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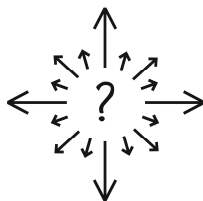
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The Influence of Zeno's Axiom on Plato's Doctrine of the Fundamental Geometrical Figures

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Biljana Radovanović (University of Niš, Serbia)

Abstract

In order to defend Parmenides' doctrine of the One in terms of a homogeneous, continuous, and indivisible being, Zeno argued that, if a multitude were possible, it would have to consist of a plurality of units (points), which is impossible because the units (points) of the multitude have no magnitude. That to which the units would be added could not increase just as that from which the units would be subtracted could not decrease. In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle named this proposition "Zeno's Axiom." This being said, Plato's ontology is based on two principles: the One and the Multitude (the Indeterminate Dyad). The introduction of multitude into the constituency of the whole of existence implies a direct negation of Zeno's Axiom, which, in turn, shows the paradoxical nature of such introduction. Our paper is concerned with the influence of Zeno's Axiom on Plato's philosophy, especially on his theory of the fundamental geometrical figures, i.e., points, lines, planes, and bodies.

Keywords: Zeno's axiom • point • line • plane • body • geometry • Plato

1. Introduction: Zeno's Axiom

In order to defend Parmenides' doctrine of the One in terms of a homogeneous, continuous, and indivisible being, Zeno argues that, if a multitude were possible, it would have to consist of a plurality of units (points), which is impossible because the units (points) of the multitude have no magnitude. In order to defend Parmenides' doctrine, Zeno criticizes the position of those who attack him. First of all, he attacks the Py-

thagorean conception of the existence of a multitude of units. He demonstrates the deficiencies of the Pythagorean doctrine by means of a *reductio ad absurdum*. In *Metaphysics*, Aristotle uses Zeno's Axiom to argue that there is no such thing as an indivisible unit of multitude.¹ Unlike Zeno, Aristotle uses the term *στιγμή* (*stigmē*) to denote the point as an indivisible unit. This means that the unit does not exist unless it is indivisible.² Zeno is not primarily interested in defending the assumption that that which lacks extension does not exist, but rather in finding "an adequate candidate" for the constituent of the multitude. As such, the point is nothing since it has no magnitude, thickness, or mass. If such unit lacking extension were added to something, it would not increase it. Nor would any subtraction decrease it. In other words, according to the mathematical interpretation of Zeno's Axiom, the addition of a point to a point cannot result in a line, just as the addition of a line to a line (in concatenation) cannot result in thickness. The same is true of the addition of a plane to a plane or the subtraction of a plane from another.

2. Definition of the Point

In the first definition of Book 1 of *The Elements*, Euclid holds that: "The point is that which has no parts."³ Obviously, Euclid considers a geometrical point to be an entity that lacks breadth and length. In other words, it lacks dimensions and is therefore to be considered zero-dimensional. A well-known German classical philologist, Hermann Fränkel, insisted on the difference between nothing and units lacking magnitude, i.e., points.⁴ He thinks that the Eleatics concluded that, if something is annulled, it does not exist. If the point is annulled as a zero-dimensional entity, does it mean that it does not exist? Mathematicians would have no great difficulty answering this question, since for them the concept of point is one of

¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, trans. W. D. Ross, Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991, 1001b10–26.

² *Ibid.*, 1001b10–26.

³ Euclid, *The Elements*, in *The Thirteen Books of Euclid's Elements*, translated with introduction and commentary by T. L. Heath, vol. I, Introduction and Books I, II, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 153.

⁴ Hermann Fränkel, "Zeno of Elea's Attacks on Plurality," *American Journal of Philology*, vol. 63, n. 1, 1942, pp. 1–25; vol. 63, n. 2, 1942, pp. 193–206.

the fundamental concepts of the axiomatic system in Euclidian geometry. For a contemporary mathematician, the word “point” is meaningful only in reference to the system to which points belong. The difficulty rather arises with ontologists, who have to determine the ontological status of the point: in which manner and in which sense does the geometrical point exist? Or, following Plato, in which realm can a geometrical point be found? Can it be found in the sensible (ορατόν) or in the intelligible (νοετόν) realm? Can we perceive a geometrical point in physical space or can we only conceive it mentally?

Let us repeat the simplest version of Zeno's Axiom in light of these questions: *An indivisible magnitude is nothing, it does not exist.* This is because any magnitude is divisible *ad infinitum*. Thus, there are no indivisible magnitudes. Historically speaking, Zeno's Axiom was not directed against the thesis that there exist points that lack magnitude, i.e., points that have no parts, indivisible points. Instead, it was probably directed against the Pythagorean doctrine of the geometrical unit, i.e., the point with an indivisible magnitude.⁵ It is impossible for a spatial magnitude to consist of indivisible spatial magnitudes. Using propositional logic, the previous claim can be demonstrated as follows:

1. If the point as a geometrical unit had magnitude, then it would be divisible ($P \rightarrow Q$)
2. The point is not divisible ($\neg Q$)
3. Therefore, according to *modus tollens*, the point has no magnitude ($\neg P$)

Let us turn to Aristotle's account of the senses of the word “one”: “we say that the continuous is one or that the indivisible is one, or things are said to be one, when the account of their essence is one and the same, as liquor and drink. If their One is one in the sense of continuous, it is many; for the continuous is divisible *ad infinitum*.”⁶ By means of

⁵ In a two-dimensional Euclidean space, the point is represented in an ordered pair (x, y) where x and y stand for numerical values, i.e., for a position at an abscissa and ordinate.

⁶ Aristotle, *Physics*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, trans. R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gay, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991, 185b8–12.

this semantic distinction, Aristotle adduces that being must have a magnitude, and a continuous and unlimited one at that. In the Pythagorean conception of the fundamental geometrical figures, a point is considered a monad occupying a location and the number one is seen as a point (monad) without a location. Aristotle was not prone to accept such a conception of the point and, therefore, criticizes it: “Moreover, there can always be something between points (for all lines are intermediate between points), whereas it is not necessary that there should be anything between units; for there is nothing between the numbers one and two.”⁷ The phenomenon of the point is that which distinguishes geometrical space from the physical one. The difference between a geometrical and a physical point is that the former has no extension, whereas the latter does. Also, the geometrical line has no width (thickness) but serves as a surface boundary. In physical space, a position is found in the real part of that space and is as such dimensionally determined as space. Unlike points in geometrical space, those in physical space (physical points) have a magnitude. In geometrical space, there is no juxtaposition (parallel positioning) in which a line could arise from a series of points and in which a plane could arise from lines or a body from planes. A zero-dimensional entity such as the geometrical point cannot produce a unidimensional entity such as the line. The basic difference between the point and the (Pythagorean) monad is its location. For the Pythagoreans, due to the theory of juxtaposition, location is related to magnitude. In this respect, to say that “a point is a monad with a location is the same as to say that “a point is an extensive monad” and, *vice versa*, “a monad is a point without location or “a monad is a non-extensive point.”⁸ It is only in this sense that the Pythagoreans could be said to have understood the point in terms of an atom of geometrical space.

⁷ Ibid., 227a31–34.

⁸ Transferring the testimony of the doxograph Aetius, Arsenijević says that Ecphantus from Syracuse claimed that “the Pythagorean point is corporal” and that, apart from empty space, only indivisible bodies exist. Miloš Arsenijević, *Prostor, vreme, Zenon*, Beograd-Zagreb: Biblioteka Teka, 1986, p. 110.

3. The Theory of Indivisible Lines

Ancient commentators (doxographers and Athenian chronologists) frequently report the attitudes of the proponents of the theory of “indivisible lines” (i.e., atomic lines). However, it is not completely clear whether these reports refer to Plato or Xenocrates (the Academy disciple). Nevertheless, besides Aristotle, who is the main source for the “indivisible lines” problem (geometrical atomism), in this paper we will also use the Peripatetic or pseudo-Aristotelian text entitled “On Indivisible Lines” (Περὶ ἀτόμων γραμμῶν, *De lineis insecabilibus*).⁹ Our primary concern with this text is not its authenticity, but the issue related to the object of the Aristotelian criticism. At any rate, we must bear in mind that it is one thing to provide an account of indivisible lines and a totally different thing to accept their existence. This might seem paradoxical, but it is our task, for the purpose of this paper, to reconstruct a part of Plato's doctrine of indivisible lines that cannot be found in his work, but only in indirect testimonials of the doxographers from Antiquity, alongside Aristotle. Of course, what we are referring to is known as Plato's unwritten doctrine taught through academic lectures that bear the common title “On Goodness.”¹⁰ We will also be referring to parts of *Timaeus*.

If we can show that Plato believed that it was the indivisible lines and not the points that constitute the basic elements and the beginning of the straight line, that may prove that he advocated for geometrical atomism of a kind different from the one described in *Timaeus*, which deals with indivisible planes. Aristotle mentions that Plato frequently spoke of indivisible lines in his lectures, in which he considered the points in terms of geometrical function, and that he regarded the indivisible lines to be the beginning of the line.¹¹ In the section we just referred to, Aristotle writes about the beginning of (things in) existence and the problem of the lower genera being contained in the higher. His aim to account for the originary principle in the construction of nature, just as it is the case with the ontology of Plato's unwritten doctrine about the One and the

⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 992a10–23; *Physics*, 231a20–25. These are just some of the places in which he discussed ἀτόμων γραμμῶν.

¹⁰ H. J. Krämer, *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics*, trans. J. R. Catan, New York: State University of New York, 1990, pp. 96–97.

¹¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 992a10–23.

Indeterminate Dyad. For Plato, a line is derived from “the long and the short,” a plane from “the broad and the narrow,” and a body from “the deep and the shallow.” This means that a line occupies one dimension, a plane occupies two, and a body occupies three. Since the line, plane, and body belong to different genera, the question arises as to the manner in which a plane contains a line, and a body both a plane and a line.

Some believe that Plato formulated a continuum theory according to which continuous (geometrical) objects are those having common limits, which means that the limit of one (object) is the beginning of another. According to A. T. Nicol’s interpretation of Plato, the end of a body is a plane, the end of a plane is a line, and the end of a line is a point.¹² This interpretation contradicts the hypothesis of the fictional point. Contrary to this, it should be stated that the point is the beginning of a line, i.e., that Plato recognized points in terms of the first indivisible lines. However, in this way we cannot avoid answering the question whether the point, being the beginning of a line, contains any magnitude. Conversely, if a body contains a plane, a plane contains a line and a line contains a point, we have to acknowledge the thickness of the plane, the width of the line, as well as the length of the point, which is impossible. Hence, as Miloš Arsenijević remarks, “the points would be corporal entities and still completely indivisible, divisible lines would include one and only one type of divisibility, whereas the divisible planes would be divisible in one and indivisible in two ways. Bodies that do not comprise planes would not be divisible in any respect.”¹³

Plato distinguishes the point understood as a geometrical fiction from the point understood as the beginning of a line, i.e., points as indivisible lines. The hypothesis of the existence of indivisible lines amounts to the assumption that the entities of a certain dimension can be derived from the entities of the same dimension: a line from “shorter” lines, a surface from planes, a space from volumes. The starting point is the assumption that indivisible lines must exist since, provided that an infinite division is allowed, that which is small could become infinitely big. Besides, there is one indivisible Idea of a line, since, if it were divisible, its parts would have a logico-ontological prevalence over its totality.

¹² A. T. Nicol, “Indivisible Lines,” *The Classical Quarterly*, 1936, pp. 123–126.

¹³ Miloš Arsenijević, *Prostor, vreme, Zenon*, p. 111.

Finally, Zeno's kinematic paradoxes (proofs against motion) show that infinity cannot be covered step by step, regardless of the (racer's) speed. Therefore, indivisible lines must exist. Otherwise, infinity could be covered step by step in a limited time span, which is impossible. The crucial evidence is mathematical: indivisible lines are derived following the commensurability hypothesis. However, a strong counterargument to this mathematical proof is the phenomenon of incommensurability through which the indivisible lines theory is refuted. Geometrical atomism could not be justified through the use of the physical indivisibility of atoms even if the validity of physical atomism were accepted.

A. T. Nicol is right when she claims that Plato's *Timaeus* is not relevant for the indivisible lines hypothesis, since the dialogue deals with the physical world in which there is no need to go beyond indivisible planes.¹⁴ The author of the treatise *On Indivisible Lines* himself invokes Zeno and his argument against multitude having commensurability of all the lines.¹⁵ Also, he directly expands upon Zeno's proofs against movement with the following argument: individual lines must exist because, otherwise, infinity could be covered step by step in finite time, which is impossible.¹⁶ That which represents a novelty in comparison to Zeno's original proof is the introduction of the "speed of thought" as an additional factor the purpose of which is to enhance the argument, since not even the thought that is unsurpassed in speed can be used in counting an infinite set step by step.

The hypothesis of indivisible lines functions as a sort of "prevention" against potentially infinite geometrical division. In the last analysis, to say that the division of the straight line ends in the point is to say that, in fact, it does not end at all. The infinite division of a finite entity, e.g., a straight line, turns that finite entity into an infinite one, which is absurd. The argument is a *non sequitur*: the fact that infinity cannot be covered step by step does not entail the actual existence of indivisible lines. Aristotle contradicts the proponents of the indivisible lines theory in the following way: "It is surely absurd that, because you are unable to solve Zeno's argument, you should make yourselves slaves of your inability, and should commit yourselves to still greater errors, in the endeavour to

¹⁴ Nicol, "Indivisible Lines," p. 125.

¹⁵ Aristotle, *On Indivisible Lines*, 968b5.

¹⁶ Ibid., 968a18–968b3.

support your incompetence.”¹⁷ Aristotle considered the question of the constitution of geometrical dimensions and of higher-order objects through those of the lower order (the possibility of constructing the straight line out of a point or an indivisible line) to be a matter of the relationship between continuous and discrete magnitudes.¹⁸ A straight line is a continuum, but it does not consist of points which, by definition, have no magnitude. The points cannot be continuously tangential but only contiguously so (as physical points). However, in that case the series would be a discrete one, not a continuous one, which means that it would not comprise a line at all. Just as a set of punctual moments cannot create a temporal interval, a set of points cannot create a line. The proof of the impossibility of the existence of indivisible lines is based on the empirical fact of the continuity of time and space in their mutual interconnection. The continuum of any kind is that which is by itself infinitely divisible.¹⁹

The result of Aristotle’s analysis is that the continuum of any kind cannot be constructed out of indivisible elements (i.e., indivisible lines). Nicol thinks that Plato’s continuum is an ordered system of limits that enables and necessitates the transition of the entities within a genus. It is a continuum based on the principle according to which the end of one genus is the beginning of another.²⁰ Plato’s ontologization of the totality of being is overarched by the principle of the One and the Indeterminate Dyad (multitude), then by the Idea of numbers and ideal dimension, and, ultimately, by the visible phenomena in the world of senses. The consequence of the acceptance of indivisible lines implies the reduction of geometrical entities to numbers. Hans Joachim Krämer points to Plato’s unwritten doctrines in which mathematical numbers, geometrical, and stereometric objects are construed out of monads and minimal magnitudes (indivisible lines).²¹ According to those doctrines, the monad constitutes the first principle of numbers, a divisible line is the principle accounting for all types of movement, and the moment is the principle of time.

¹⁷ Ibid., 969b4–5.

¹⁸ Aristotle, *Physics*, 231a29–b6.

¹⁹ Ibid., 231b15–16, 232b24–26.

²⁰ Nicol, “Indivisible Lines,” p. 123.

²¹ H. J. Krämer, *Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics*, pp. 84–85. It is clear that in the field of geometry Plato favors the expression “indivisible lines” since the mathematical point was defined as a limit index without extension, whereas in physics the expression “punctual monad” was used.

4. Indivisible Lines Form a Continuum

Many difficulties could be solved by the elimination of Zeno's hypothesis of infinite division and the introduction of minimal indivisible magnitudes (atoms, indivisible lines, infinitesimals) for space and time. However, that is impossible. The key problem arises once we ask the following question: do the minimal, absolutely indivisible parts of space have a form? If they do, infinite division is allowed. If they do not, the minimal indivisible parts do not exist. As Arsenijević says, "in mathematical terms a continuous magnitude cannot have a part which is not itself a continuous magnitude, since therein new parts can be discovered which are continuously [geometrically — authors' addition] tangential. The contact of the elements cannot be realized through the insertion of geometrical points, because, as Zeno suggests, contact is impossible since geometrical points have no extension. If the division treated in Zeno's fragment is understood as halving (division in terms of dichotomy), then the end of the parts of things cannot be arrived at, that is, the plane in question cannot be reached. In Arsenijević's words, "[i]f the division is understood as a trichotomy, in which case the middle part decreases and the central point is to be reached beginning from the ends, then the center cannot be arrived at."²² Zeno's argumentation against multitude aims at demonstrating that, if a multitude exists, its elements have to be so small that it has no magnitude and so big that it is infinite. The point cannot be reached by division, but only by abstraction from magnitudes, and division itself, once allowed, can never be finite.

5. Interpretations of Zeno's Axiom

Pure geometrical figures understood as the limits of bodies cannot have an independent existence, but physical substances as concrete unities of matter and form can be ontologically independent.²³ This means that, ontologically, physical bodies have priority over planes, lines, and points. Aristotle is explicit in his claim that bodies cannot consist of points, lines, and planes.²⁴ Aristotle understands the point as a limit

²² Ibid., p. 64.

²³ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1042a24–b9.

²⁴ Ibid., 1077a34–35.

(πέρας), not as an element of a set that could be reached through endless decomposition. Not only was Zeno's Axiom accepted within the Euclidean conception of points, but it was not refuted until the publication of Cantor's and Dedekind's work, i.e., until the second half of the nineteenth century.

Arsenijević treats the question of the autonomy of points in terms of the difference between the standard (i.e., Aristotelian-Euclidean) and the non-standard (e.g., Cantor, among the firsts) interpretations of points. Accordingly, if Zeno's Axiom presupposes the independence of the entities of lower dimensions from which the entities of higher dimensions are composed, then this independence will hold only for the standard interpretation of points in which a point cannot be a part of a particular straight line. The problem of indivisible entities cannot be solved by introducing infinitely small magnitudes (infinitesimals) since, from the perspective of the infinitesimal method itself, it is necessary for the infinitesimals to be divisible. The discovery of a non-standard point on a non-standard straight line is impossible in non-standard space because it is isotropic. What is meant by isotropic space is the standard Euclidean-Archimedean two-dimensional space in which points have no extension and no shape.²⁵ Isotropic space by definition does not support Euclidean points out of which, according to Zeno's Axiom, the line cannot be composed.

Following Euclid, we defined points as geometrical entities without extension. In the same way, lines have no breadth and planes have no thickness. Accordingly, the limits of the parts of space are considered only continuously (geometrically), but not contiguously (physically) tangential. There must always be a finite number of actualized limits,

²⁵ The German mathematician Cantor thought that his theory of sets of points refuted Zeno's Axiom by introducing the possibility of the straight line in terms of a linear one-dimensional continuum, and subsequently for the whole infinite n -dimensional space to be composed out of non-extensive zero-dimensional points in terms of set units. Grünbaum defines a particular space as zero-dimensional if any of its possible limits comprises an empty set, which is exactly the case with Cantor's discontinuum consisting in $2n$ points, but isolated ones. Adolf Grünbaum, "A Consistent Conception of the Extended Linear Continuum as an Aggregate of Unextended Elements," *Philosophy of Science*, vol. 19, n. 4, 1952, p. 294.

whereas the number of potential limits is infinite. Since dealing with pure space, some infinitists have wiped away the differences between points, lines, and planes as actual *versus* only potential limits. As Arsenijević says, “[w]herever they [i.e., infinitists] spot the situation in which unlimitedly many points can be produced, they immediately begin to talk about the givenness of infinitely many points... consciously ignoring the fact that in some of these situations, according to their own hypotheses, there literally is not enough space for the simultaneous realization of infinitely many points.”²⁶ The intervals are treated the same way alongside points. This is shown in the formula $(2n - 1)/2n$, $(2n + 1 - 1)/(2n + 1)$, which indicates that there can be infinitely many intervals. However, some mathematicians think that there are infinitely many of them, because their number cannot be fixed insofar as a subsequent addition of more intervals is always possible. To mathematicians, space appears as a set of all the points that could be actualized in a potential division. The problem is that real space does not consist of points, but of parts that actualize a particular possible distribution of points. Points, lines, and planes are limits, and that which makes them limits cannot be that which they consist of. Mathematical space as a set of points is a field (*Bereich*) of possible limits that cannot (all) be actualized either simultaneously or successively. In Aristotelian-Euclidean terms, the basic geometrical entities were viewed in such a way that they were ultimately understood as limits of the heterogeneous parts of physical bodies. Through the redefinition of the concept “point,” mathematicians (Cantor, among the firsts) defined any point in terms of a convergent series of rational numbers. In this way, for mathematicians, the continuum is a set of all possible points. However, it does not follow from this that the line is a set of points that can be discovered on it. It only follows that this kind of definition of points makes it possible for the points to be a part of a continuum, i.e., a straight line.

6. The Relation Between Higher and Lower Dimensions

Zeno's Axiom is a paradox: a multitudinous body that has been “subjected” to division emerges as an infinitely small and infinitely big one. It is infinitely small because through division we reach points without

²⁶ Miloš Arsenijević, *Prostor, vreme, Zenon*, p. 326.

magnitude. It is infinitely big because it consists of infinitely many parts with magnitude. Zeno is brilliant! His axiom is not only a proof against multitude, but also a defense of Parmenides' monistic ontology according to the law of excluded middle (*tertium non datur*). Apart from the manner in which division may be interpreted, one cannot reach anything more elementary than that from which division has started, since any part of that which is continuous must be continuous itself. In other words, anything that is (allegedly) a part must be as elementary as that of which it is a part. If we were to claim otherwise, i.e., if we were to claim that the continuum is composed of something that is not continuous, we would have a problem, because a mathematical point cannot be an essential part of any entity that has a dimension or dimensions.

The consequence of the acceptance of Zeno's Axiom is that, if the continuum (Parmenides' being) is homogeneous, undivided, and indivisible, then it is not structured.²⁷ Aristotle would add that the continuum is actually undivided, but that it is potentially divisible, and into infinity at that. Potential divisibility *in infinitum* does not imply the possibility of actual infinite dividedness.²⁸ To be even more precise, the continuum does not possess infinitely many actual parts, but does have potential ones. Alongside Parmenides, Aristotle understands the continuum (συνεχές) as a concatenation of the potential parts of something that is homogeneous (unified), but not of that which is heterogeneous (diverse), such as, for example, Homer's uninterrupted succession of day and night. If we were to accept the claim that there exists a multitude, we would also have to accept mutually contradictory propositions, which contravenes the principle of non-contradiction.

To sum up, Zeno should not be ascribed the view that a point is nothing, but rather that it is nothing only if seen as an essential part of a body. The claim that a point is nothing as a multitude constituent (zero-dimensional) does not imply that it does not exist. A geometrical point is in no way divisible, but it does exist, at least as a limit.

By raising the question of a point as the beginning or the principle of the line, we transition to the discussion of the line. It is noteworthy that,

²⁷ It is irrelevant at this point of our discussion whether the division in question is actual (real) or potential (imagined).

²⁸ Aristotle, *Physics*, 206a17–25.

when Plato and Aristotle use the term γραμμή (line), they do not mean by that what we today consider a straight line, but a line segment of any other limited line that has a beginning and an end. The beginning and the end of line segments are points. Because the concept of a limited line entails the concept of a point, and because a point can be defined as something indivisible without magnitude, Aristotle allows for the logical order to follow from a point to a body.²⁹ Logical priority does not imply an ontological one. In other words, it is not because something is logically prior that it is also prior in terms of substance. Accordingly, Aristotle concludes that physical bodies have ontological priority over mathematical objects because they are (allegedly) substances in a greater degree. If it is possible to talk about geometrical substances at all, these exist as the external forms and limits of physical bodies. But it cannot be claimed that within a particular, unified, continuous physical body there exist points, lines and planes. What can be claimed is the existence of possible points, lines, and planes with regards to possible divisions in which they could be actualized. The number of those possible parts is indeterminate, but not infinite in the categorematic (actual) sense.³⁰

7. The Relation Between Point, Line, and Surface

In his *Elements*, Euclid treats the line in general first (“A line is a breadthless length”), and then the straight line (“A straight line is a line which lies evenly with the points on itself”).³¹ In Book 1 of *Elements*, definition 6, Euclid provides one more definition: “The extremities of a surface are lines.”³² The introduction of the concept of line in definition 2 is, in fact, the introduction of the first dimension since a point cannot be an extensive magnitude. Aristotle defines the line as a continuum of length, where length is, according to him, a magnitude having one direction, breadth having two, and volume having three.³³ Since, in the ancient paradigm, a line, which has length, constitutes the first dimension, it represents the principle of magnitude in general (mathematical, logi-

²⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1077b30–1078a4.

