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LOGOS AND EROS IN CHRISTIAN METAPHYSICS

I

The issue of the relations between logos and eros in Christian metaphysics can be approached from two perspectives, namely: first, from a historical point of view, and secondly, from a systematic one.

1) The historical approach would ask for a study of the various stands taken by philosophic thinking in the course of time with regard to the relations between love and knowledge. If we were to follow the example of the brilliant but reckless German philosopher Max Scheler – a Protestant converted for some time to the Catholic faith, just to finally end up, disappointed by it, in an original anthropological stand outside the theistic philosophy, therefore holding an extremely favourable position from which to observe the various possible types of relations between the two terms – we should start by distinguishing from the very beginning between an Eastern type of understanding these relations, characterised by the supremacy of the cognitive moment over the moment of perception and action, and a Western type, that subordinates the speculative or theoretical moment to the active, practical moment of sensibility and action. This typical distinction follows quite clearly from the major themes that fuel Christian thinking in the East and in the West. The East is mainly concerned with the culminating questions of Christian speculation, such as the Trinitarian or the Christological dogmas, all of which deal with questions about God's person and nature in his relations with the world; while the West is mainly concerned with the controversies on the questions originating in human activity, such as the dogmas regarding the Church, predestination, grace and the justification of man and of his conduct with regard to God and the world.

Within the Eastern type, for which love is subordinated to knowledge, in which love is but a way, an instrument, a means of profound knowledge, we should distinguish between two sub-types: 1. The Hellenic type and 2. the Hindu type.

The distinction between these two Arian types does not lie in the relations between love and knowledge proper, but in the very manner of understanding knowledge and of placing it before existence.

In the Hindu outlook, knowledge is conceived as an emancipation, as going beyond the bonds of the being, as a fusion with the great cosmic whole, as a return of the part to the whole, compared to which things are but obstacles, therefore as a passage from being to non-being (in Aristotelian terms); while, in the Hellenic outlook, knowledge is, quite on the contrary, understood as a fathoming of the being, as a direct contact with what is, with that "*to ontos on*", as the transcendence of the deceptive appearances with the purpose of getting into touch with the unchanging fullness of the things that are for real.

Consequently, in the Hindu type, love understood as an instrument of the liberating knowledge, will be an instrument for transcending the self, for going beyond it, for annihilating one's self and for becoming one with the whole in suffering; while, in the Hellenic type, it will be, on the contrary, a craving for wholeness, the aspiration of he who puts up with need for her who could bring him satisfaction and wholeness. Thus, love understood by the Indians as universal compassion – compassion understood, however, not as love for another, but as the burden of individual existence severed from the whole – corresponds in the Greek type to the Platonic eros, the son of Penia: poverty, and of Poros: king, plenty.

Each of these two types is found in the Eastern metaphysics of Christianity. The former type, the Indian one, lies as a fundamental assumption at the basis of the entire ascetic life in the East, for which love – unlike in the West, where asceticism has undeniably active functions – is but a means of emancipation, of transcending everything in this world.

On the contrary, the second type, that of the Platonic philosophy, is found in the Eastern thinking under the form of that universal craving for the salvation of human nature, that need for wholeness which is answered by God's gift of Himself: the Incarnation.

In the Western type, a type that, quite on the contrary, subordinates conscience to action – a subordination that is so conspicuous in the formula known mainly from the positivists, but which is deeper and older, lying in the very heart of the entire West: "To know in order to foresee, to foresee in order to be able" – we can also distinguish two subtypes:

A first type, that we could call moralistic, and a mystical one. In the Western mystical type, love brings the intuition of existence, the direct contact with existence, which the abstract mind cannot provide because it lacks the intuition of endlessness, the feeling of a thing always being fragmented into the analysis of a thought. In such a type, characteristic for the entire genuine Western mystique, the one that has always seemed sensual to the Easterner, love appears as a way of transcending intelligence, as a means of getting a taste of reality, of feeling a reality that can only be reached by transcending the thought. In the black night of unknowing, beyond any shred of

feeling and any contrived content, the mystic feels as if on fire, and he is all ablaze with an immaterial light, impossible to describe, but very conspicuous as well as wonderfully and secretly present.

