spectaculis* 10; 17, 13; Minutius Felix 37, 12; Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones* 6, 20, 29; Ambrose, *Epistulae* 58.

12 Cf., e.g., Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 1, 31; Tacitus, *Annales* 14, 26; Macrobius, *Convivia primi diei Saturnaliorum* 3, 14, 7. An unfavorable attitude to the theater was also shown by emperors: by the Christian emperor Justinian after 526 as well as by the neo-pagan Julian the Apostate, cf. *Epistulae* 89b.

13 Cf. "Theater," in: Andresen et al. (eds.), *Lexicon der alt. Wel,* vol. 3, Zurich and Munich 1994, pp. 3029–3030.

What I wish to emphasize, however, is that a given historical culture as the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, values, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought characteristic of a community or population[14] (i.e., as the totality of the tangible, definable conditions of the human existence) cannot be equated with its "total reality." Any culture is only a specific articulation of this larger reality in which every human existence is rooted, regardless of where or when one happens to live or be born. Culture is, to be sure, a part of it—a large and very important one—but there are always vast areas of the unknown that can hardly be attributed exclusively to our insufficient theoretical knowledge of a given epoch. The roles, forms (even the contents), and meaning of the unknown shift from age to age, from culture to culture. Still, there seems to be something that could be named "the persistent riddles of life"—unanswerable questions or forms of the unknown that have similar roles and at least comparable implications for individuals in any culture, regardless of its specifics. This kind of the unknown emerges especially in the sphere of crucial human questions: about human origin, purpose, and identity, and about death and the gods. However elaborate the answers given by an individual culture may be, one cannot and should not dispel the characteristic mysterious mist enveloping them; that is, the peculiar existential atmosphere in which alone these questions appear in their genuine form (the reader is welcome to take these words as a metaphorical description of the state of mind).[15] It might be better to use the words of Hans Jonas, the great German philosopher, which describe this area of reality, or dimension of life, as a place legitimately inhabited by mystery.[16] Greek tragedy is full of situations that give rise to these questions; full of the mysterious mist through which the dilemmas, fears, sufferings, and existential inquiries of the protagonists can be approached and experienced as something that expands our own experience of life. This dimension of Greek tragic art was perceived by earlier classical philologists (Ana Savić -Rebac), philosophers (Nietzsche), and especially poets (Hölderlin): indeed, it was the main cause of their great admiration.

In this respect I cannot subscribe unreservedly to the view of the famous Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, who entitled one of his

14 Cf. Des Bouvrie 1990, 110–131.

15 This misty atmosphere shows affinities with the atmosphere accompanying the experience of the *Selbstgefühl*, the most fundamental self-experience of the human being.

16 Cf. Jonas 1967, 261.

best-known and most difficult books with the Gospel syntagm borrowed for the title of my paper—"illness (or sickness) unto death:"[17]

> What the natural man considers horrible—when he has in this wise enumerated everything and knows nothing more he can mention, this for a Christian is like a jest. Such is the relation between the natural (id est: pagan) man and the Christian: it is like the relation between a child and a man: what the child shudders at, the man regards as nothing. The child does not know what the dreadful is; this the man knows, and he shudders at it. The child's imperfection consists, first of all, in not knowing what the dreadful is; and then again, as an implication of this, in shuddering at that which is not dreadful. And so it is also with the natural man; he is ignorant of what the dreadful truly is, yet he is not thereby exempted from shuddering; no, he shudders at that which is not the dreadful: he does not know the true God, but this is not the whole of it; he worships an idol as God.

It is this dimension of tragedy (and the same applies to the literature and art of Greek and other distant cultures in general) that is necessarily neglected in most modern approaches. A focus on this dimension is usually seen as too generalizing, based on the ill-considered premise of the cross-cultural validity of ethnocentric concepts, and therefore even harmful. Of course we must not overlook the tremendous advances in our knowledge of Antiquity, in our scholarship, due precisely to the application of the new methods, mainly those derived from structuralism; in addition, classical philology and the study of Greek tragedy in particular have also benefited from certain cultural studies and new sociological concepts (reader-oriented criticism). It would certainly be a misunderstanding if my attitude to these approaches and methodological orientation were interpreted as negative—just the opposite; but it seems to me that anthropological frameworks tend to reduce questions about Antiquity and Christianity, about their relationship and so on, to mere rhetorical devices. This can be illustrated by a relatively recent anthropological study on Greek tragedy, which is deservedly reputed among contemporary scholars: *Women in Greek Tragedy* by Synnøve des Bouvrie.[18] This study, while highly instructive and perceptive, supplying the reader with many new insights and far-reaching conclusions, can nevertheless serve as an example of the conceptual shortcomings mentioned above.

17 S. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, translated by W. Lowrie, Princeton 1941, pp. 13–14.

18 Des Bouvrie 1990.

Des Bouvrie sees "Greek tragedy as a central, symbolic phenomenon within Athenian society;"[19] in other words, she sees it as a social institution with a more or less fixed function, which is described as follows:

> The essence of the drama is to mark off the network of cultural values. The drama did not discuss them. It invaded the imagination, senses and nerves of the audience, in order to imbue them with the feeling that "this is naturally and necessarily so" (i.e. "our cultural values are valuable"). It conditioned their reflexes. This emotional charging of cultural values, I think, was a main effect of Greek tragedy.[20]

This function was fulfilled by every single play, regardless of its specifics. Seeking to bridge the obvious gap between the poetic, thematic, and ideational diversity of individual plays on the one hand, and the uniformity of their social function on the other, the author employs a three-level model of tragedy, distinguishing, for the sake of more convenient analysis, (1) the "dramatic" level (of motivation, reflection, the poet's ideas), (2) the "tragic" level (of the elements that disturb the emotions and stimulate the imagination), and (3) the "symbolic" level (of the implicit and undiscussed "truths" of "divine knowledge," the unquestionable boundaries, values, and institutions of society). The most important level in the anthropological perspective is the symbolic one, and the other two are subordinated to it in terms of content, merely reinforcing its message—the unquestionable boundaries, values, and institutions of society—with an appeal to the emotions. Despite their instrumental role, however, the dramatic and tragic levels fulfilled an important function: "the emotional impact upon the audience was tragedy's primary characteristic, and the objects of emotional attention were sources of collective concern: the basic *institutions* of the culture."[21] The assumption that the tragic *agón* as a social institution had a uniform symbolic function that was realized, in one way or another, by every tragedy staged on such occasions is, I believe, correct, even unavoidable, and crucial for interpretation, but it cannot be satisfactorily argued in the (nowadays dominant) anthropological framework within which des Bouvrie's interpretative model is conceived. Although she applies her model to the minute analysis of as many as eight plays, it is still possible to cite numerous examples for which it cannot be reconciled with the sharp incongruities between the "symbolic" level on the one hand, and the "dra-

19 Des Bouvrie 1990, 115.

20 Des Bouvrie 1990, 116.

21 Des Bouvrie 1990, 130.

matic" and "tragic" on the other. (To forestall the accusation of seeking out weaknesses, let me point out that the author might have cited many more plays that explicitly reaffirm belief in social values and institutions, such as the institution of the seer in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the new legal and cultural system in *Oresteia*, or phil-Athenian sentiments in several "patriotic" pieces by Euripides.)

The problematic nature of this model becomes particularly clear when a parallel is drawn with the tragic institution in contemporary society. According to des Bouvrie, this institution is no longer the theater but religious celebrations or other ceremonial gatherings.[22] While she does not specify these celebrations and ceremonies, let alone analyze their structure and impact on the audience, we may assume that a form of religious celebration in modern society would be the Christian ritual. The monotheistic frame of the Christian religion, with its elaborate, consistent theology and firmly canonized body of liturgical texts, certainly enables the participants in the ritual to experience a reaffirmation of their faith in God's power and presence even when the texts refer to "tragic," dark aspects of life, to God's silence and even God's death. By contrast, the unstable, polytheistic frame of the Greek religion, with its sharp antagonisms within the pantheon and its dynamic mythopoeia/mythology, provided no firm ground for such experience. The audience at a tragic *agón* did not hear canonized (i.e., recurring and thoroughly familiar) texts, but—at least in the Classical period—always new ones; the myths were frequently expanded or altered (as in Sophocles' *Antigone* [probably], Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, and several plays by Euripides, to cite but a handful of the best-known examples); the language of tragedy is often—especially in Euripides—also the language of sharply critical and rational "theological" and "culturological" reflection; Aeschylus' drama is interpreted as containing a highly original theoretical concept of an evolutionary theology.[23] In short, the linguistic and pragmatic circumstances of the original reception of tragedy were undoubtedly very different from those accompanying the reception of Christian liturgical texts, which may serve as an example of religious celebration in modern society. It is true, of course, that the fragmentary state of the extant tragic corpuses admonishes us to proceed cautiously: in Aeschylus, for instance, the full role played by the gods in a given mythological episode, and thus their true stature, is

22 Des Bouvrie 1990, 114.

23 Cf. Sommerstein 1996, 383–390; cf. also Winnington-Ingram 1954, 19.

only revealed at the level of trilogy or perhaps duology[24]—or so we may judge from the *only* extant examples. Of Sophocles' and Euripides' works, by contrast, not a single specimen of a drama series survives; consequently, although there is good reason to infer that their concepts of trilogy were different, nothing certain can be claimed about them. The criticism in Book 10 of Plato's *Republic* is aimed at the "content" of tragic poetry, at its way of presenting reality, while the interlocutors know nothing about a dominant symbolic function that would render the lower levels meaningful and harmonize them. The rhetorician Zenobius (a Greek sophist from the first half of the second century AD) cites Chamaileon's explanation of the proverb *oudèn pròs tòn Diónyson* 'nothing to do with Dionysus': by his account, these words were exclaimed by the spectators of Phrynichus' and Aeschylus' plays, astonished that their tragedies did not treat the myths of Dionysus at all. If this explanation is correct,[25] it suggests that, while tragedy originally indeed bore a close thematic affinity with the cult (and myth) of Dionysus, which influenced the audience's expectations, poets had relatively early ceased to be bound by these expectations.[26]

What, then, could be the uniform symbolic function of tragedy as an institution, which used to be described in the more traditional jargon of classical philology (and accordingly with a different emphasis) as an edifying function? It lies in calling attention to the "transcendence" underlying the world, which at the same time limits and establishes the individual and human society—the ultimate origin of both, as well as the first cause of the action. Although all events are doubtlessly controlled by the gods, the human gaze cannot penetrate the twilight that surrounds them. The suffering of the protagonists—human, semidivine, or divine—is an illness against which divine power is always revealed (i.e., the superior power of the gods over men), but it is often also the source of their glory and "eternal

24 On the question whether Aeschylus may have written a duology on Prometheus (a thesis proposed as early as the 19th century by Friedrich Focke), cf. Sommerstein 1996, 314–321; on the authenticity of *Prometheus Bound*, cf. ibid. 321–327, as well as Schmid 1929, Herrington 1970, Griffith 1977, Winnington-Ingram 1983, West 1990.

25 The explanation above has been extensively discussed in the modern period because the cult origins of tragedy represented a major research topic in the previous century. Nevertheless, the discussion of the influence exerted on "literary" tragedy by its cult origins and Dionysiac elements continues to be lively and contentious, cf. Pohlenz 1965, 473–496, Pickard-Cambridge ²1962, 124–126, Friedrich 1996, and Seaford 1984, 26–27; 1996.

26 Nor were they bound by them later because Euripides' *Bacchae* is the only fully preserved tragedy to treat the myth of Dionysus directly.

life" because many tragedies are etiologies of heroes' cults or even prequels to their apotheoses (e.g., the apotheosis of Heracles in *Trachiniae*, or Oedipus in *Oedipus Coloneus*). The events portrayed do not always reaffirm the existing cultural institutions; indeed, sometimes they sharply criticize the latter and (especially in Euripides) suggest a thorough revision of the theological notions and religious values. This determinant is, to be sure, a very general one, but no less valid for all that: neglect of this dimension hinders our understanding of tragedy and gives rise to overcomplicated anthropological interpretations.[27]

Above all, Greek tragedy confronts the reader or spectator with the enigma of the universe in deeply moving ways. After Oedipus' catastrophe, for example, the Theban elders in *Oedipus Tyrannus* (1186–1189) sing a tragic song about their realization that the human generations are as *nothing*. What could be the propositional content of this statement? Does it really suggest nothing but humble respect for the existing historical institutions? Does it not proclaim precisely the opposite—namely, that all human creations are nothing as well? And what is man, in this overwhelming sense of his own nothingness? Is it not here that he at last becomes *deinótaton*—the most awe-inspiring creature in the cosmos? The recognition of the nothingness of one's own thought and being prompts an entirely different way of feeling, thinking, and acting. It is only at this point that the spirit can open itself to the divine mystery, which is also the mystery of its death and life.

27 A typical example is the—otherwise most instructive—anthropological study of Sophocles' *Antigone* by Oudemans and Lardinois (1987).

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Tragedy: A Song of the Illness That Is Not unto Death

Summary

The extant Greek tragedies are extremely varied in terms of poetry, themes, and ideas. However, their most distinctive common theme may be human limitations and fragility. Nonetheless, the spirit of tragedy is not a pessimistic one: in some works, the protagonist's suffering and catastrophe clearly open the possibility of new self-cognition for man, as well as a more profound or refined conception of the gods and life in general. In this respect, the experience of tragedy bears at least a rough resemblance to the Christian experience. There are certain theological similarities as well: Aeschylus' gods are beyond reality, as is God in the Judeo-Christian tradition; the gods of Sophocles are concerned with the individual (e.g., Oedipus); and the protagonists of Euripides, who are critical of traditional mythology (Heracles), do not believe in the divinity of gods that are morally inferior to man. The gods of Greek tragedy may be described as both concealing and revealing themselves, similarly to the Christian *Deus absconditus et revelatus*. It is precisely this divine characteristic that grows blurred in today's dominant anthropological model of interpretation, which has an emphatically historicist and sociological concept (illustrated with the studies by des Bouvrie, and by Oudemans and Lardinois). If Greek tragedies formed part of cult practice and were thus inextricably linked with the mystery of life, the only authentic interpretation is one that takes this feature into account. The traditional approaches (by Nietzsche, Scheler, and Savić-Rebac), based on the premise that the tragic protagonist, the poet, and the audience share a spiritual experience of the divine, pave the road to understanding the paradoxical nature of Greek tragedy, which is often both a critical theological discourse and an act of worship, a portrayal of both human suffering and greatness. It is only in the light of this approach that the differences and similarities between the tragic and Christian experiences can be discussed meaningfully.

Tragedija: spev o bolezni, ki ni za smrt

Povzetek

Ohranjene grške tragedije so skrajno različne, kar zadeva njihovo pesniškost, téme in ideje. Najznačilnejša téma, ki jim je skupna, pa so nemara človeške omejitve in krhkost. Vendar duh tragedije ni pesimističen: trpljenje in katastrofa glavnega junaka v nekaterih delih jasno odpirata človeku možnost novega samospoznanja, pa tudi globljega in pretanjenejšega pojmovanja bogov in življenja sploh. V tem oziru je izkušnja tragedije vsaj v grobem podobna krščanski izkušnji. Prav tako obstajajo teološke podobnosti: Ajshilovi bogovi so nad resničnostjo kakor Bog judovsko-krščanskega izročila; Sofoklovi bogovi se ukvarjajo s posameznikom (npr. z Ojdipom); in Evripidovi protagonisti s svojo kritičnostjo do tradicionalne mitologije (Herakles) ne verujejo v božanstvo bogov, ki so moralno niže od človeka. O bogovih grške tragedije je mogoče reči, da se razodevajo in skrivajo, podobno kot krščanski *Deus absconditus et revelatus*. Prav ta božja lastnost pa se čedalje bolj zabrisuje v antropološkem interpretacijskem modelu, ki prevladuje dandanes in ima poudarjeno historicistično in sociološko zasnovo (ilustrirata jo študiji des Bouvrieja ter Oudemansa in Lardinoisa). Ker so bile grške tragedije del kultne prakse in s tem nerazvezljivo povezane z misterijem življenja, je pristna le tista interpretacija, ki upošteva to njihovo značilnost. Tradicionalni pristopi (Nietzschejev, Schelerjev, pristop Savić-Rebčeve), ki izhajajo iz domneve, da glavni junak tragedije, pesnik in občinstvo delijo duhovno izkušnjo božjega, tlakujejo pot razumevanju paradoksne narave grške tragedije, ki je pogosto oboje, kritičen teološki govor in akt češčenja, portret človeškega trpljenja in veličine. Razlike in podobnosti med tragiško in krščansko izkušnjo je mogoče smiselno obravnavati samo v luči tega pristopa.

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"Going Blind" and "Regaining Sight" in Byzantine Culture: Paganism and Christianity in the Hymns of Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemais

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Today, when the processes of apostasy in the world are intensifying and society is returning to its pagan past, I address conversion to Christ by a person and a culture as a whole. Saul, the Apostle Paul, who became blind on the road to Damascus and then regained his sight, is the most impressive example of such a conversion:

> 1 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest
> 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way . . . he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.
> 3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.
> 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"
> 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.
> 6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." . . .
> 8 Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing . . . .
> 9 For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.
> 10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias! . . .
> 11 Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul . . . .
> 15 This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel . . . .
> 17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his

> hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."
> 18 Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized . . . .
> 20 At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.
>
> (Acts 9.1–20)

This episode of the Apostle Paul going blind and regaining his sight metaphorically shows how a person may convert from the darkness of unbelief to deep Christian faith and how an entire culture may convert from a pagan to a Christian mode. It means becoming blind to this earthly life, based on the laws of the mind, and gaining the ability to see the Heavenly life, a paradoxical one, which is "unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor 1.23). It is impossible to realize only with the forces of the mind the preaching of the kingdom that "is not of this world, not of this realm" (Jn 18.36), of the kingdom where "the last shall be first, and the first last" (Mt 20.16). The only thing that everyone is asked to do is to become blind to his mind and, afterwards, to regain the vision of his heart.

However, this is not a thing that may happen immediately. Like Saul, who regained his ability to see only after three days, every converted pagan might change his life and his outlook not in an instant, but gradually. This rule can be observed in the transition from ancient pagan culture to Christian culture during the first centuries AD. To understand how pagan heritage interacted with the Christian faith in the minds of the intellectual elite of Roman society in that period of transition from Antiquity to the Byzantine centuries, permit me draw your attention to the personality of Synesius of Cyrene, who lived at the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century and appeared to occupy a central position in the greatest ideological transformation.

A bright representative of the pagan aristocracy, Synesius, against his will, was placed on the episcopal throne in Ptolemais by Theophilus, the patriarch of Alexandria. This happened against his will because Synesius acknowledged himself not to be a true Christian; according to his own words, he did not keep the Gospel in his hands and showed a preference for Neoplatonic philosophy. As a bishop, Synesius continued to call himself "a philosopher" and found himself unable to believe in the resurrection of the body. However, at the same time, following the Apostle Paul, he called

Christ "The Savior of man," Ανθρώπων σωτήρ (3, 19). These facts are why researchers characterized him in opposite ways: for example, Alexei Losev referred to Synesius "a true Christian," whereas Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff called him a person for whom "the life and the teaching of Christ was nothing."

Synesius was among the first in the pleiad of Byzantine bishop-poets in the Christian East. Belonging by birth to the pagan aristocracy, many archbishops of that time used to devote themselves to literary creative activities, and this would become traditional for Byzantine culture. There are nine well-preserved hymns of Synesius that could be called an amalgam of all the philosophical and religious ideas found in the Alexandria of his time. Being, first of all, an adherent to Neoplatonic philosophy, he tried to reconcile this with Christian teaching as far as he was able to understand it. He managed to do so in the points common to ancient Greek and Byzantine patristic thought. First, it is a kind of mystical theology, by which I mean experience of the cognition of God deprived of any terrestrial passions, practiced in silence. For his philosophical studies, Synesius fled to the Libyan desert, where in silence "his soul purifies from its passions, anger, irritation and with the refined tongue and clear thought glorifies God" (1, 61–70). Even nature was called upon by him for silence: Εὐφαμείτω αἰθὴρ καὶ γᾶ· στάτω πόντος, στάτω δ' ἀήρ· . . . ἐχέτω σιγὰ . . . ἱερευομένων ἁγίων ὕμνων (1, 72–75, 82–85).

Second, in the hymns of Synesius the Neoplatonic admiration for nature and biblical psalmody of the creature to his Creator were merged: Σοὶ πάντα φέρει αἶνον ἀγήρων. Ἀὼς καὶ νύξ, στεροπαί, νιφάδες . . . καὶ γᾶς ῥίζαι, ὕδωρ, ἀήρ, σώματα πάντα . . . σπέρματα, καρποί, φυτά, καὶ πόαι, ῥίζαι, βοτάναι, βοτὰ καὶ πτηνά . . . (1, 343–355).

The hymns of Synesius also contain images that were common to both ancient and biblical traditions; for instance, the image of psalmody as "a verbal victim to God:" Βασιλῆϊ θεῶν / πλέκομεν στέφανον, / θῦμ' ἀναίμακτον (1, 8–11), as opposed to a bloody victim (Porphyry, Gregory the Theologian).

Among the Gospel themes, Synesius chooses those that were the most transparent and usual for ancient pagan consciousness; for example, the adoration of the Christ Child by the magi and the descent into hell, to the underground kingdom of the dead. These examples did not cause any perplexities for a pagan-minded person of Antiquity because many mythological gods and heroes used to descend to Hades: Heracles did so to tame Cerberus and to bring him to the ruler Eurystheus, and Demeter walked

this path when looking for her lost daughter Persephone. Thus in his two hymns Synesius describes Christ, an assistant to the dead, coming down to Hades (6, 38–39), or Tartarus, to destroy the kingdom of death and to save the souls of the dead from suffering (8, 13–18, 24–27).

The most incomprehensible point of Christian teaching for Synesius, who was accustomed to operating within Neoplatonic categories of thinking, was the Christian dogmas of the trinity and incarnation.

Following the ancient Greek philosophical tradition (Porphyry, Chaldean oracles), Synesius acknowledged a certain Ultimate One, a monad (Russian *отец сущих*, Greek ταμίας πατήρ τε ὄντων), but was ready to interpret all the rest as an outflow emanating from it: Ἄφθεγκτε γόνε πατρὸς ἀφθέγκτου, ὠδὶς διὰ σέ, διὰ δ ὠδῖνος αὐτὸς ἀφάνθης(1, 236–242).