³⁰ Miloš Arsenijević, *Prostor, vreme, Zenon*, p. 168.

³¹ Euclid, *The Elements*, (I) def. 2, 4, p. 153.

³² Strictly speaking, that is not a “definition,” but rather an “example.”

³³ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1020a9–1020a14.

cal, ontological).³⁴ The ancient idea of a dimension corresponds to the contemporary idea of vector space, which means that in a three-dimensional coordinate system any point can be determined according to its distance from X, Y, or Z axis. Another idea, which has been ascribed to Speusippus, is that a line can be “obtained” out of a point without juxtaposition through a “thought experiment” in which a point is set in motion. In that case, a line would represent an abstraction of the path that has been crossed. The definition of the line in terms of breadthless length cannot be found in Plato’s writings. However, his *Parmenides* contains a definition of the straight line: “straight is that of which the middle stands in between both extremities.”³⁵ If Aristotle’s expression “those who consider” refers to Plato or somebody from the Academy, then the definition of a line as breadthless length refers to the Platonists. It is not the definition itself that bothers Aristotle, but the fact that they (hypothetically Platonists) believe in the existence of a numerically one Idea or ideal genus of the line.³⁶ In fact, he analyses the specific difference of the genus as follows: if anything can be truthfully either predicated (attributed) or negated, then every length either must have or cannot have a breadth. This would mean that there are lengths without breadths (lines) and lengths with breadths (surfaces). The concepts “without breadth” and “with breadth” are *differentiae specificae* of the genus “length.” We define a species by providing its genus and its specific difference. Here, the genus encompasses both species of length as well as their differences. If the Platonic genus is numerically one, then it cannot fulfil this function. Length in itself either has or does not have breadth and, if there is such an Idea of length, the question arises as to how this genus can have breadth. If the Idea of the line as breadthless length exists, then the whole genus of lengths will imitate that Idea. This means that the predicate will necessarily and truthfully be attributed to the whole genus of length, which is contradictory to the fact that the genus comprises both the lengths with and without breadth.³⁷

³⁴ In the same way that numbers begin with “two.”

³⁵ Plato, *Parmenides*, trans. Arnold Hermann, Las Vegas/Zurich/Athens: Parmenides Publishing, 2010, 137e.

³⁶ Aristotle, *Topica*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, trans. W. A. Pickard, Cambridge/Princeton/New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991, 143b11–12.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 143b11–34.

The Ancient Greeks classified the line in different ways. In their doctrine of opposites, the Pythagoreans accepted the pair of opposites “straight and curved.” Euclid mentions only the straight line and the circle, but not the so-called “mixed lines” (curves in space and curved lines in planes). Another ancient classification is the one involving simple and complex lines. Simple lines are further classified as “limited,” i.e., “lines forming the figures” and those that “extend into infinity.” Closed lines are the circle, ellipsis, and cissoid, whereas the straight line, parabola, hyperbola, conchoid, and helix are infinite lines. Complex lines are those which “form angles.” Mixed lines would actually comprise fractured lines that can be derived from all types of angles known to Ancient Greek mathematics. All types of lines are derived from two types of movement, linear and circular, whereas mixed lines are derived from their combination. In *Parmenides*, Plato divided shapes based on these two types of movement. The types of shape in question are “circular” and “straight” as well as the combination of the two.³⁸ The term Plato uses for shapes is σχῆμα (*schema*), which serves to denote a two-dimensional geometrical figure. Just as numbers can be odd or even, lines can be straight or curved. Aristotle thought that the curved line could either be reduced to the circle or be derived from its combination with the straight line. Regardless of whether a curve “contains a bend” or not, it is unified since it is uninterrupted. However, the straight line is “more unified than the curved one,” since it is simultaneously continuous and without a bend.³⁹

In light of Plato's statements from *Timaeus*, it can be inferred that the straight line is the symbol of all that which is unchangeable, incorruptible, unshakable, inflexible. The circle, however, and the circular movement is a symbol of autoreflexion, i.e., an expression of philosophical thinking reminiscent of the production of Plato's demiurge.⁴⁰ With regards to Plato's unwritten doctrines, the circle would correspond to the principle of the One, the straight line would correspond to the principle of the Indeterminate Dyad, and their combination would correspond to the lines originating in the combination of translation and rotation (helix, conchoid, cissoid). The belief that all types of mathematical

³⁸ Plato, *Parmenides*, trans. Arnold Hermann, Las Vegas/Zurich/Athens: Parmenides Publishing, 2010, 137d14–e1, 145b5–6.

³⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1016a13–17.

⁴⁰ Plato, *Timaeus*, in *Timaeus and Critias*, trans. Robin Waterfield, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 40b.

objects of the first dimension are derived by abstraction from the circular and/or linear movement has persisted up to this day. The Platonists' prioritization of the circle in comparison to the straight line is close to contemporary geometrical conceptions in which the straight line is regarded as the circle of an infinite radius.

In a two-dimensional Euclidean space, the straight line can be defined both implicitly and explicitly. The implicit (Cartesian) definition is expressed in the following equation: $ax + by + c = 0$. The explicit definition is illustrated by the equation: (x) , i.e., $y = kx + n$, where x and y denote the values of the abscissa and ordinate, k is a quotient of the direction-tangent of the angle that the straight line closes at the positive part of the abscissa, n is a positive segment of the ordinate. A geometrical straight line is an abstraction of the direction that is *a priori* given, but still it is not completely independent from sensory experience. It is not wrong to say that the direction originates by way of abstraction from the experience of that which is straight.⁴¹ The straight line would actually be the shortest possible distance, the line segment linking the eye to the object of vision. In this respect, the curved line would include a greater distance than the straight line. Plato was right when he suggested the definition of the straight line in terms of the philosophical analysis of sight: "straight is that of which the middle stands in between both extremities."⁴² This is also the only definition of the straight line that precedes Euclid's *Elements*.

Mathematically speaking, in the orthogonal projection of the straight line p onto the plane π , if p is parallel to the direction of the projection s , the image p in the plane will be the point. If we imagined being able to see through the line segment from the perspective of the vertex, what could be seen would be the point. Plato's definition of the line is not a definition of the straight line. The contemporary concept of the geometrical straight line starts from the assumption that actual infinity (categorematic infinity) has been accepted, whereas the Ancient Greeks accepted only potential infinity (syncategorematic infinity). Within the Ancient Greek paradigm, a line is always finite, regardless of whether it is straight or curved. The line is actually limited and potentially infinite

⁴¹ "Let the following be postulated: Postulate 1. To draw a straight line from any point to any point; Postulate 2. To produce a finite straight line continuously in a straight line." Euclid, *The Elements*, Postulates I.1 and I.2., 154.

⁴² Plato, *Parmenides*, 137e5.

in terms of its capacity for further extension.⁴³

Following Archimedes' assumption that the straight line (line segment) is the shortest possible distance from one point to another, Euclid provides the definition according to which the interval between any two points is the line's length which is determined by these two points. For the two points on any curved line, the length of the line between those two points will be greater than their distance. The only case when this does not hold is the straight line. This is exactly what Euclid means by the statement "A straight line is a line which lies evenly with the points on itself" (*Elements*, Def. I.4).

8. Intelligible Shapes and Geometrical Shapes

For Plato, mathematical entities are intelligible beings and, as such, they belong to the realm of *dianoia*, i.e., of what is known by means of rational knowledge. They are halfway between sensory phenomena that can be perceived and Ideas that can be reflected by the mind (such as the Good). Being imperceptible, mathematical entities are similar to intelligible Forms. However, being multitudinous, they bear a similarity to concrete things. Aristotle's references to Plato's teaching at the Academy reveal that the "late" Plato also introduced, besides mathematical numbers and magnitudes, something that could be called ideal numbers and magnitudes. Leaving aside the status of the order of ideal magnitudes, it is certain that we are dealing here with unidimensional, two-dimensional, and three-dimensional magnitudes, and not with geometrical magnitudes *per se*.

⁴³ Euclid's definition of the straight line (Def. I.4) is essentially based on Plato's. Archimedes similarly defined curved and fractured lines based on the straight line. He thinks that any limited line whose beginning and end overlap with the beginning and end of the straight line completely lies either on the same side or on both sides of the straight line. Thomas Heath, *A History of Greek Mathematics. Volume 1 From Thales to Euclid*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921, pp. 2–3.

9. Plato's Doctrine of Ontological Principles: The One and the Indeterminate Dyad

Aristotle reports that the Platonists explained the generation of lines on the basis of the dyad, that of planes on the basis of the triad, and that of volumes on the basis of the tetrad.⁴⁴ The three types of principles of the Indeterminate Dyad, namely “the long and the short,” “the broad and the narrow,” and “the deep and the shallow,” are in fact three different aspects of one and the same principle, i.e., the principle of “the great and the small.” At first glance, Aristotle's criticism of the principle of the Indeterminate Dyad seems successful. At this point, the principle is only relevant if it refers to the ontological background in the production of geometrical objects. The founder of the Lyceum starts from the assumption that “the great and the small,” “the straight and the curved” are not principles, but properties. Accordingly, he analyses the consequences of the two different, but still mutually related judgements of the Platonists: if all these dimensions were generated by the principle of the Indeterminate Dyad, as well as if they were not, what implications would this have on the dimensions themselves and their mutual relation within the body? If the great and the small, the long and the short, the broad and the narrow are just different properties of one and the same matter, then number, line, plane, and body must be one and the same thing.⁴⁵ Conversely, if their matter is not one and the same, the plane cannot contain lines, and the body cannot contain either planes or lines.

The point of Aristotle's criticism is that, with respect to the different hypostatizations of the principles of “the great and the small,” their introduction is inconsistent with some of the basic propositions of geometry. For example, these include the proposition that the point is on the straight line or that the straight line belongs to the plane. Aristotle's objections to Plato's theory of dimensions are the consequence of his conception of mathematical entities, which can be characterized as a mathematical substantialism or realism. His mathematical realism assumes that the dimensions belonging to the lower type of the limit (πέρας) are the dimensions of the higher type: the point is the limit of the line, the line is the limit of the plane, and the plane is the limit of the

⁴⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1090b32–33.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1085a22–25, 35.

body, but they are not independent entities. The reason for this is that they do not exist separately (in abstraction); they can be ostensively referred to (τόδε τι) only within the body, but they do not satisfy the criterion to be ουσίαι (substances). Conceptually, lower dimensions epistemologically precede higher ones in the sense that knowledge of the higher dimensions is based on knowledge of the lower ones. Aristotle claims: "not all things which are prior in formula are prior in substance."⁴⁶ That which is first in terms of perceptual knowledge is not the first in terms of ontology. Physical bodies are ontologically prior to geometrical objects, which are analyzed separately. Geometrical bodies are merely abstractions from physical objects. As a field of study, geometry deals with properties such as location and relation. This does not imply, however, that geometrical objects have an independent and separate reality. This simply means that geometrical objects cannot exist independently of the physical objects from which they have been abstracted.

We also need to understand Plato's viewpoint concerning the generation of dimensions from the One and the Indeterminate Dyad. A dimension is said to be καθ'αυτό (by itself) if it partakes in an Idea. A "length by itself" would not be a "breadthless length" for it is not a unidimensional magnitude, but a concept. We cannot predicate geometrical concepts the way we do when Ideas are at stake. For example, a diagonal and the side of a square are incommensurate magnitudes. However, the Idea of the line as well as the Idea of the magnitude are themselves neither commensurate nor incommensurate, for it makes no sense to talk about Ideas in this way. Aristotle's objection refers to Plato's hypostatization of "dimensions by themselves" and his turning geometrical dimensions into separate genera. These lead to an unnecessary multiplication of entities (the logical restriction later to be named "Occam's razor"). Plato probably thought that "length by itself" would generate the reflection of the principle of the One and that of the Indeterminate Dyad (the long and the short), whereas the representation of length in geometry would be generated via the operation of the Indeterminate Dyad and the Idea of number. "The long and the short" become generative principles of the line with regard to the insight that "long" and "short" are the properties of finite lengths (line

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1077b1.

segments). The finite length is a unity which can be truthfully predicated either one of two attributes: “long” and “short.”

This insight provides the answer to the dilemma posed at the very beginning of this paper concerning the possibility for the geometrical objects to be perceived (seen) in the physical world. There is a tradition of many centuries behind the proposition that geometrical objects cannot be seen. However, let us imagine a situation in which we are standing at a seashore gazing at the horizon. What we will witness is the meeting of two surfaces, namely the surface of the sea and the surface of the sky. At their meeting point, we might see the line separating the two surfaces. Since the meeting point of the surfaces has length (namely, the line segment) and has no breadth, it satisfies the conditions for being a line. It could be objected that what is seen does not count as a line, but rather merely as two differently colored surfaces! The problem is that there is a difference between seeing a color and seeing a shape. If someone says that he/she sees a green circle or a green circular surface, we immediately know that the person’s field of vision also contains a surface of another color. The circular surface must be seen as finite, but the green one does not have to. “The statement about seeing a line implies the statement about seeing two surfaces of a different color or shade since the perception of a geometrical line is impossible without the perception of two surfaces that are mutually limited.”⁴⁷ When we see a geometrical line, we see the way in which two surfaces limit each other. One has to bear in mind that the borderline between two colored surfaces is not the part of that which it limits. The same holds for the example of four differently colored continuously tangential squares adding up to a bigger square. If we paid attention, would we not “observe” a point at the center of this square?

10. Geometrical Proportion

The conception that the existence of geometrical objects is dependent on material extension is a thesis of a materialistic monist who fails to take into consideration the ordering of matter and shape. This hypothesis can thus be rejected. Therefore, we can accept the thesis that geometrical objects are limits and that they have a particular kind of existence. Plato’s cosmogonic discourse in *Timaeus* has some overtones strongly reminis-

⁴⁷ Miloš Arsenijević, *Prostor, vreme, Zenon*, p. 17.

cent of Parmenides' (and Zeno's) One (Being), namely, among other things, that the cosmos is one, unique, and continuous.⁴⁸ Plato accepted the so-called "continuous geometrical proportion" (ἀναλογία συνεχής) through which an infinite geometrical progression is formed. For Plato, infinite geometrical progression serves as a mathematical model.⁴⁹ In geometrical progression the quotient of the two successive members is constant. Each member of the geometrical progression represents a geometrical mean of the adjoining members that is calculated according to the following formula:

$$G = \sqrt{a^1 \times a^2} \text{ for the whole series } G = \sqrt[n]{a^1 \times a^2 \times \dots \times a^n}$$

In a geometrical proportion, in the same way in which the first member relates to the second, the second relates to the third, i.e., the three numbers a , b , and c form a geometrical proportion when:

$$(a : b) = (b : c)^{50}$$

Plato is of the opinion that an infinite geometrical proportion generates the beings of the visible cosmos bringing them into mutual harmony. The elements are mutually distributed in a continuous geometrical proportion, and the physical body of the cosmos is thus completely and proportionally congruent.⁵¹ Since it is continuous, the geometrical proportion serves the function of the connection (δεσμός) that provides organic unity to the cosmos. The continuous proportion enables the establishment of the links among the elements, based on which the physical body of the cosmos turns from a contingent (contiguously tangential) into a continuous whole (ὅλον).

In the last analysis, for the Ancient Greeks proportion amounts to similarities between objects. The first observation of similarities happens at the perceptual level as the observation of the same form. Quantitative similarity, i.e., proportion, is observed among line segments and this relation is secondarily expressed in numerical terms. The last source

⁴⁸ Plato, *Timaeus*, 30d2–3.

⁴⁹ It should be reminded that Zeno's aporia "Dichotomy" can be represented via a decreasing geometrical progression.

⁵⁰ Thomas Heath, *A History of Greek Mathematics. Volume 1: From Thales to Euclid*, pp. 85–87.

⁵¹ Plato, *Timaeus*, 31b6–32.

of proportion is a geometrical intuition (*Anschauung*) that completes geometry as a mediator between arithmeticals and concepts. The first elements appear in space. These four elements (earth, water, air, and fire) are primordial properties that are constantly changing.⁵² Then Plato talks about the demiurge assigning geometric shapes to these elements. He begins by positing three types of triangles, from which the surfaces of solids should be built. Things become visible when they obtain a third dimension. So, first surfaces are created, and then bodies are built.⁵³ Plato proposes the hypothesis of the symmetry of the regular spatial figures as well as the hypothesis of the “most beautiful” elementary triangles as the basis for the construction of the universe.⁵⁴ Here, elementary triangles are the authentic atoms of the cosmic genesis. Assuming that Plato is indeed the author of *Timaeus* (which is contested), this can serve as a proof that he did not entertain the theory of the “incommensurate lines.” Although *Timaeus* deals with the structure of the physical cosmos, it is evident that it is mathematically modelled. The mathematical theory of proportion plays a central role in the first hypothesis about the construction of the cosmos. The geometrical theory of proportion is essential for the second hypothesis. It turns out that the elements of Plato’s cosmos were regular geometrical bodies, which simply means that the cosmos is geometrically modelled. The central concept of *Timaeus*, i.e., the concept of *κώρα* (*chora*), combines the classical determinations of *ὕλη* (*hyle*) with the geometrical determination of extension. The introduction of stereometry into cosmogony reveals that, not only did Plato ascribe geometrical structure to the cosmos, but that he also derived an endless diversity from it.⁵⁵ It was necessary that geometry should occupy a particular place in the cosmic genesis since the “soul of the cosmos” was not a material cause (consisting of the four basic elements) but rather the self-movable efficient cause of the cosmos as well as its for-

⁵² Ibid., 49e2–4.

⁵³ Ibid., 55d6–55 e.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 53b4. The term *σύμμετρος* (*summetros*) was used in Ancient Greek mathematics predominantly in the context of commensurability.

⁵⁵ Ernst Cassirer correctly notes that geometrical propositions can neither be verified nor refuted by experience. The incongruity between geometrical axioms and physical objects requires the revision of the latter. Ernst Cassirer, “Einstein’s Theory of Relativity,” in *Substance and Function and Einstein’s Theory of Relativity*, Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1923, p. 100.

mal cause, since it introduced regularity into the cosmos.⁵⁶ The “cosmic soul” is both logically and ontologically prior to the “cosmic body.” Just as geometry was constitutive for the construction of the physical cosmos, so was the Pythagorean belief that proportion and harmony constitute the basis for the order of the “cosmic soul,” i.e., the form. It is clear that Plato introduced the regular spatial figures and elementary triangles (i.e., mathematical entities) into his theory of the physical structure of the cosmos, but the claim that “an endless diversity of the cosmos” is generated through geometrical shapes is a philosophical one. Mathematical entities play an important part in drawing a holistic picture of the cosmos by providing its very basis.

It is justified to ask whether the cosmogony of *Timaeus* has a scientific character, and not merely a mythological one. What counts as “scientific” is Plato’s distinction between geometrical and arithmetical number via the principle of the Indeterminate Dyad (“the great and the small”). A line segment is geometrical, whereas a number is an arithmetical entity. This can be seen through the hypostatization of the generative principles of Ideas-numbers as well as through the generation of ideal magnitudes. “The great and the small” generate Ideas-numbers as well as “the much and the little” do, whereas ideal magnitudes are generated by “the long and the short,” “the broad and the narrow,” and “the deep and the shallow.” From this, it can be concluded that the viewpoint concerning Ideas-numbers was formed under the influence of the Ancient Greek arithmetical conception of numbers.

11. Summary of the Influence of Zeno’s Axiom on Plato’s Geometry

The Peripatetic text *De lineis insecabilibus* contains an indication to the effect that Plato denied the real existence of points and that he rather viewed them as geometrical fictions advocating, instead, for the existence of indivisible lines (line segments). If there exists such a geometrical object called a line, then it must have a magnitude and shape. Each line is infinitely divisible. Therefore, there are no indivisible lines. There are two ways in which we can save Plato from negating Zeno’s Axiom. One is to say that Plato did not advocate for the theory of indivisible lines at all, because this theory forces us to accept the claim that it is possible to measure all magnitudes, which is impossible. Another way is

⁵⁶ Georgy Vlastos, *Plato’s Universe*, Las Vegas: Parmenides Publishing, 2005, p. 31.

to indicate that, in *Theaetetus*, Plato clearly understood the mathematical concept of incommensurability and that, for this reason, he could not be the author of the theory of indivisible lines. In our interpretation, Plato's doctrine of ideal dimensions refers to the Ideas of geometrical magnitudes. In the geometrical context, the term $\kappa\acute{o}\rho\alpha$ (*chora*) is understood as meaning macrocosmic order. The elementary triangles of *Timaeus* are not treated as indivisible planes, but as figures in the plane (three-sided polygons). Consequently, the elements of the physical cosmos in *Timaeus* are geometrical, but they nevertheless could not be mathematically derived. Plato's Ideas-numbers and paradigmatic dimensions are not mathematical entities but transcendental forms of cognition as well as real conditions for the possibility of abstract subjective knowledge. In a mathematical interpretation of Zeno's Axiom, Adolf Grünbaum suggested two similar formulations: (1) "the sum of an infinite number of equal positive magnitudes of arbitrary smallness must necessarily be infinite," and (2) "the sum of any finite or infinite number of 'dimensionless' magnitudes must necessarily be zero."⁵⁷

We have accepted the formulation of Zeno's Axiom according to which nothing can be constructed beginning with a zero-dimensional entity, a nothing. On this view, points cannot constitute the multitude. Zeno thought that, in this way, the pluralistic hypothesis could be refuted, the assumption that there is a multitude being one of the main results of the negative dialectic. The acceptance of Zeno's Axiom led Aristotle to the theory of geometrical objects as continuously tangential limits. The negation of Zeno's Axiom in any of its aspects leads to topological aporias. It contradicts the (acceptable) thesis that in any limited space there is enough space for an arbitrarily big, but still limited number of points, lines, and planes. Another consequence of the acceptance of Zeno's Axiom is the infinitistic mathematical thesis. This thesis does not take into consideration the difference between a particular body with a finite number of parts and the space that this body occupies and to which (space), in addition, there belong unlimited number of parts.

There is yet one more solution to the metric and topological problems of Zeno's type arising from the paradoxes of infinity. This possibility, suggested by Arsenijević, could be called the "indefinitistic solu-

⁵⁷ Adolf Grünbaum, "Metrical Paradox of Extension." In: Wesley C. Salmon (ed.), *Zeno's Paradoxes*, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967, p. 178.

tion.” According to this suggestion, there must be a finite number of actualized limits in the process of division even though the number of possible limits is infinite. In the difference between the actual and the potential, Arsenijević sees the difference between physical and mathematical space. This is enabled by the fact that the premises of the *staccato* and *legato* version of Achilles are mutually insupportable.⁵⁸ The distinction between mathematical and physical space and time leads to a more or less acceptable solution to the metric, topological, and kinematic aporias of the famous Zeno of Elea. His axiom holding that a line, being a continuum, cannot be understood as a set of points found a fruitful ground within the intuitionistic mathematics in which the geometrical parts of the lower dimensions can only be the limits of the higher-dimensional entities, i.e., the limits of the heterogeneous parts of physical bodies. There is a tendency in contemporary mathematics to implicitly define the basic geometrical objects by means of the axioms regulating their relations.⁵⁹ We understand these geometrical axioms as ideally construed *a priori* propositions and not as “images” of particularly given realities. Experience, as a synthetic *nexus* of presentation, cannot provide the foundation for geometrical axioms, since axioms must be known *a priori*. Phenomena must be evaluated according to the fundamental geometrical theses and not the other way around.

⁵⁸ Miloš Arsenijević, *Prostor, vreme, Zenon*, p. 326.

⁵⁹ David Hilbert, *Grundlagen der Geometrie*, Dresden: Fachbuchverlag, 2015, Chapter 1. A similar procedure using “implicit definitions” can also be found in the fifth Postulate of Euclid’s *Elements* in which the straight line is defined. That definition is mathematically possible only if the system (set) of axioms of this geometry is self-consistent.

II. LATE ANTIQUE AND BYZANTINE PHILOSOPHY

Rival Redemption Doctrines: Nietzsche, Epicurus, and “Latent Christianity”

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Abstract

Despite the many references to Epicurus and to his philosophy in Nietzsche’s writings, there has been relatively little scholarship devoted to his interest in Epicureanism. Moreover, no research has focused on what is certainly one of the most interesting themes within this larger topic; the invaluable opposition Epicurus and Lucretius are said to have offered to ancient mysticism and superstition in general, and superstitious beliefs surrounding death and immortality in particular. This paper partially redresses this trend by shedding light on Nietzsche’s intriguing image of Epicureanism’s struggle, not with mainstream Greco-Roman religion, but with what he considers to be the anti-pagan proto-Christian mysticism of Mediterranean antiquity’s “mystery religions.”

