

*Abelard, Byzantium and the
“Intellectual Silence” of Rus’ Culture*

DONALD OSTROWSKI

One of the least studied and most misunderstood areas of European history is the comparative impact the Western Church and the Eastern Church had on their respective cultures. Especially is this the case in regard to Rus’ culture. To a great extent, relatively naive ideas about the development of high culture (or lack thereof) in pre-modern Rus’ lands predominate, even in scholarly thinking. It is more fashionable to condemn the Church than try to understand its outlook. Among such ideas I would place the view that the Orthodox Church stifled the development of East Slavic intellectual culture.

This view has a long tradition among both scholars and historiosophists, and one recent advocate is the historian Francis Thomson.¹ Thomson makes the claim that the Orthodox Church prevented Rus’ culture from fulfilling its “natural” development : “It was not the Mongols who were responsible for Russia’s intellectual isolation . . . it was the Church.”² In another article he wrote that it was “the Russian Church, mistakenly considering itself to be in possession of all the treasures of Orthodoxy,” that “remained an obstacle to intellectual progress until its hold was broken by Peter the Great.”³ Such assessments of the Orthodox Church coincide with the views of Russian liberals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.⁴ As early as 1978, Thomson raised the question: “Where

¹ Thomson has published a number of exhaustively researched philological studies, but at times he engages in speculation about the nature of Rus’ culture that has struck some scholars as questionable. See, e.g., Gerhard Podskalsky, “Principal Aspects and Problems of Theology in Kievan Rus’ ” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 11, 1987, p. 290 fn. 8; and William Veder, “Old Russia’s Intellectual Silence Reconsidered,” in *Medieval Russian Culture*, vol. 2, eds. Michael S. Flier and Daniel Rowland, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994, pp. 19–20; Ihor Ševčenko, “Remarks on the Diffusion of Byzantine Scientific and Pseudo-Scientific Literature Among the Orthodox Slavs,” *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 59, 1981, p. 322 fn. 2; art. rpt. in Ihor Ševčenko, *Byzantium and the Slavs: In Letters and Culture*, Cambridge MA, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute/Naples, Istituto Universitario orientale, 1991, pp. 585–615.

² Francis Thomson, “The Nature of the Reception of Christian Byzantine Culture in Russia in the Tenth to Thirteenth Centuries and Its Implications for Russian Culture,” *Slavica Gandensia*, vol. 5, 1978, p. 120.

³ Francis Thomson, “Quotations of Patristic and Byzantine Works by Early Russian Authors as an Indication of the Cultural Level of Kievan Russia,” *Slavica Gandensia*, vol. 10, 1983, p. 65.

⁴ See, e.g., the comments critical of the Russian Church in Paul Miliukov, “The Religious Tradition” in his *Russia and Its Crisis*, New York, Collier, 1962, pp. 60–104. In responding to a remark of Ihor Ševčenko that his work suffers from “an anti-Orthodox bias,” Thomson, however, seemed to go further even than any of the Russian liberals when he suggested that the Rus’ Church may not have been Orthodox. Francis Thomson, “I. Ševčenko as Byzantinist and Slavist,” *Byzantion*, vol. 64, 1994, p. 500: “it [referring to his own article “The

is the Russian Peter Abelard? Where is the intellectual ferment similar to that caused by Berengar's teaching on the eucharist in the 11th century or Gilbert de la Porre's on the Trinity in the 12th?"⁵ Ten years later, he answered his own question by giving up the search: "It is pointless to look for a Russian Abelard."⁶ A variant of the question "Where is the Russian Peter Abelard?" was placed to me directly by Thomson in the form: "They didn't have a Plato, did they?"⁷ Maybe not, but Eastern Christianity has as good a claim to having inherited Platonic thought as Western Christianity does.⁸ The problem, however, may be not so much that they did not have Plato but that they did not have Aristotle. William Veder's assessment of Thomson is that he is "addressing the problem of Old Russian culture from a Western point of view and a Western set of values."⁹ The problem that Veder is referring to, and that Thomson is raising questions about, is what Father Georges Florovsky called the "intellectual silence" of Old Rus' culture.¹⁰ Western Medieval culture was articulate; Old Rus' culture seems not to have been. Thomson's questions certainly carry the implication that Rus' culture was, thereby, inferior to that of the West.

I

Over forty-five years ago, the art historian P. A. Michelis, in writing about the approaches to art, asserted that "our entire aesthetic education" rests on Renaissance conceptions of classical norms, and, furthermore, that since the time of the Renaissance, "a narrow humanistic education with a one-

Nature of the Reception"] certainly berates the early Russian church for theological silence and debased formalism—hardly surprising in the light of the fact that many of the most important patristic dogmatic works were never translated—but nowhere in that article (or in any other) has this reviewer *identified* the early Russian church with Orthodoxy" (italics added). Perhaps he meant to write that he does not consider the "early Russian church" *identical* with Orthodoxy.

⁵ Thomson, "The Nature of the Reception," p. 120.

⁶ Francis Thomson, "The Implications of the Absence of Quotations of Untranslated Greek Works in Original Early Russian Literature, Together with a Critique of a Distorted Picture of Early Bulgarian Culture," *Slavica Gandensia*, vol. 15, 1988, p. 70.

⁷ In response to a question from the floor, Kennan Institute Conference, Washington DC, May 26, 1988.

⁸ In a sense this question to whom Plato belongs has already been answered by Robert Payne: "When the Alexandrians read Plato and his followers, they held up these theories to their own light; so did the Antiochenes; so did the Jews and Arabs, and much later the French, the Germans, the English and the Americans; and all saw in Plato something of themselves, refining the words to their own desires. There was something liquid in the Platonic theory; you could stain these waters whatever color you wished, but they remained Platonic. In the vast reaches of Plato's mind all things had been pondered, and it is not surprising that he should leave traces of himself on those who fed at the source." Robert Payne, *Holy Fire: The Story of the Fathers of the Eastern Church*, New York, Harper, 1957, p. 46.

⁹ Veder, "Old Russia's Intellectual Silence Reconsidered," p. 20.

¹⁰ Georges Florovsky, "The Problem of Old Russian Culture," *Slavic Review*, vol. 21, 1962, p. 12; and Georges Florovsky, "Reply," p. 39.

sided aesthetics has crippled our aesthetic judgement.”¹¹ Michelis was writing specifically about appreciation of Medieval and Byzantine art. Since then, however, appreciation for the subtleties and nuances of non-Renaissance-based art has increased. When Western travelers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries first came into contact with Eastern Church icons, they disparaged them as artless.¹² In the past century, we saw the study of icons take its place alongside the study of other art genres. Can we not argue that aesthetic appreciation of intellectual achievements and developments is analogous? That is, if, upon looking into non-Western philosophy and literature, we feel prompted to ask “Where is their Abelard?” is this not akin to walking into an icon museum and asking “Where are the Botticellis?” And would not such a question reflect more upon the questioner than upon the contents of the museum?

Yet, that would be too facile a response—to dismiss the question and disparage the questioner. As a historian, I take as my task to provide plausible and coherent explanations for the primary source testimony at hand. If we look at that source testimony, we do indeed find in Western sources of the eleventh and twelfth centuries a critical, analytical approach toward theology and the world, “logic coming to life,” as F. C. Copleston described it,¹³ which is manifested in the works of, among others, Abelard (1079–1142). But we do not find the same kind of source testimony in the areas served by the Eastern Church, or at least not to the same degree. Thomson, by raising and repeating the question of “Where is the Russian Abelard?” is, in effect, challenging us to provide better explanations for why there was an Abelard (i.e., why logic “came to life”) in the West, but not elsewhere. Or, to put it another way: why Paris, not Kiev?

Thomson’s view of the absence of Rus’ intellectual activity parallels other scholars’ attitudes toward Eastern Church culture in general. For example, Frederick B. Artz, in his book, *The Mind of the Middle Ages*, describes Byzantine scholarship and theology this way:

The Byzantine scholar was held down by the overwhelming prestige and authority of the ancients and by an authoritarian church and state. The Byzantine scholar, like the scholars in the Latin West until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, commented endlessly on the learning inherited from the past, but almost

¹¹ P. A. Michelis, “Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Byzantine Art,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 11, 1952, p. 21.

¹² See, e.g., the comments of Samuel Collins: “Their imagery is very pitiful painting, flat and ugly, after the Greek manner.” Samuel Collins, *The Present State of Russia*, London, John Winter, 1671, p. 24. Europeans also made the same kind of remarks about African art before Picasso.