In the other type, the moralistic one, the need for love also originates in a thinking deficiency and in a need to transcend knowledge and fathom the being by extra-intellectual means; it is just that here love no longer plays the role of sentiment or feeling, it appears as a deliberate attitude of the subject in the face of existence, as a moral fact, as a capitalisation or appreciation of existence through a free, autonomous operation of the agent-subject. In this case, love is no longer an encounter with the other, it is no longer intuition or discourse, it is determination.

From among the Western types: the Christian mystical one can be found in its highest form with Theresa of Carmel or Juan dal Cruz; the other type, the moralistic one, is found mainly in the religious philosophy of the post-Kantian Protestant West, and, through it, in the whole "modernistic" thinking in our country and elsewhere.

As we can see, these two types of relations too, just like the first, lay the foundation and advocate positions of Christian metaphysics although they have developed and grown in the realm of philosophy in general.

Four ways of understanding the relations between knowledge and love: two Eastern – ascetic and gnostic, and two Western – moralistic and mystic. This is what we find as a result of our attempt to establish the types of relations between love and knowledge, as we find them in the history of European thinking.

By correlating them two by two, we can find more than one correspondence between these four types. Be it the Eastern or the Western type with their varieties, each implies at the same time transcending and touching, i.e. fulfilment. It is just that, while in the Eastern type man transcends himself by contemplatively getting over the moment of action, loving being the instrument of getting over, and knowledge the moment of contact, in the Western type, on the contrary, knowledge is the moment that has to be got over, while the real, actual contact with the absolute is achieved beyond the means of knowledge, through extra-intellectual experience, through an active insertion in the absolute the mind does not cover. Be they the lay metaphysics of Kant or Bergson or the metaphysics of well-known Augustinians, such as Blondel, to mention only contemporaries, or be they Pascal or Ignatius of Loyola, they all agree on this point. In Catholicism, only Thomism tilts the scales in favour of intellectualism, but at what cost and in what circumstance?

Moreover, within each type we find more than just a mere resemblance. From the subject's viewpoint, both gnosis and mysticism are means of intuitive contact, while both moralism and asceticism are means of transcending. It is just that gnosis is intellectual, while mysticism is emotional, and asceticism is an instrument for going beyond, while "morality" is the organisation of living to the end of time.

Mysticism may be the transcendence of any reasoned content, but ultimately it is still feeling; just as gnosis is intuition, not thinking. Mysticism thus appears to be an emotional synthesis of asceticism and gnosis, and "moralism", the same synthesis, but reversed.

All these should be revealed – obviously, richly enlarged and in detail – if we had in mind to answer this question from the outside; in other words, if we had embarked upon making clear what others thought about these matters, enumerating their solutions and then letting the reader choose what suits him, as if all positions were equally justified for a Christian.

Nothing more alien to me than this ferocious scepticism. Therefore, aware of my predecessors' attempts and the difficulties lying ahead, but at the same time willing to learn not what others have thought, but what is, I will approach this issue systematically, in order to see if and what I can answer.

2) Any systematic question implies a set of problems, i.e. a number of questions each following from the other as they are solved, before reaching the answer.

