Symposium

**The Glory of Knowledge:
Construction and Deconstruction.
When Human Quest Ends
in Apophasis**

*The Fourteenth Ecumenical Theological
Symposium*

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The Glory of Knowledge: Construction and Deconstruction. When Human Quest Ends in Apophasis

The Fourteenth Ecumenical Theological Symposium

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The Fourteenth Ecumenical Theological Symposium

From the left: Victoria Malczanek, Lucian Pîrjol, Gloria Possart, Theodor Damian, Bert Breiner, Richard Grallo, Doru Tsaganea, Daniel Damian.

Acknowledging Apophasis as the Glory of Knowledge

The selected topic of our 14th Ecumenical-Theological Symposium organized under the sponsorship of the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality of New York, emphasizes one of the most ardent problems of our times concerning the ontological triadic relationship of human cognition, knowledge and apophasis.

This ontological triade represents an existential correlation based especially on the instinct of the human mind. Cognition is the juncture between knowledge and apophasis (negation).

From a theological point of view, the foundation of cognition, knowledge and apophasis is spiritual, if one takes into consideration that the ultimate knowledge comes through revelation and the ultimate foundation of all knowledge is God Himself. In this sense the glory of knowledge is the apophatic acknowledging of God's glory. That means that the true glory of knowledge will always be apophatically and doxologically acknowledging the glory of God.

Finally, we have to underline the fact that Adam and Eve committed the ancestral sin by tasting from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Among the many ontological consequences of this sin, the primordial unity of knowledge was destroyed by the deviation of the instinct of knowledge from its normal functioning.

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It is the aim of the 14th Ecumenical Theological Symposium to explore the numerous aspects of this fundamental characteristic of man, the capacity to know, to see what was the inital purpose it had and how it functions today, as well as how it can become a vehicle for man's communion with God.
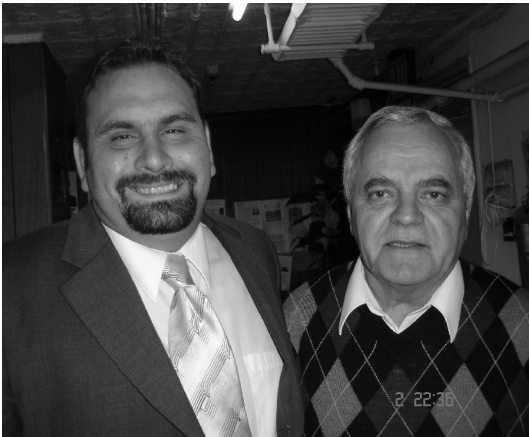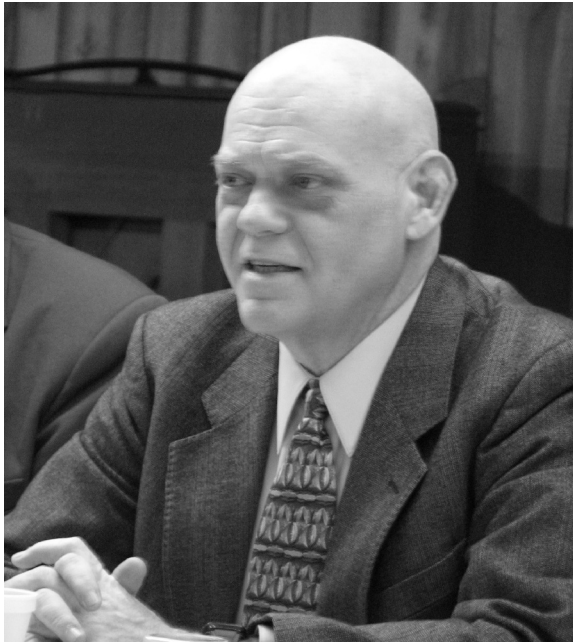

Daniel Damian(left) and Aurel Sasu

Cornelia Grosaru (left) and Lucia Columb

Prof. Victoria Malczanek

Prof. Dr. Bert Breiner
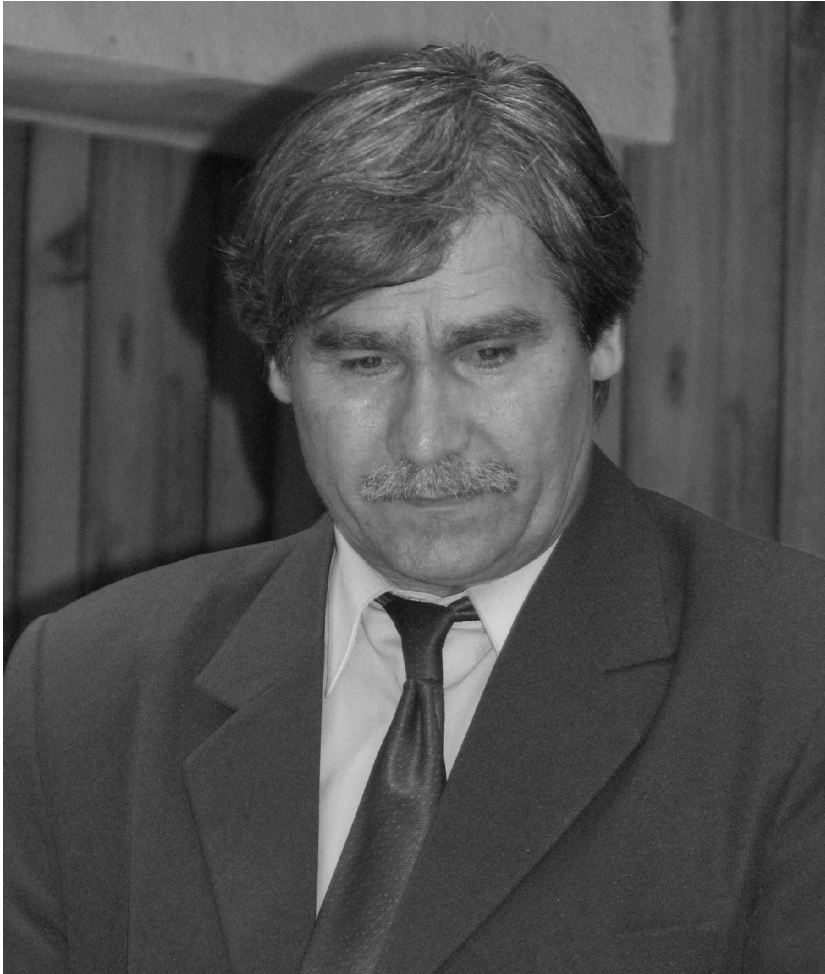
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THEODOR DAMIAN

The Transcendence of God According to St. Gregory of Nyssa: Continuity and Discontinuity with the Thought of Origen. How Is God Known?

Acknowledgement

St. Gregory of Nyssa, recognized as the most honored among the Nicene Fathers, was rightly called, "Father of Fathers" or "the Star of Nyssa."[1] G. Florovsky writes that St. Gregory "had perhaps the most strictly logical mind of all the Fathers"[2] and that he was "one of the most powerful and most original thinkers ever known in the history of the Church."[3] He had a very important contribution in creating a bridge between Hellenism and the Jewish Scriptures, as Fr. J. Meyendorff states,[4] and in expressing the Christian doctrines in philosophical language. This characterization of St. Gregory is greatly confirmed also by the way in which he treated and developed theological problems like those related to the title of this paper.

Biographical Data

St. Gregory of Nyssa was born around 331 A.D.[5] in a devoted Christian family of ten children, some of whom became saints of the Church. His grandmother, Macrina, his mother, Emmelia, and his sister, Macrina exercised a strong influence on

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him. After the education he received in the local schools Gregory became a diligent auto-didact; he spent time with his brother Basil in the monastery after Basil finished his studies. Gregory, becoming very well instructed in theology and philosophy, tried to introduce in the Christian thought that which was most valuable in the lay classical culture and steadily defended the Nicene doctrines against the heresies of his time.

In 371, he became bishop of Nyssa and after the death of Basil, he became "one of the foremost champions of Orthodoxy."[6] St. Gregory had a major role in the entire work of the Second Ecumenical Council, at Constantinople in 381, where the terminology adopted to define the dogmas of the Trinity was especially taken from his works.[7] He died probably in 395 A.D. and is commemorated in the Eastern Church on January 10th and in the Latin Church on March 9th.[8]

St. Gregory of Nyssa, called by St. Maximus the Confessor, "le docteur de l'univers," wrote a great variety of works: theological, moral, ascetical, apologetical, letters, etc. In these, he treated very different and difficult problems such as: the divine essence, energies and hypostases, the two natures in Christ, the problem of evil, the relation between the ideal man and the actual man and many others. In his writings, he proved an excellence of style and used many means to put philosophy in the service of theology; he did this without becoming servile and dependent on philosophy, but instead, with authority and competence. Although he can be highly speculative, Gregory does not rationalize the revelational truth but he remains a mystic and a theologian of the *via negativa.*

The heresies against which Gregory fought were in his time especially related to the theology of the Trinity and of the Incarnation as were the Arianism, the Apolinarianism and the Macedonianism. Against Arianism, he wrote especially his books "Against Eunomius"; against Apolinarianism he developed his Christologic doctrine and against Macedonianism, St. Gregory

wrote his works on the divinity of the Holy Spirit and His consubstantiality with the Father and the Son.

I. The Transcendence of God

This is a concept which refers closely to St. Gregory's apophatic theology. As. Fr. Meyendorff mentions, the dispute against Eunomius was one of the reasons for the development of Cappadocian's apophatic theology.[9] The Anomoeans, an extreme faction of Arianism, professed a clearly defined intellectualism in the question of the knowledge of God. Eunomius was one of them. That is why the disputes against Eunomius had such a great importance for the Christian gnoseology in general, and consequently for the doctrine of the vision of God.[10] As Vl. Lossky writes, Eunomius taught that the names and the concepts of God are able to give us an adequate idea about the very essence of God, so that God knows nothing of His essence that we do not know ourselves, too.[11] This generated a very strong reaction from the Cappadocian Fathers and is also at the basis of St. Gregory of Nyssa's "absolute apophatism."[12]

In several of his works, St. Gregory tries "definitions" of the divine incomprehensible nature; he says in the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* that "the blessed, eternal nature surpassing all understanding contains all things in itself and is limited by nothing. No name or concept can impose limits to it: not time, place, color, form, image, bulk, quantity, dimension or anything else. Every good conceived as belonging to God's nature is present in infinite and unbounded measure.[13] And again, "the divine nature is simple, pure, of one kind, unmoved,

unchangeable, always the same and always self-contained.[14] God's nature is "inaccessible, intangible, incomprehensible,"[15] not limited by any name,[16] as he says in his work *On "Not three Gods,"* and as well, in the books, *Against Eunomius*.[17]

The strong emphasis he puts on apophatism is evidenced by the multitude and the diversity of the terms used to express it. According to other formulations, God is "cette beauté inaccessible et impossible à cerner,"[18] He is "inexprimable en parole et insaisissable dans un concept," "surpassant toute intelligence."[19] This ineffability of the divine *ousia* is something beautiful in itself. St. Gregory teaches consequently that the essence of God is a mystery and the mystery is total silence. But "silence withholds information," he says, and anything that is "not manifested by speech and belonging to silence is beautiful; it is ineffable and more wonderful than words."[20]

The incomprehensibility of God's essence is due to God's own mystery but also to man's "poor nature." For us, knowledge of the divine essence is impossible, unattainable; the only knowledge of God we can have is what St. Gregory calls in *The Life of Moses,* the "luminous darkness;" it is seeing God in the darkness, it is the realization itself that the divine essence is beyond any human comprehension.[21] To know God's nature is to know that it is unknowable. "God is *there* where understanding does not reach."[22] The bishop of Nyssa writes to Eunomius that we can affirm only God's existence but we cannot say what He is in His nature. And that He exists, we can speak only from His operations in regard to our life.[23] In other words, as M. Canévet puts it, man can only recognize *(reconnaître)* that God is the true being, but he cannot know *(connaître)* God's nature.[24]

One can see that all of St. Gregory's mysticism has as its center the problem of God's total transcendence. In order to express more clearly this concept, St. Gregory especially in *The Life of Moses* and the *Commentary on the Song of Songs* uses a diversity of metaphors and images among which the night, the

cloud, the darkness and others, represent key words for an adequate understanding of the problem.