The Christian thought most unacceptable to Neoplatonism was the assertion declared in the Gospel: "And the Word became flesh" (Jn 1.14). Here I refer to the teaching of the humiliation of God. The nature of the Neoplatonic divine monad was abstract and arithmetical, and therefore the Christian belief in an unknowable God that exceeds the entire universe but is at the same time a simple man perplexed ancient pagan philosophers. Although the idea of an offspring born to a celestial god and a terrestrial woman, expressed in the cult of heroes, was natural for eastern cults and ancient mythology, the idea of God's incarnation without changing His divine nature sounded implausible.

Another stumbling block for pagan philosophers was the Christian teaching about the possibility of a human being achieving a godlike state; that is, deification. The Neoplatonic attitude that substance was hostile to everything divine did not allow the pagan philosophers to assume that anything of a divine nature could join with human nature. The idea of a person achieving a godlike state was alien to Synesius. Rather, following Plotinus, he considered any human being as longing to become God.

Undoubtedly, the hymns of Synesius could not reflect all his spiritual searches, but they allow us to observe the gradual process of a pagan's conversion to Christ, his efforts to express new ideas through his previous outlook, and the final synthesis. He interprets the Christian themes, such as the birth of Christ, the descent into hell, and the adoration of the magi, allegorically by using images common to ancient Greek mythology; for example, that of Tartarus (καταβάς δ' επὶ Τάρταρα, 8, 16), of Hades (Θεός εις Ἀίδαν σταλείς, 6, 39), of the dog Cerberus devouring people (Λαοβορὸσ κύων, 8, 21), and of the moon shepherding the night gods (Σελήνα ποιμήν νυχιών θεῶν, 8, 47–48). He also uses the pagan terminology and the lexicon

of ancient philosophers and poets—of Homer, Plato, and Porphyry.

In a similar way, the fourth-century mosaics of the rotunda of St. George in Thessalonica, as well as in the churches of Ravenna (the Major Basilica of the Virgin Mary, the Baptistery of the Orthodox), demonstrate the search for the new Byzantine image. This is still Hellenistic art, with its hedonistic imagery and voluptuous beauty, in spite of its new Christian content.

However, it is said: "Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved" (Mt 9.17). Thus the artists of the first Christian centuries faced the problem of creating the "new wineskins" for the "new wine." Although during the entire Byzantine period Antiquity remained an inexhaustible treasury of artistic images, it was not until the beginning of the seventh century that it became possible to speak about the appearance of a new image, both verbal and artistic, to express the new Christian teaching, and this image appeared to be dramatically different from the ancient one.

The temple was the center of life in Byzantium. With its mosaic and fresco decorations, services, hymnography, and psalmody, it symbolically represented the Heavenly Jerusalem. This new verbal and artistic imagery helped to create a united sacred space.

The temple was the image of the universe, in which Heaven, Paradise, and Earth were symbolically represented. A combination of timeless and historical elements, the unity of the entire Holy Church created the sensation of the eternal presence of the sacred. The hymnographers used their own powers of expression to complement the biblical narration of the frescos, and the temple and the events occurring in it came alive and helped believers feel there and then, here and now, like participants in the Gospel's events.

In Byzantine hymnography as well as in the Byzantine temple, a special sacred space was created in which the linearity of time started to decay and the sensation of eternity appeared. Hymnographers and generations of people that prayed in the temples perceived the Gospel not only as a historical narration but also as the narration of the events that recur every year and every day, and all believers became real participants in these events: "Of thy Mystic Supper, o Son of God, today admit me a partaker: for I will not tell the Mystery to thine enemies, nor give thee a kiss like Judas, but like the thief I will confess thee: Remember me, o Lord, when thou comest in thy kingdom." Thus the event that took place in the past, in the last days of the life of Christ, happened every year and at every liturgy on Holy Thursday before Easter.

The logic of the poetry of worship differs from the logic of secular poetry. It breaks the natural order and constantly combines the incompatible: death and life, joy and suffering. Thus in a Palm Sunday hymn the souls of the righteous that were dead exclaim with joy, as if they were alive, that the blood of the Innocent One will pour: "The spirits of the righteous have cried aloud with joy: Now is a new covenant appointed unto the world, and all people shall be renewed through sprinkling with the blood divine" (6th Canticle of the canon, Matins, St. Cosmas of Maiuma). They exclaim with joy because the sufferings of Christ and His death bring resurrection and life.

Going blind in the earthly world and regaining sight in the Heavenly world is an immutable law that is valid for everyone that really tries to understand Byzantine culture, Byzantine ideology, Byzantine art, and Byzantine literature. In order to become able to perceive these, it appears to be necessary to perceive the Christian teaching and the sermon: "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor 1.23).

To conclude my brief paper, I would like to recollect my conversation with a Greek metropolitan that used to be a prominent scientist in astrophysics and cosmic medical technologies at Harvard University and NASA. Once, while living in the US, he entered a Greek church where he saw the crucifix and thought that it was impossible: The Man is dead but the sign says "The King of Glory." Afterwards he recalled the Gospel's words that "the last shall be first, and the first last." He thought that paradox must have something concealed within it, and after 23 days he decided to become a monk and left for Mount Athos. So it is possible to say that this law of "going blind" and "regaining sight" works without exception for every person that comes to orthodoxy, from the Apostle Paul up to Metropolitan Nikola, and for culture as a whole.

"Going Blind" and "Regaining Sight" in Byzantine Culture: Paganism and Christianity in the Hymns of Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemais

Summary

The paper begins with a statement that we live in times of apostasy, which calls for conversion. There are two different models of conversion. The first model is represented by the Apostle Paul, who became blind to earthly life, but received the ability to see the other, real life, this change being as dramatic as every passage from death to life. The second model is represented by Synesius of Cyrene (4th–5th century AD), a Neoplatonic philosopher that became a Christian bishop without abandoning his philosophy. This strange cohabitation of two different concepts of life was typical of pagans that could not realize that they were blind (and thus could not regain their sight). The second, gradual model of conversion, however, also applies to Hellenistic culture as whole, as it was adapted by Christians in the first seven or eight centuries of Christianity. In the religious poetry of Synesius there are several motifs that were common to both classical and biblical tradition, and Christian art mostly represented new contents by using old, non-converted forms. It was still Hellenistic art, with its hedonistic imagery and voluptuous beauty, in spite of its new, Christian content. Only from the 7th century (and, more radically, from the 9th century) onwards, was Byzantine art able to create a dramatic change, in both form and content.

In the light of the command "not to put new wine into old wineskins" one can therefore speak about the need to find "new wineskins;" that is, to break more radically with Hellenistic culture (or, at the individual level, with one's past). This conversion, which is needed so much, is possible today, as it always was, in the form of regaining sight. Once upon a time it happened to the Apostle Paul, and today, for example, to the Greek Metropolitan Nikolas, who became blind at the peak of his scientific career only to regain his sight as a monk at Mount Athos. This is a model of the Christian way for all times.

»Oslepeti« in »spet spregledati« v bizantinski kulturi: poganstvo in krščanstvo v himnah ptolemajskega škofa Sinezija

Povzetek

Referat se začenja z ugotovitvijo, da živimo v času odpadništva, ki kliče po spreobrnjenju. Obstajata dva različna modela spreobrnjenja. Prvega predstavlja apostol Pavel, ki je postal slep za zemeljsko življenje, vendar je prejel zmožnost, da vidi drugo, pravo življenje, s tem da je bila ta sprememba dramatična kakor vsak prehod iz smrti v življenje. Drugi model predstavlja Sinezij iz Kirene (4.–5. st. po Kr.), novoplatonistični filozof, ki je postal krščanski škof, ne da bi opustil svojo filozofijo. Ta čudni soobstoj dveh različnih pojmovanj življenja je bil značilen za pogane, ki niso mogli spoznati, da so slepi (kako bi torej spet lahko sprevideli?). Toda drugi model spreobrnjenja velja tudi za helenistično kulturo kot celoto, kot so jo privzemali kristjani v prvih sedmih, osmih stoletjih krščanstva. V Sinezijevi religiozni poeziji je več motivov, ki so skupni tako antičnemu kakor bibličnemu izročilu, in krščanska umetnost je za prikaz novih vsebin zvečine rabila stare, nespreobrnjene oblike. Kljub novi, krščanski vsebini je bila zaradi hedonističnega podobja in nasladne lepote še zmeraj helenistična umetnost. Šele od 7. in, koreniteje, od 9. stoletja je bila bizantinska umetnost zmožna dramatične spremembe tako v obliki kakor v vsebini.

V luči zapovedi, »naj se novo vino ne toči v stare mehove«, lahko torej govorimo o potrebi, da se najdejo »novi mehovi«, se pravi, da se koreniteje prelomi s helenistično kulturo (oziroma da posameznik na individualni ravni pretrga s svojo preteklostjo). Spreobrnjenje, ki je tako zelo potrebno, je dandanes, tako kot nekdaj, mogoče v obliki vnovičnega sprevidenja. Nekdaj se je to primerilo apostolu Pavlu, dandanes pa se je na primer grškemu metropolitu Nikolasu, ki je na vrhuncu svoje znanstvene kariere oslepel in spet sprevidel kot menih na gori Atos. To je model krščanske poti za vse čase.

Vid Snoj

Homer's Odysseus and Dante's Ulysses: The Survival of a Classical Myth

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Before I begin discussing my topic, I would like to make two remarks.

The first concerns the title of this symposium, *Antiquity and Christianity: Conflict or Conciliation*. In English as well as in Slovene, we hear the two words "conflict—conciliation" as a sound figure, an alliteration. Let me repeat: "*con*flict—*con*ciliation" or, in Slovene, "*sp*or—*sp*rava." As you have heard (or, at least, I hope you have), the first two consonants are in accord with one another. In this accordance of sound, in which "conflict" alliterates with "conciliation," I catch the hint that one is in accord with the other, and that one cannot exist without the other. There can be no conciliation without a conflict—or the other way around: first comes the conflict, and then the conciliation, exactly in this order. In the title of this symposium I have thus discerned a sequence, a scenario in which the complicated relationship between Antiquity and Christianity supposedly comes into existence in the course of history, a relationship that is, as we all know, absolutely crucial to the origin and structure of modern Europe in all realms, so to speak, touched by the human spirit. This scenario, however, is the scenario of a tragedy, indeed of a classical Greek tragedy: *a conflict that leads to conciliation through the victim*.

However, does the scenario implied in the title of this symposium hold up? Let us say that it does—who, then, is the tragic victim? Whom would death have to befall in order to bring about conciliation? Would that be Hellenism in the Christianity of the Middle Ages, or Christianity in the Greek legacy of modern Europe? And further: the question is, where there is conflict, must there necessarily be conciliation? This is a question that concerns not only my contribution, but the whole of our explorations and discussions at this symposium.

I would like to say beforehand that, in discussing my topic—the myth of Odysseus as told by Homer and Dante or, in a broader sense, in Hellenism and Christianity, I will speak about *survival* rather than the (tragic) victim and conciliation. This will undoubtedly be less spectacular than if I attempted to tell the fate of the myth of Odysseus according to the tragic scenario and thereby translate it into a tragedy. Nevertheless, *Überleben* is not the same as *Fortleben*, as Walter Benjamin stressed in his famous essay on the task of the translator.[1] Survival is more than ordinary living on, a life without grandeur and sense, a vegetation, a life-in-death.

My second remark refers to Sergei Averintsev's book, *The Poetics of Early Byzantine Literature*, which served as an initiative for our symposium. There is no need to waste words on its greatness. The attention that Averintsev's book dedicates to the encounters of Greek literature, philosophy, and other spiritual activities, or Greek culture in general, with Christianity is all-encompassing, so to speak. What surfaces in this book is a broad knowledge of Hellenism and Christianity, reaching from literature on one side, to the law, the military, and even daily life on the other side of the cultural sphere, as well as a deep insight into the intertwining of elements from all possible realms, and especially a sharp sense for the attachments and ruptures within Christianity in its relationship towards Hellenism, through which Christianity established itself in the world almost from its very beginnings. Yet despite his far-reaching breadth, Averintsev does not make the encounter of Hellenism with Christianity the subject of his discussion, and touches upon myth only in passing.

However, why does the encounter of Hellenism and Christianity call for discussion precisely in connection with the myth?

In the sixth chapter of his *Poetics*, Aristotle says that myth is *arché* and *psyché*, the "principle" and "soul" of tragedy.[2] To him, myth is the most important constitutive part of tragedy, the highest of all poetic genres—a plot or a "plot-structure," as the word *mýthos* in this special use employed by Aristotle has been translated by Stephen Halliwell, one of the most respected scholars of *Poetics*.[3] I myself would say something similar about myth and, at the same time, even more than that: it is *the heart* of all Greek

1 Walter Benjamin, *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*, in: Walter Benjamin, *Schriften*, vol. 1, edited by Theodor W. Adorno and Gretel Adorno, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1955, pp. 40–54.

2 Aristoteles, *De arte poetica liber*, edited by Rudolf Kassel, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 12.

3 See Stephen Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics*, London: Duckworth, 1998 (2nd edition).

literature, not only of drama with tragedy at its head, but also—and even sooner—of epic poetry, and an essential component of lyric poetry. Myth is the heart of Greek literature both in the sense of a living spring as well as a vital core. It springs from a multi-source oral tradition before Antiquity, which denotes the historical existence of the Greeks and Romans, and is, in Antiquity itself, always an already written myth, a myth in literary form, a formed story. It is an original speech of singers from prehistoric times, and at the same time a story told in this speech—a story about immortal gods and mortal men.

My contribution therefore expands the field of research outlined by Averintsev in his book. An expansion in this direction seems important to me because Greek literature is, in fact, the speech of ancient singers transformed in the written word. In my opinion, myth cannot be avoided in observing the encounter of Antiquity and Christianity in literature.

As already mentioned, I expand the field of research using a single myth. Yet this is not just any myth. First of all, the myth of Odysseus surfaces at the beginning of European literature, where Homer's poems the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* stand and, second, it is the myth of perhaps the most complicated of all figures in classical mythology. Odysseus is not a complicated figure only, as one might think, because of his cunningness, but in particular because of his many-sidedness. In the opinion of James Joyce, who made Odysseus a modern hero in his novel *Ulysses*, Homer's Odysseus surpasses all the other great figures of European literature as far as many-sidedness is concerned: Hamlet, for example, is just a son, as Joyce wittily remarks in Frank Budgen's book of conversations with him, whereas Odysseus is a son, a father, and a husband—and, on the other hand, a lover; a master, and a king—and, on the other hand, a warrior and a traveler. To use Joyce's word, he is "all-round:" just as a figure made by a sculptor is visible in space from all sides in its voluminous plasticity, so Homer's Odysseus appears as a full figure through all the relations into which he enters with others.[4]

I now proceed to my topic, first to Homer's Odysseus. In so doing, let me refer to my introductory deliberation about conflict and conciliation. Although this reference will lead to a digression—that is, a step away from my topic—I am convinced it will pave the way for an easier approach to the topic itself.

4 See Frank Budgen, *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses*, New York: Harrison Smith & Robert Haas, 1934, pp. 15–17.

A certain conflict and a certain conciliation, both concerning the myth in general and the myth of Odysseus in particular, were already encountered in Hellenism. It is a commonplace of *Geistesgeschichte* that a conflict was roused in Hellenism *between poetic mýthos and philosophical lógos*, between the two different speech modes or their "narratives." This conflict was triggered in the 6th century BC by Xenophanes, who reproached Homer and Hesiod for presenting the gods too anthropomorphically, and it reached its culmination with Plato, who rejected the poetic presentation of gods and also of heroes as entirely false, thus making the leading role of poetry questionable, with Homer at its head, in *paideía*, the "education" or "cultivation" of Greek generations. From the philosophical point of view, poetry became contestable because philosophy understood itself first of all as a way of life,[5] that is, as *lógos* being lived, or to be lived, and not as a speculation, theory, doctrine, or similar.

The solution to this conflict—let us call it "conciliation"—came in Hellenistic philosophy through the allegorical interpretation of a poetic myth, which Plato himself did not approve of. Philosophical allegoresis of a poetic myth stemmed from two interweaving motives. The first motive was to save the venerable poetic tradition, with Homer at its head, from remaining a mere tale without any value after the conflict with philosophy; and the second motive was to ground philosophy itself, as a relatively young invention, in ancient wisdom because, in face of the contacts of Hellenism with the ancient cultures of the East grounded in sacred writings that the Greeks had not had, the need for such grounding was becoming increasingly urgent in late Antiquity. Hellenistic philosophy thus saved poetry through allegoresis by grounding itself in poetry, as if poetry were a holy scripture. In philosophy, which took a conciliatory leaning towards poetry, the myth became an allegory; that is, another or a different speech (from the Greek *állon* 'other' and *agoréo* 'I speak in public, at Agora'). It became a speech that was not to be taken literally, but as a speech about something else, as another story—as a differently told story about philosophy itself. Not only any naïve, but also any serious literal reading of the myth was *sacrificed*.

Christianity, on the other hand, took over the philosophical allegoresis of a poetic myth by virtue of its affinity to Greek philosophy understood precisely as a way of life. In the first centuries after Christ, Christianity

5 See, for example, Pierre Hadot, *Excercises spirituels et la philosophie antique*, Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1981, and *Qu'est-que la philosophie antique?*, Paris: Gallimard, 1995.

presented itself in the Hellenistic world as both a philosophical and, at the same time, a more-than-philosophical way of life—as life in Christ Logos.[6] The early Christian writers thus became susceptible to the poetic myth in which Hellenistic philosophy was grounding itself.

If I may now pass from myth in general to the myth of Odysseus, a double image of Odysseus, a negative and a positive one, was formed in the Christian reception. The negative image originated particularly in the reception of Western Christianity. It was influenced by the tradition of the Romans, who deduced their descent from Troy—the poetic monument to the Roman searching for roots was raised by Virgil in his *Aeneid*—because it was precisely Odysseus that caused the fall of this famous city with the stratagem of the wooden horse. The novels about Troy originating in the vernacular during the Middle Ages contributed to the negative image of Odysseus as well.

The positive image of Odysseus, however, was the result of early Christian writers' reference to Greek philosophy. For example, Odysseus *polýtlas*, "much suffering," who endured so much on his journeys after the end of the Trojan War, was elevated by the Stoics to the ideal of a wise man, going, in spite of all suffering, his way to the end. However, it was in Christian allegoresis that the mast to which Odysseus allows himself be fastened in the episode with the Sirens began to symbolize the cross to which a Christian had bound himself past the seduction of sensual pleasure.[7] And even more than this: the entire story of Odysseus, the entire odyssey, was re-interpreted by the principal Neoplatonist, Plotinus, into a story of a philosopher that, through his way of life, turned away from the world and started to ascend to his divine homeland. In the first of *The Enneads* (6, 8), Plotinus exhorts to such an ascension, or flight, as follows:

> Let us flee, now, to the beloved fatherland (*Il.* 2, 140), one might advise us more truly. But what kind of flight [*phygé*] should this be and how should we flee? Homer said—in a riddle, as it seems to me—that we should turn away from Circe the magician and from Calypso, as Odysseus has done, for he did not like to stay, though he

6 See Gorazd Kocijančič, *Splošni uvod*, in: Gorazd Kocijančič (ed.), *Logos v obrambo resnice. Izbrani spisi zgodnjih krščanskih apologetov*, Celje: Mohorjeva družba, 1998, pp. 20ff.

7 See Bernhard Zimmermann, *Odysseus—ein Held mit vielen Gesichtern,* in: Bernhard Zimmermann (ed.), *Mythos Odyssesus. Texte von Homer bis Günter Kunert*, Leipzig: Reclam, 2004, p. 179; see also the chapter "Odysseus am Mastbaum" in Hugo Rahner's book *Griechische Mythen in christlicher Deutung*, Zürich: Rhein-Verlag, 1957, pp. 414–486.

> shared in the pleasures through his eyes and cohabited with great sensuous beauty.[8]

In short, the odyssey became an inner journey, a journey of the soul—in Neoplatonic allegoresis, a return of the soul to its fatherland, to the One, and, in the Platonizing Christian allegoresis that can be found in St. Ambrose and St. Augustine in the Christian West, to God the Father.

However, the allegoresis of Odysseus' story was already challenged in its very foundations by Clement of Alexandria, who took part in the nascence of Christian philosophy in Alexandria before Christian allegoresis came into full swing. As he says in his *Exhortation to the Greeks* (25), Odysseus "did not yearn for his real heavenly fatherland and the light of the Being [*toû óntos*], but for smoke,"[9] his yearning did not stretch itself to the radiance of the *Arché* above the existing things, but to the *kapnòs apothróskon*, the "smoke ascending" (*Od*. 1, 58)—but only from the domestic hearth over his native Ithaca. The message of Clement's words is that Odysseus' yearning for home cannot be an exhortation to the Christian outworldly yearning on account of its low, earthly boundedness, at the same time drawing our attention to the sacrifice of literal reading of Odysseus' story in later Christian allegoresis.

What, then, is to say about Homer's Odysseus, if we try to take back this sacrifice and seriously read the *Odyssey* literally?

Homer's Odysseus is a returner (and the *Odyssey* a poem of *nóstos*, of Odysseus' "return") but to his earthly home, to Ithaca. However, the moving power of this return— which, as indicated in the first and then again in the fifth book of the *Odyssey*, certainly would not have occurred without the consent of the gods—is nothing other than yearning, as regards Odysseus himself. This is an axis of Odysseus' figure as formed by Homer.

In the first verse of the *Odyssey*, Homer begins to speak of Odysseus in the following way: *Ándra moi énnepe, Moûsa, polýtropon*,[10] "Tell me, Muse, of the man who is *polýtropos*." The epithet *polýtropos*, which in some way denotes Odysseus with "many turns" (from Greek *polý* 'many' and *trópos* 'way, turn'), summarizes all of Odysseus' other fixed epithets, notably those with the prefix *poly-* (for example, *polýtlas*, *polyméchanos*, which

8 Plotinus, *Opera*, vol. 1: *Porphyrii vita Plotini / Enneades I-III*, edited by Paul Henry and Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 102.

9 Clemens Alexandrinus, *Cohortatio ad gentes*, in: *Clementis Alexandrini opera quae exstant omnia*, Patrologia Graeco-Latina 8, edited by J.-P. Migne, Paris: Garnier fratres, editores, et J.-P. Migne succesores, 1891, col. 197.

10 Homer, *Odyssee. Griechisch und deutsch*, Munich and Zürich: Artemis, 1990, p. 6.

refers to a man capable of many *mechanaí*, 'means' or 'ruses,' and so on). Simultaneously, it is a seminal epithet, one that carries in itself the entire story of Odysseus.

