

Patristic Philosophy against Nominalism

The Ontology of Death: Patristic Philosophy against Nominalism

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Hromada Books 2022

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Acknowledgments

This book is 13 years in the making, but for even longer than that, I've been convinced that Nominalism is the root of all evil and the single most important aspect of the modern world, which begins with the metaphysics of Thomas Hobbes, the founder of modernity. This is not an easy book, and it requires at least some knowledge of Platonic metaphysics.

Soon, we will see numerous right-wing intellectuals plagiarize parts of this book. This has been the bane of my career. Suddenly, we will see "Nominalism" being the "next big thing" among those who purport to save us from the evils of the modern world. Concepts in this book will be bastardized and wildly misunderstood all over the web. Most right wing intellectuals have not the capacity to follow the argument here, but they will try to take credit for it regardless. They will cite everyone and everything but me and make a hefty profit from it. It seems that copying others is much easier than the decades of academic study that real originality requires.

This book too comes from struggle. I receive no money or support from any foundation, university or church. This means that it was written in full freedom. What I lack in money I make up for in independence. I do as I please thanks to a small army of donors and friends.

Since my divorce in 2014, my life has been a tsunami of emotions. Those who have not been through one have no idea what I'm talking about. It is an experience like no other. Destroying a family is worse than killing an individual, since the family is far more fundamental. This is why divorces were almost impossible in the past. Nevertheless, divorces are usually hoisted upon us and turn out to be both necessary and inevitable given the pathology of modernity and its affect on families. Nonetheless, the suffering involved is intense and it changes you forever.

Over the last three years, I've been given a second chance, but not just any second chance. This is a chance that should not be since the odds against it happening were extraordinary. It should then come as no surprise that again, this

book is dedicated to my wife Jennifer, the woman who gave me the impetus to finish this difficult work of Patristic philosophy. I hardly knew what love really was until I met her, I'm embarrassed to say. It is so rare today that it has become a Hallmark slogan rather than a term with meaning. A healthy relationship was a mystery too, something that people might accept in theory, but rarely seen in reality. The wife as a "help mate" is yet another thing that sounded more like a long-destroyed virtue of the past rather than anything to hope for in the present. Yet, with all this, I found the good one, thank God.

All told, I estimate the total number of good, single American women at around 10. Now, there are nine. I mean, we are happily married *and* I have no idea how to cook. I don't know where gravy comes from. Do you buy it? Does it come from trees? I also don't know how those laundry machine things work and still think clean clothes just appear out of nowhere. Still, this woman melted all the calloused defenses I constructed around my heart and made short work of all my excuses. We both come from "marriages" in the distant past based largely on gaslighting rather than love. We suffered from mendacious neglect and unveiled contempt to the point of mental breakdown, but today, those sufferings were worth it. I've never met anyone like Jennifer before and, at 51 years of age, this is nothing short of revolutionary.

MRJ Kittanning, PA October 2022

An Introduction to Nominalism, Orthodox Monasticism and Metaphysics

The Orthodox life is one of struggle. Its central, nodal point is man's preparation for the divine light, or the fullness of grace. This is the central idea of asceticism. Human life is one of preparation. This is the nature of "suffering Orthodoxy."

Contrary to the Roman church, the light of Christ can be experienced in this life.¹ There is no distinction here in real terms, as St. Philotheus of Sinai writes, "Let us cut sin out of our heart, and we will

find within us the Kingdom of Heaven.” Also Blessed Theophylact, “The kingdom of God is always present for him who desires and wills it. When a man’s disposition and way of life are like that of an angel, most assuredly this is the kingdom of God.” And also Abba Evagrius, “The kingdom of God is knowledge of the Holy Trinity, extending as far as the state of one’s mind permits, and filling it with an endlessly blessed life.”²This is Orthodox doctrine that has no place anywhere else.

1 For the sake of this paper, the terms light, grace and energy are used synonymously. For the most part, this is the consensus of the father's regardless.

God has joined himself to man through Christ, a truism that has worn thin due to constant repetition. Man, to the extent he is baptized, is an “aspect” or “part” of the Holy Trinity; he partakes in the life of the Trinity through the agency of the Holy Spirit, as that is the Spirit’s purpose.³Baptism does not “eliminate original sin,” as the western groups teach, but rather initiates one into the Trinity.

2 All from the *Philokalia*

3 As with all writing in this field, I am using modern English terms to define a reality that is a) conceptually non-modern and b) about a reality that cannot be described. Hence, understand these are metaphors.

St. Augustine, not being insane, did not argue that infants were willfully guilty of Adam's sin either. “Forgiveness” is not the purpose.

St. Gregory Palamas writes

Through the fall, our nature was stripped of divine illumination and resplendence. But the Logos of God had pity upon our disfigurement and in His compassion He took our nature upon Himself, and on Tabor He manifested it to His elect disciples clothed once again most brilliantly. He shows what we once were and what we shall become through Him in the age to come, if we choose to live our present life as far as possible in accordance with His ways.

The Christian man is not separated from God in the sense that he exists in an “autonomous” sphere of earthly life, something separate from heaven and the light but still part of God's energies, or his presence. The Orthodox man is ontologically different from others so long as he maintains this struggle. None of us are pure. The phenomenal man is saturated in sin. The noumenal man, that is, our mentality and sense of self, can be perfect. It is the latter by which our conscience judges us after death.

For the Orthodox, there is a primary, ontological distinction between the baptized and that of the unredeemed. The Orthodox man can be raised above the fallen world of nature; nature in its lowest form: one of blind force, passion and coercion. The fullness of grace is present at baptism, at confession and at the Eucharist (it is the church *tout court*), but this does not automatically permit one to be a proper receiver of it, but it is never a matter of being “worthy.” For the baptized, grace is everpresent. The ascetic life makes us able to receive it (or even understand it), and this is a salvation by “works,” to use much later language. Therefore, Orthodoxy remains outside of the 16th century polemics over “works.”

The ascetic life permits man, over time, to begin to see God within created nature, to see His activity in the outside world; to see the universal embedded in the particular. Nature is not merely blind force (as the unredeemed see it), but is the “habitation” of God and his power. God is not “up” in the sky, but exists in another dimension of reality, imminent in creation, though not identified with it. He exists with the baptized in his fullness and power, but sin and passion obscure His presence. The unredeemed see in creation mere blind force to be manipulated by science; the ascetic sees God’s power. This is the essence of Orthodox theology and radically separates it from what the bourgeoisie think “Christianity” is.

In a famous quote, St. Cyprian of Carthage writes:
As a mystical organism, as the sacramental Body of Christ, the

Church cannot be adequately described in canonical terms or categories alone. It is impossible to state or discern the true limits of the Church simply by canonical signs or marks. . . In her sacramental, mysterious existence the Church surpasses canonical measurements. For that reason a canonical schism does not immediately signify mystical impoverishment and desolation.

This is the rejection of Nominalism and literalism. Words conceal as much as they reveal, especially today. They are poor vehicles for expressing the action of grace. Doctrine is always incomplete because it is manifest in words. Thus, the church uses art and music also to supplement, all channels of grace. These are manifestations of God's presence. Nothing, however, can rival the actual experience of grace which, of course, can only function on someone who has made themselves ready both by pure doctrine and a holy life.

Nominalism has been defined in varied ways over the centuries. The founder of the Nominalist school (in the west) was William of Ockham (1285-1347). He rejects “species” of things, and reduces all such categorization to the utilitarian application of words to what can only be the “flux” of the pre-linguistic world. A “universal” in his sense is only that which can be predicated about many things. The predicate is merely a word, an aid to communication, in his view. Words are quick and easy means mankind uses to categorize reality, making it easier to reference and communicate.⁴They're abbreviations.

4 William of Ockham (1990) William of Ockham: Philosophical Writings. Ed and Trans: P. Boehner, Hackett. Two excellent secondary works on this are Boehner, P. (1946) The Realistic Conceptualism of

This view of this world is shocking in its radicalism. It denies that reality is substantial. In general, the real is flux – an undefinable nothing – and human language is a means whereby the will has struggled to force itself upon it. Marx saw this force as labor's imprint on nature. Locke said as much centuries prior. Ultimately, this is Nominalism's

ultimate conclusion. It is an attack on reality itself. Properties such as weight or color certainly exist, but what they adhere to is merely the single, concrete object. How that flux of properties and attributes gets the fairly complex and abstract notion of “object” or “thing” is another matter.

William Ockham. *Traditio*, 4: 307–35; and Brampton, CK (1964) *Nominalism and the Law of Parsimony*. *The Modern Schoolman*, 41: 273–81. For those more attuned to the analytic world, there is always the classic Quine, WVO (1947). *On Universals*. *The Journal of Symbolic Logic* 12: 74– 84. This essay has better things to do than get bogged down in sterile debates that only exist because of the absurdity and isolation of most “philosophy” departments in American universities.

The “universal” is a Platonic idea and its foundation. These can be termed Ideas, Forms, Natures or Archetypes, which, in this book, are used synonymously, but Forms or Ideas are the most common terms. It holds that reality is made up of eternal entities existing outside of space and time that are only vaguely outlined in this chaotic world. They both exist on their own and as instantiated in objects. They make things what they are. Something is a “thing” only because it partakes of a more universal Ideal. This school is often termed “Realism” because it holds that Forms are the only real things in the universe.

In theological terms, it is the mind of Logos, using “Forms,” in a manner of speaking, as the natural laws and boundaries between types of things – creation itself. Discovering these is the purpose of science. Forms need never be instantiated, but exist because God, containing all things and all possibilities, manifests his greatness in the cosmos. Logos is the means whereby this is done. Forms are created, but Logos is not. Logos, or the Second Person of the Trinity, is the manifestation of Forms taken together, Forms created by the Father known in Scripture as Wisdom.⁵

In opposition to this, William of Ockham writes that universals “are not things other than names.” Universals refer to the existence of Logos in creation. It takes away all inherent meaning in the natural order, leaving “natural” but razoring out “order.” When the mind conceives of a universal, it is only drawing its own internal picture of

the “archetypal” aspect of a thing, that is, one of many. It can go no further than this. When someone describes an object, they are not describing the object. Rather they have recourse to a mental picture of it. This is the nature of language: it is completely conventional and arbitrary. Words can do no more than point to these mental pictures lots of people have about the same thing. This is the origin of the label

“Nominalism,” or a system based on “names” as words. Under such a system, those with power decide what meaning is “real.” If I say that Socrates and Plato are both white, I cannot say that they are white men. The most I can say is that, for general purposes, it is easy to agree that they appear to be humanoid. Beyond this there is nothing.

5 Cf Jones, EM. *Logos Rising: A History of Ultimate Reality*. Fidelity Press, 2020. While a nonphilosopher, Jones shows, as always, cutting insight into this most fundamental of intellectual topics.

“Ockham's Razor” is William's most famous argument by far, and, like everything else in modernity, is completely misunderstood and abused. It has never meant that the “simplest answer is the right one,” or “using fewer variables is better than more” in an argument or description. The closest we get from William is “Plurality must never be posited without necessity,” which occurs in his theological work on the *Sentences of Peter Lombard*. This makes sense in a universe where universal ideas do not exist. Facts are about objects, and these objects have no inherent relation to each other. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein says “Ockham's Razor is, of course, not an arbitrary rule nor one justified by its practical success. It simply says that unnecessary elements in a symbolism mean nothing. Signs which serve one purpose are logically equivalent; signs which serve no purpose are logically meaningless.”

“Unnecessary elements” by definition are incorrect. No one needs a “principle” about this. In a world where only random individuals interact with no purpose, the shortest distance between two points is a straight line.

Unfortunately, reality is never like this. A does not equal A.

To know something in Ockham's Nominalism is to believe the factual truth of a proposition given the conventional definitions and uses of the terms involved. The stress is on the term “conventional” as an antonym of “natural.” It is purely subjective, a definition of something created by those with the power to impose it as real on others. For each sentence, terms have to exist in a context which connects them in some way. These can be entirely invented. In fact, Ockham gives us no way to tell the difference.

When William of Ockham defines the “individual,” he uses three related conceptions.

- That the object, the x, depends on nothing else for its existence. This is the definition of Nominalism. There is nothing beyond the individual thing;
- That x is isolated and does not refer to anything else. It is, in this case, ontologically independent and ultimately irrational;
- That the meaning of an x makes reference to other things, the conception of a “definition.” The “other things” are conventional and thus not real. These are all human creations.

Ockham argues that all Ideas/Forms are in God's mind, so we cannot know them. This severs mankind from God. Reality exists in the divine mind, while humanity is left with mere accident and desire. It is very difficult to know how he can know that except through blind faith. Realism rejects blind faith, something the ignorant believe is required by “religion.” Realism argues that, while God is not directly knowable by reason, He can be deduced from the natural order as well as human consciousness itself.

When Alexei Losev criticized

Nominalism, he argues that it is the direct result of bourgeois, urban culture where objects become commodities that come and go – the stable world is that of money, a creation of man. Money is the foundation for objects, not truth. Objects are mere attachments to it. Signs, another word or symbol, imply something that is signified.

Nominalism cannot accept this. Words signify nothing except what they are deemed to signify.

This book is about describing the error of such a view in the work of the church fathers. It is a very important, if not critical, aspect in Patristic philosophy. Nominalism is the fundamental evil in modern cognition and, in fact, is the cause of modern errors. Modernism, as an intellectual phenomenon, is based on the assumption that universals are not real.

Due to his errors, Ockham refused to believe God can be known rationally. Since no universal truths exist, there would be no way of approaching the question. The concept is rejected previously by Thomas Aquinas, who argues that it would lead to pure materialism (Prima Pars. Question 2).

The “individual” is one of the most persistent and critical myths of modernity. It is mythical because it is the creation of a lifeworld that requires it, such as one that accepts the domination of money. It is false not because of that, but because any definition of an individual must be abstract. Nothing exists independently except God. Only God can be cognized through Himself. An individual is an arbitrary abstraction from a massive cosmos of being.

This affects even consciousness itself. It was very different millennia ago. The modern conscious is tightly circumspect, taking into itself only the most narrow self-interest of the individual will. This is the creation of modernity and is not inherent in the consciousness itself. It is taken for granted. Those born and raised in a tightly integrated community and unspoiled by Nominalist ideology do not see themselves as an ego, but as a community perceiving the world through one person. In other words, the modern self is not experienced today as it was a thousand years ago. This makes even conceiving how a man cognized the world in the Middle Ages very difficult.

Bertrand Russell seems like an unlikely ally. However, in his well known work on the matter, he defends Realism in that the facts of

something like geography (he uses the phrase “Edinburgh is North of London”), are facts independent of our minds. It is a fact that is outside of time and space. To be “north of” is a permanent aspect of something. It is not in time and yet, all acts of perception involve something existing in a point in time. It is not an invention of our mind, it is not in space and is not in time. Yet it remains an objective fact (Russell, 1912). This means universals, permanent truths, are real.

Nominalism rules the west because it is the official ideology of atheism. H. Field, in his defense of Nominalism, says

[Nominalism] saves us from having to believe in a large realm of . . . entities which are very unlike the other entities we believe in (due for instance to their causal isolation from us and from everything that we experience) and which give rise to substantial philosophical perplexities because of those differences (Field, 1980).

Decoding this should be easy. He's saying that Nominalism is worth the intellectual price one has to pay for believing it because it avoids the questions of God, heaven and freedom. Put crudely, he is worried that an antiNominalist position will bring some to think about the reality and even the superiority of the non-sensible world. This is intolerable for the “empirical scientist.” It proves that a Positivist will throw his most sacred doctrine out the window rather than concede a worldview that ascribes any reality to God, or anything else he cannot control.

The context of his argument is the reality of numbers existing outside of space and time. Without universals, as diverse thinkers like Quine and Godel have written, knowledge is a term that could only be used equivocally. Field goes on to say that “nothing in this monograph purports to be a positive argument for Nominalism.” Apparently, Nominalism is so obvious that it requires no other argument than to appeal to science's self interest. In other words, if there is a realm of non-spatial and non-physical things, that means modern science cannot control it and its methods are inappropriate for it, thus, they must adhere to it. Metaphysics and

religion would have their own space after all. This is seen as so overwhelming that Field says there is no way he has to actually argue for it. He says that the alternative is to introduce “unjustifiable dogma” into scientific work, and that is all his readers need to hear.

This book takes these ideas and shows how they manifest themselves in the core doctrines of some of the major Church fathers from both east and west. This has yet to be described at length in English. While the fathers were theologians and monastics primarily, their philosophical vision should never be ignored. Nominalism is inherently an anti-Christian idea that is taken for granted today. Nominalism is the true heresy of heresies, the “pan heresy” because from it, all distorted thoughts arise. One cannot claim to know anything within a Nominalist mindset nor are there any stable meanings; all is utility. Christianity's intellectual roots are in the clarification and completion of the metaphysics of the Greeks, specifically Plato, and this is the philosophical purpose of the fathers. It is true that dozens of other major Christian writers in the Middle Ages and late antiquity could have been used, men such as Origen, but, in the interest of a compact argument, such multiplication is hardly necessary.

The Christian Platonism of St. Justin Martyr (103-165): Plato as the Philosophical Foundation of Orthodoxy

St. Justin Martyr, sometimes called St. Justin the Philosopher, is a standing refutation to those who refuse to accept the tight integration between Platonism and ancient theology. Orthodoxy, the presence of Christ on earth thought the Spirit, completed the Platonic system because, finally, the Forms (or The Form) has manifested itself on earth in a man. Human nature and The Good have been reconciled in Christ's body, which is the church ever-vivified by the Spirit. Plato was not, in general terms, wrong, but he was, like many of the pre-Christian geniuses of both west and east, just incomplete. In other words, Plato's vague outline of the Forms was, so to speak, as far as unaided human reason can go in envisaging God's transcendent “mind.” The Stoic *Logos* idea was also centrally important in making

sense of God's immanent presence. These ideas served a prophetic purpose.

St. Justin, like Origen, called himself a “Christian Platonist” and argued that the Platonic system paved the way for Christ and made his mission recognizable to the Greeks. Justin's mission was to reconcile Plato with Christ, with the understanding that Christ solved all the outstanding problems in both the Platonic and later Stoic approaches to the world. Plato prepared the Greeks for Christ's presence intellectually. The shocking parallels between Christ and Socrates are too close and clear to be dismissed. Most importantly, they were both slandered, falsely arrested, convicted on phony evidence, and both men accepted their execution without protest. Socrates was the prophet of the Greeks in a similar manner to Elijah, Samuel and Jeremiah were prophets to Israel.

St. Justin writes in his *First Apology*: And the Sibyl and Hystaspes said that there should be a dissolution by God of things corruptible. And the philosophers called Stoics teach that even God Himself shall be resolved into fire, and they say that the world is to be formed anew by this revolution; but we understand that God, the Creator of all things, is superior to the things that are to be changed. If, therefore, on some points we teach the same things as the poets and philosophers whom you honor, and on other points are fuller and more divine in our teaching, and if we alone afford proof of what we assert, why are we unjustly hated more than all others? For while we say that all things have been produced and arranged into a world by God, we shall seem to utter the doctrine of Plato; and while we say that there will be a burning up of all, we shall seem to utter the doctrine of the Stoics: and while we affirm that the souls of the wicked, being endowed with sensation even after death, are punished, and that those of the good being delivered from punishment spend a blessed existence, we shall seem to say the same things as the poets and philosophers; and while we maintain that men ought not to worship the works of their hands, we say the very things which have been said by the comic poet Menander, and

other similar writers, for they have declared that the workman is greater than the work.

St. Justin's approach to the ancient

philosophers requires a substantial understanding of them. It is no coincidence that Plato and the Stoics laid out their doctrines before Christ, since these doctrines would make philosophical sense out of Christ's Incarnation. The created order exists and as a result, the outlines of God can be dimly seen. The concept of a creator God was foreign to pagans, since creation *ex nihilo* was hardly conceivable.⁶ Usually, "creation stories" in other traditions revolve around the eternity of matter, something almost universal in pagan systems. "Gods" were more architects and manipulators rather than creators. For St. Justin, God's presence in matter, laid out in the Logos doctrine, eliminated the need for Aristotle's essences specific to each thing and struck deep against Nominalist doctrine, which existed in the Presocratic Greeks.

⁶ The term "pagan" is used here in the broadest of senses. As always, the term does not refer to a specific value system or "theology," but that which existed before Christ outside of ancient Israel.

Plato's final destiny was to pave the European road to Christ. As writers like Vladimir Solovyev were to claim later, Plato's galactic problem was how to reconcile the Forms to the banal life in this world. Aristotle made a similar charge against Plato. Christ bridged the gap, the abyss between God and man. The Incarnation was the single most philosophically significant event in global history for this reason. The Form of the Good (in which all of Plato's middle-period Forms were synthesized) had attached itself to the Form of Man (that is, human nature). This concept, even using Plato's terminology, was the foundation of the faith as expressed by the most important of all ecumenical Synods, that of Chalcedon in 431. Without the Platonic system, however, such doctrine could not have been understood.

The philosopher, including a man like Justin, will approach the faith differently from the theologian or the historian. The philosopher will seek the ontological consistency of the Incarnation and use metaphysical language to describe and defend it. The specific theological “content” and “meaning” of the Incarnation will be out of his ken. Only the formal qualities will be analyzed. Philosophy is the very Form of apologetic, since the words of revelation, the Scriptures, will have no meaning to the pagan. Those who do not recognize the Incarnation will not be swayed by Scriptural arguments, since, for them, Scripture itself requires further justification. Philosophy's role is to show how the Incarnation is possible and how it can be understood by the secular mind. From there, the secular mind can get deeper into that reality through the Church.

Philosophy leads the mind to God. Without its terminus in God, philosophy has no role. It becomes sophistry, professional “metaphysicans” in the university writing for money and academic fame. If the Spirit is real, then it must derive from a source capable of producing or generating non-material reality. Spinoza solved the problem in his doctrine of Substance, which is an Absolute Being as interpreted from the point of view of the mathematician. Substance is God totally denuded of all revelatory qualities. It is not God in His totality, but as deduced through mathematical and geometrical reasoning and remains very significant.

St. Justin writes in his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*:

“Plato indeed says,’ replied I, ‘that the mind's eye is of such a nature, and has been given for this end, that we may see that very Being when the mind is pure itself, who is the cause of all discerned by the mind, having no color, no Form, no greatness – nothing, indeed, which the bodily eye looks upon; but It is something of this sort, he goes on to say, that is beyond all essence, unutterable and inexplicable, but alone honorable and good, coming suddenly into

souls well-dispositioned, on account of their affinity to and desire of seeing Him.”

“‘What affinity, then,’ replied he, ‘is there between us and God? Is the soul also divine and immortal, and a part of that very regal mind? And even as that sees God, so also is it attainable by us to conceive of the Deity in our mind, and thence to become happy?’”

“Assuredly,” I said.

This is the ontology of life and the foundation of the ascent of man. St. Augustine was to later use similar modes of understanding the “mind's ascent.” Since Nominalism knows of no ascent (or decent, for that matter), the very concept here is a refutation of the Nominalist mind. For most types of Nominalism, the mind is merely a mechanism that can combine and analyze sense experiences and create “universals” that make sense out of them for further study.

If the mind, in the Nominalist world, can “ascend,” then it can only ascend from objects to false “universals.” At best, these “universals” are “shortcuts” that permit the thinker to refer to classes of objects. The “classes” of course, do not exist as realities. The Platonist and Christian reject this, realizing that, as nearly all Patristic writers have said, individual objects are merely tokens of more comprehensive objects outside of space and time. These objects, once apprehended, are a gateway to experience the energies (that is, the presence) of God.

Logos is the “world soul” of Plotinus. The “world soul” was a much lower and vulgar manifestation of the One. In a sense, the collection of Aristotle's instantiated essence is the world soul. For Justin and many other fathers of the church, this soul was one, it was Logos or Christ Himself, seen under the point of view of the natural sciences.

The Logos doctrine has traditionally argued that natural laws must have a source (as if this needs to be argued), and that source must, by necessity, contain all Laws. It must be the Law of law. It is God, or Christ. He is present in nature as that guarantee of its normal

functioning. The fall of Adam, however, invaded the natural world and rendered Logos less clear. Christ's presence is only barely seen by most, since the unredeemed human being can only grasp cause and effect, not the purpose or origin of it. He writes in the same *Dialogue*:

I shall give you another testimony, my friends. . . from the Scriptures, that God begat before all creatures a Beginning, a certain rational power proceeding from Himself, who is called by the Holy Spirit, now the Glory of the Lord, now the Son, again Wisdom, again an Angel, then God, and then Lord and Logos; and on another occasion He calls Himself Captain, when He appeared in human Form to Joshua the son of Nun. For He can be called by all those names, since He ministers to the Father's will, and since He was begotten of the Father by an act of will; just as we see happening among ourselves: for when we give out some word, we beget the word; yet not by abscission, so as to lessen the word remains in us, when we give it out: and just as we see also happening in the case of a fire, which is not lessened when it has kindled another, but remains the same; and that which has been kindled by it likewise appears to exist by itself, not diminishing that from which it was kindled. The Word of Wisdom, who is Himself this God begotten of the Father of all things, and Word, and Wisdom, and Power, and the Glory of the Begetter, will bear evidence to me, when He speaks by Solomon the following: "If I shall declare to you what happens daily, I shall call to mind events from everlasting, and review them. The Lord made me the beginning of His ways for His works. From everlasting He established me in the beginning, before He had made the earth, and before He had made the deeps, before the springs of the waters had issued forth, before the mountains had been established. Before all the hills He begets me."

The key part of this is the phrase "God begat before all creatures a Beginning, a certain rational power proceeding from Himself, who is

called by the Holy Spirit.” Reason in the modern world refers to utilitarian logic, or the ability to get what one is supposed to want. The truth is that all prior civilizations were based on the concept that Reason exists in all things including human nature itself. Nature is not dead, waiting for the industrial Titans from the New Atlantis to give it meaning. It is the production of Reason itself and Reason resides in it.

How can a Nominalist be a Christian? It is impossible. God as Trinity is the final end of all things and their ultimate source. Men work to imitate the life of Christ and to experience the grace, or presence, of Christ made possible through the Resurrection. God does not need our prayers nor our struggles; human beings do. God knows our needs, but, like any father, will withhold certain good things until men realize they require it from God.

The Father is always ontologically distant, beyond His creation. Logos is his “active” principle, manifesting Himself in natural law and the human conscience. In this sense He is not distant at all. The Holy Spirit is the manifestation of this grace specifically in the church and its members. The Spirit has no other function than to act as the church's “ontological scaffolding.” Outside it, the Spirit does not function in such an intimate way. The “world” is dead matter from the point of view of a degenerating humanity.

The Father is inaccessible to and by human thought. This is because the Ground of the ground of being is not one object among others and hence, cannot be described in human language. No one can intellectually experience the Ground of the ground, or the fundamental reality that the ground of all being rests upon, ending the regress. If it was experienced in a human way, it would no longer be the ultimate foundation. The Father is accessible only by the presence of the Logos made clear by the action of the Spirit. Logos is necessary because He is God understood under the idea of activity; the motion of natural law in a biological or chemical sense, but also in the ethical sense of our own will, a freedom that can exist within the church only, since outsider of her, there is no spirit.

“Free will” is then something to be fought for, and certainly nothing anyone is “born” having. Men are born totally dependent and determined, only with maturity and grace can the hint of the potential of free will show itself, and even here, it is constant struggle to think and act freely. Conforming is far easier. The saints alone have free will in the normal sense of the term. The wage of sin is natural determination, which is another word for death. Degenerate humanity does not think freely, but conforms itself to some party, passion or career, focusing their activity in conformity with it. The saint lives in another world, the noumenal world inaccessible to the world.

Logos is the Reason of God and the thought and expression of the Father. The Father's communication with the world is both via the Son and the Spirit under different auspices, and in worldly terms, is expressed in the church. This is why the Old and New Testaments are not actually distinct, since this communication has existed in one form or another since Eden. Logos is the image of the Father; He is an individual through His personhood, but never by substance. Like in Spinoza's mathematical deity, God is a single, fathomless Substance. It is infinity and thus inaccessible to thought. This Substance, however, thinks and acts. Both Spinoza and Plotinus (within the Neoplatonic movement) reject this idea, not so much because it is an impossibility to them, but because the personality of God is outside the ken of philosophy or geometry. His personhood is exclusively the ken of theology and the metaphysics that such theology suggests.

Logos is the intermediary between the Father and the universe, and is the sole domain of theological science. Logos is the principle of the universe, but also the principle of revelation. Logos, in a very real way, is the Father's reason and thought manifest in created things. To assume that Logos does not exist forces one to argue that a) natural law preexists matter (which proves that Logos exists) or b) natural law somehow evolved with matter, meaning that evolution itself needed to evolve. Now, b) also requires one to hold the dogmatic faith that there was a time when the laws of evolution did

not exist, but somehow did not affect the development of the material universe.