In other places, St. Gregory focuses on the incapacity of human nature to understand the divine nature, to contain it:[25] "L'homme n'a pas trouvé en lui-même la faculté qui lui ferrai comprendre ce qui est incompréhensible;" the divine essence "se dérobe á tout essai de formulation."[26] After stating that God surpasses all our power to know Him, St. Gregory asks: "How could anyone express even in outline that which is inexpressible and incomprehensible to the human mind?"[27] And elsewhere, he answers: "We do not come to know essences even in created things...things in themselves remain inexhaustible for discursive knowledge."[28] And on the same line of argumentation: "Who has arrived at the comprehension of his own soul? And if one cannot comprehend the mystery of one's own soul, how can one think that God's nature can be comprehended and expressed?[29] In conclusion, because any human thought falls short of the comprehension of God, we can only speak "of the splendor of God's glory, the stamp of His nature."[30] Consequently, the right attitude of man in front of this mystery is silence[31] and reverence.[32] That is why St. Gregory, after telling Eunomius that even the whole of God's revelation says nothing about the divine *ousia,* the only correct thing man can do is to revere God in silence;[33] this is a holy silence or "le silence sacré, seul digne de Dieu," in the words of M. Lot-Borodine.[34]

There is a certain inner dynamism in St. Gregory's allegorical interpretation or rather explanation of God's transcendence, convincingly and beautifully built and expressed in his mystical writings; here, the human soul is presented as being in quest for God and St. Gregory tells us what happens with this quest. According to the example of Moses, the soul, in its desire to see God and to reach the divine beauty, leaves behind everything that belongs to the created order and penetrates deeper until the moment when the intelligence gains access to the invisibile and incomprehensible and there the soul sees God. And

this is "the true knowledge of what is sought; this is the seeing that consists in not seeing, because that which is sought transcends all knowledge, being separated on all sides by incomprehensibility as by a kind of darkness."[35]

In more detailed words, as it happened with Moses, this happens also with the soul: the soul withdraws itself from the darkness of the world and of material things and enters into a light which is a more careful understanding of the hidden things; in this light the soul is lead to "God's hidden nature," which is symbolized by the cloud that overshadows all appearances and which has the role to accustom the soul to behold what is hidden. Then the soul is led higher "into the sanctuary of the divine knowledge where it is surrounded from all sides by the divine darkness."[36] This divine darkness is an absolute one. Here to see God is not to see and to know Him is not to know; in other words, to know is to know that you don't know and to realize that the divine hidden *ousia* is impossible to be grasped. In this sense, the divine darkness is a kind of realm which separates the ordinary human knowledge from the higher, mystical knowledge that comes through faith,[37] as St. Gregory says, interpreting the "Songs of Songs": "Having forsaken every manner of comprehension, I found my beloved in faith."[38]

II. Continuity and Discontinuity with the Thought of Origen

Like the other two Cappadocians, St. Gregory of Nyssa was visibly an Origenist but not to the point of being overwhelmed and dominated. "Disciple éclairé et non servile, il sait manifester son indépendance et prendre de la distance."[39] St. Gregory of Nyssa diligently studied Origen when he spent time in

the monastery with his brother Basil, and they wrote a book, *Philocalia,* with excerpts from the most beautiful parts of Origen's works. From Origen, Gregory kept as an inheritance, among other specific things, the extensive use of the Holy Scriptures as a work method as well as the spiritual, allegorical and mystical interpretation of the Christian teaching; in this field, Gregory even goes far beyond Origen. Also like Origen, Gregory successfully expressed the Christian truth in philosophical language.[40]

Besides these few general considerations related to St. Gregory's Origenism, I will now bring into attention a series of Christian doctrines which reflect the continuity and/or discontinuity in the thought of these two theologians. These doctrines are related to the idea of the transcendence of God; however, because there is an organic relationship between the theology of the divine transcendence and that of the knowledge of God, these doctrines will also relate to different aspects of the theology of the knowledge of God which will be discussed next.

The main idea about the total transcendence of God is common to Origen and to St. Gregory. I wrote how the bishop of Nyssa spoke about God's incomprehensibility; Origen had on this subject the same understanding: "God is incomprehensible for His creation," he writes. "God is known only to Himself."[41] Although the transcendence is total, it implies immanence to the created order, because "while transcendent to all things [God] contains all things,"[42] an idea common to both Origen and Gregory. The mystical interpretation of God's transcendence is inherited by Gregory from Origen, only Gregory developed it in his own way.[43] For instance, the basic idea of the allegorical interpretation found in the *Life of Moses* of St. Gregory of Nyssa, may have its roots in the suggestions made by Origen in his *On First Principles* 4.3.12.[44] As Fr. Daniélou remarks, the theme of *darkness,* very dear to Gregory, is also found in Origen.[45]

Like Origen, St. Gregory interprets "The Song of Songs" in a mystical way, as he sees in it a "symbol of man's progressive knowledge of the nature of the Godhead;[46] for both of them, although the soul is in progress towards the divine nature, it cannot be grasped completely. In relation to the "Song of Songs," St. Gregory stresses the union of each individual soul as the bride to Christ, whereas, for Origen the bride is represented by the Church.[47] Speaking of the mystical works, as M. Aubineau writes, there is also a common theme in both Origen and Gregory, namely that of the spiritual marriage between the Word of God and the human soul; yet, in this context, St. Gregory of Nyssa develops extensively in his own way the idea of the fecundity of the virginity for the spiritual life.[48]

The doctrine of the pre-existence of the souls, found in Origen's works has direct implications on that of the divine transcendence. Origen states that the souls preexist the creation of the world, that they are "partial brightnesses - ἀπαυγάσματα - of God's glory." This can lead to the supposition about the necessary knowledge that the souls have of God's nature. Gregory does not share the idea of the preexistence of the souls; he fights it, underlining the greater or total distance between God and the human soul and the impossibility for the soul to know the divine *ousia.*

In *De Anima et Resurrectione,* Gregory adopts Tertulian's theory of traducianism[49] but even this does not seem to be sufficient for Gregory[50] or to solve the problem of the origin of the soul. In relation to this doctrine, a significant difference between the two theologicans is shown by Fr. Meyendorff: For Origen when the soul returns to its original state and reaches the union with God, it is united with the divine essence itself and God ceases to be the absolute Other; for St. Gregory, while agreeing with the idea of the mystical journey of the soul, he specifies that the final union with God is not referring to God's essence but rather it is a communion in grace and love with God manifested in His energies. In Gregory's thought, God's *ousia* is inaccessible even

to the celestial beings.[51] Also, while for Origen, the ultimate goal of creation is the "static contemplation of the divine essence," for St. Gregory, the goal is the dynamic growth of the soul in knowledge and love of God, a growth without end because of the inexhaustibility of God's essence.[52]

Another doctrine common to both theologians, as Vl. Lossky mentions[53] is that of the spiritual senses of man. Origen speaks of the five spiritual senses[54] whose function goes beyond the natural limits: "You will discover a sense - αἴσθησις - that can perceive the divine." St. Gregory takes up the word αἴσθησις and develops it in the sense of the capacity of a subject to come in relation with what it desires. This goes together with the whole concept of *epectasis* so extensively developed by Gregory.[55] Speaking of the progress of the soul towards the Transcendent, both Gregory and Origen agree that "the garment of the skin" is more a remedy than a punishment and that the free will of man is closely in relation to this ascent of the soul.[56] Also, the theology of the image of God, which is not completely lost but only darkened in us, as a basis for the ascent of the soul towards the transcendent God, is common to both authors.[57] There is a disagreement between the two with respect to the matter and the body. Unlike Origen, for Gregory the matter in itself is not impure; he insists on the integrity of man's being, even in this life, and on the absolute simultaneity of the development of the body and of the soul, as Fr. Florovsky writes.[58]

On another point, there is agreement between Origen and Gregory: faith is the source of knowledge of God, different from the sources provided by the created order; they agree that we must have some idea or intuition through faith of that which is incomprehensible to us,[59] namely God's transcendence. Yet faith is a gift and a virtue and for both of them, virtue is by definition the activity which moves the soul towards God; virtue is acquired by discipline and monasticism provides the ground for the exercise of this discipline.[60]

As for the progress of the soul towards the transcendent God, both theologians agree that, first, change is essential to created beings,[61] as Fr. Daniélou writes. It is a common acception that there is a progression of the soul in knowledge from the small things toward the greater, from the visible to the invisible, from corporeal to intelligible[62] and thus, that the spiritual life is a succession of progressive steps.[63] However, while for Origen, this leads to the static contemplation by the soul of the divine essence as mentioned above, for Gregory the progress is without end, and perfection is in itself this progress. For Origen, the ascent of the soul takes place in the three stages of purification, illumination and union;[64] Gregory accepts this doctrine, but develops it further, and in the context of the mystical interpretation of the ascent. For him, the three steps are seen as light, cloud and darkness according to Moses' experience on Sinai. Also, for both Origen and Gregory, the vision of God face to face[65] and the participation in the divine life[66] as highest goal of the spiritual life is possible. The difference between them on this point lays in the way they understood this final communion with God which is related to the concept of *apocatastasis;* while for Origen, there will be many worlds until God will be "all in all," for Gregory, this final communion will happen in the world that will come after this world of ours.[67]

From all these doctrines, it is clear that St. Gregory of Nyssa was very much indebted to Origen's theology. He continued and developed many concepts of Origen, in this way giving support and confirmation to Origen's theology in a time when this was not an unimportant thing for Origen's memory. However, St. Gregory had his own strong personality and, at times, disagreed visibly with his master; at other times, he developed the Origenistic ideas in a very different way according to his own understanding, to the context in which he lived and to the problems with which he was confronted in his time.

III. How Is God Known?

The knowledge of God is compared by St. Gregory of Nyssa with a mountain[68] difficult to climb[69] and is called "the gold of the knowledge of God."[70] This is like breath: each breathes according to the capacity of his lungs but it is necessary for each person to breath. Although not all people arrive at this knowledge, it is important for everyone to become permeable to the radiance of the Transcendent[71] in order to become a person of knowledge and thus, to use this knowledge as a factor of salvation for oneself and for others.[72] In the mystical interpretation of St. Gregory, as Fr. Daniélou writes, "la théognosie commence avec la montée du Sinaï."[73] But the ascent on the mount is related to obedience symbolized by the taking off of the sandals "from the feet of the soul."[74] In this sense, real knowledge is to realize that human knowledge is only partial, not absolute; St. Gregory, at this point compares God's inexhaustibility for the human knowledge with a fountain in which one can never see all the water but only what comes to the sight.[75] However, sometimes a special knowledge of God is given to a privileged person and is concealed from others; in maintaining that, Gregory is indebted to St. Paul's concept of mystery; God cannot be understood without revelation but once He reveals Himself, there is understanding of God without question "of the essential incomprehensibility of the divine nature."[76]

At the question, "How is God known?", one of the answers that can be given based on Gregory's theology is: through the image of God in us. The theology of the image of God restored in us by Christ through which man is capable to reflect the divine nature of the Archetype[77] is closely related to the concept of connaturality - syngeneia (συγγενεία) -[78] and through this, to that of man's participation in the divine life, the real ground for the knowledge of God.[79] Through συγγενεία and participation, the soul proceeds towards its natural beauty which is found in the

Archetype: "L'indigence foncière de la beauté créée suscite donc chez l'homme perspicace, formé et purifié, le désir de la Beauté absolue, plus précisement le désir de la posséder par la θεωρία,"[80] St. Gregory writes. This is the attraction of the like for like as H. Cherniss mentions.[81] The image of God in us is the ground for a higher mode of knowledge than the natural one; the communion with God through the image founds in us "une connaissance de connaturalité qui est d'une autre qualité que la science notionelle."[82]

Very often, St. Gregory explains his understanding of the image of God in us through the plastic analogy of the mirror. Thus, another answer to the question, How is God known? is: through the mirror. J. Daniélou remarks that the problem of the knowledge of God in the *mirror* of the soul is the most important aspect of Gregory's mystical teaching. The mirror is, for St. Gregory, the awareness of the grace in the framework of which appears the knowledge of God, not in His nature but as an experience of His presence.[83] R. Leys also sees that for St. Gregory the *mirror* of the soul supposes another mode of knowledge; the mirror expresses the vital union "gratuitement donnée" which implies knowledge of God.[84] But in order for the mirror to mediate knowledge of God and to shine the beauty of the Lord, a discipline is required: the purification of life - καθάρσις - through ἀπαθεία.[85] In this way, the soul becomes transparent and the mirror clean in order to fulfill its function. Because the soul is a "living mirror possessing free will,"[86] we are free to hold up in front of the mirror whatever we want; yet, through virtue, we learn to make the mirror shine only the beauty of good things.[87] The theology of *Imago Dei* and of the mirror in St. Gregory's teachings supposes a double direction of the soul in its progress to know God: an ascent towards God and a descent into the depth of the soul to see God in the purified mirror where "la beauté déiforme de l'âme faite á l'image du Prototype" can be discovered.[88]