Already in the 5th century BC there appeared in ancient Greece an explanation under which Odysseus *polýtropos* meant "one often changing his character," the "unstable," "unprincipled one." It was Antisthenes, the precursor of the philosophical school of the Cynics, that defended Odysseus with the opinion that this epithet denotes Odysseus' skill in using figures of speech, his capability of turning words, of troping.[11] Contemporary scholars, however, do not agree with any of these explanations. They have reached the consensus that, considering the immediate context in which this word occurs in Homer, Odysseus as *polýtropos* is one that has traveled much or experienced much. Odysseus is, then, a man that was led this way or that, to this or that experience, by many turns—or, as a well-suited English translation reads, a "man of many turns."

But of which turns? First of all, the turns of fate. Odysseus *polýtropos* is a man *that is much turned by fate*, that is tossed by fate from one danger to another, yet at the same time a man *that is capable of many turns by himself*—and this not only in words, but also in actions. In short, he is a man that has the agility to save himself from these dangers. In a difficult situation brought by fate, he is always capable of turning, turning round and finding a way out, such as from the Cyclops' cave. As *polýtropos* he is thus turnable in the passive as well as active sense: time and time again he is being turned by fate, and time and time again he is also capable of turning in a difficult situation to find a way out. Odysseus suffers the turns of fate, but in his suffering he is not paralyzed by its blows and does not become a passive figure, but, paradoxically, he acts. It is in this sort of passive-active duality of polytropy that the entire dynamics of Homer's story about him is conceived.

However, what helps Odysseus maintain his direction in the face of all those turns encountered during his wanderings after the end of the Trojan War is his yearning for return—and it is precisely with respect to yearning, this axis of Odysseus' figure, that the composition of the *Odyssey* was made. Homer does not follow all that happened to Odysseus during his wanderings in straight succession, but begins his poem when Odysseus has the majority of these wanderings behind him—and this is when his return is also most threatened: on the island of Ogygia by the nymph

11 See W. B. Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme. A Study in the Adaptability of a Traditional Hero*, Dallas, Texas: Spring Publications, 1992 (1st edition 1954), p. 99.

Calypso. It is on this island, which is the "navel of the sea" (*Od*. 1, 50), far from *oikuméne* (i.e., from the populated world), and far even for the gods, that Odysseus' yearning for return is strongest. His yearning is so very strong that Calypso can overcome it neither with her divine love, in which she enfolds him, nor with the promise of divine immortality if he stays with her. The composition of the *Odyssey*, then, exposes in the odyssey of the main character his yearning—and, inasmuch as this yearning is the moving force of return, also his return as a theme of the poem. Odysseus' stay at Ogygia, which is not the first in the chronological order of events, becomes the first in the order of narration. For if the course of narration matched the chronology of events, the stress would be transferred to what Odysseus experienced during his sea wanderings, and the theme of the poem would lean towards adventure.

This is, however, precisely what happens in Dante's poem, in canto 26 of *Inferno*. Not only does Dante replace the name Odysseus with its Latin form, Ulysses, which writers in the West then did up to the 20th century, but primarily makes Odysseus *change from a returner into an adventurer*. Dante's transfiguration of the figure of Odysseus is the greatest turn in its literary polytropy. His treatment of the figure of Odysseus is by far incomparable with Homer's in terms of scope, but it is comparable to it in terms of the influence it had on European literature (and even on reality, as I shall try to demonstrate).

W. B. Stanford, who was the first to study the reception of Odysseus in European literature from Antiquity up to the present, describes Dante's turning away from Homer's returner as follows: "In place of this centripetal, homeward-bound figure Dante substituted a personification of centrifugal force."[12] How does Dante carry out his basic transfiguring turn of Odysseus' figure?

He does so by connecting Odysseus' wish for knowledge with his death and thereby moves away from Homer, who mentions this wish, for example, in the episodes with Cyclops or the Sirens, but leaves out Odysseus' death (and Odysseus in the *Odyssey* remains the perfect survivor). Namely, Dante does not allow his Ulysses to sail homewards from Circe the witch, but to Heracles' pillars, which, standing in the Strait of Gibraltar, marked the border of the known world in Antiquity. From there Ulysses sets out *retro al sol*, "behind the sun" (*Inf.* 26, 117),[13] where, after a few days, when

12 W. B. Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme*, p. 181.

13 For the original I use Dante's *Tutte le opere*, edited by Luigi Blasucci, Florence: Sansoni editore, 1965.

only the moon and the stars were rising in the darkness, death befalls him together with his crew in front of the mountain of Purgatory on the south hemisphere of the earth.

If Homer's Odysseus is a centripetal figure, if his yearning is homeward-bound and his voyage is a voyage of return, Dante's Ulysses is, in contrast, a centrifugal figure, his wish tends away from home and his voyage is a voyage into the unknown: an adventure. This is something totally different from the turn of fate that comes upon Homer's Odysseus and, as such, is not in his power. Adventure is what Dante's Ulysses, in his ardent desire for the unknown, searches for, lets himself into, what he himself causes to come—a certain *ad-venire*, which he himself triggers. It is his turn. Odysseus' act, his sailing out of the known world, is thus not a re-action to the turn of fate, it is not a *re-turn* to this turn in his yearning for return. It is instead an act that precedes fate and by which fate is coined. The adventure of Dante's Ulysses goes absolutely the opposite way of that of the return of Homer's Odysseus, thus turning the figure of Odysseus by one hundred and eighty degrees.

However, Dante does not conceive the reversal of this figure from returner to adventurer in accordance with traditional Christian allegoresis. Like other figures in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Ulysses also speaks *sub specie mortis* after the *gran mar del' essere*, "big sea of existence" (*Par.* 1, 113), is behind him, and from the perspective of death, where outlived earthly life appears as a whole, when he names his sailing a "mad flight:" *dei remi facemmo ali al folle volo*, "out of oars we made wings for the mad fligh"' (*Inf.* 26, 125).

In these words of Ulysses, Dante metaphorically interweaves the poetic and philosophical traditions. He refers to the metaphor *remigium alarum*, "rowing of wings," used by Virgil in *Aeneid* 6, 19 for the flight of Daedalus, and at the same time to the flight of the soul in Neoplatonic and Platonizing Christian allegorisis, which interpreted the odyssey as well as the flight of Daedalus as an ascension or flight of the soul out of the world to the divine homeland. In his allegoresis of the myth of Daedalus, St. Ambrose uses precisely this metaphor, as does St. Augustine on several occasions, says John Freccero, one of the most prominent contemporary Dante scholars.[14] Yet the sailing of Ulysses is not the wise flight of a soul into hereafter, but a "mad flight:" the oars swinging through the air like

14 See John Freccero, *The Prologue Scene*, in: John Freccero, *Dante. The Poetics of Conversion*, edited by Rachel Jacoff, Cambridge, MA, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1986, pp. 16–17.

wings do carry him out of the world, but not beyond, merely into another world beyond the borders of the known, populated world. The mad flight is a flight into the-unknown-on-this-side. And when, at the sight of the mountain of Purgatory, Ulysses and his crew are already rejoicing at the thought that *another* world has appeared in their horizon, *the other* world opens up before them and swallows them up.

Such an Odysseus, Odysseus the adventurer, is an invention of Dante. Although Dante put him to death, he *has survived in European literature* in the works of Alfred Tennyson, Giovanni Pascoli, and many others. Even more: transfigured by Dante, Odysseus *has survived in the Christian culture of Europe without being Christianized*, that is, without being conceived as a figure in accordance with Christian allegoresis. Finally, he has survived not only in literature, but also in reality.

It was Dante's Ulysses that Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci kept before their eyes when they sailed where the sun was going down: according to the typological interpretation they knew from the Bible, they saw in him the *týpos* that fulfills itself in reality: the image of themselves.[15] Sailing from the known world into the sunset, Dante's Ulysses thus became a prototype of the discoverer, the seafarer, who happened at last to discover the new world behind the old one, the unknown-world-on-this-side. With Ulysses, as Bruno Nardi puts it, Dante "discovered the Discoverer."[16] Ulysses has survived as a discoverer of the brave new world.

Let me conclude now. And let me conclude in contemporaneousness.

In October 1990, NASA launched a spacecraft towards the sun. In November of last year, this spacecraft set out on its third voyage around the Sun's poles,[17] navigating in space weather and transmitting to Earth various data, in which it transforms unknown reality, reality outside the horizons of our world, of our manifold worlds—and this spacecraft carries the name "Ulysses."

15 See Pietro Boitani, *The Shadow of Ulysses. Figures of a Myth*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994, p. 44ff.

16 Bruno Nardi, *Dante e la cultura medievale*, Bari: Laterza, 1942, p. 99.

17 See http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/multimedia/audioclips/ulysses-20061117/ (1 May 2007).

Homer's Odysseus and Dante's Ulysses: The Survival of a Classical Myth

Summary

The paper discusses the encounter of Hellenism with Christianity in connection with a myth from the beginning of European literature—the myth of Odysseus. The discussion of this encounter is framed by the report of a conflict between poetic *mýthos* and philosophical *lógos*. This conflict surfaced in the 6th century BC, reached its peak with Plato, and came to an end in Hellenistic philosophy with a conciliation through the allegorical interpretation of a poetic myth that was also accepted by Christianity. It was thus a double, negative and positive, image of Odysseus that established itself in the Christian reception. The negative image was formed in accordance with the tradition of the Romans, who derived their descent from Troy, which was conquered through Odysseus's stratagem, whereas the positive image sprang from the referring of early Christian writers to Greek philosophy, particularly Neoplatonism, in which Odysseus becomes a returner to his heavenly homeland. Here, the text sketches a serious literal reading of the *Odyssey*: Homer's Odysseus is *polýtropos*, a "man of many turns," one that is much turned by fate, and at the same time one that is capable of many turns by himself; that is, who always finds the way out of a difficult situation and remains steady on his way home. This is followed by the exposition of the greatest transfiguration, the most formidable turn of the figure of Odysseus in his literary polytropy, which was accomplished by Dante in his *Divine Comedy*. Namely, Dante transforms a returner to his earthly homeland, who was then allegorically reinterpreted as a man returning to his heavenly homeland, into an adventurer. Dante's Ulysses does not react, as does Homer's Odysseus, to the turns of fate while yearning to return. Instead, in his wish for the unknown, he takes the initiative to act and sails across the border of the known world. Although his sailing ends with his death, he survives beyond the Christianizing interpretation: he becomes a *týpos* of the discoverer in Europe of the Renaissance, which in reality discovered the New World.

Homerjev Odisej in Dantejev Ulikses: preživetje nekega antičnega mita
Povzetek

Referat obravnava srečanje grštva s krščanstvom ob mitu z začetka evropske literature, mitu o Odiseju. Obravnavo tega srečanja okvirja s poročilom o sporu med pesniškim *mýthosom* in filozofskim *lógosom*, ki je izbruhnil v 6. st. pr. Kr., dosegel vrh pri Platonu in se v helenistični filozofiji iztekel v spravo prek alegorične razlage pesniškega mita, ki jo je prevzelo tudi krščanstvo. Tako se je v krščanski recepciji uveljavila dvojna, negativna in pozitivna podoba Odiseja. Negativna podoba se je oblikovala v skladu z izročilom Rimljanov, ki so svoje poreklo izpeljevali iz Troje, premagane z Odisejevo zvijačo, pozitivna pa je izšla iz navezovanja zgodnjih krščanskih piscev na grško filozofijo, predvsem na novoplatonizem, v katerem je Odisej postal povratnik v nebeško domovino. Tu tekst skicira resno dobesedno branje *Odiseje*: Homerjev Odisej je *polýtropos*, »mož mnogih obratov«, ta, ki ga mnogo obrača usoda, in hkrati ta, ki sam zmore mnoge obrate, se pravi, ki zmeraj najde izhod iz težkega položaja ter ostane neomajen na poti proti domu. Sledi še izpostavitev največje transfiguracije, najbolj neznanskega obrata Odisejevega lika v njegovi literarni politropiji, ki ga je izvršil Dante v *Božanski komediji*. Dante namreč povratnika v zemeljsko domovino, ki je bil potem alegorično prerazložen v povratnika v nebeško domovino, preobrazi v pustolovca. Dantejev Ulikses ne reagira, tako kot Homerjev Odisej, na obrate usode v hrepenenju po vrnitvi, ampak v želji po neznanem sam prevzame pobudo za dejanje in odpluje čez mejo znanega sveta. In čeprav se njegova plovba konča s smrtjo, preživi onstran kristijanizirajoče prerazlage: postane *týpos* odkritelja v renesančni Evropi, ki je dejansko odkrila novi svet.

Marko Marinčič

A Cross over the Ruin of Troy: Vergil and St. Augustine in Prešeren's *The Baptism on the Savica*

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Speaking about a Slovenian literary classic in an international context entails two conflicting risks. Both arise from the fact that, according to an old saying, *Slavica non leguntur*. Most English-speaking classical scholars would probably classify my paper, with a grumble, in the varia section of "Reception of Vergil in other languages." On the other hand, to the domestic audience my didactic efforts will probably sound like an over-enthusiastic exercise in tourist promotion, not only because the setting of the poem I discuss is at a traditional tourist destination, but above all because France Prešeren (1800–1849)[1] was canonized as a Slovenian national poet before the end of the 19th century, and parts of his only epic poem entitled *The Baptism on the Savica* are still learned by heart in primary schools.

Due to his semiofficial status as a national hero, the popular perception of Prešeren in Slovenia oscillates between patriotic pathos and irreverent parody.[2] To be sure, the status of Prešeren as an icon of national culture is partly justified by his own cultural activism in the wake of the March Revolution, but the real object of collective identification referred to above is not so much the poet as a historical person but his literary production; that is, a relatively small corpus of poetry that laid the foundation of elite literature in Slovene. It is precisely its character as highly sophisticated, classicizing literature that makes the poetry of Prešeren ambivalently open to appropriation within various political and ideological contexts ranging from leftist-liberal and Marxist to militantly Catholic.

1 The English translation used here is by Cooper & Priestly 1999; a fundamental monograph on Prešeren is available in German (Paternu 1994).

2 As is shown by Juvan 1999 in his groundbreaking work on the reception of Prešeren.

It is unnecessary to remark that such politically biased use of Prešeren is of great disservice not only to the reading experience of his poetry as an outstanding exemplar of European Romanticism, but also to the understanding of his place in European literary and cultural history. Yet the alternative that seems to suggest itself, to read Prešeren's poetry from a politically disinterested transnational perspective, is hardly free from ideological bias either, considering that the writer in question *was* deeply concerned with the issue of political and religious identity of his nation and that, in the cultural context of his time, the very gesture of espousing classical authors of European literature such as Vergil, Horace, Ovid, Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, and Tasso as models for poetic works composed in a (still) semi-literary language can only be understood as an ostentatious expression of national pride. Rather than offering an ideologically detached interpretive point of view, the rich intertextual framework of an epic poem like *The Baptism on the Savica* in Classical and Italian literature[3] can be expected to shed further light on its contemporary and modern reception in various politically relevant contexts.

I would like to stress at the outset that my paper is not intended as an interpretive contribution to the rich body of literature on *The Baptism on the Savica*. I focus on Vergil's *Aeneid* as a model, and on one particular aspect of the relationship between the two poems. The aspect that concerns me is the conflicting status of Vergil's poem as a "bible" of (classical) paganism and a founding text of western Christianity understood as a political entity.[4]

Let me start with a schematic exposition of the argument.

1. *The Baptism on the Savica*, a verse narrative consisting of 501 lines, describes the defeat and conversion of the last Slavic pagan warrior in Carniola (broadly corresponding to central Slovenia).

2. The *Aeneid* is an epic written by a pagan poet that was believed to be an early (western) prophet of Christ;[5] the story of Aeneas, a refugee from Troy and the forefather of the Roman kings, has often been understood as a justificative prefiguration of (Roman-Catholic) western hegemony in the modern world (most notably by T. S. Eliot and Theodor Haecker). At the same time, the personal experience of Aeneas (who, after the destruction of his native city, the loss of his first wife, and the separation from

3 Calvi 1958; Cooper 1976; Kos 1991, 128–60; Fišer 2003; Zaplotnik 2004.

4 Cf. Snoj 2005.

5 On the Christian reception of Vergil, see Benko 1980; Comparetti 1955 (1872); Courcelle 1984.

the Carthaginian queen Dido, gradually buries his Trojan past and takes on a new, western identity) has often been interpreted as a latent personal tragedy; an implicit tension between Aeneas' public mission and his individual experience has always been felt by readers of the *Aeneid*, although there are divergent views as to the consequences this tension might have for understanding the whole.[6] However, it will be shown that the "western Christian" reading of the poem is not immune to the subversive potential of Aeneas' self-sacrificing (Stoic?) resignation.

3. The *Aeneid* (especially Book 2) as one of the main models for Prešeren's poem can be used as a key to understanding some of the ideological tensions that have accompanied the reception of *The Baptism on the Savica* since its first publication in 1836. I suggest that the poem's ambivalent attitude toward Slavic paganism reproduces the ambivalence inherent in Vergil's representation of Aeneas' Trojan past; in other words, the poem invites us to contemplate the conflicted encounter between ancient Slavic paganism and medieval Christianity in the mirror of Vergil's Troy.

The story of *The Baptism on the Savica* is a fictional legend set in a historical context. Its main subject is the conversion of Črtomir, the commander of the last pagan army in Carniola, who had resisted a six-month siege by the Christian Valjhun (Volkun) at a fortress called *Ajdovski gradec* ('Pagan castle') near Lake Bohinj at the foot of the Julian Alps. In contrast to all historical sources, Prešeren depicts Valjhun as a brutal conqueror. Under the pressure of famine, Črtomir eventually urges his companions to break out during the night. As the only survivor, disillusioned, Črtomir is intent on committing suicide on the shore of Lake Bohinj on the model of the Roman republican Cato the Younger, but is prevented by the memory of his fiancée Bogomila, who, before the outbreak of war, had guarded the temple of Živa, the Slavic Venus, on the small island in Lake Bled (a fictional temple imagined at the site of today's Church of the Assumption of Mary). Suddenly a fisherman appears and takes Črtomir to the waterfall at the source of the lake, with the promise to bring Bogomila to meet him the next day. In the morning, the fisherman arrives with a Christian priest, accompanied by Bogomila, who reports her conversion to Črtomir and, promising him an eternal union in heaven, invites him to adopt the new faith. Črtomir resignedly accepts baptism at the waterfall and departs for Aquileia to become a Christian missionary.

At least at first sight, there is a strange contradiction about the fact that the precursor of the Slovene national revolution should celebrate the violent

6 For a critical overview, see Schmidt 2001; cf. Martindale 1984.

Christianization of the Carniolan Slavs by the Bavarian army. There is a very straightforward explanation for this. The issue of nationality certainly did matter to Prešeren; it is, however, not the main concern of the poem. The war between Valjhun and Črtomir is described primarily as a civil conflict between the newly Christianized Slavs and a small pagan enclave,[7] a conflict between two incompatible forms of religious identity, and this is also the main source of the poem's openness to ideological investment up to the present day.

As an epic narrative dealing with a historical religious conflict and as a story of love denied, the poem is in fact susceptible to both "liberal" and "Catholic" interpretations, and it can be shown that every single aspect of this ideological ambiguity finds a direct correspondence in the modern readings of Vergil's *Aeneid*.[8] The predominantly pro-Christian stance of the epic narrator is underpinned by the existential failure of Črtomir as a pagan leader and as a lover; *everything* in the text suggests that Črtomir is ready to accept the baptism only after his pagan mission had failed (and he actually accepts it after an earthly union with Bogomila had become impossible), but there is *nothing* to suggest a negative attitude towards the new religion; the dedicatory sonnet to Matija Čop admittedly conveys an overtly pessimistic message, but even here the lyric subject sets the example of Bogomila *against* his own and Črtomir's existential failure.

It is very unfortunate that the *conflict*, which is in fact the real subject of the poem and a reflection of a real historical trauma, should be reduced to the question of the author's religious sincerity. In my view, this is disputable on both theoretical and practical grounds. Nevertheless, it should be admitted that Prešeren is largely responsible for the flourishing of biographical speculation regarding the dubious conversion of a fictitious epic character.

In a letter addressed to František Ladislav Čelakovský, a Czech friend of liberal views that had recently translated St. Augustine's *The City of God*, Prešeren excuses his "recent literary product" as a "pure metrical exercise" written with the only aim to "please the clergy." To this the author adds: "as a translator of Saint Augustine, you will probably not judge me worthy of being damned just because of the tendency of a few strophes."[9]

7 Kos 2002, 135–138.

8 See my forthcoming article (Marinčič 2008).

9 Letter to F. L. Čelakovský (22th August 1836): "Mein neuestes Produkt: Kerst per Savici, das beiläufig Ende März erschienen ist, bitte ich als eine metrische Aufgabe zu beurteilen, mit deren Lösung der Zweck in Verbindung stand, mir die Gunst der Geistlichkeit zu erwerben. Der Übersetzer des heiligen Augustinus wird hoffentlich

The irony probably refers to the fact that Čelakovský is not entirely innocent in the matter of religious hypocrisy. However, there is a further aspect worth noting. As Janko Kos has convincingly argued, the reference to St. Augustine conveys a hidden allusion to the Jansenists, who based their doctrine of predestination upon St. Augustine and would probably not approve of the creed professed by Bogomila, a creed based on the idea of universal salvation.[10]

Following this line of thought, I suggest that the mention of St. Augustine may allude more specifically to the opening chapters of *De civitate Dei contra paganos*.

In the preface to this work, St. Augustine starts his apology of the Christians that were blamed for the sack of Rome by the Goths in 410 by linking the Earthly City to the imperialist ideology of Vergil's *Aeneid* as a presumptuous contrafacture of the word of God:

> Nam scio quibus viribus opus sit, ut persuadeatur superbis quanta sit virtus humilitatis, qua fit ut omnia terrena cacumina temporali mobilitate nutantia, non humano usurpata fastu, sed divina gratia donata celsitudo transcendat. Rex enim et conditor civitatis huius, de qua loqui instituimus, in Scriptura populi sui sententiam divinae legis aperuit, qua dictum est: Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam. Hoc vero, quod Dei est, superbae quoque animae spiritus inflatus adfectat amatque sibi in laudibus dici:
>
> *Parcere subiectis et debellare superbos.*
>
> Unde etiam de terrena civitate, quae cum dominari adpetit, etsi populi serviant, ipsa ei dominandi libido dominatur, non est praetereundum silentio . . .
>
> (August. *C. D.* 1, praef.; cf. Verg. *Aen.* 6, 853)

> I know how great is the effort needed to convince the proud of the power and excellence of humility, an excellence which makes it soar above all the summits of this world, which sway in their temporal instability, overtopping them all with an eminence not arrogated by human pride, but granted by divine grace. For the King and Founder of this City which is our subject has revealed in the Scripture of his

über die Tendenz der wenigen Strophen kein Verdammungsurteil fällen. Die geistlichen Herren waren diesmal mit mir zufrieden, und wollen mir auch meine vorigen Sünden vergeben; übrigens wäre es mir lieber, wenn sie meine Poesien kaufen, als loben würden."