¹³ F. C. Copleston, *A History of Medieval Philosophy*, New York, Harper & Row, 1972, p. 65.

never doubted this learning or tried to move beyond it. One of the worst features of Byzantine learning was its passion for compends, abridgements, and anthologies; they even abridged the *Iliad*. In theology the great and fundamental writers had been Greeks like Origen and the Cappadocian Fathers. The last of the great theologians, John of Damascus in the eighth century, had written a huge summary of theology, and after him theologians either rethatched the old material, or, like Photius, in the ninth century and later, they discussed chiefly the relations with the Roman church and the advisability for a reunion with Rome. At its worst, this Byzantine theological literature, like that of Latin Christendom, is monotonous, repetitious, and stereotyped, with endless quotations from the Bible and the Church Fathers. Byzantine theology never produced an Abelard, a Bonaventura, or an Aquinas.¹⁴

Artz articulates here an all-too-common prevailing notion in modern historiography: that Byzantine intellectual achievement was “held down” and that it “almost never doubted or tried to move beyond” the learning inherited from the past. But one might ask why it should doubt or try to move beyond what from their point of view was the Truth. Further, if it did not try to move beyond, then what was there to be held down? We do find in Byzantine sources, however, is evidence of a holding down of a nascent analytical movement of John Italos in the 11th century, the suppression of which seems to have succeeded. Likewise, the Western Church tried to hold down the analytical approach that Abelard among others espoused, but it did not completely succeed. Abelard certainly did not represent the consensus view of his time in the West. His views were twice condemned—at the Council of Soissons in 1121 and at Sens in 1140—both victories for what was the consensus view, which was represented by Bernard of Clairvaux.¹⁵ The fact that Bernard was canonized, and Abelard was not, is indicative of whose views prevailed at the time. Besides that, Western Christendom, through the eleventh century, had far less direct knowledge of Plato and Aristotle than Byzantium did. Of Plato’s work only the *Timaeus* was known in Western Christendom directly (although incompletely),¹⁶ and the few works of Aristotle that were known (like the *Categories*) were virtually

¹⁴ Frederick B. Artz, *The Mind of the Middle Ages: An Historical Survey A.D. 200–1500*, 3rd ed., Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1980, pp. 112–113.

¹⁵ For the role that Bernard played in the “Bernardine epoch,” see Hayden V. White, “The Gregorian Ideal and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 21, 1960, pp. 321–348.

¹⁶ The *Meno* and *Phaedo* were not translated until Aristippas, the archdeacon of Catania in 1156 and principal officer of the Sicilian *curia* from 1160 to 1162, did so in Sicily, but even then they were not widely available. E. N. Tigerstedt, *The Decline and Fall of the Neoplatonic Interpretation of Plato: An Outline and Some Observations*, Helsinki, Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1974, p. 11; Charles Homer Haskins, “The Greek Element in the Renaissance of the Twelfth Century,” *American Historical Review*, vol. 25, 1920, pp. 604–605. And when Abelard wrote his *Dialectics* in 1121, he had to depend mainly on second-hand commentators and on Boethius’ translation of the *Categories* and *On Interpretation* because the other relevant works of Aristotle—the *Prior Analytics*, the *Posterior Analytics*, and, more importantly, the *Topics*, and its addendum, the *Sophistic*

ignored.¹⁷

Artz himself saw a similarity between the Greek scholars of Byzantium and the Latin scholars in the West until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, just as he saw a similarity between Byzantine theological literature and “that of Latin Christendom”; that is, “monotonous, repetitious, and stereotyped...” If the two literatures were so similar, then what was different about Western Christendom that saw it succumb to analytical thinking in spite of intense and concerted attempts to prevent it from doing so?

Before pursuing this question further, I would like to state two premises and state my working hypothesis, to provide some idea where I am headed with these notions. The first premise is a well-known one and is widely accepted: theology was the crown jewel of disciplined thought in both the Eastern and Western Churches. It affected and, to a certain degree, determined the confines within which all conceptual thinking was supposed to take place. As John Meyendorff wrote:

In Byzantine society—as well as in the Western, early medieval world—theological concepts, convictions and beliefs were present in practically all aspects of social, or individual life. They were not only used at episcopal synods, or polemical debates between representatives of divided churches, or enshrined in treaties, sermons, anthologies and patristic collections. They were heard or sung, on a daily basis, even by the illiterate, in the hymnology of the church. They were unavoidable in political matters, based on a religious view of kingship... Theological presuppositions were also involved in economic and social realities, as shown, for example, in the Church’s attitude towards usury, or in requirements connected with marriage, or the religious basis of regulating church property, or the theological rationale which determined forms of art and iconography.¹⁸

Argument (the so-called “New Logic”)—seem not to have been available to him. Charles Homer Haskins, *Studies in the History of Mediaeval Science*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1927, p. 226. Émile Bréhier, *The History of Philosophy*, trans. Wade Baskin, 7 vols., Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1963–1969, vol. 3: *The Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, pp. 60–61. See also Richard McKeon, “General Introduction,” in *Introduction to Aristotle*, 2nd ed., Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1973, p. xlvii; Gordon Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: An Institutional and Intellectual History*, New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1968, p. 130. This fact has struck a number of scholars as odd since Boethius’ sixth-century translations were the ones used after this date, that is, after James the Venetian is recorded in 1128 to have translated them anew. For a full discussion of this problem, see Haskins, *Mediaeval Science*, pp. 226–233. But see Felix Reichmann, *The Sources of Western Literacy: The Middle Eastern Civilizations*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980, p. 172 who stated that Gerhard of Cremona translated the *Anterior* and *Posterior Analytics* from Arabic in the twelfth century.

¹⁷ R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1953, p. 180.

¹⁸ John Meyendorff, “The Mediterranean World in the Thirteenth Century, Theology: East and West,” *The 17th International Byzantine Congress: Major Papers*, Washington, DC, August 3–8, 1986, New Rochelle, NY, 1986, pp. 669–670. There are those who would disagree with this assertion. Gary A. Abraham, for example,

Thus, to investigate the question of why analytical reasoning became so prominent in the West, we need to understand the differences between the theology of the Eastern and Western Churches.

My second premise has found less scholarly agreement: the conceptual model of Christian theology was essentially borrowed from pagan Neoplatonic philosophy. Or, as the recent chronicler of Neoplatonism, R. T. Wallis, has stated: “The dominant trend of Christian theology, in both its Platonic and Aristotelian forms, has always been Neoplatonic.”¹⁹ [examples of those who disagree and why??]

My working hypothesis, which results from these two premises, is that the difference in the way theologians interpreted the Neoplatonic model in the Eastern Church and the Western Church, in particular how Aristotelian logic related to it, led to a fundamental difference in mentalité., which in turn left an opening for analytical reasoning to develop in the West, whereas no such opening existed in Eastern Church theology. At the time when the Roman Empire was beginning to split into two halves and as Christianity was gaining first legitimacy and then dominance, a series of compromises of anti-theological philosophical and theological views occurred. Each compromise laid the groundwork for the next compromise in a constantly evolving synthesis. The Church fathers, in order to gain legitimacy among the pagan elite, adopted and synthesized with early Christianity a respectable form of pagan philosophy—Neoplatonism. The version of Neoplatonism the Western Church fathers adopted was itself a synthesis of features of mysticism with the Aristotelian logic of the Roman Stoics. As a result, the Western Church allowed the teaching of dialectic within the school curriculum as one of the seven liberal arts. The initial function of dialectic in determining knowledge, however, was limited. It took centuries for the role of dialectic to be expanded, and it did so against serious opposition.

By the eleventh century, a synthesis of reason and faith had evolved such that dialectic could be used to describe particulars as long as those particulars *coincided* with those that faith had already determined. In the thirteenth century, a new synthesis emerged in which, as a result of the acceptance of dialectic as a descriptive tool and the influx of Aristotelian texts (especially the *Topics* and

argued that historians have not understood Thomas K. Merton’s views on the Scientific Revolution in England because they define religion as a set of doctrines whereas Merton perceived religion as a set of “dominant cultural values and sentiments,” which can act as a “social force” distinct from any theological basis. Gary A. Abraham, “Misunderstanding the Merton Thesis: A Boundary Dispute Between History and Sociology,” *Isis*, vol. 74, 1983, p. 373. Thus, Abraham argued that understanding the difference between formal theology and popular religious concepts is crucial, at least in the case of Merton, for understanding his view correctly. But this may represent a different time when secularization of society was already beginning to occur and theology was losing its hegemony.

¹⁹ Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 160.

Sophistic Refutations), dialectic was allowed a diagnostic role in determining particulars, as long as those particulars *did not contradict* the particulars that faith had determined. This difference between *coinciding* and *not contradicting* was an important one for it amounted to another step up for dialectic. It meant that dialectic had to itself the entire realm of this world, which Neoplatonism dismissed as unimportant. This new synthesis, in turn, laid the groundwork for the further expansion of the role of reason in Renaissance humanism, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment.

An important aspect of this expansion of reason was the reintroduction into Western Christendom of Roman law. Around 1076, a copy of the Justinian law code, the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, lost in western Christendom since 603, reappeared. Shortly after that, Irnerius (Guarnerius), a teacher significantly of liberal arts in Bologna, began glossing and teaching students from the *Digest*, a summary of the key points in the law code. Irnerius' work represented the culmination of a process of reclassification that had begun over 100 years earlier of introducing dialectic into jurisprudence, which before had been almost solely in the realm of rhetoric. We see this process already occurring in Anselm of Bisate's *Rhetorimachia* (ca. 1050).²⁰ R. W. Southern dismissed Anselm's *Rhetorimachia* as not much of a work of rhetoric. But if one understands that Anselm was already making the connection between dialectic and law, then one can see his work in a different light. The result was the prominent Bologna Law School and what many consider to be the founding of the Western system of advocacy jurisprudence.²¹ As secular thought gained more and more distance from theology, dialectic as a diagnostic tool gained greater application on its own, not only in the law but in astronomy, history, mathematics, philosophy, and physics.