Another way in which Gregory of Nyssa responds to the question, "How can God be known?" is related to his understanding of the role and function of virtue in the spiritual life. Thus, virtue leads to the knowledge of God[89] and to participation in the divine life;[90] it finally brings the purified man to the vision of God but only "as much as it is possible" for a human being.[91] The progress in virtue is realized through ascetic life[92] from which purity comes. The virtuous life is the foundation for the perpetual progress in the knowledge of God. The idea of purification through ascetic life is related to that of *apatheia,* which in Gregory's thought means both the detachment or freedom from passion and the stripping off of our "garment of skin" in order to enter the habitual state of grace through the participation of the soul in the divine life. *Apatheia*, does not mean lack of desire, it is not a static dimension of the human condition, it means the conversion of the wrong desires into good ones; thus, *apatheia* implies and brings dynamism in the spiritual life.[93] This state of the spirit flourishes best in the solitary withdrawal which is called by St. Gregory a "greater philosophy."[94] Indeed, for the bishop of Nyssa, the ascetic life is practice of philosophy and the philosophy leads to knowledge of God in that it helps us not to have a mistaken apprehension of Being.[95] This whole concept of virtuous life as a basis for the progress in the knowledge of God can be summarized in this way: The one who wants to approach the "mountain of the ineffable knowledge of God" and to enter the divine darkness, there where God is, must first fight all the enemies who can impede the soul in this action. This fight is an exercise in virtue because the person who wants to approach the contemplation of Being must be pure in all things, soul and body. Only when he is so purified, he can "assault the mountain."[96]

Another aspect of St. Gregory of Nyssa's theology which answers the question "How can God be known?" is based on the knowledge of the created things. First of all, the intelligence in our souls is a light through which we can communicate with the divine energies;[97] through this, we can then contemplate the

beauty of the created things which are an analogy of the invisible Beauty, of the "fountain of beauty."[98] Thus, from the works of God in creation,[99] we can ascend to the contemplation of the intelligible beauty.[100] As F. Cherniss remarks, the senses phenomena serve as a ladder for the rise of the soul towards the Transcendent,[101] towards the knowledge of the invisible.[102] Arrived here, at this point, the soul cannot but marvel and worship "Him who alone is recognized by His works."[103] The works of God as divine operations guide us into the investigation of the divine nature, St Gregory says[104] and he even affirms that, thus, the divine nature can be made known to us.[105] Yet the manifestations of God in the created order represent the immanence of God as a source of knowledge available to us. Fr. J. Meyendorff in this respect writes that "the knowledge of God is possible only inasmuch as He revels Himself, inasmuch as the immanent Trinity reveals itself in the economy of salvation, inasmuch as the transcendent *acts* on the immanent level."[106] In the words of M. van Parys, through οἰκονομία it is possible to arrive at the θεολογία because for Gregory the οἰκονομία of God, the God-for-us, comes out of the θεολογία - God in Himself,[107] so through the operations of God, the soul can arrive to contemplate God in Himself.

For St. Gregory of Nyssa, all the ways in which the knowledge of God is attained imply progress. As J. Daniélou writes, the idea of progress of the soul in its knowledge and communion with God, the seeking of God without end is the heart of Gregory's spiritual doctrine.[108] The progress itself is perfection, it leads to endless participation in God by virtue.[109] Perfection, on the other hand, is for Gregory never stopping in our growth in good.[110] Yet, paradoxically, progress is standing still also; it is, at the same time, a standing and a moving process. By standing, St. Gregory understands the fact of being anchored steadily on the rock (Christ), unmoved from virtue and this kind of standing on the rock is in itself a move, a progress.[111] In *The Life of Moses,* St. Gregory states that progress is going beyond the created order and

beyond one's self and thus, it is interiorization,[112] as Vl. Lossky wrote: "the celestial journey of the soul is interiorized; there is an interior ascent."[113] This process has no end because while the flesh knows satiety, the soul does not know it. Thus, the soul can advance from beauty to beauty,[114] from strength to strength - εκ δυνάμεος είς δύναμιν,[115] from glory to glory until the soul, transformed and assimilated in God becomes light: "Une telle proximité entraîne donc une transformation de l'âme, une assimilation á Dieu et par Dieu, qui la rend belle et lumineuse."[116] The soul "changes thus more and more into the divine."[117] This last affirmation already indicates Gregory's concept of deification and this is based on the doctrine of participation. Participation is progressive, too and God willingly admits it.[118] This progress in the process of participation "despoils us of any other kind of knowledge."[119] Fr. J. Meyendorff calls this despoiling elimination, elimination of the lower things, and states that the process of elimination is a "necessary stage in the knowledge of God."[120]

In St. Gregory of Nyssa's understanding, the progression in the knowledge of God is closely related to the concept of *epektasis,* ἐπέκτασις;[121] the knowledge and the vision of God never exhausts the desire, but on the contrary, they stimulate it because what is seen is not exhausted by being seen[122] and every step in the realization of the knowledge of God is "only the beginning of a desire for more lofty things."[123]

The culmination of the knowledge of God through physical senses leads us to knowledge in faith or contemplation, and the culmination of contemplation is the ascent of the soul towards God until the point of the "divine and sober intoxication," the highest mystical stage of the knowledge of God. For St. Gregory, however, to contemplate is to become what one sees. It is a conscious imitation and following from behind, as Moses saw only the back of God in his state of contemplation.[124] Yet, to follow somebody means to be in communion with him and to imitate somebody, to participate in his life and mode of being. This kind of participation, strictly related to knowledge, as D.

Balas writes,[125] which makes the soul "saisir le semblable par le semblable," leads the soul to the vision of God, θεὸν ἰδειν.[126] St. Gregory teaches that the vision of God is a privilege of the one who has a pure heart; the vision of God happens "in a certain manner," ποσῶς ἰδειν[127] and it consists in "never being satisfied in the desire to see Him.[128] To see God, St. Gregory says, is to know Him as unknowable;[129] the vision although does not refer to God's *ousia*, is impossible to be translated into words.[130] As St. Gregory puts it again, "la vision du Dieu infini est l'infini désir de l'âme de voir Dieu."[131]

Vl. Lossky notices that in Gregory's theology, the vision of God precedes the union of the soul with God: "There is no vision of the divine essence and the union is presented [by Gregory] as a path which goes beyond vision, θεωρία, beyond intelligence, to the area where knowledge is suppressed and love alone remains or rather, where *gnosis* becomes *agape*."[132] Or, as St. Gregory writes, God, although unknowable to our capacity to understand, is present to us by love.[133] This kind of union is an infinite progress in the darkness of ignorance; it takes place "in the cloud" as Fr. J. Meyendorff says, where God remains totally invisible and incomprehensible to the created sense and faculties.[134]

It is worthy to mention that the whole theology of St. Gregory of Nyssa on the knowledge of God, in all its aspects and implications is not effected without Jesus Christ's action and that of the Holy Spirit. Gregory's soteriology is rooted in Christology as M. van Parys indicates.[135] Indeed, for St. Gregory, the ultimate key of the relation between God and His creation is Christology.[136] Also the action of the Holy Spirit is a necessary foundation for the authentic process of knowledge of God, because only the Holy Spirit reaches the depths of God, even the essence of God.[137] Or, as St. Gregory wonderfully puts it in his *Commentary on the Song of Songs:* "we might traffic in the wealth of knowledge...only if the Holy Spirit strikes our sails!"[138]

Conclusions

As it was evident from this presentation, in the thought of St. Gregory of Nyssa, the theology of the knowledge of God is a paradox. If God is totally Other, completely transcendent, how can God be known? The beautiful mystical investigations of Gregory as an answer to this question lead one to the conclusion that the knowledge of God, striking our logical mind or the need for logical explanations, finishes in prayer and adoration and that it culminates in apophasis.

The whole problem in the knowledge of God is, for St. Gregory, a paradox; to really know God is to know Him infinitely close to us and permanently inaccessible. In other words, "la vraie connaissance de Dieu est l'expérience d'une impossible saisie; mais Dieu est pourtant là!"[139] Again the paradox, the *coincidentia oppositorum:* to know is not to know, to see is not to see, or to know is to know that I don't know. J. Daniélou notices also this wonderful creative tension in the mystical knowledge which is a mixture of knowledge and ignorance, possession and quest, transcendence and immanence; it is a "luminous darkness."[140] This is how St. Gregory himself illustrates in the *Commentary on the Songs of Songs,* in beautiful images, through the example of the bride and bridegroom, the mystery of God's transcendence and of the knowledge of God: "When I enter the invisible realm after having forsaken sensual perception, I am embraced by the divine night, and I seek him hidden in the cloud. Then did I love my desired one, even though he escaped my thoughts. For 'I sought him on my bed at night,' that I might know his substance, beginning and end and in what his being consists, but 'I did not find him.' I called him by name as far as it was in my power to find him who lacks a name, yet the meaning of a name would not help me attain him whom I sought. How can he who transcends every name be discovered by a name? She says, 'I called him and he did not answer me.' I knew then that the greatness of his glory and sanctity has no end."[141]

NOTES:

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2. George Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century,* Ed. by R.S. Haugh, Transl. by Catherine Edmunds, Büchervertriebsanstalt, Vaduz, FL., 1987, p. 144.

3. Idem, *The Byzantine Ascetic and Spiritual Fathers,* Ed. by R.S. Haugh, Büchervertriebsanstalt, Vaduz, FL, 1987, p. 144.

4. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses,* Translation, Introduction and Notes by A.J. Malherbe and E. Ferguson, Preface by J. Meyendorff, Paulist Press, New York, 1978, p. XII.

5. The exact year of his birth is not known. NPNF opts for 331 as well as H.F. Cherniss, *The Platonism of Gregory of Nyssa,* Cambridge University Press, London, England, 1930; also does Louis Méridier in the introduction of his French edition of Gregory's "Great Catechism," paralleled by the Greek text, Paris, 1908; Tony Lane in his work *Harper's Concise Book of Christian Faith,* Harper and Row, 1984, mentions the year 335 A.D.

6. H.F. Cherniss, *op. cit.,* p. 4.

7. Gregoire de Nysse, *Discours Catéchétique,* text grec, trad. francaise, introd. et index par Louis Méridier, Paris, 1908, p. XVI.

8. NPNF, *Prolegomena,* p. 9.

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10. Vladimir Lossky, *The Vision of God,* St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1983, p. 75.

11. *Ibidem,* p. 76.

12. J. Meyendorff, *op. cit.,* p. 59.

13. Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on the Song of Songs,* Translated with an Introduction by Casimir McCambley OCSO, Preface by Panagiotes Chrestou, Hellenic College Press, Brookline, MA, 1987, p.

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14. *Ibidem,* p. 119.

15. *Ibid.,* p. 23.

16. NPNF, p. 335.

17. see Book VII, NPNF, p. 197.

18. Grégoire de Nyssa, *Traité de la Virginité,* Introd., text critique, traduction, commentaire et index de Michel Aubineau, Ed. du Cerf, Paris, 1966, p. 375.

19. *Ibidem,* pp. 369, 561.

20. Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary...,* p. 271.

21. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses...,* p. 95.

22. *Ibidem,* pp. 14, 43.

23. NPNF, pp. 264-265.

24. Mariette Canévet, *Grégoire de Nysse et l'Herméneutique Biblique,* Etudes Augustiniennes, Paris, 1983, p. 251.

25. Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary...,* p. 208.

26. *Les Chemins vers Dieu,* textes choisis et présentés par F. Quéré-Jaulmes et A. Hamman, Préface du P. de Lubac, Ed. du Centurion, Paris, 1967, p. 126.

27. *From Glory to Glory,* texts from Gregory of Nyssa's mystical writings, Selected and with an Introduction by Jean Daniélou, Translated and Edited by Herbert Musurillo, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1979, pp. 88, 104.

28. Vl. Lossky, *op. cit.,* p. 84.

29. NPNF, p. 261.

30. Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary...,* p. 82.

31. *From Glory to Glory...,* pp. 122-129.

32. NPNF, p. 265.

33. *Ibidem,* p. 261.