10 Kos 2002, 139–147.

> people this statement of divine Law, "God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble." This is God's prerogative; but man's arrogant spirit in its swelling pride has claimed it as its own, and delights to hear this verse quoted in its own praise: "To spare the conquered, and beat down the proud." [Verg. *Aen.* 6, 853]
> Therefore I cannot refrain from speaking about the city of this world, a city which aims at dominion, which holds nations in enslavement, but is itself dominated by that very lust of domination.
> (Translated by H. Bettenson)

The argument of the following sections (especially two and three) can be summarized as follows:

1. It is contrary to the usage of war that the victors should spare the vanquished for the sake of their gods.

2. It was not the pagan gods that saved the Romans but rather it was the Romans that preserved their gods until the idols proved powerless. Again, St. Augustine's main example is from the *Aeneid*: Aeneas and the Trojans were falsely convinced that the statue of Pallas Athena, the "Palladium," protected their city from ruin, whereas it was actually *themselves* that protected the powerless idol:

> Tot bella gesta conscripta sunt vel ante conditam Romam vel ab eius exortu et imperio: legant et proferant sic aut ab alienigenis aliquam captam esse civitatem, ut hostes, qui ceperant, parcerent eis, quos ad deorum suorum templa confugisse compererant, aut aliquem ducem barbarorum praecepisse, ut irrupto oppido nullus feriretur, qui in illo vel illo templo fuisset inventus. Nonne vidit Aeneas Priamum per aras
>
> *sanguine foedantem quos ipse sacraverat ignes*?
>
> nonne Diomedes et Ulixes caesis summae custodibus arcis
>
> *Corripuere sacram effigiem manibusque cruentis*
> *Virgineas ausi divae contingere vittas*?
>
> Nec tamen quod sequitur verum est:
>
> *Ex illo fluere ac retro sublapsa referri*
> *Spes Danaum.*
>
> Postea quippe vicerunt, postea Troiam ferro ignibusque delerunt, postea confugientem ad aras Priamum obtruncaverunt. **Nec ideo Troia periit, quia Minervam perdidit.** Quid enim prius ipsa Minerva perdiderat, ut periret? An forte custodes suos? Hoc sane verum est; illis quippe interemptis potuit auferri. Neque enim homines a

> simulacro, sed simulacrum ab hominibus servabatur. Quo modo ergo colebatur, ut patriam custodiret et cives, quae suos non valuit custodire custodes?
>
> (1, 2–3)

> We have records of many wars, both before the foundation of Rome and after its rise to power. Let our enemies read their history, and then produce instances of the capture of any city by foreign enemies when those enemies spared any whom they found taking refuge in the temples of their gods. Let them quote any barbarian general who gave instructions, at the storming of the town, that no one should be treated with violence who was discovered in this temple or that. Aeneas saw Priam at the altar,
>
> *polluting with his blood*
> *The fire which he had consecrated.*
>
> And Diomedes and Ulysses
>
> *Slew all the warders of the citadel*
> *And snatched with bloody hands the sacred image;*
> *Nor shrank to touch the chaplets virginal*
> *Of the dread goddess* [i.e., the Palladium, the statue of Minerva].
>
> And there is no truth in the statement that comes after,
>
> *The Grecian hopes then failed, and ebbed away.*
>
> For what in fact followed was the Greek victory, the destruction of Troy by fire and sword, the slaughter of Priam at the altar.
> **And it was not because Troy lost Minerva that Troy perished.** What loss did Minerva herself first incur, that led to her own disappearance? Was it, perhaps, the loss of her guards? There can be no doubt that their death made her removal possible – the image did not preserve the men: the men were preserving the image. Why then did they worship her, to secure her protection for their country and its citizens? She could not guard her own keepers.
>
> (Translated by H. Bettenson)

The reasoning of Črtomir after his defeat is *exactly* in line with St. Augustine's apologetic argument. After the defeat of his army, the pagan warrior suddenly understands that the idols are fictions sprung from the minds of their worshippers. He knows this *because he witnessed and experienced the defeat of the pagan gods:*

> Vem, da malike, in njih službo glave
> služabnikov njih so na svet rodile,

v njih le spoštval očetov sem postave,
a zdaj **ovrgle** so jih vojske sile.

I know that idols and their slaves adept
Imagined are by those within their fief;
'T was for my fathers' sake those laws I kept,
Which now by force of arms have come to grief.
(Translated by Cooper & Priestly)

The literal translation would be "the gods have been *refuted* by the force of arms;" 'refuted' (*ovrgle*) is a term suggesting doctrinal polemic; the very idea that the idols are fictions sprung from the minds of their worshippers is a typical case of pagan rationalism manipulated by Christian apologists to serve their polemical purposes, and the character of Črtomir's argumentation as a curious mixture of political pragmatism and juridical formalism is a further element of contact with Christian apologetics.[11]

Even more importantly, Prešeren seems to be following St. Augustine in using Vergil's Troy as the classical prototype of paganism. As has been noted by a number of modern interpreters, the pagan castle abandoned by Črtomir and his group is represented as a Slavic counterpart to Aeneas' Troy.[12] What has curiously escaped notice is the fact that Črtomir is said to be fighting for Živa, the Slavic Venus, and Aeneas is the son of Venus. Even the Palladium, the cult statue of Pallas Athena that guaranteed the persistence of the Trojan city, finds an immediate correspondence in the statue of Živa that was guarded by Bogomila before her conversion to Christianity.

The result of the Trojan War, according to St. Augustine, demonstrated the powerlessness of the Trojan talisman. The Palladium proved to be ineffective; so did the statue of Živa, so did the chthonic gods, "Črti," "The Hating Ones," whom Črtomir bears in his name (< *črtiti* 'to hate'). Črtomir's interpretation of the defeat is "Augustinian;" it is formalistic in the best tradition of early Christian apologetics. Bogomila, on the other hand, adds a more spiritual aspect to the conflict between God and the gods. As a converted priestess of the Slavic Venus, she urges the last pagan to abandon the heathen dualism of love and hate, reflected in the complementary cults of Živa and the hating gods, in favor of the one God of love and peace:

Povedat' moram ti, de sem kristjana,
malikov zapustila vero krivo,

11 See the contribution by Aleš Maver in this volume.

12 Kos 1991, 150–152; Kastelic 2000, 205–208.

. . .
soseska je Marije službi vdana
v dnu jezera utopila bóg'njo Živo.
Kako prišla k resnice sem poglédi,
moj Črtomir! v besedah kratkih zvédi: . . .

Know now that I accept the Christian law,
Have pledged the faith of idols to disown,
. . .
And all of us, now owing Mary awe,
The goddess Živa in the lake have thrown.
And how I found the path, O Črtomir,
And saw the truth, hear now this message clear: . . .
(Translated by Cooper & Priestly)

In the new religious context, Živa is supplanted by the Virgin Mary. I believe this is a crucial element in Prešeren's dialogue with Classical and Christian antiquity, a crossing point at which Vergil and St. Augustine seem to converge in suggesting the difficulty of a conciliation between eastern/pagan and Roman/Christian identities.

Let us now take a closer look at the dramatic scene in which Črtomir, who has been waiting for Bogomila near the waterfall, suddenly notices a Christian priest approaching together with the fisherman. His immediate reaction is to reach for his sword, but at that moment Bogomila appears:

Zbudi ga 'z misel teh mož govorica,
ki bližajo se z blagam obloženi,
spozna koj ribiča poštene lica;
neznan mož pride po stezi zeleni;
talar in štola, znamenja poklica,
povesta mu, de služi Nazareni.
Po meč bi desna se bila stegnila,
v ti priči se prikaže Bogomila.

With treasure laden sounds of men apace
Approaching, warn him he is not alone.
At once he sees the fisherman's kind face
But with him on the path a man unknown,
By signs of faith—the robes that him encase
That he's the Nazarean's priest is shown.
At once his hand down to his sword-hilt nears
But Bogomila thereupon appears.
(Translated by Cooper & Priestly)

The similarity between this scene and Aeneas' encounter with Venus in *Aeneid* 2 has been noted by Bartolomeo Calvi,[13] who, however, confined his attention to the overall structural correspondence. I think the analogy is worth pursuing, the appearance of Venus in *Aeneid* 2 being a critical moment not only from the point of view of dramaturgy but also in terms of Aeneas' ethnic and religious self-definition.

All the gods except Venus have abandoned the Trojan city; the Greeks have captured the citadel, and fire rages through the city. Aeneas, fleeing through the streets, suddenly notices Helen in the vestibule of a temple. In a burst of anger, he draws his sword and rushes at the woman to kill her, but suddenly his mother Venus appears and dispels the cloud of ignorance surrounding his head:

> talia iactabam et furiata mente ferebar,
> cum mihi se, non ante oculis tam clara, uidendam
> obtulit et pura per noctem in luce refulsit
> alma parens, confessa deam qualisque uideri
> caelicolis et quanta solet, dextraque prehensum
> continuit roseoque haec insuper addidit ore:
> **"nate, quis indomitas tantus dolor excitat iras?**
> **quid furis? aut quonam nostri tibi cura recessit?**
> . . ."
> non tibi Tyndaridis facies inuisa Lacaenae
> culpatusue Paris, **diuum inclementia, diuum**
> has euertit opes sternitque a culmine Troiam.
> aspice (namque omnem, **quae nunc obducta tuenti**
> **mortalis hebetat uisus tibi et umida circum**
> **caligat, nubem eripiam**; tu ne qua parentis
> iussa time neu praeceptis parere recusa)
> . . .
> iam summas arces Tritonia, respice, **Pallas**
> insedit nimbo effulgens et Gorgone saeua.
> (Verg. *Aen.* 2, 588–595, 601–607, 615–616)

> As I ran towards her ranting and raving, my loving mother suddenly appeared before my eyes. I had never before seen her so clearly, shining in perfect radiance through the darkness of the night. She revealed herself as a goddess as the gods in heaven see her, in all her majesty of form and stature. As she caught my right hand and held me back, she opened her rosy lips and spoke to me —**"O my**

13 Calvi 1958, 181–184.

> **son, what bitterness can have been enough to stir this wild anger in you? Why this raging passion? Where is all the love you used to have for me? . . .**
> It is not the hated beauty of the woman, the daughter of Tyndareus, that is overthrowing all this wealth and laying the topmost towers of Troy, nor is it Paris although you all blame him, **it is the gods, the cruelty of the gods**. Look, for I shall tear away from all around you **the dank cloud that veils your eyes and dulls your mortal vision**. You are my son, do not be afraid to do what I command you, and do not disobey me . . .
> . . .
> Now look behind you, Tritonian **Pallas** is already sitting on top of your citadel shining out of the cloud with her terrible Gorgon . . ."
> (Translated by D. West)

Like Venus, Bogomila wakes the hero up from his sleep-like state of error and ignorance:

> **Iz spanja svoj'ga, Črtomir! se zbudi,**
> **slovo daj svoji strašni, dolgi zmoti,**
> po potih se noči temné ne trudi,
> ne stavi v bran delj božji se dobroti.
>
> **O Črtomir, from out your sleep awake,**
> **To long-held grievous faults now bid farewell;**
> Choose not the night-time's sombre paths to take,
> No longer strive God's mercy to repel.
> (Translated by Cooper & Priestly)

Both Aeneas and his Slavic counterpart are blinded by hatred and delusionally convinced that war is continuing. Like Aeneas, who blames Helen for the ruin of his native city, Črtomir grabs his sword believing that the Christian priest represents the militant Christianity of Valjhun. In both works, the Venus-character—the Roman goddess of love/the ex-priestess of Živa and the worshipper of Virgin Mary—intervenes at the critical moment and prevents the angry warrior from taking revenge on his supposed enemy, Helen in the one case, the Christian minister in the other. Given the structural correspondence, it should not come as a surprise that the Christian priest turns out to be a former Druid, a convert like Bogomila and a preacher of a gospel of love. When Črtomir objects to Bogomila's account of Christianity as a religion of peace and universal love by referring to the violence of Valjhun, the priest denounces the victor as a false Christian. The true version of Christianity is the pacifist religion professed

by the priestess of Živa and the Druid; the doctrinal unorthodoxy of their creed is an element of continuity between paganism and Christianity: Venus and Helen, Bogomila and the Druid seem to form a single syncretistic alliance of love.

A further aspect of Vergilian intertextuality is the aspect of geopolitical identity. Like Aeneas, Črtomir is enlightened on the true *direction* of his mission: like his Trojan predecessor, he must forget the eastern fortress and travel westwards. The journey to Aquileia reproduces in miniature the journey of Aeneas. In accordance with traditional Christian allegoresis of the *Aeneid*, the east is pagan and the west is Christian. The destruction of the pagan castle implies a new, western orientation: the Carniolan pagans that, until then, had considered themselves as belonging to the east, are absorbed into Latin Christianity.

So far, the Vergilian model, interpreted through a Christian lens, seems to suggest uncompromising adherence to western Christianity. At the same time, however, Vergil's Troy as a model implies a nostalgic attitude towards the pagan past. Črtomir does not necessarily share Bogomila's idealistic view of the new faith; he speaks the formal language of the Latin Church Fathers, but his personal experience is a genuinely romantic story of hopes unfulfilled and love denied: after marriage with the priestess of Venus became impossible, he is left with the (very unorthodox, perhaps delusive) hope of a posthumous spiritual union with a chaste worshipper of the Virgin Mary. In this, as in other respects, he is a Slavic replica of the self-sacrificing "Stoic" hero[14] Aeneas, who is constrained by fate to forget Troy, his first wife Creusa, and his Carthaginian mistress Dido in order to fulfill his historical mission, embodied in the silent, blushing virgin Lavinia.

To read the *Aeneid* as a story of frustrated love is not a recent interpretative whim. A "romantically" inclined reader would always tend to read the poem as a story of exile, violence, and erotic unfulfillment. Even among the early Christian readers, there was no agreement about how to approach the sacred book of Roman paganism. To some of them, Vergil was above all a western prophet of Christ; St. Augustine, on the other hand, reproaches himself for having shed empty tears over the pyre of Dido in his youth (*Conf.* 1, 13, 20); moreover, in St. Augustine's autobiographical account, *Aeneid* 4 as reading matter (*Conf.* 1, 13, 20–22) finds a direct correspondence in the writer's own sexual aberrations during his youthful days in Carthage

14 On the alleged Stoicism of Aeneas, see Bowra 1933/4 and Edwards 1960. Cf. Žižek 1996, 119–22, for a Lacanian reading of the *Baptism on the Savica* as a typical case of a double, self-relating sacrifice (*Versagung*).

(*veni Carthaginem, et circumstrepebat me undique sartago flagitiosorum amorum*, 3.1.1). Yet there are clear signs that St. Augustine was not averse to the Christian appropriation of Aeneas as a proto-saint that gradually overcomes his sinful (Trojan, Carthaginian, etc.) past: not only does St. Augustine's Carthage mirror Aeneas' African episode; his departure to Italy is also clearly designed to recall a crucial moment in Aeneas' journey:[15] it is Vergil that symbolizes the sinful "pagan" past, and it is (a Christianized) Vergil that can mediate the liberation from that past.

Can *The Baptism on the Savica* then be read as an "Augustinian" *Aeneid*?

In a dedicatory sonnet addressed to his intellectual mentor Matija Čop, Prešeren suggests an autobiographical reading of his "Slavic Aeneid" by setting his own unhappy destiny in parallel with that of his epic hero:

. . .
Minljivost sladkih zvez na svet' oznani,
kak kratko je veselih dni število,
de srečen je le tá, kdor z Bogomilo
up sreče únstran groba v prsih hrani.

Pokopal misli visokoletéče,
željá nespolnjenih sem bolečine,
ko Črtomír ves up na zemlji sreče;

dan jasni, dan oblačni v noči mine,
srcé veselo, in bolnó, trpeče
vpokój'le bodo groba globočine.

. . .
Tell all the world sweet ties soon meet their end,
How few our days of happiness appear,
That he, like Bogomila, may find cheer
But only if his hopes the grave transcend.

My highest-flying thoughts have I inhumed,
With all the pain of wishes unfulfilled,
Like Črtomir's, all hopes in earth entombed;

Days bright and dull are both to night distilled,
And hearts to suffer joy and sadness doomed
Will all in deepest grave at last be stilled.
(Translated by Cooper & Priestly)

15 St. Augustine's farewell from Monica is designed to recall Aeneas' farewell from Dido (Ziolkowski 1995); on St. Augustine and Vergil, see also MacCormack 1998.

Rather than an Augustinian conversion, these gloomy final lines seem to suggest a submissive attitude that is perhaps not too far from the alleged Stoicism of Vergil's Aeneas. The prevailing skepticism regarding the sincerity of Črtomir's (or, for that matter, the author's) Christian commitment replicates very closely our modern interest in the personal drama of Aeneas. As far as Vergil is concerned, such romantic intuitions are easily liable to anachronism. In an authentically Romantic context, doubt is less easily dispelled.

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A Cross over the Ruin of Troy: Vergil and St. Augustine in Prešeren's *The Baptism on the Savica*

Summary

The paper investigates the classical background of the short epic poem *The Baptism on the Savica* by the Slovene Romantic poet France Prešeren (1800–1849), a semi-fictional verse narrative describing the defeat and conversion of the last Slavic pagan warrior in Carniola (broadly corresponding to central Slovenia). It is argued that Vergil's *Aeneid* (especially Book 2) as one of the main models for Prešeren's poem can be used as a key to understanding the ideological tensions that have accompanied the reception of *The Baptism on the Savica* since its first publication in 1836. The poem's ambivalent attitude toward Slavic paganism reproduces the ambivalence inherent in Vergil's representation of Aeneas' Trojan past and the ambivalent attitude of the early Christians toward the *Aeneid* as the "bible" of Roman paganism: the defeat of the pagan gods and main hero's conversion recall St. Augustine's apologetic use of the *Aeneid* in *De civitate Dei* 1., 1–3 and the Christian allegoresis of Vergil's epic in the *Confessions;* the frustrated love-story, on the other hand, mirrors Romantic (and modern pessimistic) readings of Vergil's poem.

Križ nad trojansko ruševino: Vergilij in sv. Avguštin v Prešernovem *Krstu pri Savici*

Povzetek

Članek je posvečen klasičnim latinskim zgledom Prešernovega *Krsta pri Savici*. Pokazati skuša, da Vergilijeva *Eneida* (zlasti drugi spev) kot eden izmed osrednjih zgledov Prešernove pesnitve lahko rabi kot ključ za razumevanje ideoloških dilem, ki so spremljale njeno recepcijo od prve objave leta 1836. Ambivalentni odnos do slovanskega poganstva v *Krstu pri Savici* se ujema z dvoznačnim prikazom Enejeve trojanske preteklosti v Vergilijevi *Eneidi* in z dvoznačnim odnosom antičnih kristjanov do *Eneide* kot »biblije« rimskega poganstva. Upodobitev poraza poganskih božanstev in spreobrnitve glavnega junaka neposredno spominja na Avguštinovo krščansko apologetiko v interpretaciji *Eneide* (*Božja država* 1, 1-3) in na krščansko alegorezo *Eneide* v *Izpovedih*, prikrita téma ljubezenske frustracije pa zrcali romantična (in sodobna pesimistična) branja Vergilijeve pesnitve.

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Antiquity and Christianity in Elizabethan Drama: Representations of Death

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The intertwined presence of classical and Christian heritage permeates Elizabethan literature in relation to various motifs and ideas. However, the symbolically mediated understanding of death is an area in which both conflicts and conciliations between Antiquity and Christianity are at their most dynamic. The Elizabethan playwrights drew their notions and images of death and the afterlife from both ancient Greek and Roman mythology as well as from Christian eschatology. Due to the intense and often unresolved tensions between Catholicism and Anglican Protestantism in Elizabethan England, representations of death and the afterlife in drama increased in complexity. In order to show discontinuity in the continuity—or, *vice versa*, continuity in the discontinuity—between Antiquity and Christianity, this paper focuses on the images and the understanding of death and the afterlife in three major Elizabethan plays: Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, and William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* is a play known for its composition, which evokes concentric circles and enables degrees of dramatic irony. It is the least challenging to interpret among the three plays, but offers a good example of mixed influence in terms of its religious, mythological, and literary elements. The overall frame, the widest of the concentric circles of the action, presents two characters: the Ghost of Andrea, a Spanish nobleman that was killed in battle by Balthazar, the Portuguese Viceroy's son, and Revenge, an allegorical figure and attendant to the queen-goddess of the ancient underworld, Proserpine, the wife of Pluto. The goddess enables Don Andrea to witness the revenge of his own death. However, as in every revenge tragedy, it does not come at once and in a straightforward manner,

but through a devious network of events. The revenge is executed at the price of many deaths and a multifold tragedy, whose hero is the Spanish courtier and judge Hieronimo, father of Don Andrea's friend Horatio, who, after Andrea's death, falls in love with Andrea's beloved lady Bellimperia, and is killed, soon afterwards, by his own and Andrea's adversaries, Bellimperia's brother and the Portuguese prince.

Kyd's image of the underworld is pre-Christian, although he introduces Christian references at times. Ancient mythology allows him a certain freedom in treating providence. There is also the idea of a Destiny that must be fulfilled, and Revenge seems to be both attendant to the gods of the underworld and an agent of Destiny.[1] Although this play can be read as a drama of the absurd *avant la lettre*, which stages senseless human endeavors to attain justice in the world marked by an irrevocable absence of God, or gods, in the way Jan Kott read *King Lear*, an expectation of the active intervention of the divine is clearly expressed and asks for interpretation. "One way of solving our problem," says Philip Edwards, "would be to say that for the purposes of this play Kyd is a Manichee. Revenge is of the pagan nether-world, Justice is of the supernal Christian heaven."[2] The references to both religious conceptions are equally present, almost without being differentiated. Hieronimo says:

> Till we do gain that Proserpine may grant
> Revenge on them that murdered my son
> (ST 3, 13, 120–121)[3]

and, a bit further,

> . . . heaven applies our drift,
> And all the saints do sit soliciting
> For vengeance on those cursed murderers.
> (4, 1, 32–34)[4]

He wants to put his revenge in the hands of the divine both ways and does not want to see himself as the one that brings revenge. At the same time, irony plays a part in the fact that he is a judge, one that helps execute justice upon villains, while he remains frustrated in his own expectations

1 Philip Edwards, *Thomas Kyd and Early Elizabethan Tragedy*, edited by Ian Scott-Kilvert, Longman Group Ltd., Harlow, Essex 1977 ([1]1966), p. 34.