In the Eastern Church, after the initial synthesis of early Christianity with pagan Neoplatonism, further compromises were avoided so as to maintain the purity of faith. In part, this avoidance can be explained by the form of Neoplatonism adopted in the Eastern Church, which rejected dialectic even as a descriptive tool. Any attempts to use dialectic as a diagnostic tool in matters of doctrine were

²⁰ Anselm of Bisate, *Anselm der Peripatetiker*, ed. Ernst Dümmeler, Halle, Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1872, p. 17; Cf. Anselm of Bisate, *The Rhetorimachia*, in Beth Susan Bennett, "The *Rhetorimachia* of Anselm de Besate: Critical Analysis and Translation," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1981, pp. 92–160.

²¹ See, e.g., Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1927, pp. 199–200. See also David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, New York, Vintage, 1962, pp. 153–184; and Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1983, pp. 123–127.

like Neoplatonism was received differently according to the nature of the religion with which it collided.”²³ immediately suppressed.²² If Neoplatonism interacted differently with Western Christianity and with Eastern Christianity, and to a certain extent accounted for the differences between these churches, then we would expect to see the results of those differences not only in theology but also in everyday practice.

By the eleventh century, the subcurrent of analytical thinking, or what later came to be called reasoning,²⁴ was already inherently stronger in the Western Church than in the Eastern Church. In part, this relative strength can be attributed to the preservation of Martianus Capella’s *Marriage of Mercury with Philology*. It was on this fifth-century work, well known in the Western Church, less well known in the Eastern Church, that the curriculum of the seven liberal arts—the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*—was based. Among those arts was *dialectica*, which is now often referred to as logic, but in the High Middle Ages was called the “new logic” to distinguish it from the “old logic” of the non-dialectic type. Their relationship has a curious history.

In late antiquity, logic (*logica*) and dialectic (*dialectica*) were at times seen as two different, although related, subject areas. Albinus, as subsequently also Plotinos (204–270), considered dialectic to be a subject that dealt with the eternal and the divine and was, therefore, superior to formal logic.²⁵ The Stoics had considered grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic to be subsets of logic, and they may have been the first, as David L. Wagner has asserted, to consider these three areas of study as a unit.²⁶ In turn, they viewed logic (and the rest of the trivium) as a branch of philosophy. In the Middle Ages, logic included dialectic and rhetoric as its component parts—“the shut and open fist,”²⁷ but was not considered philosophy at the time (see below). Not until the Scholastics does dialectic once

²² For the difference between dialectic as a descriptive tool and as a diagnostic tool, see *infra*. Indicative of this suppression is the absence of dialectic in the school curriculum in Byzantium (see below). In this respect, the centralized power of the Eastern Roman Empire helped maintain theological purity. The Western Church allowed a space for dialectic to develop as a discipline in its own right and eventually to grow and to dominate conceptual thinking in the secular culture, while the Eastern Church eliminated that space and thereby precluded a similar phenomenon from happening. Ian Richard Netton has pointed out: “The reconciliation of a pagan philosophy with the dogmatic theology of any revealed religion poses enormous problems and has evolved different approaches over the ages from those . . . scholastics who have attempted the synthesis. A pagan philosophy

²³ Ian Richard Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity* (Ikhwā al-Ṣafā’), London, George Allen & Unwin, 1982, p. 33.

²⁴ The word “reasoning” meaning the process of reasons, arguments, proofs, etc., derives from the fourteenth century.

²⁵ P. Merlan, “Greek Philosophy from Plato to Plotinus,” in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. H. Armstrong, Cambridge University Press, 1967, p. 68. See also Plotinos, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna, 2nd ed., London, Faber and Faber, 1956, p. 39 (I.3.5).

²⁶ David L. Wagner, “The Seven Liberal Arts and Classical Scholarship,” in *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages*, ed. David L. Wagner, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1983, p. 11.

again become fully associated with philosophy. And then the groundwork for that association derives from the work of people like Abelard and the twelfth-century philosopher Hugh of St. Victor (1078–1141).²⁸ According to A. Victor Murray, it was only in the twelfth century, “[w]hen . . . the method of dialectic was strengthened by the translation of the ‘nova logica’ of Aristotle, i.e. the *Prior* and the *Posterior Analytics*, the *Topics*, and the *Sophistic Elenchi*,” that “dialectic . . . became identified with philosophy itself.”²⁹ The trees of knowledge of both the schools of Hugh of St. Victor and of Abelard, which R. W. Southern reconstructed, place the subjects of the trivium as subsets of eloquence, not of philosophy. The subjects of the quadrivium are subsets of mathematics, which in turn is a subset of theoretical philosophy.³⁰ In other words, these schools placed the quadrivium under philosophy and saw dialectic as distinct from philosophy. In comparison, the tree of knowledge given by the Jesuit-educated Iurii Krizhanich in the seventeenth century describes the subjects of the trivium and quadrivium as the “seven noble sciences.” Krizhanich places all seven subjects under secular knowledge, in contrast to religious knowledge. As such, he groups the subjects of the quadrivium under mathematics, while he lists the subjects of the trivium under “logic,” which, in turn, he places, along with ethics and physics, as a subset of philosophy.³¹ This means that we have to be careful to determine what each writer means by “logic,” “dialectic,” and “philosophy.” We cannot assume these terms are interchangeable.

It would therefore help in this investigation for me to define exactly what I mean by “dialectic.” As with many definitions in philosophy, we have to begin with Aristotle, who distinguished between two types of legitimate formal reasoning, on the one hand, and non-legitimate reasoning, on the other, based on the nature of their “premises” (ᾠραχαι). The first type of legitimate formal reasoning, which he called *apodeiksis* (ᾠποδειξις), or the demonstrative syllogism, is based on generally agreed upon premises. Contrary to the popular view, the syllogism does not move from things known to things unknown. As Aristotle described it in the *Posterior Analytics*, the application of *apodeiksis* does not derive new facts, it merely demonstrates the relationship between those already known. And

²⁷ See Henry Osborn Taylor, *The Medieval Mind: A History of the Development of Thought and Emotion in the Middle Ages*, 4th ed., 2 vols., London, Macmillan, 1927, vol. 1, p. 220.

²⁸ See *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, trans. Jerome Taylor, New York, Columbia University Press, 1961, pp. 81–82.

²⁹ A. Victor Murray, *Abelard and St. Bernard: A Study in Twelfth Century “Modernism”*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1967, p. 9.

³⁰ R. W. Southern, *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1970, Charts I and II following p. 252.

³¹ Iurii Krizhanich, “Discourses on Government,” trans. John M. Little and Basil Dmytryshyn, in their *Russian Statecraft: The Politics of Iurii Krizhanich*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1985, p. 93.

it is when a discipline has its “knowledge” (ἔπιστευμε) completely demonstrated that we can call it a scientific discipline. The second kind of legitimate formal reasoning according to Aristotle, which he describes in the *Topics*, is *dialectic* (διαλεκτική), which he defines as a type of inductive reasoning where the premises are generally but not completely agreed upon. In dialectic one can move to things previously unknown or unaccepted. The result, however, is not “scientific knowledge” (ἐπιστευμε) but probable knowledge. The third kind of reasoning is *sophistic* (σοφιστικός), or eristic. This is non-legitimate reasoning in which the premises seem to be generally accepted but are not and the sophist seems to reason from accepted opinions but does not actually do so.³² The two types of legitimate formal reasoning, syllogism and dialectic, in combination, are what is commonly referred to as “Aristotelian logic.”

But this formal description does nothing to help us understand the power of dialectic in practice. For this, we must turn to Robin Smith’s “heterodox” view of “gymnastic dialectic” as an “argumentative sport” in ancient Athens. Smith begins his description by pointing out what has been said before by others, that “[d]ialectical argument differs from demonstrative reasoning in that it is intrinsically a kind of exchange between participants acting in some way as opponents.”³³ We see this practice, among other places, in Plato’s dialogues. But Smith proceeds further to describe “structured contests, with rules and judges” in which

one participant took the “Socratic” role and asked questions, while the other responded to them. The answerer chose, or was assigned, a thesis to defend; the questioner’s goal was to refute the thesis. In order to do this, the questioner would try to get the answerer to accept premises from which such a refutation followed. However, the questioner could only ask questions which could be answered by a “yes” or “no”; questions like “What is the largest city in Lacedaemonia?” were not allowed.³⁴

On the basis of these argument contests, Smith defines dialectic as “*argument directed at another person which proceeds by asking questions.*”³⁵ We can go further and propose that the intent of dialectic is, within a structured thought process, to force an opponent to abandon a premise he or she holds or to get them to accept a premise they did not accept previously. Thus, while rhetoric was

³² Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*; Aristotle, *Topics*. See John Herman Randall, Jr., *Aristotle*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1960, pp. 38–40. See also Berman, *Law and Revolution*, pp. 132–134.

³³ Robin Smith, “Logic,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 58.

³⁴ Smith, “Logic,” p. 59.

³⁵ Smith, “Logic,” p. 60 (italics in original).

intended to persuade an audience through beauty of formulation, dialectic was meant to defeat an opponent through bruteness of structure.³⁶ The concept of questioning premises and arranging intellectual contests between opponents is a common occurrence in the Western Church and its descendants. We see it in the “devil’s advocate” procedure for ascertaining the sainthood of a prospective candidate. We also see it in the disputations that were common in Parisian schools of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and that Abelard engaged in against William of Champeaux (1070–1120) and Anselm of Laon. We also see it in debates carried on within the Church as when Martin Luther debated Johann Eck at Leipzig in 1519.