34. M. Lot-Borodine, *La Déification de l'homme,* Ed. du Cerf, Paris, 1970, p. 147.

35. Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses...,* p. 95.

36. Idem, *The commentary...,* p. 202.

37. *Ibidem,* pp. 24-25.

38. *Ibid.,* p. 131.

39. Grégoire de Nysse, *Les Béatitudes,* trad. de Jean-Yves Guillaumin et Gabrielle Parent; Introd. et notes de A.G. Hamman, col. "Les Pères dans la foi," Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1979, p. 13.

40. NPNF, p. 15.

41. Origen, *On First Principles,* Transl., Introd. and Notes by G.W. Butterworth, Peter Smith Ed., Gloucester, MA., 1973, p. 213.

42. *Origen,* Translation and Introduction by R.A. Greer, Preface by H. Urs von Balthasar, Paulist Press, New York, 1979, p. 8.

43. Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary...,* p. 7.

44. see: Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses...,* pp. 6-7, in comparison with Origen's interpretaiton made in *On First Principles...,* pp. 307-309.

45. *From Glory to Glory...,* p. 27.

46. *Ibidem,* p. 293, note 33.

47. Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary...,* pp. 18-19.

48. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité...,* p. 130-139.

49. NPNF, pp. 17-19.

50. H.F. Cherniss, *op. cit.,* p. 32.

51. J. Meyendorff, *op. cit.,* p. 12.

52. *Ibidem,* p. 219.

53. V. Lossky, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

54. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité...,* p. 383, note 6.

55. Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary...,* p. 16.

56. *From Glory to Glory...,* p. 12.

57. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité...,* p. 129.

58. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century...,* pp. 189-190.

59. NPNF, p. 309, note 6.

60. *Origen...,* pp. XVI, 21.

61. *From Glory to Glory...,* p. 48.

62. Origen, *On First Principles...,* p. 216.

63.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses...,* p. 12.

64.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Commentary...,* p. 6.

65.   *Origen...,* pp. 24-25.

66.   *Ibidem,* p. 11.

67.   NPNF, p. 16.

68.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses...,* p. 93.

69.   Idem, *The Commentary...,* p. 48.

70.   *Ibidem,* p. 143.

71.   Idem, *The Life of Moses...,* p. 60.

72.   *Ibidem,* p. 61.

73.   Jean Daniélou, *Platonism et Théologie mystique,* Ed. Montaigne, Aubier, Paris, 1944, p. 133.

74.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses...,* p. 60.

75.   Idem, *The Commentary...,* p. 14.

76.   *From Glory to Glory...,* p. 28.

77.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses...,* pp. 61, 98.

78.   Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité...,* p. 188.

79.   D.L. Balás, Μετουσία Θεου, Pontificium Institutum S. Anselmi, Romae, 1966, pp. 158-159.

80.   Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité...,* p. 177.

81.   H.F. Cherniss, *op. cit.,* p. 48.

82.   R. Leys, *L'Image de Dieu chez St. Grégoire de Nysse,* Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1951, p. 44.

83.   *From Glory to Glory...,* p. 25; see also: Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité...,* p. 187.

84.   R. Leys, *op. cit.,* p. 41.

85.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Commentary...,* pp. 84, 265.

86.   *Ibidem,* p. 264.

87.   *Ibid.,* p. 92.

88.   St. Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité...,* p. 187, 407.

89.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses...,* p. 10.

90.   Idem, *The Commentary...,* p. 21.

91.   Grégoire de Nysse. *Traité de la Virginité...,* pp. 375, 377, 397.

92.   *Ibidem,* p. 165.

93.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Commentary...,* p. 20.

94.   Idem, *The Life of Moses...,* p. 3.

95.   *Ibidem,* p. 60.

96.   *Ibid.,* pp. 91-93.

97.   M. Lot-Borodine, *op. cit.,* p. 171.

98.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Commentary...,* p. 235.

99.   R. Leys, *op. cit.,* p. 39; see also: Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la virginité...,* p. 387.

100.   J. Daniélou, *op. cit.,* p. 141.

101.   F. Cherniss, *op. cit.,* p. 40.

102.   NPNF, p. 309; see also: *From Glory to Glory...,* p. 84.

103.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Commentary...,* p. 207.

104.   NPNF, p. 328.

105.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Commentary...,* p. 209.

106.   J. Meyendorff, *op. cit.,* p. 185.

107.   M. van Parys, *Exégèse et théologie dans les livres "Contre Eunome" de Grégoire de Nysse,* in "Ecriture et culture philosophique dans la pensée de Grégoire de Nysse," Actes du colloque de Chevetogne, Ed. E.Y. Brill, Leiden, 1971, p. 193.

108.   *From Glory to Glory...,* p. 25.

109.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses...,* p. 31.

110.   *From Glory to Glory...,* p. 84.

111.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses...,* p. 117.

112.   *Ibidem,,* p. 177, notes 194, 195.

113.   Vl. Lossky, *op. cit.,* p. 87.

114.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses...,* pp. 114-115.

115.   Idem, *The Commentary...,* pp. 13-14.

116.   Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité,* p. 186.

117.   *From Glory to Glory...,* p. 84.

118.   G. Christopher Stead, *Ontology and Terminology in Gregory of Nyssa,* in "Gregor von Nyssa und die Philosophie," zweites internationales Kolloquium über Gregor von Nyssa, September 1972, Münster, Herausgegeben von Heinrich Dörrie, M. Altenburger, Uta Schramm, Verlag, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1976, p. 116.

119.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Commentary...,* p. 24.

120.   J. Meyendorff, *op. cit.,* p. 12.

121.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Commentary...,* pp. 13-14, 129-130, 223-225.

122.   *Ibidem*, pp. 201-202.

123.   *Ibid.,* p. 130.

124.   Idem, *The Life of Moses...,* p. 119.

125.   D. Balas, *op. cit.,* pp. 95, 155.

126.   Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité...,* p. 393.

127.   *Ibidem,* p. 183.

128.   Idem, *The Life of Moses...,* p. 116.

129.   *Ibidem,* p. 15.

130.   Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginité...,* p. 189.

131.   *Les Chemins...,* p. 120.

132.   Vl. Lossky, *op. cit.,* p. 88.

133.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Commentary...,* p. 15.

134.   Idem, *The Life of Moses...,* p. XIII.

135.   M. van Parys, *op. cit.,* p. 193.

136.   J. Meyendorff, *op. cit.,* p. 14; see also: Grégoire de Nysse, *Traité de la Virginitę...,* p. 180.

137.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses...,* pp. 79-80.

138.   Idem, *The Commentary...,* p. 213.

139.   *Les Chemins...,* pp. 118-120.

140.   *From Glory to Glory...,* p. 56.

141.   Gregory of Nyssa, *The Commentary...,* p. 131.

Prof. Dr. Richard Grallo

RICHARD GRALLO

The Absence of Question & Insight
in Accounts of Knowledge

Introduction

It appears to me that in ethics, as in all other philosophical
studies, the difficulties and disagreements, of which its history
is full, are mainly due to a very simple cause: namely to the
attempt to answer questions, without first discovering
precisely *what* question you desire to answer. (Moore, 1968, p. vii)

In the ideal detective story the reader is given all the clues
yet fails to spot the criminal. He may advert to each clue as
it arises. He needs no further clues to solve the mystery. Yet
he can remain in the dark for the simple reason that reaching the
solution is not the mere apprehension of any clue, not the
mere memory of all, but a quite distinct activity of organizing
intelligence that places the full set of clues in a unique
explanatory perspective. (Lonergan, 1957, p. ix)

The topic of this paper is the absence of question and
insight in accounts of knowledge. The goal is to briefly outline
what happens when the events of *insight* and *question* are
systematically overlooked, particularly by philosophers,
psychologists and students in general.

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Perhaps a few clarifications are in order: (1) An *insight* may be defined as a transition in consciousness from a state of not knowing to a state of knowing an apparent solution to a problem (Mayer, 1995). It is the event, often occurring quite unexpectedly, of coming up with a bright idea or a possible solution to a problem. (2) In contrast, a *question* is the formulation of a gap in our understanding, knowledge or practice. If pursued authentically, a question may guide an extended search or "quest" as the term suggests. Insights and the questions they address are everyday events and may be enjoyed by many.

Questions emerge from an often unclear *recognition* of a gap in our understanding, knowledge or practice. If that recognition is pursued and if appropriate language is available, a question may be formulated. A question is a representation of a problem, understood as a gap and often expressed as an interrogative (Hamblin, 1972). If the question is pursued it becomes an *intention* to fill the gap, and the question becomes an expression of the *desire to know*. This desire and intention distinguish *authentic questions* from *inauthentic questions*. The emergence and pursuit of questions constitutes the dynamic process of *questioning*. Within an attitude of questioning, authentic questions become *operators*, moving the process of learning forward. The pursuit of questions may be conducted more or less privately or publicly. Private pursuit involves inquiry on one's own. (For example this was practiced by Descartes and da Vinci through their private writings.) "Public" pursuit involves *asking questions* of others. If questions are asked of others, that behavior may or may not be in accord with local cultural norms.

Insights emerge as the solution to a problem, often formulated as a possible answer to a question. As an act of understanding, insights bring together a variety of otherwise disparate elements into a single coherent solution, answer or viewpoint. As such, insights act as *integrators* and consolidators in the learning process. As fulfillment of the desire to know, insights are often associated with an emotional release (Lonergan,

1957; Schooler et al., 1995). Insight frequently gives rise to further questions (Lonergan, 1957; Seifert et al., 1995). The pursuit of insights may also be conducted more or less privately or publicly. If insights are pursued in the company of others, that behavior may or may not be in accord with local cultural norms.

The alternating process of questions and insight has been described elsewhere (Lonergan, 1957, 1967). As the intentions of the further questions change the inquirer's viewpoint expands, becomes more comprehensive with further insights and summons forth differing *levels of consciousness*, all resulting in a "spiraling ascent of mind" (Byrne, 1995; Grallo, 2006a; Wallas, 1926).

Illustrations of Question and Insight

The first illustration pertains to the event of an *insight* and was related a few years ago by the director of a Montessori school in London. One day she was conversing with a parent when a very young child came rushing over to her. It seems that in the courtyard of the school there was a ladder that was leaning against the building. At this time, the child was learning about triangles. The child rushed up to the adults, trying desperately to get the director's attention. The director went with the child into the courtyard, and the child,(a budding expert in shapes), pointed at the ladder leaning against the building and shouted "Look, a triangle!" (Wallbank, 1999).

One of the things that we know about Montessori schools is their concern with this naturally occurring comprehension, here named "insight". There is no guarantee that this event will occur in any given case. Both teachers and learners may do what they can to facilitate it, but they must wait for it to occur. Since, the

history of science is filled with the occurrence of insights that have dramatically influenced the course of scientific research (Gruber, 1995; Seifert et al., 1995; Vernon, 1970), this seemingly simple phenomenon of insight may play a pivotal role in education as well.

Here is another illustration, this one having to do with *questions*. It involves a four year old standing in a church amidst a group of adults during a church service. As the child listens to hymns and prayers about God, he tries to get adult attention, this time with the question "Who is God?" This is a story about the very early days of Thomas Aquinas, who was to become a premier thinker in the West and who was to devote much of his intellectual life to this and related questions.

A third illustration also pertains to *questions*. In the American Museum of Natural History in New York City there is a famous room filled with totem poles. Many years ago there was another child, about five years old. This child was brought on a visit to the museum into the totem pole exhibit. He exclaimed "What is that?!" upon first seeing these artifacts. That person grew to be the world famous anthropologist Joseph Campbell, who never ceased asking that question with regard to totem poles and the societies, cultures and religions that produced them.

Illustrations of the Absence of Question and Insight in Philosophy and Psychology

These phenomena of *question* and *insight,* while interesting in their own right, may have an important role to play in the process of learning and in the emergence and refinement of knowledge. To the extent that is true, it is also interesting that

many philosophers who claim to be examining knowledge and learning also do not examine the event of *insight* (the sudden occurrence of a bright idea) or the experience of having and pursuing *questions*. In addition, many psychologists, who are developing theories of human intelligence and complex problem solving, rarely if ever mention *insight*, and even less mention *questions* and *questioning*. (The early Gestalt psychologists and their later successors in cognitive psychology are exceptions in their study of *insight* (Mayer, 1995), though not of *questioning*.) Some examples from both fields may prove useful.