Aristotle famously argued that matter is eternal, an idea that is also the dogma of the Masons, since dead matter in flux is the *en soph*, the primordial matter that the Chosen, the New Men in Nietzsche's sense, have the right to manipulate at their pleasure. The Industrial Revolution was the direct descendant of this thinking. Arguing this today is impossible, because the scientific establishment holds that matter is encased energy, and it is thus winding down. Therefore, matter cannot be eternal, it must have been created.

Logos is never separated from His point of origin, the Father. While generated from Him, Logos was generated before time began and hence, outside of time. Logos is then eternal, not material, since the two are

opposites. Salvation is a way of life, a way of will within the grace of the Spirit, available only in the church. Salvation, in good Platonic terms, is a life "according to reason." In St. Justin's case, it is a life according to Logos, which is the specific Reason of the Father.

Salvation is based on righteousness and is almost identical to it.

Salvation is a state of affairs while righteousness is the summation of the virtues, a lifestyle. It is, in other words, the "apprehension and imitation of Logos."

Dead matter is the God of the pagans. It is eternal and is productive of all things. This is the theology of the Kabbalah and the Masons in modern times. To be a "master Mason" is to shape and mold the primordial chaos of eternal matter into usable Forms using the metaphor of the Architect to explain it. The machine is the result, the demonic imitation of organic Forms, which demons cannot create as they are dependent only on preexisting matter. An architect is not a creator, but a manipulator; he does not make anything, but only shifts the Form of the existing matter with which he is presented.

For St. Justin, these arts were taught to early man by demons. Demons, being highly intelligent and always trying to imitate God, sought to "create" though the vehicle of "civilization," or a

bureaucratic, centralized structure culminating in the iconic Temple of Solomon; a perversion of the temple of nature and the tabernacle. The first Temple, perverted and based on forced labor and centralized control, is one of the most powerful images of the demonic arts and sciences, not dissimilar to the massive golden image in the plain of Dura.

All pagan civilizations have a “god” of the arts. Apollo and Prometheus, Set and Osiris, Ahura Mazda and many others can be found in the remaining fragments of what might be the seminal texts of these cults. They are “myths” in the true sense of the word: they represent truths, but dressed up in accessible, poetic images. All civilizations have had a god of science, but the specific sciences dealing with building and controlling. It is the constant desire to create a machine out of the organic that typifies these deities, who in St. Justin's view are poetic images and memories of demons who taught man to create “civilization.”

The Old Testament shows Cain as being taught by these beings. Cain cannot be expected to “build a city” from nothing. He was taught. This “city” became the heart of Mesopotamian civilization, typified by an oligarchic ruling class, materialist metaphysics and forced labor. The free life of the spirit is rejected by them as superstition. There is a tendency when reading the ancient stories to impose modern Christian ideas onto their “theology.” This is a mistake. “Creator gods” are architects who created out of primal chaos, without there being any creator of the matter that always goes under the identification of “primal chaos.” This question remains unasked.

Using terms like “god,” “religion” or “creator” without any historical understanding destroys many of the academic works on the ancient traditions. Gods in the pagan sense are not creators like Yahweh. “Creation out of Nothing” was nearly inconceivable in societies that did not have the number zero, a numeral imported into the Near East from India. What is far more significant about the old “creation stories” is that these deities are not meant to be believed as literal

persons, but as iconic expressions of what was important to civilization as a whole. While simple people may have believed in them as persons, ancient philosophy and science, fairly advanced, did not. They were patterns to follow, natural laws dressed in poetic terms to make them comprehensible.

This is the argument of St. Justin, who said that these gods were the demons who brought “fire from heaven” to teach man to create civilization – to be self sufficient without God. The Temple of Solomon the Apostate is a precursor to modern occult thinking. Technology was the magic of the ancient world, and the civilizations of Egypt and Assyria were highly advanced in the practical sciences. Where this knowledge came from is wrapped in mystery and is an important topic in the old stories. They were enlisted to build a civilization that treated human beings as chattel. Civilization in the Babylonian or modern industrial sense are practical manifestations of the Temple. Technology, in other words, is demonic because its purpose is to raise the ruling class (who benefits most from it) to the status of near godhood.

Human sacrifice is a ritualistic manifestation of this same idea. Human sacrifice is a popular ritual that “plays out” the massive human slaughter that exists as the direct cause of technology. Not merely slaughter in wars but the millennia of slavery, serfdom and the bondage of the working classes of human history.

Prometheus is the same ancient god/archetype as Lucifer and Set. They are both gods of rebellion, but rebellion in the specific sense of taking practical technics from the domain of “heaven” and giving it to mankind, or, more accurately, the ruling elite who then uses it to enslave others and enrich themselves. This sort of “practical technics” is meant as a demonic substitute for the organic world, that, while fallen, contains all that is necessary for human survival. Only those who lusted for power sought to harness technics (a “substitute nature”) to artificially

enhance their power over others in the guise of “enlightenment.” This artificially is unnatural, and thus, requires sacrifice.

Christ came to bind these demons and the ideas they helped promote. The church is the practical regulation of the needs of man. Matthew 5 contains the condemnation of this demonic “enlightenment” in terms that were crystal clear in the ancient context, but very obscure in the modern one:

Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Therefore do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?” For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

This is a direct condemnation of the ancient occult magical arts that today are called “technology.” Technology seeks the creation of a “second nature,” one without Logos, that purports to provide security. In reality, it provides security and power only for those who are capable of harnessing it for their own uses, and even that is an illusion. The organic world, and those human inventions that work with it and by it (rather than seeing to replace it) contain all that is necessary for human

flourishing. The 20th century was typified by the multiplication of artificial wants as needs that reinforce the “inevitability” of technical progress.

This is the center of St. Justin's social philosophy and his own views on the ancient Church and its tradition. Brotherhoods of the faithful were created as the natural extension of the organic extended family. The Jews were at the forefront of all anti-Christian persecutions and retain all the ancient, magical arts that artificially increase their power over others. Demons are under the power of Christ, and, while thinking themselves autonomous, actually do God's work by causing the hardships that ultimately improve the church's discipline and purify its life. Suffering is really not an evil if it is used as a way to strengthen one's life and to reinforce one's dependence on Logos and its purpose.

The ancient rituals and liturgies were very real, but simple and based around the ancient texts. The members of the church constantly strove for purity. The church was based on the *sobor*, or locally organized societies informed by the Spirit without a clear bureaucracy. Bishops and the apostolic succession were important and served to inform the local groups of true doctrine as issues arose, but these men were never dictators, only stewards of the gospel. They were not rulers in a political sense. The only “tie that binds” is the faith and right action.

Heresy is identical with theological novelties. They were rapidly identified as heresy because they were imported by foreigners bringing ideas from other societies that contained the seeds of their own paganism. The church organization came into existence, according to St. Justin, as a hedge against heresy. There was no “synodal” system, but rather an ad hoc organization of different churches to solve problems specific to them.

St. Justin was the clearest Platonist among the great church fathers. His metaphysics were the foundation for the faith and its connection to

the ancient teachings. Metaphysics and ontology were absolutely necessary to make the faith understandable to others, especially those in the Greek world, the world of the ancient church. The church was a Greek phenomenon in this era.

St. Hilary of Poitiers (310-367) on Essence

Philosophy gets theology in trouble. This is one of the cardinal points of St. Hilary's work on these issues. It is not so much that philosophy cannot work with theology, or that its truths are different from the divine. Rather, it is more in the type of person who philosophizes. The philosopher, then and now, is the type who demands that all things bow to him. All things must justify themselves to his mind. Often, this is the worst person to engage in theology. Concepts take on a life of their own rather than reflecting reality.

Asking about the mechanics of the "generation" of the Son from the Father is absurd. This is not for the mind to know, nor would there be any benefit gained from so knowing. Metaphysics can help us as we know that the spiritual can never perish. It is the property of the spiritual world that it does not die. It might have a beginning, but this does not imply an end. We know that the material world is based on constant change.

It is also true that material things desire, in some sense, to continue their existence. They resist dissolution. For humanity, it is this desire that creates the passions. That is, the inclination to continue living leads men to develop fetishes that seem to prolong or enhance existence. The problem is that these fetishes never quite live up to the vividness in which they first present themselves. This is a key element to human psychology.

From *De Synodis*, Hilary writes:

Essence is a reality which is, or the reality of those things from which it is, and which subsists inasmuch as it is permanent. Now we can speak of the essence, or nature, or genus, or substance of anything

and the strict reason why the word “essence” is employed is because it is always. But this is identical with substance, because a thing which is, necessarily subsists in itself, and whatever thus subsists possesses unquestionably a permanent genus, nature or substance. When, therefore, we say that essence signifies nature, or genus, or substance, we mean the essence of that thing which permanently exists in the nature, genus, or substance.

This is important because these terms show up again and again in Patristic philosophy. Any object is known through its unchanging essence. The essence “is always.” This makes St. Hilary a Realist. He states that the essence which makes a thing what it is cannot die. Thus, it must separate from the thing itself, or the essence itself would die. He is not merely “using Plato's language,” since using the language is identical to the concepts it denotes. There is a reason God built his church on a Greek foundation at a time just after the flowering of its metaphysics. Nothing is by accident. The church is Platonic.

God is unique in that His essence and His existence are identical. While St. Hilary would not have used the term, this is the foundation of his understanding. Objects in the world beget others like it. Humans beget a human baby, for example, and the essence of “man” is translated wholly in that union. The child is human and nothing else. Like begets like.

If essences are eternal, and the objects in which they are instantiated are not, then the former must be separate from the latter. This is also why Hilary can say that the Father and the Son have a single essence. This is then transferred onto creation itself, showing a shadowy analogue to the Trinity. It becomes more than an analogy when Christ is born into this world and takes on both human nature and the flesh of Mary.

The very use of the terms “Father” and “Son” suggest a close connection to organic nature. The crux of the Patristic idea, and what gave it its impetus, is the identity of essence in all three members of the Trinity. In this regard, he writes in the same work:

The fact of the essence declared to be one in the Father and the Son having one name on account of their similarity of nature seemed to offer an opportunity to heretics to declare that the Unborn God, or a part of Him, was born of Mary. The danger was met by the wholesome resolution that he who declared this should be anathema. For the unity of the name which religion employs and which is based on the exact similarity of their natural essence, has not repudiated the Person of the begotten essence so as to represent, under cover of the unity of name, that the substance of God is singular and undifferentiated because we predicate one name for the essence of each, that is, predicate one God, on account of the exactly similar substance of the undivided nature in each Person.

The argument is specifically against the ancient version of Nominalism and its cognates. The use of a single name does not preclude the differentiation of persons. He is referring to several heresies here, one of which was the idea that the persons of the Trinity are just modes of the singular essence and not actual, separate persons. The main idea of Nominalism is that universals are merely names or words. This is challenged by St. Hilary when he states that a name denotes essence, not the mere apprehension of a bunch of qualities for convenience's sake. The distinction between the person and the essence is no different than essence and existence because “substance” and “essence” are the same.

In Ellen Scully's (2011) *The Assumption of All Humanity in Saint Hilary of Poitiers' Tractatus super Psalmos*, an unpublished doctoral dissertation (Marquette University), she states:

He argues against the conventionalist position that believes names have no tie to nature other than conventional imposition. The conventional position robs us, in Hilary's mind, of our very basis for understanding and belief: “If I do not believe names, if I do not understand the nature from the

words, I ask what ought to be believed or understood? There is no other indication left to me.” Hilary is particularly interested in defending, as we have said, the names “Father” and “Son.” If the sonship of the Son is the result of adoption and not nature, then, Hilary says, the names Father and Son “are useless,” and we accept “Christ as God from name but not from nature.” A belief that the names Father and Son are conventional makes these names “pretenses,” and “things spoken rather than proper.” Throughout the *De Trinitate* Hilary maps out how eternal generation is the only way to preserve the reality—that is, the natural, rather than conventional, connection—between the names and the nature of the Father and the Son (Scully, 2011: 210) This is the very argument of this book.

He did not differ from the other fathers with this argument. Names must denote a substance or they are just arbitrary signs. Conventional connections calls doubt onto the very being of God in general. Finally, in his *De Trinitate*, he writes:

The words, Image of His substance, discriminate between Christ and Him from Whom He is, but only to establish Their distinct existence, not to teach a difference of nature; and the meaning of Father in Son and Son in Father is that there is the perfect fullness of the Godhead in Both. The Father is not impaired by the Son’s existence, nor is the Son a mutilated fragment of the Father. An image implies its original; likeness is a relative term. Now nothing can be like God unless it have its source in Him; a perfect likeness can be reflected only from that which it represents; an accurate resemblance forbids the assumption of any element of difference. Disturb not this likeness; make no separation where truth shows no variance, for He Who said, Let us make man after our image and likeness, by those words Our likeness revealed the existence of Beings, Each like the Other.

One way to understand this is to say that the “thought” of God must be God himself. Like Spinoza centuries later, St. Hilary writes that an

eternal spiritual substance, that which does not have a beginning in time, must be infinite. It cannot have boundaries or borders. These things assume a limit, and hence, imply an object that has the power to so limit. Since Substance is a power above all others, this limit cannot exist. Logical contradiction is not a “limit,” because it is built into the concept of being itself. All that belongs to being as being belongs to God to an infinite degree. It contains all aspects of itself that is cognizable only through itself, rather than another. This is an important foundation for Trinitarian thought.

Following from this logically, that if nature is an aspect of Substance, then it is a system of law. Creation is not an aspect of Substance, but its product. Chaos is the opposite of power. Power is precisely the ability place some order on that which otherwise would be chaotic. Chaos cannot be an aspect of being, but an aspect of its privation: evil.⁷ Chaos in this case is not a quantitative label, but only a qualitative one, or at least primarily a qualitative measure. Therefore, God is the legislator, so law exists because it appertains to Being (as

⁷ Note that this use of “chaos” is not identical to how philosophers like Alexander Dugin use the term.

such) to have it. Therefore, the product of such a being cannot be anything other than lawbound unless some other force intervenes. This force is will, or the ability to misuse or misunderstand it. Even so, the actions of will on the products of God themselves follow understandable laws.

God is “Father” in the sense that all lawbound aspects of creation come from Him. An earthly monarch is “father” for the same reason, though not to the same degree. He discovers and enforces the limits set by the natural order. Law sets limits to things in a way that God cannot be limited. Spinoza, again, is anticipated in St. Hilary in that the Substance is the Father, who then has Logos proceed from himself as His necessary attribute. Logos then creates the objects – the finite modes of Being – that serve to manifest those eternal laws. It is human reason and will that may or may not grasp these laws. Sin serves to give the impression that nature is chaotic. Sin and

mental illness present the world to the sinner in a distorted state. The world does not appear the same to the sinner as to the saint.

This truth lies at the heart of fasting and vigil. These things exist not because God requires them, a common modern error. The idea that God “needs” our prayers – He somehow “feeds” on them as a sacrificial object

– is a monstrous error. Fasting and vigil are there for us: fallen, ignorant, sinful humanity. Epistemology is not about the formal rules of the academic. It is not about salaries or tenure. It is really about creating a vessel that exists for the apprehension of truth. This is what selfdiscipline does. Typical theories of epistemology currently fashionable among academics make no mention of the condition of the human person that comes to “know.” Yet, this is the main ingredient to knowledge because sin and error distort the nature of the world around us.

Free will is not an inherent component to human nature. It is an imposition of grace upon the damaged will. Men are not born free – they are born absolutely dependent and ignorant. The rising to adulthood is precisely about the imposition of limit upon what appears to be unlimited, the “infinite subjectivity” of Hegel. The extent to which our “infinite subjectivity” is limited through fasting, vigil and other practices, the more the person becomes a vessel capable of knowing. If the person is not so disciplined, then “knowledge” becomes the parody of the schools – it is a matter of pure self interest. Even worse, it can descend into the cave itself, taking the mass-produced shadows on the wall as reality. Those shadows are taken as real in the same sense as the Nominalist takes objects, in themselves, as real.

Christ becoming an “object,” that is, His taking on human nature, is a self-emptying, a concept that is familiar enough. It is a form of humiliation. To use Spinoza's language, He has made room alongside His hypostasis as Attribute and placed on Himself the world of the finite mode – the lowest of objects – the flesh of a specific genetic line of people. God became what was unworthy of

Him. Rather than dwell on the mechanics of the divine union, the qualitative concepts here are far more important.

He did this without leaving His Father. Arianism made no sense because they claimed that Christ could act as God without being God. They claimed that Christ can take upon himself the sins of the world in all their horror in the Garden, without being God. This is an absurdity and makes a mockery of Christ's incarnation. Directly from Himself, God the Father can produce nothing other than Himself. The thought of God can be nothing but God, since it proceeds from Substance as the ground of all being.

From this, the Chalcedonian formula necessary follows. God and man must be two separate natures with two separate wills. Wills do not adhere to “persons,” but rather to natures, itself implying Realism clearly. Hence, the Trinity only has one will, not three. This was well known to the Chalcedonian fathers, and equally well known to the Monophysites. This was not some vague matter of “differing language,” since all who served at the Third and Fourth Ecumenical Councils spoke Greek. They were educated in the same liberal arts and knew the Platonic language of nature, person and hypostasis by rote.

The difference was in whether a “person,” or a “manifestation” from something can have a will deriving specifically from this manifestation. If true, then it introduced chaos into the world. When “persons” have a will, then wills can manifest themselves everywhere. Only the state remains to force order on chaos. Natures have a will in that natures are real entities. Nominalism sees natures as created by certain men alone, and hence, only “persons” have will. A nature cannot have one because there is no such thing.

The metaphysics of Chalcedon is even more important: if God and Man are within a singular, newly formed nature, then there is no man as such. Man must be autonomous from God in a very real way. This is because the response to grace must not be intrinsic to human nature, but extrinsic. Man must go to God because—and only because—he wants to.

The church does not philosophize about such matters unless impelled by a crisis. Hilary held that when men want to philosophize about everything and anything, heresy is often the result. Heresy, therefore, in a technical sense, is the demand that things the human mind was not designed to grasp are studied and speculation fills in the gaps of human knowledge. The only rational way to hold to the proposition that the human mind can come to know all things is that if the mind itself is infinite Substance. It is not, and therefore, it can only know certain things. God can create the conditions by which men can know things, but this does not refer to the mind as such, but God's intervention into its work. The mind is a product, created by God so as to come to know and serve Him.

Our earthly limitations mean that, in general, we can know general concept of God for the sake of proper worship. But beyond this is speculation and, from speculation, comes heresy and arrogance. Even Plato did not seek to understand the world of Forms as they are in themselves, but only their general outlines so we would know when we have “found” one. Spinoza did not pretend to grasp the inner workings of Substance, only that it is a necessary being.

St. Cyril of Alexandria (378-444) and the Metaphysics of Chalcedon

St. Cyril of Alexandria remains, unjustifiably, the central patron of those churches which deviated from the Synod of Chalcedon. The non-Chalcedonian sects argue that Cyril justified the view that the nature of Christ had been remade from both his human and divine attributes to create a “new” nature, that of the Godman. This is termed

“Monophysitism,” that is, the view that Christ had only one nature, though this has evolved through the ages. One of the worst metaphysical aspects of the Monophysite view is that Christ is considered neither human nor divine, but rather having a single, new nature that combines, without confusion, elements from them both.

The First Council of Nicaea in 325 clarified previous debates and stated that Christ was both human and divine, a fact necessary for

salvation. This relationship was, philosophically speaking, a difficult one to conceptualize, which is hardly surprising, especially among the Greeks outside of Europe, split into factions that either stressed the human or the divine aspects of Christ.

The followers of Nestorius emphasized the separation of these aspects, positing two elements of Christ's person that were barely able to communicate with one another. This manifested itself in his rejection of Mary as the Mother of God, meaning that the divine and human aspects of Christ were not closely related. He replaced the hypostatic union with the "prosopic union," deriving from the Greek term for "mask" or "appearance." In other words, it was merely the veil of appearance, not the essence, of the union of the two natures. This view has been termed dyophysitism, in that the two natures are not closely related. It is the proper idea of two natures, but just not related ones. This is the context for St. Cyril's view on Christ's nature, not a position in his own right.

St. Cyril encouraged the Synod of Ephesus to condemn Nestorius in 431. Here, he stated that Christ has one *physis* as the Incarnate Logos. *Physis* refers to the concrete being as hypostasis. It is not identical to "essence" (or Form) in the metaphysical sense and is also the central aspect of the term "Monophysite." The opposition to this was not dyophysitism, which derives from Nestorius, but the Orthodox position that posits two natures with two wills, but tightly bound together.

In other words, Cyril uses the word "*physis*" in two senses: that of nature (Form) and that of person. A Nominalist cannot be Christian since Christ cannot be comprehended by it. There are no "natures" in the Nominalist idea, so there can be no hypostases either; there are only persons – not even persons – only masks. The human will is connected in Nominalism to these masks since there's nothing else.

It is easy to use "nature" and "person" as two terms condensed into one. This is because, as far as human relations are concerned, to possess the human nature is to be a man. To have

human nature is to have a will. “Persons” are, for lack of a better term, epiphenomena. The person (that is, the individual) is a residual category for the Realist in the sense that the person is radically dependent on its nature or Form. This nature, manifest in a person, is the concrete universal; it is what is real. The mask is the specific manifestation at best. The Nominalist sees only the appearance, and then tries to argue that the origin of the appearance does not exist.

Cyril regarded the Incarnation as the divine nature irradiating mankind and transforming it. Nestorius saw the incarnation as a moral example more than a metaphysical one. It was not about reconstitution. Christ was the Logos made flesh, the most central element of Christianity.

Trinitarian theology, from St. Cyril, posits a single nature in three persons. When Logos became man, he literally “took on” the nature of man as a universal object. The Monophysites then stated that this meant that one new, redeemed nature was created out of the original two. Logos, for St. Cyril and the Orthodox, walked among mankind as a human man. Nestorius argued that the human nature was just “associated” with the divine in an ethical way. The issue at Chalcedon was in the natures of Christ and their relation, as Nestorius had already been condemned. The Monophysites claimed that the Orthodox were closet Nestorians.

St. Cyril, however, did not share this odd view promoted by the Monophysites. Today, ecumenists argue that, more or less, the two sides of Chalcedon were identical, but used different “language” to define their terms. This is an odd statement because they all spoke Greek. Even more, they were educated in the same method, being immersed in the views of the Greek masters of past ages. Their language and metaphysical language was identical.

For Cyril, the Church has been created by Christ as identical with the kingdom of God, though our condition makes us blind to it. The church before or after our death—and the death of the world as a whole—is the redeemed state not as a matter of type, but only of degree. She is a pure virgin in that she has not been sullied by

heresy, nor is she capable of being so violated. The church is always distinct from the men who control it.

Cyril's Chalcedonian mindset is proven by his writings on the church: the church is always proof of the Chalcedonian idea because she has both a human and divine nature, each nature functioning autonomously, with its own will, united through and in Christ's person. The fact that Cyril can separate the church's human from its divine side proves his Chalcedonian orientation. The true Monophysite cannot make such a distinction consistently.

Cyril also argues that Christ was capable of destroying the sins of man, that is, human nature as an entity, in that he has "taken on the flesh which perishes." This very statement is at the heart of the Chalcedonian formula. If Christ has taken on the "flesh that perishes," then the flesh itself cannot be anything but a nature that is distinct from Christ's godhead. The perishing flesh cannot become this new, synthetic nature that lies at the root of the Monophysite system if it is, in fact, the "flesh that perishes." This would entail that St. Cyril holds that the Theotokos herself is somehow synthesized into the new "Godman" nature.

Cyril states that Logos comes to earth to save man from sin. The Word/Logos, in other words, comes to dwell on earth as man. This statement too cannot be squared with the Monophysite error. Put differently, if the Word comes to earth and dwells among men in the flesh, then there is no theoretical room for the "Godman" synthesis. Keep in mind that the non-Chalcedonian formula does not revolve around the unity between God and Man. It is the synthesis of these two natures into a new nature, that of "Godman." The "Godman" is a synthesis – not a fusion – of both natures to create something new. The Monophysite position, if taken to its extreme conclusion, leads to Christ no longer being the second person of the Trinity, but a new divine entity in his own right.

Christ is one man with two attributes. Spinoza's metaphysics is helpful in this regard. Substance is God, considered from the point of view of its formal "qualities." He speaks of God as a mathematician

would, but two Attributes can be deduced from it. These are the only two aspects of God that can be comprehended by mankind. They are distinct: extension and thought. They are linked in that they both come derive from Substance. They exist as dual only because this is the way that men are “wired” to perceive their external world. The Trinity is not too far from this understanding.

St. Cyril was no Monophysite. When he speaks of Christ's action, he speaks of two natures doing things distinct to each of them. Since these natures are destroyed in the Monophysite “Godman” creation, the divine and human natures cannot do anything. “Godman” acts from the synthesis of both natures. St. Cyril speaks of the human body as one entity with two natures within it. This is body and soul. By analogy, they are the human and divine natures within Christ. Therefore, the two natures and two wills in Christ, like body and soul in man, are two distinct natures existing in a single human person.

St. Basil the Great (330-379) and the Monastic Attack on the Nominalist “Concrete Object”

St. Basil the Great was concerned with ontology to provide a foundation for mental and spiritual peace. This is the purpose of metaphysics. Peace is achieved by unity as its necessary but not sufficient condition. Dispersal of thought is the opposite of peace. Philosophically speaking, the monastic goal is to control this dispersion and maintain an integral focus.

The concept of “the world” does not just refer to the passions and appetites. It also refers to the oppressive power structures on the one hand, and the anxieties which cause fetishes and obsessions, on the other. The individual object alone excites the passions, not the object of thought or the idea. In his famous “Second Letter,” St. Basil writes to St. Gregory Nazianzus:

We must strive after a quiet mind. As well might the eye ascertain an object put before it while it is wandering restless up and down and sideways, without fixing a steady gaze upon it, as a mind, distracted by a thousand worldly cares, be able clearly to apprehend the truth.

He who is not yet yoked in the bonds of matrimony is harassed by frenzied cravings, and rebellious impulses, and hopeless attachments; he who has found his mate is encompassed with his own tumult of cares.

Basil argues that “worldly cares” harm, if not destroy, our “apprehension of truth.” This implies that truth is something separate from worldly cares. It is not only separate, but of a different order entirely. Worldly cares are precisely those things the Nominalist sees as real: physical objects such as money, reputation or technical skill. Yet none of these things are “true” in St. Basil's sense. They are not real at all.

Like everything in Patristic thinking, especially on the monastic life, the final concern is to focus the mind. This focus is itself a rebuke to Nominalism, or the dispersal of thoughts into the particular sensible things of the world. This dispersal of thought lies at the root of sin, since nature is reduced to literally nothing, a random swirl of qualities existing for no purpose except to be dominated and controlled by an initiated elite. Realism at its best understands nature as the dwelling place of Wisdom. There is nothing essential about the specific qualities of the natural world like colors or odors, but it is rather how Wisdom and Logos appears to the person. It is on the plane where appearances actually appear, what Plato called *Khora* in his *Timeaus*.

The 20th century Athonite St. Silouan refused to roughly handle plants or animals because of the presence of Logos within them. Logos, communicated to the monk by the Holy Spirit, is not just for mankind, but for plants and animals too, since they are part of creation. These lower creatures have the benefit of being incapable of sin, since they have no freedom to deviate from their natural purpose. The beauty of the world, in the mind of St. Silouan, can be grasped only because of the fact that it is a singular organism created and maintained by Logos as the second person of the Trinity. The Theotokos is a “compact” version of this creation as she was created, maintained and cleansed by Logos. In her case, she

was literally infused with Logos in a way no other human being can claim. Therefore, she is a particularly powerful icon of what nature was supposed to be.

“Sin” is a state of affairs, not an act. Western Nominalism and positivism determine all reality as part of a “code” of some kind, whether scientific or legal. Everything is based on “policies and procedures.” Reality is more messy. We are called upon to be perfect, but “perfection” does not mean to be without error, but to be complete, lacking nothing. Sin is the state of affairs where the mind depends on the support of the present power structure – the world – for its identity. When the world produces your identity, this is a state of sin. A sinful act is the result of sin, not the sin itself.

Since the end of monasticism is the unification of thought around Logos/Wisdom, then Nominalism must be a heresy. Another way to put this would be to say that knowledge can never be about a particular thing. It can only be about a class of things that is then imposed on any given particular of that same class.