Keywords: Nietzsche • Epicurus • Greece • Rome • Mystery Religions • Mystery Cults • Christianity • Immortality • Death

1. Introduction

Dozens of references to Epicurus and his philosophy can be found in the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900).¹ Surprisingly, there has been rela-

¹ According to Brobjer, there are thirty direct references to Epicurus (and four to his Roman disciple Lucretius) in Nietzsche’s published works (Thomas Brobjer, *Nietzsche’s Ethics of Character*, Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1995, pp. 347–348). Nietzsche’s *indirect* references to Epicurus and his school are less easily quantified. A case in point is Vincenzo’s article “Nietzsche and Epicurus” (Joseph Vincenzo, *Man and World*, vol. 27, n. 4, 1994), which devotes considerable

tively little scholarship devoted to this skilled classicist's interest in Epicureanism.² More particularly, with the apparent exception of an earlier paper of mine focusing on his middle-period work *Daybreak*,³ essentially no research has examined what is certainly one of the most original themes within this larger topic, namely, the invaluable opposition that Epicureanism is said to have offered to ancient mysticism in general, and superstitious beliefs surrounding death, immortality, and divine involvement in human affairs in particular. To what extent this lack of scholarship can be attributed to Nietzsche's — especially the *later* Nietzsche's — often exaggerated and dismissive treatment of these matters, is an interesting question.

The purpose of this paper is essentially twofold. (1) To partially redress the comparative absence of scholarship in this area by closely examining several of the late-period Nietzsche's provocative treatments of these topics. (2) To employ post-Nietzsche scholarship on ancient Mediterranean religion to help us better understand the intellectual reality *behind* his intriguing image of the struggle of Epicureanism, not with mainstream Greco-Roman religion, but with the proto-Christian mysticism of Late Antiquity's secretive religious cults. I make the case that, while several of Nietzsche's end-of-career claims in this area are certainly overstated, they nonetheless reveal considerable insight into a fascinating aspect of Late Antiquity.

attention to what its author takes to be allusions to Epicurus' philosophy in the section of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* entitled "The Convalescent."

² See A. H. J. Knight's "Nietzsche and Epicurean Philosophy," *Philosophy: Journal of the Royal Institute of Philosophy*, vol. 8, n. 32, 1933; Martin Heidegger's *Nietzsche*, trans. D. Krell, New York: Harper and Row, 1984, vol. 2, p. 52; Laurence Lampert's "Who is Nietzsche's Epicurus?" *International Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 24, n. 2, 1992; Joseph Vincenzo's "Nietzsche and Epicurus"; Marcin Milkowski's "Idyllic Heroism: Nietzsche's View of Epicurus," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, n. 15, Spring, 1998; Laurence Lampert's "Nietzsche and Plato," *Nietzsche and Antiquity*, ed. by Paul Bishop, Rochester: Camden House, 2004, pp. 210–211; and Morgan Rempel's "Nietzsche and the 'Happiness of Repose,'" *Comparative and Continental Philosophy*, vol. 9, n. 1, 2017.

³ Morgan Rempel, "Daybreak 72: Nietzsche, Epicurus and the 'After Death'," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, vol. 43, n. 2, 2012.

2. *Antichrist*, §. 58

Nietzsche's most forceful treatment of this theme is to be found at *Antichrist*, §. 58, written near the close of his career. Speaking of the corrosive effect of Christianity on the Roman Empire, Nietzsche writes:

... gloomy concepts such as Hell, such as the sacrifice of the innocent, such as the *unio mystica* in blood drinking... *that* is what became master of Rome, the same species of religion on whose antecedent form Epicurus had already made war. One must read Lucretius to understand *what* it was Epicurus opposed: *not* paganism, but "Christianity," which is to say the corruption of souls by means of the concept of guilt, punishment and immortality. — He opposed the subterranean cults, the whole of latent Christianity — to deny immortality was already in those days a real redemption — And Epicurus would have won, every mind of any account in the Roman Empire was an Epicurean: *then Paul appeared*... Christianity as the formula for outbidding all the subterranean cults, those of Osiris, of the Great Mother, of Mithras for example — *and* for summing them up...⁴

A notebook entry of the period refers to burgeoning Christianity's adaptation "to the needs and the level of understanding of the religious masses of that time," suggesting that:

... those masses which believed in Isis, Mithras, Dionysus, the "Great Mother" ... desired of a religion: (1) hope of a beyond, (2) the bloody phantasmagoria of the sacrificial animal (the mystery), (3) the redemptive deed, the holy legend, (4) asceticism, world-denial, superstitious "purification" ... In short: Christianity accommodated itself to already existing and established anti-paganism, to the cults that had been combated by Epicurus — more precisely, to the religions of the lower masses, the women, the slaves, the non-noble classes.⁵

⁴ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, and *The Antichrist*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968.

⁵ Notebook entry dating from Nov. 1887–March 1888, in F. Nietzsche, *Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe (KGA)*, Hrsg. von Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1967, Abt. 8, Bd. 2 [295]. See also *Will*

Before turning to this recurring image of Epicureanism's struggle against the "anti-paganism" of antiquity's "subterranean cults," an introduction to the cults in question is necessary.

3. The Mystery Religions

The cults such passages hold up as both Epicureanism's enemies and early Christianity's progenitors are, of course, the foreign "mystery religions" or "mystery cults" that existed alongside the state religions of Ancient Greece and Rome. The excerpts above refer to the cults of Isis, Osiris, Mithras, Dionysus, and the Great Mother. Elsewhere Nietzsche speaks of the cults of Eleusis and Orpheus.⁶ It is believed that dozens of foreign mystery cults existed in the Greco-Roman world between the seventh century BC and the fifth century AD. The origins and beliefs of these cults were by no means uniform,⁷ and significant gaps exist in our knowledge of their rituals and practices.⁸ Nonetheless, a number of common themes — several of which were touched upon by the later Nietzsche — emerge from their study.⁹

(1) Congregations of the mystery religions tended to be populated largely by members of Mediterranean antiquity's *least powerful* groups: women, merchants, low-ranking soldiers, slaves, freedmen, etc.

(2) Initiates of the mystery religions typically placed great emphasis on *secrecy* with respect to their meetings, rituals, and beliefs.

to Power, §. 196, in Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. by W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, New York: Random House, 1967.

⁶ See, for example, sections 1, 12, & 19 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, in Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. by W. Kaufmann, New York: Random House, 1967.

⁷ The origins of the Mithras cult are Iranian; the cults of Isis, Orpheus, and Eleusis are Egyptian; and that of the Great Mother, Turkish.

⁸ Philologist Franz Cumont describes the striking scarcity of original source material concerning the mystery cults as "the most regrettable one in the great shipwreck of ancient literature" (Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987, p. 66).

⁹ For more on Nietzsche's interest in the religious cults of Mediterranean Antiquity, see Morgan Rempel, "Nietzsche, Mithras, and 'Complete Heathendom'," *Comparative and Continental Philosophy*, vol. 2, n. 1, 2010.

(3) Access to, and union with, the divine are recurring themes among the mystery cults.

(4) Followers of the mysteries commonly hoped to transcend death via the performance of specific rituals of initiation and purification.

4. Guilt, Punishment, and Immortality

As Nietzsche's references to "superstitious purification," "guilt, punishment, and immortality" indicate, the avoidance of post-mortem punishment and the pursuit of a favorable personal immortality were central to the beliefs and practices of the mystery religions. According to Manfred Clauss, the "mystery-cults shared the conviction that deliverance and salvation are the aim of all human existence on earth [and] that one could only attain the desired salvation once one had been initiated."¹⁰ Practitioners of the various mysteries believed that their performance of specific rituals of initiation and purification would result in the forgiveness of their sins and the favor of the deity in question. The result hoped and prayed for was their avoidance of the frightening post-mortem fate said to await the uninitiated, and the initiates' *new* birth into a blessed immortality. To that end, Roman devotees of the Mithras cult, for example, would re-enact their god's celebrated slaying of a bull. Followers of Mithras — but not only of Mithras¹¹ — believed that their bathing in the

¹⁰ Manfred Clauss, *The Roman Cult of Mithras*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000, p. 14.

¹¹ Speaking of the rituals of the cult of Meter, Walter Burkert describes the *taurobolium*: "where the initiand, crouching in a pit covered with wooden beams on which a bull was slaughtered, was drenched by the bull's gushing blood" (Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, p. 6). Initiates of the cult of the "Great Mother" — mentioned by Nietzsche at *Antichrist*, §. 58, and notes of the period — likewise crouched in a pit "flooded with 50 liters of blood from the bull agonizing just above" (Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, p. 98). Smith notes that the Mithras cult's "expiatory blood baptism" rituals were likely inherited from the cults of Attis and Cybele (Jonathan Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 95). Such blood soaked purification rites are surely what the later Nietzsche has in mind when he speaks, in the context of the continuity of ideas between the mysteries and

blood of the slain animal and consumption of the sacred meal helped cleanse them of impurities and prepare them to be "born again [and] rendered immortal."¹² Similar connections between rituals of purification and hopes of immortality can be found in the cults of Isis, Orpheus, Attis, Cybele, and Eleusis. Indeed, Plato's *Republic* refers to the belief that, while "terrible things" and "evil" lie in store for those *not* purified and initiated into the Orphic mysteries, "remission of sins" and "true life" beyond the grave were promised to the properly initiated.¹³

This notion of the absolute necessity of the "forgiveness of sins" before one can access the god and hope to receive divine blessings — ideas Nietzsche insists were utterly foreign to *traditional* Greek sensibilities and suitable primarily for slaves¹⁴ — is a recurring theme in the foreign mystery cults. As Nietzsche was acutely aware, this very human longing for a path to personal immortality finds expression in the mystery cults and, later, in Christianity, to a degree that is quite foreign to the more traditional religions of Athens and Rome. Unlike the mystery religions' vision of the "terrible" fate awaiting the unredeemed and the blessed condition awaiting the initiated after death, the Hades of more conventional Greco-Roman tradition —

early Christianity, of "the bloody phantasmagoria of the sacrificial animal (the mystery)" (Nietzsche, *KGA*, Abt. 8, Bd. 2 [295]; see also *WP*, §. 196).

¹² An excerpt of an ancient Roman Mithras liturgy reads: "I, a man ... born of a mortal womb ... having been this day born again by thee, out of so many myriads rendered immortal in this hour by the good will of God in his abounding goodness" (Albrecht Dieterich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie*, Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1910, p. 12).

¹³ *Republic*, 364e–365a (Plato, *The Republic*, trans. by Desmond Lee, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987).

¹⁴ While ritual purification and the resulting remission of sins were considered absolutely necessary by initiates of a number of the foreign mystery religions in order to gain access to the god, Nietzsche famously contends that the *very* notion of "sin" was foreign to classical Greek thinking. At *Gay Science*, §. 135, Nietzsche insists that sin was a "Jewish feeling and a Jewish invention," and that "Greek antiquity" was "a world without feelings of sin." This passage further maintains that the familiar notion, "only if you *repent* will God show you grace" — an idea central to both the mystery cults and emerging Christianity — "would strike a Greek as ridiculous and annoying. He would say: 'Maybe slaves feel that way'." (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. by W. Kaufmann, New York: Random House, 1974).

a handful of exceptions notwithstanding¹⁵ — is not conventionally portrayed as a place particularly concerned with posthumous punishment or reward. As Alice Turner, pointing to the suffering of Orestes and Oedipus, rightly emphasizes: “punishment for wrongdoing in the old Greek stories, though it may be supernaturally administered ... was not generally an after-death affair.”¹⁶ Moreover, unlike the bifurcated view of the afterlife typical of the mystery religions, the Hades of Greco-Roman convention was generally conceived as the shadowy ultimate destination of virtually *all* mortals, regardless of whether they were good, bad, righteous, sinful, initiated, or not.¹⁷ Unlike the blessed *life* said to await the initiate of the mysteries, mere *existence* better describes the lot of those who find themselves in the Hades of tradition.¹⁸

Of course, punishment and reward were *very much* “after death affairs” among the mystery religions. Indeed, for the Orphic cult, at least, “simple justice” required “the souls of the dead to live on in order to receive reward or punishment.”¹⁹ And, as we have seen, the all too human desire to *influence* after-death accounting was fundamental to the beliefs, practices, and rituals of the mysteries.

5. Granters of Immortality

Closely related to the matters of posthumous reward and punishment is the fact that, unlike Isis, Mithras, Orpheus, *et al.*, the more traditional

¹⁵ Turner characterizes Tityus — said to have vultures feed forever on his ever-regenerating liver in the underworld — for example, as “one of a handful of imaginatively punished celebrities” (Alice Turner, *The History of Hell*, Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993, p. 27).

¹⁶ Turner, *History of Hell*, p. 28

¹⁷ Stories of happier destinations of the departed, such as the Elysian Fields, were by no means unknown to more traditional Greek religion. Such notions, however, were typically associated with semi-divine heroes rather than average men and women of faith.

¹⁸ Speaking of the fate of the dead in official Greek religion, Guthrie deliberately speaks, not of “life” but of “existence”: “The dead exist indeed, but they are strengthless, witless wraiths, uttering thin bodiless shrieks as they flit to and fro in the shadowy house of Hades” (W. K. C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, London: Methuen & Co., 1952, p. 149).

¹⁹ Turner, *History of Hell*, p. 29.

deities of Greece and Rome were not generally regarded as granters of immortal life. Indeed, it has long been observed that the more conventional religions of Mediterranean Antiquity offered very little to satisfy man's powerful desire for immortality. Samuel Angus, for example, characterizes classical Greek religion as "almost dumb as to a hope beyond death," and emphasizes that: "*di immortales* of Rome were never considered by their worshippers as conferring immortality."²⁰

Greco-Roman devotion to foreign mystery cult deities, however, was inextricably bound up with their ability to confer immortality. That Isis had delivered Osiris from death to eternal life was a central belief of initiates of her cult who prayed and performed rites so that the goddess would do likewise for them. Followers of Orpheus, meanwhile, believed that their deity, who had already "shown himself capable of melting the hearts of the powers below ... might be expected to intercede on their own behalf if they lived the pure life according to their precepts."²¹ If classical Greek religion was "almost dumb to a hope beyond death," the mystery cults, notes Walter Burkert, "were meeting practical needs even in their promises for an afterlife."²²

6. Religions of the "Lower Masses"

Nietzsche is also right to underscore the particular demographic appeal of the mystery religions. His notebook reference to the "religions of the lower masses, the women, the slaves, the non-noble classes" is both deliberate and justified.²³ Among Roman followers of Isis, for example, were significant numbers of women and slaves.²⁴ Worshipers of Mithras, meanwhile, tended to be drawn largely from slaves, merchants, and legionaries (many of whom were exposed to novel foreign deities during eastern campaigns). Clauss points out that "the cult of Mithras was not accepted by the ruling elite of the Roman Empire" and notes that "it is

²⁰ Samuel Angus, *The Mystery Religions: A Study in the Religious Background of Early Christianity*, New York: Dover Publications, 1975, pp. 13 & 231.

²¹ Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, p. 29.

²² Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, p. 23.

²³ Nietzsche, *KGA*, Abt. 8, Bd. 2 [295]; see also *WP*, §. 196.

²⁴ Sharon K. Heyob, *The Cult of Isis Among Women in the Graeco-Roman World*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975, p. 87. See also Eric M. Orlin, *Foreign Cults in Rome: Creating a Roman Empire*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, p. 206.

striking that there are virtually no senators among the dedicators of inscriptions and reliefs.”²⁵

Scholarship in this field underscores the ancient distinction between “*religio*,” the typically cool, respectable, state religion, and the more emotional “*superstitio*” of the foreign mystery cults. Treading a path mapped decades earlier by Nietzsche, Angus, for example, characterizes “the rise of *Superstitio* or religiosity as a species of non-conformity against *Religio*,” and emphasizes that one must always be careful to “distinguish the state religion, the religion of the educated, and popular superstition.”²⁶ Alice Turner, also sounding very much like Nietzsche, observes that, from the perspective of the powerful and educated, the formal state religions of Greece and Rome were simply “the religion that decent people believed in ... anything else was considered archaic, anarchic, exotic, barbaric, or radical.”²⁷

Clearly, Nietzsche is not alone among classicists in distinguishing sharply between the beliefs and practices of the mysteries and those of more traditional Greco-Roman religion. And while his characterization of the beliefs of the mystery cults as “superstitious ... absurdities” believed by “the lower masses” perhaps lacks subtlety,²⁸ it is apparent that significant insight lies behind Nietzsche’s seemingly flippant remarks. We have thus far examined three elements:

- (1) the focus on post-mortem punishment and reward,
- (2) the hope that the god will grant immortality to those who worship correctly, and
- (3) the demographic of believers.

What is especially noteworthy about these is that the foreign mystery cults have more in common with emerging — or soon to emerge — Christianity than with more traditional Greek and Roman religion. Nietzsche’s keen awareness of this continuity is underscored by the intriguing characterization of the “subterranean cults” as forms of “latent Christianity” in *Antichrist*, §. 58. Understanding the extent to which

²⁵ Clauss, *The Roman Cult of Mithras*, p. 33.

²⁶ Samuel Angus, *The Mystery Religions*, p. 33.

²⁷ Alice Turner, *The History of Hell*, p. 20.

²⁸ Nietzsche, *KGA*, Abt. 8, Bd. 2 [295]; see also *WP*, §. 196.

many of the beliefs, hopes, and characteristics of the mystery cults find resonance with early Christianity helps us better appreciate Nietzsche's suspicion with respect to the origins of the latter. Moreover, according to the Nietzsche of 1888, not only does the "same species of religion" underlie both the mystery religions and early Christianity, but it is precisely this anti-pagan species of religion that Epicureanism explicitly "opposed" and "combated."²⁹

7. Epicureanism: Redemption Doctrine of the Pagan World

One of the hallmarks of Epicurean philosophy is its single-minded commitment to promoting human tranquility and lessening mental suffering. So it is that Nietzsche refers to Epicurus (341–270 BC) as "the soul-soother of later antiquity" and characterizes his philosophy "the redemption doctrine of the pagan world."³⁰ As Nietzsche was well aware, much of the redemptive strategy of this practical Hellenistic philosophy centered on dispelling fear-inducing superstitions in general and unsettling beliefs surrounding human mortality and divine involvement in human affairs in particular. Indeed, the first two precepts of Epicureanism's famed *fourfold remedy* are: "God presents no fears, death no worries."³¹

8. The Finality of Death

Epicurus and his followers, acutely aware of the anxiety associated with death and the question of post-mortem survival, devote significant attention to these matters; with Epicurus famously concluding that "death is nothing to us."³² As is his wont, Epicurus' teachings on these themes are designed to lessen suffering and to do so in a manner capable of benefiting a wide audience. Accordingly, his soul-soothing teachings on the fi-

²⁹ Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, §. 58; Nietzsche, *KGA*, Abt. 8, Bd. 2 [295]; see also *WP*, §. 196.

³⁰ Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, Book 2, Part 2, n. 7; Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, §. 30.

³¹ Philodemus, *Against the Sophists*, 4.9–14, in Long & Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 1*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 156.

³² Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*, pp. 124–126, in Long & Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 1*, p. 149.

nality of death are remarkably straightforward and can be summarized in four basic points:

(1) Everything in existence is composed of atoms and “void” (the space between atoms).

(2) All collections of atoms are impermanent.³³

(3) The human soul, like the human body, and every other collection of atoms, is impermanent.³⁴

(4) The idea that a person — an aggregate of material body and material soul — or a human soul alone, can survive physical death; can remain in existence permanently and be subject to eternal post-mortem reward or punishment, is irrational and fundamentally contrary to our experience of every other thing in existence.³⁵

Simply put, one of the central pillars of Epicureanism is that nothing bad can befall you after death, because after your death, there is no longer

³³ Gods are apparently the sole exception to this general rule. Epicureanism seemingly maintains *both* that the gods (a) are composed of “countless atoms” (Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, 1.49, in Long & Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 1*, p. 142) and (b) “enjoy immortal life in perfect peace” (Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, trans. by M. F. Smith, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2001, 2, p. 648).

³⁴ According to Epicurus, the soul — and its member components, the mind and spirit — is composed of especially fine and smooth atoms. The soul, in concert with the body’s sense organs, plays a crucial role in sense perception (*Letter to Herodotus*, 63–65, in Long & Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 1*, p. 65). Epicurus insists that the fine atoms that compose the human soul are soon dispersed if not contained by the human body (*Letter to Herodotus* 65, in Long & Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 1*, p. 65). Speaking of the fundamental connection between body and soul, Lucretius writes: “the two are twined together by common roots and evidently cannot be disentangled without being destroyed” (3, 328–330).

³⁵ Epicurus dismisses the concept of an *immaterial* soul as fundamentally unintelligible and impossible: “But it is impossible to think of the incorporeal *per se* except as void. And void ... merely provides bodies motion through itself. Consequently, those who say the soul is incorporeal are talking nonsense” (*Letter to Herodotus*, 67, in Long & Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 1*, p. 66).

a *you*. As Epicurus' Roman disciple Lucretius (99–55 BC) makes clear, properly understood, this gospel of the finality of death and the corresponding limit to human suffering is capable of neutralizing the full gamut of "terrors" so often linked with beliefs in post-mortem existence and immortality. Tragically, though, minds clouded by fear, guilt, and superstition too often fail to recognize the genuine redemption that comes with recognizing that "death is nothing." Speaking of such a troubled mind, Lucretius laments: "It fails to see how there can be an end to its afflictions, or a limit to its punishment; Indeed, it is afraid that its sufferings may increase in death. In short, fools make a veritable hell of their lives on earth."³⁶ As the Epicureans well understood, and as we have seen with respect to the mystery cults, it is this irrational and often intractable fear of death that spurs anxious souls to appeal to the gods for intervention.

9. Divine Indifference

In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche offers a glowing account of Epicureanism's simple teachings concerning the matter of divine indifference to human affairs: "Epicurus, the soul-soother of later antiquity, had that wonderful insight ... that to quieten the heart it is absolutely not necessary to have solved the ultimate and outermost theoretical questions. Thus, to those tormented by "fear of the gods" it sufficed him to say: "if the gods exist, they do not concern themselves with us."³⁷

As Nietzsche is well aware, Epicurus' "wonderful insight" *vis à vis* the gods' lack of concern with human affairs was intended to soothe the anxious, superstitious masses of the Hellenistic era. And, like his teachings on the finality of death, Epicurus' philosophy of divine indifference can be summarized in a few simple points:

³⁶ Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, 3.1020–1023. Lucretius surveys a number of Greek myths involving post-mortem punishment for wrong-doing, including those of Tantalus, damned to spend eternity under a huge suspended rock (3.980) and Tityus, condemned to having vultures feed forever on his liver (3.984). Lucretius observes that, while Epicurus has shown us that such frightening suffering cannot possibly await one *after* death, men can and do fill their *pre-mortem* lives with hellish suffering by harboring needless fears and false beliefs concerning death and immortality.

³⁷ Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, Book II, Part 2, Section 7.

(1) The most blessed human condition is one characterized by *ataraxia*; the absence of physical and mental perturbation.³⁸

(2) It would be unreasonable to conclude that the gods do not also enjoy such serenity.³⁹

(3) The idea of the gods exhibiting concern and effort with respect to the affairs of humanity is incompatible with a life of blessed tranquility, and therefore contrary to the very notion of divinity itself.⁴⁰

Epicurus insists: “First, think of god as an indestructible and blessed creature ... and attach to him nothing alien to indestructibility or inappropriate to blessedness.”⁴¹ This passage goes on to characterize the belief that “the greatest harm from the gods [comes] to bad men and the greatest benefits” to the good as a prime example of a widespread belief that, upon reflection, seems “repugnant” to divine blessedness. In the words of Lucretius: “free from all distress, free from peril, fully self-sufficient, independent of us, they are not influenced by worthy conduct nor touched by anger.”⁴² Epicurus’ *Principal Doctrine* #1 distills the matter thusly: “That which is blessed and imperishable neither suffers nor inflicts trouble, and therefore is affected neither by anger nor favour. For all such things are

³⁸ This serene condition of *ataraxia* is characterized by Epicurus thusly: “For the steady observation of these things makes it possible to refer every choice and avoidance to the health of the body and the soul’s freedom from disturbance, since this is the end belonging to the blessed life. For this is what we aim at in all our actions — to be free from pain and anxiety. Once we have got this, all the soul’s tumult is released” (*Letter to Menoeceus*, 128, in Long & Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 1*, p. 113).

³⁹ “Surely, if man can attain to happiness, so can the gods; and that which constitutes happiness for humans must also be the substance of the happiness enjoyed by the gods” (A. J. Festugière, *Epicurus and His Gods*, New York: Russell & Russell, 1969, p. 57).