In the Byzantine Empire, a dissociation between logic and philosophy similar to that in the early medieval West seems to have occurred. Formal Aristotelian logic may not have been taught as part of “philosophy” after the closing of the Athenian Academy by the Emperor Justinian in 529 and the ousting of non-Christians from the Alexandrian Academy in the sixth century. The Alexandrian Academy retained enough Aristotelian logic, however, so that, when the Muslims captured Alexandria in 646, it could be incorporated into Islamic philosophy,³⁷ while exiles from the Athenian Academy fled to Sassanid Persia where their teaching also subsequently was taken over by the Muslims. Nor is there much evidence that the trivium and quadrivium were the basis of the educational curriculum in Byzantium before the thirteenth century. John Tetzes (ca. 1110–1180) complained in the twelfth century that a “liberal education” (ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία) had been reduced to grammar alone.³⁸ Indeed, we have little evidence there even was a standard curriculum in Byzantium before the thirteenth century.

The lack of evidence prompted George Sarton to suggest that the trivium and quadrivium were introduced to Byzantium by the Crusaders in 1204.³⁹ In response, Aubrey Diller argued that at least the quadrivium was known in Byzantium 200 years earlier.⁴⁰ What Diller was referring to and what

³⁶ Perhaps Czesław Miłosz had this coercive aspect of dialectic in mind when he made the observation that “[t]he pressure of the state machine is nothing compared with the pressure of a convincing argument.” Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1953, p. 12.

³⁷ R. T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, London, Gerald Duckworth, 1972, p. 1. Richard Walzer, “Porphyry and the Arabic Tradition,” *Porphyry*, Entretiens sur L’Antiquité Classique, vol. 12, 1965, p. 276.

³⁸ John Tzetzes, *Historiae*, ed. Peter Aloisius M. Leone, Naples, Liberia Scientifica editrice, 1968, pp. 448–449, *Chiliades*, XI, § 377, lines 527–528

³⁹ George Sarton, review of Paul Tannery, *Quadrivium de Georges Pachymère*, in *Isis*, vol. 34, 1943, p. 218.

⁴⁰ Aubrey Diller, “The Byzantine Quadrivium,” *Isis*, vol. 36, 1945, p. 132. Diller cites Sarton’s own history of science to contest his suggestion.

Sarton had previously characterized as “[a] treatise on the quadrivium,”⁴¹ published in 1556 by Xylander, and formerly attributed to Michael Psellos, is a five-part work including philosophy, arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. Diller equated the “philosophy” of the text with logic, for it seems to have included the study of Aristotle’s *Categories*, *On Interpretation*, and both *Analytics*.⁴² This commentary, which has been dated to 1008,⁴³ does not tell us, however, what was taught in the curriculum. And, despite the conclusion Sarton and Diller drew from its containing the four subjects of the quadrivium, a five-part work is not a quadrivium. N. G. Wilson argued that “the existence of commentaries [such as this one], especially if they are of an elementary character with many explanations of individual words, is a further indication that a text formed part of a school curriculum.”⁴⁴ While this may be a reasonable inference, Wilson then assumes that Western commentaries were available and widely used in Byzantium.⁴⁵ We have little evidence that formal instruction in Byzantium included the treatises of Porphyry (ca. 232–ca. 305) or Boethius (480–524) on dialectic, or those of Capella, the Roman statesman Cassiodorus (ca. 490–575), or the encyclopedist Isidore of Seville (560–636) on the subjects of the liberal arts. And, as Ann Moffat had to admit, the Byzantines had nothing equivalent to the works of those writers.⁴⁶ We do find references to “grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy,” but philosophy in early Byzantium, as Georgina Buckler pointed out, may not have been defined the same way as in the West: “The letters of Synesius show that under Hypatia at Alexandria the ‘mysteries of philosophy’ comprised mathematics and physics. . . . We have then to admit that neither the names nor the sequence of the different branches of Byzantine education are very clear to

⁴¹ George Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science*, vol. 1: *From Homer to Omar Khayyam*, Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1927, p. 750.

⁴² Diller, “The Byzantine Quadrivium,” p. 132. Kazhdan and Epstein also equated the “philosophy” of this work with “logic” but did not mention that this work also contains a section on astronomy. A. P. Kazhdan and Ann Wharton Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, p. 149.

⁴³ V. Rose, “Pseudo-Psellus und Gregorius Monachus,” *Hermes*, vol. 2, 1867, p. 467. Another commentary, formerly attributed to Psellos, the *Synopsis Orgami*, was not an original Byzantine work. In the nineteenth century, the Scottish common sense philosopher William Hamilton asserted that the *Synopsis Orgami* “is itself a mere garbled version of the great logical text-book of the west,” i.e., Petrus Hispanus’ *Summulae logicales*. William Hamilton, *Discussions on Philosophy and Literature*, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1853, p. 129n.

⁴⁴ N. G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, London, Gerald Duckworth, 1983, p. 22.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, pp. 13, 25.

⁴⁶ Ann Moffat, “Early Byzantine School Curricula and a Liberal Education,” *Byzance et les Slaves. Etudes des Civilisation. Mélanges Ivan Dujčev*, Paris, Association des amis des études archéologiques des mondes Byzantino-Slaves et du Christianisme Oriental, 1979, p. 276.

us.”⁴⁷ But it was precisely the study of mathematics and physics that was understood to be philosophy in the medieval West before Scholasticism. There appears to be an assumption in the historiography that the subject “philosophy” in Byzantium was “dialectic” as taught in the West. As Plotinos asked in his first *Ennead*, although in a different context: “Is Dialectic, then, the same as Philosophy?”⁴⁸ Even though Proclus tells us that dialectic is “the purest part of philosophy,”⁴⁹ we have to maintain a distinction between the two. Copleston has stated that, in the West, during the Dark Ages when there was no speculative philosophy to speak of, dialectic constituted whatever philosophy there was.⁵⁰ Yet, dialectic had to be reintroduced into the curriculum by Alcuin of York (735–804). For, after Isidore of Seville (560–636), we have no evidence of interest in dialectic, or even the trivium as such for over 150 years, until Alcuin wrote his pedagogical treatises on grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic.⁵¹

In middle Byzantium, the direct evidence indicates that only two subjects of the trivium—grammar and rhetoric—were taught before students advanced to one or more subjects of the quadrivium: arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. Then, philosophy (i.e., mathematics and physics) was taught as the capstone of education. And we do encounter the phrase “grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy,” in sources of the time.⁵² But Louis Bréhier, in his study of higher education in Constantinople, describes philosophy as “comprising not only metaphysics and morals, but the sciences properly

⁴⁷ Georgina Buckler, “Byzantine Education,” in *Byzantium: An Introduction to East Roman Civilization*, eds. Norman H. Baynes and H. St. L. B. Moss, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1943, p. 206.

⁴⁸ Plotinos, *The Enneads*, p. 39 (I.3.5). Boethius discusses this question in his *Commentaries on the Isagoge of Porphyry*. Ancii Manlii Severni Boethii, *Commentaria in Porphyrium a se translata in Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina (PL)*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols., Paris, Migne, 1844–1855, vol. 64, cols. 73–75; for an English translation, see *Selections from Medieval Philosophers: Augustine to Albert the Great*, ed. and trans. Richard McKeon, New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1929, pp. 75–77.

⁴⁹ Proclus, *In Eucl. Comm.*, p. 42, 15–16 ed. Friedlein.

⁵⁰ Copleston, *History of Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 59, 65. Copleston seems to be understanding “philosophy” in the modern sense, that is, to include dialectic.

⁵¹ *Ars grammatica*, in *PL*, vol. 101, cols. 849–902; *De rhetorica et de virtutibus*, in *Rhetores latini minores*, ed. Carl Halm, Leipzig, 1863, pp. 525–550; *De dialectica*, in *PL*, vol. 101, cols. 951–976.

⁵² In the *Life of Michael Synkellos*, we find that he studied “τῆς γραμματικῆς καὶ ῥητορικῆς καὶ φιλοσοφίας.” *The Life of Michael Synkellos*, ed. and trans. Mary B. Cunningham, Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, 1991, pp. 46–47. In the *Life of Theodore, Bishop of Edessa*, we find that he studied “γραμματικὴν τε καὶ ῥητορικὴν καὶ φιλοσοφίαν.” Ia. P. Pomialovskii, ed., *Zhitie izhe vo sviatogo ottsa nashego Theodoro arkhiepiskopa edesskogo*, St. Petersburg, Imperatorskaia akademiia nauk, 1892, p. 6. And in the previously mentioned work of John Tzetzes, he refers to “γραμματικῆς, ῥητορικῆς αὐτῆς φιλοσοφίας.” Tzetzes, *Historiae*, p. 449, Chiliades, XI, § 377, line 520.

speaking, physics, natural history, and astronomy.”⁵³ Philosophy, in this sense, does not seem to have included dialectic either in the West or in Byzantium. All assertions I have come across to the effect that dialectic was part of the curriculum before the end of the twelfth century in Byzantium appear to be based on the assumption that, if grammar and rhetoric were taught, then the third part of the trivium, dialectic, must also have been taught.⁵⁴ In contrast, Artz, while including the quadrivium, did not explicitly mention dialectic as part of the course curriculum in Byzantium. He included, besides Attic Greek and rhetoric, “arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy, and philosophy.”⁵⁵ Reynolds and Wilson point to the fact that “[t]here are sporadic references in authors of widely differing dates to the *quadrivium* (τετρακτύς), but the evidence does not enable us to say whether the concepts of *trivium* and *quadrivium* were as influential in Byzantium as they were in the educational practice of Western Europe.”⁵⁶ Geanakoplos stated that “[b]oth Byzantine and Western Renaissance traditions contrast sharply with Western medieval practices, in which the emphasis... was on logic and dialectics (Scholasticism) rather than on the humanities.”⁵⁷ Thus, applying the nomenclature of one area to the other can be misleading.