A scientific statement can be defined as a universal truth discovered in the natural order. It is never about a specific object, as science deals only with classes of objects. If Nominalism is true, then scientific knowledge becomes questionable, since the categories of scientific discourse are arbitrary. In other words, there is nothing essential about, for example, causal relations of heat contained in an object. Heat becomes an arbitrary category that describes, in the most general sense, objects that are described as “hot.” Heat then becomes an empty generalization that does little else than abbreviate any group of experiences of hot things. Either hot things—taken as a universal—are real, or “hot” as a universal predicate is whimsical.

The more significant point for monastic studies is that individual objects—the only things that exist in Nominalist thought—are only those things which spur and provoke the passions. A beautiful woman is possessed of voluptuous curves. That woman and those curves, heaven knows, provoke a man's lust. On the other hand, an

anatomical analysis of the same woman, or a geometric analysis of her curves, can never become an object of lust. Men do not express sexual desire for the geometrical concept of curves. They only express desire for one specific arrangement of those geometric truths as manifest in a specific woman's body. "Woman" is never the object of lust; only a specific woman is. The moral issue is that specific things, the world of the Nominalist, are not objects of knowledge only, but they are also objects of lust – men seek to dominate them. One cannot dominate a universal Form.

The mind integrates itself only through the idea. Dispersal is the very principle of Nominalism in the sense of restricting "things that are real" to "things that are particular, physical and individual," which means, in turn, "things that are useful." This latter cannot be an object of knowledge. They can produce knowledge only when the mind leaves the realm of cause and effect and considers only the universal. Yet, if universals are unreal and are only artificial abbreviations for physical objects, then this knowledge is, at its best, arbitrary, or, at worst, highly manipulative. If the goal is the unification of the mind and heart, then the realm of ideas alone becomes the only world for the monk.

St. Basil's monastic "rule" lies at the basis of eastern monasticism in general. The Studite Rule and its Kievan counterpart at the Caves are variations of the outline of St. Basil's letters on monasticism that eventually were collected together as a "rule." The point here is that Realist metaphysics has no real meaning unless there is a means for it to communicate itself to others. Two methods are used to make this happen: ritual and practical rules. Summarizing Basil's monastic idea is really summarizing Basil's approach to the virtues. The point of the virtues, again, is to cleanse the mind so it can recognize and realize the fullness of the church, that is, the energies of Christ on earth.

When St. Gregory Palamas speaks of the uncreated "energies" of God, he is speaking of the presence of Logos in nature, but he is also speaking of Logos "approaching" the monk that has been

cleansed through struggle. It is Eden – the presence of Logos not merely as a quantitative principle of natural law, but also the personal and graceful presence of the Creator. The virtues necessary to experience the presence of this energy lay at the very ground of the ascetic life. It has no other purpose. However, these virtues are not primarily the grist for a philosopher's mill, but exist in love rather than in formal rules. Monastic love is the forgetting of self in the communal experience of God. Basil is generally opposed to the anchorite life, but even those anchorites that are truly called to this sort of life can never live too far from the communal institutions. There is a reason for this.

The community is the monastery. Nominalism sees only the individual both in itself and in social life. For Basil, the monastic institution is the highest manifestation of the fact that the community, not the individual, is the primary ontological element in life. In fact, one of the most important virtues that negates the assumptions of Nominalism is the recognition of a man's dependence on the community. A Nominalist cannot love anything if this approach is followed to its logical end. If love is the merging of one's will with the other, then a Nominalist cannot love. A Nominalist, if consistent, can only use others for his own purpose.

Authority is important because the Form of the community is typified by the moral and ascetic example of the abbot. In our fallen human state, our individualism, developing from pride, seeks its own satisfaction at the expense of others. Nominalism, when applied to social life, is the very metaphysics of Hell. It posits the individual as ontologically isolated from everything else. All relations become examples of mutual manipulation. The abbot is the force that constantly keeps the individual ego on its communal path.

Nominalism is the foundation for democracy and its cognate, collectivism. Community is its anti-type. For St. Basil, "polyarchy" (or "the rule by the many") is the worst of conditions. Democracy, simply

put, is the natural social consequence of Nominalism. Democracy is the only system that makes sense to the consistent Nominalist, but if the trajectory of the ego is to enrich itself at the expense of others, then democracy is the most destructive of systems. For the monk, the abbot is the elected monarch of an eccentric sort; Scripture is the constitution (not the rule) while the assembly of the senior brethren is the Senate. In general terms, the virtue of humility is the one virtue that has no place in democratic thinking. Nominalism is based on the individual and therefore, the inherently egotistical, selfcentered and arrogant impulses of those individuals are the only things that exist.

Still, St. Basil also views the abbot less like a political monarch and more like the chief of psychiatry at a hospital. Politics, at its best, can also be seen as an institution that cures the diseases of vice, and this is a tall order. Having such a “medical” role also has its political and social application a well. Nominalism is not just a philosophical error, it is a disease of the mind. It is a philosophical error only because it derives from the “normal” nature of fallen humanity as egocentric. If you begin with egocentrism, then the constitution of nature appears broken, and this is viewed as its normal state. The Nominalist disease is precisely what the church exists to cure.

In the most general of senses, Christ's taking on human nature cleanses mankind from the sin of pride, a sin that flows normally from Nominalism. Pride refers to the view that enshrines the ego as the sole reality and the single thing that has intrinsic value. All associations of citizens here are accidental, designed to fill a specific purpose, and then dissolve. They have no ontological status because they are conventional, the product of social interaction only.

This is the “root” of evil since it provides justifications for egocentrism. The abbot therefore exists to force the ego to forget itself and serve the community, the church and God before itself. Or more accurately, that in serving these things, the ego is given its proper place, and served well in that regard. The ego certainly exists and cannot be ignored, but its place in the hierarchy of reality is important. The concept of a “penance” is not to “make up for” some

transgression in a penal sense, but rather to force the ego to remain in its bounds; bounds that are typical of its real nature, not its fallen demands.

The Nominalist idea, when applied to theology, leads to endless errors and absurdities. The first and chief is the essential separation of man from God. Since the individual alone has ontological status, then there can be no real communication between God and man. “The Bible” becomes the only way for someone to conceive of God's presence on earth. Since the church is merely an accidental collection of men, it cannot have any role in interpretation, so the individual alone interprets what he reads. Protestantism, not surprisingly, saw the Greek influence in theology as “pagan.”

If the individual alone exists, then the church is not really a “thing,” but a mere collection of like-minded people for the sake of some end. This end is not intrinsic to the association at all, but is an accident stemming from it, a useful tool. God “hears” prayers in the same way that neighbors hear each other through a wall. Since there is no intrinsic connection between God and man – or man and man – God exists only through the Bible on the one hand, or as just another “person,” on the other. God is approached through prayer in the same sense that you would petition your Congressman.

Prayer is not a “petition” since that assumes God has no knowledge of what you need or what you might ask for. God is not just another “individual,” but is present throughout nature and through and in the church.

Communities, not individuals, are the only real things—things that have an “ontological” status. Therefore, in a sense, the presence of God on earth is productive of real, living organisms such as churches, families or monasteries. These are not made up of individuals, but create individuals. Individuals are products of these and similar real organisms. Without them, there would or could be no individuals.

In this view, prayer is not an act. It is a disposition of the soul. It is a soul that is not separated from God, but is in fact bound to him as a

“new man.” The ego-individual is gone – the discarded product of sin. What exists is the community of the church within which the new man has been birthed and must remain. The bishop or abbot are not individuals, but vitally important offices. While these are positions occupied by individuals, they exist only because their offices are tightly integrated and bound with the organism of the church.

The person, the organism and God's presence all create a new singular object that is an earthly Form in Plato's sense. Prayer itself is both an expression and a manifestation of this new Form. It is the Spirit that dwells within the monk addressing its father. It is the Trinity communicating with itself. Prayer is a Form of discipline in that it keeps the monk close to the Trinity as an integral component. Outside of prayer, within the concerns of daily life, the mind is quickly dispersed with the demands that material things make upon it.

St. Basil, for all his philosophical ability, was primarily a practical man. His work on the *Hexameron* only matters if it can be applied to the Christian life and the behavior typified by the Christian virtues. The monastic life is about making oneself capable of receiving or realizing the grace of the Resurrection that exists in the earthly church in its fullness. Salvation, in other words, exists on earth and can be experienced. Eden or paradise exist on earth right now. The problem is that our sins, our preference of the material over the Spiritual; the particular over the Real, keeps us from realizing that grace. Asceticism, in other words, is tightly integrated with Logos theology and Realism in that it cleanses the mind and will so they could experience the fullness of grace within the church right here and now.

St. Basil wrote his famous *Hexameron* as a way of grasping God's creation. The Six Days are the sole subject of this work, and it is designed to explicate the nature of this created order. He writes in the first Homily of the *Hexameron*:

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” I stop struck with admiration at this thought. . . Those who were too ignorant to rise to a knowledge of a God, could not allow that an

intelligent cause presided at the birth of the Universe; a primary error that involved them in sad consequences. Some had recourse to material principles and attributed the origin of the Universe to the elements of the world. Others imagined that atoms, and indivisible bodies, molecules and ducts, form, by their union, the nature of the visible world. . . It is because they knew not how to say "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Deceived by their inherent atheism it appeared to them that nothing governed or ruled the universe, and that was all was given up to chance. To guard us against this error the writer on the creation, from the very first words, enlightens our understanding with the name of God; "In the beginning God created." What a glorious order!

St. Basil was surrounded by the long history of Greek science. Its establishment, in general, did not have the mountains of foundation, government and university money at its disposal, but the scions of the Greek world laid out in detail the nature of their world view. St. Basil sought to combine Greek physics with God's creation over the Six Days.

Christ came to, in part, reject the classical errors about the world. God's purpose, among other things, was to teach about Himself, the Logos inherent in all created things. Of course, the natural order was not created in exactly six days, in that Basil states that the days were not like the days in the modern sense. This is hardly a concession to modern, theoretical science, a phenomenon far older than is generally known. It is inherent in creation itself.

Basil takes from the wisdom of the Greeks in correctly surmising that the Sun is a massive star and that the moon controls the tides. The moon also does not have its own light, but rather reflects that of the Sun. He correctly deduces the method of understanding the species of sea creatures and speaks with some authority about the circulation of the blood. He, in short takes from a highly advanced, Greek science which is still quoted today.

Logos is an essential aspect of all created things. Basil says it is the “substance” that is concealed under the accidental qualities of created objects. St. Basil stresses that nature is not a collection of individuals, but instead are communities, each one containing more communities within them. Nature works by law, which is to say by Logos, and this law is manifest in the organization of communities of beings.

All animal species share a single soul. This is contained in Logos and provides the instincts and desires relative to their kind. A “species” is a useful means of organizing animals, and their similarities that place them in a specific species are not arbitrary, but are a part of the natural design. It is not an “accident” in other words, that species all have those specific things in common. However, Basil stresses that, while there is good, objective reasons for placing all members of a “species” into a single category and calling it a Cougar or Carp, this only tells part of the story. In a certain way, a species is an arbitrary construction even if there are good reasons for so grouping them.

This is because in taking a group of animals or plants out of their context and giving them a label based on their clearly present commonalities removes them from the realm of actual behavior. In other words, the act of creating a species is already an act of dividing the natural community one from another. Taking a single species and separating it from its environment is arbitrary, since there is no good reason for separating the species from the ecosystem it depends upon for survival and, in part, has helped create. The idea of an “object” as distinct from other objects, regardless of the good scientific reasons for studying it, has a bit of arbitrariness in it. St. Basil thinks of nature as communities of communities in constant motion and interaction, not as static objects in themselves.

St. Basil rejects Aristotle in certain key ways. Essences in Aristotle's sense do not exist in Basil's conception of the created order, but

Logos exists and takes on specific qualities in the sense that it keeps them cohesive. Without Logos, Nominalism would be true – there is no specific nature to objects – since objects, taken out of context, actually do not exist. An “object” in the sense of an “individual” does not exist. Logos alone keeps nature in motion as it keeps all the Forms of Plato cohesive. The Form of the Good is the Form of Forms. Things like fish, diamonds or oxygen have no essence in Aristotle's sense. They are mere qualities in motion, but Logos alone is the Substance. Using Aristotle's language, all essences are the same. They are all equally Logos which means that nature is a single unit kept in motion by Logos. Qualities differ, by which we organize nature for the sake of convenience. “Whiteness” and a “white thing” are functionally identical for St. Basil, but Logos alone keeps them in their place.

St. Basil's Logos theology is insufficient for his overall theology. One of his more historically significant contributions was his views on the Holy Spirit. This is, to speak mildly, significant to the concept of Realism and Nominalism. It is very clear, outside the *Hexameron*, that Basil was a Platonist and Realist in that sense. What makes the Holy Spirit significant in theology is that his mission is exclusively in relation to man. Logos is close to an efficient cause of creation in the sense that He is the essence and principle of creation. He is both efficient and formal cause, yet not the material cause. Identifying Logos as material cause is the precise definitive of pantheism.

Basil's argument on the Holy Spirit relative to Realism can be summarized like this:

- Those qualities shared by all created things are not shared by the Holy Spirit;
- Those qualities by which the Spirit is known are not present in creation. The same cannot be said of Logos;
- Therefore, the Holy Spirit cannot be said to be a creature, that is, he is not a part of the natural order in a created sense. Logos is not a creature, but his mission is different, since he has “poured” himself into creation as the efficient and formal cause of natural law;

·The conclusion, therefore is that the qualities shared by Father and Son are also shared by the Spirit.

Basil's Platonism is revealed here: "God created the heavens and the earth. . . He created all the heavens and all the earth, creating the essence with the form. For he is not the inventor of figures, but the creator of even the essence of beings" (*Hexameron*, II, 3).

Nominalism was associated with the hedonists of ancient Greece, since the passions are only evoked by concrete things. St. Basil's metaphysics is appropriate to what we know about God. It is spiritual, leading men to higher knowledge as science – in the true sense – increases. God created the Forms, but human sin brings us only to matter and is provoked by it.

A type of "semi-Arianism" was dominant in the Greek Levant at the time of Basil. This strange view held that Christ should be worshiped (not merely adored), but this did not imply that Christ was totally and perfectly God. Basil concerned himself—naturally enough—with stressing the concept of a "single essence" by which the Trinity is known. That is, a set of qualities (speaking in very general terms) that all persons share.

Though this can be exaggerated, some elements of Spinoza's much later thought can be dimly seen in Basil's writings. Like in St. Cyril, Substance is the essence of the Trinity, and, like in Spinoza, it is infinite and totally free, creative and self-cognized. Substance itself is incomprehensible. It can, however, be seen in its constructive activity, and this is in Spinoza's two Attributes. This idea Basil and Spinoza share. Since the Trinity shares something— philosophically, not theologically, speaking— like Substance, then this Substance is God; it is incomprehensible in itself, is totally infinite, uncreated and totally constructive of many other things that are, of themselves, not Substance. Many commentators on Spinoza have insisted that the objects generated by Substance are, in fact, Substance. This is false in that those things generated by Substance are not Substance, but aspects of Substance's creativity that are specifically amenable to

human comprehension. It is similar to the difference between creation and Logos.

Logos in St. Gregory of Nyssa (335-395)

Often, those writing on Patristics do not have a background in the history of metaphysics. On the other hand, those writing on metaphysics usually do not have a background in theology and almost always refuse to see the Patristic writings as legitimate continuations of Realism or even metaphysical systems at all. This lack of overlap is a serious intellectual problem.

As mentioned before, Realists must believe, in one sense or another, in Forms. These are Archetypes and are Reality in the strict sense. Because material things are constantly in flux and our own human perception picks up only the tiniest aspects of the external world, the Forms are prerequisite for all knowledge. They are the benchmarks of Truth. In this respect, St. Gregory of Nyssa writes, None of those things which are apprehended by sense perception and contemplated by the understanding really subsists, but the transcendent essence and cause of the universe, on which everything depends, alone subsists. For even if the understanding looks upon any other existing things, reason observes in absolutely none of them the self-sufficiency by which they could exist without participating in true Being. On the other hand, that which is always the same, neither increasing nor diminishing, immutable to all change whether to better or to worse (for it is far removed from the inferior and it has no superior), standing in need of nothing else, alone desirable, participated in by all but not lessened by their participation – this is truly real Being. And the apprehension of it is the knowledge of truth (Life of Moses, 2, 24-25).

St. Gregory was more a poet than a metaphysician in a strict sense, but he was part of a long line of Greek Platonists who saw Christ intimated in ancient Greek thought, especially the Realism of Plato.

The Orthodox use of Platonic and Neoplatonic metaphysics is to finally solve Plato's problem – how the Forms can be brought into the experience and purview of any honest man. When Plato died, he left that as the single greatest problem of his system. If the Forms were the source of goodness in creation, then their remoteness from human experience is a gaping hole in the theory. They might be real, but real for whom? Plato was a “prophet” in the sense that he was given insight into the structure of the world that could only be made complete by the revelation of Christ as the “I AM” – God.

His metaphysics is based, in part, in Plato's *Symposium*: all earthly pleasures which fade lead to that pleasure that does not fade, pleasure that is not mixed with pain, that is, God Himself. All earthly loves imply the Form of love, the origin of love that unifies and defines all specific manifestations of it. The grace, that is God's presence on earth, existing in His church is the manifestation, the “hypostasis” so to speak, of the Form of beauty and love, accessible to men who need only believe in the Trinity and all that it implies. The Good is brought down to the church and made flesh in numerous senses of the term.

This “ascent of the mind,” so central to Gregory's vision (and most Patristic writers), requires that our passions be transfigured rather than repressed. The “ascent” is a standard concept in ascetic philosophy and remains the absolute center of its life. The ascent implies that man lives in a nominal world, one populated by individual sensibles that can never be objects of knowledge. The ascent is to leave that world—the work of physical sensibles— and grow in spirit and mind to apprehend, in some limited way, the Forms themselves, thereby revealing Logos. This is how a philosopher sees the ascetic life.

“Passion” is only a problem when it assumes Nominalism: that only the individual sensible object is real. This sensible object does not impress the mind in a rational way, but in a passionate way that provokes the desire to have and control it. The object is perceived as a means to the end of some pleasure. Such provocation lies at the

heart of Fallen humanity. This is not a “bad” thing in itself, just an incomplete one: the objects that exist in daily life imply an Object that exists eternally. We naturally desire delight and satisfaction that does not fade. Therefore, our limited pleasures necessarily imply a much greater and eternal pleasure. This transfiguration of the mind's power through the actual constitution of the perceived objects forces the earth-bound mind upwards to the world of Forms; the Truth that is unchanging and the true pleasure that does not fade.

The world of “individuals” the Nominalist takes for granted is a world of falsehood. They can be arranged in the mind by basic, practical logic. If logic is something “added” to the sensible world (as the Nominalist must claim), then there is no a priori reason to assume that this logic is natural to them. Logic in this view presupposes that it is a human creation that exists to “work upon” sensible objects and is therefore foreign to them. It is imposed on things rather than being a part of them. Reason, as opposed to logic, is inherent in the world though Logos and the Forms. The same reason exists in the human mind and connects thought to reality. Nominalism cannot accept this.

The “particular” is taken for granted in part because it is the norm in modern social life. It is very difficult to fight Nominalism because it is so deeply ingrained in experience, but this experience presupposes Nominalism to begin with. Our apprehension of social life is prior to any speculation about reality. Social life must come before science and produces some kind of consensus that is then imposed on the world of sensation. The Enlightenment mind assumes that the self is an arbitrary abstraction from the whole, while the real, living social community is conspicuously left out of its general epistemology because it is perceived as a conventional, contrived thing. Even Rousseau's General Will is an abstraction without any inherent content. This is one of the central steps in putting together a rational defense of metaphysical Realism.

The Trinity is based on the rejection of Nominalism since a Nominalist can make no sense out of three persons sharing an

identical substance. Nominalist epistemology cannot grasp the existence of this Highest Universal generating two additional persons who remain fully persons. The world of the Trinity is a social whole that excludes the concept of individualism in favor of the most concrete of all universals, unified by a common purpose and power. The relations of the Trinity are as significant as the persons themselves. These relations are those of love, that is, a mutual ontology that unifies the persons in their separateness. They are not isolated, but exist in a context. In our own social life, to separate the individual from the social whole that created and nurtured it is arbitrary and factually false: there is no possibility of the individual without the whole. The individual is a product of the whole, whose rationality is generated through the socialization and education that the community provides. Only through ideological special pleading is the individual will taken as paramount.

St. Gregory writes in his *Commentary on Ecclesiastes*:

The universe contains everything, and its harmony does not admit the dissolution of created beings; instead, we have concord between them all. Neither is the universe severed from any of its parts; instead, he who truly exists holds all things by his power. God indeed is true existence or absolute goodness; also, any name we ascribe to him points to his unutterable reality (s. 406).

Reality here is unutterable in the same sense that Spinoza's Substance is unutterable. It contains infinite content. Logos is the very primal manifestation of infinite content given logical form and structure. This is why Logos cannot be fully understood by the limited human intellect. It assumes a familiarity with infinite content, something beyond the abilities of any man. It can be understood in its effects, and from this, an outline of the cause can be the object of speculation, but nothing can be grasped beyond this.

While we can grasp the presence of this law and structure in natural and social forms, this is Logos only in a limited and partial way. Gregory in the above passage stresses the concept of "concord"

between all the Forms of the cosmos. Logos serves as the essence (in Aristotle's sense) of objects in the cosmos (including the whole) as well as the relations among objects, systems and subsystems of that same whole. The cosmic whole, therefore, becomes an object, though not of cognition. It is the partial manifestation of Logos.

Gregory's Platonism is shown by his phrase "does not admit the dissolution of created beings." The point here is that the Forms of objects do not disappear. Their manifestations in the world of sense come and go, but their eternal archetype in Logos remains. "Power" in this passage is presented identically as St. Gregory Palamas will explain many years later. The "Power" that holds all the cosmos together as a whole is the Light of God, His energies or grace, both referring to the same object. Light is therefore a metaphysical concept that refers to the grace of God, via Logos, sustaining the cosmos as a single entity. The broader point is that this grace is personal, it is the presence of Logos, the second person of the Trinity as God. This structure is not a dead scientific law, but a Person.

And again, on the Psalms:

If the entire world order is a kind of musical harmony whose artisan and creator is God, as the Apostle says (Heb. 11.10), then man is a microcosm, an imitator of him who made the world. The divine plan for the world sees this image in what is small, for the part is indeed the same as the whole. Similarly, a piece of small, transparent stone reflects like a mirror the entire sun in the same way a small object reflects God's light. Thus I say that in the microcosm, man's nature, all the music of the universe is analogously seen in the whole through the particular inasmuch as the whole is contained in the particular. The structure of our body's organs follows this example, for nature has skillfully constructed it to produce music (cf. 33-34).

The differences among persons, the social whole and God are highly fluid; there is no strict boundaries. Boundaries exist because human beings are fallible and limited. The whole is the only real object of

knowledge, but human beings can only begin from the immediate, and relatively false, report of their senses; apprehension of the particular. The Trinity remains both the first church and the first society, where individuals find their place only within the whole.

Persons are “individuals” only in the secondary sense that the whole and its functions have created them and endued them with the proper moral vision to function at all. The whole creates the part in the sense that the part only makes sense when considered as a part of the whole, never something by itself. Modernity is based on destroying the whole, and, as a moral result, enthroning the greed of acquisition as the primal, base and purposeful element of human life. It becomes its own end. Even those theories that make reference to the community are empty abstractions.⁸

These realizations are the ancient foundation of Realist thinking both metaphysically and socially. These two fields are tightly integrated and related, and the distorted thinking of modern metaphysicians is based around the complete separation of these various branches of the same reality. Presently, the philosophical establishment has much to answer for, with large salaries and light teaching loads unmatched by any real contribution to actual understanding. As of this writing, analytical philosophy tried to justify itself as the inferior

⁸ Traditionalist writers such as Hegel or Herder are exceptions to this, misunderstood as they are.

handmaiden to what they think “science” is. Serious philosophy is being done only outside of the universities. There can be no separation between the assumption of Nominalist ideas and the analytic desire to serve as the retainer of the scientific elite.

Ethics, social life, theology and ontology are the same field, using different vocabularies and approaching the identical subject matters from different methodological starting points. There is no metaphysics apart from social life, since it is our associations that create

metaphysical speculation in the first place or provide the intellectual foundations for cognition at all. Realism understands that social communities are the only basis of social life, while Nominalism assumes that the individual alone is real. The argument for both is ultimately a social one as the separation of metaphysics from social life is capricious. The social whole and our place in it is set down by the functionality of the Trinity. The proper understanding of the Trinity does not

necessarily come normally in a fallen universe and it requires personal purification and transformation in order to be perceived clearly in its effects. In other words, the Trinity only becomes difficult to understand if Nominalism is already taken for granted.

The Incarnation, which is “continued” by the sacraments, is the bringing to earth the Forms of Plato in their true sense, philosophically speaking, as Logos, their vehicle. They are brought to us in a way where sinful and fallen man can grasp the purpose and structure of the Form without having recourse to technical philosophy. Plato was metaphysically correct (in general), and his vision went as far as unaided human reason can go. Christ's presence is a means of rectifying normal human error in these critical matters. Intellectually speaking, Plato laid out the foundation while later, Christ and his church filled in the many blanks.

As any good Realist would recognize, Logos theology is the presence of the imminent Forms in nature. This is not to say that there are not independent Forms, that is, the Form of Divinity present in the church, but human senses comprehend Form as imminent before they are understood as transcendent. Nevertheless, even fallen humanity can dimly see the Wisdom present in the natural world.

Realism versus Nominalism, a debate quite alive in Plato's time, was the first real debate over the nature of reality in an abstract sense. The spiritual world cannot be nominal in that spirit is by its very structure a Form. The spiritual world cannot be “lusted” after

because it is not physical. The centrality of Nominalism in modern society was a necessary step for the Will to Power to become the passion for domination. Nominalism is the source of moral error.

St. Gregory says,

Even the inquiry as to that thing in the flesh itself which assumes all the corporeal qualities has not been pursued to any definite result. For if any one has made a mental analysis of that which is seen into its component parts, and, having stripped the object of its qualities, has attempted to consider it by itself, I fail to see what will have been left for investigation. For when you take from a body its color, its shape, its hardness, its weight, its quantity, its position, its forces active or passive, its relation to other objects, what remains that can still be called a body, we can neither see of ourselves nor are taught by Scripture. . . .

Wherefore also, of the elements of this world we know only so much by our senses as to enable us to receive what they severally supply for our living. But we possess no knowledge of their substance (Against Eunomius, 949).

The purification of the mind, will and senses is a prelude to being able to experience the grace of the resurrection and to see Logos/Wisdom clearly in the natural world. The sacramental life is a small glimpse of this, since it is the natural world set aright, that is, the presence of Wisdom and purpose (all one object) becoming clear, even, or especially, to simpler, humbler minds.

The Nominalist understanding of abstract objects—actually abstract qualities—disappears as Logos, the imminent Form of Truth in things, becomes manifest. The specific qualities, while part of the world's beauty, become radically secondary to their final and formal cause. Qualities (or “accidents”) are illusions born of passion and mental dispersion. They have their place of course, but they are radically secondary to the actual Truth of the objects they manifest. Qualities are symbols in the true sense of the world. They are not objects in themselves, but they point to the world of Form.

Our knowledge of matter is only the knowledge of individual things, the only things considered to exist in the Nominalist mind. All matter is, as far as the human mind is concerned, is a collection of qualities such as color, length or vividness. In this regard the Nominalists are correct, but this is not the end of the story. Matter is, as the great Gregory Skovoroda writes, the mere “quality of appearing.” For x to appear in a material sense, it manifests its qualities and the essence remains hidden. Getting “behind” appearance is the entire purpose of social life and philosophy. Reality is one of the most unreal elements to the modern mind. Reality is that which does *not* appear, but generates appearance.

Logos as Forms present in nature (or rather, the Form of the Good or Wisdom) is shown in *Genesis*, where the Logos, or the Word of the Father, becomes manifest in the specific life of natural objects, or more accurately, natural systems that generate individuals as secondary elements of themselves. Individual objects might be the most obvious ingredient of a system, but they exist only because the system, and its creator, exists first. Creation is self-contained through the presence of Wisdom – it is self regulating and mutually reinforcing, and hence, natural laws (that is the active presence of Logos) are inherent in its operation. Gregory writes in his *Against Fate*:

We may perceive the divine nature in every good thought and name manifested in our lives such as light, truth, righteousness, wisdom, incorruptibility and any other good we can comprehend. we recognize the divine nature and its attributes by all those things which are opposite to it, for example, death instead of life, deceit instead of truth and every type of evil inimical to man.