⁴⁰ In Book Two of *On the Nature of Things*, Lucretius speaks of “the sacred, peacefully tranquil minds of the gods, who pass placid days and a life of calm” (1093–1094).

⁴¹ *Letter to Menoeceus*, 123, in Long & Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume 1*, p. 140.

⁴² Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, 1, 47–49.

marks of weakness."⁴³ For the Epicureans, no ritual, no sacrifice — not even of "thousands of oxen" — alters the divine nature.⁴⁴

Clearly, the widespread notion that a precise series of prayers, sacrifices, or rites of initiation can so please a deity that he or she will bestow immortal life upon the initiate is *doubly* at odds with Epicurus' philosophy insofar as it violates two of his foundational teachings. Understanding this fundamental opposition between Epicureanism and the central beliefs and practices of the mystery religions (and later, of Christianity) helps us understand Nietzsche's intriguing image of the Epicureans bravely struggling, *not* against traditional paganism, but against the same *anti-pagan* "species of religion" he discerns in the mysteries and in Christianity.⁴⁵

10. Rival Redemption Doctrines

As a disappointed Nietzsche observes in *Antichrist*, §. 58, Epicurus' fear-dispelling ideas *almost* "won" their world-historic struggle for the hearts of the Roman Empire. Indeed, in a patent overstatement, Nietzsche insists that, had it not been for Pauline Christianity's calculated mystery religion inspired appeal to the Empire's "lower masses,"⁴⁶ "Epicurus would have won" the struggle, as "every mind of any account

⁴³ Epicurus, in Long & Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers: Volume I*, p. 142.

⁴⁴ Festugière (p. 65) cites a remarkable letter fragment — likely originating with Epicurus himself — wherein the writer, perhaps alluding to the bloody animal sacrifices widely practiced by the mystery cults, emphasizes the necessary indifference of the gods to human affairs: "For indeed, in the name of Zeus (as men affect to say) what have you to fear in this matter? Do you believe that the gods can do you harm? Is not that, on any showing, to belittle them? How then will you not regard the Divinity as a miserable creature if it appears inferior in comparison to yourself? Or will you rather be of the opinion that by sacrificing thousands of oxen you can appease God if you have committed some evil deed? Can you think he will take account of the sacrifice and, like a man, remit at some time or another a part of the penalty?"

⁴⁵ Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, §. 58.

⁴⁶ For a thorough discussion of what Nietzsche takes to be Paul's deliberate "outbidding" of the rival mystery religions of the day for the hearts and allegiance of the Empire's downtrodden masses, see Chapter Six of Morgan Rempel, *Nietzsche, Psychohistory, and the Birth of Christianity*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003.

in the Roman Empire was an Epicurean.⁴⁷

Epicureanism's thoroughgoing victory in Rome, however, was not to be. Noteworthy supporters notwithstanding, its superstition-dispelling teachings on death, immortality, and divine involvement in human affairs, ultimately proved no match for the rival doctrines of the day. In the bustling ancient Mediterranean marketplace of ideas, religions teaching that a *new* life of eternal reward or punishment follows one's physical death; that gods *do* take an active interest in the affairs of humanity, and may in fact be persuaded to bestow immortality upon the properly initiated, found far more followers than Epicurus' rival gospel.

⁴⁷ Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, §. 58. While certainly an exaggeration, the Roman "minds" Nietzsche is alluding to here are well known. The Stoic philosopher, statesman, and advisor to Emperor Nero, Seneca (c. 4 BC–65 AD) — considered by some "the real master of the world" — displayed great enthusiasm for Epicureanism (see Campbell's "Introduction," *Seneca's Letters From a Stoic*, trans. by R. Campbell, London: Penguin Books, 1969, 10). His celebrated *Letters* contain many Epicurean slogans as advice for his *protégé* Lucilius. In *Letter VIII*, he writes: "It is likely that you will ask me why I quote so many of Epicurus's noble words instead of words taken from our own school. But is there any reason why you should regard them as sayings of Epicurus and not common property?" (Seneca, *Epistles I–65*, trans. by R. Gummere, Cambridge, Mass: Loeb Classical Library, 1917, pp. 36–41). While belonging to the pre-Imperial period, Nietzsche is surely also referring to the Roman poet Lucretius (99–55 BC), whom he calls "the gloomy and yet enlightened disciple of his [Epicurus'] teaching" (Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 72). Farrington calls *De Rerum Natura*, Lucretius's ebullient tribute to Epicurus and Epicureanism, "the greatest philosophical poem in the world" (Benjamin Farrington, *The Faith of Epicurus*, New York: Basic Books, 1967, p. 136). Nietzsche likely also has in mind Virgil (70–19 BC), "by most accounts a great admirer of the character of Epicurus and his Garden school" (Richard Hibbler, *Happiness Through Tranquility*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984, pp. 78–79) and Cicero (106–43 BC), who studied under the Epicurean Phaedrus and was a notable supporter of the school as a young man. Cicero later became an outspoken critic of the Garden philosophy. Eight decades after Nietzsche's insistence that "every mind of any account in the Roman Empire was an Epicurean" (A58), Farrington similarly concludes: "It is not too much to say that the impact of Epicureanism transformed the cultural life of Rome" (*The Faith of Epicurus*, p. 136).

Whether in the hands of a priest of Isis, Mithras, or Christ, Nietzsche concedes that it is *this* "species of religion," *this* "anti-pagan" assemblage of ideas that finds lasting favor with the masses of Late Antiquity. While one can readily appreciate the all too human hopes expressed in such ideas, what Nietzsche recognizes, like Lucretius before him, is that, in a world awash in teachings not just of post-mortem reward but also of post-mortem suffering in beliefs in man's ability to anger and please the gods, the *real* "redemption doctrine of the pagan world"⁴⁸ was Epicurus' straightforward denial of all such ideas.

11. Conclusion

Like so much of the writings from the last year of his career, Nietzsche's reflections on Epicurus' lonely, almost-successful fight against the "superstitious ... absurdities" believed by "the lower masses" attracted to the mystery cults,⁴⁹ are full of bravado and highly prone to exaggeration. That his musings on this topic are lacking in twenty-first century political sensitivity, is also clear. I suspect that such considerations may partly explain the marked lack of scholarship on this aspect of his philosophy. It is my hope, however, that this paper's examination, aided by post-Nietzsche scholarship, of the ideas *behind* Nietzsche's provocative remarks on this topic, partially fills this lacuna and serves as testimony to his impressive insight into the religious and philosophical traditions of Mediterranean Antiquity. Indeed, his unconventional image of Epicureanism's struggle, not with mainstream Greco-Roman religion, but with the "latent Christianity"⁵⁰ of Late Antiquity's mystery religions, offers a fresh perspective on an intriguing and still relevant constellation of ideas.

⁴⁸ Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, §. 30.

⁴⁹ Nietzsche, *KGA*, Abt. 8, Bd. 2 [295]; see also *WP*, §. 196.

⁵⁰ Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, §. 58.

Faustus Byzantinus: The Legend of Faust in Byzantine Literature and Its Neo-Platonic Roots

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Abstract

Late in Queen Elizabeth I's long reign, around 1595, Cristopher Marlowe presented on stage his famous play *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*.¹ In this play, a great scholar, who penetrated the very depths of knowledge, summoned the Devil, rejected Christ and his Christian faith, and signed with his own blood a contract with the Evil One. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the notorious Witch Hunt was a reality and, hence, Marlowe's audience was well acquainted with the idea of a pact with the Devil. A different situation occurred in the 1820s, when Goethe elaborated and put on stage his own “Faustus.” By then, the great stakes had ceased to burn for almost a century in Europe. Nevertheless, the fascinating story of the man who sold his soul to the Devil is known today mostly in this literary, romantic form. In reality, though, behind the myth of Faustus lies an enormous philosophical, theological, political, and ideological tradition; its roots are actually visible in the literary production of Late Antiquity and the Early Byzantine Empire. Here we present and study these ancient sources, the real phenomena behind them, and the philosophical tradition, related to them.

Keywords: Late Antiquity • Byzantium • Neo-Platonism • demons • Devil • ideology • hagiography • soul

¹ The first edition of the play (the so-called ‘A-text’) was published for the first time in 1604 by Valentine Simmes. Cf. *Cristopher Marlowe. Doctor Faustus. A- and B- texts (1604, 1616)*, ed. and comm. by D. Bevington & E. Rasmussen, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993, p. 62.

1. Introduction

The sources giving information on the contract with the Devil were partially edited in 1927 by Ludwig Radermacher.² The texts incorporated in this collection are dated from the 4th to the 7th centuries. In the West, the Latin versions of the legend of Theophilus (Church *oeconomus* or “manager” of the city of Adana, who reportedly sold his soul to the Devil) was translated and rewritten several times between the 9th and 13th centuries. We also still have records of Byzantine variations of this narrative *topos*, where it took political and religious dimensions and probably was interwoven with some urban legends of the cosmopolite imperial capital during the period between the 8th and 10th centuries.

The theme of the contract with the Devil in Late Antiquity and in the Byzantine tradition is a complex phenomenon that combines elements from literature, folklore, politics, and philosophy. The core idea probably evolved as a Christian reaction against the widespread magical practices (a flourishing business in the eastern Roman cities) and as an attempt to demonize them. In addition, as we will see below, in the late 4th century Neo-Platonism had already developed an elaborate demonological system, including the so-called *demon-paredros*, i.e., a “patron demon” or “protector demon.”³ In our opinion, early Christian authors of hagiological texts borrowed this idea from the great Eastern philosophical schools of Athens, Antioch, and Alexandria, combined it with numerous urban legends, and created in this way the image of the evil spirit that accompanies and helps the devilish and cunning magician in his harmful deeds.

The theme of the Devil’s contract was used in different anonymous hagiological texts. In the late 8th and in the early 9th century, Stephen, deacon of St. Sophia in Constantinople and founding father of the iconodule hagiology, used it to create the image of the Emperor Constantine V (741–775) — one of the most hated and demonized Byzantine rulers. Obviously, the legend of the Emperor, who signed a written

² L. Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen zur Faustsage*, Wien & Leipzig: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky in Komm, 1927.

³ The term is used in one of the Egyptian magical papyri edited by Karl Preisendanz in: *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, ed. and comm. by K. Preisendanz, t. 1, Leipzig: Teubner, 1928, p. 8.

contract with the Devil, gained huge popularity among the populace of the imperial capital and was employed in the late 9th and in the first half of the 10th centuries by the chronographer George Monachus, by the encyclopedists of Emperor Constantine VII's intellectual circle, and by the anonymous author of the *Suda* lexicon.

We can only speculate about the origin of the pact with the Devil before the 4th–6th centuries, when it appears for the first time in relatively elaborated form. It is vaguely reminiscent of the founding principle of the relationship between humans and gods in Ancient Rome — *do, ut des* (“I give so that you may give”). Before some important event, in cases of illness or some difficulty, a person would promise to a higher puissance certain reward for its help. Votive offerings (usually figurines representing the injured part of the body) are frequently found in ancient temples.⁴ In ancient Greek *poleis* and in Rome, this tradition was related neither to mysticism nor theurgy. The pact with the deity was considered a real contract, similar to the contracts made by mortals. In the eclectic Hellenistic world and especially in Late Antiquity, where magical practices of Egyptian, Babylonian, and Syrian origin mixed with Graeco-Roman mythological traditions, the summoning of supernatural powers for the sake of a client became profitable business for professional “magicians” in huge metropolises. These practices constituted a significant obstacle for Christianity in its course to universal power and were therefore subjected to intense propagandistic “demonization.”⁵ They became criminalized as early as the mid-4th century, under Emperor Constantius II (337–361). Ammianus Marcellinus mentions accusations of magical

⁴ Cf. A. Comella, *I rilievi votivi greci di periodo arcaico e classico: diffusione, ideologia, committenza*, Bari: Edipuglia, 2002.

⁵ The term “démonization de la magie” is used by J.-B. Clerc (J.-B. Clerc, *Homines magici. Etude sur la sorcellerie et la magie dans la société romaine impériale*, Bern: Peter Lang, 1995, p. 248) in his thorough analysis on treatises of St. Augustine, St. John Chrysostom, and other early Christian theologians (ibid., pp. 246–278).

practices as a powerful weapon in political struggles.⁶ Supernatural aid, unauthorized by the Church, was perceived as dangerous for society itself.⁷

The judicial measures against the widespread magical business were insufficient to deal with such practices, deeply rooted in the Graeco-Roman and Middle-Eastern social and religious traditions. The Christian Church needed propaganda to change the public opinion and attitudes towards pagan cultism. Under these circumstances, and along with the formation of the new religion's ethical and theological system, a new narrative emerged. The pivotal points in the plot and the main characters are clear from the very beginning and, at least until the 10th century, have become almost identical — the differences usually lying in the details and in the background. A wealthy and powerful man (a Faustian type, we would say), usually young, is driven by ambition, lustful passion, or thirst for revenge. But some obstacle holds him back. In his frustration he turns to a famous (or, from the Christian point of view, notorious) magician. This magician promises to fulfill his wish, but the supernatural powers summoned to this end require something in return. The price is costly: the client has to sign a written contract (usually with his own blood), whereby he barter his soul. At the end, the sinner usually confesses and is saved by a holy man.

This quite simple and basic *topos* is very convenient to convey a didactic message, which is the main goal of hagiology. In addition, to be successful, every propaganda tool needs certain “anchors” — values, beliefs, attitudes — already accepted by the persuadee.⁸ The story line of

⁶ According to the same author, people were accused of magic and executed just on grounds of being caught passing in the vicinity of graveyards early in the afternoon or in the evening. Cf. *Ammiani Marcellini, Rerum gestarum libri qui supersunt*, ed. J. C. Rolfe, Harvard: Loeb Classical Library, 1963–1964, XVI, 8, 2; *Zosime. Histoire nouvelle*, ed. F. Paschoud, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1971–1979, IV, pp. 13–15; A. Βακαλούδη, “Μαγεία, πολιτική, θρησκεία και φιλοσοφία στο πρώιμο Βυζάντιο,” pp. 116–118, *Βυζαντιακά*, vol. 19, pp. 99–136; A. Βακαλούδη, *Η μαγεία ως κοινωνικό φαινόμενο στο Πρώιμο Βυζάντιο (4^{ος}–7^{ος} μ. Χ. αι.)*, Αθήνα: Ενιάλιος, 2001, p. 192.

⁷ Βακαλούδη, *Η Μαγεία...*, p. 193.

⁸ G. Jowett, V. O'Donnel, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, Fifth Edition, Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2012, p. 35.

the pact with the Devil was probably inspired by urban legends of Antioch, Adana, and Constantinople, well known to the populace. These legends would have made the story more plausible.

2. The Platonic Tradition and the Concept of the *Demon-Paredros*

The concept of the divine protector of a hero and/or a ruler can be traced back to Homer. The classical example of this concept is that of the goddess Athena, who took under her wing Ulysses and his son Telemachus.⁹ In the *Odyssey*, even the secondary hero Autolicus had his own guardian, namely his father Hermes.¹⁰ In some cases, as we learn from the tragical poet Euripides, the divine protector may abandon his/her *protégé*, such as Artemis, who abandoned Hippolytus. Nevertheless, these protectors are gods, not *daimones*. They are by no means identified with the hero himself, like the Roman *genius*. Their relationship with the hero is *ad hoc*; it is mostly aimed at the fulfillment of some specific task.

Personal demons that accompany somebody through his/her whole life are mentioned for the first time in the 6th century BC. According to Pindar, there are two kinds of demons: the good one and “the other demon, who brings a man to harm” (δαίμων δ’ ἕτερος ἐς κακὸν τρέψαις).¹¹ In his *Elegies*, the poet Theognis mentions the “brave” (ἔσθλός) and the “cowardly” (δειλός) demon, both of whom could determine one’s life.¹² Nevertheless, this concept of determination was not an entirely fatalistic one. Mortals could change their fate by willingly choosing to follow their “brave” guardian and to avoid the vicious deeds inspired by the “other” one. Judging from such examples, we could assume that the concept of guardian demon was quite common as early as the Archaic Period.

Plato and the Platonic tradition contributed significantly to the de-

⁹ *Homeri Odyssea*, ed. P. von der Mühl, Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1962, §13.300 sq. and §13.393–4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, §19.398.

¹¹ *Pindari carmina cum fragmentis*, ed. H. Maehler (post B. Snell), t. 1, Leipzig: Teubner, 1971, §3.108–109. Cf. W. Burkert, *Greek Religion, Archaic and Classical*, transl. by J. Raffan, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1985, p. 181.

¹² Theognis, *Elegiae*, §1.161–164. In: *Theognis*, ed. E. Diehl, Leipzig: Teubner, 1971, pp. 1–83.

velopment of the philosophical idea of the personal demon. In the *Phaedo*, Plato says that every human being receives by lot his or her own demon. This demon accompanies the person he took charge of through their whole life and after death leads him or her to the place in the kingdom of Hades where the dead are put to trial. According to the philosopher, one is not entirely dependent on his or her demon; he or she can always follow the path of virtue and is obliged to do so, even against the will of this personal genius.¹³ Another well-known account on this subject is that of the “divine and demonic creature” (θεϊόν τι και δαιμόνιον), whose voice Socrates used to hear since childhood. This voice never incited the philosopher to do anything, but rather always prevented him from acting. Because of this, Socrates was charged with attempting to introduce “new deities” in Athens and eventually lost his life as a result of this.

During the next seven centuries, until the decline of the pagan Roman Empire, the distinction between good and evil demon was preserved, enriched, and, occasionally, rejected.¹⁴ Intellectuals such as Plutarch (c. 45–120), who wrote a whole treatise *On the Demon of Socrates* (*Περὶ τοῦ Σωκράτους δαιμονίου*), were particularly interested in the *daimonion* of Socrates. In the 3rd century the idea of the personal *genius* was common in Neo-Platonism. In his *Life of Plotinus*, Porphyry tells the story of the encounter between the personal demons of Plotinus and those of an Egyptian priest. The meeting was to be held in the temple of Isis in Rome — the holiest place in the city. Surprisingly, when the genius of the philosopher was summoned, there came a god (θεός) instead

¹³ Plato, *Phaedo*, 107d–e and 113d. In: *Platonis opera*, ed. J. Burnet, t. 1, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967, 57a–118a; Plato, *Respublica*, 617b–618a. In: Burnet, *Platonis opera...*, t. 4; Plato, *Leges*, 877a. In: J. Burnet, *Platonis opera...*, t. 5, 624a–969d.

¹⁴ For example, the comical poet Menander tries to persuade his audience that everybody is accompanied by only one good guardian demon. According to him, the widespread belief in evil demons comes from people who lead vicious lives and who prefer to blame their misfortunes on supernatural powers instead of on themselves (Menander, *Fragmenta longiora apud alios auctores servata*, fr. 714. In: *Menandri reliquiae selectae*, ed. F. Sandbach, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, pp. 303–324).

of a “deity of a lesser nature.”¹⁵ Around 180 A.D., the sophist Maximus of Tyrus even “calculated” that exactly 30 000 demons were haunting the world.¹⁶ Every demon was in fact the *eidos* of a certain human talent; he chooses his own *protégé* and endows him or her with this talent.

Surprisingly enough, the guardian demon has no specific place in the elaborated demonological system of the leading figure of Neo-Platonism in the late 3rd and in the early 4th centuries, namely Jamblichus. According to his treatise *On the Egyptian Mysteries*, the demons are creatures of an immortal nature. Their main function is to fulfill the orders of the gods and to reveal their will to the mortals through divination. In other words, they are mediators between the intelligible world of *ideas* and the material world. Jamblichus asks, rhetorically, “[w]ho is capable to perform any sacred ritual or to predict the future without the participation of both a god and a demon?”¹⁷ The concept of the demon-mediator was a dangerous one for the Christian religion, as we will see in the story of St. Cyprian.

The guardian demon appears once again in the demonological system of Proclus, one of the last heads of the Academy (5th century). In his *Commentaries on Plato’s Alcibiades*, he distinguishes between “demons by substance” (δαίμονες κατ’οὐσίαν) and “demons by analogy” (δαίμονες κατ’ἀναλογίαν). The demons of the former kind have a divine nature and origin, whereas “demons by analogy” are spirits who choose a human being and take care of him or her.¹⁸ Proclus does not clarify why he calls this kind of demons “by analogy”; possibly, in his opinion they were celestial creatures of different nature, that just bore some resemblance to the “demons by substance.”

¹⁵ Porphyrius, *Vita Plotini*, p. 10. In: *Plotini opera*, ed. P. Henry & H.-R. Schwyzter, t. 1, Leiden: Desclée de Brouwer, 1951, pp. 1–41.

¹⁶ Maximus, *Dialexeis*, §8.8.f.1–2. In: *Maximi Tyrii philosophumena*, ed. H. Hobein, Leipzig: Teubner, 1910, pp. 1–484.

¹⁷ Jamblique, *Les mystères d’Égypte*, ed. É. des Places, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1966, §3.30.37–39.

¹⁸ Proclus Diadochus, *Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, ed. L. Westerink, Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Co., 1954, pp. 73–75.

3. St. Cyprian: The Mage-Philosopher Who Became a Christian

Neo-Platonism was undoubtedly one of the most dangerous rivals of Christianity in the 3rd and 4th centuries. According to this philosophical and mystical doctrine, the main path towards God is through initiation in various mysteries (e.g., in the Eleusinian mysteries).¹⁹ The demonization of such pagan rituals, as well as the condemnation of theurgy in general, is evident in the legend of St. Cyprian of Antioch. The story is preserved in two versions. The first one contains the *Confession of St. Cyprianus* (Μετάνοια τοῦ ἁγίου Κυπριανοῦ)²⁰ and was written by an anonymous author between 350 and 370.²¹ The second version is the *Life of St. Cyprian and Justina*, preserved in three sub-versions, edited and translated in German by Radermacher.²² From the Christian perspective, the *Confession* represents the path to be followed by the heathen philosopher to achieve full control over the higher powers. At the age of six, the future saint was sent by his parents to be initiated in the mysteries of Mithra. At ten years old, he served as *dadouchos* (torch-bearer) in the Eleusinian mysteries. He then visited Mount Olympus, where he remained for forty days, dancing and fighting with deities and demons. At the age of fifteen, he studied arcane arts under the guidance of seven different *hierophants*, was initiated in the mysteries of Artemis of Argos and Artemis of Lacedaemon, and was taught all the divination techniques by the Phrygians.²³ Afterwards, Cyprian travelled to Memphis and observed there all kinds of demons and evil powers, as well as the incarnated images of deceptions of Greek philosophers²⁴ — perhaps a far echo of the Platonic *eidē*. The highest point of his education in the art of magic and

¹⁹ Cf. *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, ed. P. Athanasiadi, M. Frede, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.

²⁰ R. Bailey, *The Confession of Cyprian of Antioch: Introduction, Text and Translation*, Master's thesis, Montreal: McGill University, 2009.

²¹ This dating is accepted by R. Reitzenstein, L. Radermacher, and Th. Zahn (cf. Bailey, *The Confession of Cyprian of Antioch*..., pp. 3–5).

²² “Cyprianus und Justina” (Ὁμολογία τῆς ἁγίας παρθένου Ἰουστίνης). In: Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen*..., pp. 76–113. Cf. F. Halkin, *Bibliotheca hagiographica Graeca*, Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1957, № 452–452c.

²³ Bailey, *The Confession of Cyprian of Antioch*..., pp. 34–38.

²⁴ Ibid. pp. 38–44.

theurgy was his encounter with the Devil himself. Cyprian is said to have met him in Chaldea at the age of thirty (Christ's age when He was crucified). Having learned from the Chaldean wise men all the secrets of the stars, plants, and fire, and having seen the so-called "mediator demons" (δαίμονες μεσῖται), he was ready to come face to face with their master. According to the text, Cyprian described the encounter as follows: "Believe me, I saw this devil and placated him with sacrifices. Be sure, I gladly accepted him, and I talked with him, and I was granted the highest power among his servants. He turned his face to me and called me 'wise youth, a new Jambres, apt to serve him, worthy to communicate with him.'"²⁵

Cyprian was appointed chief of a "phalanx of demons" (φάλαγγα δαιμόνων) and with their support he was able to accomplish all his plans. He settled in Antioch and there gained huge influence with his magical skills,²⁶ much demanded by the local nobility. His life changed when a powerful and wealthy lawyer, Aglaides, asked the mage to grant him the love of a virtuous maiden called Justina. Cyprian tried everything, but his efforts were in vain. Even the most powerful demon summoned by the wizard was incapable of breaking her unwavering piety.²⁷ According to the *Life of St. Cyprian and Justina*, at this point Cyprian asked the Devil to reveal the reason of this constant failure. Before answering, the Evil One demanded from his loyal servant that he swear the oath that he will never renounce him. Cyprian accepted and said: "I swear to all your might, I will never renounce you."²⁸ The Devil informed Cyprian that the source of Justina's strength against all temptations was Christ and that nobody was more powerful than Him. The mage then abandoned his pagan ways and became a Christian. To achieve this task and to escape the power of the Devil, he was helped by a priest, who demanded from him a lengthy confession and repentance. In addition, Cyprian had to burn his devilish books and to become a monk.²⁹

²⁵ Ibid. p. 46.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 52: ὀνομαστὸς ἤμην μάγος φιλόσοφος.