⁵³ Louis Bréhier, “Notes sur l’histoire de l’enseignement supérieur á Constantinople,” *Byzantion. Revue internationale des études Byzantines*, vol. 3, 1926, p. 83.

⁵⁴ For example, Hussey wrote: “The first stage [of education] was that which was known as the Trivium in the west, comprising Grammar, Rhetoric, and Dialectic.” J. M. Hussey, *Church and Learning in the Byzantine Empire 867–1185*, New York, 1937, p. 61. But, subsequently, she wrote: “When they had finished their training in grammar and rhetoric students proceeded to the higher course of lectures...” Hussey, *Church and Learning*, pp. 62–63. Note that she did not mention dialectic as part of that training. Vogel stated that “Michael Italicus (second quarter of the twelfth century) taught not only grammar and rhetoric, but also ‘the mathematics’ (the Quadrivium including mechanics, optics, catoptrics, metrics, the theory of the centre of gravity) and theology.” K. Vogel, “Byzantine Science,” in *Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 4: *The Byzantine Empire*, pt. 2: *Government, Church and Civilisation*, ed. J. M. Hussey, Cambridge University Press, 1967, p. 273 n. 1. Not only did Vogel not mention logic, but he used the term “Quadrivium” in an unusual way. Meyendorff asserted: “The universities taught Aristotle’s logic as part of the ‘general curriculum’ required from students under the age of eighteen...” John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, 2nd ed., New York, Fordham University Press, 1983, p. 73. But Meyendorff cites no source for his statement. And Vogel again: “After Apuleius (c. A.D. 150) and Martianus Capella (first half of the fifth century) Roman schools usually followed a plan of instruction based on the seven liberal arts, and this division must also have been the plan followed in the early Byzantine schools.” Vogel, “Byzantine Science,” p. 268 n. 1. Again, no source or evidence is cited.

⁵⁵ Artz, *The Mind of the Middle Ages*, pp. 109–110. See also Tamara Talbot Rice, *Everyday Life in Byzantium*, London, B. T. Batsford, 1967, p. 193.

⁵⁶ L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, 2nd ed., Oxford, 1974, p. 225.

⁵⁷ *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen Through Contemporary Eyes*, ed. and trans. Deno John Geanakoplos, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 401.

When, in the ninth century, Caesar Bardas set up his school in the Magnaura Palace, he established only four subjects: philosophy, geometry, astronomy, and rhetoric. We can infer this from the report in Theophanes Continuatus that Constantine Porphyrogenitus, in the following century, appointed professors for these subjects.⁵⁸ This combination of four subjects (with the substitution of philosophy for the quadrivium's music) would seem to indicate that we cannot assume Byzantine sources mean the West's quadrivium when we encounter the word τετρακτύς in the sources. One must acknowledge, however, that *argumentum ex silentio* is risky in regard to what we can conclude was not taught because a large number of sources on Byzantium have not been published or even examined.⁵⁹ Instead of trying to shape the evidence to conform to the hypothesis that the trivium and quadrivium, as described by Martianus Capella, Boethius, and Cassiodorus, were the basis of the curriculum in Byzantium, we might do better, in good Popperian fashion, to test such a hypothesis by trying to refute it and see if it can survive the attempted refutation.

According to the *vita* of Constantine-Cyril, the Apostle of the Slavs studied all the subjects of both the trivium and quadrivium, along with other subjects:

In three months he mastered grammar and began other studies. He studied Homer and geometry with Leo and Photius, dialectics (ΔΙΑΛΥΤΙΚΗ), and all philosophical studies. In addition, he studied rhetoric, arithmetic, astronomy, and music, and all other Hellenic arts.⁶⁰

But, as Ihor Ševčenko has proposed the *vita* of Constantine was most likely written in or near Rome, and thus probably reflects what the Latinized Greek scholar-philosopher of the Western Church studied.

To be sure, we have references to Byzantines' learning dialectic as part of their education, but what is meant by that in each case is not clear. For example, one *vita* of Theodore the Studite (sometimes attributed to Theodore Daphnopates), tells us he studied "dialectic and syllogism" (διαλέξει καὶ ἀποδείξει).⁶¹ But another *vita* of Theodore the Studite (attributed to Michael the Monk), tells

⁵⁸ Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, p. 141.

⁵⁹ Dominic J. O'Meara, "Logic," *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan, New York, Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 1245.

⁶⁰ *The Vita of Constantine and the Vita of Methodius*, trans. Marvin Kantor and Richard S. White, Michigan Slavic Materials, no. 13, 1976, pp. 8–9.

⁶¹ PG, vol. 99, cols. 117, 120.

us the dialectic he studied was “called philosophy by experts on the matter,”⁶² Ann Moffat, who has made a study of the school curriculum in Byzantium, argued that, although the seven liberal arts as they were known in the West were not taught, “the idea of a fully-fledged advanced education embracing the liberal arts was never lost.”⁶³ That may be, but there is only one clear and unambiguous reference to the trivium and the quadrivium being taught in Byzantium, and it is relatively late. Around the year 1200, Nicholas Mesarites described the curriculum of the church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, including discussion of dialectic.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, this was at a time when the trivium and quadrivium, as known in the West, may have already have been making their impact on Byzantine education through other channels.⁶⁵ In short, there is no hard evidence, such as a specific description of the subject, that will justify the claim that it was taught earlier.

To be sure, during the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, we find frequent references in Byzantine writers to the *Isagoge*, which was used in the West as an introduction to the study of dialectic.⁶⁶ Yet, not only do we have trouble finding evidence that dialectic was taught as a regular part of the Byzantine curriculum, but it clearly did not become part of the thinking of those who engaged in

⁶² Michael the Monk, Βτοϛ... Ψεοδωρου... (the Studite), in Migne, PG, vol. 99, col. 237B.

⁶³ Moffat, “Early Byzantine School Curricula,” p. 288.

⁶⁴ Glanville Downey, trans. and ed., “Nikolaos Mesarites: Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople,” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, N.S., vol. 47, pt. 6, 1957, p. 894. Downey asserted that Mesarites discusses the trivium in section VII and the quadrivium in section XLII, but, in fact, it is just the reverse. Section VII describes the quadrivium (“all that is concerned with sacred music and with the arraying of numbers and their extension to infinity [geometry] and their reduction and division [arithmetic], and all that pertains to this profession of ours [astronomy],” Downey, “Nikolaos Mesarites,” p. 865). while section XLII describes the trivium (“some putting questions to each other concerning letters and accents and the rules of short and long syllables and nouns and verbs [grammar]. Others are concerned with figures of speech and all kinds of forms of complete and incomplete rhetorical figures and with questions of clarity and force [rhetoric]. Others again deal with problems and questions of dialectic...” Downey, “Nikolaos Mesarites,” p. 894). Downey’s confusion led him to equate Mesarites’ phrase “this profession of ours” with rhetoric rather than to astronomy, but he is not alone in misidentifying the phrase. Heisenberg thought the phrase referred to medicine. A. Heisenberg, *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche*, Leipzig, 1908, vol. 2, pp. 17ff and 90ff.

⁶⁵ Leonardo of Pisa (ca. 1170–1245), who wrote *Liber de abaco* in 1202, visited Constantinople about this time and has been credited with introducing Arabic numerals into Byzantium. Vogel, “Byzantine Science,” p. 273.

⁶⁶ Ammonius, *In Porphyrii Isagogen*, in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* (CAG), vol. 4, no. 3, 1891, p. 34, 21–24, called it the “introduction to all philosophy” (late 5th century). See also Elias, *Prolegomena philosophiae*, in CAG, vol. 18, no. 1, 1900 (6th century) and David, *In Porphyrii Isagogen prooemium* in CAG, vol. 18, no. 2, 1904, p. 90, 25f (6th or 7th century).

intellectual activities. After John of Damascus in the eighth century, except for isolated note taking,⁶⁷ the next Byzantines to take seriously the study of dialectic were Michael Psellos and his student John Italos in the eleventh century. The present-day Byzantinist Cyril Mango has suggested that, if the direction in which Psellos and Italos headed had continued, Byzantium would have produced its own Abelard.⁶⁸ But it did not continue. Psellos was careful not to expand his intellectual tour of pagan and Neoplatonic writers to theological matters, although in his letter to Patriarch John VIII Xiphilinus (1064–1075), he states that he would like to do so. In addition, Psellos declares that syllogisms, the basis of Aristotelian *apodeixis*, could be a diagnostic tool for demonstrating truth.⁶⁹ John Italos, in contrast, was condemned for, among other things, applying dialectic to discussions of the incarnation of Christ.⁷⁰

Meyendorff suggested that the Church condemned Italos because they feared he was attempting a new synthesis of Neoplatonism and Christianity, one that would replace the synthesis worked out by the Church fathers. It was this fear that Meyendorff saw as the reason for the anathemas pronounced the first Sunday after Lent against people “who held that Plato’s ideas had real existence” as well as against people “who devote themselves to secular studies not merely as an intellectual exercise but actually adopting the futile opinions” of pagan philosophers.⁷¹ Yet it was not a new synthesis as such that Italos was attempting but specifically the application of dialectic to theological matters, which was enough to earn him approbation.