All this means is that Reality is what modern man believes is not real. Reality is Wisdom/Logos, while appearance is generated by it. If human beings were sinless, Wisdom would appear first, then qualities would serve as their decorative outer coating that would

“bring out” many aspects of its essence without being essential themselves. This is how Law can actually be beautiful. It is the essence of the Platonic system in both the *Statesman* and the *Symposium*. Put in the simplest terms, objects, taken in isolation, make no sense. Systems, and the System of Systems is the object of human knowledge, or creation as such. This is as far as the human mind can penetrate into the divine “essence.”

The earth, or the individual objects of the Nominalist mind, can only produce natural reason and logic. It cannot go beyond these practical, but essential, faculties. The human will, logic and body are productions of the earth and its natural processes. In other words, they can produce nothing but expressions of themselves. To claim that matter alone exists is an example of circular reasoning. If the earth produces human beings and their logic, then only earthly things can be understood from it. This does not imply materialism, but is the result both of passion, intellectual laziness and the corporate conformity of modern thought. Yet, as Gregory states regularly, the human mind is not satisfied with the acquisition of the world and its earthly products and always desires more. This desire strongly implies the existence of a spiritual world that alone can make sense out of the free and restless will.

Logos, as the Stoics proved and as the Old Testament explains, can be seen in nature, albeit very dimly. Man, possessed of spirit (that is, freedom) can recognize Christ in the sense that Christ was capable of taking human flesh under the mask of a singular person. This is to say that the human nature/Form can, under the proper conditions, produce a Theotokos that can “contain,” so to speak, the presence of the divine fire. When considered rightly, the earth finds its proper place as the domain and vehicle of the spirit, shown most obviously in

iconography. The individual object also finds its place as secondary to the Forms, the whole and the ecosystems of the natural world. The final end is the total destruction of dualism: matter becomes spiritualized while spirit takes on redeemed matter. Wisdom becomes the primary quality in matter rather than as a secondary

quality as it is seen by fallen man who is controlled by earthly and material desires. Reflecting on these desires, however, cannot come from matter since matter can only recognize itself. It is inherently non-reflective. It is a “brute given.”

Matter is capable of creating individuals, and, like the Scholastics, Gregory holds that matter is known primarily as the principle of individuation (which is the same as appearing). Spirit cannot be created by matter, as the occultists of the Renaissance claimed, but the reverse is true: matter is created by spirit for its own purposes. The ideal becomes real under the Form of matter as a family becomes one in the Form of a household. Thinking of the family as a singular unit is not the result of material processes, but rather the result of Wisdom inherent in matter that creates law where there would be chaos. Law must come first, then matter as the reverse does not make logical sense.

St. Gregory sets up this ontological poetry so the final purpose of his writings can be made manifest: to grasp, in a vaguely Plotinian sense, the ascent of the human mind from the individual thing to the Platonic Form which is given its true shape through the incarnation. Put simply, Nominalism produces the dispersal of thoughts into eventual chaos and schizophrenia. Form is more real than matter, yet, largely inaccessible except to the truly gifted, such as Plato, the prophets or Stoics such as Emperor Marcus Aurelius. The church exists to change this fact; to bring the Form to those other than the freakishly gifted. Form can be understood by all men within the church in one sense or another. Grace, or the presence of the Spirit, is required both to lift the mind to heaven as well as recognize the Forms as truly real. In fact, grace is even necessary to implant the desire to rise above the muck of materialism. It is not easy to so rise, but it is easy to live in the determined world of matter.

Two conflicting things are true about the human mind, a schism that is the result of the Fall. First, that the mind, at its most ideal, seeks pleasures and truths that are beyond the present material world of individuals arbitrarily classed (in the modern, scientific sense) under

genera and species. The second is that the mind desires to see the Forms – to go beyond the material individual. Yet, these are stymied by the fact the world of isolated objects forces man to live like an animal, to be focused on the world of the passions, which is precisely the desire for the material, individual things of the world to dominate them. This is the “hoarding” desire of fallen man whereby things like governments, possessions, armies, bureaucracies, factories and other idols are created and justified in the frantic desire for security. They cannot give security at all.

It is “natural” in the fallen sense, for the human mind to accept Nominalism as true. It derives from the passions, not reason, and it takes discipline to escape. This is because individual things are amenable to ownership, control and destruction. Only when the mind is freed from this “commodity fetish” can man soar beyond the individual to the Form, or the truth. Once the modern world made factory life and the control over nature its *raison d’être*, Nominalism became its official ideology since that mentality cannot even conceive of a Form which gives shape and purpose to the natural world. The machine does that.

The modern mentality claims that nature has no purpose precisely so the elite can give it its purpose for a profit. There is no value in things except as the machine makes them valuable. Modernity and Postmodernity can be almost reduced to that single proposition. If nature contains (as its essence) Wisdom, then man's will becomes secondary; its purpose then is to discover and enjoy it, not control it. Nominalism, in assuming that nature has no purpose, gives the Regime its ideological justification to dominate the world. This domination is the “giving” of purpose to nature. In other words, claiming that nature has no *telos* is to give the elite permission to create and re-create nature as they see fit. *Telos* is then manufactured as part of a mass-production scheme.

In St. Gregory's work on the mind's ascent, his philosophical concern is to refute Nominalism in the practical sense that “individual objects” in space-time are illusions; phantasms created by

man's passion to dominate and to hoard. The Scriptures, especially the Wisdom books, dealing explicitly with Logos present in the world, as well as the liturgical poetry and readings, are essential (yet insufficient) for the mind's ascent from unreality to reality. It is unsurprising that these books are rarely referenced.

Unreality is the nominal world – the world of appearances with their two-fold accompaniment: labels and corresponding emotions. The world of nominal realities is the false world of labels masquerading as reality. The term masquerade is essential because it denotes the words and labels so dear to Nominalism as mere masks, revealing far less than they hide. Modernity's error is to take the mask as real. The entire modern philosophy of language is predicated on that error.

In the church too, the ascent is made in Symbolic Form. The nave is the fallen world; the cave, the “vale of tears” in and from which we struggle against the passions for the sake of achieving reality. The icon screen is not a barrier, but an entryway from appearances to reality via the icons. Finally, the altar area is the divine darkness, symbolized in the Old Testament by the Holy of Holies. Therefore, the church is a manifestation of the Forms of Wisdom present in the world. It is the only actual scientific reality in the world for that very reason. Symbols are not unreal, they are entryways into reality. Man's desire for possessions demand that the unreal be taken as real. The elite, the factory owners and the “scientific establishment,” then decide what reality is.

Forms, however, are not the end of the journey. They are the penultimate stop to the divine darkness. Forms are the expressions of divinity purged of all nominal appearances. Forms are the entryway to God, not God himself. While the Forms are externalized Wisdom which Logos synthesizes wholly, the origin of the Form is the divine darkness; God the Father. God the Father is not rational, he is beyond Form, reason and logic; he is the origin of the order within which human logic and language makes sense. The structure

of reality, or Wisdom, implies a further creator. To avoid the absurd infinite regress; God the Father, beyond all rational description (save what is revealed though Wisdom), is the final source of all order and the Order of order; that is, the Presence that must exist making the order of Formal reality make sense at all.

From his *Great Catechism*:

For although this last form of God's presence among us is not the same as that former presence, still his existence among us equally both then and now is evidenced: now he rules in us in order to hold together that nature in being; then he was transfused in our nature, in order that our nature might by this transfusion of the divine become itself divine—being rescued from death and put beyond the reach of the tyranny of the Adversary. For his return from death becomes to our mortal race the commencement of our return to immortal life (*Great Catechism* 25).

The common element here is the vision of order in created things. As thinking degenerates, man's reason becomes more and more effaced and soon takes on its Postmodern form: it is mere rationalization. Nominalism exists in part to remove any language that might be used to express universal truths in the world. Once that is taken as an axiom, then reason has no use except as a means to gain the objects of the passions. It would be like hiring Michael Jordan as a soccer coach.

Like all the major church fathers, there is no distinction between our spiritual and emotional state on the one hand, and our perception of the external world, on the other. The external world, in other words, is perceived in part according to our internal state. This central postulate of Patristic philosophy must be rejected by modern academic philosophy because it would likely eliminate most “professional philosophers” from ever philosophizing. The point is to stress that perception does not

account for the outside world – it accounts, in part, for our internal state as well.

God is distinct from matter in the sense that God is One – He is unity. Matter is dual. It is dual because of the very nature of creation itself. God “pours himself out” into creation, so Logos is found in all things. Matter is dual because it is material, yet contains the Logos, its purpose or place in creation. It is known not through itself, but only in relation to all around it.

Metaphysics here, like among all the church fathers, centers around the spiritual state of the knower. St. Gregory calls philosophy “speculative asceticism” in that it can only be accomplished when the knower has been purified by the church. At the same time, speculation cannot be separated from daily practice. Practice in daily life can never be separated from the daily fare of philosophy. There is not a “specialized” academic philosophical vocabulary that can be quickly dispensed with when getting back to the “real world.” Philosophy is about purification when considered in speculation, while asceticism is about the actual world of purification.

Philosophy only has as its purpose selfmastery – to grasp the inner self and its purpose in the world. In so doing, as St. Augustine was not opposed to saying, we come to some indirect knowledge of God and His activity. The body, seen as flesh in motion, acts as if it is selfsufficient, seeing material things are all it needs. Only when one goes inward can the emptiness be seen. It is the soul and the will that need completion. Our passions are the Platonic “unlimited” while our ascetic endeavors are the “limit” that is placed upon them.

The Nominal world, that world that is arbitrarily divided into things, objects, sensibles and groups of the above, is mediocre. It is the common possession of all the ignorant. Objects are not real in that they have been “set off” from each other. This is an arbitrary setting off having more to do with control than reality, yet it forms the very basis of Nominalist ontology. What counts as an object, an “individual” itself, is always changing. Ecosystems are considered as

individual as the plants within it, but this does no harm to the doctrine considered “common sense” by those who are saturated and drowning in the modern world.

The True Christian philosopher is the only free man because only he can grasp the fact that the “objects” of this world are not objects of knowledge: they are objects of desire first and foremost. They are as unstable as the desire for them; from there, the moral world can be deduced with the assistance of both the Bible and the Patristic consensus. The “sensibles” of modernist ontology only take on reality when they become an aspect of the Regime: the recreation of matter takes place in the interests of the powerful. Individuals are only individuals when they are manipulated for the sake of those with the power to so manipulate.

In theology, the very words Christ used to describe his own relation to the Father are the groundwork of the Orthodox ontology. In other words, the unmistakably metaphysical “in,” as in, “I am *in* the Father” are the terms used to describe the church and its own relationship to the Father through Jesus. At the same time, the members of the Trinity are “in” one another. Each contains the other two. The Trinity itself is a middle ground, the idea, of reality in itself. The Trinity is the middle ground between what became Islamic Unitarianism and pagan polytheism. Metaphysics itself forbade Gregory and his peers from seeing God as a single, monolithic unit and nothing more. God is a community that has overcome the one/many problem before the world was created. His very power assumes and implies that he is creative, since his very thought is itself God, since it is internal to the omniscient workings of God. Simple reflection forbids the Unitarian concept of God to make any sense. St. Gregory rejects the *filioque* because the Father is the principle of unity, the generator that generates His own thought and action, which, by definition, must be God.

The Father serves as the core of reality since he is the ground of Being. The I AM – Yahweh – then acts, moves and thinks in a sense far beyond man's understanding. He generates (rather than creates)

Logos and the Spirit from these actions. They are a part of God, they come from Him, yet His thought cannot be incomplete, nor can His action. These are God too in that there is no essential distinction between the thought and the mind that generates it in God (but not among men). There is a distinction in hypostasis, or manifestation, but to separate them is to fall into the Nominalist error. Effects are never *sui generis*, nor is their meaning. Individuals make no sense unless seen as hypostases, or “standing under” the broader Idea of the system.

Western Monasticism and Realism: Saints Benedict (480-547) and Romuald (951-1027) on Monastic Stability

To think that the Benedictine virtue of “stability” is a metaphysical idea, or at least derivable from one, seems ridiculous and unnecessary. Unfortunately, work on the concept of “stability” in the Orthodox west is still in its infancy. When properly understood, stability, as it is defined by the various Benedictine congregations, it becomes the very essence of monasticism.

The concept of “stability” in the Benedictine tradition is often overlooked and misunderstood. It is normally described as the insistence that a monk not seek to leave is monastery in which he was professed. Of course, this is good advice, since there is no “perfect” monastery and searching for one causes harm. However, it means far more than this.

Stability is multifaceted, and probably the most complex idea in all Benedictinism. It refers to the stilling of inner listlessness, personal integrity and living in the “moment” rather than worrying about the past or future. The mind needs to be focused rather than dispersed. In modern times, the constant flood of images, often moving at high speed, is far more than the brain was designed to handle. The result can be stimulus overload and the total dispersal of thoughts. It leads to the lack of focus so many have called ADHD.

Stability is as much an internal, spiritual virtue as it is a social one. Stability is the focus of the person on the monastery, community and the tradition itself. Stability is not to introduce innovation unless absolutely necessary, and even there, only so long as the necessity persists. To remain stable is to stand; to stand is to “stand up.” It is the legitimate pride that comes with the struggle for holiness. But this is not “pride” in its sinful sense, but rather an awareness of the integral nature of the monastic life. Nothing is outside it. It contains all necessary for a rational life, far more so than the life outside the cloister.

Most of all, however, it refers to the “metaphysics of place.” this is a term that this author coined when dealing with Heidegger. It is the fact that the “place,” in all its facets, becomes an integral part of the person living there. There is no real distinction (though there is a practical one), between the person and his surroundings. The self is not just the individual will, but the self comes to define its own workings as “working among.” This does not just refer to people, but to the architecture, topography, icons, customs, and idiosyncrasies of the place itself. To hold that the self is, over a period of time, essentially and fundamentally distinct from place is to make yet another error of the Nominalists. It is a variation on the perennial Nominalist error: that of arbitrarily separating things that always seem to work together. It takes the community and abstracts the “self” from it. This is unjustified both on social and logical grounds.

“Stability” in the Benedictine sense is precisely this “metaphysics of place.” If you were to leave the monastery where you made your profession and progressed as a monk, you would not be the same person. One's personhood is more than the will and the chemical functions of the brain, as modernity hypothesizes. It is the very place and landscape of daily life. The only real victory of existentialism is the fact that it has taken the “day to day” and made it the centerpiece of philosophy. The analytic school made certain to destroy this practical relevance, satisfied in taking words out of

context and exploring their “inner meaning.” A more irrelevant discipline cannot be devised.

The “day to day” is an important aspect of philosophy properly considered, and “stability” is the real meaning of this practical applied metaphysics. Certain saints like Kevin, the Athonites or Cyril of White lake cannot be taken from their natural surroundings. Their very “place” helped make them who they are. The famed picture of St. Seraphim feeding a bear in the forest speaks volumes of how important this concept is. The Athonite is no more separable from his steep cliffs than Seraphim was from his forest. These were not just the “background” of the saint's life (which itself, is an aspect of Nominalism), but fundamentally constitutive of the person.

Stability, within the monastic concept, itself creates a channel of grace. When the surroundings of the day to day become one with the soul, it is much easier for grace to be perceived. Grace, or its experience, can even become associated with specific places, like St. Cuthbert's Inner Farne. The very existence of sacred trees or pools, in Christian and preChristian times, shows the significance of place in the life of grace. Seeing Logos in a specific place becomes easier when that very place has helped create your own sense of purpose. This is the difference between a “house” and a “home.” A house is the domain of the

Nominalist: a set of repeating qualities that are given various names to describe or denote them, but ultimately, have no connection to them. They are no more than the names themselves. A home, of course, cannot withstand this treatment. The warmth of “home” is beyond the ken of Nominalist thinking, because the name comes from within the experience, not without. The well known “warmth” of home and hearth cannot be exhausted by Nominalist categories. It might be the origin of those categories, but their reality only takes into itself a small aspect of experience. More accurately, the present inhabitants of a home are working out the life of the “place.”

Stability is stillness in the integral tradition. Christ is the rock, not the ocean. Tradition demands stability since the two ideas are tightly intertwined. Tradition, in order for it to be accepted and properly applied, must agree with the “givens” of human nature. Confession to an elder, vigils, fasting and other monastic practices exist as tradition not because they are old, but because they have created saints. Even from the most secular point of view, the great monastic reformers were men of extraordinary and miraculous integrity and ability. They became that way because they refused any other life than the one immersed in tradition and purpose. This would justify the monastic life even if Christianity were totally false.

It has created saints, in turn, because it agrees with our fallen human nature in the same sense that medicine agrees with our bodily organism to cure disease. It might be temporarily uncomfortable, but this does not diminish its importance. Human nature must be prepared to receive the discipline of tradition and the grace that it helps to be realized only because it matches up with the life, struggle and sin of fallen man. If it does not, then it is a mere imposition without purpose.

From the point of view of the regular and routine, problems arise. Stability demands that the avoidant personality be rejected. Stability is partially about facing problems rather than fleeing them. Problems are themselves an aspect of the discipline that creates monks. Problems create the community in the same sense that problems bring families closer together, or foreign occupation helps nations become more cohesive. Problems, usually arising from the ego that seeks to dominate, rather than to enter the community, help reform that community without ever leaving its own purpose.

The metaphysics of “place” as defined by the benedictine tradition might be summarized, but not exhausted, in seven basic points:

First, that stability is a metaphysical postulate, an ontological object that cannot be fully described in normal language, that implies that

God has called his servants to work out the issues at a specific place with its own eccentric problems.

Second, that all monastic life is struggle. Without struggle, even from the secular point of view, no accomplishment is struggle. Struggle and pain, however, are never ends in themselves. They are means to the end of strength, to persevere in the faith and struggle no matter how unfair it seems. Avoiding sin is impossible. Giving up is quite avoidable.

Third, stability is also about maintaining momentum. Monks throughout the world write regularly about *aboulia*, that sense of inner sickness, the lethargy that derives from mental exhaustion. It cannot be avoided, but it can be alleviated. Part of this is the monastic routine and the differences in seasons, saints days and the alternation and balance of fearing and fasting periods. When the monastery and its surroundings become “yours,” then it is easier to remain motivated than when you are alienated from your surroundings.

Fourth, grace, the energetic presence of Christ, is never separated from the community, whether it be the family, parish or monastery. The Diocese itself derives from all of these, and can never act independently of them. Bishops do not dispense grace from above as so many Orthodox today claim in their various polemics. Grace is a communal experience of Christ's presence that is uncreated and eternal. No one prays alone, even the most isolated recluse. The community prays, and the community itself is, so to speak, the “incarnated presence” of the Spirit. If grace is uncreated, then no one controls it. Not bishops, abbots or patriarchs. It is a constituted part of the community in the faith and never outside it, since Grace and falsehood are opposites.

Fifth, our identity is very finite. There is no such thing as a “global community,” since such a thing would be too large to be meaningful. The larger the community, the more abstract its laws must be. The more diverse the population, the more the law must be alienated from the community as a whole, since specific laws can

only apply to specific people. Localism is the most manageable way to pursue any public interest since it agrees with man's limited senses and natural constitution. Man can only see so far ahead. Stability makes sense because the locality is the one place where even the most ordinary of people can actually make a difference. It serves as an arena for virtue in that no community can exist without humility.

Sixth, stability, was a large part of the great Roman Stoic vision. The Stoic ideal was duty to the state, which itself was the summation of all the virtues. The state was Reality because that which was outside of it was irregular, asymmetrical and impossible to control. It was chaotic and hence, prevented the living of a real human life. While this horizon is highly limited, its overall conception became rightfully very influential.

Seventh and finally, the monastery or parish is the natural outgrowth of the organic and biological family. It is a natural movement from the family to the parish, monastery or labor guild. These are more abstract in that they are not bound by ties of blood, but they are small enough and have enough of a focused interest and set of traditions that the good life can be pursued there. Stability is natural – it derives from the very social elements of human nature that seek identity in the family, the guild and the parish for a balanced life based on anything other than self will. Once these institutions fade, mental illness can be the only result.

The Order of St. Romuald, now present only in a few cells of the Orthodox western rite, developed its own concept of stability in a mode that has yet to be explored philosophically in English. St. Romuald, a hermit reformer of the Benedictine idea, stressed stability, though in a mode quite distinct from the larger Benedictine order.

For St. Romuald, the cell was a philosophical unit – it was, to oversimplify, a manifestation of the Form of stability. It is not a new concept, yet, the descriptions of it from the desert fathers to the high Middle Ages have a striking similarity. The cell itself is a very specific

manifestation of the uncreated energies of God. Romuald's own consuming Greek influence implies that many of the "Greek" ideas of the Athonite movement penetrated into southern Italy, largely a Greek province. The cell is a manifestation—an incarnation, to so speak—of the uncreated grace, presence and energy of the Spirit on earth.

The cell is paradise. This concept is a part of the Orthodox monastic life from Iceland to northern China. The cell is far from just a small building with a chapel, sleeping room and some storage areas. It is the church – the whole-in-the-part, the Catholic vision. The monastic life, in a sense, is the constant manifestation of the "cell" in all that one does. This is the very specific idea of "stability" on the rule of St. Romuald. Even the (slightly) later Carthusian order stresses this idea: the "cell" is the Platonic limit placed on the "unlimited chaos" of the outside world. In fact, the cell is The limit, not just A limit. The cell then becomes a powerful metaphor showing the nature and function of that building, the church, monastery or home chapel – they are all the same (in a philosophical sense); the building is not just brick or wood, but the divine "limit" placed on the unlimited world, the chaos of death and manipulation.

For St. Romuald, stability is the highest good in practical monastic life. He believes this for the same reason St. Benedict does: it focuses the struggle in every regard. St. Romuald holds that obedience, another of the significant monastic virtues, is "conciliatory." How is obedience "conciliatory?" That is not made completely explicit. One slight variation of the Benedictine rule is that the abbot under the Camaldolese system is not absolute. Since the average monk is often alone, the division of labor in the Romualdian system is not as sharply organized.

There are fewer Carthusians and Camaldolese monastics and therefore, the role of the abbot has developed a more "desert" element: he is an adviser above all. Obedience is "conciliatory" because no one is "above" the church or "above" the monastery. The same rules apply to abbots as to novices. All can err, and the pride

that the abbatial position might cause in certain abbots can be reason for serious sin and abuse.

The *Constitutions of Camaldoli* says this:

Obviously, the cell can display its precious function only if the hermit perseveres there with constancy. Therefore, let the solitary endeavor to maintain his continual and perpetual residence in the cell, so that through

assiduous stability and the grace of God, residence in the cell becomes sweet to him. Left for a short time, the cell is for the most part sought with greater avidity; but he who abandons it for a long time often forgets about it (sec 29).

Yet, for all the metaphysical subtlety of the “cell,” men remain men. They get bored, occasionally doubtful and occasionally regretful. There is a method, a style by which the Form of the cell is continually made manifest: reading, services, work. These should be balanced in a Form not unlike that Platonic soul: reason, spirit/will, passion. Each element has its place. Reason does not totally dominate the soul in Plato's system, it puts the other two in their proper place. The same is true of the feudal system of social organization, the same is true in the church. The spirit, or the services and the sacramentals; the rational will, reading; and the Nominalist, particularist element of the passions has its labor. While these specific connections are never hard and fast, they strongly suggest a Platonic origin.

Labor has a strong and powerful place in the Benedictine system. By “labor,” the benedictine refers specifically to physical labor, though the liberal arts are not totally excluded. Benedictine labor is central because it is a means of forcing the passions to listen to the dictates of reason. The results have been what we call “western civilization,” made, after the fall of Western Rome, the wilderness into a livable space. Education, poor relief, worship and philosophy existed solely and exclusively in the monasteries in the early middle ages, with the Cathedral chapter explicitly imitating the monastic model. St. Benedict, imitating the masters of the east though the work of St.

John Cassian, brought labor from its “aristocratic” disdain to the true dignity of legitimate and spiritual “co-creation.”

Co-creation is very different from its opposite, re-creation. Re-creation is a Gnostic concept that holds nature is fatally flawed and, metaphysically speaking, dead. Therefore, the elite, the initiates, have the right and duty to recreate it according to their image. This is the central concept of modernity. Modernity is incomprehensible without this perversion of the concept of “work.” The benedictine needed little, yet work was of absolute importance.

The Metaphysics of the Icon: St. Dionysus the Areopagite (? - 532)

In the realm of metaphysics, none is more famous among the fathers than St. Dionysus. Establishment scholars deny that this is the same man mentioned by St. Paul (Acts 17:34), though it should be noted that the medievals had far more sources to consult than moderns. Regardless of the actual identity of the author, his work is a manifesto of Christian Neoplatonism. From him, at least in philosophical terms, does posterity receive the concept of God as Unity beyond unity. From Plotinus to St. Dionysus, the philosophical world gets the concept of creation as “overflowing.” From the Orthodox point of view, this “overflowing” is not really a problem if it is envisaged as deriving from love; from God's will.

The nature of this overflowing is the very act of creation; it is the transfer of God's action from the uncreated to the created. This overflowing, resulting in God's willful creation, fashions multiplicity from unity and serves as the basis for his ontological Realism. More than any other major Orthodox figure except St. Justin, St. Dionysus, one of the most significant sources for early medieval metaphysics, rejects Nominalism as heresy. Logos makes no sense if particulars are unattached to a truly existing universal source.

When God overflows and creates out the fullness of His very being, two things are created. These are the universal objects and the

particular objects dependent upon them; the objects “standing under” them, as in hypostasis. The hierarchy is clear: Pure Being overflows (out of love) and creates the most important Ideas; these Ideas, in a sense, “create” what is below them, the particulars made up of matter. We should not take “create” too literally in terms of the Ideas, since the Ideas do not create as such, but they serve as the archetype for what is instantiated in matter; the particulars about which the Nominalist holds are the only real things in the world.

To reiterate, this world has two general types of objects: the universal and the particular, the latter encased in matter and the former serving as its principle of origin. Between the two, only the universal has being; it alone actually is. For Realism, the universal (or Idea/Form) is the most concrete thing in existence. It is the particular that is abstract unless understood as an aspect of the Idea, or the universal which serves as the goal and source of the object in space and time.

It might seem counter intuitive, but Spinoza's later work, to an extent, can be found here. Spinoza's definition of Substance is nearly identical to what the Areopagite describes as God. Parallels with Spinoza can be taken to far, but his view of Substance is useful in grasping how something can be the most general – Being itself – and yet also be the most concrete. The Nominalist sees all universals as arbitrary abstractions, but the term “arbitrary” only holds strictly if there is something connecting the universal and the particular other than the utile reason of the knower. There is nothing: the Nominalist generally holds that the connections between the universal and the particular are occasioned only by scientific utility and there is no correspondence between the universal and the particular other than that the former is useful for grouping and understanding things.

It is too easy to lapse into Realism if there are intrinsic connections between the object and the universal that defines the object. These connections, if objectively real, would themselves not be of material

stuff and so would be the very start of Realism. Therefore, the scientific Nominalist must hold to some version of the “utility” thesis.⁹

Ideas are the very manifestations of the thought of God as concerns particular objects. The one must exist before the other. Sensibles

9 In the chapter on St. Symeon, the concept of “light” being this connecting substance will be discussed in detail.

are products of something more fundamental in order to count as a thing at all. Infinite Modes in Spinoza are God's thought relative to objects. They, collectively, are Logos. They are instantiated in particular objects and thus serve as their principle and final end.

The parallels between Spinoza and Dionysus are not accidental: Spinoza laid out a purely mathematical idea of God, therefore he has to describe that which is most general as the most concrete; the One, the All, that is responsible for creating the particular. In Spinoza, there is no “creation” in the normal sense of the term, only ontological dependence. For Dionysus, creation is critical to his metaphysics, but this does not affect the philosophical hierarchy. Actual creation from God is the source of the ontological dependence. Spinoza's Substance is eternal, as is what it generates. Dionysus' God, the God of the Christians, is eternal, yet his finite modes are not.

For St. Dionysus, the Incarnation is the most explicit manifestation of Logos within creation. Almost without exception among the fathers, Logos is incarnated, as energy, in all creation. The Incarnation as an event is the first time that Logos as person is incarnated in matter. He takes the Idea of human nature and unifies it – without mixing it – into Substance, the All which contains all. Without Realism, the Incarnation makes no sense.