It goes without saying that each of the questions that will be asked would need to be enlarged upon separately, which is not possible: What is love? What is knowledge? What is the criterion of truth? And what is the role of truth in figuring out the powers of love? In what way do the thinking subject and the loving agent transcend themselves through love and knowledge? Are our knowledge and our love projections of our own self, within the scope of its own productions, or do they actually reach beyond us, to the other? In other words, the cardinal question if, with all these available means of transcending, are we destined to remain closed in ourselves or to become whole through the other? The question if our knowledge and our love, being what they are, can nevertheless go beyond us in certain circumstances; the depiction of the circumstances in which this passage is possible: the movement of the Other towards us, the embodiment showing who the Other is and the way in which this movement towards us takes place; showing by analogy how, beyond, with Him, Logos and Eros merge, they being but the nature and the doing of one and the same image; showing how any theory of Christian knowledge and any moral theory of Christian action originate and indisputably refer to Incarnation; showing then the reasons for which both our love and knowledge, although contain the resemblance of this image, are broken, bleak, powerless and contrary to one another; ascending to sin, and finding the ways that lead simultaneously to real knowledge and fruitful love within the Church. However, none of these questions can be overlooked, because ignoring them would make the very sense of the issue unintelligible. Our task is made easier by the fact that most of the issues we shall enlarge upon here are not lab problems, they are of the kind that one comes across in his profound moments of one's life, and therefore is prepared enough to understand them.

Eros and Logos, that is, Love and Word, or rather: love and meaningful word, meaningful phrase, the manifestation of ground or reason, for logos means at the same time more than just simple "speech" and more than "reasoned knowledge" (*nous*).

Therefore, this is not about the relation between love and mere knowledge, but the relation between love and the rational ground of existence.

What gives this question a peculiar character in Christian metaphysics is mainly the notion that, unlike in lay metaphysics, here we do not deal only with movements of the human soul, which is within the scope of psychology, but with realities of a purely metaphysical nature. For the Christian thinking, based on undeniable texts and on the Church's unflinching faith, Love is God Himself, that is, to be more precise, God is also revealed and assimilated as Love, and the whole world, with its things and grounds, is but the result of this love. This is the cardinal point that distinguishes the Christian notion of God from all the other notions of Him. Creator, omnipotent, omnipresent, supporter of everything, these are characteristics of the divinity we also find by analogy in other metaphysics; God as loving, creator and supporter – out of love – of the world, grace spreader, is a revelation of the Christian Church.

This is not all. There is more: the Word itself is not only an abstract expression of the ground of any one thing (*nous*) in Christian metaphysics. It is not a formula or a formal object that explains the world and everything happening in it. The Word, the Logos, Reasoned Knowledge, is not even an attribute of divinity. The Word, the Expressed Meaning, the Logos is God Himself, it is one of the faces of Divinity, it is an Image, a substantial Individual, agent and support of one's own activities. The Word is one with the Son, One that was born out of the Father before time, i.e. with the second face of the Maker and Supporter, co-participant in creating the world. The Word is mainly that face of the Trinity which, in order to redeem us, takes an appearance similar to ours, is embodied in human form, is crucified to redeem the world in the days of Pontius Pilate; in other words, the Logos is Jesus Christ Himself existing before time, enduring in time and victorious to the end of time.

This is not the place to speculate on the nature of the Holy Trinity or to show in what way the Father and the Son are two faces of the same being, in the Holy Ghost. This is neither the place to show why they are three, or why the faces of the Divinity are three. Then again, this is not the place to show from a metaphysical point of view why there are not three Gods but One in three Faces, or how come that the Divinity's three Faces are not its three modes, but three actual agents, different in their actions and yet working together and making up one being. Christians confess in God neither three ways of being, nor three modes or three attributes of God, but three subjects

of action, three Individuals in one Being, three images, three faces, but one Spirit, moreover, one act of being and one presence. For, there can be neither Son without Father, nor Father without Son, or the Holy Ghost.

Strange difficulty – linking the answer to the question of logos and eros – for the Christian metaphysics, such an abyss for the thought!

Therefore, human knowledge and love are one thing (*nous* and *eros*), while, with God, knowledge and love are quite another: Logos and Mercy.

... Love and understanding will definitely be different with us and with God, and yet... they will not be completely different!