The trial of Italos established the precedent for a series of similar trials well into the twelfth century against other potential dialecticians. The historian Robert Browning counted twenty-five such trials for “intellectual” heresy.⁷² These included trials against the pupils of Italos, the monk Nilus,

⁶⁷ Wilson reports that Leo the Philosopher knew Porphyry’s *Isagoge* in the ninth century (Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, p. 84) and that Arethas (ca. 850–932+) wrote a large quantity of notes on fols. 2–29 of the MS. Urb. gr. 35 covering Porphyry’s *Isagoge* and part of Aristotle’s *Categories* (Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, p. 124). See also John Tzetzes’ notes on Porphyry’s *Isagoge* (Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium*, p. 191).

⁶⁸ Cyril Mango, *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980, p. 143.

⁶⁹ Michael Psellos (Michele Psello), *Epistola a Giovanni Xifilino. Test critico, introduzione, traduzione e commentario*, ed. Ugo Criscuolo, Naples, University of Naples, 1973, pp. 52–53.

⁷⁰ J. Gouillard, “Le Synodikon de L’Orthodoxie,” *Travaux et mémoires*, vol. 2, 1967, pp. 57–61. For a discussion of the trial and its context, see Lowell Clucas, *The Trial of John Italos and the Crisis of Intellectual Values in Byzantium in the Eleventh Century*, Munich: Institut für Byzantinistik, Neugriechische Philologie und Byzantinische Kunstgeschichte der Universität, 1981.

⁷¹ John Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality*, trans. Adele Fiske, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1974, p. 98.

⁷² Robert Browning, “Enlightenment and Repression in Byzantium in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,” *Past and Present*, no. 69, 1975, pp. 17–19.

Eustratios of Nicaea, Michael of Thessalonika, Nikophoros Baseliakes, Soterichos Pantergenes, and other intellectual leaders. Indicative of this tendency is the fact that the successor to Psellos and Italos as *hypatos ton philosophon* was the undistinguished Theodore of Smyrna.⁷³ Much as one might scoff at the shrinking power of the Byzantine emperor from the eleventh century on, within his realm he controlled a state apparatus that was strong enough to suppress dissident movements. And the ecclesiastical and the temporal authorities were in harmony on religious matters, at least in theory.

If dialectic was not taught in middle Byzantium (or at least not taught in the formal way that it was in the West of the time), then its absence may have been crucial. Yet, there were lay schools in the Byzantine Empire (as in Italy) and the belief in education was strongly held in Byzantium, more strongly than in the West at the time. The question when dialectic became a formal part of the Byzantine curriculum is not an idle one, for, by the thirteenth century in the West, *dialectica*, the handmaiden who, in Capella's words, "was devoted to deceitful trickery,"⁷⁴ had won out. The evidence for this victory is profuse, but I will limit myself to one quotation from the secondary literature. According to Pearl Kibre and Nancy G. Siraisi:

Of the arts of the trivium, included in Paris under the new rubric of rational philosophy, only logic [dialectic] appears to have gained in scope and prestige. It was victor in both the allegorical and the actual battle of the seven arts. . . . Hugh of St. Victor had suggested that logic [dialectic] should come first among the seven liberal arts. . . . And to this view was added the authority of such renowned thirteenth-century scholars and scientists as Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, prominent both at Oxford and Paris, and the two distinguished Dominican scholars, Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. All three held that since the study of logic provided the method for all sciences it should be placed first.⁷⁵

But this "victory" was centuries in the making.

⁷³ Mango refers to him as a gourmet. Mango, *Byzantium*, p. 146. The author of the *Timarion* caricatures him as a faith healer. See Kazhdan and Epstein, *Change in Byzantine Culture*, p. 156.

⁷⁴ *Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts*, 2 vols., New York, Columbia University Press, 1971–1977, vol. 2: *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, trans. William Harris Stahl and Richard Johnson, sec. 330.

⁷⁵ Pearl Kibre and Nancy G. Siraisi, "The Institutional Setting: The Universities," in *Science in the Middle Ages*, ed. David C. Lindberg, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 127. On the statutes of the University of Paris in 1215, which gave predominance to dialectic over the other liberal arts, see *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, ed. Heinrich Denifle and Emile Chatelain, 4 vols., Paris, 1889–1897, no. 20, vol. 1, pp. 78–79.

As early as the ninth century, Rabanus (Hrabanus), a student of Alcuin who nicknamed him Maurus,⁷⁶ sang the praises of dialectic: “the discipline of disciplines . . . it is dialectic that teaches us how to teach and teaches us how to learn. In dialectic, reason discovers and shows what it is, what it seeks, and what it sees.”⁷⁷ The teaching of dialectic had such a pervasive influence in the West that it infiltrated the approach of many of those, like Lanfranc (1010–1089), founder of the school at Bec and archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm (1033–1109) archbishop of Canterbury (1093–1109), and the “Angelic Doctor” Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–1274), who defended the dominant consensus view.⁷⁸ Indeed, Gerbert of Aurillac (945–1003), later, from 999 to 1103, Pope Sylvester II, has been credited with being the first instructor to teach the full introductory course of Aristotelian logic, based on his familiarity with Islamic commentaries and studies, as well as on Boethius, when he was assigned to the Rheims Cathedral school in 972.⁷⁹

Whereas European kings and princes within their realms might rival the Byzantine emperor in degree of control, none governed a large enough area to suppress dissent throughout much of Europe. Instead, the governments in Western Christendom were so many links in a chain, with many weak links. These individual links often found themselves in opposition, or indifferent, to papal policy. While Henry I had joined in the condemnation of Berengarius in the eleventh century, neither Louis VI nor Louis VII, who himself had been excommunicated, took part in the condemnation of Abelard in the twelfth. In Paris, the analytical movement not only developed but flourished unconfined by papal or imperial repression. But then, we may ask, why did no “Abelard” develop in the outlying cities of the Byzantine Commonwealth that were as distant from Constantinople as Paris was from Rome? Why did no such movement develop in Orthodox lands not directly under the political control of the Byzantine emperor, say in Bulgaria or in Kiev in the eleventh or twelfth centuries? And why

⁷⁶ See Stephen Allott, *Alcuin of York c. A.D. 732 to 804*, York, England, William Sessions, 1974, p. 139 (Letter 134).

⁷⁷ Quoted by Regine Pernoud, “Abelard in Paris,” in *Milestones of History*, 2nd ed., 6 vols., New York, Newsweek Books, 1973, vol. 2: *The Fires of Faith*, p. 128. “Treatise on the Liberal Arts,” in ***Great Pedagogical Essays: Plato to Spencer, trans. and ed. by F. V. N. Painter (New York: American Book, 1905)***

⁷⁸ On Lanfranc as logician, see R. W. Southern, “Lanfranc of Bec and Berengar of Tours,” *Studies in Medieval History Presented to Frederick Maurice Powicke*, eds. R. W. Hunt, W. A. Pantin, and R. W. Southern, Oxford, Clarendon, 1948, esp. p. 48. On Anselm’s formulation of the role of reason, see *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, in Library of Christian Classics, vol. 10, pp. 101–102. MacDonald calls those like Lanfranc and Guitmund of Aversa who used dialectic to defend the consensus view “dialectical realists,” which seems to be a bit of a misnomer. A. J. MacDonald, *Berengar and the Reform of Sacramental Doctrine*, London, Longmans, Green, 1930, p. 331.

⁷⁹ H. Liebeschütz, “Western Christian Thought from Boethius to Anselm,” in *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, p. 597.

did such a movement not occur in Novgorod, with its connections to the Hanseatic League and thus open to Western influences until the end of the fifteenth century,⁸⁰ or even in Muscovy, where independent intellectual currents began stirring in the second half of the fifteenth century?