In philosophy, John Locke's (1690/1967) *Essay concerning human understanding* and David Hume's (1751/1951) *Enquiry concerning human understanding* were both designed to examine human understanding and the kinds of processes that result in this understanding. Yet in these classic works of modern western philosophy the event of *insight* is not considered in any detail, either descriptively or in an explanatory context. Moreover, the process of *questioning* is simply overlooked. These were very intelligent people who themselves were on a quest for understanding. They were in fact asking questions. However, perhaps it was so close to them that they did not "get it".

In the 20th century, philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1949) wrote his classic *The concept of mind*. One might expect from such a work at least a rather complete list of the cognitive operations that make up the everyday activities of mind. *Insight* and *questioning* are neither mentioned nor described.

These examples are in stark contrast to the philosophic work of Bernard Lonergan (1957). His major work, *Insight: A study of human understanding,* gives a central place to *insight:* the sudden discovery, the bright idea, the illumination. Not only is *insight* described here, but it is placed in an explanatory context relating it to other cognitive operations. Furthermore, *questioning* is prominent in this set of other cognitive operations. These two operations are seen as functionally related: *question* seeking

insight, insight as response to *question*. The authentic *question* acts as *operator* to move the process of learning forward. The *insight* acts as an *integrator*: gathering disparate elements into a coherent context, consolidating gains (in formulations) and serving as basis for further developments.

In psychology, there are a number of prominent thinkers who have spent the majority their careers studying aspects of human intelligence and related areas such as complex problem solving. For example J.P. Guilford (1968; 1986) spent many decades studying different facets of human thinking, and developing distinct tests for each, identifying different cognitive processes by which people solve problems. However, he does not explicitly describe or explain *insight,* although it may be implicit in his trait and aptitude perspective (Guilford, 1950). In addition, questioning is missing altogether from his list of cognitive processes. Something similar can be said for Howard Gardner's (1993) work on "multiple intelligences", which places more of an emphasis on domains of performance than on processes (Sternberg, 2003).

More recently, cognitive psychologists are beginning to pick up where Gestalt psychologists left off, and the topic of *insight* is receiving renewed attention (Sternberg & Davidson, 1995). However, while there are occasional studies of the cognitive process of *questioning* (Dunbar, 1995; Seifert et. al., 1995) and its initial product the *question* (Bromberger, 1992), these topics have not yet become a widespread focus for systematic study in psychology, nor have they entered the major theories of learning or intelligence (Moseley et al., 2005).

It is no secret that students often experience difficulty in learning various disciplines. For example, prominent among the areas of study causing difficulty for high school and college students are the various branches of mathematics: for example algebra, calculus or statistics. Often what is lacking in the student is the occurrence of relevant *insights* into these fields. However, a study of the history of mathematics (as opposed to mathematics itself) often reveals that the mathematicians who invented fields such as algebra, or calculus or statistics were engaged in a quest to solve problems and to answer *questions* suggested by those problems (Bell, 1986).

In teaching statistics, for example, student knowledge of statistics, even on the graduate level is often chaotic and shallow at best (Grallo, 2006b). Rarely is the study of statistics related to any kind of interesting context (Ferguson, 2005). Even less often has the study of this field been guided by the general insight that every statistic is an answer to a question, and therefore part of learning about statistics is to learn about the questions they can reasonably address (Grallo, 2006b; Hlawaty & Grallo, 2007).

What is true in these fields may be true in others as well. Hence the neglect of *questioning* and associated *questions* constitutes an oversight of important anchors and contexts for grounding central *insights* embodied in these disciplines. Their neglect runs counter to reports from scientists and inventors of what they actually do in attempting to learn and to solve complex problems (Dunbar, 1995; Gruber, 1995; Vernon, 1970).

By neglecting the role of question and insight, teachers often leave the impression that their discipline is a collection of facts and propositions having no clear connection with the world or anything interesting in it. By neglecting question and insight,

teachers provide few opportunities for students to actually generate their own questions (Postman, 1988) and follow them through to engaging insights. By neglecting question and insight, teachers model that these phenomena are unimportant, rather than being the very *operators* and *integrators* that are central to complex human problem solving and learning.

By overlooking the role of question and insight, students often pay little attention to their occurrence in their study strategies. Combined with the view that the fields they are studying are collections of facts and propositions having no clear connection with the world or anything interesting in it, they often rely on rote memorization of those facts and less often are engaged in the challenge and joy of complex problem solving. By neglecting question and insight, students fail to advert to what is happening in their own intellectual life. Finally, by neglecting question and insight, students fail to experience these phenomena as the very *operators* and *integrators* that are central to their own development as complex problem solvers and learners.

On these general topics of *questioning*, *question* and *insight* much remains to be done. For example, there is need for locating these cognitive processes in an explanatory context with other cognitive processes within an evidence-based *unified theory of problem solving (*UTPS). That theory will (1) include cognitive processes in their functional relations with one another, (2) map out distinct levels of consciousness, according to the general intention of the questions pursued, and (3) provide a taxonomy of interferences with learning and complex problem solving. Recent theory and empirical studies have provided an important start in this work (Lonergan, 1957, 1967; Sternberg & Davison, 1995). What also remains to be done is the drawing out of specific implications and applications of this *unified theory of problem solving* (UTPS) for other fields, such as psychology, counseling and management.

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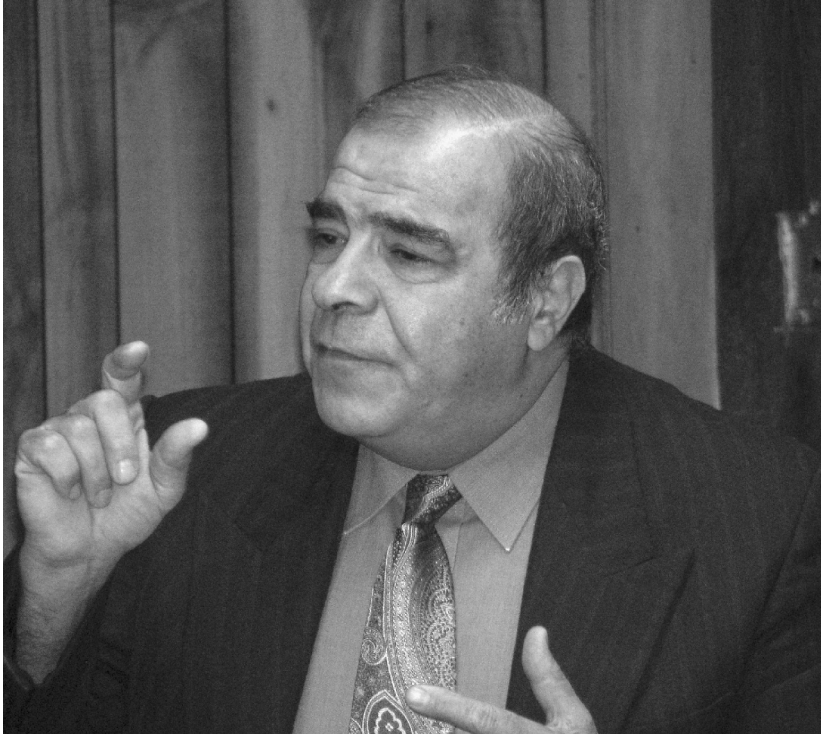
Daniel Damian (left), Richard Grallo, Theodor Damian

Aurel Sasu (left), Daniel Damian, Grigore Sandul

Victoria Plăviţu (left), Gloria Possart, Victoria Malczanek, Theodor Damian

Prof. Dr. Doru Tsaganea

The Concept of Infinity in Mathematics, Philosophy and Religion

1. The Concept of Infinity

In *Encyclopedia Britannica* "infinity" is defined as "the concept of something that is unlimited, endless, without bound," and "three main types of infinity may be distinguished: the mathematical, the physical, and the metaphysical. Mathematical infinities occur, for instance, as the number of points on a continuous line or as the size of the endless sequence of counting numbers: 1, 2, 3,…. Spatial and temporal concepts of infinity occur in physics when one asks if there are infinitely many stars or if the universe will last forever. In a metaphysical discussion of God or the Absolute, there are questions of whether an ultimate entity must be infinite and whether lesser things could be infinite as well."[1]

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "infinity" means "the state or quality of being infinite" or "a very great number or amount." In mathematics, a infinite number is "a number greater than any assignable quantity or countable number." Infinity refers also to "a point in space or time that is or seems infinitely distant." The adjective "infinite" means "limitless in space, extent, or size" and/or "very great in amount or degree."[2]

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In the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* "infinity" is similarly defined as "the quality of being infinite," as "unlimited extent of time, space, or quantity" or as "boundlessness." In most fields of mathematics infinity means "an indefinitely great number or amount," or "the limit of the value of a function or variable when it tends to become numerically larger than any pre-assigned finite number." In geometry infinity is "a part of a geometric magnitude that lies beyond any part whose distance from a given reference position is finite," and in astronomy infinity can be regarded as "a distance so great that the rays of light from a point source at that distance may be regarded as parallel."[3]

2. Infinity in Mathematics

Defining infinity in a rigorous and operational manner has been one of the most challenging and important problems of mathematics, and it has required a long evolution of mathematical thinking. Some of the most important theorems of the classical geometry (the theorem of Pythagoras, the theorem of Thales) including concepts and reasoning techniques that do not imply the infinity concept were proved during the 6th century B.C. The algebra, which to a large extent does not demand the use of the concept of infinity, was created and developed about fifteen hundreds years later. But the foundations of differential and integral calculus - for which a rigorous definition of infinity is a imperious necessity - were put by Newton and Leibnitz only during the 17th century. This means that there were necessary nearly two thousands years of evolution in mathematical sciences in order to begin the development of differential and integral calculus. And the cause of this very long delay was the considerable difficulty of finding an operational definition of infinity.

Although today the mathematical concepts of infinity or probability are studied in the high school, their rigorously logical – and especially operational – definitions required an extraordinary intellectual effort.

In algebra, analytical geometry and differential and integral calculus, infinity is associated with concepts like: very big natural number, very small negative number (very big in absolute value), very small interval, number very close to another number, etc.

A number is infinite or tends to infinity if it can be made bigger than any other given number. A positive number is infinitely big or tends to plus infinity if it can be made bigger than any given very big positive number. A negative number is infinitely small or tends to negative infinity if it can be made smaller than any given very small negative number. A number is infinite close to another number, or tends to be infinitely close to another number if the difference between the two numbers can be made smaller than any given very small number. Similarly, a straight line is infinite, goes or tends to infinity, if from any point of the line it can be continued with another unlimited segment.

In the set theory, a set is infinite if it is possible to define a binary association between its elements and the set of natural numbers. A set is also considered infinite if it is equal with any of its parts, an assertion which is non-intuitive and contradictory in the domain of the finite, but it is not in that of the infinity.

Related to these particular cases of infinity is the logically difficult problem of transition from one rigorously defined concept to another. The sum of a finite number of values - regardless of how big this number is, or how big the values are – is a simple and completely intuitive concept. But if the number of values is infinite, and some continuity conditions are fulfilled, the addition of these values means calculating an integral. And the concept of integral is considerably less intuitive than that of sum, because it necessarily implies the idea of infinity.

As one learns from the first lectures in elementary geometry a regular polygon can be inscribed in a circle. The first and the simplest one is the equilateral triangle, the second is the square, the third is the regular pentagon, the fourth is the regular hexagon, and so far. All these regular polygons have a fixed, finite number of sides, and equal, clearly defined angles between their sides (sixty degrees angles in the case of the equilateral triangle, 90 degrees angles in the case of the square, etc.).

But when the number of sides of a regular polygon tends to infinity the polygon tends to become a circle. A "square circle" is of course a classic example of absurdity, or … the manner of drawing wheels in cartoons for children. But a "circular polygon" with n sides, n tending to infinity, is only partly contradictory. It is in fact the way in which a circle is drawn on any computer monitor.

Even more puzzling but also true, the circumference of a circle with an infinite long ray may be regarded as a straight line. And vice-versa, a straight line might be regarded as the circumference of a circle with an infinite ray.

Similarly, a coin staying on a table in vertical position is tangent to the table in a point. But a big wheel of an old steam engine is tangent to the track also in one point. But the point is defined in geometry as being so small that it has no dimensions, and this assumption necessarily leads to the common sense question: "is the tangency point of a coin equal to that of a six feet wheel of a steam engine?" The theoretical answer might be yes or no depending of the type of logic that we are using, but the intuitive answer is definitely no. The cause is again the idea of infinity, which is also implied in the definition of the tangency point.