Whatever God's transcendence, and no matter how much a common measure of His love and knowledge and our love and knowledge were missing, there is nevertheless a certain affinity, a however distant similarity. For, if such a similarity between what we utter and the meaning of our utterance were missing, it would certainly be a curse to say that God is understood or that God is love.

Consequently, no matter how much the divine love and knowledge outshone the meaning of the human love and knowledge, no matter how impossible were for us to rise, by analogy and by ourselves, from the understanding of the knowledge and love of here to the understanding of the knowledge and love of beyond, there are nevertheless solid connections between the love and knowledge of here and the love and knowledge of beyond that enable us to use the correlation of the same terms. What should be taken into consideration is that such similarities, these connections, are irrelevant, i.e. they do not reveal the nature of the other terms, the terms beyond, which, for knowledge and for our words about God, only appear with exhaustive limits, that is limits that are determined negatively, as being beyond our most pure love and understanding, but somehow heading in the same direction. They are irrelevant, not just for an upward effort to grasp them, that is only for dialectic, for that daring and wonderful projection of the ego outside itself, guarding signs that fail to show at the intersection of the skies. For dialectic is the effort to grasp what is, the huge effort to know that knowledge cannot be reached through you, not a sterile dialogue as the weaklings of thinking consider it! And yet, these secret connections become relevant and reveal the similarity between the love of here and the love of beyond, as soon as the Other makes the revelation move towards us, as soon as He reveals, He shows us, through the gift of Himself, the similarity between His love and understanding and our love and understanding.

The following reflections on the relations between love and understanding, therefore, are not based on a neutral philosophy, one devoid of the light of the Church's teachings. This was certainly quite clear from the very beginning of the present study. In fact, we could not make neutral Christian philosophy. It would be a contradiction in terms. And what we are doing here, although it is only philosophy, i.e. one's own thinking effort, cannot be neutral because these are the reflections of a Christian. And the difference

from theology is only that we, as philosophers, look for reasoned grounds to questions to which they receive direct answers from the mother tradition of the Church.

Logos and eros, therefore love and knowledge.
But what is love, and what is knowledge?

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Starting from our knowledge, obviously, we must notice from the very beginning a wide variety of ways to understand its nature in the thinking world. From the definition given by those who consider knowledge a faculty of the immaterial grip of reality in us, and to the definition of those who, starting from reactive psychology, define it as the biological conduct of the living human being, as an orientation function of the individual with a higher nervous physiological structure, as a function of adjustment to a complex real environment or social environment, what a wide range of positions you come across when it comes to defining one and the same thing! Certainly, definitions depend on the viewpoint of those who define. But, no matter the definition, they all assign knowledge certain characteristics that I will try to depict because I consider them fundamental.

1) First of all, any kind of knowledge implies two terms, one of which is the knowing subject, the other, the known object. There is no knowledge that is not the knowledge of someone about something: from simple apprehension, through judgement and concept, to the most refined forms of analytic or synthetic reasoning, from simple sensation to the most complex structure of sensorial intuitions.

2) These two terms, that represent two separate presences, two existentially distinct terms, in terms of being, nevertheless make up in the process of knowing one *sui generis* whole: "knowledge".

What is this entity and what are its characteristic features?

First of all, this is not a material entity. Concretely speaking, the subject and the object remain distinct, and their relation is not causal.

Their relation is purely spiritual, a kind of immaterial grip, of viewpoint, a designation of the object by the subject.

Certainly, things are much simplified, reduced to the ultimate limit of distillation; but here, at the limit, no other analysis will find anything else.

The subject refers outwardly, to something, and in an immaterial way, he gets a grip on it.

Two characteristic features of knowledge follow from here:

1) The first is its transitive character; knowledge always refers to objects.