In part, this can be explained by the form and structure of the Byzantine Commonwealth wherein individuals felt they could follow a successful career only in the center, in Constantinople. Theophylakt of Ochrid seems to have represented conventional wisdom when he saw his appointment as archbishop of Bulgaria to be an exile and a detrimental detour in his rising career until he could return to Constantinople.⁸¹ “All the world is 10—and the City is 15” according to a Greek proverb,⁸² which reflects the fact that Constantinople had remained for centuries the sole focus of high culture. And whatever seeped out to the provinces was sharply circumscribed. This limitation was due to the fact that the conduits for Byzantine culture were the monasteries, and the form and function of monasticism had developed differently in the Eastern and Western Churches. In the Eastern Church, the primary and almost sole function of monasticism was the salvation of the soul of the individual monk. Eremitic monasticism predominated in the eastern Mediterranean, and, even in those areas where communal monasteries developed, there was no concept of preserving writings other than those that were liturgical and scriptural in nature. As Mango has pointed out, we find, for example, no tradition of chronicle writing associated with Byzantine monasteries.⁸³ Compendia of sanitized pagan

⁸⁰ The Novgorod-Moscow heresy may have been an analytic movement, but it was too small to have any impact and was suppressed in 1504. See inter alia Joseph L. Wiczyński, “Hermeticism and Cabalism in the Heresy of the Judaizers,” *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 28, 1975, pp. 17–29; A. A. Zimin, *Rossia na rubezhe XV–XVI stoletii*, Moscow, Mysl’, 1982, pp. 82–92; Jakov S. Luria [Ia. S. Lur’e], “Unresolved Issues in the History of the Ideological Movements of the Late Fifteenth Century,” in *Medieval Russian Culture*, eds. Henrik Birnbaum and Michael S. Flier, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984, pp. 150–163. Although contemporary opponents claimed that the heresy came with the Jew Zacharia from Kiev, we do not have enough evidence to identify its point of origin.

⁸¹ Ernest Barker, ed. and trans. *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium: From Justinian I to the Last Palaeologus*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1957, p. 145; A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire, 324–1453*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1964, p. 496; Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe 500–1453*, London, Sphere Books, 1974, pp. 284–285.

⁸² K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur*, 2nd ed., Munich, 1897, p. 3.

⁸³ Cyril Mango, “The Tradition of Byzantine Chronography,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 12/13, 1988/89, p. 362. While a tradition of monastic chronicle writing did develop in Rus’, and that tradition was influenced by secular Byzantine chronicles, there still was no tradition of preserving classical learning until Renaissance influence on Ruthenian lands via Poland occurred in the seventeenth century. Frank Sysyn, “The Cultural, Social and Political Context of Ukrainian History-Writing: 1620–1690,” *Europa Orientalis*, vol. 5, 1986, p. 285, and Frank Sysyn, “Concepts of Nationhood in Ukrainian History Writing, 1620–1690,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 10, 1986, pp. 395–396. To be sure, beginning in the late fifteenth century, we find in Rus’ territory translated tales with classical roots such as Trojan Tales and the *Serbian Alexandreid*, but that is not the kind of writing I am referring to.

writings were copied, preserved, and taught from in the secular culture but this method was hardly a basis for the development of analytical thinking. These compendia were for a different purpose. Byzantium, as the imitation (*mimesis*) of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, acted to maintain the purity of the written word and artistic form (e.g., strict rules for icon painting). In contrast to China, for example, where an idea or technological innovation from a province could find its way to the imperial capital and then be dispensed throughout the Empire, Constantinople for the most part dispensed but did not receive.

In the Western Church, the development of monasticism coincided with the fall of the Roman Empire and, more importantly, was influenced by the perception of a Golden Age about to be lost. When Boethius' student Cassiodorus founded his monastery of Vivarium on his lands at Squillace in Calabria in southern Italy around the year 540, he helped establish the idea, along with the salvation of the soul of individual monks, of preserving the "salvation kit of Latinity" for a future, better time.⁸⁴ It might not be surprising then to discover that the Byzantine monasteries were the major lobbyists against John Italos and that Italos was sent to a monastery as part of his punishment, whereas Abelard sought refuge from the official Church in monasteries.⁸⁵ As a result of this difference in orientation of monasticism in the Eastern and Western Churches, Francis Thomson can argue that Rus' inherited not "the intellectual world of Byzantine culture, but the obscurantist world of Byzantine monasticism, which was largely hostile to secular learning."⁸⁶ Yet, it probably would have made little difference if Byzantine monasticism had been less "obscurantist" or less "hostile to secular learning," for the orientation of Byzantine monasticism was merely an outward manifestation of a deep structural difference in mentalité between the two Churches. And that difference can be traced back to the different ways Neoplatonism was synthesized with Church dogma in Eastern and Western Christianity and their subsequently differing epistemologies.

II

⁸⁴ On Cassiodorus' role, see Reynolds and Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, pp. 72–74. The phrase "salvation kit of Latinity" is A. G. Lehmann's in *The European Heritage: An Outline of Western Culture*, Oxford, Phaidon, 1984, p. 46. Significantly, Capella's *Marriage* was part of this kit.

⁸⁵ Once there, however, Abelard seems to have alienated the monks too. He fled from St. Denis as the result of a dispute with the monks over Dionysios the Areopagite. Later on, he claims that, when he became abbot of a monastery in Brittany, the monks tried to poison him. Peter Abelard, *The Story of His Misfortunes and Personal Letters*, trans. Betty Radice, London, Folio Society, 1977, pp. 39–40, 52–53.

⁸⁶ Thomson, "Nature of the Reception," p. 118.

Neoplatonism conceptualized the material world as emanating from the ultimate reality—the One—through the spheres of Divine Intellect and Divine Soul. This model viewed the One as a thing-unto-itself, unknowable except in a negative sense of what it was not (*apophasis*); postulated a Divine Intellect, which emanated from the One and in which the ideal and eternal forms existed; and saw our souls as immortal and as connected to the Divine Soul, which acted as intermediary between the eternal forms in the Divine Intellect and the imperfect manifestations of those ideal forms in the material world. Wallis has stated that “a survey of Neoplatonism’s influence threatens to become little less than a cultural history of Europe and the Near East down to the Renaissance, and on some points far beyond.”⁸⁷ One of the reasons for this is that, in both the Eastern and Western Churches, the Neoplatonists, at least until the twelfth century, were studied more than Plato. In the Eastern Empire, the writings of Plato were known directly to the scholars of the Neoplatonic Academies, but these were closed down by the Emperor or taken over by the Muslims. In the West, Plato was known in a direct way solely through Chalcidius’ fourth-century translation of the *Timaeus*, the only one of Plato’s works available in Latin until the twelfth century, and even that was incomplete. In contrast, the writings of Neoplatonists were known more or less widely in the West through Latin translation.

Although R. Baine Harris has asserted that “Greek Christianity has always been more Neoplatonic than Latin Christianity,”⁸⁸ it might not be a question of one being more Neoplatonic than the other, but of the different amalgamations resulting from the different “flavors” of Neoplatonism. Plotinos attacked Aristotle’s *Categories* in the sixth *Ennead*⁸⁹ and in general dismissed Aristotelian logic. But Porphyry, influenced by the rationality of the Stoics (as A. C. Lloyd has indicated), saw a positive role for Aristotelian logic within Neoplatonism.⁹⁰ Through his translator and interpreter, Boethius, as well as through his own *Isagoge*, Porphyry’s view of the relationship of Aristotle to Neoplatonism prevailed in Western Christendom. In Eastern Christendom, neither the philosopher Iamblichos (died ca. 326), a student of Porphyry who helped introduce Neoplatonism into Syria, nor Proclus (412–485), who played a similar role in relation to Iamblichos as Boethius did in relation to

⁸⁷ Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 160. The main reason Whitehead could say that the history of Western philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato is because of the influence of Neoplatonism.

⁸⁸ R. Baine Harris, “Brief Description of Neoplatonism,” in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, ed. R. Baine Harris, Norfolk, VA, 1976, p. 13. Harris attributed this difference to the influence of Origen, who, “[a]lthough he could not officially be labeled a Neoplatonist, . . . had quite similar views which also got into the thought of other important Greek church fathers such as the Cappadocians, Basil [of Caesarea], and the two Gregories [i.e., Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzos]—all of whom were taken seriously in Byzantine Christianity.”

⁸⁹ Plotinos, *The Enneads*, esp., pp. 471–474.

⁹⁰ A. C. Lloyd, “Neoplatonic Logic and Aristotelian Logic,” *Phronesis: A Journal of Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 1, 1955, p. 58.

Porphyry, was much influenced by Stoicism. As a result, and perhaps also as a result of the influence of thought from further east,⁹¹ there occurred no rehabilitation of dialectical reasoning within the type of Neoplatonism that most influenced the Eastern Church.

Stoics
 / (accepted) Aristotle Porphyry--->Boethius
 (rejected) /
 /
 Plato----->Plotinos----->Iamblichos---->Proclus

Neoplatonism, in particular the *Enneads* of Plotinos, shared certain themes with Platonism. Harris has listed these shared themes:

(1) belief in the immateriality of reality, (2) the conviction that the visible and sensible refer to a still higher level of being than the level on which they occur, (3) preference of intuition over empirical forms of knowing, (4) the affirmation of the immortality of the soul, (5) belief that the universe in its most real state is good, and can be known as good, and (6) the tendency to identify the beautiful, the good, and the true as one and the same.⁹²

Neoplatonism also differed from Platonism in certain significant ways, including the assertion that it is impossible to say anything about what the One is, beyond that the One is Goodness, Truth, and Beauty. In fact, we can use only negative language about the One—we can say only what it is not. Ultimately, however, we can comprehend only through the silence of mystical union.⁹³ This “silence of mystical union” with the One coincides, it seems to me, with the so-called “intellectual silence” of Rus’ culture. It derives from the Byzantine blend of Christianity with Neoplatonism and entered Rus’ through Eastern Church monasticism. As a result, communion with the divine is to be experienced, not thought or perceived. The prevailing view in Rus’, as in Byzantium, was that our senses can perceive only that which is created. Our senses cannot perceive the uncreated, that is, God. And anyone who asserts we can perceive God through the senses is suspect. This was the criticism that Barlaam

⁹¹ See, e.g., Hajime Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India, China, Tibet, Japan*, rev. Engl. trans., ed. Philip P. Wiener, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1964, pp. 56–57.