2 Ibid., p. 35.

3 Thomas Kyd, "The Spanish Tragedy," in: *Five Elizabethan Tragedies*, edited by A. K. McIlwraith, Oxford University Press, London, Oxford, and New York 1971, p. 199.

4 Ibid., p. 209.

of divine justice. He is shown to be aware of the biblical *Vindicta mihi* ("Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord") by saying that "mortal men may not appoint their time" (3, 13, 1–5).[5] However, as the plot develops, he begins to understand his own self as a tool of divine agency, by identification of his own will with the will of heaven. He carries out an elaborate vengeance, which is at the same time subtly sophisticated and sordidly savage: with the help of Bellimperia, Hieronimo stages a play in which his enemies, persuaded to take part in the acting of the play, are *really* killed. His own ceremonial suicide is planned, but prevented, which causes even more deaths than anticipated, including, finally, his own.

Can the Christian God bring all this about? Nothing is attributed to the Devil. "Suppose we accept," says Edwards, "that Kyd has given us a neutral pagan metaphor for the government of the universe with occasional lapses into Christian imagery."[6] Still, it is not clear whether Hieronimo was right to assume the support of heaven. There is no explicit answer, no explicit moral, and nothing to point to either Christian approval or disapproval.

The play obviously presents the tragic human experience faced with the epistemological void. Seneca's tragic patterns, along with the pagan pantheon and accompanying mythology, come to the Elizabethan dramatist as one way to conceptualize the relations of good and evil in the world. The Christian conception seems to be taken for granted, as something implicit, while at the same time deeply questioned and implying an urgent need for a convincing theodicy.

Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* is a tragedy with a characteristic irreconcilable conflict within a single soul, and with contradictory tensions derived from it, but wrapped in the form and structure of a Christian, pre-Elizabethan, morality play. This play is not known for its composition—just the opposite. In spite of Goethe's famous observation reported by Henry Crab Robinson, "How greatly is it all planned!,"[7] the play is impressive in its beginning and its end, both staged in the hero's study, and consisting of Faustus' elaborate monologues in powerful blank verse; however, by most standards, the middle sections of the play lapse into a disappointing farce, at times trivial, absurd, and silly. "We are unfortunate," says Helen Gardner, "in possessing Marlowe's greatest play only in an obviously mu-

5 Ibid., p. 195.

6 *Thomas Kyd and Early Elizabethan Tragedy*, p. 39.

7 *Marlowe's* Doctor Faustus. *A Selection of Critical Essays*, edited by John Jump, Casebook Series, Macmillan, London 1969, p. 29.

tilated form," and it is so.[8] However, the encounter with the "immanent, if not imminent" prospect of death appears in the first two acts (1, 1; 1, 3; 2, 1). In the closing monologue of the play, death is as imminent as can be; Faustus is dying and about to begin paying his debt to the devil. These are the sections of interest.

The presence of the classical motifs related to death, beauty, knowledge, curiosity, and enjoyment of life's pleasures within a Christian (to be more precise, Protestant, Anglican, Calvinist) context of understanding life, and, consequently, death and damnation, can be analyzed at two levels. One could first see them as a part of rhetorical adornment originating from Marlowe's classical education; as an indispensable literary device of any Renaissance, or any Elizabethan, poet. Classical motifs were living metaphors: Elysium is a metaphor, just as Helen of Troy, or Alexander the Great, or Homer, or Ovid's verse, all mentioned, invoked, or present in Marlowe's play. The second level should be concerned with the Elizabethan ways of understanding the position of man and human nature in relation to the divine, and the supernatural in general.

Wilbur Sanders sees Marlowe as "standing at the centre of a vast network of conflicting ideas, his ears teased with distant sounds of systems falling into ruin and his soles tickled with new growth underfoot, his mind half free, half bound, and a huge assortment of contradictory propositions on every conceivable subject awaiting him in his library."[9] He sees Faustus as neither essentially "medieval," nor "modern." He also calls this play a "spiritual autobiography of an age," that is, of the Elizabethan Renaissance. The *psychomachía* of Faustus, the battle within a soul, for a soul, is fought between the aspirations of a human brain "to gain a deity" (1, 1, 69),[10] with the help of the reprobate Lucifer, who had once attempted the same, and *the* Deity—that is, the Christian God.

The early modern humanist aspirations in England owe a great deal to the Italian humanists and to Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, in particular. As a polymath with a predilection for syncretism, Pico fused the heritage of ancient thought and literature with the Hebrew, Arabic, and Christian traditions. Like his contemporary Marsilio Ficino,

8 Helen Gardner, "The Theme of Damnation in *Doctor Faustus,*" in: *Marlowe's* Doctor Faustus. *A Selection of Critical Essays*, p. 95.

9 Wilbur Sanders, "New Wine in the Old Bottles: *Doctor Faustus,*" in: *The Dramatist and the Received Idea, Studies in the Plays of Marlowe and Shakespeare*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1968, p. 208.

10 Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* (1616), in: Christopher Marlowe, *The Plays*, Wordsworth Editions, Hertfordshire 2000, p. 211.

he stressed the universality and the central position of the human being in the universe, as well as man's liberty, freedom of choice, and opportunity to exercise free will. Pico's and Ficino's humanism presupposes ancient philosophy, with a special emphasis on Platonism, but within an overall Christian framework, just like Erasmus' humanism, also greatly influential in Elizabethan England. None of this, however, appears in *Doctor Faustus*, at least not in visible traces—only in the form of a caricature. The humanist aspirations to knowledge are not given as a search for knowledge of the self, or of nature, or of divinity, but merely as "the egocentric abuse of knowledge" by an "academic megalomaniac."[11] In the middle sections of the play, the traces of humanism are deprived of both Platonic and Aristotelian aspects, or of any philosophical dignity whatsoever. Faustus' initial aspirations "to gain a deity," to perform, by his knowledge, more than a man can do—to conquer death, for example—appear both authentic and painful, if ambitious and vainglorious.[12] Nevertheless, once the power is acquired—after Faustus signs the contract with Lucifer—all that is left of the aspiring humanism is the mere hedonism, epicurean self-indulgence, and Christianized Pyrrhonism that brought Marlowe the reputation of an atheist.

What is it that produces a counterbalance to the distorted image of Renaissance humanism in this play? It is the Calvinist doctrine of reprobation, supported by the authority of Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine and their writings on predestination. This doomed view of human existence was accepted by the Elizabethans with a fascination that Wilbur Sanders qualifies as "morbid and powerful."[13] The God that Faustus can hear within himself, once facing the imminence of death, in the closing monologue, is the God of Wrath,[14] a fierce and merciless judge, a Calvinist God closer to the Jehovah of the Old Testament than to the God of Love. Faustus cannot think of the all-powerful and endless *grace*, and he cannot repent, because he knows that there cannot be any pardon for his sin, and because he knows that the damnation and punishment are eternal and irrevocable.

In formal accordance with the structure of the medieval morality play, humanist aspirations are punished in *Doctor Faustus* in their distorted forms of pride, sensuality, and curiosity. However, the tensions are not re-

11 "New Wine in the Old Bottles: *Doctor Faustus,*" in: *The Dramatist and the Received Idea,* pp. 220–221.

12 See Faustus' first monologue, 1, 1, 1–62.

13 Wilbur Sanders, "Marlowe and the Calvinist Doctrine of Reprobation," ibid., pp. 243–252.

14 See Faustus' closing monologue, 5, 2, 135–189.

solved. The understanding of the play varies from author to author,[15] but it is more often seen as a tragedy than as a morality play. The humanist aspirations, coming from both ancient and Renaissance sources, are authentic and strong, the realty of Medieval Satan is vivid, and the early modern, subjective, psychological phenomenon implying the interiorized positions of Satan and God, and causing early modern internal *psychomachía*, is complicated and contradictory. The conflict is formally resolved, while at the same time remaining unresolved and intriguing at a more profound level.

All of this is expressed through both Christian and ancient imagery. When inquiring about hell, Faustus at one point equates hell with Elysium/Hades and wants to see his soul in the afterlife with the ancient philosophers.[16] When explaining the aspects of his achievements that transcend low, sensual beauty, he illustrates the sublime love of beauty by invoking ancient poetry and music, Homer, and the mythical singers of the ancient world.[17] The climax of his human fulfillment is the divinization of Helen, by means of identifying her with the incomparable figures of ancient gods.[18] Ironically enough, Faustus even expresses the vain attempt to postpone the moment of death and the beginning of eternal damnation and punishment of his soul with Ovid's verse from *Amores* (1, 13, 40), with the lover's wish to prolong the night: *lente currite, noctis equi*.

The last, best-known, and most dialogical instance of the simultaneous presence of Christian and ancient thoughts on death is Hamlet's famous monologue "To be or not to be" (3, 1). Its position of a reflexive caesura

15 See Willard Farnham, *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Doctor Faustus*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1969, and John Jump, *Marlowe, Doctor Faustus. A Casebook*, Macmillan, London 1969.

16 DF 1, 3, 57.

17 DF 2, 1, 24–29:

> "Have I not made blind Homer sing to me
> Of Alexander's love and Oenon's death?
> And hath not he, that built the walls of Thebes
> With ravishing sound of his melodious harp,
> Made music with my Mephistophilis?
> Why should I die, then, or basely despair?"

18 DF 5, 1, 108–114:

> O, thou art fairer than the evening air
> Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars,
> Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
> When he appear'd to hapless Semele;
> More lovely than the monarch of the sky
> In wanton Arethusa's azur'd arms,
> And none but thou shalt be my paramour!"

at the beginning of the third act, which is not directly—although it is implicitly—related to the action of the play, gives us the right to analyze it without regard to the rest of the play. The complex content of Hamlet's contemplation and his presupposed associations, expected from a well-read Renaissance man when meditating upon death, also invite a scrutiny of the implied network of classical and Christian references in this soliloquy.

The persistent and controversial discussion on whether this monologue deals with the possibility of suicide or with revenge and the action that revenge requires must be left aside, as well as the equally controversial discussion about whether it concerns Hamlet's personal situation, or *la condition humaine* in general.[19] Because we are concerned with representations of death, it seems plausible to accept a broad presupposition that this soliloquy "concerns the advantages and disadvantages of human existence," including the possibility of suicide,[20] and that the speaker is approaching these questions from a general, and not personal, point of view. A lexical and stylistic analysis of the speech offers sufficient argument for the general intonation: the prevalence of infinitives and first-person plural distinguishes this speech from the other monologues of the play, as the most general and contemplative one.[21] Understood either as a consequence of a suicide, or as a heroic departure from life, or a natural end of life, or simply the contrary of life, not-life, and not-being, death is the central notion of this soliloquy, and it is evidently mediated by a number of unreported references to both classical and Christian authors.

The form itself of this speech is related to the debates upon certain questions, and it is therefore introduced as a question. The argumentation *for* human existence, for being, and not against it—because it appears to be better than not-being, despite all the disadvantages and misfortunes—was a traditional task of a Renaissance student of theology, with an illustrious example from St. Augustine's *De libero arbitrio* (3, 6–8). Therefore, the

19 The bibliography concerning these issues is, needless to say, enormous. See William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, in: *The Arden Shakespeare*, edited by Harold Jenkins, Routledge, London and New York 1995 ([1]1982), longer notes, pp. 484–485; Irving T. Richards, "The Meaning of Hamlet's Soliloquy," *PMLA* 48, pp. 741–766; V. F. Petronella, *Studies in Philology* 71, pp. 72–88; Alex Newell, "The Dramatic Context and Meaning of Hamlet's 'To be or not to be' Soliloquy," *PMLA* 80, pp. 38–50; A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 1904; J. Dover Wilson, *What Happens in "Hamlet,"* 1935; G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, 1949.

20 *Hamlet*, edited by Harold Jenkins, longer notes, p. 485.

21 Ibid., p. 486. See also Wolfgang Clemen, *Shakespeare's Soliloquies*, translated by Charity Scott Stokes, Methuen & Co., London and New York 1987.

initial question-comparison,

> Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
> And by opposing end them
>
> (3, 1, 57–60)

introduces acceptance of suffering, on the one hand, as a form of being, and rejection of suffering, by means of arms, on the other. However, the rejection appears to be ambiguous and tricky. Does one end the suffering by annihilating "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" and, therefore, continue *to be*? That would be a successful outcome. What if, however, "the *sea* of troubles" turns out to be mightier than "the arms"? Human effort would appear useless, the suffering would eventually end in the contrary direction, in the annihilation of the human subject by the unconquerable element of water, the metaphorical "sea." Then the "opposing" would mean—*not to be*. Scholars have found classical sources for this metaphor. Taken literally, attacking the sea armed with swords, spears, and axes seems absurd; nothing can be done to the sea in this manner. Shakespeare may have read the story about the Celts that used to demonstrate that they could not be driven away from the sea when frightened of the tides by drawing their swords and throwing themselves into the waves, in order to terrify them, instead of being terrified by the sea. Some of the warriors, evidently, vanished in the sea. This is to be found in Aelian, translated by Abraham Fleming as *A Regystre of Hystories*, published in 1576. It can also be found in Aristotle: "A man . . . is not brave . . . , if, knowing the magnitude of the danger, he faces it through passion—as the Celts take up their arms to go to meet the waves" (*Eudemian Ethics* 3, 1; *Nichomachean Ethics* 3, 7).[22]

The next motif of the soliloquy, the comparison of death with sleep, can also be traced to Antiquity.

> . . . To die—to sleep,
> No more; and by a sleep to say we end
> The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
> That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation
> Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
> To sleep, perchance to dream—ay there's the rub.
>
> (3, 1, 60–65)

22 Ibid., p. 491.

Harold Jenkins, the editor of the Arden Shakespeare *Hamlet*, emphasizes the brilliant use of the traditional ideas in this soliloquy. Relating death to sleep was a commonplace that reached the Renaissance via texts from Antiquity. It is present in Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, in Plutarch's *Moralia*, references to which can be found in Montaigne's *Essays* (3, 12), where we also find the most notable of sources for this connection of death with sleep—Plato's *Apology* (3; 32). When commenting on the sentence of the judges, Socrates says that death is either a state of nothingness and utter unconsciousness, or a change and migration of the soul from this world to another. In the case that there is no consciousness, Socrates regards death as an unspeakable gain, and compares it to the sleep of a person that is not disturbed by the sight of dreams. However, Shakespeare, like Marlowe in *Doctor Faustus*, refers, at the same time, to the Christian context, which his Elizabethan audiences presuppose and expect:

> For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
> When we have shuffled off this mortal coil.
>
> (3, 1, 66–67)

That is to say, what of the dread of eternal damnation, what if one is among the reprobates, as described in the Book of Homilies, read in the Anglican churches of the Elizabethan age, and coming out of the general outlines of Calvinist theology?

The outline of this soliloquy has also been traced to St. Augustine in *De libero arbitrio* (3, 6, 19), where it is said:

> It is not because I would rather be unhappy than not be at all, that I am unwilling to die, but for fear that after death I may be still more unhappy.

The turn after the comparison of death with sleep develops this idea. The disasters and misfortunes of life are lined up in a long row, and the alternative is commented on:

> . . . Who would fardels bear,
> To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
> But that the dread of something after death,
> The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
> No traveler returns, puzzles the will,
> And makes us rather bear those ills we have
> Then fly to the others that we know not of?
>
> (3, 1, 76–82)

Leaving aside one of the many paradoxes of this play—that of the traveler that, eventually, returned; namely, the Ghost—we should note that the notion of the undiscovered country also comes from Antiquity: the metaphor of the journey of no return is used by Seneca several times (*Hippolytus* 93; 625–626; *Hercules Furens* 865–866), in Catullus, and in Aelian, who speaks of the country of Meropes, within which there was a place called "Anostum," from which there was no return. Nevertheless, death is described as a journey without return in the Old Testament as well (Job 10.21, Wisdom 2.1 "neither was there any man known to have returned from the grave").

In all three tragedies, Antiquity and Christianity are blended both in concepts and in metaphors, and it seems that the Elizabethans could think about the ontological other, the ultimate, the divine, and, consequentially, about death, *only* through *both* traditions. This double exposure brings out cases of conflicts and tensions, and, in parallel, examples of reconciliation, as seen in the brief analyses of the three tragedies.

By treating this problem, we have come close to the interests of the latest Shakespeare criticism, which, judging by a relatively recent collection of essays under the title *Spiritual Shakespeares*,[23] seems to be replacing the long-lasting tendencies of the new historicism and cultural materialism. It is regarded as a new religious turn in approaches to Shakespeare. Spirituality in Shakespeare intrigued not only Derrida in *The Specters of Marx*, and Greenblatt in *Hamlet in Purgatory*, but a number of other authors. This investigation into the conflicting and/or reconciled aspects of the dialogical presence of Antiquity and Christianity in the Elizabethan drama points to the spiritual duality of the Elizabethan writers, who blended the two traditions in their works into a unity which "neither two nor one was called," to put it in a verse from Shakespeare's famous hermetic threnos *The Phoenix and the Turtle*.

23 *Spiritual Shakespeares*, edited by Ewan Fernie, Routledge, London and New York 2005.

Antiquity and Christianity in Elizabethan Drama: Representations of Death

Summary

The paper deals with the notions and images of death and the afterlife in Elizabethan drama, taken either from ancient Greek and Roman mythology or from Christian eschatology. It demonstrates that the tensions between Catholicism and Anglican Protestantism in Elizabethan England made representations of death and the afterlife in drama even more complex. The images and the understanding of death and the afterlife are analyzed in three major Elizabethan plays: Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, and William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The analysis shows that literary and mythological allusions, philosophical notions, and rhetorical devices from Antiquity, placed within the Christian context, express the spiritual duality of the Elizabethan Renaissance.

Antika in krščanstvo v elizabetinski drami: prikazi smrti

Povzetek

Referat obravnava predstave in podobe smrti in posmrtnega življenja v elizabetinski drami, ki so vzete bodisi iz stare grške in rimske mitologije bodisi iz krščanske eshatologije. Poskuša pokazati, da napetosti med katoličtvom in anglikanskim protestantstvom v elizabetinski Angliji delajo prikaze smrti in posmrtnega življenja v drami še zapletenejše. Podobe in razumevanje smrti in posmrtnega življenja so analizirane v treh osrednjih elizabetinskih dramah: v *Španski tragediji* Thomasa Kyda, *Doktorju Faustu* Christopherja Marlowa in *Hamletu* Williama Shakespeara. Analiza kaže, da literarne in mitološke aluzije, filozofske predstave in retorična sredstva iz antike, s tem ko so postavljeni v krščanski kontekst, izražajo duhovno dvojnost elizabetinske renesanse.

Biljana Dojčinović-Nešić

Antiquity and Christianity in the Personal Cartography of John Updike's Characters

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In his review of John Updike's novel *Roger's Version* (1985), David Lodge states: "If there was ever such a species as the Protestant novelist . . . Mr. Updike may be its last surviving example" (Lodge 1986, 1). This statement provoked a bitter response from a believing critic: "Updike 'preaches' prophetically, but fails to offer that word of grace his faithful readers need." He also wanted to know where the characters' "faith in the Incarnation and Resurrection . . . and final victory over the world, the devil, all suffering, and even death itself" is (Mehl 1987, 54).

These polemics on the Protestant quality of Updike's writing merely illustrate what will *not* be sought in this paper—neither prophetic preaching nor words of grace for faithful readers because faith in a fictional text could not be a measure superimposed on it. The faith, be it one or a (dis)union of religious beliefs, that is read out of a fictional text is only an element of it, not the principal norm to which a text as a whole adheres.

I have chosen to discuss Updike's novel *The Centaur* because it illustrates the dual nature of the question stated in the title of this symposium (*Antiquity and Christianity*), a question that should be "resolved" without any binary or hierarchical order. *The Centaur* seems to offer such an answer, itself being based on the idea of a dual creature—a biform or, as one could also say, a grotesque, a freak, a monster.

The Centaur is an autobiographical novel. This well-known fact, however, does not mean that it represents a text in which we should search for the author's real person. Updike himself said about his own writing:

> I feel no obligation to the remembered past; what I create on paper must, and for me does, soar free of whatever the facts were . . . the work, the words on the paper, must stand apart from our living

> presences; we sit down at the desk and become nothing but the excuse for these husks we cast off.
>
> (Samuels 1994, 27–28)

I therefore suggest the term "personal cartography" to describe the process of casting off the husks as well as characters' descriptions of places where they are, the things they see, and the fact that "identity is retrospective" (Braidotti 1994, 35). In coining this term, I rely on Rosi Braidotti's concept of nomadic subjects, which enables one to think of the past without nostalgia and the wish to go back "there"—because "there" is always within us, and the mere process of describing one's past is the process of inscribing it within ourselves. Applied to this fictional text, that means that readers always have the opportunity to read something of themselves in and out of these maps.

In this case, even more important than proximity to oneself (whether the author or reader) is the political similarity of Updike's third novel to a psychological theory from the late 1970s. Psychologist Dorothy Dinnerstein used the images of the mermaid and the minotaur to describe the danger of human nature's construction as that of halved creatures. She opted for the unity of humanity, instead of half-human creatures; that is, monsters that, according to her, were the transcripts of children's earliest images of their mother and father.[1] Her ideal seemed equally necessary and unreachable. She says that, when the magic richness and the magic dangerousness of the first parent are embodied inside every person, male and female, when they are contained within the same skin that contains the subjective, vulnerable, limited human "I," the emotional uses of this magic will change. What now serves as a chronic focus of greed, says Dinnerstein, a chronic source of terror, will be transformed into a wild place to be visited for pleasure, a special preserve where old, primitive regions of the human personality can be rediscovered:

> The "I" will turn to this part of itself, and of the other person, as it turns to forest or flame or moving water: to replenish its energies in contact with something less tidy and reasonable, more innocent and fierce, more ancient and mystifying than itself.
>
> (Dinnerstein 1977, 113–114)

1 She argued that these mythical images of half-humans, like the mermaid and the minotaur, "express an old, fundamental, very slowly clarifying communal insight: that our species' nature is internally inconsistent; that our continuities with, and our differences from, the earth's other animals are mysterious and profound; and that in these continuities, and these differences, lie both our sense of strangeness on earth and the possible key to a way of feeling at home here" (Dinnerstein 1977, 2).

The thesis of this text is that in Updike's novel *The Centaur* such a landscape/mindscape is achieved, and that the very dual nature of the main character plays the decisive role in reaching this kind of "idyllic wilderness."