²⁷ Ibid. pp. 54–60; Radermacher, *Grieschische Quellen...*, pp. 84–100.

²⁸ Radermacher, *Grieschische Quellen...*, pp. 100–101. The content of the oath is identical in all versions of the text.

²⁹ Bailey, *The Confession of Cyprian of Antioch*, pp. 62–104; Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen...*, pp. 104–113.

Cyprian, it must be stressed, did not actually break the deal. As we saw, he swore in the name of Satan's powers. Supposedly, if he renounced his master, all the might of the Evil One would eventually be against him. If Christ is more powerful than the Devil, then *a fortiori* Cyprianus would be fully protected, even if he did not fulfill his promise.

The image of the mage Cyprian, who obtained all conceivable knowledge, only to find that the ultimate power lays in the hands of the Christian God, mirrors the deep identity crisis in the Late Roman Empire. In addition, this story reveals the propagandistic uses of demonization as a weapon against the widespread mystery cults and practices in the second half of the 4th century. The plot of the written contract with Satan has not taken its final shape yet, but some of its basic elements are already present. Cyprian meets the Devil personally, makes sacrifices to him, speaks with him, obtains power over demons, and swears not to renounce the Devil. All these features will evolve in the next centuries.

4. The Professional Magician and His Clients

Between the late 4th and the third decade of the 7th century, the struggle between Christianity and the pagan cults continued, but the enemy of the Church was now different. As a consolidated intellectual movement mixed with mysticism and based on certain sacred texts ("textual community"), Neo-Platonism was gradually marginalized by the efforts of fanaticized Christian bishops. It waned and finally died out with the last pupils of Olympiodorus of Alexandria in the late 6th century. Nevertheless, the magical practices inherited by the cosmopolite Hellenistic and Roman worlds continued to flourish. According to many hagiological texts, the professional magicians became very important figures in the megapolises of the Empire. Among their clients were the noblest and wealthiest citizens. Reasonably enough, Church authorities felt threatened and inspired fierce polemic against these magicians, usually called "poisoners" (φαρμακοί). The "tragical histories" of people who sold their souls to the Devil during this period ended happily — the misled victims were forgiven and accepted back into the bosom of the Church.

One of the versions of the *Life of St. Basil the Great* is the first

known text wherein a written contract with the Devil is mentioned.³⁰ This text was erroneously ascribed by its first editor, François Combefis, to St. Basil's close associate, bishop Amphilochius.³¹ Its critical edition was prepared by Radermacher with the title *On the One Who Renounced Christ in Written Form*.³² The author and the date are unknown, but on the basis of circumstantial data we could suppose that the *Life of St. Basil the Great* was probably compiled before the 7th century. The events took place during the reign of the heretic Emperor Valens (364–378), when a pious senator, Proterius, disgusted by the ruler's religious views and policies, decided to self-exile and settle with his daughter in the Holy Lands.³³ He wished her to become a nun, but this was not to the taste of the Evil One. By the Devil's inspiration, a certain youth fell in love with her. When she resisted his lust, the man resorted to the services of an “enchanter” (ἐπασιδός)³⁴ or a “poisoner”/“magician” (φαρμακός).³⁵ To his great disappointment, the magician declared that he was powerless to deal with the girl's virtue and advised his client to renounce Christianity in written form and to seek his master's help.³⁶ The enchanter gave the youth a letter, addressed to the Devil, wherein he described briefly his client's passion and his firm decision to abandon his faith. The young man had to bring this letter at a certain nocturnal hour to an ancient graveyard, to sit upon some pagan grave, and to wait.³⁷ Everything was accurately carried out. As soon as the lover-to-be

³⁰ F. Halkin, *Bibliotheca...*, № 246y–260.

³¹ “Εἰς τὸν βίον καὶ τὰ θαύματα τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Βασιλείου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Καισαρείας Καππαδοκίας,” ed. F. Combefis. In: *Amphilochii Opera Omnia*, Paris: Piget, 1644, pp. 155–225.

³² “Die Erzählung des Helladius (Proterius)” (Περὶ τοῦ ἀρνησαμένου τὸν Χριστὸν ἐγγράφως). In: Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen...*, pp. 117–149. Cf. F. Halkin, *Bibliotheca...*, № 253a.

³³ Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen...*, p. 122; 123.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 122; 125.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 124. The Greek word could have both meanings.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 126.5–6; 127.5. In hagiological texts, such places are frequently inhabited by demonic powers and a standard “meeting place” for them. A good example in this instance is the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon* († 613). Cf., e.g., Théodore, *Vie de Théodore de Sykéon*, ed. A.-J. Festugière, Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1970, pp. 38–38 (the inhabitants of the village of

raised his hand with the letter, he was surrounded by demons, which brought him triumphantly to their master's throne. The Devil accepted the document and demanded from the youth to sign a contract, in which he "renounced his baptism by his own will, passed to the side of the Evil One, and accepted to face, along with Satan, the eternal damnation, prepared for him in the Last Judgement."³⁸ With the help of the demons, the man successfully seduced the girl. Ashamed, she convinced her father to agree to her marriage with the seducer. The couple lived happily afterwards, but their neighbors noticed that the husband avoided church and did not take communion.³⁹ They told his wife that he was not Christian and the apostate confessed everything to her. Together they visited St. Basil.⁴⁰ In order to take back his contract, the man had to be locked up in a small room inside the church, where he bravely resisted a horde of demons, who restlessly threatened him with utter destruction. In the fortieth day, the evil spirits disappeared and the bishop showed the repentant to his fellow citizens, announcing his salvation.⁴¹ At this point, Satan himself appeared with the contract, but St. Basil encouraged the throng to shout at the top of their lungs "*Kyrie, eleison*" ("Lord, have mercy"). A fierce wind then blew and wrested the document off the Devil's hands, laying it in the hands of the bishop instead. St. Basil tore it to pieces and the young husband was accepted back in the Church.⁴²

The meeting with the Devil and the selling of the soul in *Life of St. Basil the Great* are related to significant literary and social phenomena. Cyprian is simply called a "mage" and a "philosopher." By contrast, in this text the man who urged the desperate youth to sign a contract with Satan is not just a "mage"; he is a "poisoner" or "magician," which de-

Bousaion use raw materials from ancient graveyards), pp. 89–90 (Eutolmius of Sandos digs into rich ancient graves), pp. 94–95 (demons emerge from an ancient sarcophagus).

³⁸ Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen*..., pp. 128; 129.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 132, 133.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 136–138.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 142–143.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 146, 147. Cf. R. Greenfield, *Traditions of Belief in Late Byzantine Demonology*, Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1988, p. 255; Βακαλούδη, *Η Μαγεία*..., pp. 217–218.

notes a precise social function, well-mentioned in judicial texts. A *φαρμακός* (*pharmakos*) is a professional sorcerer who performs magical rituals and frequently provides different herbs and poisonous potions for his clients.⁴³ As we will see, the magician's role in the ritual of signing contracts with the Devil is constant.

The author and the exact datation of the next text, the *Life of St. Mary of Antioch*,⁴⁴ are unknown.⁴⁵ The plot and the main characters suggest that this hagiological work was written between the second half of the 6th century and the Arab conquest (in 637).⁴⁶ A poor and pious widow had a daughter named Maria, brought up in accordance with the Christian morals. The girl grew up and became so beautiful that even the most wealthy and powerful men in Antioch were attracted to her. Nevertheless, she did not succumb to any temptations and used to leave her house only to accompany her mother to Church. Unfortunately, there she was spotted by a certain Anthemius — one of the richest youths of the Syrian capital.⁴⁷ During the next two years he was constantly trying to seduce her, but all his efforts were fruitless. The man had almost abandoned all hope, when by chance he witnessed a strange scene. An impressive and supercilious person approached his company and his noble friends payed him enormous respect. He asked them who was this man and they answered that he was Megas — an experienced professional “poisoner”/“sorcerer” (*φαρμακός*, γόης), for whom nothing was impossible.⁴⁸ The social status

⁴³ Cf. e.g., the laws against this occupation in *Iustiniani Novellae*, p. 537.16. In: *Corpus iuris civilis*, ed. R. Scholl, vol. 3, Berlin: Weidman, 1895 (repr. 1968), pp. 1–795, where the term *φαρμακός* is used.

⁴⁴ Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen...*, pp. 258–271. Cf. Halkin, *Bibliotheca...*, [1045].

⁴⁵ *Acta Sanctorum*, ed. J. Bollandus & G. Henschenius, Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1966 (=Antuerpiae: apud Ioannem Meursium, 1643), Maii VII, p. 53D (“absque ulla nota temporis”).

⁴⁶ At the time, when the story is laid out, the city of Antioch was already mostly Christian. The Christianization process of this megapolis was probably completed by the second half of the 6th century and, therefore, the text must have been written after that period. On the other hand, there is no mention of the Arab invasion of the city (637).

⁴⁷ Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen...*, p. 261.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 262 (γόης); 262, 262, 263, 266, 267 (*φαρμακός*). As we have seen, the last word denotes a certain social role according to Justinian's *Novellae*.

of Megas was very high. The wealthy and noble youth called him “sir” (κύριέ μου) and bowed to him. Anthemius implored him for help. The magician took the assignment and promised that that same night the maiden would come to him, but the next day he disdainfully informed his client that he had forgotten about him.⁴⁹ Afterwards, the magician assigned the mission to two of his demons. One of them took the shape of the girl and accompanied her mother back to their home. The other evil spirit disguised himself as the mother and brought Maria to Anthemius’ house. The young aristocrat offered her money and expensive jewelry if she agreed to become his wife. Weighted down by his insistence, she swore to fulfil this wish after fifteen days, having meanwhile persuaded her mother to bless the marriage.⁵⁰ Anthemius agreed and let her go. Impressed by the immense power of the demons, he proposed to Megas as much gold as he wished, if only he made him mage and gave him control over these spirits. Anthemius was even ready to give up his Christian faith.⁵¹ The sorcerer wrote a note, gave it to the youth, and instructed him to go to a certain bridge in the evening (a widespread symbol of the transition between life and death)⁵² and to wait there. At midnight he would hear a tumult and would see some magnificent lord, Satan himself, riding in a chariot and accompanied by a huge retinue of followers. He said that Anthemius would not be harmed if he held high the magician’s letter. Afterwards, he would have to greet respectfully the kingly person, to say that Megas had sent him, and to give the note to the lord. In addition, if he wanted to achieve his goal, he was never to make the sign of the cross. The youth acted as he was told. The Devil read the letter and wrote an answer to Megas. Anthemius’s wish would be fulfilled, it turned out, but under one condition, namely, that he renounced his Christian faith in writ-

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 263.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 264–265.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 267. It is interesting that Anthemius does not want to be a professional *magician* (φαρμακός) like Megas himself, but only to acquire the skills of a mage and to control the demons.

⁵² Cf., e.g., the struggle between St. George of Lesbos (8th–9th c.) and Imeros, commander-in-chief of the demonic army, took place on a bridge (Acta graeca ss. Davidis, Symeonis et Georgii Mitylenae in insula Lesbo, ed. J. van den Gheyn, pp. 222–223. *Analecta Bollandiana*, vol. 18, 1899, pp. 209–259). Cf. and Βακαλούδη, *Η Μαγεία...*, p. 218.

ten form. The client produced the following document: “I, Anthemius, deny Christ and my faith in Him; I renounce my baptism, and the name ‘Christian,’ and His cross, and I vow never to use or mention these symbols.”⁵³ As soon as he pronounced these words, the apostate sweated from head to toe, which indicates that God’s grace came out from him. Megas approved the text and warned Anthemius not to demand from the Devil more than one or two demons as servants — they would push him day and night to assign them tasks. The youth handed the document to Satan, who raised it to the sky, and shouted triumphantly to God “I took a soul from you!” This cry sobered the apostate up. He tried by all means to persuade the master of the demons to give him back the contract, but all his efforts were in vain. The Devil answered that he would use the document as evidence on the Day of Judgement.⁵⁴ The desperate youth turned for help to the local bishop, who declined his plea to be baptized again, but advised him to repent. Anthemius sold all his property, distributed the money among the poor — three pounds of gold (approximately one kilogram). In this way, his soul was saved.⁵⁵

In 1903, Léon Clugnet and François Nau published in a short paper the first paragraphs and the abstracts of some inedited texts dedicated to the lives of early Christian saints and hermits. Among them we find an anonymous and incomplete story about the ritual that concerns us here.⁵⁶ This text is missing from Radermacher’s collection. The scene of the narrative is completely different from that of the eastern cities, where St. Cyprian, Aglaides, and Anthemius sold their souls. In this case, the events are happening in the imperial capital, Constantinople. According to the text, during the reign of Emperor Mauricius there lived a certain Mesites, who surpassed in skills all the magicians who had lived before him. He hired as his *notarios* (secretary) a pious man who had just arrived in the capital. Deeply desiring to make him renounce the Christian faith, Mesites invited him to ride together. The two men arrived at a field where a group of demonic Ethiopians were gathered. A huge nigger was their leader — the Devil himself. But their encounter was

⁵³ Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen...*, p. 268.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 267–269. Cf. and Βακαλούδη, *Η Μαγεία...*, pp. 218–219.

⁵⁵ Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen...*, pp. 269–270.

⁵⁶ L. Clugnet & F. Nau, “Vies et récits d’anachorètes (IVe–VIIe siècles),” *Révue d’Orient Chrétien*, vol. 8, 1903, pp. 91–100, pp. 93–94.

spoiled by the piety of the secretary. As soon as he saw this godless throng, he fearfully crossed himself and everything disappeared.

Anastasia Vakaloudi points out that this story very much resembles the ceremonies through which a contract with the Devil was being made.⁵⁷ According to the text, Mesites took his secretary to the devilish gathering in order to coerce him to renounce Christ. The very name of the magician is somehow allegorical — *Mesites* (Μεσίτης) means “mediator” (between humans and the Devil). Even though at the beginning of the text a different etymology is ironically given by the anonymous author (Μεσίτις – Μεσίαζ/Messiah), it is possible that there really was an urban legend behind this narrative, which has preserved the memory of the Neo-Platonic idea of the *mediator* between the earthly and the heavenly world — a concept so threatening for Christians.

Undoubtedly, in Medieval Western Europe the most popular legend related to the contract with the Devil was the story of Theophilus, Church manager (*oekonomus*) in the Cilician city of Adana. This story is narrated in the anonymous *Confession of St. Theophilus*. Four Greek versions of the text have been preserved.⁵⁸ Only one of them is anonymous⁵⁹ — the name of the author is Eutychianos, who was reportedly a close friend of St. Theophilus.⁶⁰ The first Latin translation, made in the 9th century by Paul, deacon of Neapolis, was probably based on this version.⁶¹ In the next centuries, Paul Deacon’s translation passed through different redactions and elaborations.⁶²

The question of the datation of the described events has largely been

⁵⁷ Βακαλούδη, *Η Μαγεία...*, p. 223.

⁵⁸ Cf. F. Halkin, *Bibliotheca...*, № 1319–1322.

⁵⁹ “Theophilus nach der Bearbeitung des Eutychianus mit daraus abgeleiteten Fassungen” (“Μετάνοια καὶ ἀνάκλησις πρὸς τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν γενομένη παρὰ τινος οἰκονόμου ὀνόματος Θεοφίλου ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἀνατολικῆς χώρας τοῦνομ’ Ἀδανῶν διὰ τῆς μεσιτείας τῆς ἁγίας καὶ ὑπερενδόξου θεοτόκου καὶ ἀειπαρθένου Μαρίας,” ed. Radermacher. In: Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen...*, pp. 182–218. Cf. Halkin, *Bibliotheca...*, № 1321].

⁶⁰ Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen...*, p. 218.

⁶¹ AASS Februarii t. I: 482; edition of the Latin version on pp. 483–487.

⁶² About them cf. *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina antiquae et mediae aetatis*, Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1898–1901, [8121]–[8126].

solved. All the versions mention a “Persian invasion” (ἐπιδρομὴν Περσῶν, *incursio Persarum gentis*). The oldest of them,⁶³ according to Radermacher,⁶⁴ makes reference to the Emperor Heraclius (610–641).⁶⁵ If we accept this datation, the described events must have happened between 612/613 (when the Persian invasion against the Empire became almost unstoppable) and 628 (when the contract with Shah Kavād II Shīrōe was signed and the Persian threat was eliminated forever).⁶⁶

According to the texts, Theophilus was an extraordinarily pious person who held the position of *oekonomus* (i.e., manager) of the Church in Adana, Cilicia. Humble as he was, he refused to be ordained bishop after the death of the previous hierarch and the archbishop chose another priest for this post. A few days later, he was slandered and unjustly threatened to be removed from his office.⁶⁷ The Devil “entered his heart” and inspired in him the idea to turn to the “magicians” (φαρμακοί)⁶⁸ for help. Theophilus decided to visit a certain Jew who was a notorious servant of Satan. The sorcerer was afraid when he saw a high-ranking Christian priest knocking on his door — an indication of the steady marginalization of Jews in the Later Roman Empire and of their constant fear of repression, the main instigator of which was the

⁶³ “Theophilus. Älteste Fassung” (“Περὶ τῆς πώσεως καὶ τῆς μετανοίας τοῦ οἰκονόμου τῆς πόλεως Ἀδανῶν. Κύρι, εὐλόγησον”), ed. Radermacher. In: Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen...*, pp. 164–177. Cf. Halkin, F. *Bibliotheca...*, [1322].

⁶⁴ Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen...*, pp. 164–167 (Cod. Marcianus gr. cl. II 101).

⁶⁵ Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen...*, p. 164: “Ἐν τοῖς χρόνοις Ἡρακλείου πρὸ τοῦ τοῦς Πέρσας κατὰ Ῥωμανίας ἐξελθεῖν”; cf. and Βακαλούδη, *Η Μαγεία...*, p. 216.

⁶⁶ The pact between Shah Kavād and the Emperor Heraclius was signed in the last months of 628 (Χριστοφιλοπούλου, Αικ. *Ιστορία του Βυζαντινοῦ κράτους*, t. B1, Θεσσαλονίκη, 1998, p. 28). Despite the existence of the version that mentions Emperor Heraclius, the editors of *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina* date the story of Theophilus in the 6th century, after *Acta Sanctorum*, Februarii t. I, p. 481 (where the events are dated c. 538, before the great invasion of Shah Chusrau I Anushirvan in 540 (Χριστοφιλοπούλου, *Ιστορία...*, t. A, p. 276).

⁶⁷ Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen...*, pp. 164; 182–186.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 186; 164.

Church. Nevertheless, the magician accepted to hear the troubles of Theophilus and invited him the next night to an audience with his *patron* (πάτρων).⁶⁹ The priest agreed and at midnight was taken to the city's hippodrome. This location is closely related in Byzantine sources with the so-called *nekrodaímones* (νεκροδαίμονες), i.e., souls of people who had suffered a violent death and who afterwards haunted the place of their demise or the graveyard where they were buried.⁷⁰ In addition, the hippodrome is *le monde à l'envers* (after Gilbert Dagron), similar to the Roman *Saturnalia*, where every ceremony has the opposite meaning to the usual. Before the meeting, the Jew advised his client in the same way as did Mesites for Anthemius in the *Life of St. Mary of Antioch*: no matter what he saw or heard, he had to avoid by all means the sign of the cross. Immediately after that, he showed him a long procession of ghostly humanlike figures, clad in white chamids and carrying lighted candelabras. Amidst them was seated their master. These creatures were the Devil and his servants. The Jew took Theophilus by the hand to his mentor and explained the case. Satan promised to help the priest and to give him power over the bishop, if only he renounced his faith and became his servant. Theophilus agreed and the Devil kissed him several times in the mouth — this way, says the author, the Evil One entered him. The priest quickly drew up the agreement and gave it to his new master.⁷¹ The effect was immediate. The bishop apologized to him and Theophilus suddenly became the most powerful cleric in the city. Despite his great success, though, the priest feared Hell and quickly changed his mind. He decided to save his immortal soul and begged the Virgin Mary to help him. After forty days and forty nights spent in prayer in one of her churches, she finally appeared and, following her advice, he recited the Creed aloud. Three days later, St. Mary appeared to him anew in a dream, giving him back the contract.⁷² In the morning, the document was lying on his chest. Repentant and thankful to his heavenly patron, Theophilus gave the contract to the bishop and asked him to read it publicly and burn it before the crowd. Another three days

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 164–166; 188.

⁷⁰ Βακαλούδη, *Η Μαγεία...*, pp. 117–122; 217.

⁷¹ Radermacher, *Griechische Quellen...*, pp. 166–168; 188–190.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 170; 172–174; 198; 204–206. The confession of Theophilus is actually a paraphrase of the Nicene Creed.

later, the priest's body gradually weakened and he finally died.⁷³

According to the texts dating from the 4th to the 7th centuries, the absolution of the sinners who made a contract with the Devil, was a compromise. The didactic message of such stories is clear: everyone could be accepted in the bosom of the Church, even the worst sinner. Nevertheless, the case of Theophilus of Adana was the last story wherein the one who sold his soul was saved. In the age of Emperor Heraclius and the Arab invasion, another type of person emerged, completely different from the cosmopolite citizen in the Eastern Roman Empire. The ethical and religious values and the code of behavior of this new man are completely determined by the Church and her ministers. Bishop Leo is representative of this almighty institution who is in position not to compromise with stray sheep of his flock. The conclusion of the Faustian narrative is being shaped — the sinner loses his soul forever.

5. The Story of Bishop Leo of Catania and the Mage Heliodorus: A Comical Discourse

According to Alexander Kazhdan, three texts from the 8th–9th centuries belong to the comical genre, namely the *Life of Leo of Catania*, the *Life of Pancratius of Taormina*, and the so-called *Πάτρια Κωνσταντινουπόλεως* (*Patria of Constantinople*).⁷⁴ The same scholar pays close attention to the medieval sense of humor. On the one hand, laughter is perceived as something evil (“Christ never laughed,” says a proverb). But, on the other hand, it could serve as a way to better understand something sacred. It is difficult for the modern reader to grasp the real meaning of the Byzantine sense of humor, which in hagiological texts is based mainly on the parody of serious theological matters and helps in clarifying them. In the legend of the mage Heliodorus and of his punishment, incorporated in the *Life of Leo of Catania*, we will see the literary *topos* of the Devil's pact as an example of this exact stylistic method (δριμύτης). This story influenced the Faustian tradition, since we have at least one Latin translation⁷⁵ and, in addition, the events take

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 176; 210; 214–218.

⁷⁴ A. Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature*, t. 1, Athens: Institute for Byzantine Research, 1999, pp. 295–296.

⁷⁵ *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina...*, № 4838–4839.

place in the far Byzantine West (in the Sicilian town of Catania).

There are three known Greek versions of the *Life of Leo of Catania*⁷⁶ — two prosaic ones (a shorter one⁷⁷ and a longer one⁷⁸) and one composed in verses.⁷⁹ The latter, preserved in a 1307 manuscript, is probably the latest. The author of the text is anonymous; about him we could only say that he was obviously knowledgeable about the architecture both of Constantinople and of Catania.

The dating of the events described is dubious as well. In Latišev's version, the Emperor Constantine IV (who reigned between 667 and 685) is mentioned along with his son Justinian II, crowned as his father's co-emperor probably in 681/682.⁸⁰ In the shorter version, edited by Augusta Acconcia-Longo, the rulers are different — one Leo and one Constantine. This fact suggests a much later date, namely the early 9th century.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Kazhdan, *A History*..., t. 1, pp. 296–302.

⁷⁷ A. Acconcia-Longo, "La vita di s. Leone vescovo di Catania e gli incantesimi del mago Eliodoro," *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici*, vol. 26, 1989, pp. 3–98. Cf. Halkin, *Bibliotheca*..., № 981.

⁷⁸ Βίος καὶ πολιτεία τοῦ ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Λέοντος ἐπισκόπου Κατάνης. In: V. Latišev, *Neidannye grečeskie agiograficheskie teksti* (В. Латишев, *Неизданные греческие агиографические тексты*), St. Petersburg, 1914, pp. 12–28. Cf. Halkin, *Bibliotheca*..., № 981b.

⁷⁹ D. Raffin, "La vita metrica anonima su Leone di Catania," *Bolletino della Badia Greca di Grottaferata*, vol. 16, 1962, pp. 37–48. Cf. Halkin, *Bibliotheca*..., № 981c.