These simple but paradoxical cases were known for a very long period of time, but they did not prevent the development of mathematics, or the virtually general use of the bivalent logic in mathematical proving. Interestingly, although the creation of the

differential and integral calculus solved from an operational point of view the problem of considering the infinite small variations in calculations, it did not solve several other fundamental problems. It only went around them. Especially, it did not explain the logical contradictions associated with the essence of the infinity concept. For this reason at the end of the 19th century and during the first half of the 20th century several subtle mathematicians and logicians focused directly on the infinity problem with the occasion of the development of the polyvalent logics and the modern set theory. Among them were Cantor, Frege, Dedekind and Russell.[4]

These simple examples presented before, as well as the brief remarks regarding the significance of the concept of infinity in mathematics suggest that for a better understanding of infinity is also necessary to explore the field of philosophy.

3. Infinity in Philosophy

Nearly all great philosophers have been highly interested in the study of infinity in order to understand the structure of the universe and the complexity of logical reasoning. This interest has been generated in the past, and will undoubtedly continue to be caused in the future by a remarkable fact. When we push our reasoning toward infinity something strange and unusual, but also obvious and real happens: our classical bivalent logic does only partially operate.

In the limited and finite world a regular polygon with, for example, twelve sides (the dodecagon) and a circle are not only different from geometrical and physical points of view, but they are also perceived as being different. But in the infinite and

unbounded world a regular polygon with an infinite number of sides and a circle are similar and undistinguishable.

This means that between the mathematical conceptions of infinity and the metaphysical and logical ones should be, and in fact there are multiple and complex correspondences.

In *Physics* Aristotle wrote that "it is always possible to think of a larger number: for the number of times a magnitude can be bisected is infinite. Hence the infinite is potential, never actual; the number of parts that can be taken always surpasses any assigned number."[5]

But many of his followers were not so radical in rejecting the idea of actual infinity. As a result most modern philosophers distinguish between two types of infinity: potential and actual. The theoretical possibility of extending a straight line by continuously adding a new segment where the previous ends would be an example of potential infinity in space. In parallel, the possibility to think of the cause of the cause in the past without accepting a first cause, or of the effect of the effect in the future without any final limitation would be an example of potential infinity in time. An intuitive illustration of actual infinity would be the total number of points included into the area of a circle.

Trying to explain sophists' logical traps and errors as well as the paradoxes of the Eleatic school, Aristotle wrote the *Organon*. This was the book in which he developed and presented the bivalent formal logic, and it had an overwhelming impact on the development of human civilization. It remains as fresh and impressive today as it was 2300 years ago, and it continues to be the starting point of any serious reexamination of the foundations of logic.

But although it is rightly considered as probably the greatest philosophical achievement of human mind, Aristotle's treaty focuses on how the human mind works in normal finite conditions. It does not describe what happens at the limit, how we

should reason in the case of the concepts that necessarily imply infinity, or the transition between concepts. The partial explanation of these extremely difficult problems would be the great achievement of Kant and Hegel. But, only more than two thousands years later.

The great interest in mathematics, logic and natural sciences that marked the 19th and 20th centuries renewed the interest of a number of distinguished philosophers in the study of the concept of infinity. This renewed interest was stimulated not only by the development of metaphysics and logic, including mathematical logic, but also by the revolutionary advancements in the field of theoretical physics, astrophysics, cosmogony, and space exploration.[6]

The development of thermodynamics, of the theory of relativity, of quantum physics, as well as of nuclear and sub-nuclear physics challenged the philosophers in two ways. From an existential, metaphysical point of view it has been necessary to analyze the relationship between the concept of infinity, and the concepts of curved-space, quadric-dimensional space, relativist time, relativist space and finite energy (the quant of energy). From a logical point of view, new mathematical concepts and techniques of reasoning, most of them implying the concept of infinity, were necessary in order to describe the new physical concepts and theories.

As a result various polyvalent logics were developed, statistical reasoning and statistical methods were for the first time applied in the field of theoretical mechanics, and by 1970 the fuzzy logic[7] was created.[8] Similarly to the theory of relativity in which the space is no more the absolute space of the Newtonian physics, in the new polyvalent logics the true and false are no longer the absolute values of the classical bivalent logic. Between true and false there are various degrees of truthfulness, or complementarily, falseness. Like in the theory of relativity where light is simultaneously corpuscle and way[9] in the polyvalent

and/or fuzzy logics the polygon with an infinite number of sides is a circle, and a circle is a polygon with an infinite number of sides.

In other words, *ad infinitum,* the classical bivalent logic, the logic of the finite, does not operate any longer, and therefore an affirmation and its corresponding negation may be simultaneously true. And this leads us to the third area of human inquiry - religion, realm of infinity, eternity and of the miraculous.

4. Infinity in Religion

If the concept of infinity is important in mathematics and philosophy, it is even more important in religion. It is absolutely basic in both its connotations – metaphysical- existential, and logical.

If God is infinite, all-powerful, eternal, all-knowledgeable, prescient, all-present, absolutely right and absolutely good, God cannot be understood or interpreted by using finite physical concepts or by employing bivalent logic. Because that logic is the logic of the finite. Therefore, it is necessary to appeal to logics of infinity - the polyvalent logics - because in infinity the contradictions of the finite vanish and the opposites unite. Using such logics, rigorously formulated although non-intuitive,[10] the contradiction between God's absolute and unbounded righteousness, grace and power and God's tolerance of wars, killings and crimes vanishes, as does the apparent contradiction between God's total transcendence and His total immanence.

It is normal and logically non-contradictory to accept that God is absolute love and has sacrificed His Son on the cross, and

that Jesus has been God and man at the same time. At the level of God's infinity the divine and the human are no more opposite. They are identical in one. And the Holly Trinity is also non-contradictory. It is fully comprehensible and rational, although it is mystical.

5. Conclusion

Concluding these brief observations, I would like to remark that the human being's struggle for comprehending infinity - existentially and logically – is itself infinite. It is infinite in time, it is infinite in purpose, and it is infinite in the space and methods of knowledge.

NOTES

1. ":infinity." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 2008 Encyclopedia Britannica Online. 10 2008 http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9384399

2. "infinity," 'infinite." *Oxford English Dictionary* http://www.askoxford.com

3. "infinity" *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* http://www.merrriam-webster.com/dictionary/infinite

4. Rudy Rucker. (1995). *Infinity and the Mind: The Science and Philosophy of the Infinite.* Princeton University Press

5. Aristotle. Physics 207b8

6. David Foster Wallace (2004). *Everything and More: A Compact History of Infinity.* Norton, W.W. & Company, Inc.

7.   Fuzzy logic is a non-Crissipian logic that uses notions defined by their degree of belonging to a concept or another. For example dark grey is a color that belongs – let say – 70% to black and 30% to white, while light grey is a color that belongs 30% to black and 70% to white.

8. Constantin V. Negoita, D.A. Ralescu (2000). *Fuzzy Sets,* New Falcon Publications, Tempe, AZ.

9.   In the classical physics, the way and the corpuscle are completely different concept. Affirming that something may be at the same time way and corpuscle is absolutely contradictory

10.   The polyvalent logics are little or non-intuitive because we, the human beings, are finite and we overwhelmingly use bivalent logic.
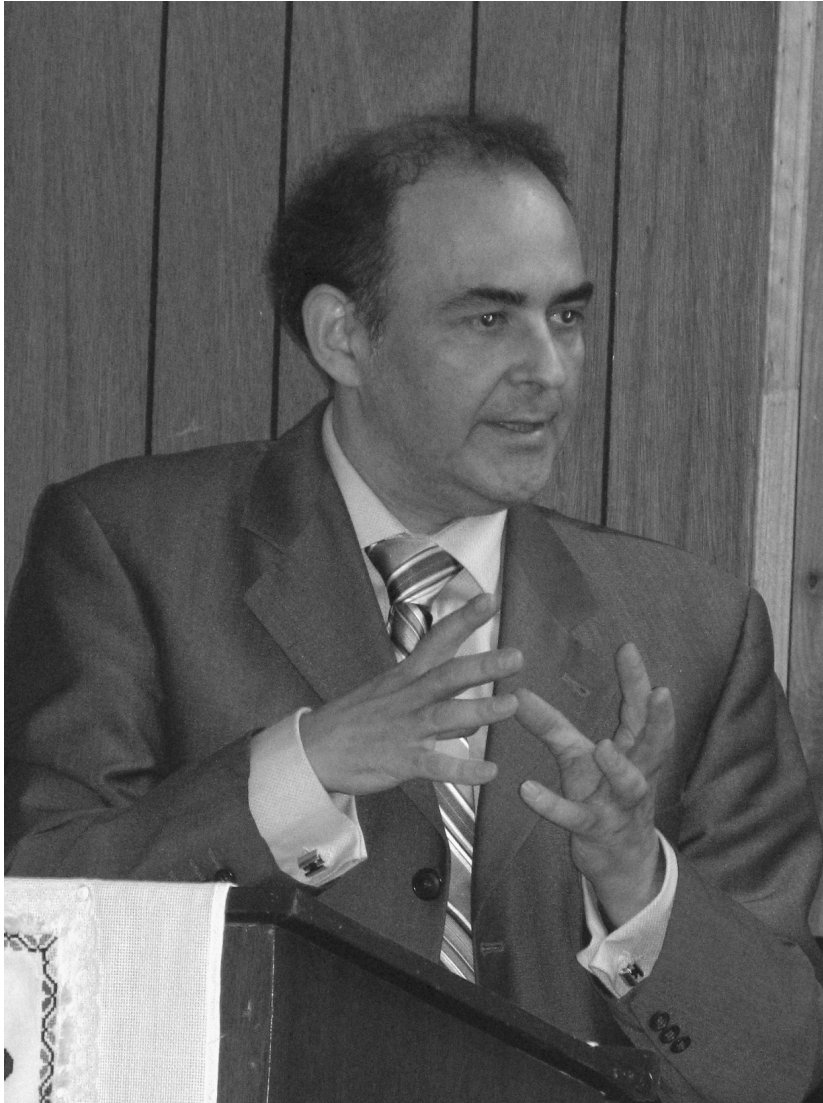
Eva Damian (left)
and Gloria Possart

Mircea Ghiţă (left) and
Viorica Colpacci

Theodor Damian
(left) and Alex
Mărăndici

Lucian Pîrjol

Stickiness. What Makes Knowledge Transfer Difficult

The value of the knowledge – even of the ultimate, absolute knowledge – is not a guarantee for a successful knowledge process. The paper points out the dependency of quality of the perceived knowledge from the way of being transferred.

Instead of an introduction

Caroline said to me again and again almost in an obsessive way: *"They don't do, what we say, they have to do. They cheat us…"* The context of this small excerpt of a dialog is a project. "*They*" represent the Russian partner within the project. Caroline, a French expert for health policies and I, we have been working together since 2005 in a project of the European Union dealing with responding effectively and efficiently HIV/AIDS in the Russian Federation . The reaction of my colleague represents the perception of a frustrating reality related to knowledge transfer in a development assistance project..

Why is it so difficult to transfer knowledge? The knowledge we want to transfer is of high value. The knowledge we want to transfer within this project is based on the proven

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Western experience of the last 20 years of effective and efficient fight against HIV/AIDS. It is about formulating an appropriate social and health policy, it is about forming an appropriate socio-medical institutional system, it is about forming proper attitude both of professionals and the public, it is about advocacy of the vulnerable and affected groups,… it is about fighting in Russia the most devastating epidemic since the bubonic plaque in the 14th century halved Europe's population within only 5 years. However, the knowledge transfer within this project is not an easy job.

Knowledge Transfer

But first of all let me explain how I understand knowledge. I mean knowledge in its four-dimensioned profile: first 1. Know-what: that means the informational contents; 2: Know-how: that means the skill you need to apply this informational contents in the practice; 3. Know-why: that means the systemic understanding of the context and 4. Care-why: that means to provide a continue renewal, actualisation of the informational contents, of the necessary skills and of the context understanding[1].

Now back to the question: Why is so difficult to transfer knowledge?

I affirmed from the very beginning that the quality, the value of knowledge is not an intrinsic guarantee for the success of a knowledge transfer. It's is my empirical observation not only in Russia. The lesson learned is different because the reality I perceive is different. Otherwise all institutions dealing with value

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1. Quinn, James B., Anderson, Ph. and Finkestein, S. (1996): *Das Potenzial in den Köpfen gewinnbringender nutzen…,* p.108

or valuable knowledge, such as schools, universities, churches, etc. would have no problem to transmit it. Well, where do the difficulties of knowledge transfer hide?