2) The second is its grip taking, that is, in a certain way, the appropriation (to the extent to which such local determination can have a meaning for

an immaterial grip effected by an immaterial agent); more correctly, the likening, the identification in a way of he who knows and what is known. Controversies begin over these characteristic features. For, some think that knowledge is carried out by appropriating the other; others, that it is carried out by taking the other out of one's self and by projecting it outwardly; for some, it is a matter of grasping what is in its individuality; for others, it is only a matter of grasping a general way of being in the other or only of a projection of a way of being – taken from the organic or spiritual structure of the knowing subject – onto the other term; lastly, for yet others, it is about placing the subject itself under the object's way of being.

This issue of stating the direction of knowledge – from the subject or from the object – divides the theory of knowledge into two great trends: idealism and realism, as two opposite directions of grouping the solutions, between which countless syntheses try but fail to keep a balance.

The answer to this question requires that the problem of the exact knowledge sources should first be solved, by accepting the existential discrimination between the knowing subject and the known object and by elucidating the nature of their gnoseological identity.

Sensualistic empiricism, rationalistic intellectualism, criticism and intuitionism answer the first question; metaphysical theories such as the co-extension of the divine truthfulness to the entire universe, Spinoza's double function of substance, Leibniz's pre-established harmony, Lossky's epistemological co-ordination and Kant's spiritual architecture are mere answers to the question regarding the capacity of knowledge to actually touch the other term.

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Just like knowledge, love has its own set of problems.

Here too, love is an immaterial relation, the spiritual unity of two terms. However, the situation is different and circumstances change.

1) Instead of having to do with the relation between two terms, in which one appropriates the other: a subject and an object, here we deal with two terms, susceptible of mutual intentionalisation: two subjects. The other too is an agent susceptible of initiative, and therefore it is not enough to obey certain formal conditions in order to come to an agreement with it or take a grip. A convergence of tendencies is needed here, a mutual meeting of intentions. The co-ordination between the subject and the object in knowledge is not a free relation between two terms. At least apparently, it does not depend on the two, but on the conditions to which both are subjected, or which are dictated by one of the two terms. Identifying the two terms of the act of love is subjected to certain determinations of their own, originating in the very essence of these terms.

2) Certainly, as in the case of knowledge, here we have to do with a spiritual unity, with a new reality under which the two terms, existentially distinct or free, are one. But what emerges between them is no longer knowledge, but a community of love of another order than the former, a gearing of presences that sometimes can be completely devoid of intellectual content and achieved only "in via", in synchronised action.

It is then only natural that here, as in the case of knowledge, theories have tried to distinguish morphologically between the different ways in which two subjects can be one, and, naturally again, they have tried to explain theoretically the grounds and the nature of this *sui generis* unity.

Thus, as early as the time of the ancient Greeks, distinction was made between "eros" and "philia", between "philia" and "sterghi", and between "sterghi" and "agape". The Middle Ages also distinguished "amor concupiscentiae" from "amor affectionis", and the latter from "amor benevolentiae", which was then distinguished from "amor obedientiae".

Max Scheler I have mentioned before wrote a whole book in which he made a phenomenological analysis of the various types of emotional relations possible between subjects, entitled *On the Nature and Types of Sympathy*; in it, he distinguished sympathy proper from compassion, mass common feeling, pity, desire, yearning for mystical identification with another, and from what he calls love proper, the union of two subjects when specificity is respected and mutually appreciated, as against a supreme value.

The explanations of the nature and causes that urge subjects to embark upon such a search for each other have also been numerous: positive, such as imitation or suggestion; and metaphysical, such as "elective affinity", the ontological fundamental identity of all human beings that miss each other in love and call each other backwards, towards their origins, the subordination of wills to a common ethical end, the merging in the contemplation of one and the same transcendent reality.

Here, as in the case of knowledge, theories have tried to clear up the nature and causes that make the subject venture beyond him/herself towards another, and the way in which he/she indeed comes to meet the other.

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How does love relate to knowledge?

We have seen what differentiates them. Are they antagonistic means of transcending, or do they complete each other?

There are two extreme solutions here, with an infinity of intermediate syntheses: absolute intellectualism and the primacy of action.