Meet George Caldwell, alias Chiron, the noble Centaur.

The novel consists of the memories of Peter Caldwell, a young abstract painter, and his memories of his father. This narrative is combined with the mythological one, which provides various references to archetypal images. However, the character of George Caldwell (based on Updike's own father, as has been stated many times before) stands in sharp contrast to Dinnerstein's usage of similar half-human figures. This contrast is made more visible by making him a very dual creature, a biform, a freak. Pain and discomfort are the inevitable traits of his existence. Pain is what we learn about in the very opening scene of *The Centaur* in which Caldwell, a high school teacher, is wounded in the ankle by an arrow during class. The description of the pain he feels while moving down the corridor in search of help sounds like a description of the human situation in general:

> His top half felt all afloat in a starry firmament of ideals and young voices singing; the rest of his self was heavily sunk in a swamp where it must, eventually, drown.
>
> (*The Centaur*, 10)

The upper, human part contrasts with the other, equine, animal part. The duality of the human situation illustrated here has already been outlined in the novel's motto, an excerpt from Karl Barth's *Dogmatics in Outline*:

> Heaven is the creation inconceivable to man, earth the creation conceivable to him. He himself is the creature on the boundary between heaven and earth.

In an effort to solve the obvious differences that permeate Updike's works, in 1977 Robert Haugh wrote that one must first accept the difference between the "man of Eden" and the "man of Arcadia," that is, between the Calvinist and ancient Greek viewpoint. He said that misunderstanding of this difference "creates a hopeless blur in analysis" (Haugh 1977, 489). More than the difference, however, the connection between these two points of view may be more valuable here, as well as their coexistence in Transcendentalism, the eclectic thought so important for American writers. It is a mixture of various philosophical thoughts that "owes much more to the Greek than to the Christian viewpoints" (Haugh, 1975, 489). Transcendentalism has been a kind of monism that spoke about the unity of the world

and the immanence of God in the world. It also stressed the importance of the mundane because everything in the world represents a microcosmos that has in itself the laws and the meaning of existence. This may also be a source of Updike's Platonism, his depiction of everyday life as a shadow of transcendental, eternal values, but with an accent on the shadow itself, the earthly, the corporeal.[2]

In *The Centaur* there are at least two important scenes that illustrate this difference between Antiquity and Christianity, as well as their crucial similarity. Both speak about Creation, and both are therefore a (re)creation of the Creation myth. The first is told in the language of science but, because Caldwell tries to explain the cosmogony in scientific terms, he comes very close to the language of the Bible:

> Let's try to reduce five billion years to our size. Let's say the universe is three days old. Today is Thursday, and it is—he looked at the clock—twenty minutes to twelve. . . . O. K. Last Monday at noon there was the greatest explosion there ever was. We're still riding on it.
>
> (*The Centaur*, 34)

This is also the scene that has been marked as the most Joycean aspect of this novel, in addition to the fact that it speaks about father and son wandering through a city. From this point on, the interpretation of creation becomes hallucination-like, a re-creation.

> A boy over by the windows had sneaked a paper grocery bag into class and now, nudged by another boy, he tumbled its content, a clot of living trilobites, onto the floor. One of the girls, a huge purple parrot feathered with mud, swiftly ducked her head and plucked a small one up. Its little biramous legs fluttered in upside-down protest. She crunched it in her painted beak and methodically chewed.
>
> (*The Centaur*, 38)

Some critics consider this scene the closest English literature got to the Nighttown scene in *Ulysses*, at least until the mid 1960s. The Circe chapter of *Ulysses* represents the unconsciousness of the book itself and has been revisited and revised in a way here. The mythical pattern that lies behind

2 The topic of Platonism permeates almost all of Updike's novels. Trying to reach the meaning beyond the veil of everyday life, the essence beyond the facts, has been the most common instinct of his characters, not to mention the emblematic notion of Plato's cave, whether implicit or explicit, in *The Centaur*, *Rabbit Redux*, *Roger's Version*, *The Coup*, and other novels.

both books, granting their trivial subjects a not archetypal ticket to universality, but to the humor-producing distance and inner split of modern man, has been underlined in a new way here. Contrasted to the hallucination-like scene, which ends with Caldwell's outburst and violence, there is an idyllic scene of Chiron among his disciples:

> "Our subject today," he began, and the faces, scattered in the deep green shade like petals after rain, were unanimously hushed and attentive, "is the Genesis of All Things. In the beginning," the centaur said, "black-winged Night was courted by the wind, and laid a silver egg in the womb of Darkness. From this egg hatched Eros, which means—?"
> "Love," a child's voice answered from the grass.
> "And Love set the Universe in motion."
>
> (*The Centaur*, 78)

Thus, as Haugh said, it seems that an Arcadian man, if mingled with a Calvinist man, would create a "hopeless blur in analysis." Would it mean that, for the sake of the analysis, one should separate Caldwell rebelling against the doctrine of Predestination from the noble Centaur telling the cosmogonic myth? Or leave Caldwell's human "why" (why are some saved and others eternally damned) unanswered, as the priest named March in the novel does? Does this text itself give one the right to pronounce exactly this *blur* the crucial point in analysis, which tries to be not of an *either/or*, but of a *both/and* type? Or, to put it more simply, does not an Arcadian man as well as a Calvinist man, an idyllic and scientific/Christian being, ask for the same thing, at least as long as mundane existence is at stake?

One comes to the turning point in Caldwell's cosmogony when the idea of loving others surfaces. A creature named volvox appears:

> . . . neither plant nor animal—under a microscope it looks just like a Christmas ball—by pioneering this new idea of *cooperation*, rolled life into the kingdom of certain—as opposed to accidental—death.
>
> (*The Centaur*, 37)[3]

This Christmas ball does what both Chiron and Christ do: it gives its life for another, making death certain. The volvox is a manifestation of what

3 "The volvox, of these early citizens in the kingdom of life, interests us because he invented death. There is no reason intrinsic in the plasmic substance why life should ever end. Amoebas never die; and those male sperm cells which enjoy success become the cornerstone of new life that continues beyond the father" (*The Centaur,* 37).

is called Agape, understood in Christianity as unselfish love, goodness, sacrifice for others (sometimes translated into English as *charity*). Many critics and Updike himself, in one of his essays, contrasted it with Eros.[4] However, it is very questionable if here, in this novel, Eros as love spoken of by Chiron, is really so different from Agape. That Eros was double sexed and the world was harmonious means that there was no desire, no pain, no inner division characteristic for the modern (Christian) man. For these characters, then, what would the Uranian/postlapsarian (i.e., post-Depression and postwar) difference between Eden/Arcadia and Eros/Agape mean?

The grown Peter Caldwell concludes his personal cartography by taking us straight to the meaning of love, the mindscape his father George Caldwell/Chiron created for him. Peter tells his mistress about a statue fountain he used to see in a museum in his childhood:

> She held to her lips a scallop shell of bronze and her fine face was pursed to drink, but the mechanics of the fountain dictated that water should spill forever from the edge of the shell away from her lips. Eternally expectant . . . she held the shell an inch away from the face that seemed with its lowered lids and parted lips asleep.
>
> (*The Centaur*, 199–200)

The boy imagined that there was thirst—this final and unfulfilled human need of Jesus. This need made the boy think that something must be done to heal it. A little miracle, which he, the future painter to be born out of his father's pain, can imagine to suture the wound:

> The patience of her wait, the mildness of its denial, seemed unbearable to me then, and I told myself that when darkness came . . . then her slim bronze hand made the very little motion needed, and she drank . . .
>
> (*The Centaur*, 200)

This may not be the "final victory over the world, the devil, all suffering, and even death itself" (Mehl 1987, 54), as the critic mentioned above asked of Updike. It is, however, a temporary victory over pain, thirst, and eternal expectation, won by human love for the other—the love that can be

4 "Eros is allied with Thanatos rather than Agape; love becomes not a way of accepting and entering the world but a way of defying and escaping it. Isault is the mythical prototype of the Unattainable Lady to whom the love myth directs our adoration, diverting it from the attainable lady (in legal terms, our 'wife'; in Christian terms, our 'neighbor') who is at our side. Passion-love feeds upon denial" ("More Love …," *Assorted Prose*, 285).

called both Eros and/or Agape here. It is contrary to what Strandberg said; namely, that by setting off *The Centaur* against Updike's erotic novels—*Couples*, *A Month of Sundays*, and *Marry Me*—one may observe how the author designates Agape and Eros as the two alternative pathways that connect the dualistic realms of reality. According to him, "the way of Agape is surer but much more difficult, of course—straight is the path and few there be who find it. None do find it after Caldwell" (Strandberg 1978, 173). In *The Centaur*, however, the difference between Eros and Agape is merely the difference between the names for love used in Antiquity and Christianity, respectively. This similarity actually offers two ways of describing the human need for love that sets the world in motion. George Caldwell is certainly an exceptional hero, not only among Updike's male characters, but also among his literary characters in general. His mythological and archetypal "content" only underscore his obvious tenderness, empathy, and gentleness, so rare in both literature and life.[5] The influence of Transcendentalism is obvious here, in creating this amalgam of various concepts of love, both ancient and Christian in its origin.

Finally, if one considers unity and disunity, Antiquity and Christianity, what is conceivable and inconceivable to man, human and animal, human and divine, the statue and the water, the author's self (and/or my own self) and this novel, in a *both/and way*, not solved or resolved, but coexistent, they seem to be not hopelessly but happily blurred. What I am saying is that literary analysis can (and should) sometimes allow itself to leave the words and acts of love untouched out of categories, no matter how well they are designed. That is, unquestioned, simply read, lived, and believed in.

5 In a way, his character is much closer to Virginia Woolf's astonishing Mrs. Ramsey from *To the Lighthouse* than James Joyce's hero of *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom.

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Antiquity and Christianity in the Personal Cartography of John Updike's Characters

Summary

The paper focuses on the issue of the fusion/collision of Christianity and mythical images concerning modern man in John Updike's autobiographical novel *The Centaur* (1963). Through the figure of Chiron, the noble centaur, the novel speaks about nostalgia for the Golden Age, which is actually a search for the time of early childhood. Updike's use of this figure stands in sharp contrast to Dorothy Dinnerstein's usage of similar, half-human figures of the minotaur and mermaid as metaphors for human inner conflict and discomfort. Updike's characters' personal mythography merges mythic elements with everyday appearance, humanity with both divinity and monstrosity, pain with love, and Eros with Agape. It should therefore be read without an effort to strictly delineate and separate all of its constitutive parts in the analysis.

Antika in krščanstvo v osebni kartografiji likov pri Johnu Updikeu

Povzetek

Referat se osredinja na problem fuzije/kolizije krščanstva in mitskih podob, ki zadevajo modernega človeka v avtobiografskem romanu Johna Updikea *Kentaver* (1963). Ta roman prek Hirona, lika plemenitega kentavra, govori o nostalgiji po zlati dobi, ki je v resnici iskanje zgodnjega otroštva. Updikeova raba tega lika je v ostrem nasprotju z rabo podobnih, polčloveških likov minotavra in morske deklice kot metafor za človekov notranji konflikt in nelagodje pri Dorothy Dinnerstein. Osebna mitografija Updikeovih junakov meša mitske prvine z vsakdanjim videzom, človeštvo z božanstvom in pošastnostjo, bolečino z ljubeznijo in Eros z Agape, zato jo je treba brati brez prizadevanja, da bi vse te njene sestavine strogo razmejili in ločili v analizi.

Milica Kač

Antiquity and Christianity in the Slovenian Writer Alojz Rebula

Logos Cultural and Arts Society,
Ljubljana

First of all, I would like to express my thanks for the opportunity to be a part of this symposium. My paper is quite unlike those clear-cut philosophical approaches that we enjoyed yesterday. It lacks much of the scholarly apparatus that was so skillfully applied to many relevant texts. It is narrowed, but it is not clear whether this helps make it radical. I try my best to create a synthesis between Antiquity and Christianity, but have I succeeded in making it a non-questionable synthesis? On the other hand, yesterday I was encouraged by statements like: "The scholarly just means the developed commonsensical." Or: "The only way to approach an author is to read him like that . . . Without any afterthoughts . . ." Or again: "The author as the subject . . . is neither himself nor someone else . . . and this enables him to be himself and someone else." And, last but not least: "Knowing is good, feeling is better."

I certainly read and enjoyed Rebula's texts without afterthoughts, and I certainly felt strongly about them.

When I—as I prefer to put it—"came upon the idea" that I would like to share with you, how I feel about the texts of Alojz Rebula in the context of the leading thought of this symposium, I soon realized that it would be a real challenge if not also quite an embarrassment.

First of all, for me thinking, speaking, and, finally, trying to write about texts of Alojz Rebula is not only an attempt to comment on something I read, then somehow digested, and made my own in a way—and now to share it with somebody else. It also means reliving those evenings in the 1970s when even the largest lecture hall at the Theological Faculty was too small to accommodate those that wanted to attend Rebula's talks at the "Theological Evening Lectures for Students and Intellectuals."

Second, Rebula's texts are not only versatile, given the fact that his thirty or so books range from some of the best-known Slovenian novels to fascinating diaries and very finely crafted essays, but they are also interwoven in such a way that you can often take a paragraph from a novel and put it into an essay, and it fits in perfectly, functioning there as a genuine part. I will not venture any answer to the question of what this tells us about the novel itself, which is one of the main concerns of Katarina Šalamun-Biedrzycka in the book with which she honored the seventieth anniversary of Rebula's birth.[1] Nevertheless, it is somehow a clear warning that Rebula the writer and Rebula the thinker are there in one and the same text. Not only they are there at the same time, which is not a problem *per se*, but they are there, speaking simultaneously, holding a pen simultaneously. Is one telling a story and the other explaining it? Whose sentence is it that I am enjoying? It does not matter, as long as I am just enjoying it, but as soon as I start to comment and elaborate further on it, I must face, strictly speaking, a rather tricky task if I have no answer to the question: who is my partner in this dialogue?

Third, one cannot speak about Alojz Rebula without pointing out that he is one of the most outstanding representatives of the Slovenian minority in Italy. If one speaks about Slovenians in Trst (Trieste) and its surroundings in the second part of the 20th century, the first two names to appear in this context would be Boris Pahor and Alojz Rebula. Rebula actually breathed the air of all those picturesque Karst villages just above and behind Trieste as well as with those along the Soča (or Italian Isonzo) River, flowing down to the Adriatic Sea. For him, to stand for the Slovenian language and to be part of Slovenian culture was not only to develop and contribute to something that he felt as his native language—what has always literally been a vital part of his personality—but it was also a right and a noble thing to do. And he (*N.B.* simultaneously!) stood for his native language and his nation (as a member of the Slovenian minority in Italy), he stood for his Christian beliefs within the Catholic Church (in predominantly Catholic Italy, not only remembering but also living under an Italian government, experiencing the politics of official as well as unofficial Vatican and local Catholic authorities), and he stood for Slovenian culture (the major part of which was at that time developing and trying to survive under the Yugoslav flag). Taking it at its best, to be a part of Yugoslavia meant to live in a system suspicious of anybody that had a western European passport and, taking it at its worst, it meant to live in a system that controlled, sup-

1 Cf. Katarina Šalamun-Biedrzycka, *Umetniški vzpon Alojza Rebule*, Koper: Lipa, 1995.

pressed, persecuted, and refused free entrance to the country to anybody that aroused its suspicions.

Fourth, in the above context (or, rather, contexts), one can clearly see and understand that many of Rebula's thoughts and statements are lively comments, reactions to what was actually going on, and not well-polished pieces of a mosaic that fit perfectly into a well-established theological, philosophical, or whatever system. On the other hand, when one learns how many times he rewrote and how long he worked on some of his literary texts, there is a reassurance in the feeling that what is read, felt, and almost heard in those texts stands there finished, well-polished to the last sound, and perfect in every word. I was always fascinated and often almost taken aback by the way Rebula made the language work. His way of expressing himself seems lapidary to me, but not that he would keep his expression short. On the contrary, he takes his time, but more in the sense of enjoying and sculpting the sentence and the thought, both linguistically and phonetically. I never have the sense that it is small talk, even if he is just telling me about yesterday's dinner.

Fifth, as Rebula himself puts it, when somewhere in the Karst, "still full of partisans and German soldiers," he was translating some aphorisms from *Also sprach Zarathustra* into Greek, writing commentaries on Horace's odes, and keeping his diary in French:

> There are things that themselves delineate the irreality of youth. . . . For me, as I am today, this irreality seems even sadder and more unfortunate than it really was. . . . Nevertheless, two distinct directions were formed . . . even more, two certainties. First, for me there was only one university under the sun that I could long for, and that was my Alma mater Labacensis. Second, at this university there was only one branch of knowledge under the sun, classical philology. . . . Neither Slovenianness nor Antiquity allowed any alternative.

Or, as it sounds in Rebula's own words, in Slovenian:

> So stvari, ki že same po sebi zarisujejo irealnost neke mladosti. ... Danes se mi tista irealnost zdi bolj žalostna in bolj nesrečna, kot je dejansko bila. ... Vendar se je ... izoblikovalo dvoje bivanjskih usmeritev, še več, dvoje gotovosti. Prvič – zame je obstajala samo ena univerza pod soncem, kamor sem mogel hrepeneti, in sicer Alma mater Labacensis. Drugič – da je na tej univerzi obstajala ena sama stroka pod soncem, klasična filologija. ... Ne slovenstvo ne antika nista dopuščala alternative.[2]

2 Alojz Rebula, *Na slovenskem poldnevniku*, Maribor: Obzorja Maribor, 1991, p. 87.

One could venture the thought that for such a man Antiquity was not only a way of thinking, of expressing oneself in a noble, educated, and well-read way, but it was life itself. Not only *ben trovato*, it was really *vero*! Especially if at this point one also recalls such details as the recollection of Stane Gabrovec noted in his introduction to Rebula's book *Through the First Veil*.[3] Namely, he remembers his first encounter with Rebula in autumn 1945, as students gathered for a new academic year in the still half-ruined building of the Slovenian National Library. Rebula was a freshmen and Gabrovec came back to the university after the war to finish his studies. He simply wanted to enlighten the newcomer and told him that "he [Rebula] should not expect a philosophical approach from somebody like Nietzsche. Had I only left that name unspoken, because I turned into a freshman myself as he said with glittering eyes that his [Nietzsche's] philosophy is not worth much, but his poetry, his *Also sprach Zarathustra*, could be compared with the greatest Greek poets."

Further on one reads that Alojz Rebula invaded the seminary, where Cicero was a must, with postclassical, sometimes medieval and even ecclesiastic Latin language. Not only did he do this, but he was even proud of it and quoted from St. Augustine as if he wanted to pose the rhetoric question: "Is this not classics as well?" He was constantly bringing Antiquity into everyday life by bringing up names from world literature such as Dante and Claudel and those from Slovenian literature such as Prešeren and Župančič together with the masters of Antiquity.

Sixth, if I now quote Gorazd Kocijančič, who recently told me once again over a glass or two of delicious red wine that no commentary on the New Testament can be considered adequate if the person in question does not have a sufficient background in the literature that formed the cultural and social backbone of these texts, you can well see and understand why I feel both challenged and embarrassed. Rebula's cultural surroundings were Antiquity at least as much as the world he physically lived and worked in.

If I tried to summarize in a few sentences how I feel about the two traditions encompassed in the leading question of this symposium (namely, Antiquity and Christianity) and also about the two states of mind about which the same question asks (namely, conflict and conciliation), I would probably end with something like the following.

To be a good, successful, and believing citizen of a Greek *pólis*, and then of Rome, was to live between the ideals of *kalón* and *agathón*, between *métron* and *mystérion*. Thus you made your way through a triumphant

3 In: Alojz Rebula, *Skozi prvo zagrinjalo*, Celje: Mohorjeva založba, 1994, pp. 8–13.

welcome of cheering crowds, celebrating your achievements, towards the assembly of wise and capable men that accepted you as one of themselves and finally put you in the noble position of their leader, which was so worth striving and longing for. You did not allow trifles along your way to interfere with your plan and to keep you from being focused. Or, on the other hand, you left all this as something that did not deserve your attention and energy, learned how to live without it, and proceeded on your own. You did not allow your feelings to interfere. In both cases, gods and destiny may or may not be on your side, and the situation changed constantly along the way.

This undertaking was brave, fascinating, and even admirable, but it somehow lost a great part of its humanity, if humanity in its deepest sense means human sympathy. The word "empathy" is possibly more to the point; it makes it sound more serious, more real, more "all-inclusive," demanding not only your real presence but leaving you at the same time with your real absence.

On the other hand, to be a Christian means "to love God with all your forces, with every part of your being, and everybody else as yourself." So you cannot leave anybody or anything out, behind you. You have to treat everybody "like yourself," not "instead of yourself," not "as your own" but as yourself. There is no luxury like "that's none of my business." No "baggage" can be comfortably left behind. You are constantly being asked, challenged, and implored to be a part of everything and everybody and at the same time to have your anchor in Jesus Himself. You are not making your career, but you are a part of the career of the world. And God is always on your side.

This is surely a very ambitious plan, but achieving the top of what I have spoken of previously is no simple task either. On the other hand, as I speak of Antiquity and Christianity as two traditions, without trying to condense them into some brief ideas or two well-established systems, it is more a question of how we walk, of what or Who is leading and guiding our steps along the way, and less of how far we can come and what we can achieve. In the first case (Antiquity), the ultimate achievement and outcome is in the hands of destiny or gods, whereas in the second (Christianity) it is safely in the hands of God. Therefore we are talking about everyday life, about my praxis, about how I react, what makes me joyful, serene on the one hand and sad—not to say mad—on the other. This represents a practical tradition, not a system, as someone, I think it was Gorazd, so nicely formulated yesterday: something that you drank with your mother's milk, without any

afterthoughts, not as a philosophically pregnant heritage.

Rebula is well-known for his roots in Antiquity; one cannot imagine him without his Greek and—even more—Roman surroundings. It is only natural to imagine that, when he is writing (actually, when he is doing anything!), everything is proceeding from this powerful context. On the other hand, it is also more than evident that he is not only a Christian, who is very much practicing his faith as well as "faithing his practice," but also one of the pillars of the Slovenian Catholic church. He attended many official events at the Vatican, to mention only the synod of European bishops in November and December 1991, which is documented in the diary published under the title *The Steps of the Apostolic Sandals*.[4] His faith is not, ought not to, and cannot be discussed or even considered here. It would be far beyond anything such a piece of work can, should be, or is even allowed to deal with, but his commitment to the Church is beyond any reasonable doubt. He is committed to the Catholic Church as it is, he is a practicing member of it, but he is also one of its very severe and concise critics and uses all of his picturesque eloquence, especially that inspired by all the Latin masters, when making a point—or better, making many points.