⁸⁰ Kazhdan, *A History*..., p. 296; *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. A. Kazhdan, A. M. Talbot, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 1084.

⁸¹ Kazhdan, *A History*..., p. 296. Marie-France Ausépy dates the text between 730 and 843 (M.-F. Auzépy, "L'Analyse littéraire et l'historien: l'exemple des vies de saints iconoclastes," *Byzantinoslavica*, vol. 53, 1992, pp. 62–67; Auzépy, "A propos des vies de saints iconoclastes," *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici*, vol. 30, 1993, pp. 3–5. According to A. Acconcia-Longo, it was written during the rule of Leo V, whose son and co-emperor was called Sabbatius-Constantine (813–820), or of Michael II (820–829) (Acconcia Longo, "A proposito di un articolo sull'agiografia iconoclasta," *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici*, vol. 29, 1992–1993, pp. 10–17; Acconcia-Longo, "Di nuovo sull'agiografia iconoclasta," *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici*, vol. 30, 1993, pp. 7–15.

Even though the existing data are insufficient to date the *Life of Leo of Catania* accurately, in my opinion the historical context supports the dating of the events, which stood in the core of the legend, in the early 680s. For instance, the *strator* (officer),⁸² who was sent by the Emperor to Catania, bears a name typical for the period of the dynasty of Heraclius — “Heraclides.” In addition, there is no mention of danger from a foreign enemy to trouble the tranquility of the provincial Byzantine town or its maritime relations with the capital. This is circumstantial evidence that the island of Sicily and the routes in the Aegean and Ionic seas were not seriously disturbed by Arab raids. Such raids became very frequent as early as the first half of the 8th century and especially after the secession of the North African emirates from the Abbasid khalifate at the end of the 9th century.⁸³

After the beginning of the 8th century, the provincial city ceases to be the most popular scene of hagiological texts — the events are set mostly in Constantinople, in a monastery, or in the countryside. In the *Life of Leo of Catania*, the scene is different. Heliodorus made his contract with the Devil and was active as a professional sorcerer in Catania. The priest who saved the town from the wicked man was not a humble monk (as were usually the saints in the period of the iconoclast crisis), but the bishop himself. According to Kazhdan,⁸⁴ this is another evidence that the text was probably written before the 8th century.

According to the legend, the young Heliodorus belonged to the high society of Catania. Despite his position, he had incited the local populace against himself because of his arrogant temperament and behavior. His craving for power and glory inspired him to strive for the position of *ep-*

⁸² In the 7th century, the *στράτωρ* (*strator*, i.e., officer of the imperial guard) to a great extent had lost his previous military functions and had become a mere court dignitary.

⁸³ The threat on Sicily until 756 and after the beginning of the 8th century was almost unceasing (A. Vasiljev, *Vizantija i arabyi. Političeskie otnošenija Vizantii i arabov za vremja Amorijskoj dinastii* (A. Васильев, *Византия и арабы. Политическія отношенія Византіи и арабовъ за время Аморійской династии*, St. Petersburg: Tipografija I. N. Skorohodova, 1900, p. 55).

⁸⁴ Kazhdan, *A History...*, p. 300.

arch (governor) of Catania using his innate slyness.⁸⁵ Unable to fulfill this goal, he turned for help — like Theophilus of Adana — to a Jew. Unlike the texts that describe events that occurred during the period from the 4th to the 7th centuries, in the *Life of Leo of Catania* the mediator between the young and ambitious Christian and the Devil was not called φαρμακός and did not practice publicly.⁸⁶ Heliodorus invited this man to his home and took lessons from him. At the end of the training, the Jew gave him a written note, looking like a letter, and ordered him to bring it at midnight to some place, where were buried ancient heroes (ἥρωες). Heliodorus was told to sit upon a gravestone and wait. Supposedly, he would see a “person, dreadful in appearance and stunning, flying in the air.”⁸⁷ The youth had to stay calm. The creature would come to him and promise to fulfill his every wish. Heliodorus followed the instructions with accuracy. The very moment when he stood with the note in hand on the gravestone, he saw flying on a huge deer “the devil-master of the air.” The Devil promised to Heliodorus one of his servants if he accepted to renounce Christ. The wicked youth gladly obeyed, fell in prostration before the Devil, kissed⁸⁸ his hand and was awarded with the demon Gaspar as his servant. The master of the air ordered this evil spirit to help Heliodorus in everything and vanished in the darkness.⁸⁹

The detailed account of the mischiefs of the mage and of his friends with the help of Gaspar is interesting and its style is highly humorous. For example, the youths would walk the streets and inspire to passing women the delusion that they waded in deep water. By this cunning strategy they made them lift their chitons up to the thighs. Such scenes were not only delightful to the lustful eyes of the young men, but provoked laughter to the other viewers. But not all of their actions were that harmless. The young

⁸⁵ The eparch (Lat. *praefectus*) was governor of a city with huge power in the Late Roman Empire and Early Byzantium. The title is well documented both in Constantinople and in provincial cities.

⁸⁶ Ἐβραῖον τινα ἐπὶ μαγείᾳ καὶ γοητείᾳ ἐπίσημον (“Some Jew, known for his profound knowledge of magic and sorcery”) (Latišev, *Neidannye grečeskie agiografičeskie teksti*, p. 16).

⁸⁷ “κάκειψε κατιδεῖν” μέλλει εἰρχόμενον διὰ τοῦ ἀέρος φοβερόν τῃ θεᾷ καὶ πάνυ κατάπληκτον” (ibid.).

⁸⁸ The verb ἀσπάζω in Medieval Greek is liturgical and means *to kiss*.

⁸⁹ Latišev, *Neidannye grečeskie agiografičeskie teksti*, pp. 16–17.

rasicals inspired irresistible passion and “furious lust” in the hearts of the daughters of noble citizens. This madness “burned” the poor maidens and pushed them out of their homes right in the hands of Heliodorus’ gang. The activities of the mage troubled the economic life of the town as well. He made the traders see common stones as gold and useless objects as absolutely necessary. Everyone in Catania was in such utter despair that all trade ceased and that the inhabitants were condemned to starve.⁹⁰ Under these circumstances, the governor Lucius was urged to ask the central government for help. The emperor sent his *strator* (military officer) Heraclides, but even his intervention did not save the world from the gang. Heliodorus managed to escape the executioners with the assistance of Gaspar. Only the bishop Leo was able to put an end to his outrages. After many attempts to save Heliodorus from his delusions, he dragged the mage out to the Achilion — the place where executions were usually carried out. There the priest ordered a furnace to be flamed up and entered it with the mage. The latter burned and Leo remained intact.⁹¹

The legend of the Sicilian mage Heliodorus is very different from the previous stories. The *Confession of St. Cyprian* and the *Lives* of St. Basil the Great, of St. Mary of Antioch, and of St. Theophilus of Adana have certain didactic functions: to demonstrate the omnipotence of the Christian God and to diminish the popularity of other mystical practices and cults. The *Life of Leo* describes events that take place in a completely Christianized social and religious environment, where there is no rival to the dominating religion. The Jewish sorcerer in this narrative has almost nothing in common with powerful figures like Megas from the legend of Anthemius of Antioch, who allowed himself to speak in a rough and scornful manner to a respectful member of the local society. The marginalization of the professional magicians, who once earned their wealth from the populace’s credulity, is evident in the *Life of Theophilus of Adana*. Here the Jew was terrified as soon as he saw the priest knocking on his door. We can only imagine what repressions he was afraid of. In the *Life of Leo*, we observe the ultimate stage of this marginalization. The magician was scared not only to practice his “profession” publicly, but he was also unable to do so even in the comfort of

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 16–18.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 25.

his own house and was forced to settle in the home of the noble and ambitious youth. The struggle is no longer between mystery cults and Christianity, nor between Neo-Platonism and the new popular religion, but rather between the Church authorities and the local populace. The image of Heliodorus is not as tragic as the one of Theophilus of Adana with his long monologues of public repentance. Before the audience stands a dissolute and ambitious young man who, along with his friends, makes fun of the bishop's authority, of the serious businessmen in his town, even of the Emperor himself. The anonymous author parodically uses the standard hagiological thematic pattern and terms to describe the events. For the gravestone, where Heliodorus must wait for the arrival of Satan, is used the word *στήλη* that ironically refers to the *στῦλος* (the high pillar of the stylites). The Devil himself flies riding a huge deer — a symbol of Christ, e.g., in the martyrologue of Eustathios Placidus, where the animal materialized before the Roman commander and converted him to the true religion.⁹² The only event narrated in a serious manner was actually Heliodorus's death in the furnace.

6. The Emperor Constantine V: Politicization of the Contract with the Devil

All of the above-mentioned hagiological texts are related to semi-legendary personages and were written by anonymous authors. The contract with the Devil was never accepted as a theological doctrine and never became a widespread phenomenon in literature until the late 8th century. It was used by iconodule authors as early as the first decade of the 9th century. During this crucial period of the iconoclast crisis, hagiology became a powerful weapon of Orthodoxy against its rivals. It is widely accepted by modern scholars that the model work of polemical iconodule hagiology was the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger* (August 11, 715 – November 28, 767), written between 807 and 810 by Stephen the Deacon.⁹³ This well-known author de-

⁹² Kazhdan, *A History...*, p. 300 sq.

⁹³ “Vita Sancti Stephani Junioris, monachi et martyris” (“Στεφάνου διακόνου τῆς Ἐκκλησίας Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, εἰς τὸν Βίον καὶ μαρτύριον τοῦ παμμακαρίου καὶ ὁσίου μάρτυρος Στεφάνου τοῦ Νέου, μαρτυρήσαντος ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀσεβοῦς Εἰκονοκλάστου βασιλέως Κωνσταντίνου τοῦ καὶ Κοπρωνύμου”). In: *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Graeca*, ed. J.-P.

cided to use the contract to create the propagandistic image of the iconoclast Emperor Constantine V (741–775).

According to the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger*, Constantine made his contracts (συνθήκας) with the demons in the debris of the church of “St. Mavra,” located in the suburbs of the capital and which he had himself demolished. Reportedly, he sacrificed to them young boys. One of these boys, says Stephen, was the son of a certain Sulphamios.⁹⁴ The same story can be found in the chronographic work of George Monachus:

This wicked god-hater and new Julian renounced the Holy Virgin and all the saints, and worshipped, like the Greeks, Aphrodite and Dionysus. He used to make human sacrifices to them outside the city, where he had established a special place for murders in the debris of the church of the saint martyr Mavra that he demolished by himself. There he sacrificed every night one boy during his mysteries, dedicated to the demons. A witness to that was the slaughtered son of Sulphamios, whom the demonic emperor secretly had sacrificed — this event was made widely known.⁹⁵

This story is mentioned by many authors during the whole of the 10th century. Constantine VII and his associates included it in their encyclopedic work *On Virtues and Vices* and in the compilation known today as *Excerpta*.⁹⁶ An account of the son of Sulphamios can be found in the *Suda* lexicon as well.⁹⁷

7. Accounts of the Byzantine Legal Documentation

All of the above-mentioned accounts of the contract with the Devil are produced by literary texts and have a concrete political, social, or ethical

Migne, t. 100, Paris: Imprimerie catholique, pp. 1069–1186. Cf. Halkin, *Bibliotheca...*, [1666]; Kazhdan, *A History...*, pp. 183–198.

⁹⁴ “Vita Sancti Stephani Junioris,” p. 1169.

⁹⁵ *Georgii monachi chronicon*, ed. C. de Boor (corr. P. Wirth), vol. 2, Stuttgart: Teubner, 1978, p. 752.

⁹⁶ “De virtutibus et vitiis,” p. 155. In: *Excerpta historica iussu imp. Constantini Porphyrogeniti confecta*, vol. II, t. 1, Berlin: Weidmann, 1906.

⁹⁷ *Suidae lexicon*, ed. A. Adler, t. III, Leipzig: Teubner, 1933, pp. 176–177. Cf. I. Rochow, *Kaiser Konstantin V (741–775). Materialien zu seinem Leben und Nachleben*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1994, p. 137.

function. We can only guess the real magical practices that stood behind such stories. Very few official documents and court judgements that mention the contract have been preserved. Nevertheless, secondary sources on such cases could allow us to take a look into the underground of the capital and the provincial cities of the Late Roman and Byzantine world. Some criminals were known to be associated with evil spirits and/or demons. A typical example is the lawsuit against two women charged with child murder under the influence of the demon Gilo. The official authorities obviously did not pay much attention to such accusations, because the father of the future patriarch Tarasius (784–806), the imperial judge George, quickly found them innocent.⁹⁸ The *Life of Patriarch Tarasius* mentions neither a contract with the demon nor a renouncement of Christ.

More information on this matter can be obtained from Late Byzantine court protocols and judgements. Two synodal decisions of the Church of Constantinople on cases of voluntary desecration of Christ's name and exploitation of the "assistance" (συνεργία) of Satan have been preserved. The first one dates from November 1338 and the name of the individual charged with these accusations is George Tzerentzes. This man wrote and then covered with ink the name of Christ. In addition, he ritually scrawled spells to summon the demons. For these blasphemous acts he was sentenced to stay outside the church during the psalmody and to beg everyone who entered or exited the building for absolution. His punishment included fast and penitence for a hundred days.⁹⁹ Written renouncements of Christ and satanic help as a reward were in fact nothing but a contract with the Devil.¹⁰⁰

An analogous story is described in a decision of the court of Thessaloniki (15th century).¹⁰¹ A sorcerer called Cappadocus was notorious for his magical skills and his books on such impure arts. His influence upon the souls of the citizens was especially destructive. Innumerable penances were imposed on him by the Church's authorities. A monk be-

⁹⁸ *Ignatii Diaconi vita Tarasii Archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani*, ed. I. Heikel, *Acta societatis scientiarum fennicae*, 17, 1891, pp. 395–423, p. 396.

⁹⁹ *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, ed. F. Miklošič, J. Müller, vol. 1, Athens: Spanos, 1996, p. 180.

¹⁰⁰ Greenfield, *Traditions...*, p. 255.

¹⁰¹ *Acta et diplomata graeca...*, pp. 342–344; Greenfield, *Traditions...*, p. 255.

gan to visit him, pretending that he was trying to get him on the right path, but his true intention soon came to light, a scandal blew up, and, as a result, the image of the Church was seriously damaged. In fact, the monk was a very ambitious man who strived for a higher position and tried to make “an alliance” with the Devil. To achieve his goal, he had to write and to recite a certain prayer (probably *Our Lord*) aloud backwards along with the names of the persons responsible for his promotion. In addition, Cappadocus had to write some “impure and sinful letter” to be read by the monk all night under the starlight and then to be worn by him under his cassock as an amulet.

Obviously, this shameful episode coerced the Church to put the monk to trial and to produce the decision edited by Franz Miklošič and Joseph Müller. Unfortunately, the final paragraphs are lost, and we have neither a date nor information about the imposed punishments. Even though there is no mention of a written contract with the Devil, the similarities with the stories of the above hagiological texts are many. The monk “was asking for an alliance with the Devil.”¹⁰² The letter, written by Cappadocus, resembles the correspondence between the magician and his evil master in the *Lives* of St. Basil the Great and St. Mary of Antioch.

8. Conclusion

The Faustian legend is rooted in a long-lasting mythological and philosophical tradition in the Greco-Roman world. The concept of the supernatural guardian of a hero, already found in Homer, was elaborated firstly by early poets — Theognis and Pindar —, who used the term *daimon* to refer to the divine protector instead of the Homeric “god.” This difference, though seemingly small, brought about a new idea — the demon is an anonymous, unintelligible, both beneficent and malevolent power. The belief in this unknown higher puissance was fatalistic and quite different from the socially acceptable piety and the devotion to the Olympic gods. Demons were conceived as the very manifestation of chaos and disorder; they were thought to be innumerable and unnamable; it was believed that they act by their own obscure will and that mortals do not have any power over them.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Plato brought a significant change to the concept of the guardian *daimon*, providing a philosophical elaboration of this ancient idea. The *daimonion* of Socrates was not the chaotic and frequently destructive power of the early poets — the word *daimonion* was actually synonymous with “conscience” or even with “super ego” (in Karl Jung’s terms). According to the *Phaedo*, everybody ought to choose the way of virtue, despite the influence of his or her demon.

Neo-Platonism entwined the philosophical concept of the protector demon with its usual mysticism. According to Porphyry, exceptionally pious and holy persons, like his teacher Plotinus, had gods for guardians instead of *daimones*. According to Maximus of Tyros, the Platonic *ideas* of human talents had their manifestations, i.e., demons, who choose their *protégé* and gave him or her this talent. Along with this function of protecting humans, demons in the theogonies of the Neo-Platonic philosophers were mediators between the human world and the heavenly powers. From the philosophical and theological point of view, these functions of protection and mediation were crucial for the religious systems of the pagan Late Roman world. Exactly for this reason, the Christian Church had to eradicate the very notion of the good *daimon* from the collective mind and to demonize the professional mage in the very heart of the pagan Hellenistic culture. One of the propagandistic tools, used to this end, was the Faustian legend.

As a rhetorical and literary *topos*, the concept of the pact with Satan probably originated in the eastern Roman provinces (Syria, Asia Minor). It appears for the first time as a story in a small number of hagiological texts in the mid-4th century. Such stories were undoubtedly one of the many instruments used for demonizing the ancient pagan mysteries and practices of Neo-Platonism.

From the late 4th to the early 7th century, in hagiological texts the *topos* of the contract was relatively widespread. The narrative pattern (the protagonists and the plot) are rather standardized. The plot is laid in a huge eastern city or in Constantinople. Ambition of strong carnal passion drive a Christian of high standing to ask the local magician for help — a well-respected man, at least until the late 6th century. His assistance had a price — the client had to renounce Christianity, accept Satan, and sign a contract to sell his soul. The ceremony is held in places typically related to pagan cults or haunted by demons: a bridge, an ancient graveyard, the hippodrome. During this period, only the sorcerer was damned

to eternal tortures in Hell. The client repents and his immortal soul is saved. Even though the authors show condescension to their sinful heroes, the punishments grow gradually more severe. While St. Cyprian and Anthemius of Antioch were entirely purified of their sins, Theophilus of Adana had a different fate. He was accepted back in the bosom of the Church, but died immediately after his absolution. In addition, here the image of the magician, who played the role of mediator between the pious priest and the Devil, is different from those of his earlier colleagues. He is just a frightened and marginalized Jew, scared to death by the Church authorities.

After the Arab invasions and the decisive cultural, political, and religious changes in Byzantium, from approximately the mid-7th century, the narrative motive changed as well. Heliodorus and Constantine V did not die only bodily, but also lost their souls because of their agreements with the powers of the Evil One. The ceremony continued to be held in places traditionally haunted by demons: a grave of an ancient hero, a ruined church. In addition, in the *Life of St. Stephen the Younger* the usage of the *topos* is clearly propagandistic — the damnation of the heretic emperor.

It is extremely difficult to distinguish in these stories what was real from what was merely a literary phenomenon. The later judicial documents give only circumstantial evidence that practices similar to the ones described in hagiological texts from the 4th to the 7th centuries existed throughout the Empire — the written renouncement of Christ and the Devil's aid were well-established in the 14th century.

It is important to emphasize the numerous Latin translations of Byzantine texts that provide accounts of the contract with the Devil. The stories of Theophilus of Adana and bishop Leo of Catania were well-known to the Catholic world as early as the 9th century. *The Tragical Story of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* was a literary, political, and cultural phenomenon with a long history and the works by Christopher Marlowe and Johann von Goethe were only stages of its development.

III. RUSSIAN THOUGHT

A Bakhtinian Analysis of Dostoevsky's Polyphonic Novel

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Abstract

This paper offers a Bakhtinian analysis of the distinctive character of Dostoevsky's novels, which depends on the author's unique relationship with the hero. Firstly, I explain the notion of "polyphony" and the role of the "idea" in Dostoevsky's novels by reference to Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Secondly, I investigate the possibility of an "aesthetic event" in terms of the dialogical relationship between the author and the hero through Bakhtin's work "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity." After analyzing the notions of "surplus of seeing" and of "artistic consummation," I clarify the way Dostoevsky visualizes the "event" in terms of space and time and its effect on plot developments in his novels. Finally, I analyze the time of the dialogue in Dostoevsky's novels and its consequences on the reader's experience. Through a consideration of some of Bakhtin's prominent works, I elucidate the internally dialogic relationship between the author and the hero, which is the underlying condition of polyphony in Dostoevsky's novels.

Keywords: Aesthetics • Bakhtin • dialogue • Dostoevsky • otherness • polyphony

1. Introduction

A significant task in the relevant literature on Dostoevsky is to clarify the specific character of his novels, which reveals itself in the creative activity of the author as well as in the reader's experience *vis-à-vis* the novel. In the following sections, I put forward the idea that to read one of Dostoevsky's novels is by itself an unparalleled experience. In the polyphonic novel, the reader finds herself in the peculiar position of having the responsibility of listening to the hero for making any judgement on his per-

sonality instead of locating herself in the pre-given perspective of the author against the hero. This peculiarity, however, is not an arbitrary phenomenon; it finds its ground precisely in the possibility of an actual dialogue. What Dostoevsky does is principally to ensure this ground in his unique way. According to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky is the creator of a new artistic way of thinking that he appropriately calls “polyphonic.” Here I attempt to explain and critically examine the conditions of the polyphonic novel by primarily focusing on Bakhtin’s *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* and “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity.”

2. The Notion of Polyphony

In the *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Bakhtin describes the chief characteristics of Dostoevsky’s novels as a “*plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices.*”¹ He draws attention not merely to the plurality of characters in the novels but also to their independence from one another as well as from the author. In Dostoevsky’s novels, the consciousness of the hero is not an object of a single authorial consciousness; rather they are represented as equal participants in the unity of the event “*with equal rights and each with its own world.*”²

Before going into a detailed description of the above-mentioned definitions, we need to clarify what Bakhtin means by the word “event.” Bakhtin originally uses the Russian word “*sobytie*” and the term has crucial importance for understanding what is intended here. Its root lies in the word “*bytie*,” which means “existence” or “being”; and “*sobytie*” can ordinarily be read as “event,” but it literally means “co-existing, co-being, shared existence or being with another.”³ The implication is that the necessary condition for any event to occur is the plurality of interacting consciousnesses. There can be no isolated event—there must always be an “I” and an “other” and the categorial difference between the two is unsurmountable. Therefore, any event emerges from the co-existence of

¹ M. M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, trans. Caryl Emerson, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984, p. 6.

² Ibid.

³ Editor’s explanatory note (Bakhtin, *Problems*, p. 6, fn. a).

different interacting consciousnesses in a dialogue.⁴

Only in the unity of the event, which is mediated through the artistic vision of the author, can the plurality of different integral fields of visions co-exist without losing their independence from each other. In Dostoevsky's novels, multiplicity of utterly incompatible elements, such as completely different worldviews, are distributed among several different consciousnesses, i.e., the multiplicity is not represented through a single authoritative point of view. Instead, they are presented within several fields of vision. Moreover, as Michel Gardiner says, the "multiplicity of interacting consciousnesses is a necessary but not a sufficient characteristic of a genuine polyphony."⁵ The dialogical principle can be accomplished only when the heroes are treated as other subjects with their own words. For example, Dostoevsky unites together the criminal/thinker Ras-kolnikov and the righteous prostitute Sonya, and we do not see them through the eyes of a transcendent observer who does not participate in the event, but rather through their own eyes; we see them through their dialogue with each other. They are united in the event as equal participants. In other words, the heroes are not reified by the author. Instead, each hero is considered as the author of his or her own worldview and not as an object of Dostoevsky's artistic vision.⁶ For this reason, the reader does not meet the heroes through Dostoevsky's own judgment about

⁴ Bakhtin also introduces the term "*sobytiie bytiia*" in his early work *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* and the term has crucial importance in "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," where he focuses on the architectonics of the I/other relationship. The term "*sobytiie bytiia*" can be translated as the "ongoing event of Being," "event of Being," or "Being-as-event." He explains the term in "Author and Hero" as follows: "The event of being is a phenomenological concept, for being presents itself to a living consciousness as an event, and a living consciousness actively orients itself and lives in it as in an event" (p. 188). Since Being is an ongoing event and is possible for a consciousness only as being-with-another (*sobytiie*), any event directly refers to being in a relation/dialogue with the other. According to him, as I will explain, one cannot be conscious of oneself without being in relation with the other, and further, any relationship between two consciousnesses can only be dialogic.

⁵ M. Gardiner, *The Dialogics of Critique: M. M. Bakhtin and the Theory of Ideology*, New York: Routledge, 1992, p. 25.