Absolute intellectualism features a spectacular vision of the world, a disinterested, Olympian vision of the universe: Spinoza's "nec ridere, nec lugere, sed intelligere", i.e. when it is not knowledge, i.e. "amor Dei intel-

lectualis", love is a second-hand thing, moreover, sometimes it is a treason of human dignity, naiveté, or it isn't at all. "Detached" thinking, objective reflection, which we know from Maiorescu's serenity, is certainly a non-Christian attitude. In his opinion, with us as with God, if intellectualism is theistic, the cool reason, the object of clear and distinct knowledge predominates. God Himself is not a living creature, an Individual, He is subordinated to a concept: "the philosophers' God" Pascal mentioned. Up there, on the glaciers of intelligence, the world seems the cool hallucination of a demiurge: It is not a place for weeping or for joy, and not for being sad either, not because the universe were not sad, but only because weeping "was invented by lunatics, children and women", and lies under the dignity of accepting everything of the pure philosopher, the monster of ice and dignity. Philosophy appears here as the art of wrapping your heart in rock.

For absolute voluntarism, on the contrary, any reason vanishes. The world is a chaotic projection of encounters of the free subjects or agents' actions (Schiller, Schelling, Fichte, Shestov). While the universe materialises pluralistically, in a host of anarchical worlds, outgrowing manifestations of the free subjects expressing their inner plenitude, the moment of action, of enthusiasm bursts out tempestuously in the serene realm of philosophising and replaces the grounds, the reasons of nature with the arbitrary and irrational decisions of thinkers, who, like demiurges, produce reality. Even if enthusiasm has ebbed and free agents have proved to be a mirage of the universal will working within them, the grounds remain lost for this philosophy. Will is blind in its achievements, and justifications are but the flicker of illusions. Intelligence deceives us, throwing over the depth the misleading veil of a *fata morgana* beyond which, down deep, only will itself touches or is reality in itself.

An attitude equally alien to Christianity, where the moment of love and the moment of knowledge simultaneously look for each other in order to make up a whole, and God is, as we have seen, both Love and Knowledge, both Logos and Mercy. Logos, because of mercy; and mercy, as the basis of everything.

MIRCEA VULCĂNESCU was born in 1904 in Bucharest. In 1925 he graduated with a thesis on contemporary sociology from the department of Letters and Philosophy of the University of Bucharest, where he also studied Law. Starting in 1925 he was enrolled for a doctorate in Law in Paris, but there he was captivated by theology. He participated in the Orthodoxist student circles in Paris, where he encountered such figures as Nikolay Berdyayev. At the same time he was a familiar of the Thomist circles coagulated around the French Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain. In 1928, Vulcănescu was back in Romania, where he engaged in a fervent cultural campaigning around what was called at that time "the young generation". He was one of the founders of the cultural association called Criterion that was organising symposia on arts, philosophy and literature. A review with the same name was published later, among its contributors being Mircea Eliade, Eugen Ionescu and Emil Cioran, together with all the intellectuals that would constitute the golden age of Romanian culture, usually identified as "the Criterion generation". The main point of Criterion was the rehabilitation and the exploration from various perspectives of the idea of spirituality, and its avatars in the context of modern civilisation. The national and Orthodoxist propensities of the cultural trends he was animating, together with the official, administrative positions he occupied throughout the thirties and forties (between 1941-1944 he was deputy state secretary in the Ministry of Finance), led to his arrest in 1946. He died in 1952 in Aiud prison. Among his many publications dealing in sociology, philosophy, economy, theology and criticism, the comprehensive collection entitled *The Romanian Dimension of Existence* detaches itself as a philosophical endeavour to establish a national profile of reflection and intellectual, cultural experience, that will influence many other approaches of this kind.

Logos and Eros is searching, along the same path, for the mainly religious and mystical grounds that enables one to think of a particular, East European, Byzantine cultural experience, different, complementary – not opposed – to the one developed in Catholic and Reformed Europe.