Finally, I would like to present some quotations. These will not be the most powerful ones, not the well-known ones. If I did so, I would use sentences where one could suggest that the author has taken great pains to make them polished as they should be, in other words, to get them absolutely right—*quantum potest humana fragilitas*! However, I decided to end my paper with some casual sentences, randomly taken from books that caught my attention for one reason or the other. Hopefully we will be able to look into Rebula's backyard through them, to catch a glimpse of him, when he is not looking, when he is not paying enough attention to be aware of our presence. With a lot of luck, we may even come a little bit closer to what I have already cited: "The author as the subject . . . is neither himself nor someone else . . . and this enables him to be himself and someone else," and: "Knowing is good, feeling is better." Once, attending a lecture on mass spectrometry, a chemical technique that forms part of my profession as a chemist, the lecturer was explaining a new ionization technique and said that with this new technique we can hope to catch the ions before they have time to make a clever rearrangement. In this sense I hope to capture some sentences, too, before they make a "clever rearrangement" because of the context and interpretation. "Knowing is good, feeling is better."

4 Cf. Alojz Rebula, *Koraki apostolskih sandal*, Klagenfurt, Ljubljana, Vienna: Mohorjeva založba, 1993.

On 10 May 1448, the new bishop in Tergeste addressed his secretary:

> Is this not a terrible thought, Kajetan: I can nearly imagine that I could live without God but I cannot imagine how to survive without my library?[5]

A happy thought, playing with words? Most probably. Practically on the next page, it is the same entrance into Tergeste, the same bishop:

> He felt he had to kiss something on that green morning—he had to kiss the earth, but not primarily in its mystical map, but the earth as such, in its pre-Christian glory, the goddess Gaia, a daughter of Chaos, in her pagan wedding dance.

That was a translation prepared for this occasion, and now I quote in Slovenian:

> ... je sredi tega rastlinskega jutra veljalo poljubiti nekaj—prav zemljo, a ne toliko v njenem mističnem zemljevidu, ampak zemljo kot tako, v njeni predkrščanski slavi, boginjo Gajo, hčer Kaosa, v njenem poročnem poganskem plesu.[6]

The next quotation is from six meditations published under the title *Smer nova zemlja* (*Direction New Earth*):

> A Christian can never be cautious enough when mingling with private revelations . . . but why not also enjoy Christ's words in an innocent play? As the following answer to the question of what happened to Judas: "If you knew what I did to Judas, you would take advantage of my goodness."[7]

Still the next quotation refers to Ulderich, the Abbot in the Benedictine cloister at the Timava River, in *Maranatà ali leto 999* (*Maranatà or the Year 999*):

> Though his will accepted his blindness, his pride still refused to accept it.[8]

And another about Nitard, the pilgrim to the Holy Land, who is taking farewell from the world in the year 999:

> Amelia, my love, I am taking farewell, I am doing it every day. Not

5 Alojz Rebula, *Zeleno izgnanstvo*, Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1981, p. 10.
6 Alojz Rebula, *Zeleno izgnanstvo*, p. 12.
7 Alojz Rebula, *Skozi prvo zagrinjalo*, p. 263.
8 Alojz Rebula, *Maranatà ali leto 999*, Klagenfurt, Ljubljana, Vienna: Mohorjeva založba, 1997, p. 100.

> from you, my love, but from everything that might prove corruptible. From the elements of our earth that might melt . . .[9]

I took just a very short glimpse at a small pebble on the shore of the Mediterranean, where Antiquity and Christianity both emerged. Am I correct in saying that, as far and as well as I can feel, conciliation between them is not needed and conflict between them is not a must?

9 Ibid., p. 112.

Antiquity and Christianity in the Slovenian Writer Alojz Rebula

Summary

The paper has no ambition to be either philosophically clear-cut or irreproachable as far as scholarly apparatus is concerned. It is more an essay written and also lived by someone that has been sharing Rebula's homeland as well as admiring his work for almost half a century. It deals with various aspects of Rebula's personality as perceived by someone not of the same profession, nor of his clear national, religious, and political convictions, but with a simple and somehow natural self-evident attitude that the conflict between Antiquity and Christianity is not a must and that a reconciliation therefore is not needed. In order to be like a little child before one's God, it is not necessary to give up one's love for the highest achievements of art and science. To be devoted to one's profession and nation, to enjoy one's work that is well done and even the acclamation of one's fellow men, does not necessarily mean to be in a process of losing the roots that constantly reminding one of the One and the only relevant. Through his texts, Rebula spoke to me as a great writer, a brilliant scholar, an outstanding member of Slovenian minority in Italy, and a more than merely practicing Christian. This essay provides some examples and proofs of such a statement.

Antika in krščanstvo pri slovenskem pisatelju Alojzu Rebuli

Povzetek

Referat ne stremi k temu, da bi bil bodisi filozofsko jasno utemeljen ali neoporečen, kar zadeva znanstveni aparat. Je bolj esej, ki sem ga napisala, pa tudi živela kot nekdo, ki je z Rebulo delil domovino in občudoval njegovo pisanje skoraj pol stoletja. Obravnava različne vidike njegove bogate osebnosti, kot jih zaznava nekdo, ki nima enakega poklica kakor on niti njegovih jasnih nacionalnih, političnih ali verskih prepričanj, ima pa preprosto in nekako samoumevno stališče, da spor med antiko in krščanstvom ni neizbežen in da zato sprava ni potrebna. Da bi bil kot otrok pred Bogom, se ti ni treba odreči ljubezni do najvišjih dosežkov umetnosti in znanosti. Biti predan poklicu in narodu, uživati v delu in celo v tem, da okolica tvoje delo občuduje, še ne pomeni, da izgubljaš zasidranost v Enem in edino pomembnem. Rebula mi je skoz svoje tekste govoril kot velik pisatelj, izreden izobraženec, izstopajoč pripadnik slovenske manjšine v Italiji in več kot samo praktični kristjan. Esej podaja nekaj zgledov in utemeljitev za takšno trditev.


Mednarodni simpozij • International Symposium
Antika in krščanstvo: spor ali sprava?
Antiquity and Christianity: A Conflict or a Conciliation?

The Discussion

First Round

Chairman: Gorazd Kocijančič

Gorazd Kocijančič: Now that we have heard some interesting presentations, I am opening the discussion. I noticed that during the presentations many of you wrote down your impressions, thoughts, and questions. Please, the floor is yours.

Vid Snoj: I have a question for Matjaž Črnivec. Matjaž, you spoke of mixing of what you called Jewish Christianity on the one hand and Greek philosophy on the other. However, as you said at the end of your presentation, the mere fact of this mixing does not seem to be a particular problem. If the Greek dualism between the material and the spiritual, the body and the soul, became that which was conceived as a distinctive feature of a genuine Christian identity only in the patristic era, then the questions arises: what is a real Christian identity? Does a *pure* Christian identity exist at all? You yourself have used the term "Jewish Christianity," but what is Christian identity if, in its early—or even its earliest—form, it is determined by *Jewishness*?

Matjaž Črnivec: This is a very pertinent question. I did not take much time, it is true, to elaborate on what would be the real identity of early Christianity, on the Christian paradox. As I already stated in my paper, my premise is this: instead of the paradigm, according to which the material is opposed to the spiritual, we could deduce—especially from the New Testament—a different paradigm, in which matter is lower than spirit, but *the opposition* between spiritual and material reality does not yet take place. In other words, the Christian ontological model of understanding the relationship between the material and the spiritual is more complex than the Greek ontological model because it includes the material without opposing or annihilating it. It includes the material world in a—let us say—more holistic picture. This is therefore the main feature of the "proto-Christian" paradigm and early Christian identity. Of course, there are also many other features.

Another important Christian "specific difference" is the understanding of evil. It seems to me that the early Christians had a much more sophisticated understanding of evil than, for example, Plato. In the early Christian, scriptural "dualism" that I have presented, good and evil are located within

the person, the mind, the heart. That is why this dualism is much more sophisticated and—I believe—much more accurate than the Greek one.

It was possible for Justin the Martyr and other apologists to claim that there were seeds of truth in Greek philosophy because there really are some similarities, but at the same time the apologists could say: "Christian revelation is superior to Greek philosophy because it is a disclosure of a deeper level of reality, of Christ himself." Above all, however, I would like to stress that the early Christian language and world view are always deeply *personal*. This Christological, personal dimension is crucial to the identity you are asking about.

Giovanni Grandi: I wonder why you did not consider Aristotle's perspective. His hylemorphism is very different from Platonism. If in Platonism the soul is—I am aware that I am oversimplifying—"inside" the body, then we can say that in the philosophical perspective of Aristotle the body is inside the soul. The spiritual path of Platonism is not a path of Antiquity as such. However, there remains the problem: why did early Christianity not appropriate the Aristotelian way of understanding the human predicament?

Another question. Your thoughts about Origen were very provocative. In Origen's view, the creation of matter follows the original sin. However, let us consider the following problem: "body" in the Christian idiom means the physical experience of *hýle*, but also the experience of corruption, of "flesh." How can we distinguish these?

Matjaž Črnivec: Concerning Aristotle, I can only agree. However, it is a historical fact that the Christians interacted mostly with the Platonic tradition. Of course, there were also other traditions in Greek culture in addition to the Aristotelian that could have offered their conceptual framework to the expression of the biblical word view—the traditions of Epicureans, Cynics, Greek tragedy, and so on. However, I am not aware of any significant early Christian interaction with these segments of the ancient Greek *paideía*. Thus I can only repeat your question.

Now, regarding your second question: perhaps it is hard for us to pinpoint the distinction between the semantic shades of the "somatic" conceptuality, but Origen—at least in my opinion—would say that the creation of the material world as such, the world as we know it, is subsequent to the fall. The world, however, that we conceive now is for him obviously a consequence of sin and basically a place of punishment. Yet the biblical, Hebrew world view has nothing to do with this conception. Latter Christian reactions to Origenism proved this. In both the Old and New

Testament there is a huge difference between material, bodily existence and corruption. Corruption, *phthorá*, is a consequence of sin, but material existence is prior to this. The concept of the resurrection of the body proves it. Salvation is not complete if the body is not restored as well. If we claimed that salvation is something purely spiritual, the resurrection of the body would be completely superfluous.

Gorazd Kocijančič: Just a small observation. You were talking about Plato. In my opinion, one should admit that his dialogues require a much more differentiated interpretation of his understanding of the relationship between the soul and the body. You quoted *Phaedo*, but *Phaedo*, as you all well know, is only *one* of his dialogues and, above all, *a dialogue*, not a monologue. As a starting point of the discussion, one can take the *Symposium*, which presents a very different kind of attitude towards bodily senses because the material world is understood here—*again only in the dialogue*—as the beginning of the ascent towards the Beautiful. The "holistic picture"—to use your expression—that we receive reading Plato's dialogues is pretty much different from the abbreviature that you have offered us. The fact is that the early Christian community was fed not on Plato's dialogues, but on Middle Platonism as a kind of philosophical religion developed from them. However, the main problem remains. Why did Christians believe that their world view was similar to the Platonic one? I think that your construction of "pre-Platonic" Christian identity—which, of course, was and still is very common in contemporary Protestant and Catholic theology—is not satisfying. Namely, there are many passages in the Gospels and Pauline epistles that already have a Platonic touch. For example, 2 Cor 2.14: "For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal." Or Col 3.2: "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

Matjaž Črnivec: I can accept your distinction between Plato and Platonism, which is beyond doubt. I have only chosen certain specific quotes from Plato that were relevant for his reception at the beginnings of Christianity. I do not mean that this is the whole message of Plato. However, as I put it initially, I have intentionally presented a radicalized view because I wanted to point out something. I am well aware of these kinds of elements in the New Testament. We have to take them seriously into account, but we should not forget the elements of early Christian spirituality that were

traditionally disregarded. The Platonic elements are *just elements* after all, yet the entire New Testament was traditionally interpreted *completely* in accordance with them. You have quoted two passages from the Pauline epistles, and one could also quote similar thoughts from the Gospels. However, this is only one part of the picture. The Church Fathers forgot this. When Origen writes against the millennarists, he says something like this: "They develop a Jewish interpretation, a Jewish kind of understanding." This is characteristic: Origen knew what he was talking about, he saw that from the Jewish perspective the eschatological *millennium* was an age in which the eschatological event would take place *in materiality*, not as a purely spiritual contemplation of eternal realities.

Gorazd Kocijančič: I still wonder whether one is therefore entitled to interpret John's Revelation in millennarist terms. I feel that the same hermeneutical problem is repeating itself over and over again. You have tried to present a more authentic reading of the New Testament. However, one could—and should—demand that the same be done with the Church Fathers. Do we understand them properly? In my humble opinion, you have applied a modern conceptual and hermeneutical framework in order to contradict the Church Fathers but, if you had applied the same hermeneutics to the patristic understanding of the body, then a different picture would have emerged.

Matjaž Črnivec: As I already stated, I really only wanted to broaden our understanding. I insist that there is *a remnant* in the New Testament, which was not thought in patristic literature. It is an imperative that we learn to develop a more complex understanding, one that would comprehend the radical patristic "spiritualism" properly and with more careful hermeneutics, but also include a proper Jewish understanding of the significance of the material world—the understanding that was also part of early Christian *otherness*.

Alen Širca: I think that you have overlooked the influence of Gnosticism. I believe—and I am not isolated in my opinion—that a specific proto-Gnostic world view is hidden behind devaluation of matter. The Gnostic discourse is much more dualistic than the Platonic and Neoplatonic.

Matjaž Črnivec: Yes, it may be that proto-Gnostic spirituality served as an immediate point of contact between Middle Platonic ideas and the patristic devaluation of matter. Origen was certainly reacting to Gnosticism. However—*omnis negatio determinatio*.

Marko Marinčič: It does not seem to me that your radicalized account of the Platonic concept of evil really corresponds either to Plato or

to Platonism. I must disagree particularly with what you said about Plato. In my opinion, in Plato evil is a psychological rather than an ontological category. This brings us to another question, a question about early Christian attitudes towards the body and sexuality. Do you think that there is evidence for a direct influence of Platonism on these attitudes? I see here a clear connection with Jewish tradition, which is very similar in this respect.

Matjaž Črnivec: In what respect?

Marko Marinčič: Jewish tradition is also characterized by a rather negative attitude towards sexuality.

Matjaž Črnivec: Well, I do not believe that the Jewish attitude towards the body and sexuality is negative. We should not confuse strict moral rules of sexual conduct and sexuality *per se*. Moreover, I think we are used to reading the Jewish sexual code through "Platonic" lenses. The scriptural view of sexuality, however, is quite the opposite. I would argue once more: in the Bible, sexuality is considered something holy and sacred, and this is why there are such strict rules around it. Essentially it is something holy, and this is why it must be protected and regulated. It is not bad in itself at all. How else you could explain the inclusion of Song of Songs in the canon? It is a very high point of revelation—revelation of God and of man. Its explicit sexual metaphorics would be completely useless if sexuality were considered evil in itself.

Vladimir Cvetković: At the beginning of your presentation you said that you would try to radicalize the differences between Antiquity and Christianity. However, I cannot agree with your reading of St. Maximus the Confessor. I do not think that Maximus had a negative attitude towards the body, although in his texts you can find sayings such as the one you have quoted: "He that has his mind attached to the love of God despises all visible things and even his own body as something foreign." Nevertheless, in my opinion the translation of *sárx* as "sinful nature" is much more a heritage of Luther than of the Church Fathers. You cannot find it either in Maximus or in previous patristic tradition. The Church Fathers talk about *the corruptibility* of our nature, but not about its *sinfulness*.

Matjaž Črnivec: The precise term may be questionable. I was only referring to some of the Bible translations, which tend to translate *sárx*, in a certain context of Pauline epistles, as sinful or, simply, as human nature. I do not insist on this translation. My point was not to present an interpretation of Maximus and Plato, and so on—I admire both authors, personally—but to take some of their views as of a certain kind of atti-

tude, which was characteristic for the Church Fathers and which impoverished, solely in my opinion, the wholeness of Christian truth. As far as I know, Maximus was a much more complex thinker than the sentence I have quoted from him shows. It would therefore be completely unfair to present him like this, I agree. Nevertheless, I think that the fragmentary quotes I have presented are representative of a typical mindset that existed and still exists within Christianity. This mindset is still fully present and thriving even in Protestant circles. In order to understand the concept of sinful nature, *sárx*, we would probably have to undertake an exegesis of Romans 8 and Galatians 5, where the opposition of spirit and flesh is most clearly presented. The common patristic understanding of *sárx* as "body" seems to be too weak here. There is obviously a deeper meaning: for Paul *sárx* becomes a metaphor for corruptible human nature, which rises up against God.

Giovanni Grandi: I have a question for Vladimir Cvetković. St. Thomas Aquinas said that we cannot decide philosophically if the world is eternal or not. He tried to distinguish two different problems: the createdness of the world as its absolute ontological dependence from God and the relation between time and eternity. It is not one and the same problem. Is this sort of distinction in some way already present in St. Methodius?

Vladimir Cvetković: St. Methodius is the first Christian author that uses the Aristotelian term *diástema*, although in a completely new, Christian context—namely, in order to explain the generation of Logos. Maybe you can see some analogies here with the Thomistic paradigm, but I do not think that this is a good way of interpreting St. Methodius.

Giovanni Grandi: However, it is still intriguing: can we think eternity, following the lead of Church Fathers? Can we think something that happens in a dimension that is different from the perception of time? We are somehow forced to think in terms of "before" and "after." When we try to think the reality of God, we are forced to use an inappropriate language, a completely inadequate conceptuality. It seems to me that both St. Methodius and St. Thomas struggled with this question.

Vladimir Cvetković: For Methodius, eternity is neither an objective nor a subjective category. I think it is rather an attribute of the absolute God. God himself is—because He is above all, including *aión*. What is, however, the difference between eternity and time? When St. Maximus, following Denys the Areopagite, defines eternity, he is talking about *aión* as a lack of change, an apophatic absence of movement. In contrast, we are surrounded by movements in this temporal world. However, eternity is an

attribute of the absolute God, like goodness. It is not a human concept.

Gorazd Kocijančič: Are there any further questions?

Milica Kač: May I ask Pavle Rak a question? You concluded your paper somehow pessimistically, saying that it is your personal problem to be rooted in Antiquity and Christianity at the same time. Did I get it right?

Pavle Rak: More or less.

Milica Kač: But look, what if we simply accept that being a Christian *today* and being rooted in Antiquity are two *compatible possibilities* of existence? Of course, the problem was totally different in times of early Christianity. However, Antiquity is today only what I "use" and enjoy. Antiquity has brought us great literature, magnificent means to express ourselves—yet it is not *our way of life* any more. What is your comment on such a "practical" approach to the problem?

Pavle Rak: When I said that the way you summarized my opinion is more or less accurate I meant it in a sense that I have to choose between the two approaches to the Christianity that are both mine. I have to choose between the interpretation of Christian truth that is rather open for different, Christian and even non-Christian, experiences, and another interpretation of Christianity that I feel has its cogency in its dogmatic exclusivism, in the incontestable primacy of the orthodox understanding of Christ as an absolute *alétheia*. This choice marks me in a sense that I—as I have said—sometimes feel like being schizophrenic in the spiritual sense of the word. Schizophrenia is a mental illness, and the same can be said of spiritual schizophrenia. There is nothing good in it.

Iztok Osojnik: A very general question. The topic of this discussion is called Antiquity and Christianity. From this discussion I am realizing that we are confronting very complex phenomena. There are many subtones to the entire melody. When you talk about Antiquity, you do not talk about Antiquity as such but always about a particular phenomenon and, when you talk about Christianity, you also discuss specific authors and texts. Is there any—not outspoken—understanding of what Antiquity and Christianity are at all? What do you mean by Antiquity, and what by Christianity?

Gorazd Kocijančič: In my opinion, one of the modest achievements of this discussion—particularly in our post-communist cultural context—is that we are not talking in broad terms about Antiquity and Christianity any more. We silently agree that we cannot talk about these complex phenomena without dealing with very particular matters, individual texts and some fundamental questions of hermeneutics. Fifteen or twenty years ago

this would not have been possible. Scholars were obliged to use ideological lenses and reductionism. By avoiding general definitions of Antiquity and Christianity, it seems to me that we are putting things back where they belong. However, even in this way we are not doing justice to all their complexity.

Iztok Osojnik: Yes, but Antiquity is nevertheless much wider than—let us say—the period of two or three hundred years after Christ. It also includes the Roman period and a great number of other phenomena.

Gorazd Kocijančič: Of course, no one here is pretending to be exhaustive. Our point of reference is Averintsev's book. It was clearly specified that we would deal with the interaction and transformation of the "pagan"—or Greco-Roman, if you like—world into the Christian world.

Vladimir Cvetković: I have a short remark about Justin the Martyr, whom Franci Zore talked about. I believe there is a difference between Justin's concept of *lógos spermatikós*, obviously adopted from Stoic vocabulary, which refers to a rational concept, and *spérmata toû lógou*, which are more of a biblical origin. I think that for Justin *spérmata toû lógou* were the words, or teaching, of Christ. Franci, do you agree that there is a difference between these two concepts?

Franci Zore: No, I do not agree that "rational concept" is a proper understanding of Justin's *lógos spermatikós*. This is meant much more ontologically. It may have the connotation of the teaching of Christ, of his words—but this is not its central aspect. Namely, the secondary aspect became possible only after Christ. I think that the distinction I talk about is important to Justin because his approach to *lógos* is neither only philosophical nor only biblical. He tried to give it a universal significance. It was present before Christ and revealed in him in a special way. Even when Justin talked about *lógos* before Christ, he did not mean only rationality in the contemporary sense of a word, mediated through the "age of reason." The *lógos* that interested him appears in the Aristotelian definition of the human being as *zóon* with *lógos*. However, the difference between animal and man does not only lie in the possibility of reasoning. The possibility of *lógos* is much more. It is the possibility of the foundation of the human being as a human being with all his behavior, thinking, and practical action.

Gorazd Kocijančič: I think that the problem we have not mentioned yet is that in early apologetics there were rather different currents of thought. On the one hand there was Justin, and there were Tatian and Tertullian on the other, who were radically hostile towards Greek philosophy. In a way there was already a kind of schizophrenic situation, which

was referred to by Pavle, in early Christianity. It is important even today that we make our decision at this crossroad of thought and spirituality. This is why I do not agree with whoever writes that Justin lacks the ability for a deep synthesis. His fundamental insight is of great depth, and I think it was not superseded in our time at all. We are dealing here with the understanding of one's own revealed religion as something that is at the same time open for any wisdom, any spiritual tradition, any great cultural value. This is a brilliant idea with far-reaching consequences even for contemporary Christian thought.