⁶ H. J. M. Hermans, "The Construction and Reconstruction of a Dialogical Self," *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, vol. 16, 2003, p. 93.

them, but rather listens to and questions Raskolnikov himself. Unlike the cases of *monological constitution*, in a polyphonic novel there is no stable perspective from which the heroes are situated and contemplated one-sidedly. The authors of monological novels tend to have this god-like vision over the characters. In that kind of structure, the author knows everything about the character and even things that the character does not know about itself. On the contrary, in the polyphonic novel, there is nothing to say about the hero which the hero cannot articulate about himself. To put it concisely, the hero is a free consciousness of himself. We can know the hero only through his own voice. He enters into dialogue both with himself and with the others and, moreover, the event provides the realm in which the hero's consciousness is revealed. In Bakhtin's thought, the function of dialogue is to provide a basis for a freely flowing and potentially inexhaustible human exchange.⁷ Monologism is the enemy of the genuine novel, since it distorts the interaction and ensure a single authoritarian position. The main premise of the dialogue is the destruction of the monopoly and omnipotence of the author. The author must lose his divine control over the hero and heroes, and their speech can be safe from the author's superintendence. Only after that can the dialogue ensue.⁸

3. "Idea" in the Polyphonic Novel

In the majority of studies on Dostoevsky's novels, the notion of polyphony is not mentioned at all. It is obviously possible to approach his novels in completely different ways of literary analysis. However, in the foreword of the *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin states that

[l]iterature on Dostoevsky has focused primarily on the ideological problems raised by his work. The topical acuteness of those problems has overshadowed the deeper and more permanent structural elements in his mode of artistic visualization. Critics are apt to forget that Dostoevsky is first and foremost an *artist* (of a special type, to be sure) and not a philosopher or a publicist.⁹

⁷ G. Tihanov, *The Master and the Slave: Lukács, Bakhtin, and the Ideas of Their Time*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 69.

⁸ Ibid., p. 80.

⁹ Bakhtin, *Problems*, p. 4.

At first glance, Dostoevsky's novels seem to embody different, or even opposite, philosophical attitudes, and critics often try to analyze and interpret the diversity of opposite ideologies in the novel. That kind of critique leads to failure since different ideas of particular heroes are impersonalized. As far as Dostoevsky's work is concerned, this attitude seems to be rather inadequate: none of the philosophical ideas embodied in Dostoevsky's work has authority over the others and none of them clearly belongs to the author himself. They are rather personal ideas peculiar to the heroes. Bakhtin rejects the claim that an idea or an utterance can be meaningful in the same way for anyone and under any circumstances. Rather, he always places the emphasis on the unique character of a particular subject and of an utterance. Similarly, in Dostoevsky's novels, an idea is not an abstract assertion, but is always the thought of a particular person from his or her unique perspective in the event.¹⁰ When one attempts to construe the ideational complexity of the novel as if the ideas belonged to the author and as if the heroes were just mouthpieces, the attempt inevitably ends in abstraction. With this kind of approach, all we can obtain is a list of ideas and not the holistic understanding of the novel itself. Dostoevsky's novel is composed of the interactions between consciousnesses and not of the monological regulation of ideas.

The above-mentioned approach is not the proper way of tackling Dostoevsky's novel insofar as the notion of "idea" plays a remarkable role in the novel. And, as Bakhtin says, the "idea is not the hero in the novel."¹¹ Dostoevsky represents not the idea in man but "*the man in man*."¹² The idea is a medium, an environment in which consciousness is revealed. All ideas are personalized in his novels, as if they were them-

¹⁰ Since neither the event nor the participants of the event are represented from a single authorial point of view, there is no unified consciousness inherent in the novel that carries the philosophical or ideological structure of the novel.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 31.

¹² Quoting Dostoevsky's own words from his last notes in 1881: "With utter realism to find the man in man . . . They call me a *psychologist*; this is not true. I am merely a realist in the higher sense, that is, I portray all the depths of the human soul" (Bakhtin, *Problems*, p. 60). Dostoevsky's original statement can be found in: *Biografiia, pis'ma I zametki iz zapisnoi knigi F. M. Dostoevskogo* [Biography, Letters and Notes from the Notebooks of F. M. Dostoevsky], St. Petersburg: Tipografiia A. S. Suvorina, 1883, p. 373.

selves free agents. Consequently, there is no idea which belongs to no one. Each and every idea originates from the necessarily unique position of a particular person in the event and becomes the representation of this unique position. Ideas may change, but they never break free from the consciousness to which they belong; they are never free floating. In Dostoevsky's novels, thinking is interwoven with feeling; an idea has a unique meaning for someone and under certain circumstances. Moreover, an idea gains meaning as it is uttered. A word as an item in the dictionary is meaningless when it is deprived of its living context.¹³ Only when uttered does it become a concrete person's voice and, in this way, the idea becomes an active participant of the event.

It should be stressed here that none of Dostoevsky's novels can be regarded as a philosophical work *stricto sensu* because the idea never becomes the *principle* of representation or construction of the novel, but is the *object* of representation. It is not the principle since the idea exists only for the hero and not for Dostoevsky himself as the author.¹⁴ The idea shapes the world of the hero; it becomes the principle for his understanding of the world from his unique and irreplaceable point of view. However, it must be pointed out that ideas do not become the principles of authorial representation of the novel. In other words, the idea does not become the hero of the novel. The hero is the consciousness of the hero itself, which does *not* coincide with the author's consciousness. Dostoevsky represents the consciousness of the hero in a way that regards the hero's consciousness as a second consciousness independent of himself. Furthermore, this other independent consciousness of the hero is not the object of the author, but another subject on its own. As an author, Dostoevsky creates free "others" with their own ideas that are related in the overall unity of the event. The other reason why Dostoevsky's novels are not properly speaking philosophical is that, although they contain plenty of different confronting ideas, they never dialectically evolve into an ultimate statement—just as different consciousnesses do not merge in one another and do not dissolve into the single unitary consciousness of the author. Since the idea is always embedded in a concrete conscious-

¹³ J. A. Simons, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Man and His Penultimate Word a Radical Humanistic Philosophy of the Unfinalizable Whole*, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, 1988, p. 36.

¹⁴ Bakhtin, *Problems*, p. 24.

ness and the event is the interaction of different consciousnesses, the idea serves as a principle to understand the world from a unique position in the hero's ongoing event of life. In "From Notes Made in 1970–71," Bakhtin clearly distinguishes between dialectic and dialogue with respect to the embodiment of the idea:

Dialogue and dialectics. Take a dialogue and remove the voices (the partitioning of voices), remove the intonations (emotional and individualizing ones), carve out abstract concepts and judgments from living words and responses, cram everything into one abstract consciousness—and that's how you get dialectics.¹⁵

Consequently, the attempt to abstract an idea from a hero ends up in distortion, since to trace an idea abstractly as if it exists on its own is nothing but to expel the idea from the event in which it is rooted in the first place.

4. The Relationship Between the Author and the Hero

According to Bakhtin, aesthetics is not about the subject-object relation, but rather about a relationship between two noncoinciding consciousnesses. In "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," Bakhtin investigates the conditions of possibility of the aesthetic event that depends on the specific kind of being in relation with the other. In this article, Bakhtin emphasizes the difference between the notions of the "aesthetic" and "cognitive-ethical": "Cognitive and ethical objectivity is the impartial, dispassionate evaluation of a given person and given event."¹⁶ In that context, the directed object is not evaluated as a whole. He states that "[b]y contrast, the center of value for aesthetic objectivity is the whole of the hero and the event of his lived life, and all values that are ethical and cognitive must be subordinated to that whole."¹⁷ Bakhtin exempli-

¹⁵ M. M. Bakhtin, "From Notes Made in 1970–71," in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986, p. 147.

¹⁶ M. M. Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," in *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*, ed. M. Holquist and V. Liapunov, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990, p. 13.

¹⁷ Ibid.

fies the author's position against the hero through two living persons who stand against and contemplate each other. When they look at each other, their experienced "horizons" do not coincide;¹⁸ each one sees something inaccessible to the other. These two persons view different horizons from their unique points of view and see two different worlds behind each other. Bakhtin calls this phenomenon "the surplus of seeing."¹⁹ The surplus is grounded on both the limitedness of one's positioned vision and uniqueness and the irreplaceability of that position in the event of being. From that particular position, the "I" can never coincide with its own horizon. I am out of my horizon, I am the origin of my directedness towards the world, and I always fall into the other's horizon. An event becomes aesthetic when different viewpoints do not coalesce into one encompassing point of view. As Clark and Holquist say, "[s]urplus is after all a relative term having no meaning without reference to others."²⁰ The "I" is also the "other" simultaneously and the "other" for the "I" is not a passive object, it is not a mere object of cognition.

From the Bakhtinian point of view, "[a]ny object of knowledge (including man) can be perceived and cognized as a thing. But a subject as such cannot be perceived and studied as a thing, for as a subject it cannot, while remaining a subject, become voiceless, and, consequently, cognition of it can only be *dialogic*."²¹ Bakhtin says that "[a]n aesthetic event can take place only when there are two participants present; it presupposes two noncoinciding consciousnesses."²² The difference between two consciousnesses can be maintained only if the "I" posits itself side

¹⁸ Bakhtin introduces a difference between horizon and environment in the "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity": "There are two possible ways of combining the outside world with a human being: from within a human being—as his *horizon*, and from outside him—as his *environment*" (*Author and Hero*, p. 97).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²⁰ K. Clark and M. Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984, p. 71.

²¹ M. M. Bakhtin, "Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences," in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. C. Emerson and M. Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986, p. 161.

²² Bakhtin, *Author and Hero*, p. 22.

by side with the "other" and not suppress the other as an object of cognition. In a genuinely polyphonic novel, the author neither invades the position of the hero nor objectifies the hero from a top-down point of view. When the author and the hero share the one and the same position, there no longer are two consciousnesses but only the authoritative authorial consciousness. Since the "I" is never impersonalized, the author must recognize the hero's unique point of view in the event. Only after that can the hero become an aesthetically consummated whole of meaning.²³ Moreover, in "lived life," as opposed to the literary plane, this surplus does not belong to one participant in the event but to both of them equally. The surplus can be regarded as problematic when it comes to the relationship between the author and the hero in the novel: there is an obvious difference between their ontological statuses. A living person always remains incomplete and always finds oneself as "a task, and in its essentials, as *yet-to-be*,"²⁴ just as the eye cannot see itself, one cannot coincide with herself. Consummatedness is possible only in a momentary sense and one's life does not become consummated as a whole, until one dies. The author, however, contemplates the whole of the hero and the hero is created as a whole self-consciousness with her environ-

²³ At this point, two of Bakhtin's crucial terms can be explained. "Transgression" is one of those important terms. It refers to the consequence of being situated in the world, in the ongoing event of Being. It implies the inaccessible features of the "I" for itself. The "I" is incomplete temporally for itself in the sense that the birth and death of a person are beyond his own experience. And the "I" is also always incomplete spatially as one's own facial expression and "the world behind one's back" are always out of one's own gaze. The second important term that Bakhtin makes use of in his analysis is "consummation." Bakhtin's own term "*zavershennost*" can be translated both as "consummation" and as "completedness." The act of consummation requires two independent consciousnesses. The "I" cannot consummate itself, since there is always something transgredient to itself both inwardly and outwardly. Only an "other" can consummate or complete the "I," since the act of consummation necessitates outsidedness (*vnenakhodimost*), which refers to the condition of having a surplus of seeing. This surplus is the source of the consummation of the other's transgredient features for himself and of the possibility of the other's becoming a whole. In that sense, consummation is always an artistic act.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 16.

ment and interrelations in the event. In the polyphonic novel, the different ontological planes of the author and of the hero do not coincide with one another, since the author guards the line between his own position and the hero's position by granting the uniqueness of the consciousness of the hero as an "other." Still, they come into contact through the author's dialogical relationship with the hero. As an author, Dostoevsky, represents the consciousness of the hero with her *own* world, but does not represent a person against a static background constructed in a merely one-sided fashion. It is not a cognitive-ethical relationship in which the "I" is looking at the other, but an aesthetic relationship in which the "I" listens to the other.

5. The Artistic Consummation of the Hero

Bakhtin mentions that the action of contemplation is active and productive.²⁵ The "I" needs the "other" to have a total understanding of itself. There is always something transgredient to myself, which can only be consummated by an-other. In the polyphonic novel, the positions of the author and of the hero are external to each other and that externality depends on the author's attitude in his creative activity. The author contemplates and consummates the hero both inwardly and outwardly. Bakhtin writes: "It is only the position of being situated outside the hero that enables the author to produce the aesthetic value of the hero's exterior: the spatial form *of* the hero expresses the author's relationship *to* the hero."²⁶ It must be underlined that when it comes to the hero as an aesthetic creation, what is represented is not the hero's horizon but her environment. The author organizes and orders all the transgredient features of the hero's exterior, including her body.²⁷ The represented object-world of the novel does not coincide with the hero's horizon, since the author's unique position is not obliterated: the author does not see through the hero's eyes but apparently has contemplated her from the outside. Besides, the author relates to the hero in terms of the hero's inner experience of herself and of the world. Empathy, for Bakhtin, does not produce meaning; it is the "passive mirroring or duplication of an-

²⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 96.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 98.

other's experience within myself (nor is such duplication really possible)."²⁸ In order for my self-activity in relation to the other's inner world to produce a new understanding, I must relate to the other outwardly. Two interrelated consciousnesses must sustain their unique positions in that interrelationship. Bakhtin calls this "sympathetic understanding."²⁹ Accordingly, I can relate to the other's inner experience, such as fear. In other words, I can co-experience the other's fear. However, when I co-experience it from the outside, it is not the same experience but one that is principally different from the other's fear as he experiences it for himself—and one that is also different from my own experience of fear. Sympathetic understanding is a new valuation that recreates the whole inner person in aesthetic categories.³⁰ Bakhtin contends that a lived experience, when it is just for the I who experiences, does not yet exist in full.³¹ A lived experience, an inward given, is not something contemplated for the one who is experiencing. Therefore, otherness is a necessary condition in order for meaning to be enriched aesthetically; "[t]he withdrawal of one of the participants destroys the artistic event, and we are left with nothing but a misleading illusion of an artistic event."³² By means of sympathetic co-experiencing, the hero gains his own unity and wholeness as an independent consciousness but always and principally in relation with the author. The author creates the background for the hero in which the latter's consciousness takes place in the unity of the event, and the author takes the other's place to consummate the hero's inward experience of herself. What Dostoevsky does as an author is the artistic consummation of the hero's consciousness and of the hero's own world outwardly without consuming her from the inside.

6. Space-Time and Plot in the Novel

It must be stressed that Dostoevsky does not "consume" the hero, since he does *not* constrain the hero within the boundaries of some fixed, unchanging personality. At this point, his way of visualizing the event in

²⁸ Ibid., p. 102.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 103.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 104.

³¹ Ibid., p. 117.

³² Ibid., p. 200.

the novel is crucial. His artistic visualization is remarkably based on his vision of the world in spatial rather than temporal terms.³³ He depicts a multitude of noncompatible materials as if they simultaneously coexisted in space. Hence “[t]he fundamental category in Dostoevsky’s mode of artistic visualizing was not evolution, but *coexistence* and *interaction*.”³⁴ A linear timeline necessitates an authorial view “from above” that is not relative to the heroes but monologically all-encompassing. In Dostoevsky’s novels, the specific relationship between the author and the hero produces a world in which all the meaningful elements of reality are contained in the same time frame. In a single moment, all the interrelationships of the hero in the event with the other heroes and the awareness of the hero’s situation relative to his or her surroundings are represented simultaneously. Dostoevsky develops reality extensively. In this manner, he plays with the function of the plot in the novel. Since the ongoing event is developed extensively but not temporally, he breaks the essentiality of causality over his heroes. It is no accident that a great deal of his characters show clear symptoms of various mental illnesses. The hero seems to live in his own mind and not in his socially conditioned spatiotemporal environment. Dostoevsky does not examine the psychological continuity of the hero. This kind of examination results in excessive control over the “other.” Particular past experiences of the hero would become the explanation of the acts of the hero. Bakhtin states that the “real connections begin where the ordinary plot ends.”³⁵ The reality of the novel depends on the linear timeline that brings certain experiences and reactions in that time period together. In this manner, the hero’s actions would become interpreted by the author and this interpretation would also result in giving a description of the personality of the hero—to wit, the hero’s life would no longer be an open-ended event but would be finalized. Rather, Dostoevsky depicts the hero in the ongoing event of his life, always in his presence. Accordingly, Bakhtin states that the goal of the plot in Dostoevsky’s novels is as follows: “Its goal is to place a person in various situations that expose and provoke him, to bring people together and make them collide in conflict.”³⁶ The

³³ Bakhtin, *Problems*, p. 28.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 277.

³⁶ Ibid.

plot serves to reveal the unpredictability and unfinalizability of a living person. The hero is in becoming and the author gives this freedom to be oneself to the hero by not describing or finalizing him. Although his depiction depends on the artistic consummation of the hero as a whole, just as a living person, the hero sees himself “inwardly” as a task still yet-to-be. A story can be told only after it is once known. On the contrary, the hero’s life has not yet ended—the hero stands against the author as a living person who has endless possibilities. The rejection of the monological perspective prevents the hero’s possibilities from being consumed. Since the event of the hero’s life always unfolds in the present time, the author depicts the hero’s ongoing event of becoming himself but not his own judgement about the personality of the hero. In other words, the author does not play the judge in the polyphonic novel.

7. Simultaneity and Co-existence

All these artistic innovations of Dostoevsky which make possible to present a person in his or her ongoing event of life are tied in with the notion of simultaneity and manifest themselves as genuine polyphony. Different unmerged consciousnesses—with their unique positions in the event—are represented simultaneously at the threshold, bordering on a crucial decision, on the eve of a crisis, and even in the state of delirium. Dostoevsky provokes the heroes to spell out ultimate revelations about themselves in extreme situations.³⁷ The space is organized accordingly and the plot is used for the meeting and juxtaposition of different consciousnesses in the very complexity of the event. Actions take place in the doorway, in the foyer, in the stairway, on the bridge, etc. In *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov’s room is six steps long, not unlike a coffin, and still is the place for crowded scenes where lots of commotion take place. Marmeladov’s room is a walk-through hole but becomes the scene of a significant crowd when Marmeladov is just about to die. In *The Double*, Goladkin encounters himself as another on a bridge. Time expands as the space narrows and all the significant multitude converges and coexists. Turning points are squeezed in these narrow spaces so that the weight of the event is increased. The possibility of simultaneous co-

³⁷ S. Dentith, *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader*, New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 41.

existence turns into a criterion for distinguishing the essential from the nonessential. As Bakhtin says:

Only such things as can conceivably be linked together at a single point in time are essential, and are incorporated into Dostoevsky's world, such things can be carried over eternity, for in eternity, for Dostoevsky, everything is simultaneous, everything coexists. That which has meaning only as "earlier" or "later," which is sufficient only unto its own moment, which is valid only as past, or as future, or as present in relation to past or future, is for him nonessential and is not incorporated into his world.³⁸

Thus, Dostoevsky gathers all the meaning at the very moment of interaction. In such moment of crisis, each hero enters into the event with his or her unique point of view. The meaning of the event gravitates through each other and for each of them differently. There is no standing point outside the event; the objective, all-encompassing point of view is categorically rejected. Moreover, it is not just that contradictions among different consciousnesses as if they were not in time but only in space. Dostoevsky also represents the conflicts in one particular consciousness as they belong to different bodies, side by side and facing each other as if the inner dialogue of a person occurred in space and not in time. Through paired characters such as Ivan and the devil or Raskolnikov and Svidrigailov, he dramatizes the contradiction and develops it extensively.³⁹

8. Microdialogue and Great Dialogue

Dostoevsky's relation with the hero is, in a nutshell, an internally dialogic relationship. He interrupts the discourse of the hero dialogically—he interrupts through another discourse. Dostoevsky's novel is essentially dialogic; the dialogue between consciousnesses is not just compositional. Particular dialogues between two heroes, such as between Raskolnikov and the court investigator Porfiry Petrovich, are truly dialogic in the sense that they are not images of dialogues, but each of them hears the other's voice inwardly. Their possible responses, doubts, fears,

³⁸ Bakhtin, *Problems*, p. 29.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

thrill, and all that are not uttered also pervade the dialogue. Thus, the other becomes an active constituent of one's own words and one's own speech turns into an internal dialogue with the other. In one's speech, the other's voice echoes simultaneously: "Dialogue has penetrated inside every word, provoking in it a battle and the interruption of one voice by another"; this is what Bakhtin calls "microdialogue."⁴⁰ Furthermore, dialogic relations exist among all elements of the novel, not just in the interrelations of the particular consciousness of the hero, but the "*polyphonic novel is dialogic through and through*."⁴¹ Dostoevsky forces different worlds of the heroes to enter into relation with each other and forces the heroes to see and know what the others know about both themselves and the others and, further, what the author knows about the heroes. Dostoevsky, as the author of polyphonic novels, extends his own point of view on the hero to the heroes' own consciousnesses and the hero thereby becomes capable of answering the author. He writes that "[f]or the author the hero is not 'he' and not 'I' but a fully valid 'thou,' that is another autonomous 'I'" capable of answering the author.⁴² The condition for creating fully valid voices of other consciousnesses lies in the construction of the author's discourse as dialogically addressed to the hero. The author of a genuinely polyphonic novel talks with the hero and not about the hero.⁴³ The consciousness of the other cannot be treated as an object or as a mere thing among other objects; rather, to think about them is to talk with them, and to understand them requires entering into a dialogical relation with them. For Dostoevsky, thought is two-sided, "to think means to question and to listen."⁴⁴ He definitely creates his novel as a great dialogue, by creating the sphere of interaction and by granting the juxtaposition of different voices. His novel is never quiet.

The disturbance of quietude by sound is mechanical [...]; the disturbance of silence by the word is personalistic and intelligible: it is an entirely different world. In quietude nothing makes a sound

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 75.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 40.

⁴² Ibid., p. 63.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 95.

(or something does not make a sound); in silence nobody *speaks* (or somebody does not speak). Silence is possible only in the human world (and only for a person).⁴⁵

If the hero's consciousness fell silent, Dostoevsky would be left with nothing to say.

9. The Time of the Dialogue in the Novel

The great dialogue of the polyphonic novel takes place not in the past but always in the present; it is never an already finished dialogue.⁴⁶ If it were a finished dialogue, the author's position would be outside the dialogue, he would not partake in the event and would only view the whole of the dialogue from above. This would end as a successful monologization of a lifeless dialogue. All we heard would be the voice of the narrator and not that of the interlocutors of the dialogue. On the contrary, the condition of the ultimate dialogicality is the simultaneity of emergence of the dialogue with the author's creative activity and the reader's participation. As aforementioned, the fundamental necessity for the dialogical relationship is the outsideness and interaction of the consciousnesses with respect to each other, and the reader is not positioned out of this event either. If the dialogue's time were the past, and if it were represented by the omniscient monological consciousness of the author against the firm background of a unified consciousness, it would result in the location of the reader in the author's point of view, since there would remain no other position. Heroes would become dead silhouettes of once living persons, and the living plurality of voices would be covered by monotony. Rather, the dialogue, the event, takes place just right now. Furthermore, since the dialogue occurs between the independent and unmerged consciousnesses that do not become objects for each other and are not objectified by the author, there is no ground for the reader to choose any position in the ongoing event of the novel. The readers must take a position on their own and, in a manner, this prevents the readers from being passive witnesses and forces them to become active interlocutors.

⁴⁵ Bakhtin, *From Notes*, pp. 133–134.

⁴⁶ Bakhtin, *Problems*, p. 63.

10. Conclusion

I believe that an adequate understanding of Dostoevsky's internally dialogic relationship with the hero is a *conditio sine qua non* for understanding the specific character of his novel. Unlike the omniscient and unitary consciousness of the author of the monological novel, we find Dostoevsky's creative power in the great dialogue of the novel itself. In a monological novel, the characters reach us through the filter of the author's own consciousness. The author, who has an indisputable authority over the past, present, and future of the character, presents us with the power of his authorship in all its majesty. The author of a monological novel does not share his creative power with the character of the novel and does not make the character the center of its own world or the author of its own fate. The author constructs the characters as images, not as consciousnesses, and what the author relates himself to is not the necessarily unique point of view in which the hero has a sense of herself and her world. What is represented is the author's own perception of the character in the world wherein the character is situated. This impersonal reality surrounding the character loses nothing of its own reality and of its meaning if the character is removed from it because the world in the monological novel does not gain a new meaning through the perspective of the character. As a result, a character image is not transformed into the living consciousness of the hero.