One first step toward incorporating difficulty in the knowledge transfer is to conceive of transfer not as act but a process. Knowledge transfer is seen as an (exchange) process in which an individual or an organization take over, recreates, reconstruct, maintain and deconstruct or reform a complex set of information, technologies and routines in a new setting. Current understanding of the transfer process suggests that there are four distinct stages of transfer. Each of the four stages – initiation, implementation, ramp-up and integration – can be difficult in its way. It is stickiness that connotes difficulties experienced in that process of knowledge transfer, said Szulanski[2] (1994).

Stickiness

A useful starting point to clarify stickiness and its predictors is to use metaphors. We use a metaphor to understand complex realities. A metaphor is not only a comparative figure of speech often used to add a creative flourish to the way we talk. It is first of all a primal force through which human create meaning by using one element of experience to understand another. In this case these metaphors are imported from the communication science and specify the basic elements of a knowledge transfer: source, message, and recipient but also channel (medium) and the context.

Well, related to the four distinct stages of transfer there is

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2. Gabriel Szulanski teaches management of knowledge and strategy at INSEAD (since 2002) after having served on the faculty of the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania (1995/02).

an initiation stickiness as difficulty in recognizing opportunities to transfer or in perceiving the profile of the source: "When source is not perceived as reliable, trustworthy or knowledgeable, initiating transfer from that source will be more difficult and its advice and example are likely to be challenged and resisted"[3].

The implementation stickiness is a matter of bridging the communication gap between source and the recipient. "Bridging the communications gap may require solving problems caused by incompatibility of language, coding scheme and cultural convention."[4] (e.g. It's not only about inherent problems in translation between Russian and English but also the adjustment between the current notions used in the social policies/social work in Russia and Western Europe).

The rump-up stickiness is connected to the recipient's effort to adjust the transferred knowledge to his own "reality". Putting new knowledge and practices into practice may cause problems. The easier to understand cause-effect relationship for the new practice and to forecast and to explain results, the easier to solve the unexpected problems. The absorptive capacity[5] of the recipient is in this case decisive.

The integration stickiness is specific for the last phase of removing obstacles and managing challenges in order to assimilate the new knowledge and to routinize a new practice.[6]

A. The first lesson learned is that the effectiveness of the transfer depends more on the strength of the tie between recipient and the source then the value of the knowledge itself. That reflects in the ease of communication and the "intimacy" of the general

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3. Szulansky, G. (2000): *The Process of Knowledge Transfer…*, p. 14
4. *ibid.*
5. Absorptive capacity was defined by Cohen and Levithal as the ability of the recipient to recognize the value of external, new information to assimilate and to apply it (Cohen, Wesley M. and Levinthal, Daniel A. (1990): *Absorptive Capacity…* p.129)
6. Szulansky, G. (2000): *The Process of Knowledge Transfer…* pp. 14-15

relationship between recipient and the source. A competent, persuasive and trustworthy source is more likely to influence the behaviour of the recipient towards accepting new knowledge.

B. The second lesson learned is that the already existing stock of knowledge and skills at the level of recipient (absorptive capacity) plays a considerable role in the transfer process.

C. The third lesson learned is that the knowledge transfer should be regarded as a cyclic process of reconstruction and deconstruction rather then a mere linear act of transmission and reception.

D. The fourth lesson learned is that the knowledge transfer induces a change and every change gives rise to resistance: an emotional, a rational and a political resistance. But what seems to be particularly relevant for our symposium is the denial. Resistance often leads to denial. The organizations learn to receive or to transfer knowledge by making those transfers less eventful, yes, even denying the eventfulness of knowledge transfer itself. The denial becomes a device of preceding a knowledge transfer by stating that it won't be preceded.[7]

Is the message getting through?

The *church* as institution / organisation - even if theologically seen as divine-human institution - is stuck in a *paradoxical situation:* 1. on the one hand it has to promote knowledge - finally, the absolute, the ultimate knowledge, the knowledge of God and, 2. on the other hand it disposes - apart from the transcribed revelation and the holy mysteries - only of human tools to transfer the knowledge . The consequence is that

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7. Analogous to the meaning of apophasis as rhetoric tool

the activity of the church concerning the knowledge transfer may have success or not, facing the same stickiness as every other organization. The reality illustrates that.

I remember that in 1994 the Protestant Church in Germany hired the consulting company Kienbaum to assess the quality of its communication and knowledge transfer activities. The result was disastrous – the (divine) message doesn't reach the receptor (in German: "*Die Botschaften kommen nicht an*"). The result based on representative polls didn't reflect what the church intended to reach in its knowledge transfer, but what the receptors, the believers, experienced. The immediate consequence was that it induced a set of systematic measures to rethink and reformulate, not the message, but the way to communicate the message, and the transfer of its transcendent knowledge and measures to deal with the specific stickiness in the process. Concretely: measures to better recognize the opportunities it has to preach its divine message, measures to improve its trust in the society, measures to address better the believers and not believers, to work more effective with children, seniors or young people bridging the communication and cultural gaps or the incompatibility of language, measures to modernize the catechesis, to organize the divine service, to create its image in the German society, to define its role in the society concerning values and social engagement, measures to define its role in transferring or mediating the absolute knowledge.

There are some points to criticize in what the Protestant Church in Germany did. But one thing is to honour: the realistic taking in consideration of our human limitation and specificity in perceiving and knowing God without accusing and to creating false guilty feelings among its believers.

Recognizing this limitation of the human nature, engraved in the human nature, is nothing new in fact. Peter, the Apostle, speaking to the Corinthian (1 Cor. 13, 12) uses a metaphor: he says, we can get mostly an idea of what Got could be, as a "cloudy image in a mirror". "A cloudy image in a mirror" is a nice allusion to the shadows on the wall in the cave of Plato. You remember: Truth and reality for the prisoners in that cave rest in this world of shadow because they have no knowledge of any other. However, if one of the inhabitants were allowed to leave the cave, he would realize that the shadow are just reflections of a more complex reality, open to be learned, explored, to be experienced - if he were free!.

Recognizing this limitation of the human nature, engraved in the human nature, led also to the apophatic theology.

Analogies to the learning process, knowledge of the absolute reality, knowledge of God is not a linear, always ascendant process, it is a circular process. knowledge of God is not a single loop process but a double loop process, implicating reflection and experience. Reflection means also to construct and to deconstruct, to accept and to deny, to quest for knowledge and to loose again your way verging towards apophasis. All this loops are part of the knowledge process of God.

One of the books I read when I was a young man, just coming out from my adolescence, was *The Myth and Reality* by M. Eliade (1978). Eliade suggests in his definition of the myth that a myth, a mythos, a religious account – whatever it is, whenever and wherever it appeared, - is not fiction but reality and contains in a direct or allusive form, in a more or less encrypted form, a fundamental human experience. Since then I used to see in what e.g. the Old and the New Testament relates not only historical events but also patterns of fundamental, basic human experience.

The encounter of the two disciples with the stranger on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24, 30) and not recognizing Jesus Christ is also a part of knowledge process. Also denying - as Peter, the Apostle, did three times before the rooster crowed (Math. 26, 69-74) - or distrusting - like Thomas did (John 20, 24-29) - are natural parts of the knowledge process.

To construct and deconstruct, to climb and to fall, to accept and to deny, to quest for knowledge and to loose again your way verging towards apophasis - all these loops are part of the knowledge process, implicit knowledge of God.

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Lucian Pîrjol

Theodor Damian
(left), Gregory José,
and Richard Grallo

Gloria Possart

Challenges of the Knowledge Society

The millenarian fascination of the birth and the departure of life is still present in spite of the Enlightenment and overabundance of scientific acknowledges. It is not only religion or the contemporary cultural trend development that reserve a specific honorable place for the points of entrance into life and the point of exit out of this life. The social sciences themselves (re)discovered in these two life poles a topic worth of precise attention.

The paper identifies these two momenta that the human being trespasses as a challenge per se of our knowledge society.

First of all I would like to make a difference between the terms *Information Society* and *Knowledge Society*. "The information society is a society for everybody. Its democratic nature must be noted and supported. It is vital to provide universal access to information for everybody. Transparency and openness in government activities will definitely help to improve the efficiency of public administration. Electronic democracy, improvement in education and training, betterment of employment, support of market economy, various legal and social benefits and finally research and development improvement may be named as a few of the advantages of information society." (Aktas, 2005). "The knowledge [...] society stems from the combination of four interdependent elements: the production of new knowledge, mainly through scientific research; its transmission through education and training; its dissemination through the information and telecommunications technologies such as computers, computer networks and internet; [and] its use

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in technological innovation for new industrial processes and services" (Aktas, 2005).

The same ideas we find already in the Charter of Human Rights for Sustainable Knowledge Societies that was drafted in 2003 by the "Initiative Sustainable Knowledge Societies" at the initiation of the Heinrich-Boell-Foundation in Germany. This charter summarizes the necessary values of a sustainable knowledge society in 10 topics[1]. The topics of interest for our discussion are free access to knowledge and knowledge as a public good owned by all. These are very important for developing education systems like the European Union decided in the Bologna Declaration in 2000. The change of the education systems has to enable the human being to knowledge work that Peter F. Drucker (1994) describes as the social transformation of the last century.

There are two professional fields where I mostly recognize the challenges of the knowledge society: prenatal diagnostics at the beginning of the life and terminal care of dying people (in hospices) at the end of the life. In both fields human beings have to take decisions concerning two main problems of population in knowledge societies: decreasing birthrates and increasing lifespan. Even influencing each other destructively, these two determinants produce together the historical novelty of an aging society as we see in Japan, the European countries and in the United States.

To which extend do prenatal diagnostics and terminal care have something to do with the knowledge society?

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1. Free access to knowledge; knowledge as a public good owned by all (the Commons); openness of technical standards and open organization forms; securing privacy in the use of knowledge and information; cultural and linguistic diversity; securing media diversity and public opinion; long-term conservation of knowledge; bridging the digital divide; freedom of information as a civil right to political activity and transparent administration; securing freedom of information in work environment (Heinrich-Boell-Foundation, 2006).

The increasing lifespan itself is both benefit and burden for the individual and the society. On the one hand the number of elderly people is growing fast worldwide – only the speed differs between the countries. The percentage of population over sixty-years old will increase in the period 2005 to 2040 in the USA from 17% to 28%, in Germany from 24% to 38%, in Japan from 26% to 38% (Pfaller / Witte, 2002).

On the other hand the decreasing birthrates minimize the necessary future resources to manage the benefit of increasing lifespan.

Birthrates sink because of increasing social pressure to participate into the knowledge society, respectively because of increasing social pressure to get educated. Birthrates sink because of increasingly longer times of education, higher participation of women in the labor market, stronger individualization as a main issue of the 20th century and insufficient chances of compatibility between family planning and job career. For different combinations of the mentioned reasons the birthrates stagnated or decreased variably in the Western countries in 2005 as following: United States 2.05 children per woman, Germany 1.36 and Japan 1.23 (tagesschau.de, 2006). All aging societies share the same problem: the families do not have children early enough and that is why they have not enough physical time to get the necessary number of children needed for the human kind reproduction. Not only the increasing number of the childless female academics – that is 25% – is guilty of not reaching the necessary average of 2.1 children per woman, but also the unborn second, third and the fourth children (Meister-Scheufelen, 2005). Prenatal diagnostic will not influence this number positively. On the contrary: societies develop different laws which set up the cases in which humans are protected by the right not to know, in prenatal diagnostic or terminal care. Families, friends and professionals have to decide what to do with this knowledge or to accept that the right not to know is sometimes the only constructive way for future parents, vulnerable relatives or clients.

At the same time the burdens of caring for ill or old grandparents or parents increase. Both the young and the old generation need resources from the middle working generation. What to do to improve the number of the people in the middle generation? To clone children or to use eugenics in order to reduce the number of the old people? No one is able to cope with this dilemma. Who would be able to think or say to his parents "your too long life is consuming the future of my children"? Who is able to behave like the old Indians climbing the mountain of their ancestors and disappear when the tribe decided that their time had come? Or who is able to plan and to have 2.1 children (actually 3 children) without risking her career?