Nevertheless, the same love that permits the One to “overflow” into descending realities of creation is the same love and the same One that seeks to Incarnate His own thought, Logos, into the very matter

that he has made. Matter shows Logos, though to the smallest degree. Logos is as much in mud and spittle as it is in Idea, yet, because of our senses, he cannot be seen. The Incarnation, plus our crudity, are the cause of icons, the Eucharist and the very nature of the “Sacramental.” The Incarnation, as is so often implied in the metaphysics of the Fathers, joins the Real human to Logos, or the Real divine. Then, matter becomes a vessel, infused with (rather than containing) Logos.

Flesh, broadly considered, is not the receptacle of Logos, as is so common among neo-pagans. It is rather infused with the divine as the vehicle for things that cannot be sensed. A natural force, in the most crude sense, cannot be sensed. Things might serve as vehicles for it, but the visual elements are far from identical with the Force itself. This pushed Hume into his famous refusal to see a Cause in anything, since a Cause would eliminate his materialism. The same thing that forced Hume to reject Cause is the same that forces consistent Nominalists to believe that there is no intrinsic connection between universal and particular except utility.

The Sacramental is calling attention to the manifestation of Logos in created things. Anything can be blessed. Anything can be the source of grace to the extent it recalls God's creation. This is the purpose of beauty: to force the mind to recall the ontological dependence (sometimes called “upward”) of beauty on Primal Beauty – the infinite modes of Logos.

Metaphysics for Dionysus is not sufficient. It never is. It just lays out, in proper Form/Form, how to comprehend, in a limited way, the action of God. Nothing is said about the mechanics of this ontological dependency, this cascade of creation. No explanations are offered since this is not possible as well as being extraneous. Metaphysics serves life and truth only, and is never an end in itself.

The angels complete the metaphysical structure of reality. Angels really are manifestations of this ontological dependence. They are concrete universals (in the true sense) with personality as personality is an

attribute of Substance. This level of power and creativity strongly suggests—if not implies—personality. If cats and fish can be said to have personality, then there is no good reason why much higher beings would not have one. If will exists, then personality exists, but will implies purpose, and such purpose implies Realism. Nominalists come to reject Realism, at least in part, because nature must be denuded of will. There is only one Will, that of the Nietzschean Overman.

The single greatest and most significant philosophical work on the angels, the one that informed all others coming after it, is the *Celestial Hierarchies* by St. Dionysus the Areopagite, writing in roughly the middle of the 5th century. His work is a method of understanding the metaphysics and ontology of angels as manifestations of Logos. He writes in a passage that will be copied thousands of times afterward in the Middle Ages:

The aim of Hierarchy is the greatest possible assimilation to and union with God, and by taking Him as leader in all holy wisdom, to become like Him, so far as is permitted, by contemplating intently His most Divine Beauty. Also it molds and perfects its participants in the holy image of God like bright and spotless mirrors which receive the Ray of the Supreme Deity – which is the Source of Light; and being mystically filled with the Gift of Light, it pours it forth again abundantly, according to the Divine Law, upon those below itself. For it is not lawful for those who impart or participate in the holy Mysteries to overpass the bounds of its sacred laws; nor must they deviate from them if they seek to behold, as far as is allowed, that Deific Splendor and to be transformed into the likeness of those Divine Intelligences. Therefore he who speaks of Hierarchy implies a certain perfectly holy Order in the likeness of the First Divine Beauty, ministering the sacred mystery of its own illuminations in hierarchical order and wisdom, being in due measure conformed to its own Principle.

Angels are ontological realities that receive their being from God's Light. Light, too is a Realist metaphysic, since it is the distinction between Truth in its fullness and Truth in its hypostasis. Light is God's "nature," not in a literal sense, but in the sense that all creation comes from a single, unified and clear center of Truth as such. Light holds "things" together in that it is the "force" that holds the Form to the matter it informs.

Angels are parts of the Divine

Outpouring and manifest the action of the Trinity. In many ways, they are aspects of the One working themselves out as Light gets father away from its source. There are nine orders of angels arranged in three groups of three. Outside of the Trinity itself, the first outpouring is manifest as Seraphim and Cherubim. These, for St. Dionysus, represent the working out of action and contemplation into the full life of knowledge, or the Thrones. These archetypes of human life themselves serve as the basis of what works out in the human world. The first division in the angelic, divine outpouring is Action and Contemplation; truth as such and truth in motion. Motion is important because it is something not inherently part of God, but is inherent in creation because everything in creation moves, vibrates and has a created point in time. Motion and Rest are the very first realities of the divine outpouring, and take on personalities as Seraphim and Cherubim, synthesized into Thrones, or the third order of angels. These three are the first subdivision of the angelic order.

From Truth must come human action: therefore, the next level is Dominations, or the power of truth and Virtues, or Truth in application. Truth as manifested by the first triad begets its applied world: dominion and virtue. Virtue is dependent on being; the "ought" derives directly from the "is." Being is the ground of Truth, which, in turn, is the ground of Dominion and Virtue. This is synthesized into Powers, or the unity in truth, the concrete universal, the synthesis of dominion (power based on truth) and virtue, or the action of this power. This is the second subdivision.

Finally, closer to the human realm are the Principalities, Archangels and Angels making up the third and final subdivision. In a sense, Plato's Forms have been given a full description and even granted personalities. Ideas in Plato's sense imply personality, since they contain the richness of their specific identities. Identities imply personalities. Principalities are "nations," in that they are more material objects, though still Real things partaking in truth as such. The Archangels represent Office, that is, the holding of a specific Real purpose and the duties that it implies. Finally, the angels themselves, guardian angels among them, who serve the specific needs of the world and represent the communication of Logos in the material world.

When Dionysus deals with earthly hierarchies and offices, they partly derive from the world of the angels, the Ideas that derive from Logos as it is in God. There is no real hierarchy here, just different manifestations of the same principle, bringing to mind the fact that St. Michael transcends the other orders, despite being Archangels. The orders of angels do not imply a hierarchy in a string sense. The angels go from general content to more specific purposes, so the life of mankind takes on similar categories. They are all equal in the sense that they are all manifestations of Logos and necessary for the execution of the divine plan. They differ in ontological purity, but, in earthly terms, this does not imply difference in order.

After the fall of Adam, matter and spirit became separated; even hostile to one another. Man began to obsess about power, possessions and the domination of the material world. Technology is the result, as the name "Cain" actually refers to the "builder of a city." This actually refers to the "builder of a city." This 37 for more detail on the nature of light and the material world). The "re-spiritualization" of matter is the real purpose of an icon. The icon style was the normative method of depicting divine reality not just on the Greek east, but in the Latin west for many centuries. Only after the schism between the two sides of Christianity in 1054 did the west develop its own, more materially-minded method of religious art.

In his work *Late Greek Philosophy*, IP Sheldon-Williams writes:

Christians identified the Logos with Christ, who is also called Image of God, and who in turn is the pattern of man, for man is created 'in' the Image, i.e. in the image of Christ, the Image of God. Here again, then, there is a hierarchy of natural images, but man is not the lowest order of it, for being a creature endowed with mind he produces thoughts which are the patterns of the memorials and monuments of literature and art. Likeness, the relation of image to archetype, is equivalent to participation, the relation of the lower to the higher order of a hierarchy. In so far as an image is like its archetype it is equal and identical with it, for it participates in its nature (Sheldon-Williams, 507).

The image is a likeness, rather than a unity – but it does not exclude unity per se. it participates in the Form, albeit imperfectly. Iconoclasm is prefaced on the idea that matter is eternal, independent of God, and hence, incapable of having any connection to God. This old Gnostic doctrine, largely resurfaced in the Renaissance, is the heart of modernity and Masonry. An icon, therefore, is an affirmation that matter is good, and can serve to mediate grace to fallen man. Words on a page have the ability, in the proper context, to change lives (without ceasing to be anything more than printed letters), so an image of Christ is permissible without ever claiming that it is an aspect of the “natures” of Christ.

The icon is meant to show how the material world is actually meant to reflect the divine life. In a real sense, the iconographer, and the church that operates through him, contains the Form of the being depicted, and manifests it in color, shape and other qualities.

Since humanity is encased in physical reality, matter, art and color are legitimate means of translating and expressing God's grace. Of course, Nominalism cannot grasp any of this, since an image is nothing, having no relation to its original. This “participation” makes no sense in Nominalism (at least in its pure form) and thus, even the vocabulary used is not shared especially since words are equally arbitrary.

Iconoclasts argue that divinity cannot be represented. Hence, the icon only represents his humanity (that is, only “half” of Christ's being). This poor argument rejects the notion that the church provides the fullness of grace on earth. The icon, the iconographer and the church that encapsulates them are both within the fullness of grace. It is important to note that nothing about Christ's essence is depicted in the icon, but the faith of the church is the single and sole manifestation of light on earth, so the icon then partakes of the reconstitution of Eden made possible at Pentecost.

The purpose of the icon is to show matter as redeemed. Yet, beings such as angels are not, by nature, material. They are intelligences that are closer to God, the ultimate in immateriality. In the post-Cartesian modern world, there are things that are “physical” and things that are “mental or spiritual.” In the Byzantine mind, this was too simple of a distinction. There were grades of physical and grades of spiritual. The Seraphim, as mentioned above, are very close to God, and so they partake in the material world much less than an ordinary angel. In the hierarchy itself, Michael is an archangel, which is one of the lower orders, yet Michael himself has a very high “rank” among the heavenly hosts. Michael is significant in Scriptures and in church tradition because it is he that threw Lucifer from heaven while Gabriel announced the pregnancy of Mary with God. The lower orders of angels are close to men and their world, but the higher orders, such as Seraphim or Cherubim, serve only to praise God constantly, for eternity.

St. Dionysius clarifies the nature of the metaphysics of the angels while also expressing the proper understanding of the icon:

There is, therefore, one Source of Light for everything which is illuminated, namely, God, who by His Nature, truly and rightly, is the Essence of Light, and Cause of being and of vision. But it is ordained that in imitation of God each of the higher ranks of beings [i.e. angels] is the source in turn for the one which follows it; since the Divine Rays are passed through it to the other.

Therefore the beings of all the Angelic ranks naturally consider the highest Order of the Celestial Intelligences as the source, after God, of all holy knowledge and imitation of God, because through them the Light of the Supreme God is imparted to all and to us. On this account they refer all holy works, in imitation of God, to God as the Ultimate Cause, but to the first Divine Intelligences as the first regulators and transmitters of Divine Energies.

Here, in his discussion of the ontological roots of the angels, the entire purpose and method of the icon is expressed. The only difference here is that the angels, never having been human, still must be depicted as “people” in the broad sense. This icon is done identically to all angel icons in the Greek canon, adopted by the Serbs, Bulgarians, Russians and Romanians and even the medieval west, though obvious regional distinctions remain today. The description of Dionysius on the nature of the angels is the source text for iconic representations of them.

Like most writers in the Byzantine tradition, such as St. Gregory Palamas or Symeon the New Theologian, the most common word to describe the expression of things divine is “light.” Here, light refers to that which, when directed to an object, makes it perceptible and knowable. The light makes something knowable to the intellect in the same way that physical light makes objects knowable by the senses (cf. Meyendorff, 23ff).

The “light” here is that which, ontologically speaking, brings men closer to God. God Himself is purely light and contains nothing other than light. The light of the universe, both in terms of metaphysics and physics, exists to bind everything together as knowable objects. Christ, as Logos, is the divine presence and light in all beings. Christ is always depicted in icons of the angels since they cannot be depicted outside of the light from which and by which Christ created them. This is the canonical

rule, and its origin is to be found in the light metaphysics of Dionysus.

Light, in the focused metaphysical sense that St. Dionysus cites, is the purpose of iconography and the manifestation of Logos. There was a time that the powerful metaphysics of Plato were only accessible to the most educated and eccentric of intellectuals, but Christ, in uniting human nature to the divine, recreated the material world. The material world is then capable of receiving the divine light, and, as a result, changes radically. This is the icon at its root. At a glance, the complexity of Byzantine metaphysics is made immediately visible to the viewer in the icon rather than in dense works of metaphysics. Notably, there is also no “viewer” in the traditional sense of the term as the viewer in the true sense is not some disinterested spectator, but also a member of the body of Christ. The icon is really a representation of the church of which the viewer is a part (Andreopoulos, cf 67-70).

In the quotation above, St. Dionysus writes “Divine Intelligences as the first regulators and transmitters of Divine Energies.” This is his understanding of the purpose of angels that was long a part of Greek theology, then and now. The concept here is that the archangels those closest to humanity, bring the knowledge of God's light (that is, God's grace and power) to the earth, to the world of men (Stockstad 2008, 278-279).

Maximos the Confessor (580-662) on the Structure of Ultimate Reality

Among all the later Greek Patristic writers, none was as purely Platonic as Maximos. His entire corpus was a lengthy metaphysical treatise on Logos theology within its necessary Realist context. Plato and Plotinus—as well as the Stoics—provided a useful ontological account of Creation informed by Logos. Plato and his followers were inspired by God to prepare the Greek mind for the reception of Logos in the flesh. Nothing happens by accident. Maximos writes in a celebrated and oft-quoted passage from his *Ambiguum*

If [a man] intelligently directs the soul's imagination to the infinite differences and varieties of things as they exist by nature and turns his questing eye with understanding towards the intelligible model according to which they have been made, would he not know that the one Logos is the many logoi

[Forms]? This is evident in the incomparable differences among created things. For each is unmistakably unique in itself and its identity remains distinct in relation to other things. He will also know that the many logoi are the one Logos to whom all things are related and who exists in himself without confusion, the essential and individually

distinctive God, the Logos of God the Father. . .

Because he held together in himself the logoi before they came to be, by his gracious will he created all things visible and invisible out of non-being. By his Word and by his Wisdom he made all things and is making all things, universals as well as particulars, at the proper time. For we believe that a Logos of angels preceded their creation, a Logos preceded the creation of each of the beings and powers that fill the upper world, a Logos preceded the creation of human beings, a Logos

preceded everything that

receives its becoming from God, and so on. It is not necessary to

mention them all. The Logos whose excellence is

incomparable, ineffable, and inconceivable in Himself is exalted beyond all creation and even beyond the idea of

difference and distinction. This same Logos, whose goodness is revealed and multiplied in all things that have their origin in him, with the degree of beauty appropriate to each being, recapitulates all things in

Himself (Eph 1:10). Through this Logos there came to be both being and continuing to be, for from him the things that were made came to be in a certain way and for a certain reason and by continuing to be and by moving, they participate in God.

This citation is quoted at length because it summarizes the whole purpose of this book – an exposition of the Realist metaphysical and ontological basis of the Patristic mind. This is a part of the Orthodox

dogma of creation and hence, Nominalism is a heresy. This is one of the essential statements of Christian metaphysics, largely abandoned by later Roman Scholastics and totally rejected during the Reformation. It contains, in germ, the entire ontology of the redeemed soul, the meaning of the *stichera* of Pascha where the reality of all things now shines forth as today – the symbols have been decoded.

Maximos is as Platonic as it gets. The logoi are one of Plato's Forms, but the Logos is the uncreated master of them all, taking human flesh in Christ. Universal objects are created just as particular ones are. Forms are created entities, but this does not mean they are not the “patterns” of all created sensibles. The entire purpose of creation is to reveal the presence of Logos in the same sense a work of art expresses the mind of the artist. Christ's revelation exists in three ways: creation and its ordered relations, Scripture (in the broad sense) explicating specific details of the created order and, finally, Christ Himself incarnate. One means of grasping the concept of “salvation,” or even “holiness” is that the saints are sanctified; they see Logos in creation clearly, even primarily, as evidence of this. The rest of us see the “accidents” in nature, never the essence.

His basic understanding of Logos in relation to Platonic Realism can be reduced to five major points:

First, God transcends all relations. If God is infinite Wisdom and Power, then He cannot be divided. Plotinus' sense of “overflowing” is insufficient to grasp the reason for creation. It is not as if we have any access to God's “thought,” but Plotinus' conception is necessary to being reason's attempt to consider the question. Plotinus' concept of “overflowing,” however, is not useless to ontology. God is good because goodness is diffusive of itself. In other words, part of the essence of goodness is that it seeks to replicate itself; it wants to spread itself out according to its nature.

Second, Christ is “incarnate” in all things, so to speak, but there are two senses of “incarnate,” namely qualitative and quantitative. The

latter is the measurable, scientific concept of natural logic. Christ is in creation as the artist is in his painting. On the other hand, the qualitative sense is when Logos is specifically incarnate in a clear and distinct manner. This is the case in Christ's activity on earth recorded in Scripture as well as Christ incarnated in the Eucharist. In general terms, these aspects of incarnation are not really distinct, but given our sinful state, they appear as distinct. Logos is the "sustaining" cause of the natural order.

Third, Maximos stresses that these different concepts of "incarnation" are relative to us. For him, "salvation" is the term used for the more qualitative incarnation. "Salvation" is an ontological state where human nature cohabits with the divine. Of course, this does not exhaust the concept of salvation, but it is its ontological basis.

Fourth, this general understanding of Logos had been, by the time St. Maximos wrote, dogmatized at Chalcedon. Logos theology is incomprehensible or even useless when not connected with the metaphysics of Chalcedon.

Fifth, the incarnation is identical with the will's "participation" in ultimate reality. All Realism must have a theory of participation because the Forms have to relate to particulars in order to be particulars of anything.

Specifically, the incarnation in the qualitative sense means that all believers participate in the uncreated energies of Christ.

St. Maximos' concept of participation is crucial and should be analyzed in detail. In formal terms, it occurs when a spiritual object takes on the qualities of a material object. This specific purpose is to in-form the material so as to make it a "part" of the spiritual. Put in simpler terms, Logos creates (and in the process transfers) his presence into matter. This is the action of Logos in creation. Matter is also created, but its meaningless without Form.

"Participation," being such a key term in Realism, has several tightly related definitions. Primarily, it is that which is shared by a group of

things in the sense that a dictionary definition of a word is the same whenever that word is used. This implies that the particulars are less comprehensive than the Form. In addition, these particulars are also part of a larger whole and take their definition and purpose from that principle which informs the whole, making it comprehensible and cohesive. This also implies that the Form, as incarnated in matter, is also the Form present in the matter it informs. As an aspect of this, participation is a condition whereby the sharing of a Form is an essential part of the particular. The Nominalist mind rejects out of hand the very idea that an individual can be defined by being part of a larger whole. Both the social significance and origin of the Nominalist mind cannot be exaggerated.

From the practical point of view, participation is manifest in the act of contemplation. Contemplation, at its root, is the act of participation in a Form which is more comprehensive than the individual. Contemplation infuses the man with the Form.

The basic concept of participation in St. Maximos can be summarized in four further points:

First, the distinction between the unity of Form (substance) and the unity of hypostasis (or the informed individuation) is critical. Christ possesses two essences at His incarnation: the created Form of Man with the uncreated Power of divinity. Calling divinity an “essence” is not incorrect so long as it is understood that it is a matter of language, not accuracy. Language here can be used to make a complex idea more comprehensible. There is no divine essence because, as St. Maximos states, divinity itself is not a relation, and cannot be described using such categorical distinctions. From the point of view of humanity, however, the word can be used in this equivocal sense.

Second, Christ's two natures are not changed in any way. Human nature is cleansed of its sinful accretions, but this is a matter of accidental, not substantial, change. The problem with the Monophysite position—among others—is that the essences of both

God and man are substantially altered in the new essence of “Godman.”

Third, in *Contra Nestorius*, Christ's two natures are continually in communication. Socially speaking, this is the real import of both Chalcedon and St. Maximos' grasp of its metaphysics. While many scoff at the technicalities of the metaphysical discussions of Chalcedon, this is often a cover for the lack of comprehension, especially of the formal and technical vocabularies of Greek metaphysics, but apart from the metaphysics – beyond the average person – the social importance is occasionally overlooked. Human nature remains as it was, except it has been cleansed by the action of divinity upon it. It is not, however, passive. The human will must remain intact as it seeks communication with the divine. This is why the two natures must remain distinct yet related. If they were re-created in the Godman thesis of the Monophysites, then human nature loses its essential features and is no longer close to humanity seeking God.

Fourth, creation remains a cohesive and rational whole. This is the origin of man's belief in god(s). Such belief is not based on “fear,” as the atheist, Establishmentarian mind imagines. While fear is very real, it hardly explains the development of fearsome beings such as Tiamat or Set. God makes sense to even the most primitive soul because nature can be understood as a single society, a system. Logos came to be the shorthand way to communicate this and lies at the root of any rational conception of the cosmos, but this conception must be religious in the sense it has both a metaphysical and a personal element. Logos must have a personality because it acts and wills. Since moderns use the metaphor of the machine to describe natural processes, it is no wonder why nature is seen as just another mechanical or computational device. He continues,

For we believe that a Logos of angels preceded their creation, a Logos preceded the creation of each of the beings and powers that fill the upper world, a Logos preceded the creation of human beings,

a Logos preceded the creation of everything that proceeded from God, and so on. It is not necessary to mention them all. The Logos whose excellence is incomparable, ineffable and inconceivable in himself is exalted beyond all creation and even beyond the idea of difference and distinction. This same Logos whose goodness is revealed and multiplied in all the things that have their origin in him, with the degree of beauty appropriate to each being, recapitulates all things in himself (Eph. 1:10). Through his Logos there came to be both being and continuing to be, for from him the things that were made came to be in a certain way and for a certain reason, and by continuing to be and moving, they participate in God. For all things, in that they came to be from God, participate proportionally in God. For all things, whether by intellect, by reason, by sense-perception, by vital motion, or by some habitual fitness, as the great inspired Dionysus the Areopagite taught. Consequently, each of the intellectual and rational beings, whether angels or human beings, through the very Logos according to which each were created, who is in God and is with God (John 1:1), is called and indeed is a “portion of God,” through the Logos that preexisted in God as I already argued.

Continuing the same thought, this proves Plato's immense influence in Patristic thought. To “participate” in God is to participate in one's logoi, or specific Form. Christianity is a metaphysical doctrine serving as a means of understanding God's presence on earth. Metaphysics is highly limited of course, but humanity require these methods – or steps – of approaching the truth. He continues,

If someone is moved according to the Logos, he will come to be in God, in whom the Logos of his being preexists and is his beginning and case.

Furthermore, if he is moved by desire and wants to attain

nothing more than his own beginning, he does not move away from God. Rather, by constant straining toward God, he becomes God and is called a “portion of God” because he has become fit to participate in God...he ascends to to the Logos by whom he was created and in whom all things will ultimately be restored (*apokatastasis*). . . The logoi of all things known by God before their creation are securely fixed in God. They are in him who is the truth of all things.

This means that sin is to depart from one's nature. It is to adopt modern ideologies that deny the very nature of the human person. A Nominalist must deny there is any such thing as human nature, as this is a universal, which means that human beings are infinitely malleable by corporate capital or the state.

We are speechless before the sublime teaching about the Logos, for he cannot be expressed in words or conceived in thought. Although he is beyond being and nothing can participate in him in any way, nor is he any of the totality of things that can be known in relation to other things, nevertheless we affirm that the one Logos is many logoi and the many logoi are One. Because the One goes forth in goodness into individual being, creating and preserving them, the One is many. Moreover, the many are directed toward the One and are providentially guided in that direction. It is as though they were drawn to an all-powerful center that had built into it the beginnings of the lines that go out from it and that gathers them all together. In this way the many are one. Therefore we are called a portion of God because the logoi of our being preexisted in God. Further, we are said to have slipped down from above because we do not move in accordance with the Logos (who preexisted in God) through whom we came to be.

The Logos is God's nature and is therefore unknowable fundamentally. The logoi, however, the most fundamental creations from the Logos, are knowable. When one is saturated in sin, even this becomes a matter of

“metaphysical speculation.” A man is intellectually dead if he cannot grasp the universal Form inherent in things. The nature of an object is the presence (or energy) of God in them. Hence, our world is to manifest our nature. He continues,

It is evident that every person who participates in virtue as a matter of habit unquestionably participates in God, the substance of the virtues. Whoever by his choices cultivates the good natural seed shows the end to be the same as the beginning and the beginning to be the same as the end. Indeed the beginning and the end are one. As a result he is in genuine harmony with God, since the goal of everything is given in its ultimate goal. As to the beginning, in addition to receiving being itself, one receives the natural good by participation: as to the end, one zealously traverses one's course toward the beginning and source without deviation by means of one's good will and choice. And through this course one becomes God, being made God by God. To the inherent goodness of the image is added the likeness (Gen 1:26) acquired by the practice of virtue and the exercise of the will. The inclination to ascend and to see one's proper beginning was implanted in man by nature.

A virtue is that habit by which one's nature is made more manifest by action. This goes for all objects, not just human beings. To sin is to fall outside of human nature and descend into an animal one. Our nature is a *logoi*, created by the Logos, and it follows that to manifest one's nature is to become like God. Maximus confirms this in the same work:

In such a person the apostolic word is fulfilled: In him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). For whoever does not violate the Logos of his own existence that pre-existed in God is in God through diligence; and he moves in God according to the Logos of his well-being that pre-existed in God when he lives virtuously; and he lives in God according to the Logos of his eternal being that pre-existed in God. On the one hand, insofar as he is already irrevocably

one with himself in his dispositions, he is free of unruly passions. But in the future age when graced with divinization, he will affectionately love and cleave to the logoi already mentioned that pre-existed in God, or rather, he will love God himself, in whom the logoi of beautiful things are securely grounded. In this way he becomes a “portion of God,” insofar as he exists through the Logos of his being which is in God and insofar as he is good through the Logos of his wellbeing which is in God; and insofar as he is God through the Logos of his eternal being which is in God, he prizes the logoi and acts according to them. Through them he places himself wholly in God alone, wholly imprinting and forming God alone in himself, so that by grace he himself is God and is called God.

This canonizes Plato as the gateway to Christ. His metaphysics was laid out so that God's presence on earth can have an intellectual grounding, one dominant at the time of the incarnation. Our logoi is *nous*, the basis of our autonomy free from self-interest and other passions. This is identical to “freeing” the source of reason in our soul and spirit. It is the whole purpose of the ascetic life (also cf. Hieromonk Maximos, 2011)

The concept of “diffusion” cannot be neatly dispensed with, however. God is present in nature in both an “expansive” and “contracting” manner. The expansion is the mode of Logos bringing matter under the Forms to create a cohesive system of creation. Contracting is Christ's saving power – bringing all creation into communion with Him. In other words, that which is “saved” is that which is brought back to communion with Logos. To see Logos, not mere causality, as the cause of all things, especially their coherence. This is especially true in that “objects” are not the singular, “sensibles” of the Nominalist view. They are systems of interaction where Logos is its guiding force and “principle.”

Isaac the Syrian (613-700) on Realism and Prayer

Metaphysical Realism and Neoplatonism are understood by the existence of Logos. Evolutionism is the official scientific doctrine of Postmodernity and is a logical absurdity. If evolution, as described by

the modern scions of biology and bio-chemistry, is based on more or less clear and law-bound motion, then the laws inherent in such development must have existed prior to the matter it governs. The laws of evolution can not evolve, which just pushes the question back to infinite regress territory, unless God is admitted.

The ancient Greeks solved this problem by positing the eternity of matter. In fact, the Christian doctrine that matter was created was a radical departure from ancient physics. One of the central, unspoken principles of materialism, which currently masquerades as “naturalism,” is that matter is god, or has godlike qualities. Matter, since it is creative of all things out of itself, should be worshiped as the creator. If evolutionism is true, then matter contains potentially all things. This mystification of matter is, to a great extent, responsible for the theological pantheon systems of the ancient world.

However, modern physics has largely rejected this view because of the depletion of cosmic energy or a broad conception of entropy. Therefore, there must have been a time when matter was not. So the solution is that either a) Logos existed prior to matter, as the Patristic consensus has it, or b) Logos is informed with matter at the exact time of the material creation. In other words, law is inherent in the very structure of matter.

Option a) is attractive, but it is strictly forbidden for modern science. Setting aside the professional incompetence of science to deal with questions like Logos in the first place, there is also the matter of the spiritual world being both prior to and independent of matter. Matter is the sole competence of the scientific mind. The fact that this wealthy and powerful world has sought to bring all facets of being under its purview is unscientific, dishonest and based on assumptions rather than realities.

Option b), therefore, is the only one left to the scientific establishment. They must devise a method to consider how it is that natural laws, that which created the natural order at its micro- and macro-levels, can somehow be inherent in matter. The problem is that since Nominalism is yet another unscientific

assumption of the scientific establishment, the concept of “system” is permanently opaque to it. The Realist mind, eliminated a priori from the scientific establishment and modernity in general, sees such systems as primary, while the individual takes its own “destiny” from the whole only secondarily. The point is that evolutionism as a meta-scientific approach makes no logical sense because it assumes Nominalism is true and cannot but see systems in the natural world as the product of the natural development of “objects.” These are the rocks on which the ship of the modern mind crashes.