Bakhtin was undoubtably the most influential figure among those who tried to explain Dostoevsky's attitude towards his heroes. As Bakhtin claims, what makes his novels polyphonic is the presentation of the hero as an "independent consciousness" along with his own world and not merely as the depiction of a character image. The author of the polyphonic novel indeed listens to the hero's voice and externalizes it. The subtle relationship between Dostoevsky and his hero, which is completely different from the authoritarian and one-sided relationship of the author with the character in the monological novel, has now become a *mutual* relationship. Consequently, there is no single truth or isolated whole of meaning in the polyphonic novel. The authoritarian monocentrism, however, is skillfully replaced by multi-voicedness and multi-centeredness. The author does not pass judgments and deprive the hero of his or her right to answer the author.

We must also indicate here that Bakhtin regards the novel as responsible for re-creating the dialogical nature of actual human understanding and communication. He does insist that there is no possibility

for any event to occur within the limits of a single consciousness. Solitude, in this sense, is nothing but an illusion. He says that a “person has no internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks *into the eyes of another* or *with the eyes of another*.”⁴⁷ The reason why Bakhtin celebrates the polyphony of Dostoevsky’s novel is the latter’s unique attitude against heroes, which results in the freedom of the hero against the author-creator and his ability to hear all the different voices and orchestrate them. The relationship between the author and the hero is dialogized and the possibility of the reader’s dialogical relation with both the author and the hero is secured by Dostoevsky. Since truth is not impersonal and not readily presented from the perspective of a single authorial consciousness, the reader of a polyphonic novel is compelled to become an active participant in the novel’s event. In order to make her own judgement about the hero, the reader is obliged to listen actively to the hero.

I am inclined to think that this unique and peculiar situation one finds in one’s own experience as a Dostoevsky reader is what forcefully drives one to explore the conditions of this experience. The ultimate question of what kind of authorship emerges via a novel of this sort is perhaps the most intriguing and crucial question that Dostoyevsky’s novels can raise. In Dostoevsky’s novels, we sense and witness the author’s consciousness in an extremely powerful manner, as it is aptly embedded in the whole great dialogue of the novel. Thus, Dostoevsky’s voice maintains its existence as a creative principle in the independent voices of the heroes that he creates *qua* “free others” and without any need to show off an absolute authoritative power.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 287.

⁴⁸ I am indebted to a referee of this journal for their criticisms and suggestions on the earlier version of my manuscript. I would also like to thank Halil Turan and Murat Baç for their comments and criticisms from which this paper has greatly benefited.

IV. BOOK REVIEWS

Henry Martyn Lloyd, *Sade's Philosophical System in its Enlightenment Context*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 305 pp., Hardcover ISBN 978-3-319-97195-7, 80.24 €

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Henry Martyn Lloyd's monograph, *Sade's Philosophical System in its Enlightenment Context*, contends that, despite many invocations, monologies, and his own -ism, the Marquis de Sade has not received the philosophical attention he deserves. Lloyd aims to show (a) that Sade *had* a philosophy, which is worthy of closer academic study, and (b) that this philosophy is deeply intertwined with and must be understood through the active and sophisticated discourse of the early Enlightenment *philosophes*. In my opinion, his book amply demonstrates both.

What the book does *not* contend, contrary to its title, is that Sade's philosophy can be understood as a coherent or comprehensive system. Indeed, Lloyd only ever deploys the word "system" in quotation marks, and discusses at length in Part I why Sade may not have regarded systematicity itself as a philosophical ideal. Nevertheless, Lloyd wants to problematize an all-too-easy reading of Sade as simply non- or anti-philosophical, and succeeds in presenting a Sade who is both highly sensitive to the philosophy of his time, and who responds to and develops this philosophy in sophisticated ways.

In accordance with the second contention outlined above, the book is split roughly evenly, first providing the "philosophical context" in the form of a reconstruction of the early French Enlightenment discourse around the "body of sensibility," then proceeding to Sade's critique and appropriation of this discourse for his own ends.

In Parts II and III, Lloyd succeeds in animating a rich and varied philosophical milieu which is seldom studied in modern academic philosophy. I expect that many who read this book will come away with a desire to delve into the less-known figures including Étienne Condillac,

Baron d'Holbach and Antoine Le Camus, in addition to (or perhaps instead of) Sade himself.

In Parts IV and V, Lloyd traces Sade's responses to the various strands of moral and aesthetic philosophical discourse outlined in the first. Because this discourse is both broad and multifaceted, Sade must be "ambidextrous" as Lloyd often says, offering multiple and sometimes mutually contradictory arguments with the aim of advancing his own position. Finally, in Part V, Lloyd turns to a closer study of the positive elements of Sade's philosophy, with analysis of some of the inconsistencies and difficulties which frustrate a thoroughly systematic reading of Sade's thought.

The figures Lloyd presents in his account of the "Enlightenment context"—including Rousseau, Fouquet, d'Holbach, Le Camus, Jaucourt and Condillac—were not all philosophers. Rather, they counted among them a number of scientists and physicians who had little to no explicit interest in "doing philosophy." Yet this mixed milieu seems to be responsible for the richly *medicalist* discourse which emerges in the period, and which Lloyd reconstructs excellently in his book.

In particular, we wish to focus on the status of *sensibility*, to which the *philosophes* accord a status and function which often appear idiosyncratic to modern readers. First, sensibility is not treated as happening solely in or for the mind. Rather, it is distributed in and continuous with the organs of the body. Consequently, it is highly particular: "not only different [between] various parts of the body but [different] between particular individuals" (p. 53). The influence of medicine in the era, a consideration of the ways in which disease and impairment modify the sensing body not only from part to part but from person to person, leads numerous *philosophes* to prioritize sensibility and sensible experience—and pleasant and painful bodily experiences in particular—over *a priori* knowledge and reason.

Even abstract concepts, theoretical and practical reason are thus ultimately derived from "impulsions" in the body of sensibility. Condillac goes so far as to postulate a "statue man"—a statue with all the sense organs of a human, imbued with no innate knowledge or reason, but only the capacity for pleasurable and displeasurable sensations. Condillac argues that, by undergoing sufficiently many sensible experiences, the statue would nevertheless become able to acquire all of the supposedly "innate" faculties of the mind, and thus that "the *a priori* is deriva-

tive of, or supervenes on, sensation" (p. 97).

For Lloyd's purposes, the greatest significance of this blurring pertains to the aesthetic, and particularly the literary experience. For Fouquet, Le Camus, and others, the physical sensibility of reading was not restricted to the optical comprehension of words on a page. Rather, fiction *itself* is sensible insofar as it produces excitations which are *ontologically* continuous with those caused by the physical world. Condillac begins his statue argument by emphasizing that the readers must "put themselves exactly in place" of the statue, and *observe* the effects of the argument as it progresses (Condillac, quoted on p. 95). There is here an assumption that the truth of the argument can be *experienced* by undertaking an imaginary excursion, as a sky's hue can be experienced by looking.

According to Lloyd, this blurring between "mental" and "physical" experiences, between what is imagined and what is seen, explains the predominance of the philosophical novel in the early French Enlightenment. For these thinkers, the novel gave its author the power to make their ideas not only intellectually understood but literally *felt*. In this way, the novel becomes a device for producing and cultivating moral, political, and philosophical attitudes in its reader. If, as the *philosophes* contended, knowledge is derived from sensibility, then knowledge of moral and metaphysical truths can and even *must* be attained by undergoing the appropriate sensible experiences.

The status of the philosophical novel is of course methodologically important for any exegesis of Sade, who wrote almost exclusively in the fictional mode. Yet Lloyd's extensive treatment of the French Enlightenment discourse of sensibility also enables a better grasp of Sade's own understanding of philosophy and sensibility as intertwined in the literary mode. For Sade, it is not only the case that aesthetic sensibility can be a vector for philosophical arguments and ideas; one also finds in Sade that "philosophy physically moves or stimulates the body" (p. 131). Sadean characters are roused to ecstasy and fury by philosophical speeches and rational debates.

Additionally, Sade draws from and modifies this discourse of sensibility, criticizing the *philosophes* for smuggling in "artificial" differentiations between good and bad, right and wrong, when discussing the "natural" capacities of the body. This differentiation at the *sensible* level is important to numerous thinkers of the early French Enlightenment in-

sofar as it is necessary to ground *conceptual* distinctions between what is morally or aesthetically good or bad. In Rousseau, for instance, a “natural sympathy” is “the first sentiment of humanity,” what leads humans to seek actions and arrangements that increase the well-being of all (Rousseau, quoted on p. 123). The innate capacity to distinguish between well- and ill-being thus acts as the ground for Rousseau’s moral and political philosophies. Even Condillac, who strips away almost all mental faculties from his statue-man, retains a polar distinction between pleasant and unpleasant experiences.

Sade argues in the course of his texts that these polar distinctions are unwarranted *assumptions*, extrinsic to a sensibility which only measures degrees of greater or lesser intensity. Sade’s critique of the discourse of sensibility consists in the expurgation of all that is “unnatural” or extrinsic to sensibility, including stipulated distinctions between moral and immoral, pleasurable and displeasurable, beautiful and ugly. Sade finds that, underpinning the moral and aesthetic theories of the *philosophes*, there is a monistic conception of sensibility as the experience of *shocks* upon the body. Thus, for Sade, “at the most fundamental metaphysical level, [there is] no difference between pleasant and painful sensations: both are shocks” (p. 139).

Lloyd calls this Sade’s “principle of intensity,” which Sade uses both to undermine the moral theories of the *philosophes* and to justify and exalt the abject horrors his characters both undergo and inflict on others. For Sade, what matters is not our judgment of an experience as pleasurable or painful, as moral or wicked, but only the *intensity* of the experience itself. If there is no innate ontological distinction between, say, pleasure and pain, then there is no reason why we cannot learn to enjoy the most extreme displeasures and pains. What becomes desirable is the maximization of intensity *tout court*, be it through physical, sexual, aesthetic, or intellectual experiences. Thus, his characters argue and fornicate, submit each other to violent tortures, partake of both the finest foods and every kind of bodily fluid and excrement. Sade’s fictions reflect and enact a *philosophical* indistinction between the sublime and the abhorrent from the perspective of pure sensible intensity.

In the preceding we have followed just one thread of the book’s general expository method. By careful back-and-forth analysis, Lloyd reconstructs not only Sade’s original philosophy, but the general intellectual background against and through which this philosophy is best

understood. Lloyd quotes generously and often, not only from Sade himself but from his many philosophical interlocutors, giving the reader a sense of familiarity with the period's rich variety of philosophical interests and styles. We are then able to concur with Lloyd when he claims, against the clichéd anti- or non-philosophical reading, that "Sade was a highly sensitive barometer of the period's moral theory," and that his literary *oeuvre* constitutes a deft and sophisticated critique of this theory (p. 284).

In the book's closing chapters, Lloyd turns to some of the inconsistencies in Sade's philosophical attitudes, which prevent a straightforwardly systematic reading of his works. For, though he makes Sade into a compelling philosophical figure, Lloyd is frank that Sade's is not a philosophy anyone should adopt. Lloyd's philosophical reconstruction of Sade mostly glides over the gruesome details of Sade's actual writings, so that we almost forget that we are studying the works of a genuine apologist for rape, torture, murder, cannibalism, and coprophagia. It is not clear how or whether we can accept his piercing critiques of Enlightenment moral philosophy without his concomitant advocacy for acts which most readers would rather not do (or have done to them).

These are problems which Lloyd cannot resolve in the course of his own text. Yet in unearthing them, he has shown that there is still much productive philosophical work to be done with Sade's *oeuvre*, and that Sade himself—despite being the subject or theme of many disquisitions—still suffers from a dearth of scholarly attention. Lloyd's book may be the impetus that finally provokes that attention.

**Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer, Max Pensky
(eds.), *A Companion to Adorno*, Hoboken, NJ:
Wiley Blackwell, 2020, 680 pp., Hardcover
ISBN: 978-1-119-14691-9, 162.40 €**

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A Companion to Adorno provides a fresh look at Adorno and various interpretations of his work. The editors, Peter Gordon, Espen Hammer, and Max Pensky have gathered contributions from notable authors known for their scholarship on Adorno. This extensive work contains forty articles classified under the headings "Intellectual Foundations," "Cultural Analysis," "History and Domination," "Social Theory and Empirical Inquiry," "Aesthetics," "Negative Dialectics," and "Ethics and Politics," all addressing main issues in the debates around Adorno.

The first part, "Intellectual Foundations," begins with a biographical article by Peter Gordon chronicling the life of the philosopher, along with comments on their connections to his philosophy. The following article by Roger Foster, consisting in an examination of Adorno's early period, may be read as a continuation of Gordon's contribution. Foster addresses the inaugural lecture at the University of Frankfurt that Adorno delivered in May 1931 and analyses the philosopher's early thought. Foster considers Adorno's ties to previous philosophers, but also to the social history of Germany. He explains that, although Adorno was influenced by figures such as Weber and Lukács, his thought was also largely a response to bourgeois idealism. Besides these contributions, the first part also contains interesting articles from Marcia Morgan and Sherry Lee, the former of which treats of Adorno's readings of and commentaries on Kierkegaard, whereas the latter discusses the influence of the Second Viennese School on Adorno's philosophy of music. The article by Alexander Stern is, in my opinion, the most outstanding contribution of the first part. Stern provides an examination of the contradictory relationship between Benjamin and Adorno, claiming, in contrast to many works on the issue, that Benjamin's philosophy of language is central to the break between the two philosophers. Benjamin's

main idea, he says, is that human language is not something isolated and independent, but rather something located “in a global ontology of expressive media” (p. 52). Stern explains how Adorno departed from this idea.

The first article of the second part—“Cultural Analysis”—belongs to Fred Rush, who focuses on music, cinema, and television to explain the main lines of Adorno’s view of the culture industry. Although the article contains passages about radio, a fuller treatment of this medium could have been included. Andrew Bowie’s article treats the perennially popular issue: Adorno’s critique of jazz. Bowie presents detailed empirical information in his article and uses it to argue that Adorno’s research on jazz was empirically limited. Moreover, Bowie criticizes Adorno from different angles and convincingly argues that Adorno could not realize the potential of jazz in terms of content while insisting on certain particular forms in music. He thus arrives at the conclusion, *contra* Adorno, that there are examples of both the culture industry and critical art in jazz, as in every form of music, and provides many examples of the latter. The second part also includes contributions from Fabian Freyenhagen, Shannon Mariotti, and Charles Clavey, which draw the attention of the reader to politics.

The third part of the volume, “History and Domination,” contains six articles, the first of which, by Martin Jay, focuses on the relationship between Adorno and Blumenberg. Jay shows that Adorno’s concept of “nonconceptuality” may be read together with Blumenberg’s arguments, except in some distinct points. The article thus attempts to compare the philosophers with reference to that concept and the relevant arguments. Iain MacDonald’s contribution is an examination of Adorno’s philosophy of history, considering his critical readings of Kant, Hegel, and Marx. MacDonald’s starting point is Adorno’s opposition to Marx, which turns on the surpassing of class society through the progression from capitalist society to the transitional stage(s). MacDonald demonstrates that Adorno offers another path, while maintaining the essential parts of Marx’s critique of capitalism. He explains this attempt as depending mostly on the critique of Hegel: Adorno re-evaluates the Hegelian dialectic and justifies his own alternative reading of history with reference to the ontology that arises from this critical process. The philosopher also draws inspiration from Kant’s idea of peace and serenity and includes that consideration in his alternative. Adorno thus indicates

a possible exit in the progression of history towards a better future. The contributions of Michael Thompson and Martin Shuster are not limited to the subject of the third part; the issues explored therein are relevant to all the parts of the companion. Thompson explains the influence of Weber and Lukács from different aspects and Shuster examines the essentials of the critique of Enlightenment, especially by focusing on *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Also interesting are articles by Pierre-François Noppen about the anthropology of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and by Andrew Huddleston about the aesthetic model of social critique. The latter, which is complementary with the previous part, touches on the issues of the culture industry and mass culture on one side, and the critique of *kitsch* and the specification of the artwork on the other.

The fourth part, “Social Theory and Empirical Inquiry,” consists of articles that concentrate on the main concepts and arguments of Adorno’s social philosophy and his contributions to the empirical side of the social sciences. The articles of David Jenemann, Matthias Benzer & Julian Krause, Eli Zaretsky, and Jacob Norberg are particularly focused on the latter issue. Peter Osborne’s article, which aims at explaining the influence of Marx on Adorno, distinguishes itself for its broader content. Osborne differentiates between the general comprehension of social philosophy and sociology as a science in the Frankfurt School. The author then examines the Adorno-Marx relation. Here an examination of “commodity” and “reification” takes central place. The last section of Osborne’s article is a comparison between the ontologies of Adorno and Marx from the point of view of the former.

The part on Aesthetics may be divided into two categories. The first concerns the essentials of aesthetics according to Adorno. This category contains contributions from Owen Hulatt, Eva Geulen, and Peter Uwe Hoehdahl. Hulatt discusses the autonomy of the artwork and the problem of how an artwork gains its unique character, i.e., its autonomy. And Geulen analyses *Aesthetic Theory* and the lectures given by Adorno in 1958 and 1959. Hoehdahl examines Adorno’s aesthetics as a whole from his early to his late period. Besides these contributions, the articles by Henry Pickford, Richard Eldridge, Michael Gallope, and Richard Leppert, represent a second category concerned with particular issues, namely “literary criticism,” “modernism,” “music,” and “opera,” respectively.

The sixth part on Negative Dialectics is the most prominent part of

the companion. It begins with Terry Pinkard's article, which seeks an answer to the question "What is negative dialectics?" Pinkard focuses on Adorno's re-evaluation of Hegel. After a long introduction on the contradiction of being and thought and of subject and object, Pinkard presents a fluent summary of the Hegelian dialectic of the concepts *limit* and *limitation*. He examines Adorno's commentaries and critique of Hegel before coming to a conclusion regarding the question. The article contains remarkable points, one of which is Hegel's critique of Schelling's philosophy of identity, Adorno's critique of Hegel, and how Hegel's critique of Schelling can be levelled against Hegel himself. The article also contains passages providing a safeguard against the interpretation of Adorno and Hegel as two distinct poles. Pinkard shows the influence of Hegel on Adorno, even in Adorno's critique of Hegel. Additionally, this part contains comparisons between Adorno and Heidegger, and Adorno and Kant by Espen Hammer and J. M. Bernstein. In combination with Pinkard's article, the contributions by Max Pensky, Brian O'Connor, and Peter Gordon do much to deepen the reader's understanding of negative dialectics.

The last part of the companion, entitled "Ethics and Politics," contains four articles. The first contributions belong to Christian Skirke and Maeve Cooke, who deal with two important topics in Adorno debates, namely the phrase "after Auschwitz" and the radical transformation of society. In addition, Kathy Kiloh and James Finlayson contribute interesting articles on the materialist ethics of love and moral solidarity in Adorno. Skirke's contribution, which I deem to be the most important of this part, focuses on how Adorno reads the catastrophe of Auschwitz as a milestone in history. In the first section, he analyzes the statement that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric" (p. 568). Another section is devoted to interpretations of the statement. Skirke shows that what Adorno argues is that the individual bears the negative mediation of the catastrophe and that what needs to be done is to remove that mediation. Skirke explains that the main consequence of Auschwitz for ontology, according to Adorno, is the new social structure making future events like Auschwitz possible. The article further contains a section about education that touches upon Adorno's understanding of education as a means to change the individual so as to prevent possible future Auschwitzes.

In general, the companion offers a worthwhile and rewarding read-

ing for those interested in philosophy and the social sciences. But, although the volume contains several noteworthy contributions, it is not without lacunae. For example, the “Cultural Analysis” part is not satisfying at all and appears weak in comparison to the other parts. Another problem is the “Editor’s Introduction,” which only gives a long commentary on Adorno. An introduction covering the articles and explaining the purpose of the companion as a whole would have been more appropriate. The book nevertheless offers a skillful contribution to the Adorno debate and deserves the attention of the reader.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Master's Program in Philosophy Taught in English at the University of Sofia "St. Kliment Ohridski"

General Information

Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" was founded in 1888 following the best standards of European higher education. Sofia is the capital city of the Republic of Bulgaria, which is a member of the European Union (EU). Sofia University is the highest-ranking university in Bulgaria. The MA Program in Philosophy taught in English at the University of Sofia provides instruction in all major areas of Western Philosophy, but the Master's thesis can also be written on a topic from Eastern Philosophy. The program consists of 10 mandatory courses and 2 electives, so it leaves enough leeway for the student's own interests. The degree is recognized worldwide including in the EU/EEA and Switzerland, the USA, Canada, Russia, Turkey, China, the Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America, and the Middle East.

Courses Offered

Philosophical Anthropology, Ethics, Axiology, Philosophical Method, Truth and Meaning, Philosophy of Intercultural Relations, Social Philosophy, Continental Philosophy, Philosophy of Culture, Logic in the Continental Tradition, Theories of Truth, Existential Dialectics, Philosophy of Subjective Action, Phenomenology.

Faculty Members

All faculty members teaching at the program are approved by the Bulgarian State Highest Assessment Commission. They feature successful teaching experience in this country and abroad and are well published in Bulgarian and English.

Duration of Studies

Two semesters of course attendance plus a third semester for writing the Master's thesis. There are also opportunities for distance learning.

Requirements

Bachelor's degree in any field of the humanities, social science, science, or professional disciplines. No tests or application fee are required (for citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland applying for a state scholarship €16 fee is charged and an interview is held). No previous degree in philosophy is needed.

Tuition Fee

- 1) For citizens of the EU/EEA and Switzerland: €850 per school year.
- 2) For international students: €3850 per school year.

Financial Aid

- 1) EU/EEA and Swiss citizens are eligible for state scholarships carrying a 60% tuition waiver plus a monthly stipend beginning from the second semester.
- 2) American citizens are eligible for Fulbright Graduate Grants. For more information, see www.fulbright.bg. It is possible for American citizens to use sources of governmental financial assistance (please contact the Program Director for details).
- 3) Canadian students are eligible for financial aid in the form of governmental student loans from the province where they are permanent residents.
- 4) Turkish students are eligible for financial aid within the Erasmus+ Student Exchange Program.
- 5) Chinese students are eligible for financial aid within the bilateral Chinese-Bulgarian Cultural Agreement. For more information, contact the Chinese Ministry of Education.
- 6) Russian students are eligible for financial aid within the bilateral Russian-Bulgarian Cultural Agreement. For more information, contact the Russian Ministry of Education.
- 7) Students from the Ukraine, Belarus, and the other CIS countries, the Indian Sub-Continent, Latin America, and the Middle East receive fi-

nancial aid in the form of inexpensive dormitory accommodation (about €50 per month including most of the utilities) plus a discount on public transportation and at the university's cafeterias. The same type of financial aid is available for the citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland, American citizens, Canadian nationals, Western Balkans citizens, students from Turkey, and Chinese students.

Application Deadlines

To start in October: July 31.

To start in February: November 30.

Student Visa Matters

Sofia University in cooperation with the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science provides the necessary documents for student visa application to all eligible candidates, except those from the EU/EEA and Switzerland.

Cultural Life and Recreation

The city of Sofia is the most ancient European capital after Athens. The cost of living there is one of the lowest in Europe. As the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia features a rich cultural life. There are a number of concert halls, museums, dozens of art galleries, and many national and international cultural centers. The streets of Sofia are populated by cozy cafés and high-quality inexpensive restaurants offering Bulgarian, European, and international cuisine. Sofia is a favorable place for summer and winter sports including skiing on the nearby mountain of Vitosha. More about Sofia can be found at <http://www.sofia-life.com/culture/culture.php>. You can also follow Sofianite and Bulgarian news at <http://www.novinite.com/lastx.php>.

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Courses Offered

Psychoanalysis and Philosophy, Applied Ethics, Epistemology, Philosophy of Science, Social Philosophy, Philosophy of Projectivity, Philosophy of Intercultural Relations, Epistemology, Continental Philosophy, Philosophy of Language, Philosophy of Culture, Time and History.

Requirements

Master’s degree in any field. No previous degree in philosophy is required.

Checklist

CV, two letters of recommendation, standardized tests scores are NOT required. No application fee (for citizens of EU/EEA and Switzerland a €32 fee is charged and an entrance exam is held).

Tuition Fee

- 1) For EU/EEA & Swiss students:
 - in residence: €1450 per school year.
 - extramural: €2440 per school year.
- 2) For international students:
 - in residence: €6500 per school year.
 - extramural: €3300 per school year.

Other Fees

Dissertation Defense Fee: €1700.

Duration of Studies

In residence: 3 years. Extramural: 4 years. There are opportunities for distance learning.

Financial Aid

- 1) EU/EEA and Swiss citizens are eligible for state scholarships carrying a 60% tuition waiver plus a monthly stipend beginning from the second semester.
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