The German author Wolfgang Bonß described in 2002 the three different kinds of knowledge according to a specific dependency on sciences: insecure knowledge, non-scientific knowledge and non-knowledge. Any way this knowledge-trinity that coexists and proliferates in our time has become dramatically important in relation to these two challenges of the knowledge society, prenatal diagnostic and terminal care: one close to the point of entrance into life, the other close to the point of exit out of this life. Nowhere the knowledge is more insecure as at these two extreme points, nowhere is the non-scientific knowledge so present as here, nowhere non-knowledge is so easily mistaken for knowledge. In these two points the more we learn the more we realize that we know only partial facts. In these points we learn how much we do not know, and we learn more than anywhere else that we also don't know what we don't know.

What to do? To improve the knowledge quality? To reduce the non-knowledge? To give to the insure knowledge a fundation, the chance to become scientific? Yes, of course. But that's not enough.

The description of Wolfgang Bonß contains insecure knowledge, non-scientific knowledge and non-knowledge, according to a specific dependency on sciences. He indirectly

promotes the idea of making knowledge extremely scientific. It reminds me of the Adornos *Verwissenschaftlichung,* that is "making knowledge overly scientific". Adorno complains about the danger of this process, especially about the splitting between science and philosophy. I would say the splitting between science, on the one hand and philosophy and religion, on the other hand. Taking that in consideration, I think that, what lacks in the description of Bonß besides insecure knowledge, non-scientific knowledge and non-knowledge is the absolute knowledge, the knowledge of God. Retaking it in consideration, accepting or rediscovering the absolute, the ultimate knowledge could bring a positive change in the challenge of our knowledge society.

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Prof. Daniel Damian

Evagrius Ponticus: Gnosis as Contemplation

Natural contemplation is one of the stages of knowledge and spiritual ascension, becoming accessible after the soul's elevation from passions and attainment of a state of moral purification.

Natural contemplation means reaching with mind into the meanings -"logoi"- of creation and is a dynamic process that culminates in a comprehensive vision of God, in a direct manner; it presupposes man's transfiguration in order to capture the "reasons" of the things, the spiritual aspect of creation and advancement to the Ultimate Logos (Christ). Natural contemplation constitutes a reaching into and a deepening of the divine mystery as reflected in nature and "getting in contact" with the absolute Logos, the unifying principle and archetype of all "reasons"(*logoi*) of earthly things.

In Greek, the word "contemplation" was translated by "theoria", meaning "to receive", "to reflect", "to meditate", coming from the words "theon oran". The origin of natural contemplation is found in the Holy Scripture as well as Platonist philosophy.

In the Scripture, the world in its entirety has a theophanic character. "The heavens tell the glory of God and the sky bears witness to the creation of His hands"(Psalm18,1).

Platonism understands contemplation as a vision of "that which is better in all things that exist, meaning the divine beauty, which is purely intelligible" (Spidlik, 1997, p.158). Contemplation is not just a sensorial vision of the things, but becomes intellectual

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knowledge through "the shutting down of the senses". The philosopher Celsus stated: "Shut down your senses; ……awake the eye of the mind, because that is the only way to see God" (Spidlik, 1997, p.206).

In Christianity, the Alexandrian school is the first which systematized the scriptural and philosophical grounds of the Christian contemplation. The objective of the contemplation is the ultimate truth of all beings, their "reason" (*logos*), meaning the God's imprint on them. The "logos" of a thing is the constitutional and explanatory principle of it, through which it is connected to its primary Cause and whose intention is being revealed.

Origen stated that the divine Logos became "incarnated" for the first time in nature. Therefore, Christ is the unifying factor and the receptacle of all *logoi* of the creation. "Many 'reasons'(*logoi*) play a role in the governance of earthly and heavenly things, and all of them, as parts of the whole world, converge toward a unique fulfillment which is their recapitulation in Christ"(Spidlik, 1997, p.163).

Human beings can contemplate the "reasons" (*logoi*) of the earthly things because they are also "logikos" and possess the "seed of the divine Logos", meaning the image of God. But human beings must make their potential as the image of God more transparent, by operating a purification of senses through ascetic approach, detaching themselves from the sensible world and opening up their "eyes of the mind". Origen believed in the existence of five spiritual senses belonging to human beings, actualized through the action of "praxis" (ascetic work). "The one who examines deeper the reality will say there is, according to the Scripture, a certain spiritual general sense, which only the saints are able to acquire, and whose characteristics are: a vision capable of contemplating things superior to the physical body, such as the cherubs and the seraphim" (Crainic,1993, p.15).

Contemplation of the "reasons" of beings leads to the understanding of the "divine intention" embedded in them and

their intimate relationship with the Creator. The world represents an immense epiphany, where one can read the attributes of the Creator: His wisdom and His providence. The intelligible (non-sensorial) contemplation of the things created opens up the eschatological mystery: "Through the knowledge of intelligible beings, exceeding the sensory level, we contemplate a part of the divine and heavenly realities, looking at them only with the mind, because they go beyond the sensory vision" (Spidlik, 1997, p.191). This spiritual knowledge is not exclusively logical and rational, but is rather a direct intuition of the essence of a specific thing, as a revealed reality, based on the foundation of faith.

The Cappadocian Fathers are the ones who continued the legacy of the Alexandrian school and gave it a new impetus. For St. Basil the Great, "the world is the school in which the rational souls are able to learn, the place in which they learn to know God" (Spidlik, 1997, p.165). The whole macrocosm is a "voice" that announces its Creator. "Even the inert things have deep inside them the voice of the Lord, suggesting that almost the whole creation calls out, acknowledging its Creator"(Spidlik, 1997. p.165).

The Will of God, "reified" in particular *logoi*, is the one that gives meaning to the creation. The perceiving of "reasons" of things through contemplation means the comprehension of the "divine will" and "divine providence that reaches out to the tiniest beings", and therefore it means the understanding of the revealing divine Wisdom, Providence and Judgment (Spidlik, 1997, p.166). The *logoi* of the things are therefore "the words of God, which run through creation; they began since the inception of the world, work for the time being and will go further until the end of the world" (Spidlik, 1997, p.166); in their entirety, they constitute the "wisdom of the world", their Archetype, toward which they continuously strive for, is the Absolute Logos (Christ).

Contemplation appears in the context of experiencing the presence of Holy Spirit in the human heart purified from passions

and implies both a gift (charisma) and a transformational action of Holy Spirit in human beings.

All Holy Fathers highlighted the relation between "praxis" (ascetic approach) and "theoria" (contemplation), the former being an indispensable condition of the latter. Origen said: "Neither *praxis* without *theoria*, nor *theoria* without *praxis*" (Spidlik, 1997, p.179). But "praxis" means the achievement of virtues, the most important one being the love towards God and other people.

Contemplation is not a "technique", employed as a result of the purification from passions, but originates in the context of love, which generates the "ek-stasis", meaning the transcending of the self in order to get closer to God. St. Gregory of Nazianzus stated: "The love is the one that enables the knowledge" (Spidlik, 1997, p.181) and St. Gregory of Nissa talks about the knowledge turned into love as a foundation of contemplation. Therefore, the knowledge of God, through nature first, and then directly, is not viewed as a mere rational approach reserved to a minority of the "enlightened ones" , but is realized as the expression of the highest love between God and people.

Evagrius Ponticus, in accordance with the Holy Fathers, identifies a progress in the spiritual contemplation. The beginning stage is the knowledge of the "reasons" of material things, followed by the knowledge of the immaterial beings (the angels). Next stage is the knowledge of and the union with Holy Trinity without "juxtaposition" of any created being, in other words, the knowledge of God only through the Son and the Holy Spirit (Spidlik, 1997, p.373).

The objective of the natural contemplation is the knowledge of the material and immaterial beings, more specifically the "reasons" (*logoi*) of the material creation and angels. In Greek, it's called "physike". Its purpose is to "reveal the truth concealed in all beings" and to lead to the direct contemplation of God ("theologike"). Evagrius stated: "The goal of 'praktikos' is love and of gnosis is 'theologike'. The principle

of the former is faith; and of the latter, is natural contemplation" (Sinkewicz, 2003, p.108).

Natural contemplation includes everything that God created and will create. It refers to things"seen" beyond their "materiality" but in their spiritual aspect, specifically in their intimate relationship with the Creator. This charismatic knowledge of nature is different from the mere rational knowledge, is accomplished through the divine grace and necessitates high moral standards. Evagrius acknowledges that "Gnosis that comes from the outside attempts to know things through rational explanations; gnosis coming from within us through grace reveals things directly to our mind, and the intellect, seeing those things, receives their *logos*; the first type of gnosis is vulnerable to error, the second one to anger, passion and all related things" (Evagrius Ponticus, 1997, p.105).

According to Evagrius, the intellectual capacity is not enough to gain access to the "gnosis that comes from God". "The knowledge of God needs not a dialectician, but a visionary; because dialectics can be found at people who are not necessarily moral, whereas the spiritual vision is found only at moral people" (Bunge, 1997, p.77). The primacy of moral qualities over the intellectual ones is also viewed as an anti-arian reaction; the heresy of Arianism believed that the mystery of Holy Trinity can be known through a mere rational and dialectical approach.

For Evagrius, the world is an epiphany, par excellence. Following in the footsteps of Saint Basil the Great, Evagrius calls the creatures "letters" through which the attributes and intentions of God are made manifest. The contemplation of the created beings reveals the "plan" of God pertaining to the world and the loving relationship existing between Him and the creatures (Bunge, 1997, p.217).

In his cosmological vision, Evagrius articulates a hierarchical ontology, made up of multiple "levels" of reality. Each level is relatively autonomous but also closely

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interconnected with the others, representing a symbol which reflects the reality immediately above it. The "center" of convergence of these hierarchical levels of reality is God, as first Cause and absolute Providence. Thus, the Son and the Holy Spirit are the "letters" through which God Father makes Himself manifest as the absolute principle of the existence; and creation, at all its levels -angels, people and demons - is an immense "capital letter" that reveals the Son and the Holy Spirit as the personalized power and wisdom of God . On an ascendant level, the visible creation-namely, the people-makes manifest the immaterial beings-the angels-, which, in turn, reveal the two Persons of the Holy Trinity, which ultimately reveal the God Father. This hierarchical universe implies a degree of spiritual knowledge specific to each ontological stage. The demons are not capable but of a rudimentary contemplation, people in the post-paradisiacal state are capable of an indirect contemplation, through material things, and angels are able to directly contemplate the Divinity.

The possibility of spiritual progress and natural contemplation has ontological implications. It means "the imitation of angelic beings", therefore the transcendence of man's actual condition and its elevation to the angelic condition. Of course, the ultimate stage of spiritual perfection is resemblance with Christ, the Archetype. This stage, coming to completion in the eschatological age, can be "prefigured" and anticipated even in this life through the mystical union with Holy Trinity and the direct vision of God in pure prayer.

The spiritual contemplation is realized through spiritual senses actualized by people reaching the "realm of purification". Evagrius believes in the existence of five spiritual senses, the counterpart of the physical ones, which represent the distinctive mark of a mind ("nous") purified from passions.

The knowledge of "reasons" (*logoi*) of created beings is centered on the relationship of love between God and spiritual

people. The vision of God is the highest manifestation of this love. Evagrius stated that God, as the Originator of love cannot be known in its absence (Spidlik, 1997, p.181).

For Evagrius, the world is a "letter"-carrying a transcendental message-and a "mirror", -reflecting the divine light, wisdom and glory-. The natural contemplation, which doesn't mean hedonistic attachment to the created things, has as its purpose the understanding of God's work "ad extra" (outside the Holy Trinity) as Creator, Judge and the Author of Providence. The creation is the expression of "the manifold wisdom of God" (Ephesians 3.10) and this wisdom is discovered by the "gnosticos" contemplating the "reasons" (*logoi*) of created things; he can also perceive Gods' love permeating the entire creation, and mostly revealed in the divine providential work.

Natural contemplation is a continuous progress in knowledge, therefore a diminishing of ignorance characteristic to the human beings in a sinful state. But, -paradoxically- the natural contemplation will end up in the "infinite ignorance" and the "knowledge of the Unknowable": the gnosis of Holy Trinity. In the end, natural contemplation, still offering an indirect and partial knowledge of God, must be elevated to the ultimate contemplative stage, specifically the direct vision of God and knowledge of Holy Trinity, without the intercession of any created being or thing. According to Evagrius, the ultimate purpose of man is not to "honor God through the intercession of creation, but to honor God in Himself" (Sinkewicz, 2003, p.195).

In conclusion, Evagrius Ponticus' vision about gnosis and natural contemplation represents a hallmark of his theological system, by which the made a unique and significant contribution to the development and enrichment of the spirituality and mystical theology of the Orthodox Church.

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Richard Grallo (left) and Theodor Damian