It should not seem strange that modernity and the Protestantism which preceded it, should find the Wisdom books of the Old Testament to be a puzzle. Modernity does not have the mental scaffolding to grasp this, except, especially in the case of the Song of Songs, to be the return of the repressed erotic desires of the Israelites. Yet, Realism sees itself reflected in the very concept of “Wisdom.” In fact, this writer has no difficulty in seeing Realism itself, the world of Forms, as precisely what “Wisdom” is in the Bible, minus the personality of Wisdom as a person.

“Wisdom,” speaking in both ontological and formal terms, is the universe of Forms that precede matter. It is the explanation as well as the reality that informs matter and gives it its law-bound integrity. This only means that God is imminent in a way that matters to humanity – God is transcendent, but, since we are encased in this materialized Wisdom, God is also imminent. God is imminent in creation according to human reason, He is transcendent according to eternity.

“Wisdom” is the Truth of the whole as greater than its parts. The proposition “the whole is greater than its parts,” of course, is a cardinal principle of Realism, but in Christian terms, it means that the parts, as well as the whole they help create, are imperfect as any system of nature is liable to break down. This is inherent in the post-lapsarian world. The church is an exception to this rule because it is an “incarnation” so to speak, of the Holy Spirit.

Logos is more than the scientific concept of lawfulness. It is not just a measurable, regular part of the natural order, but is also the “destiny” and final end of the cosmic system. Logos is hidden because sin keeps men from seeing the purpose and end of the cosmos. Seeing accidents such as color and shape are the normal course of sensation because men seek only what will satisfy him bodily. To see Logos is to go beyond mere appearance and sensation.

The Nominalist is not in an enviable position. He must see the similarities among created things to be just coincidences. Systems, and then cohesive ecosystems that bring other systems into it, have to be seen as happenstance in which each complex part must fit into the rest with perfect precision as a result of a random confluence of events. This is absurd. The constant references to the “truth of evolutionism” might work to answer questions in a Freshman seminar, but it does not make sense out of ecosystems, especially systems such as DNA that are productive of other groups of cohesive, interlocking systems of great complexity. Therefore, an “essence” is a metaphysical idea, but not in the way Aristotle conceived it. An essence in a true sense sees “individual” sensible objects as radically abstract. The relative whole is the system, and essence is the presence of Logos within that system, giving it its coherence.

What does this have to do with the ascetic life? St. Issac writes,

The purpose of the advent of the Savior, when He gave us His life-giving commandments as purifying remedies in our passionate state, was to cleanse the soul from the damage done by the first transgression and bring it back to its original state. What medicines are for a sick body, that the commandments are for the passionate soul.

The fathers were almost unanimous in the proposition that only a handful can ever reach that state of pure prayer. It is not a prerequisite for “salvation.” It is, however, actually living in heaven while in the body remains on earth. Like almost all monastic

theology, there is a general schema for developing the life of Prayer (rather than just “prayer”); Prayer is a state rather than an action.

The ascetic struggle is the heart of monasticism. It is “step one” only in a sense, since it is never abandoned for more “worthy” pursuits. It is something that all Orthodox people, the last remaining Christians, are called upon to perform. It is sometimes called the stage of “purification” and is often more than the average Christian man can handle. It is the “first” step not because of its actions. It serves the Christian his entire life and never leaves him. It is “first” only in its motivation: fear. The sinner (sin also is a state, not an action) is called by God to leave that state, but the odds seem insurmountable. Enemies from within and without will fight at every step. Yet, the struggle must occur or salvation is impossible. Salvation is a “gift,” but that does not imply utter passivity on the part of the struggler. God only calls a few. Only a few can even make a good beginning, let alone progress to other “stages” in development.

The purpose of “purification” in a philosophical sense is to detach from the realm of appearances. Individuals, the sensibles of Nominalism, exist as a set of passionate attachments and “pulls” upon the man. An individual thing, in the Nominalist sense, cannot ever be known. This is yet another problem with this view: the individual object—rather than the essence—cannot be an object of knowledge.

The actual “knowledge” is in an essential “definition” not the individual. The individual might partake in it, but is not identical with it. Nominalism argues that this “definition” is arbitrary in that it derives from the interests and intellect of man in studying any and all phenomena. It is arbitrary not in that it does not actually apply, in some incomplete sense, to the class of objects under discussion, but taking that class of objects and calling it a “class,” is. It is easier to live in a reality that is made up of classes of things rather than a random collection of unrelated phenomenon, but since essences are inventions of the human mind, then reality is a random set of unrelated individual things held together by some kind of physical

force. Men seek to place some order on this chaos by the invention of “universal truths.”

The stage of “purification” is to reject these assumptions. The world is not a collection of individuals, but a community of communities. Force does not hold the cosmos together, but family resemblance. The law of the cosmos is real, so all science, in order to actually be about something, must assume that, but the law itself is never a object for the Nominalist, since the law is not a thing. It is that which holds things together in a coherent order. The coherent order, its formal and final causes, called Logos by the Stoics, can never be just an object. Therefore, in the Nominalist world, it cannot exist.

Purification is about study. It is a mistrust of your own will and former habits. The passionate arrogance is always just under the surface and only a small provocation will bring it out into the open. Solitude, the rejection of worldly concerns and the study of the divine writings are all essential to this process.

The second stage is the “serenity of soul.” Only when Nominalism is rejected does the monk begin to experience peace. The “world,” or that random collection of objects held together by force, is held in contempt. That “world” is not all that exists. In fact, it is the most ephemeral of all. The nominal world is transitory. This world is also unreal in the sense that it derives from our fear, our lack of purity and ill-will.

Logos is both the most concrete and the most universal of all things. This is particularly the case with the symbols of Scripture. The Old Testament contains objects which are an earlier and cruder form of what will come after. The cross, for example, is the symbol (in the true sense) which unites all others. Its horizontal and vertical intersection is a complete picture of our life, the world and our final purpose. St. Issac states that the cross, when properly contemplated in prayer and by one in a state of purification, manifests the entire theology of the church.

Until a man has received the Comforter, he requires inscriptions in ink to imprint the memory of good in his heart, to keep his striving for good constantly renewed by continual reading... (But) when the power of the Spirit has penetrated the noetic powers of the active soul, then in place of the laws written in ink, the commandments of the Spirit take root in his heart and a man is secretly taught by the Spirit and needs no help from sensory matter (Gnostic Chapters, b6, 91).

This passage above is about reading, yet, it deals with the translation of particular objects into their universal and fullest aspects. The word on a page is mere ink, but when the Holy Spirit is present, Logos is infused into the mind, and the word is transformed into its archetype. Soon, this infusion becomes a normal mode of being, and words (as well as particulars in general) are no longer needed. Logos and the world of Forms Logos contains last forever. Logos is not an individual nor is it abstract: it is the Form of Forms (or the Form of goodness); it is Christ, who created the Forms.

St. Issac writes:

Stillness, as Saint Basil says, is the beginning of the soul's purification. For when the outward members cease from their outward activity and from the distraction caused thereby, then the mind turns away from distractions and wandering thoughts that are outside its realm and abides quietly within itself, and the heart awakens for the searching out of deliberations that are within the soul. And if purity is nothing else save forgetting, an unfree mode of life and departing from its habits, how and when will a man purify his soul who, actively of himself or through others, renews in himself the memory of his former habits? If the heart is defiled every day, when will it be cleansed from defilement. But if he cannot even withstand the action upon him of outward things, how much less will he be able to purify his heart, seeing that he stands in the midst of the camp and every day hears urgent tidings of war. . . if, however, he should withdraw

from this, little by little he will be able to make the first inner turmoils cease. . . . Only when a man enters stillness can his soul distinguish the passions and prudently search out her own wisdom. Then the inner man also awakens for spiritual work and day by day he perceives the hidden wisdom which blossoms forth in his soul. . . . Stillness mortifies the outward senses and resurrects the inward movements, whereas the outward manner of life does the opposite, that is, it resurrects the outward senses and deadens the inward movements.

The communion with Logos is the end and being of Prayer. The individual thing, even the individual prayer, dissolves into unity, the presence of Logos as the Being of being. St. Issac, through his own experience, sees the individual, “concrete,” and particular things of the world fall into the unity of Logos. Instead, the true reality of these things is manifest as individual things are fully revealed as impregnated by the Form, the universal Logos manifesting itself in the individual, negating its isolation. It is an “individual” thing, but now – in an intensely different way – it is an individual only in that it is the “home,” the specific manifestation, of the true Form; the real universal, saturated with content.

In his *On Prayer*, Issac writes:

Love is a fruit of prayer that, by prayer's contemplation, draws the intellect insatiably toward that for which it longs when the intellect patiently perseveres in prayer without wearying, whether it prays in a visible way, employing the body, or with the mind's silent reflections, diligently and with ardor. Prayer is the mortification of the will's motions pertaining to the life of the flesh. For a man who prays correctly is the equal of the man who is dead to the world. And the meaning of 'to deny oneself' is this: courageously to persevere in prayer.

The final step, which has already been anticipated, is pure prayer. In his *52nd Homily on the Three Degrees of Knowledge*, St. Issac writes in a key passage which will be quoted at length,

Hear now how knowledge becomes more refined, acquires that which is of the Spirit, and comes to resemble the life of the unseen hosts which perform their liturgy not by the palpable activity of works, but through the activity accomplished in the intellect's meditation. When knowledge is raised above earthly things and the cares of earthly activities, and its thoughts begin to gain experience in inward matters which are hidden from the eyes; and when in part it scorns the recollections of things (whence the perverseness of the passions arises), and when it stretches itself upward and follows faith in its solicitude for the future age, in its desire for what has been promised us, and in searching deeply into hidden mysteries: then faith itself swallows up knowledge, converts it, and begets it anew, so that it becomes wholly and completely spirit.

Then it can soar on wings in the realms of the bodiless and touch the depths of the unfathomable sea, musing upon the wondrous and divine workings of God's governance of noetic and corporeal creatures. It searches out spiritual mysteries that are perceived by the simple and subtle intellect. Then the inner senses awaken for spiritual doing, according to the order that will be in the immortal and incorruptible life. For even from now it has received, as it were in a mystery, the noetic resurrection as a true witness of the universal renewal of all things.

These are the three degrees of knowledge wherein is brought together a man's whole course in the body, in the soul, and in the spirit. From the time when a man begins to distinguish between good and evil until he takes leave of this world, his soul's knowledge journeys in these stages. The fullness of all wrong and impiety, and the fullness of righteousness, and the probing of the depths of all the mysteries of the Spirit are wrought by one knowledge in the

aforementioned three stages; and in it is contained the intellect's every movement, whether the intellect ascends or descends in good or in evil or in things midway between the two. The Fathers call these stages: natural, supra-natural, and contra-natural. These are the three directions in which the memory of a rational soul travels up or down, as has been said: when the soul works righteousness in the confines of nature, or when through her recollection she is caught away to a state higher than nature in the divine vision of God, or when she recedes from her nature to heard swine, as did that young man who squandered the wealth of his discretion and labored for a troop of demons.

That "which is hidden from the eyes" is precisely the spiritual world of Form, or the foundations of that which we see. The stages of knowledge Issac mentions are both a function of grace and the human intelligence, designed to perceive these things above the merely sensible world. The sensible gives way to their ground, and this is applied to human behavior such that it flees the world itself. The spiritual world is understood according to one's ability and then, living within it, are two distinct stages. True deification comes with the third, and the struggler is in need of nothing but grace and the spirit.

St. Justin Popovich spends quite some time on the metaphysics and epistemology of St. Issac. He saw it as the *sine qua non* of Orthodox ontology: the Forms manifest as a unity in Logos. Even more, man cannot gain true knowledge relative to his view of creation nor his view of other men. Chalcedon alone provides knowledge: the Form of Man and Divinity come together to renew creation. Grace is manifest on earth and is identical with the church; the reconstructed Eden of rational and reflective souls. The fundamental concept is that the "individual, concrete object" exists only because of sin. Sin forces the mind to see only itself and its demands when observing anything. Nature follows suit.

St. Justin's treatment of St. Issac can be summarized in seven points:

First, evil is an illness of soul. This illness can be reduced to Nominalism: individual objects things are taken as the whole of reality, or even that there are no universal truths, which is really one and the same thing. This negates interrelation, real community and the ontological connections of objects into real “ecosystems” bearing a single identity. The Nominalist brain can only process individual things in their isolation. The combination or connection of things is the result of mere selfinterest; the bringing together of different qualities in the creation of new objects such as machines or philosophical theories.

Second, passion is the direct cause of the Nominalist idea. The object of knowledge can never be an individual thing. It can only be a Form. The Form not only provides an object with “definition” and “limit,” but it also shows it in its broader content and the “community” of ontological interrelation is what really makes the object what it is.

Third, all virtues are crosses: only in freeing himself from the world (the “world” as a swirl of emotions and passions, not rational concepts) can any progress be made. The flux that fallen man sees before him requires the Superman of Nietzsche to impose his will on it. This is the modern idea of industry and its “titans.” This is not the case with Realism, since meaning already exists in nature.

Fourth, faith is the presence of the Holy Spirit in the soul. It is a relationship. It is the very first contact of the soul with Form as Logos is the home of all Forms. Forms are created. Faith is not a mere credulity and this neologism is hampering any real discussion about metaphysics today. Faith is the acceptance of someone based on their inherent goodness. It is a rational act. It is knowing x, and thus extrapolating many additional properties that will be uncovered with further study. It is the grasp of the unknown via things known.

Fifth, prayer is the result of this contact: the whole man is in the process of transformation. This is a transformation towards freedom and

autonomy: the elimination of selfinterest in calculating what is true and false.

Sixth, love is the result of prayer, it is, at the most minimal, the rejection of self-interest and self-absorption. Love is the desire to empty oneself for the benefit of the beloved. Prayer and love are tightly connected in that humility forces the New Man to realize he knows little.

Finally, humility is the synthesis of prayer and love. All three imply one another, yet the process begins with the presence of God. As St. Basil says, one begins with a foggy knowledge, a general faith in the existence of an object, and soon, through experience, comes to know the object well.

St. Justin and St. Isaac are talking about the same thing. Uncreated grace is a constant affront to Nominalist mental dispersion which does not end in death. All men, at least all baptized men, will see God. The grace on earth, while we are distracted by the body, and the grace that surrounds the soul itself, is received in a very different sense. They increase in intensity without the constant dispersal of the bodily sensations. Both the evil and the good will see God, and both will see the divine light.

The sinner will see God as a terrible vengeance, the same God that he scoffed at on earth. It is the same God the just man will see as well, but for the just, God's presence intensifies his love, since it is the same love felt on earth via grace. Since the soul was prepared, basking in grace without the body is intense pleasure. On the other hand, since the soul of the unjust —though baptized—has not prepared itself for God, it becomes obtuse. It sees God as a scorching fire. It is like the skin, to use a simple example, that is as white as snow – the sun will torment it. The skin that has been properly prepared for the sun, however, will be benefited by it.

This experience of God's energies by the just can, to a great extent, be experienced at the level of pure prayer, a constant state of soul

reserved only for those especially called. They exist to, among other things, show a real glimpse of heaven.

Hesychia and the “Light” in Ascetic Metaphysics: Metaphysics: 1022)

The “mystic” element in theology is often expressed as the participation in “light.” This is a term often used but rarely defined. In Sts. Gregory Palamas, Symeon and others in the Byzantine Middle Ages, light is an element in all things; its intellectual essence. To understand an object, we grasp its light. We are “enlightened” by the process of comprehending the true nature and purpose of an object. This is the mark of Logos, the presence of God's creative power in things. The long history of “light” theology is about the presence of Logos in the world. It is about true science, since His presence in objects gives them definition, cause and final purpose.

The broader point is that writers such as Sts. Maximos and Symeon completed Plato and Aristotle by stressing any essence as an immaterial light. Light too exists in plants and animals in that plants synthesize literal sunlight for their very existence. Light is suffused throughout the organism as it is transformed from seed to its flowering. Light, in this real, physical example, is essential to the object at all stages of its growth and is even the principle of its growth.

St. Gregory Palamas has been at the center of many controversies, both religious and metaphysical. While a possible exaggeration, the metaphysics of Palamas is one of the central distinctions between the theology of Rome and that of Orthodoxy. Much has been written on Palamas, and this chapter has no pretensions of improving on that.

Gregory did not create anything new. He was a man quite capable of taking what had come before him and restating it in a manner relevant to the issues of the High Middle Ages. Palamism is the “answer” to Scholasticism and the increasing significance of Aquinas

in western thought. While Orthodox writers often misunderstand Scholasticism, the rejection of it has more to do with method than with any specific set of conclusions. Palamas challenged the triumph of the Scholastic movement and its use of Aristotle in theology.

In his own “light doctrine” much earlier, St. Symeon writes this as part of his “Light Beatitudes”

Blessed are they who have the eye of their intellect ever open and with prayer see the light and converse with it mouth to mouth, for they are of equal honor with the angels and, dare I say it, have and shall become higher than the angels, for the latter sing praises while the former intercede. And, if they have become and are ever

becoming such while still living in the body and impeded by the corruption of the flesh, what shall they be after the Resurrection and after they have received that spiritual and incorruptible body? Certainly, they shall not be merely the equals of angels, but indeed like the angels’ Master, as it is written: “But we know,” he says, “that when He appears we shall be like Him.”

The intellect has been created for the primary purpose of seeing the divine light as light is the actual essence of things. The “light” of something is its Form in a basically Platonic sense. Now, St. Symeon cannot be thought to have reduced light to the physics of the later medieval west, yet, there is a “light” that has a real presence in nature. The entire concept of the Logos theology is that the essences of Aristotle are all one thing: they are all the presence of Christ in all His acts taken together.

The distinction between corruption and incorruption is the same distinction between Form and matter. Matter is the principle of individuation – or the principle of appearing – which refer to the qualities of an object. Its essence, its “light,” is the relation of the object to the archetype, the presence of Logos in nature. Light is the “fingerprint” of Logos in a singular, natural object, since that object

encapsulates Form – it is both the beginning and end of its existence.

In St. Symeon's *Practical and Theological Precepts* from the *Philokalia*, he writes:

From the first God created two worlds: the visible and invisible, and has made a king shine in the visible who bears within himself the characteristics of both worlds – one in his visible half and the other in his invisible half – in his soul and in his body. Two suns shine in these worlds, one visible and the other intellectual. In the visible world of the senses there is the sun, and the invisible world of the intellect there is God (section 151, page 133).

In many ways this passage would be totally obtuse to those who were not versed in the metaphysics of light in its ancient and medieval guises. As mentioned in earlier chapters, God is to the world of the intellect what the Sun is to the world of the senses. In both cases, we cannot experience the essence: we cannot even look upon the Sun; we cannot experience the essence of God, but we can experience His effects. In the case of the intellect, light is the analogue to the Sun's rays. Light is the cause of everything in a physical sense in that nothing could be seen and nothing could grow without it. It is not just that nothing could be discerned, but that nothing would be discernible. The same is the case in the intellectual world.

And again, from his Hymn 33:

And for this reason all asceticism and all these actions are
Accomplished by us in order to share in the Divine Light as a lamp
does For like a single candle, so the soul projects all of the virtuous
actions

Towards the
unapproachable light, Or rather, as a papyrus is plunged into the
burning candle,
So the soul, bulging with all the virtues,

Is completely set on fire by the light,
Insofar as it is capable totally of seeing it, As it has a place to lead it
into its house.

And then the virtues illumined from intimate communion with the
Divine Light

Are themselves called also light,
Or rather, they themselves are the light, having become
melded with the light. And they reflect brilliantly the light on the soul
itself And also the body; and they illumine truly first him Who
possesses them And then all those others living in the darkness of
life.

Darkness, among other things, is the

absence of light. This is, from a metaphysical point of view, identical
with Nominalism – the view of objects as singular and based on their
quantitative impress on the senses and utility. If Logos is removed
from the world, there is no world. Modern evolutionism is an
intellectual system that derives from assuming that Logos does not
exist. If Logos recedes, or even hides Himself from humanity, then
Nominalism cannot help but become the accepted approach to the
natural world. When looking at the natural world without Logos, all is
struggle, all is chaos, all is death, all without purpose.

Nominalism is the approach to the natural world that sees matter and
its qualities (as matter can only be its qualities) as the sole reality of
all things. Without Logos, the intellect becomes “liberated” as an
objective reality in nature, and can then reconstruct a world
according to its specifications. Theoretical science (rather than
empirical science) would rule because the chaos of the nominal
world cries out for domination, control and
reconstruction. If there is no ruling principle, then one has to be
provided. Nominalism is the convenient doctrine of the modern
scientific establishment that no longer pretends to explain things “as
they are,” but has to first construct what is “really out there,” and then
build evidence for its theories from what it has already assumed to
be true. Descartes laid the ground for this, showing the interrelations
between empiricism and rationalism. Empirical science in the

modern sense is anything but empirical, it is based on the assumptions of Nominalism and the effects deriving from it. It serves its own interest. The realm of darkness then becomes the complete domination of an economic elite that creates reality through the theoretical foundations of a scientific establishment whose very existence is based on this same elite.

The “soul” which is “set on fire by the light” is both an ontological and a moral thing. It perceives objects in nature for what they really are: the presence of Christ who has taken on natural qualities as Logos. He is the creator of the Light – Logos – that gives purpose to the natural order. From this, proper perception leads to proper action. Nature is not a realm of dead matter that can be created and re-created at will; nature is not chaotic and unformed, waiting for the new elite Demiurge to give it objective reality. Domination, lust and greed are not present in the soil that is on fire with Light, since that light exists both as knowledge and moral action.

In his homily “On the Divine Gifts,” he reiterates this same point:

Once I had started out on the way and had in slight measure returned to my senses from the abyss of evil and darkness I was obsessed with fear as I was tormented by the evils within me. Yet it was really love and striving for goodness that contributed most to turn me toward it. But all that it accomplished was a flight from evil that impelled me toward the good. In the midst of these things there was this alone that held me back—my ingrained propensities and evil habits of sensuality. By the persistent practice of prayer, the meditation on God’s oracles, and the acquiring of good habits this fades away. As the sun gradually rises the darkness recedes and disappears. So as virtue shines, evil, like darkness, is driven away and is proved to be without substance, and from then on we shall always continue in goodness just as we have previously been evil. Through a little patience and a very slight effort of will, or, rather, by the help of the living God, we are re-created and renewed. We are

cleansed in soul, body, and mind, and we become that which we really are, though we know it not because we are shrouded by passions, and in addition we receive gifts of which we are not worthy.

The study of ontology does not exist for its own sake. The “evil habits of sensuality” are based on the purported knowledge of the natural world which assumes that it is purposeless, dead and chaotic, as the Nominalist does. If it is dead, then it can be appropriated and dominated. If it is not, then it becomes a huge forest of Symbols serving as entryways to ultimate truth. These are the first inklings of Logos from the human point of view and addresses those men who begin to purify themselves of their passions; passions that cannot be understood without grasping first the assumptions and implications of bad metaphysics.

When St. Symeon writes that evil is “without substance,” he is not just being metaphorical. Evil is precisely that view of the world that rejects reality and Form and reduces all to a violent jungle of cause and effect. In the social realm, this assumption produced Thomas Hobbes, the political version of Descartes. In Symeon's *On the Mystical Life*, he lays this concept out in more detail:

So, being made of dust from the earth, and having received a breath of life which the word calls an intelligent soul and the image of God, he was placed in the garden to work and given a commandment to keep. How so? So that, as long as he did keep it and work, he would remain immortal and compete everlastingly with the angels, and together with them would praise God unceasingly and receive His illumination and see God intelligibly, and hear His divine voice. But in that same hour that he should transgress the commandment given him and eat of the tree from which God had commanded him not to eat, he would be given over to death and be deprived of the eyes of his soul. He would be stripped of his robe of divine glory; his ears would be stopped up, and he would fall from his way of life with the angels and

be chased out of paradise. This indeed did happen to the transgressor, and he fell from his eternal and immortal life. For once Adam had transgressed God's commandment and lent his ear for the deceitful devil to whisper in, and was persuaded by him on hearing his cunning words against the Master Who had made him, he tasted of the tree and, perceiving with his senses, he both saw and beheld with passion the nakedness of his body. He was justly deprived of all those good things. He became deaf. With ears become profane he could no longer listen to divine words in a manner which was spiritual and adequate to God, as such words resound only in those who are worthy. Neither could he see the divine glory any longer, in that he had voluntarily turned his intellect away from it and had looked upon the fruit of the tree with passion, and had believed the serpent who said: 'In that now that you eat of it, you will be as gods, knowing good and evil.

This passage is quoted at length because it is a summary of the real purpose of this book. Nature went from a living icon of Logos to dead matter perceived as having no value. Man became blind and deaf because he only saw matter – the light of natural objects ceased to speak to him. The idea is that "to be as God" is to have control over nature, to be the recreator; to "fix the world" that was created by an evil deity bent on keeping humanity enslaved to him. Cain, when expelled from his family, founded a city and somehow developed the ability to oversee the construction of civilization. Fallen spirits, symbolized by Prometheus and Set, brought down "fire" from the gods – this fire is not as St. Symeon speaks of it, but rather is the fire of technology, the factory, the geometer and the scientist that, taken together, is the foundation of civilization which is iconically seen in the Gnostic version of the Temple of Solomon, the archetype of the rebuilt and re-created world.

Demons taught Cain that no essences or purposes are inherent in nature, so he and his ilk can impose their own. This became

civilization: the state, private property, bureaucracy and oligarchy from Babylon to New York. The symbols of Osiris and Set represent the two “sides” to civilization: the use of technology to assist man, and the use of technology to enslave him. One seeks to cooperate with nature, the other seeks to dominate it. The seed of Cain's murder was the force unleashed by civilization, typified graphically by the institution of human sacrifice for the sake of appropriating more of nature than she would naturally be prone to provide herself.

In his *Catachecial Lectures*, St. Symeon makes this explicit:

The things and possessions that are in the world are common to all, like the light and this air that we breathe, as well as the pasture for the dumb animals on the plains and on the mountains. All these things were made for all in common solely for use and enjoyment; in terms of ownership they belong to no one.

But covetousness, like a tyrant, has intruded into life, so that its slaves and underlings have in various ways divided up that which the Master gave to be common to all. She has enclosed them by fences and made them secure by means of watchtowers, bolts and gates.

She has

deprived all other men of the enjoyment of the Master's good gifts, shamelessly pretending to own them, contending that she has wronged no one. But this tyrant's underlings and slaves in turn become, each one of them, evil slaves and keepers of the properties and monies entrusted to them. Even if they are moved by the threat of punishments. . . and take a few or even all of these things to give to those who are in poverty and distress whom they have hitherto ignored, how can they be accounted merciful? Have they fed Christ? Have they done a deed that is worthy of a reward? By no means! I tell you that they owe a debt of penitence to their dying day for all that they so long have kept back and deprived their brothers from using.

The “intrusion” of covetousness is identical to the blindness and deafness of humanity that can see nature only as a random course

of physical coercion without ultimate purpose. Cain built civilization upon blood; Solomon created his temple out of forced labor, military rule and the invasion of pagan deities of geometry, fertility and technology into the Israelite social world. The “religion of nature” is identical to covetousness, since civilization is built around the alienation of man from Logos. It reduces him, as anything else, to a tool. If Logos is no longer perceived in nature, then it is no longer perceived in human nature.

Fr. Basil Krivocheine, in his important work *St. Symeon: Life and Doctrine* speaks of the “Dialectic of the Divine Union.” This is a dialectic well known to students of Plato, since it is a synthesis of the One, the ground of the Forms, and the Forms themselves, collected into Christ as God. In a way, the One can either be the Father or Logos, since the One in Plotinus can be either the origin or the foundation of the Forms. Plato was capable of having glimpses of the Forms, but he could go no further. Plotinus spoke well of the One, but it was just a word; neither Plotinus nor Orthodoxy can say any more about the One, including that it is One, hence the capital “O.” It is nameless by its very constitution. For St. Symeon, the One is something that can be experienced on earth, except not as the One, but only as Logos, its expression.

Logos is the synthesis of all Forms while at the same time the collection of all Forms. Forms are objects, but taken together, they comprise Logos. This Logos is manifest in nature, which is the doctrine of the “mystic” experience of the church. On the other hand, the One (as the ultimate point of origin) is not manifest. In an indirect way, the One is manifest as the ground of Form, but only in that indirect and imprecise way can the One be seen as “imminent” in nature. Pure Oneness is beyond the ken of experience. It is a revelatory gift, yet, in a logical sense, it must exist for there to be Forms at all, and hence knowledge. If Forms exist, then their Ground must also exist. The Ground of all Formal grounds is the end of philosophical speculation, yet, for St. Symeon, it is within the realm of experience for the simplest of monks through the manifestation of Logos in the church.

