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## **THE LABYRINTH OF MYSTICISMS**

Having thus presented the readers with this special monographic number of *Hybris*, we are gladly inviting them for an inspiring journey through the worlds of mystical experience and its contexts, geographically stretching somewhere between East and West and historically varying between limits of ancient Greeks' thought and XX century literature. Since anyone concerned with the issue may feel free to decide on their own if they prefer to concentrate on the articles respectively or to read them, so to speak, from cover to cover, it was the intention of the undersigned editor to attempt a risky task of creating a sort of coherent, still quite far from pretending to be considered exhaustive, depiction or at least a frame of mysticism. Accordingly, by means of premeditated selection and sequencing of articles a kind of network has been included, the structure of which invokes an idea of Ariadne's thread: a reader is welcome to follow the paths of the mystic labyrinth, guided by the thread set up beforehand unless he prefers to cast about for his own way.

### **The spiritual world of the Christian East**

Four pieces that are opening the whole coexist to form an effort to grasp the core of the spiritual tradition of the East. As it appears from the first one (See: *SOPHIA – God's Wisdom: Quality, Energy or separate divine Person in the theology of the Eastern Church to the 15th Century* by Zofia Brzozowska), it is sophiology that played a crucial role in the process of forming the spiritual culture of Byzantium, therefore both the Church Fathers and later the East Christian thinkers aimed at

identifying Sophia with either one of the divine persons of Trinity, i.e. the Son, the Word Incarnate and the Holy Spirit alternatively on the one hand, or abstract, uncreated energy of God, on the other. The latter interpretation of God's Wisdom originating from the views of Saint Basil the Great, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor, brought forth a central principle of Eastern Orthodox theology, i.e. the Essence–Energies distinction formulated by Gregory Palamas who may be regarded as our pathfinder to the “silver age” of the Russian philosophy and its prominent, still somehow forgotten, sophiologist Pavel Florensky (See: *The concept of God in the Pavel Florensky's metaphysics of All-unity* by Justyna Krocak).

Whereas one can say without any exaggeration, that Florensky's concept of God is founded on the mystic Eastern Christian tradition of Hesychasm directly inspired with the doctrine of Palamas, we should not lose sight of Plato's ontology from which it is derived to no lesser extent. Notwithstanding the latter, his “concrete metaphysics” affirms the inseparability of the two realities: spiritual and physical, manifesting thus contradistinction to rationalism and naturalism.

The opposition to the rationalistic philosophy of the West, or, at least, resistance to its insufficiency regarding an ability to grasp the experience of the East, seems significant to the Russian thought with mystic inclinations, as well as to mysticism in general. The next short study sheds some light on the point at issue: “When it comes to summarizing this era, Lev Shestov wrote that in the European philosophy one can distinguish between two currents of thoughts. The first is the rational one that originates from Athens and is characteristic to the philosophy of the West. The second one comes from Jerusalem and is based on the Revelation, specifically - the miracles. It is characteristic to the thinking of the East” (Michał Podstawski, *Refugees from Athens. Russian philosophy of the turn of the XIX and XX century to the 'unknowableness of God'*; see below). Regardless of cogency of this remark, the author of the study finds distinctness of the two i.e. that of Russian orthodox philosophy of unknowable God and that of mysticism with neoplatonic provenance, worthy of definite emphasis. While recognizing that a personal experience of the Absolute belongs

undoubtedly to both streams, the fact remains that the former claims authority of the Orthodox Church as a guarantor of the faith.

To seal the subject, the perspective of the spiritual tradition of the East, particularly its anti-occidental aspect, has been broadened by a reference to the area of literature and Fyodor Dostoevsky's anthropological reflections on freedom and "living God" being the source of it (*Freedom as the divine foundation of humannes. Fyodor Dostoevsky's anthropological considerations* by Iwona M. Perkowska).

### **Meta-confessional world of mysticism**

Although a deep inner conviction of authenticity seems to be shared by all the mystics as well as the mystically inclined theologians and the philosophers lucky enough to have experienced a mystical union with the Supreme Being, a disposition to turn onto such a peculiar form of relationship with a deity appears not to draw a distinction among diverse confessions. Four standpoints are being presented as the constituents of the second series, each of them arising from a different tradition.

Had A. N. Whitehead been right or not while characterizing all European philosophy as consisting of footnotes to Plato, an insight into mystical experience could not have been deepened without his concept of direct perceiving of the Good. As it is pertinently stated by the author of the study (Jadwiga Skrzypek – Faluszczyk, *The judicious perceiving of good as its mystical experience*) Plato himself would never have considered direct perceiving of the good to be mysticism; however, assuming that the latter might be defined as a direct intuitional insight, a parallel seems acceptable.

Thus the inspiring presence of the Greek philosophy in the Patristic tradition, irrespective of a conviction shared by the Christian apologist that knowledge of God they were given along with the revelation surpassed all the others with respect to perfection and accuracy, appeared to become a main source of explanation of the Holy Scripture. As far as the mystical element is concerned, it was to be of special relevance during the stages of formulating the doctrine of God's unknowability founded by The Cappadocian Fathers (See: *Known -*

*unknown God. Remarks on development of the doctrine of unknowability of God in Christian authors from second to sixth century* by Tomasz Stępień).

Third tradition certainly worth referring to, especially in the context of the objections addressed to the rational paradigm of the West, is German mysticism represented herein by Meister Eckhart, a thinker as undoubtedly unique as controversial. The author of the study points out that the main source of misinterpretation is as follows: “The worthiness of Meister Eckhart’s thought has been appreciated. Therefore, a variety of subsequent intellectual, philosophical and religious currents declare an affinity for him, legitimately tracing the seeds of their own ideas or interpreting his thought so that their past together with a confirmation or justification of their theories could be detected. This is imposing of scholar’s own perspective and the point of an outlook espoused, which should be considered as the essential reason for misinterpretation of Meister Eckhart” (Józef Piórczyński, *Of some interpretations of Eckhart’s conception of God*; transl. MG).

A wanderer of the mystical labyrinth should not miss a draft of mysticism that grew on the grounds of the Islamic tradition (*Al-Ghazali’s mystical interpretation of “Verse of Light”* by Damian Kokoć). Being an attempt to decipher hidden meaning of *Verse of Light* from the Quran, Al-Ghazali’s *Niche of Lights* brings forth the exegesis which engages mystical deliberations as much as epistemological and ontological investigations.

Even though numerous traditions of great importance have been omitted, e.g. esoteric teachings of Kabbalah or mysticism of the Far East and the South Asia, it would seem that the examples invoked herein, proved mystical disposition to be unfettered with the dogmas, and despite all its uncommunicativeness, firmly embedded in human longing for indirect relationship with a divinity.

### **Modern world of mystical experience impossible**

To bring the peregrination through the labyrinth of mysticism to an end, two pieces referring to more contemporary approaches have been included, both appertaining to the area of literature. In the first one

*(The Galician atheist. Prophetism, mysticism and romanticism in Aleksander (Leszek) Dunin Borkovsky's writings by Tadeusz Półchłopek)* the issue of mystical experience has been transposed onto the ground of a political dialogue with prophetic and mystical aspects of the biblical source, resulting in the spread of democratic ideas.

Finally, in the last piece an analysis of short stories by Jorge Luis Borges is undertaken concluding with a diagnosis that when it refers to modern times, the description of mystical experience is always a failure (Joanna Miksa, *Mystical experience in "The Aleph" and "The Writing of the God" by Jorge Luis Borges*).

Wishing everyone to whom it may concern pleasant and fruitful reading I take this opportunity to express my special thanks to all the Authors for their cooperation.

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