Franci Zore: I personally do not agree with the critique of Justin's philosophy. I was surprised when I read it. Nevertheless, it was important for me because it showed me how he—as the first Christian philosopher—is received today. When Justin talks about philosophy and Christianity, he understands both as part of the same story. Contemporary readers are obviously unable to follow him any more.

Gorazd Kocijančič: Some of them obviously are. I think that Pavle Rak's account of *gerondas* Partenius, who said to his disciples that he feels the benevolent presence of archeological remains, is a part of the same living tradition . . .

Franci Zore: This is precisely what I meant when speaking "of the same story."

Giovanni Grandi: As I have tried to show in my presentation, it is important not to pose questions merely to history or to books, but to a person. To a real person. Moreover, if this person is an icon of a living tradition, then it can show us the only way we can make the "translation." Namely, translation is not only a transposition from one text into another. It is a possibility of a dialogue in life. It is the only way to build something common, if it is not supposed to be totally abstract—and abstract universality is always violent in a way.

Gorazd Kocijančič: Let the first speaker also have the last word: at three o'clock we will begin our afternoon session. Thank you very much for your attention.

Second Round
Chairman: Pavle Rak

Pavle Rak: Good afternoon. We should have met on Pentecost, so that my lack of knowledge of some foreign languages would have been annihilated by the Holy Spirit. Anyhow, I hope that the majority of you understood well what was spoken of here, and the discussion can continue. Are there any questions?

Giovanni Grandi: I have a question for Gorazd. Would you, please, tell us something more about what you called "agapic hermeneutics?" It appears quite promising to approach different authors from this perspective.

Gorazd Kocijančič: I can explain a bit. Why did I choose the name "agapic hermeneutics?" I wanted to emphasize that in reading one has to develop openness to the reality of the other, which radically alienates the subject of the openness from itself. Thus, it is very different from a kind of understanding that you can posit in a system of contemporary humanities, somehow ordered by *lógos*. It is characterized by different "logics," which operate beyond every common principle of identity, of non-contradiction, and so on. I agree with you, Giovanni, that this approach is promising because I believe this is the only way we can really approach *different authors in the real foundation of their difference*. If you want to read Augustine, you have to read him in this way, with this openness that destroys your own horizon. You have to be open to the *aloneness* of the world of the author—the aloneness of being, which is a concept beyond any concept. How is this possible? We should start with a practical endeavor. My short essay was a practical exercise in this kind of hermeneutics.

Pavle Rak: I will abuse my position as moderator here for a brief comment. Perhaps the term "agapic hermeneutics" should be replaced by "erotic hermeneutics"—if we remember Denys' claim that *éros* is more ecstatic than *agápe*.

Gorazd Kocijančič: Of course, in the framework of Denys' conceptuality this could be done. However, I am afraid that the contemporary understanding of *éros* points in another direction.

Vid Snoj: My question will also be a hermeneutical one. Gorazd, in your presentation you have explained that in "agapic hermeneutics," as you have called your reading of Denys's identity, one loses himself completely in the process of understanding the other's text. In this understanding, only

the being of the other therefore remains. Thus, my question is this: how can I then *regain myself* in the hermeneutical process? Or to put it another way: how does my being reappear?

Gorazd Kocijančič: My hypostatical being, my hypostasis, does not disappear at any time. It is always there, and it is the only being that I really experience. That is the core of the hermeneutical problem. I am always encaptured in my own being, in the only experience of the being that I have. However, at the same time, in the ethical transgression of ontology, in reading the text or entering into a personal relation—and reading the text is always entering into a personal relationship—I am being disclosed by the *only* being of the other. The problem that you have noticed is real, but your question cannot be answered in the framework of ordinary logic. Here, we have an onto-logical contradiction, which is nevertheless a basic experience of life.

Perhaps I can use an analogy from the natural sciences. Using quantum mechanics, you can describe light as a wave or as particle, but you cannot logically connect both theories. Here we are faced—on a different, much more profound metaontological level—with the same problem, that is, the problem of suspension of common sense. We are faced with a reality that we cannot describe with our language, but our insight has the power to indicate the meta-logical event that is *real*. This is the power of the philosophical *lógos*, which is something fundamentally different from the *lógos* of the sciences and of common sense.

Alen Širca: I have what may be a naive question. You have commented on Denys' mystical identity. However, what about the other identities in his work? Denys claims that he was a disciple of Hierotheus, and many contemporary scholars claim that he meant Proclus. Could we take Denys' statement as an indication that he considered himself a disciple of Proclus at the mystical level?

Gorazd Kocijančič: Well, I do not know if I really understood your question. I think, however, that it was still put in terms of historical identification. We all know that there were many attempts to identify Denys. There has been an enormous amount of historical work done in this field. However, I tried to shift the question to a different horizon. Of course, there are other identities in Denys' work that can be conceived and properly understood only in the frame of the basic "theo-poiethetic" identity, disclosed by agapic hermeneutics. However, this does not give us a clue to their historical counterparts.

Matjaž Črnivec: I have another question about Denys, but from

a little bit different angle. The central concept of your presentation was "unity," or "oneness." Is this not an indicator that here we are not dealing with genuine Christian mystical experience, which is always an experience of participation in the Trinity?

Gorazd Kocijančič: I have not had enough time to show how the Trinitarian dimension in Denys' work is constitutive of his very concept of oneness. The apophatic reality of "God," complete abandonment of any rational concept that would be "similar" to absolute "Reality," also implies *Aufhebung* of any "rational" concept of oneness. This is how Denys himself could think the *revealed* Trinity. He developed a subtle dialectics of *henóseis* and *diairéseis* that deconstructs our categories in a transgressive manner *because of the revelation of the Trinity*. Of course, this also applies to the process of deification: in metaontological *théosis* one does not experience only the dialectics between the same and the other but also—again metaontological—oneness of God and the Trinity of revealed divine *hypostáseis*.

Carmen Angela Cvetković: I think you have pointed out where the tension between the East and the West lies. It is disclosed in different emphases—in oneness in Denys the Areopagite and the Trinitarian dimension in St. Augustine. I am not talking here about Augustine's *Confessiones*. I am talking about his *De Trinitate,* which was mainly interpreted as a dogmatic work, but which, particularly in its second part, seems to be more and more a masterpiece of mystical theology. Augustine is searching for the image of God in his soul, and that image must be Trinitarian. *Memoria* is an icon of the Father, *intelligentia* of the Son, and *voluntas* of the Holy Spirit.

Gorazd Kocijančič: I wonder wether there is really only a question of emphases. Oneness in Denys is not oneness in any ordinary sense, which would oppose plurality. His radical apophaticism shifts the ordinary use of words. Augustine is, of course, also aware of the otherness of God, yet he is inclined to a kind of "psychological" understanding of the Trinity. I believe that we are not dealing here with two different complementary theologies, but with very different types of thought. Namely, the problem is not the relationship between unity and trinity. It lies elsewhere. We have the totally apophatic (and at the same time Christian and Trinitarian) thought of Denys on the one hand, and the thought that thinks in terms of *analogia entis* on the other.

Valentin Kalan: I admit that I was quite impressed with Kocijančič's idea that personal identity cannot be understood without otherness. This is

something quite different from the old definition of "person" that we know; for example, from Boethius: a person is an individual substance of rational nature, and so on. Can we use Denys the Areopagite today for a critique of moral personalism, not to mention moral egotism of every kind? I believe that Denys' understanding of oneness and otherness could be useful for challenging the contemporary understanding of personal identity.

Gorazd Kocijančič: Of course, I think that not only Denys, but many Church Fathers are useful guides today in challenging various aspects of the egocentric mentality of modern society. Here, there is really no difference between Denys and St. Augustine. The texts that the Church Fathers have left us are a heritage that is still philosophically pregnant, enabling us to develop new categories of thought and to cope with the reality of the contemporary world. I even think that this is the most important reason for our gathering here.

Pavle Rak: It is time to close down this round of the discussion. I would like to express my thanks to all the participants.

Third and Fourth Round
Chairman: Marko Marinčič

Marko Marinčič: We have entered the third round of our discussion, which for lack of time we will unite with the fourth—and last—one. I am sure that, after hearing the variegated presentations from the literary field, there is still much to be asked.

Biljana Dojčinović-Nešić: I have a question for Vid Snoj, concerning James Joyce and his Ulysses. There are at least two ways of seeing Joyce's Ulysses; namely, as a negative or positive type of hero. Above all, however, Joyce made his Ulysses funny. He used parody and all the other possible strategies to create his story. In my opinion, however, the most important fact is that Joyce's Ulysses is a Jew. When he utters his first sentence to the anti-Semitic Dubliners, he says that Moses was a Jew, and Christ was also a Jew. Do you think that Joyce, by making a Jew the main character in his novel, attained something that may be called a third great representation of Ulysses in European literature?

Vid Snoj: If I understood you well, your question is whether Joyce reached literary greatness by introducing Jewishness into the figure of Odysseus or Ulysses, who remained a typically Greek hero in European literature until Joyce's path-breaking treatment. Well, I am not quite sure

that I can follow you in the direction you propose. The hero of Joyce's *Ulysses* is certainly a variant of a wandering Jew. However, when Joyce looked for a model for his Ulysses in European literary tradition, he did not use either Homer or Dante, nor did he reach for any Jewish source whatsoever. He made much use of Homer's *Odyssey* for compositional reasons, to be sure, but, in shaping Ulysses' character, he chose a different model. He came upon this model in another Greek writer, a philosopher that severely criticized the poetic myth and nevertheless wrote his own myths on subjects that cannot be handled properly in a discursive way. The philosopher I have in mind is none other than Plato.

In Book 10 of Plato's *Republic*, there is a famous myth on the afterlife, the myth of Er. In Plato's mythopoetic narrative, Er is a man that, after seemingly being killed in a war, returns to life on the day of his funeral and tells the others what he saw in the afterlife: the souls of men, which were passing from life to afterlife, and the other way around. Among those souls, which were being reincarnated, coming from the afterlife again to life, he saw the soul of Odysseus. Each soul then chose its own fate, but the choice of Odysseus' soul was as though it were not made by the former hero, the hero of the ancient myth. Namely, Odysseus' soul did not choose a great life at all. On the contrary, its choice was the life of an *idiótes*. The life of a private man. A life without glory.

Thus, the Odysseus that we encounter in Plato is a prototype of Joyce's Ulysses because in Joyce's novel the hero, Leopold Bloom, is an average man, a Jew by descent, it is true, but, what seems still more important, also a man that lives a perfectly ordinary life—and it is all about one day in his life, 16 June 1904, which came to be called "Bloomsday" soon after the publication of Joyce's novel. Or, to correct myself, Plato's Odysseus is not the prototype of Joyce's Ulysses properly speaking. In fact, the life of an ordinary man is only chosen, but not lived by him. Joyce's novel could therefore pass for an ingenious creation on the basis of the choice that Plato's Odysseus has made.

Biljana Dojčinović-Nešić: I agree, but I did not want to ask the very complicated question of the sources of Joyce's *Ulysses*. What I asked about was the issue of "being other" in Dublin. Bloom was born a Jew, he is a Christian, a Catholic and a Protestant, and he is also a mason. Thus, he is everything, almost everything. And this is funny.

Vid Snoj: He is funny indeed, and for many reasons also very likeable. Harold Bloom, a great literary critic of our times, wrote somewhere that Leopold Bloom is the most likeable hero of modern literature.

Marko Marinčič: As regards the models for Joyce's Ulysses, I would propose another possible parallel in addition to Plato's *Republic*. As a model I would rather suggest the Odysseus myth as it was interpreted by the Cynic philosophers—Odysseus as a common man, a traveling cosmopolitan. There is a reference to this kind of interpretation in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, which were also a possible source, or model, for Joyce, although I am reluctant to speak about direct influences.

Gorazd Kocijančič: Vid, your account of Ulysses in Western literature has a clear two-partite structure. On the one side, there is Homer, and on the other there is Dante. Here is Antiquity, there is Christianity. Homer is a representative of the pagan world view, whereas Dante expresses the Christian world view. I wonder, however, what would follow if someone questioned the very assumption that Dante is a Christian poet *par excellence*; namely, that he *paradigmatically* expresses the Christian world view. Such questioning could seem odd, but there were some very prominent theologians—Hans Urs von Balthasar, for example—that were rather uncomfortable with Dante's presentation of the other world. They felt that his spirituality was in a problematic relationship with ancient Christian tradition.

Vid Snoj: I am well aware of another opinion that questions the Christianness of Dante's spirituality. However, the vast majority still holds him to be the greatest Christian poet of the West in the Middle Ages. We may share this opinion or not (and I admit that I had it in mind while contrasting Homer and Dante) but this is not the point, in my view. Be that as it may, it is precisely Dante's account of Ulysses that I did not want to present as a paradigmatic Christian text. In my presentation, the emphasis lay on Dante's transfiguration of Ulysses' figure, which is *not accomplished in the traditional Christian way*—not in a way that Ulysses' figure would come out Christianized. In this respect, the contrast, the opposition between Homer and Dante, between Antiquity and Christianity, could be viewed as a starting point, but not as the point of my presentation.

Pavle Rak: I would like to address my first question to Alen. What would be the impact of Ephrem the Syrian in today's culture? I know that his poetry is still very alive, very much present in Russian culture. It may well be that it does not exist in the best translations because the 19th century translations were made from Greek, but the fact is that Ephrem the Syrian is extremely well-known in Russia. He is also present in Russian literary classics. Pushkin, for example, made an adaptation of one of his famous hymns, and his presence in the spiritual world of Dostoevsky is

also widely accepted. This is due to the fact that he is still a living part of church worship. On the other hand, you quoted some new English translations. Does this mean that the poetry of Ephrem the Syrian is now plowing its way into contemporary Western culture? What kind of status does it have or could it have?

Alen Širca: Ephrem the Syirian was, and still is, very influential in the Christian East, but there are not many traces of his work in the West, at least in modern times. Of crucial importance for the modern revival of Ephrem studies is the work of a scholar from Oxford, Sebastian Brock, who has made several good translations. However, proper literary—and liturgical—evaluation of Ephrem's poetic achievement is still a work to be done.

Vladimir Cvetković: Can we connect Ephraim the Syrian with the general culture of his times? I think that it is important not to lose sight of the entire picture of Christianity. We should emphasize not only Syriac—or Greek or Latin—patrology, but strive toward a general pattern of the Christian faith of his era.

Alen Širca: I would prefer to talk about a sort of continuity rather than a general pattern—namely, continuity of a particular Semitic way of thinking, of worshiping, and so on. In Ephrem the Syrian, there are references to older Acadian and Aramaic traditions, so much so that his main impact on Greek or Latin Christianity is connected with a specific Semitic character of his metaphors. In fact, the general pattern is *a network of continuities*. Of course, Ephrem the Syrian is not the most important source of Semitic imagery in other Christian literatures. If you read Greek or Latin patristic hymnody, you will immediately recognize the Semitic character of its crucial metaphors. However, this imagery is of Semitic provenience because it draws on the Bible.

Matjaž Črnivec: I would like to get involved in this discussion because it is somehow connected with my own presentation and the controversy that it has fueled. In my opinion, the Syriac Christian tradition perhaps more that any other shows us that Christianity can be very different from what we are used to because here we can see it in its Semitic form, which is drastically different from the development of Christianity in our, Greco-Roman cultural world—and this is also my answer to Pavle Rak's question about what the importance of Syriac poetry might be in our society. I think that it could be precisely this: to show that there was a living and vibrant Christian tradition that expressed itself differently.

Aleš Maver: I have a question for Aleksandra Nikiforova. The topic

of your presentation, the conversion from paganism to Christianity, is very important. However, don't you think that "the way to Damascus" is a bit too optimistic a metaphor for that process? I believe that very few converted Greeks, and even born Christians, became blind to "pagan" reason and literature in Antiquity. We like to indulge ourselves in an illusionistic search for pure Christianity and pure paganism, but from the historical point of view this is obviously inappropriate.

Aleksandra Nikiforova: First of all, for me Christianity is not a theory, but a practice of life. From that point of view, the only access to Christ is to become absolutely blind. We should try with all the forces of our souls to reach God. This ideal is, of course, rarely achieved. Paganism and Christianity are mixed up in history from the beginning to our times. Nevertheless, we should not forget the lesson of the way to Damascus: *to lose our sight and to find a new one*.

Aleš Maver: I think that we are actually speaking on two different levels. I spoke from the historical point of view, and you are obviously speaking from the theological one.

Pavle Rak: Maybe we could try to reconcile the two points of view? I admit that I am very fond of Bishop Synesius; although a bishop, he sincerely admitted that some of his Neoplatonic ideas were not in accordance with faith of the Church. What is, in my opinion, important here is sincerity and honesty, which are so rare in our times. Our contemporary culture is imbued with opportunism, and this opportunism is much more dangerous than sincerity.

Matjaž Črnivec: I think we are touching on something very important now. What happens after the blinded have recovered their sight? Someone obtains a pure vision of Christ. But what happens next? Does it mean that Christianity makes its own culture *ex nihilo*, or can the pure vision of Christ be translated into certain already existing cultural structures and models, either ethnic or Semitic, contemporary or aboriginal? The question that is really important is how we can understand the relationship between Christianity and its cultural expressions. My initial thought would be that Christianity can appear *only in different cultural forms*. Even in the New Testament there are "Hebraists" and "Hellenists," and already in the Bible we find the coexistence of the two very different expressions of Christianity.

Gorazd Kocijančič: I have a question for Brane Senegačnik. Brane, in your presentation you were somehow trying to find the transcendent dimension of Greek tragedy. However, what if we try the other way around?

In your opinion, is there something in tragic wisdom that is an enduring legacy even for Christianity?

Brane Senegačnik: There were many attempts to establish the tragic dimension of Christianity. The best of them was accomplished by German philosopher Max Scheller. I personally believe that we all live our lives on different levels. Even if we spiritually share a Christian experience, if we believe that we are Christians, we also have an experience of the tragic dimension of existence. This is perhaps even the most important hermeneutic condition for understanding the tragic art in our culture.

Gorazd Kocijančič: A question for Milica Kač. It is well known that Slovenian was not Rebula's first language. Do you find traces of this fact in his novels?

Milica Kač: Yes, in a paradoxical way. Every sentence that he makes is something monumental because he is struggling with language. For him, language is something that is not just there. He learned it, he fought for it. He felt it to be his native language, or as something that he had to develop as if it were his native language. As I already said, he wrote his first diaries in French and translated his thoughts into Greek. His first year in Ljubljana was actually something incredible, because he and Stane Gabrovec were walking along the streets and translating graffiti like *Istra, Trst, Gorica, to naša je pravica!* 'We are entitled to Istria, Trieste, and Gorizia!' into Greek and Latin, so as to practice. When Rebula came to Ljubljana, he had twenty or thirty major literary works in Latin because of the secondary school he attended, but he was unable to write fluently in Slovenian.

Gorazd Kocijančič: If you look more closely at Rebula's language, there are a great number of neologisms in it. Rebula is very daring in creating new words, and I think this is a kind of attitude that is not usual even for native speakers.

Milica Kač: If I may comment briefly on this: this is where I absolutely do not agree with Katarina Šalamun-Biedrzycka; in the book I mentioned in which she honored the 70th anniversary of Rebula's birth, she wrote not just once, but several times: "This should be corrected." I believe that is a misunderstanding of Rebula's creative approach to Slovenian. *Quod scripsit, scripsit.*

Vid Snoj: I have a question for Biljana Dojčinović-Nešić. What exactly do you mean by the term "personal cartography?" Is this a sort of a plan that encompasses figures of Christian and Greek provenience like Christ or Chiron, of whom you spoke in your presentation, or is it a gallery of such traditional figures that are literary transformed?

Biljana Dojčinović-Nešić: Neither of the two, actually. The term "personal cartography" is my attempt to explain what happens with autobiography in a novel. It is based on the idea of the nomadic subject. It is about remembering without nostalgia, about describing places where we were, but not with nostalgia, with the wish to go back there, but just being aware of it, just describing it. This is also part of our becoming eternal, but in the sense of this earthly life. The personal cartography enables one to shed all these burdens that remembering the past carries with itself.

Vid Snoj: I see. It appears that I have missed the dynamic dimension of your conception of the term in question. Thank you for your explanation.

Marko Marinčič: Are there any other questions? If not, let me conclude the formal part of the conference without a formal address and without saying final words of either conflict or conciliation. However, the symposium in the proper sense of a word is not over yet. On behalf of the organizers, I would like to invite you to another place where we can continue our discussions late into the evening in a truly symposiastic manner—that is, "drinking together."

Transcribed by Milica Kač
Edited by Gorazd Kocijančič

Acta comparativistica Slovenica
2

Knjiga ***Antika in krščanstvo: spor ali sprava?*** je zbornik mednarodnega simpozija z istim naslovom, ki je potekal 9. in 10. maja 2007 v Ljubljani. Naslov simpozija povzema osrednjo témo vélike knjige Sergeja Averinceva ***Poetika zgodnjebizantinske literature***, ki je leta 2005 izšla v slovenskem prevodu. Povzema jo v obliki vprašanja, ki nekako odmeva alternativo Atene – Jeruzalem Leva Šestova, kateremu je bil posvečen naš prejšnji mednarodni simpozij (zbornik tega simpozija izšel kot prvi zvezek knjižne zbirke »Acta comparativistica Slovenica«). Ob tem vprašanju – vprašanju o kontinuiteti oziroma diskontinuiteti med antiko in krščanstvom – se je na novem simpoziju zgodil shod različnih disciplin, predvsem teologije, filozofije in literarne zgodovine. Knjiga prinaša njihovo bero.

The volume ***Antiquity and Christianity: Conflict or Conciliation?*** is a collection of papers delivered at an international symposium with the same title, which took place from 9 to 10 May 2007 in Ljubljana. The title of the symposium resumes the main subject of the great book by Sergei Averintsev, ***The Poetics of Early Byzantine Literature***, which was translated into Slovenian in 2005. This subject is summarized in the form of a question that in some way echoes the alternative of Athens and Jerusalem by Leo Shestov, to whom our previous international symposium was dedicated (the collection of papers given there was published as the first volume of the series "Acta comparativistica Slovenica"). Prompted by this question—that of continuity or discontinuity between Antiquity and Christianity—the new symposium hosted a gathering of various disciplines, primarily theology, philosophy, and literary history. The volume presents their *collecta*.