The hesychasts, the strictest of monks, at least in terms of their understanding of the world's ontology, imply that the concept of "light" is central and virtually limitless in how it can be understood both relative to metaphysics and, more importantly, the spiritual life. Sts. Gregory Palamas and Symeon give some indication to the remainder of sinful humanity who have not climbed that particular ladder of the nature of "light" and how it can be used.

The concept of "light" is critical for all true theology, which explains why Protestants have no understanding of it. In the late western Middle Ages, the great 13th century bishop of Lincoln, Robert Grosseteste, created an entire physics based on the idea of light. He lived about a generation before St. Gregory Palamas. Light for Robert was the force that held the archetype to its content. Light was far more than the physical light of the Sun, but speaking broadly, it referred to those elements of the cosmos that the human intellect can understand. Putting it simply, light is almost identical to Form, as said many times above. Form is light in the sense that it takes the primordial chaos and gave it a foundation in Reality. Chaos, in its common sense, is unknowable. It is a mere word, but light only becomes such when it takes the chaos of matter and attaches it to Form.

"Light" in both ancient and medieval physics refers to the creation of three dimensional space. Light, if uninterrupted in its diffusion, creates a sphere. The universe is, in fact, that sphere with matter at its center, the earth. The earth is at the center of the universe not because it is "special" in some way, but because it is heavy and dense; that which is less like light will gravitate to the center of the sphere. All objects partake, to some extent, in this light when considered both the "stuff" of creation and the presence of Logos within and around it. Grosseteste stressed that light is also "energy" broadly considered, and also is the engine that keeps nature/cosmos in regular motion (Sharp, 1930). Therefore, it is more than Form, but is based on it. It is a "Form in motion," for lack of a better description.

In his famous *De Luce seu de Inchoatione Formarum* (1220), he says

The first corporeal form, which some call corporeity, I hold to be light. For light of its own nature diffuses itself in all directions, so that from a point of light a sphere of light of any size may be instantly generated, provided an opaque body does not get in the way. Corporeity is what necessarily follows the extension of matter in three dimensions, since each of these, that is corporeity and matter, is a substance simple in itself and lacking all dimensions. But simple form in itself and in dimension lacking matter and dimension, it was impossible for it to become extended in every direction except by multiplying itself and suddenly diffusing itself in every direction and in its diffusion extending matter; since it is not possible for form to do without matter because it is not separable, nor can matter itself be purged of form. And, in fact, it is light, I suggest, of which this operation is part of the nature, namely, to multiply itself and instantaneously diffuse itself in every direction. Therefore, whatever it is that produces this operation is either light itself or something that produces this operation in so far as it participates in light, which produces it by its own nature. Corporeity is therefore either this light, or is what produces the operation in question and produces dimensions in matter in so far as it participates in this light itself and acts by virtue of this same light. But for the first form to produce dimensions in matter by virtue of a subsequent form is impossible. Therefore light is not the form succeeding this corporeity, but is this corporeity itself

The ultimate Form is light, since it “multiplies itself and expands without the body of matter moving with it, makes its passage instantaneously through the transparent medium and is not motion but a state of change.” The conclusion is that light is also in motion, so that when it is incorporated within matter, it takes it along with it, which he calls “rarefaction or augmentation of matter.” Motion is then

the motion of light, which is spirit and inherently in motion, produces the natural motion of beings.

Its connection with the rejection of Nominalism is significant.

I say that it is possible to have some knowledge without the help of the senses. For in the Divine Mind all knowledge exists from eternity, and not only is there in it certain knowledge of universals but also of all

singulars. Similarly, intelligence receiving irradiation from the primary light see all knowable things, both universal and singulars, in the primary light itself. Moreover, the Divine Mind, in the reflection of its intelligence upon Itself, knows the very things which come after Itself, because it is itself their cause. Therefore, those who are without any senses have true knowledge.

The highest part of the human soul, which is called the intelligence and which is not the act of any body and does not need for its proper operation a corporeal instrument—this intelligence, if it were not

obscured and weighed down by the mass of the body, would itself have complete knowledge from the irradiation received from the superior light without the help of sense, just as it will have when the soul is drawn forth from the body, and as perhaps those people have who are free from the love and the imaginings of corporeal things (*Commentarius in Posteriorum Analyticorum Libros*, *Analyticorum Libros*, 1220).

The problem with Nominalism is that it takes human sin and makes it the normal constitution of the human psyche. Eternal essences are the only means whereby knowledge can exist, but our sin makes it very difficult to rise above particulars. In the same work, he finishes the idea:

Because the purity of the eye of the soul is obscured and weighed down by the corrupt body, all the powers of this rational soul born in man are laid hold of by the mass of the body and cannot act and so in a way are asleep.

Accordingly, when in the process of time the senses act through

many interactions of sense with sensible things, the reasoning is awakened mixed with these very sensible things and is borne along in the senses to the sensible things as in a ship. But the functioning reason begins to divide and separately consider what in sense were confused. But the reasoning does not know this to be actually universal except after it has made this abstraction from many singulars, and has reached one and the same universal by its judgment taken from many singulars. The experimental universal is acquired by us, whose mind's eye is not purely spiritual, only through the help of the senses. For when the senses several times observe two singular occurrences, of which one is the cause of the other or is related to it in some other way, and they do not see the connection between them.

Being asleep is to hold that only individual things exist and, as a result, to be dominated by the passions this generates. Perception, when repeated, is remembered, and reason then “works” on this to discover the universal truth it implies. This is when the mind is awoken, because it is now alerted to the truly spiritual world, that of the Forms. Robert takes the experimental method, which he helped create, as the way by which Nominalism is defeated in that sure knowledge is proof of light.

Grosseteste concluded that the objects of mathematics were proof of the Forms. It was the Logos of the world, seen from the point of view of ontology. It was literally a real set of objects. Even McEvoy argues that the later philosophies of science aimed to both overthrow him and be inspired by him (McAvoy, 1985: 153-155). Forms are real because the foundation of the world is not available to the senses, so his pioneering of the experimental method was meant to uncover it.

Only a handful have ever heard of this man, the Franciscan bishop that created modern empirical methods. The methods of course, were to discover Forms, not the tentative opinions that soon became the dogma of “scientism.” Light theology was rare in the west and had to have come from the east. It is clear that “light” for all these

men did not refer primarily to physical light. It is rather the basis of all essences and even all knowable qualities. Ultimately, light was not mere Form, but also the action of Form upon matter and was, in an important way, both the Logos and the Spirit as light together with the matter for which it was created. There is no matter without Form. This is not only the means whereby Form and matter were unified, but also the means whereby the soul came to understand universal essences.

The scientific world was on the cusp of a revolution at the time of Robert Grosseteste. His physics of light was the main paradigm contender as the Middle Ages slipped from history. Light was quietly removed from speculation about the physical world as the materialist physics of Hobbes took over. While several centuries separate the two men, the revolution of the Renaissance unjustly destroyed the reputation of the bishop of Lincoln.

The western world would be unrecognizable today had the theory of Grosseteste, rather than Hobbes, become the dominant paradigm for physics. Practically speaking, the big difference between the two was that Hobbes posited a physical world that can be made into anything the Leviathan wanted as Leviathan was the only source of right. In a sense, it was also the only source of light. Leviathan was far from a “monarch,” but rather the initiated elite – what was soon to manifest itself as the “counter-church” – in groups such as the British Lunar Society. This organization alone had the power to bury Grosseteste and launch Hobbes and his many allies into the scientific pantheon of its founding gods.

Modern science took its origins from the initiated elite of British society, and to promote Hobbes over Grosseteste was an implied, primary goal of this movement. Britain produced two dominant scientific minds as the medieval world decayed, Grosseteste and Hobbes. Grosseteste's physics of light and his revolutionizing of the science of optics posited a meaningful world arranged in a hierarchy of intelligibility. It put Aristotle on a whole new footing and served to

possibly join eastern and western metaphysics. For this reason, Grosseteste himself was rendered a footnote in the history of science. Hobbes posited chaos that can only be given meaning by Leviathan, exactly what the new English elite wanted to hear, since they were this Leviathan.

St. Gregory Palamas writes in his famous “Homily on the Transfiguration:”

Hence it is clear that the Light of Tabor was a Divine Light. And the Evangelist John, inspired by Divine Revelation, says clearly that the future eternal and

enduring city “has no need of the sun or moon to shine upon it. For the Glory of God lights it up, and the Lamb will be its lamp” (Rev 21:23). Is it not clear, that he points out here that this [Lamb] is Jesus, Who is divinely transfigured now upon Tabor, and the flesh of Whom shines, is the lamp manifesting the Glory of divinity for those ascending the mountain with Him?

John the Theologian also says about the inhabitants of this city:

“they will not need light from lamps, nor the light of the sun, for the Lord God will shed light upon them, and night shall be no more” (Rev 22:5). But how, we might ask, is there this other light, in which “there is no change, nor shadow of

alteration” (Jas 1:17)? What light is there that is constant and unsetting, unless it be the Light of God? Moreover, could Moses and Elias (and particularly the former, who clearly was present only in spirit, and not in flesh [Elias having ascended bodily to Heaven on the fiery chariot]) be shining with any sort of sensory light, and be seen and known? Especially since it was written of them: “they appeared in glory, and spoke of his death, which he was about to fulfill at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:30-31). And how

otherwise could the Apostles recognize those whom they had never seen before, unless

through the mysterious power of the Divine Light, opening their mental eyes?

To know something is to know its “light.” This is another way of saying that to know something is to know its Form. The two concepts are identical except that it provides the principle of differentiation in purely quantitative terms. Matter is the very principle of the quantitative which is why modernity is totally focused around material things and their cognates. Light is that which gives intelligibility to objects.

The mystical doctrines of Orthodoxy have been effaced by vulgar western thinking, the mentality of the Enlightenment and the agitation of the non-Orthodox, or the bicomposite. Everything for them is force, an imposition. The universal is never an imposition, only the particular is. The particular object in space is the expression of our sinfulness and fallenness. Seeing the universal, however, seeing God in nature, that is a token of grace, of the results of a lifetime of ascetic labors.

Nature for the bulk of humanity is merely an arena of blind force. This view is the basis for materialism and fetishism, as the latter is an understanding of certain natural objects as somehow embodying force or power. It is the genesis of paganism (i.e. life after the fall of Adam) in that regard. Its particular epistemology is that of Nominalism, the belief that what is real is what the senses perceive, and that only specific objects in their “givenness.”

Objects are brute givens, made up of particular attributes, and partake, in some sense, of the violence and blindness of fallen nature. This is the “world” or “the flesh” in the Scriptural sense, that which leads one to worship power, the state, and the manipulation of natural objects for profit, or the “economy.” It is the lowest form of human life. The reason of the unredeemed in this came becomes a slave to passion, and acts in relation to passion as means are to ends. Reason is able to contemplate spirit, but passion knows nothing of it, and recognizes particular objects only.

The ascetic life, therefore, is one where the human person is prepared to receive the light of God, both on earth and after his repose (as the Orthodox man does not “die,” but is released from the mere earthly life to live with Christ). There is no distinction between life on earth and that of the heavens, in that the divine light can penetrate the mystic both equally. The Orthodox struggler, after a lifetime of labor, no longer sees brute nature, but natural objects as manifesting the universal Form of the thing in the Platonic sense, that understanding of objects as existing in the mind of God. They bear the imprint of God as the creative force. The mystic can see through a person, they can see objects invisible to the unredeemed; they see what the life of the flesh hides from the pagan or heretic.

The unredeemed see objects/attributes are mere givens, each containing some force, some sort of “pull” over the will. A woman, to the lower human, is merely an object for sexual attraction or some Form of sexual exploitation. For the ascetic, the curves of a woman are the “Form” of human beauty, the manifestation of God’s will for man, the Eros of the love and beauty of God manifest in the human Form. There is no “passionate” pull on the ascetic’s will (at his best), but rather, the curves of a woman, or the red of an apple, or the color of the sky, are manifestations of God, His Will, His Beauty and His Love. They exist as universal ideas rather than brute objects in space and time.

St. Cyril of Turov (1130-1182) and the Lie of the Kabbalah

Western Russia also had its share in the anti-Nominalist movement represented by the Church fathers and Logos theology. For St. Cyril of Turov, a basically neglected saint of Old Russia, Pascha was the very manifestation of Logos for all to see: it showed divine control over natural forces. Man has his life arranged by Logos for his own benefit. The rest are determined merely by their passions. While St. Cyril hardly set out a systematic metaphysics, his approach to the church implies one that is both profound and evocative.

St. Cyril was a powerful representative of Kievan Rus' and hence, continues the tradition from Byzantium via Slavonic

translations coming from Bulgaria. He was a master rhetorician. St. Cyril singled out several aspects of intellectual life that are the most essential elements of human knowledge. The acquisition of the “gift of language” and the ability to “write in an accessible way” which can only come from the truth, since the fallen world is based on and creates the “cloudiness of the mind.”

In his many homilies, such as the “Homily about Man and Heavenly Forces,” he outlined the mission of man's life. It is in tireless spiritual work and, from this, the continuous creation of good deeds. For earthly life, men should avoid the sinful traps that lie in wait for them everywhere. Thus, the “Homily on the Second Coming of Christ” ends with a call to his fellow countrymen to give up sinful acts and indecent behavior such as drunkenness, overeating, adultery, anger, envy, slander and usury. Yet, how is this anything other than a platitude?

In his “Homily for Pentecost” he connects the virtues of modesty, restraint, mercy and respect though keeping the fasts. This is how one's thought becomes clear. This rejection of the world then leads to never refusing to give alms to beggars and the disadvantaged. In his “Homily on Wisdom,” he argues that the “pagan” view of the world is the root of man's sin.

In turn, this leads to questions of ethics and education. The process he writes in such a brief space forces man to leave the pagan way of life, which he connects with the excessive consumption of food, debauchery and mindless pleasures. This way of life then leaves nothing for others, since material wealth becomes the only thing worth pursuing. Mutual respect is impossible when the passions rule, since they see only themselves (cf Lunde, 2000).

Creation is “renewed” at the Resurrection in the sense that its divine origin can easily be discerned. If Eve is decried by the very world which she so earnestly served, Christ has now overcome that very world. If the pagan mind saw only natural forces and gave them names and poetic images, then Christ showed that there is only one force: the presence of

Logos. Mary redeemed Eve and contains the very Form of all creation. She is woman literally infused by Logos. She is not under “force,” as in the pagan stories, but is now under divine guidance.

It is not only pagans who attach names to natural forces, hence “humanizing” them for their own comfort, but the Jews remain as the last real force of pagan magic. If the *En Soph* of the Kabbalah is Nothing, that is, the “mist” of primordial chaos, then the rabbis can decide what is real and what is not. They “create” nature since nature, in their world, is only a human creation in the first place. St. Cyril condemns this in his writings on the nature of Pascha. The connection between Judaic magic and immoral behavior is his central priority. In his “Homily on Books and Education,” he says

Heretics had the holy books [at one point], but they did not have a clear mind, one given by God, but in their perversion, they became apostates of God.

Fearing that their soul stank from the excess of wine, and so blinded were the eyes of their heart and reason, and because the throne of their [rational facility] fell rotten and sour, decayed from the evil passions, their mind had nowhere to rest or escape, leaving them open to the demonic teachings.

Passion, on earth, is its own punishment. It blinds both the senses and reason, projecting only its own desires onto the world. All of this is “tied together” by pride, one that is implied by the fact that the ego is all they can perceive. Ignorance, passion, vices and heresy are brought together through egocentrism, or the individualism that implies that singular individuals are all that exists. In brief, “Logos cannot enter into a wicket soul.” This is why he says, citing the Scriptures, that meekness is more important than Wisdom because it is from that entryway that Logos then appears clearly. Nominalism means individualism and, both intellectually and socially, prevents truth from being perceived.

The “transformation” from Pascha is manifested by the full disclosure of Logos. This is not mere poetic verbiage, but refers to the rejection of the pagan and Judaic “Nothingness” revived by Nietzsche. The

Nothing of the rabbis is the result of the rejection of Logos. Without Logos, there can be no nature, only the “mist” of Prime Matter. If chaos reigns, then order is drawn from it. If order can be drawn, elite control is then manifested and rationalized. “Masses” do not create order, but are created by it. “Masses,” from a social point of view, are, in fact, chaos itself. The Resurrection shows Logos as the master and ruler of all creation, not any human factor except by analogy. As the Kabbalah saw suicide as the true world of freedom, since man was not master of nature except in that radical sense, the Orthodox see Logos as the principle of nature: singular, good and purposeful. Nominalism sees Nothing, and hence, it has to conclude that the creation (or the repair) of “nature” can only be done by those with the power to do so.

As ideal types, Jews and “Egyptians” for St. Cyril are the very principle of evil and corruption. This is because their entire existence was based around the world-as-they-found-it, not the original, divinely created world. What they tend to perceive is chaos, and as a result, either in the “pagan” sense of needing to be named and “humanized” by it or b) this “chaos” needed to be remade into the image of the Judaic master, the Mason of the New Temple of Solomon, or the something-out-of-Nothing. However, the Nothing is a demonic lie as it is the closest an elite of adepts can get to creation *ex nihilo*. It is to make a fetish of chaos. Chaos, to reverse the metaphor, is in the mind of the beholder. Chaos is the mental state of those who have rejected or otherwise lost contact with Logos. Without this singular order and an understanding of its purpose, then Nominalism becomes the default mental mechanism of man.

The Pharisees were so controlled by Nominalism – their worship of dead material objects such as money, reputation and power – that they could not and would not see Christ for anything but as a threat to themselves. St. John the Baptist was treated in the same way. For the Judaic elite, then and now, the world is a chaotic mess of power, aimless and meaningless. Only an initiated and powerful elite can harness this, though only for the ends that they chose. Since there were no

intrinsic ends of things—central to Nominalism in all ages—they and they alone had the right to dictate what these meaningless objects were for. This is the root of totemism and fetishism and its fruit, the torture and murder of Christ and millions of Christians.

The resurrection, in St. Cyril's *Paschal Homily*, also typifies the Spring. It is not the literal season, but what Spring is qualitatively. He says, "Today the winter of sin has stopped in repentance, and the ice of unbelief is melted by wisdom spring appears." Wisdom is another term for Logos. It is not just a rebirth, but a rebirth of man's labor in cooperation with God. Man works the earth and, in cooperation with the Logos that guarantees regularity in nature, creates something "new." Not quite new precisely, but something done in cooperation with Order, natural law in the fullest sense. Soil, Sun, warmth, growth and labor: these are the variables of the order of creation informed by Logos. Logos, expressed by numerous appearances in the Old Covenant, now appears as fully manifest in the flesh. "Flesh" not only means the flesh taken from the Theotokos, but all matter. Nature is "Transformed" only because now, we can see what truly controls the birth, death and rebirth of objects in creation; what makes it all function as a rational unit.

For the Pharisees, the Law given to Moses itself was a totem. It had no meaning in itself, as the Talmud shows hundreds of ways where the Law can be abrogated. It is meaningless except as a magical, material thing. The Law, sociologically, became the route to power and control. The Talmud, because the fruits of that power, served as the very negation of Law. There was no natural law, since that suggests a spiritual origin and purpose to nature, there was only power and, just as importantly, those elites who had the knowledge to control it, to harness it.

Hobbes had a role in this too. He saw the Leviathan as the great magician who can harness the aimless and violent energy of the mass for his own ends. The Leviathan is, in some very real way, the Adam Kadmon of the Kabbalah. Power without authority cannot perceive grace. It can see only its own self interest and will. The will

comes first to be followed by reason, though reason appears only in the capacity of a courtier in that it justifies what has already been done. Power has to use trickery as an important tool in its variety of tactics, as Machiavelli made clear. This is done with images, and images are false presentations of objects. It is the very utility of Nominalism. An image is the same as the object because the object, in itself, has no intrinsic meaning or end. Therefore, the image is truth and reality is falsehood; all is inverted, since inversion is a cardinal principle of Satanism.

With all this, Christ spit in the mud to create a healing balm. Nature is good as even in its lowly manifestations of spit and mud, Logos is present as the Form of Forms. Plato's problem of how to reach and live "within" the Forms has been solved by the Incarnation. The Forms came to man rather than the reverse. Logos Himself showed us Logos, but he could only do this in the Form of man. Logos realized is Logos incarnated. The Incarnation of Christ in human flesh was just yet another, more radical, manifestation of nature, which, in a hidden way, is a constant incarnation of Christ's energy via natural law.

St. Cyril's social thought, expressed in his short story of the *Householder*, is derived directly from his vision of the Paschal reality. The householder is God, the vineyard is Eden, a place where Logos is fully manifest as the guiding principle of natural life. There is a fence around this garden, and this fence is both "doctrine," that is, the discipline needed to comprehend Logos truly, and also a guard, something delineating the border between truth and falsehood. Only a few can enter since most only see themselves. Logos is not present when the external world is little more than a reflection of one's disordered internal impulses. The entrance, however, is the rejection of this disordered state and is the "entrance" to the truth. The guards are two: one lame, the other blind, representing the unredeemed body and soul.

These two guards plunder Eden as they can only act upon their own impulses. They have no fear of God, they are ignorant of the origin of

all these good things, and their reason is controlled by impulse and becomes only a tool to rationalize these very impulses. In a state of sin, reason is never autonomous: it either justifies one's disordered actions or, splitting from them, seeks the proper means to the truth. All else is given, but what the guards do not have is humility. Reason seems to be the end result of all, a servant of passion while it naturally seeks to rule them, to break free from its passionate prison. Reason without humility is a metaphor for Satan: dependent, yet struggling to convince others he is independent.

The purpose of St. Cyril's writings of Pascha or social life is the rejection of individuation. Individuals only exist because they are bound together in community. The binding, as well as the purpose, is Logos and law is the opposite of chaos. One cannot create the other. Your will must be harmonized with Christ's as He is the bearer of all truth and the reason plays the dominant part in the struggle, but passions remain potent. By themselves, isolated from Logos, they are enslaved to what are often confused with "natural" demands.

Sin brought death not just to the soul, but to the world. It brought all earthly things to death and decay. Death is the same as the Nominalist view of the world – a collection of objects without internal purpose; an almost random set of Newtonian interactions without meaning. Our names are as arbitrary as the "order" to which they are attached. This is sin, it is the ontology of Hell in that it torments the passions, forcing them one way, then another, never satisfying any of them.

The soul that is upheld through grace from the Spirit becomes immortal. Through sin, the soul dies in the life of the Spirit. Of itself, the specific animating principle of man is not immortal, but it becomes such through grace, and once grace upholds the soul, it no longer will see eternal death, either spiritually or bodily, since bodily death will be reversed at the final judgment. Eternal life is based on the focus of the soul solely on the divine Wisdom, while its death is based on its meaningless meandering among the random bits of

matter in order to satisfy monetary passions. For the unredeemed, chaos is their lot on earth; the painful emptiness and void ending only in death. Materialism is an “obvious truth” for the unredeemed, since such souls can grasp no other reality. They are merely a part of the natural order and fade away at their own death, since they had no contact with anything else. In fact, the animal kingdom expresses the divine order quite admirably, far more than the chaos-ridden unredeemed soul. Animal species share a single soul, the priorities of which cannot be resisted since free will does not exist among them. While animals cannot, for this reason, have virtue, they still carry out what Logos has implanted in their nature. Life outside of grace is endless anxiety, depression, fraud, misrepresentation and finally, meaningless death. If there is a single proposition that all Patristic writers agree on, this is it.

The Metaphysics of the Heart in St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359)

The social mentality of St. Gregory Palamas is organized around the fact that, in the church, the divisions among men, offices, institutions and the Spirit himself are blurred. This same question arose in the work of St. Dionysius in an earlier chapter. In fact, while these divisions have a general purpose in that they have different functions, they are not ultimately real. Synods, parishes and even monasteries are distinct from one another only out of convenience, though this structure in the abstract is congruent with human nature. Of themselves, they have no reality, but these are just successful means that fallen men have used to manifest the gifts of the Spirit. Monks have their own lives and bishops have theirs, but this does not imply that their lives are essentially different, only that they are functionally distinct. In terms of grace, they are identical.

Function is important only in the sense that it is convenient. Functions are not inherent in the faith and have no relevance for grace. Function, such as the office of bishop or deacon, can be the path to Hell as to Heaven. Offices exist because it makes the life of the church progress easier. There is no further meaning than this.

They are needed, they are important, the church largely cannot function on earth without them. Yet, they are not intrinsic to the constitution of the church, especially if that “constitution” is based on grace, or God's presence on earth. Functions are artifacts, not natural objects, so they partake of no clear and overarching reality except the most basic – humans need to organize their lives in some form of order. This, of course, is part of the Form of human nature.

The reason why this is so important is that the obsession with offices, titles or functions can fall into idolatry. Nominalists do this with “individuals,” while the papal sect makes the bishop of Rome as such into the primary or even sole instrument of the Holy Spirit. He is the “instrument” of the Spirit based on his function and office alone, meaning that grace is tethered to an office. From this, grace is hence something “created.” Put crudely, it means that the pope takes grace from the Spirit and “applies” it to those people whom have “earned” it. This distinction is the main issue between Orthodoxy and west Rome and lies at the root of the filioque issue. If the Spirit proceeds from the Son, and if the Son's vicar is the pope, then the Spirit flows from the pope. Created grace is directly deduced from this. Once this concept was dogmatized in Roman councils, the heresy of Rome was permanent and the offices of pope and cardinal became the only channel of grace that was then “dispensed” to those who seek it. Once the unity of God's presence was split and the pope became the only channel of grace available to the faithful, the work of St. Gregory Palamas became a necessity. In other words, it became crucial that the Orthodox church manifest the truth of God's presence as indifferent to an office as such. Faith and love—not purity of life—became the sole means of approaching this grace. Sacraments, vigil, fasting, liturgy, icons and the rest became assistants – things that can help the struggler to experience this uncreated presence with greater or lesser intensity. This is why monasticism became the very heart of the church, since there was the real instantiated Form of sainthood. Works did not “earn” grace—since that would imply that the grace was created—but instead made it easier for that grace to be experienced.

One of the most important problems of spirituality in Palamas' approach is the dispersal of the mind. This is a common monastic theme, but its philosophical significance lies in its rejection of the Nominalist error. The mind, heart and person—speaking in the most conceptual and general way possible—is a single entity. At the very least, it is an entity made up of the integration, but not confusion, of these entities. The focus or integration of our faculties, regardless of how they are conceived separately, is the secular goal of the monastic life. The individual is part of the life of grace not by accident, but because he is ontologically designed for it.

After man's Fall, Nominalism was born in that reason could no longer “see” God. It could not easily discern Logos “operating” in the regular, law-bound action of nature. Nature slowly began to appear as a chaotic jumble of forces made up of objects and relationships apparently without cause or final purpose. Paganism, in the most general terms, was the result. The gods of pagan lore were never meant to be taken as real, living beings. They were poetic symbols—in the true sense—of natural and social forces. The drama of the gods, however, reflected the fact that the mind was long alienated from its inner (that is, essential) connection with nature via Logos as none of these entities was a creator out of nothing. That, at the time, was inconceivable.

Nominalism was the final stage in mind's alienation from the Reason inherent in the world, the presence of the Forms. The state, as in the Persian or Roman empires, became the Leviathan that held the chaos of peoples, forces and ideas together in a coherent whole. The whole was not coherent because of its nature, but was held together by force in spite of its nature. St. Augustine argued this to a deaf audience after the sack of the City by Alaric.

Nominalism leads to order imposed by force. This is a simple idea only in that Nominalism rejects any “natural” order among natural components. This is why Darwinism was, and had to be, based on Nominalism. Force and violence are the real elements that push evolution's

march “forward.” The “connections” among natural objects do not create a system that can be understood by use of intrinsically connected concepts. Rather, these concepts derive from the human mind and serve only to systematize that which is not essentially a system, but an equilibrium of the violent forces among species battling for available living space.

The extent to which the mind is “dispersed” is the extent to which the mind has accepted the chaos of Nominalism. The trajectory of nature after the fall is towards dispersal and chaos. It was stopped in the rise of Greek thought and the concept of eternal, unchanging entities accessible to human thought, but much of the intellectual world still lived in and among chaos. Nominalism takes this chaos as the very principle of nature itself. From this, the modern scientific elite can remake this chaos into whatever it wants. Nominalism and Realism remain the master distinction between the ancient and medieval worlds on the one hand, and the modern world on the other. It has permitted technology to go from assisting in the work of nature to replacing it.

Monotheism implies and assumes that the universe is governed by a single source. This means, in turn, that the world operates from a single law that manifests itself in all aspects of the natural order. Monotheism, strictly speaking, is radically incompatible with Nominalism since it rejects and essential connections between created and creator. Realism is the Christian vision of nature because Logos is the very Wisdom of nature as its creator. The Law emanating from the Father is the “footprint” of His presence in creation through Logos.

It is only because of the Nominalist bias in human sensation (or at least considerations on human sensation) is the “mystical school” somehow “different” from the others. If Nominalism is false, then everything becomes “mystical” experience, because the outward form of things only serve to introduce us to the real world underneath. The difference between the medieval and modern worlds is that the former saw the world as symbolic (in the true

sense) of deeper, more profound spiritual realities reserved only for the redeemed. "Symbols" are gateways to substance, not its opposite. The modern assumes that the material objects and their accidents are all there is.

Anything intrinsic to objects in the world must be imported from our own brains. Man is the lord over nature only because nature really does not exist in the modern and Postmodern minds. It is a swirl of chaotic sounds, smells and colors without meaning; without final purpose. Of course, no "scientific" theory can show one way or another whether or not nature has purpose, though, if pressed, the modern might admit that "self-preservation" seems to be the only observable trait in all natural things. This, of course, only begs the question.

If reason be considered one object among others, and the objects of nature similarly, then there can be no relation between the two. Ego and will end up substituting for it. This is the occult nature of modernity. There is no intrinsic reason why I should hold that reason is anything other than opaque to the objects that surround it. The only way out of this problem is to hold that reason is, in itself, a spiritual and non-material reality that hence can take "into" itself the objects of the external world as well as internal objects like will or consciousness.

While this is an oversimplified description, it communicates the essence of the issue. Dedicated to some Form of Nominalism, which is identical with materialism (the spiritual world must be more than nominal), reason and will seem almost absurd: the very mockery that the existentialists considered them to be. St. Symeon provides a fairly simple yet profound anticipation to the modern problem, a problem that existed in the world of ancient Greece as well.

The heart is the ontological center of man. To isolate the brain from the rest of creation seems to be one of the general problems of rationalism in the sense of the scholastic method. Men think not just with their brains, but with their wills, hearts and physical constitution.

Social context is important as well. The “brain” is not the same as the “mind.” Yet, the mind is not the only “organ” of thought. Thought is holistic. This holism is represented by the “heart.”

The heart in Palamism is the center of the person in a qualitative sense. It is the locus of the unity of history, affection, reason, romance, tradition, logic and self-interest. Reason never works alone. It follows the will and seeks to justify it. It serves the context of the thinker and does not operate autonomously. Like all abstractions, logic serves a very important and specific qualitative goal in history. Reason is a tool, it is not the tool. Palamas writes in his Homily 63:

This soul was honored with free will and independent life, as without this honor it would have been pointless for it to be rational. Thus it received a will free from all necessity, and if it remains attentively in God and is united with Him by love, it keeps its good and natural life. But if it becomes as though satiated by this sacred residing in God, turning towards things below and the pleasures of the flesh by veering away from what is by nature good, it falls sick with what is evil by nature, sin, creating death for itself, alas, by voluntarily falling away from life.

The union of man with God's presence is not a rational unity. It is a super-rational unity. To say something is “irrational” is to say that it is either above or below reason. It can go against it in some formal way—like a logical fallacy—but truth is not dependent on reason's workings. Logic assists men in approaching truth and explaining it to others. It does not create it, and, more importantly, does not exhaust its content.

Prayer is a means of approaching God's presence. “Grace” and “energy” are terms that substitute for “presence.” Grace and energy are means by which Logos can become more clearly visible to people. Prayer is the action of the heart, not the mind. The heart prays not with reasoned and measured theology, but the entire context of the person, the institution (like the parish) and the social life to which the person belongs. Palamas writes,

If according to the delirious opponents and those who agree with them, the Divine energy in no way differs from the Divine essence, then the act of creating, which belongs to the will, will in no way differ from generation and procreation, which belong to the essence. If to create is no different from generation and procreation, then the creatures will in no way differ from the Begotten and the Projected. If such is the case according to them, then both the Son of God and the Holy Spirit will be no different from creatures, and the creatures will all be both the begotten and the projected of God the Father, and creation will be deified and God will be arrayed with the creatures. For this reason the venerable Cyril, showing the difference between God's essence and energy, says that to generate belongs to the Divine nature, whereas to create belongs to His Divine energy (quoted from Florovsky).

God does not "need" our prayers. Nominalism is most obvious in the Protestant sects because it posits a large gap between "individuals," the abstract wills that have somehow been given the authority to interpret Scripture, church history and God Himself. God is posited as a being essentially separate from man. Protestantism cannot be separated from Nominalism and makes no sense without assuming the truth of that metaphysical theory. Prayer in the radically Realist system of Palamas takes on a very different coloration from the "intercessions" of the Protestant mentality. Protestants seem to conceive of God as a being separate from everything that is not God in every respect. He is an "individual" like any other and is not connected in any way with his creation because there is no intrinsic connections among things that have been created. Approaching God in this way is a bit like going before a judge or asking a question of a teacher.

Realism approaches prayer in a way so distinct that it cannot be called "prayer" in the sense that the Protestant Nominalist conceives it. There are intrinsic, yet not essential, connections between God and his creation as Logos is the ordering force in creation. On the other hand, the church is the presence of God on earth. The church of Rome reduced the presence of the Spirit to the pope, and

Protestants generally hold that nature is autonomous both from God and all forces and manifestations of natural powers.

This problem lies at the heart of Palamite prayer and the nature of the relation of man to God in the Orthodox church. These are not distinct “traditions,” but human prayers in a system of chaos and individualism or prayers within an ordered universe based on the presence of Logos. The distinction becomes clearer when prayer is understood as the communication of the three persons in the Trinity one with another. Realism takes on its most extreme form in Palamism, since men do not pray in the popular sense. The Spirit uses them as vehicles for His own communication with the Father. Without Truth, there can be no prayer and the Holy Spirit alone has been charged with teaching men how to pray. The purpose of prayer is to join man with God, so prayer need not be based on words, but on the longing for the soul to be united with its creator and final end.

This is not to say that men do not pray for specific ends, but God knows man's needs beforehand and the Psalms refer to that fact. It is just that God withholds his assistance until his church, or the “manifestation” of his Spirit, seeks His assistance. The purpose here is disciplinary: prayer must regularly be about petitions primarily to keep man's constant dependence on God a part of their day to day lives. Fathers do this with their children. Nevertheless, this also implies that the word “prayer” is an equivocal one, since it refers, even in the church, to two very different ways, purposes and motives for approaching God.

As all the Fathers agree, epistemology is not an autonomous branch of philosophy. Epistemology is intrinsically connected with metaphysics in that the state of the soul dictates what will be understood as “real.” A diseased soul will not see reality, but mere projections of his internal disorder. Purity of soul, that is, a soul not weighed down with material drives and desires, alone can see reality. Material drives and desires are not themselves evil, but they only find their proper place in the ordered system of creation organized by Logos.

Humanity manifest in the church, the Forms and the Grace and presence of God are all tightly integrated in Palamas, making his specific brand of Realism of immense importance. Nominalism, at its very minimum, takes the divisions and borders among objects in nature as given, though never organic. These borders are precisely what separate one thing from another and, more importantly, manifest the total lack of any real connection among objects. Useful connections are one thing, but utility does not imply an essential or organic connection. In fact, it even serves to imply a total lack of connection, as when one man uses another for his own purposes. It shows alienation rather than a dependence.

Sts. Gregory Palamas, Maximos the Confessor and Dionysus are often called the “mystics” of the church. St. Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022) is also usually added as a fourth member of this school. Secular academia bumbles around complex theological issues they often do not take seriously as truthful statements. Without the slightest common ideology with their subject, modern historians simply cannot describe the ideas or mentality of non-modern man. The truth is that the majority of “medievalists” in American universities are secular, having only the most perfunctory knowledge of Christianity. They not only fail to write actual history, they are incapable of it for this reason. It is as if professional psychiatrists had to analyze human behavior without any reference to the brain. They take modern concerns and read them back onto history. They cannot escape modern assumptions.

One example of this incompetence is the cliched distinction between “monastics” and “humanists” in Byzantium. These labels exist to cover over their often total lack of knowledge of the church, the essence of the Byzantine life. In fact, there is no distinction between mystic and “practical” Christianity at all. The Church and the presence of Christ on earth are identical regardless of what a writer might stress about it. To be “mystic” is to participate in a Universal, in this case, a concrete universal. This is why Plato, especially in commentaries on the *Symposium*, is often called a “mystic.” The more vague labels become, the greater the chances that the writer is

covering over something. The term “mystic” is one of the more notorious examples.

The Will to Power: Nominalism as Pagan Science

The social consequences of Realism is the Orthodox doctrine of royal and patriarchal life. The stories of the gods in the ancient world show a democratic equality and independence, such as the gods on Mount Olympus. Paganism, from Babylonia to Rome, is chaos. Each entity in the pantheon reflects the minds who first wrote the poems and stories – social life is an anarchy only occasionally forced into shape by the transitory nature of superior force. For the church, “force” makes no sense since the ground of their relations are ontological. Nominalism only knows force, since force is the only thing that brings objects, inherently unrelated, under one roof. All “roofs” (or descriptive words) are artificial and transitory. Force is all that exists in the Nominalist universe.

The Father is the ground of existence and the alpha and omega of all relationships. The father on earth is the king and patriarch. He is the ground of all familial relationships. When the Nominalist metaphysics is adopted through political revolution, the Father loses all purpose since reality is chaotic. Anarchy remains, but an anarchy that serves to invite the oligarchy to impose its own sense of hierarchy. One hierarchy is no better than another, and no moral distinctions can be made if meaning is not to be found among sensibles as such.

Metaphysics follows politics.

The visible world only exists as such because of God's enlightening presence. This “presence” is another way of speaking of his Light, the power of grace that holds the cosmos together as a singular object. Understanding this reality brings mental freedom in that there is something not at all subject to cause and effect. Logos is always present in nature. In fact, He is creation's principle. It is one thing to speak of the law-bound regularity of the natural world, but it is another to consider how this Logos functions “mechanically” as the ground of all things. Modern science can only study the motion and

power of matter. It has no competence elsewhere. Therefore, it has no authority to pronounce that matter is all there is, since, among other things, it is a fairly obvious matter of self-interest for the scientific establishment to make such a claim.

The study of Logos is known, in part, by the study of the complexity of the natural laws as they manifest themselves in biochemistry and the forces they unleash. Logos in Himself, outside of the church and its revelation, is another matter. The fact that the world of matter is law-bound is something assumed by modern science, but the origins, purpose and end of such law is out of its understanding or competence. Idolatry derives from the attempt to make sense out of Logos as a “mechanical” entity.

One of the most important axioms of the modern world is its view of ancient and medieval science. Medieval science derived directly from the science of Rome, itself based on Greek ideas. The assumption of the Enlightenment is that the middle ages were a time of mindless superstition. “Natural laws” were not known in this era, or so they think. People died at “30” back then, so our longevity derives directly from the new sciences developed as a direct result of the Enlightenment. Those who criticize modern science, at least those who are criticizing it from a “rightist” point of view, are smeared as “obscurantists.”

Modern science is based on a series of myths. It posits, speaking simply, an ignorant, sick people “liberated” by the developing scientific method of Britain, the Netherlands and France more or less immediately following the Renaissance and Reformation. This method was self-generating, desirous only of finding the truth in the midst of medieval superstition. “Truth,” “science” and “reason” are defined precisely as that which derives from modern methods, making it a circular argument. It finds its end in the development of technology. The conclusion is, therefore, that the western world is far

more “rational” today than it was 1000 years ago, as well as being far happier and healthier.

Of course, this approach bears very little resemblance to actual history. The main distinction between medieval and modern science is that the latter has as its final purpose the development of a technological apparatus. Greek and Roman science generally did not have “machines” as their end, with the exception of Roman military technology. The question, therefore, becomes how to explain ancient science. The Enlightenment approach claims that there was no “science” in the ancient or medieval worlds.

The reality is that the ancients developed powerful empires, tremendous monuments and centralized bureaucracies with mathematical, geometric, aesthetic and astronomical precision and sophistication. Ancient medical science caused a lifespan of roughly 70 years of age. To claim that the ancient world was “unscientific,” and that the cathedral of Rheims were built by the “ignorant,” is to engage in colossal intellectual dishonesty. The precision of the pyramids alone is equal to the most sophisticated building equipment of the 21st century. Yet, no one denies that ancient science was very different from its modern inheritors.

The difference lies in its product. Empirical methods of inquiry were well developed in Egypt, Athens, Rome and medieval Ireland. The Renaissance did not “resurrect” Greek and Roman learning, nor did the Enlightenment revive science and reason. Natural science existed in its empirical modes in the Roman empire, and the literature of Greece and Rome were the daily fare of medieval intellectuals. The concept of “Enlightenment” is thus an occult concept. What was resurrected is not the empirical method or Roman poetry, but rather the ancient Babylonian occult science of alchemy. This makes the Greco-Medieval scientific mind very different from its modern successor.

The rise of the Kabbalah is the ingredient that separates medieval from modern science. The one ancient concept of science that is not dealt with in any detail is that of the antediluvian world. Occult scientific techniques derive from the wisdom of those destroyed by the flood. This flood is described in detail in nearly all ancient cultures. The Renaissance refers not to the resurrection of Greco-Roman classics, but to the antediluvian tradition of Nimrod. Its biblical icon is the “Tower of Babel.” Judaics, in their exile in the cradle of this civilization, incorporated its “magic” in what was later to become Talmudic Judaism.

Major Jewish writers and the collections of the Jewish Virtual Library – just to name one place – have stated that the Enlightenment was the beginning of the Messianic era. By the end of the 16th century, the sciences of navigation and astronomy were almost exclusively in Jewish hands, according to the Israeli based Shaul Youdkevitch. Jewish science was the basis of the rise of Portugal, the Netherlands and later, the British empires. Leibniz himself stated that the future of science can be found in the Kabbalah. The “Big Bang” theory is explicitly mentioned in the Zohar as the origin of all things.

Jewish nationalist writers such as Michael Laitman hold that the Kabbalah is modern science and vice versa. Messiah, according to him, will be created by technology as it ushers paradise to the world. Evolutionism finds its root in this Babylonian Judaism, where “God” is considered as identical with the Unified Field Theory, more or less. Zohar claims that the earth is 15.3 billion years old and is continually expanding. The “Torah Science Foundation” says the same.

“God” among the Jews has no resemblance to the Old Testament. Judaism has long rejected the Tanakh, as well as the prophets, as “outdated.” The most Orthodox of Jews reject the literal reading of the Old Testament and find their truth only in the Zohar and related texts. Moses Hess stated that evolutionism is “pure Kabbalah.” At its root, the resurrection of the ancient antediluvian and later Babylonian science and alchemy lies

at the root of modernity. This is what separates modern from Greco-Roman and medieval science.

Technology is the final end of the Kabbalah and is almost identical with

modernity. Technology is the product of modern science, so technology and the recreation of both nature and society is the crux of science in general. Nominalism is the metaphysical principle of the Kabbalah, modernity and modern technology overall. Without Nominalism, modern science does not make sense. Modernism, in short, is the imposition of the Zohar and its metaphysics on the western world for the goal of transforming nature into technology, the *tikkun olam*, or “fixing the world.” Marxism, liberalism, materialism, Nominalism, capitalism, “markets” and the whole vocabulary of modern ideology has its distant origins in Judaism and the Kabbalah.

The secret, literally “occult” aspect of modern science is metaphysics. After decades of academic philosophers claiming that there is no need for “metaphysics” anymore suggests a more potent ideology than even its critics have grasped. “Metaphysics” is a problem for them because, at its very root, it seeks to grasp the structure of reality. This “structure” is different from the functioning of natural laws in that it tries to grasp their source. This is not a scientific question. Since philosophy in the universities—really a parody of what Socrates meant by “philosophy”—has redefined itself to be a mere handmaiden of science, the rejection of metaphysics makes sense on several levels.

First, science has no business in the realm of metaphysics. Metaphysics is not, in itself, a scientific discipline since it understands what and how science can know of anything at all. Science can try to grasp the purpose and function of a force of nature, but metaphysics tries to grasp on what this force might be based. These are two completely different methods and questions. Therefore, the Positivist opinion as to whether metaphysics is “necessary” is irrelevant, since they have no authority over a field outside their purview.

Secondly, Positivism as the “handmaid” of science is also absurd since the scientific establishment has a professional and financial interest in making sure metaphysics does not become a competitor. It is a regular feature of scientific and Positivist historical criticism that opponents of the “Enlightenment” have a nonintellectual motive. “The church,” and other vague abstractions, usually have an “interest” in fighting “science.” On the other hand, the scientific establishment, since it is truth itself, can have no financial other non-intellectual motive at all.

The truth is evidently different, as the scientific establishment, being a wealthy and well connected interlocking set of bureaucracies has, by this very fact, substantial and allimportant professional and scientific interests which it must serve to survive. If budgets shrink, which is a possible but unlikely scenario, the establishment's claim to intellectual superiority will increase in frequency and insistence.

The most significant issue here is the fact that the scientific establishment rejects metaphysics because “science,” at its root, claims the ability to actually create the world. Reality is not observed by theoretical science, but is in fact, created by it. Technology as the distinction between ancient and modern science and it exists only because of the Kabbalah and its eccentric concept of “god,” that is, the *En Soph* of the Zohar. It is Nothing. It is the chaotic void that is to be filled by the machine as the more “perfect” rendering of the natural order. The *En Soph* is literally Nothing but chaos.

The rabbi has the goal of ordering the *En Soph* to fit the interests of his tribe. The crafting of the *En Soph* is the purpose and nature of Judaism and the rabbinic idea. The world is imperfect because it has not suitably been “ordered” by the rabbis. Jewish power is thus equated with *tikkun olam* – or the “healing of the world” so commonly referenced in pop culture. Technics is the rabbinic solution to the chaos of the world still uninformed by them.

This ideology can be symbolized in numeric form. The significance of the number six and its letter, “F,” in Hebrew refers to this world in its lowest Form. It is the domain of power and coercion. It refers to “the

double edged sword” in its initial pictographic representation, according to Ukrainian scholar Vladimir Owarchuk, a personal friend of the author. It is the “spine” of creation, that mystic relation between particulars and the passions, and is completed, in Christian life, through the waters of baptism, represented by the number seven.

Seven in Hebrew numerology refers to the “source” or, in its original understanding, the source of the waters of Eden, or the waters of divine truth. On the other hand, six often is represented by a tree, the tree of “secret knowledge” the source of Gnostic ideology. Technology, or the ultimate ideology of “sixness,” or Gnosticism (the “perfection” of creation), is the reverse of the “seven,” or man saving himself, rather than the true meaning of seven, or the source of liberation, divine truth and the overcoming of contradiction.

In the Gnostic mentality, the resolver of contradiction is man, represented by six, the occult “star of David,” (which has nothing to do with ancient Hebrew religion) the star is a hexagram symbolizing technology resolving the contradiction, the “yin/yang” of nature through technology and oligarchy. Since “six” is represented by what appears to be an upright staff (both “sword” and “nail”), it represents the nailing of man to earth, the prison of space/time, the life of sin, the life of the earth. 60 in Hebrew is “the support,” or the tree, the “tree of life” in the garden, the knowledge of contradiction and its resolution; the knowledge of the earth. It is traditionally known as the space/time prison.

600, the age of Noah when he enters the Ark, it is the earth and its pleasures, soon to be altered into perfection, the number 7, beyond space and time, the church itself. In Hebrew the number seven is rendered “Shiva,” adopted by the Hindus for their Goddess of destruction/rebirth; death/life. Seven is rest and godhood, the end of labors. 70 is the number for the “all seeing eye,” perverted by the Masons, but was the Eye of God, that which destroys sin.

Six and Seven, then, are closely related, as Satan attempts to convince people he is God. There are true and false miracles, true

and false religions; six and seven produce religion, tradition and miracles equally, hence the problem, hence the need for the Church and its authority. Six represents one Form of the resolution of contradiction, the double edge “yin/yang.” It is technology, the secret knowledge of ideology and the oligarchical elite to create a “better world.” Seven is the true resolution of contradiction in Christ himself and the waters of baptism. Seven is timelessness, both in the sense of tradition as remaining steadfast another meaning of the tree in ancient paganism. “Tree” might refer to both being rooted to the earth, as well as the steadfastness of tradition. It is both good and evil. The contradiction in nature, as being both good and evil at the same time, therefore neither, the domain of blind force, is resolved either by the Gnostic prison of technology and slave labor to maintain it, or the life of asceticism, the liberation of the will over and above the domain of “treeness” or “sixness,” that is, blind nature. It was this “tree” to which Christ was crucified, “nailed” down by passion and sin.

The Orthodox answer can be found in St. Thalassios in the *Philokalia*,

When the intellect has been perfected, it unites wholly with God and is illumined by divine light, and the most hidden mysteries are revealed to it. Then it truly learns where wisdom and power lie. . . While it is still fighting against the passions it cannot as yet enjoy these things... But once the battle is over and it is found worthy of spiritual gifts, then it becomes wholly luminous, powerfully energized by grace and rooted in the contemplation of spiritual realities. A person in whom this happens is not attached to the things of this world but has passed from death to life.

The mentality of the ruler is what the modern mind refuses to understand. If science is ruled by the passion of greed or power, then it will fail, since it does not have reason at its core. Since the Positivist idea tends to ignore psychology, the methods of science do not seem to be affected by the passions and the sinful state of the

human mind. The prison of the symbolic numbers such as four or six are the result of the destruction of cognition through passion.

Conclusion: Realism and the Virtues

Metaphysics is about the apprehension of reality and serves as the foundation of behavior. It is never idle speculation. A virtue is a set of habits that permit a man to ascend the ladder from objects as “brute givens” to objects bearing the universal; to a life where objects manipulate the passions, to one where God is observed working through natural objects and the laws that govern their interaction where nature appears as truth rather than violence. A vice does the opposite.

A virtue is a structure of behavior (or a “rule” of life) that permits the ascetic to ascend to God in the sense of seeing the universal in the particular, or the “spirit” that is hidden under the colors and sounds of fallen nature. There can be no virtue without some variant of the ascetic life. “Natural Law,” the laws discoverable by science, is understood by the mystic/ascetic as the loving presence of God directing His creation. For the vulgar, law, whether civil or natural, is a form of violence, coercion and death, something set “over” man, something with its own set of obligations and penalties.

St. Gregory of Sinai writes in this vein,

Fire, darkness, worm, hell
correspond to passions-lusts of all kinds, the all-embracing darkness of ignorance, the unquenchable thirst for sensual pleasures, the stench of evil-smelling sin, which, like
precursors and foretastes of the torment of hell, even now begin to torture sinners in whose souls they take root through long-established habit.

Therefore, good acts are those that permit the ascent to Christ, the ability to view nature as Logos, and are the sum total of the ascetic struggle. A bad act brings man back to the prison, and ultimately

worship, of earthly power. A “passion” is precisely the “pull” that objects within fallen nature have on the human will, forcing the will to act in one way over another, to be drawn one way, repelled another. The term “passion” is related to the terms “patient” and “passive.” Attributes of natural objects are viewed purely as a means whereby a certain drive can be (temporarily) satisfied. Ultimately, this is how the unredeemed view created nature, as an arena for their drives. Amounting to the same thing, it is also an arena for those with the ability to set their passions above others for a fee, such as the wealthy, to dominate the world.

This mentality is the basis for a life of sin, the life of the world. The repetition of good actions, therefore, are those that, in their totality, bring the human being out of this prison and into the light of the Trinitarian life for which human beings were created. “Freedom,” properly defined, is the liberation of the will from the prison of “cause and effect,” of nature in its lowest manifestation. As the repetition of bad acts imprisons one in the earthy world of determinism, good actions, repeated over time, create a habit of life, or a virtue.

Sin therefore, does not “offend” God in the normal sense of the term; but it offends against the dignity of the baptized man. Sin is the gradual effacing of the true destiny of the human person, a prison where drives of the will are the only reality (ultimately dissolving objects into the undulations of the will), and objects in space are the means where by these are satisfied. Sin is a prison; it imprisons man in the world of cause and effect, of force and coercion. Therefore, “penance” is not “making things up” to God in a juridical sense of compensation, but an attempt to place the penitent on the right path of asceticism and selfdenial, training of the will to not seek fulfillment in the world of violence and coercion, but in the liberation only the universal can provide. St. Macarius the Great writes,

After a person had turned away from God’s commandments and became subject to His condemnation, sin had enslaved him and like a narrow and deep abyss of bitterness, having

pervaded inside, captured the soul to its very deepest recesses. Likewise, we can compare the sin within us as a large and leafy tree, whose roots stretch deep into the soil. Thus having entered our soul, sin had overwhelmed it to its deepest recesses, becoming a habit that begins in our childhood and with the years, grows ever stronger leads us toward the vile.

Asceticism liberates the will and brings it above the world of objects and into the world of universal truth and reality, that of spirit, objects reflecting the will and love of the creator rather than as means to (temporarily) fulfill the individual's will. Objects are not abandoned, but radically transformed as the fullness of their being is revealed. This is the concept of "transfiguration." Christ did not create a literal "new earth" after His resurrection, but rather, God provided those who believe in Him to receive the light; a light that would reveal the fullness of created nature, to reveal its universality. For one on the path, the earth then becomes truly a new creation in the redeemed.

This might make some sense out of the "debate" between Nominalists, Aristotelians and Platonists, a debate of great interest to the Church Fathers, all of whom were familiar with the metaphysics of the era. The Aristotelian sees the outlines of the universal within the particular, while the Platonist wishes to live among the world of Forms, the universal nature of things, things as seen by the mind, rather than by sense. Of course, the ancients were only able to reach so far into this world without the life of grace. Only the later ascetics were able to provide the "content" to the purely formal world of Plato's.

This content is shown in the lives of the Orthodox saints: the seeing of visions, the attraction of wild animals, the ability to predict the future, the ability to see inside a person, all of this is the heightened perception of the ascetic life, the life where the dead weight of objects are transfigured into the life of the universal, the Form, the

mind of God. No matter where one looks, from medieval Ireland to Palestine to Egypt to Russia, the life of the ascetic saint is basically the same. He is able, through grace, to transfigure nature.

This is what it means to be enlightened, though for Plato could only see a Form as an empty unit of the intellect. For us, God has given us this gift, and we give our labors as a “living sacrifice” so this gift can be manifest. Therefore, metaphysics is a function of our own labor, and is not merely a dry and, quite frankly irrelevant, aspect of university life.

Salvation is based on “good works” in the sense that such good works create virtue, or a disposition of the will where objects in their lowest form (as brute givens) are replaced by a desire to see them in their fullness. The penitent then begins to partake of divinity, being an adopted son of God through the agency of the Holy Spirit, but such divinity, or the divine light, as always been present since baptism. While the fullness of the grace of the Spirit has always been there, a life of vice does not permit a man to perceive it, understand it, or live according to it. This takes place only within the boundaries of the Orthodox church, for it is here where the Spirit operates. The Church therefore, in a manner of speaking, is the “incarnation” of the Spirit on earth in that its members partake of the Trinitarian life by virtue of their struggle. In this sense do Orthodox saints say that church is not merely human institution, but that salvation is available only to her ascetic strugglers.

Virtue permits the light of the Spirit to penetrate man completely. Sin renders man brute and obtuse; material and vulgar. The penitent, had he not sinned after the initiation into the Church, he would be so full of joy and grace that he could barely contain it. He could foretell the future, see the angels and saints on a daily basis, be able to tame the most violent beasts, and would be absolutely happy. Space and time would cease to exist, and such a man would live in the rapture of grace.

Unfortunately, this is not how it is. Man sins and chooses the nominal entity, the brute object, as a means of satisfying a certain passion.

Asceticism, Suffering Orthodoxy, as Archbishop Averky put it, is a means whereby we are raised above the world and shown the basis of its creation in the life of the Forms, or objects as they exist in God, rather than in our perception, retarded as it is by sin, the world and the Fall.

The extent to which the penitent is prepared to receive the light of Christ on earth, that is one's lot after our repose. Orthodox people, at their chrismation and baptism, receive the Holy Ghost. We are tricomposite, as St. John of Damascus writes, in that man is body, soul and spirit. Unredeemed humanity is merely bi-composite, that is, just body and soul, both created from the earth and a part of this earthly life. The "soul" that is not saved is merely a machine that produces methods and means by which passions are satisfied as it does not partake of the Spirit and is a fallen entity, one that, in itself, does not recognize its true end.

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