⁹² Harris, “Brief Description,” p. 3.

⁹³ All this is well known and fairly well accepted. See, e.g., A. Hilary Armstrong, “Neo-Platonism,” in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, 5 vols., New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1973, vol. 3, pp. 374–377.

of Calabria in the fourteenth century hurled at the hesychasts, who claimed to see the light of the divinity by repeating the Jesus prayer while observing their navels.⁹⁴ But the question dividing Barlaam from the hesychasts was not, as is often asserted, whether knowledge is the result of inquiry (inference) or the result of vision (perception).⁹⁵ Although Barlaam later became a Roman Catholic bishop, he rejected the analytical subcurrent of later Western theologians, which he associated with Aquinas:

Thomas and everyone who reasons as he does thinks that there is nothing inaccessible to the human mind; but we believe that this opinion comes from a soul of demoniacal and evil pride; for most divine things transcend human knowledge.⁹⁶

Thus, Barlaam's reaction to Aquinas was similar to Bernard of Clairvaux's reaction to Abelard (see below). Barlaam doubted the efficacy of dialectic and syllogisms in theological matters.⁹⁷ Gregory Palamas (1296–1360), the great champion of hesychasm, may be the one responsible for the distorted representation of Barlaam's views. He, at first, as Robert E. Sinkewicz has argued, mistook what Barlaam said about the position of the Latins on the filioque as Barlaam's own position.⁹⁸ Then he attacked Barlaam for applying syllogistic arguments to matters of divine truth. As Sinkewicz pointed out, Barlaam used syllogistic arguments in only one of his *Antilatin Treatises*. In the others, he resorted to standard Eastern Church citation of Patristic literature to substantiate his views. Sinkewicz's point is that, because Barlaam had "noted that the Latins were in the habit of couching their arguments in syllogistic form," he "decided to open the question of the propriety of submitting divine truths to examination by Aristotelian logic."⁹⁹

Palamas thought Barlaam was ignoring Patristic literature and basing his discussion solely on

⁹⁴ This hesychastic practice is similar to and may have derived from the Hindu and Mahayana Buddhist practice of *dhyana*, or uninterrupted meditation on one point. Houdini used the same technique of concentration on one point to escape from strait-jackets.

⁹⁵ See, for example, Harry J. Magoulias, *Byzantine Christianity: Emperor, Church and the West*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1982, p. 82.

⁹⁶ Quoted in Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas*, p. 88 (from Paris Gr. Manuscript 1278, fol. 137).

⁹⁷ On this point, see Robert E. Sinkewicz, "A New Interpretation for the First Episode in the Controversy Between Barlaam the Calabrian and Gregory Palamas," *Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S., vol. 31, 1980, pp. 493–494.

⁹⁸ Sinkewicz, "A New Interpretation," p. 498.

⁹⁹ Sinkewicz, "A New Interpretation," p. 500.

sylogism, thus relying on “the hazardous tenets of Hellenic philosophy.”¹⁰⁰ Palamas’ opinion of pagan (Hellenic) philosophers well reflected the general attitude of the Eastern Church. For him the pagan philosophers were snakes who have utility only in the event that “one kills them, and dissects them, and uses them with discernment as a remedy against their own bites.”¹⁰¹ One might say that Palamas thought it necessary to be aware of the methods of dialectic in order to know what to avoid and how to avoid it, whereas Barlaam was willing to use its methods to bite back and show the faultiness of dialectic in regard to divine matters. Thus, Palamas and Barlaam were in agreement in their opposition to Western dialectic but were in disagreement over the means to defeat it.

Another issue that divided Palamas and Barlaam was the epistemological claims of the hesychasts. Barlaam was not attacking hesychasm from a Western analytical perspective, for, as Meyendorff wrote: “In his flight from the intellectual realism of Western Thomistic Scholasticism, Barlaam clashed with the mystical realism of the Eastern monks.”¹⁰² In his polemic against Barlaam, Palamas explained that “[o]ur holy faith is a vision of our hearts in a special way because it surpasses all the intelligible capabilities of our soul.”¹⁰³ There is no contradiction here between understanding through the soul as opposed to understanding through the heart. The heart is seen not as different from the soul, but as the very center of the soul.¹⁰⁴ It may have been this formulation, among other teachings of the hesychasts, that Barlaam had in mind when he attacked as “monstrosities” their “ridiculous doctrines not even worthy of mention by one of sound mind or understanding—products of mistaken beliefs and reckless fantasy.” For among their teachings “of certain wondrous separations and reunions of the mind and the soul,” he points specifically to their claim of “the union of our Lord with the soul, which occurs perceptibly within the navel and with full certitude of the heart.”¹⁰⁵

Tomáš Špidlík attributed to Thomas Aquinas the distinction between heart and mind, although that distinction was apparently developing earlier in the West. Modern colloquial English maintains the idea of the heart as the organ of knowing in the expression “to learn by heart.” This expression

¹⁰⁰ On the hostile attitude toward profane philosophy, see J. Gouillard, “Le Synodikon de l’Orthodoxie. Edition et commentaire,” *Travaux et mémoires*, vol. 2, 1967, pp. 56–61.

¹⁰¹ *Triads*, I, 1, 17, ed. J. Meyendorff, *Grégoire Palamas—Défense des saints hésichastes*, I Spielegium Sacrum Lovaniense 30, Louvain, 1954, p. 35.

¹⁰² Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas*, p. 89.

¹⁰³ Quoted in Magoulias, *Byzantine Christianity*, p. 83.

¹⁰⁴ For a discussion of the heart as an epistemological organ, see Tomáš Špidlík, S.J., “The Heart in Russian Spirituality,” *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, vol. 195, 1973, pp. 361–379.

¹⁰⁵ Letter V to Ignatius, ed. G. Shiró, *Barlaam Calabro: Epistole greche. I primordi episodici e dottrinari delle lotte esicaste*, Palermo, Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neogreci, 1954 (= Testi e Monumenti. Testi 1), pp. 323–324.

was used by Chaucer as early as 1374, but it ultimately derives from the ancient Greeks (see also “record” [*< re (again) + cor (heart)*]). This idea is one of the points of connection between hesychasm and Sufism. For example, Abu Sa’id Abel-Kayr wrote: “Sufism is the heart standing with God, with nothing in between.”¹⁰⁶ After the Islamic capture of the Alexandrian Academy in 646, Neoplatonism may have influenced Sufism in its idea that the infant is born with knowledge of Allah. In turn, Sufism may have been responsible for, and influenced, the development of hesychasm in the Eastern Church. A Sufi has been described as one who has God in the forefront at all times, as indicated by their internal repetitive saying of the *shahada*: “La ilaha illa ’llah.” Such constant repetition of a sacred formula, to the point that it becomes subconscious is similar to the hesychasts’ repetition of the Jesus prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me a sinner.” For the Sufi, God is internal—“closer than the jugular vein.” This is a formulation that a hesychast would fully support.

The issue in question is an epistemological one. According to Neoplatonism, aspects of the Divine Soul are in each one of us, in our own souls. Here we are in the world in which we live on the edge of non-existence. We are imperfect; we have many flaws, and our physical world is constantly changing. But each of us has a connection with the Divine Soul, i.e., with the eternal, because there is a part of the Divine Soul within us. Like fingers on a hand, our souls are separate from each other but connected with the palm of the Divine Soul. When Christian writers of the third and fourth centuries took over this concept, it was very easy for them to place God in the position of the One. Thus, the Divine Intellect, or Mind of God, emanates from God, while the Divine Soul still acts as an intermediary between the Mind of God and the world in which we live. We can have an understanding of the Divine Soul through our own soul. But we cannot have an understanding of the Divine Soul through the material world in which we live, because that world is a world of illusion and deception, of change and mutation. The imperfections of this world thus lead us astray. We do not really learn from the experience of this world. What the experience of this world does is unlock or lay bare the understanding of forms that we are all born with, that is, that which already exists in our souls. Such is Neoplatonic epistemology, which predominated in the West, at least, until the Enlightenment, and among some thinkers even later.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Javad Nurbakhsh, *Sufism: Meaning, Knowledge and Unity*, New York, Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications, 1981, p. 21.

¹⁰⁷ See, e.g., the Unitarian minister William Ellery Channing who, in the nineteenth century, was a forerunner of the Transcendentalists, argued that our knowledge derives from “our own soul.” See William Ellery Channing, “Likeness to God,” in *The Transcendentalists: An Anthology*, ed., Perry Miller, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1950, p. 23.

The mysticism of the Eastern Church, in having part of the Mass take place in the sanctuary behind the iconostasis hidden from the parishioners' view, derives from a more explicit implementation of the mystery of God. Not only can we not have any positive knowledge of God, but also any knowledge of the Mind of God that we might obtain through the Divine Soul is only partial and imperfect. Salvation can be obtained only through our own souls for our own souls. From the point of view of the Eastern Church, the West has been regressing from concern for salvation of the soul. An Eastern Church theologian might have the view that, just as we in the West have polluted the earth and threatened to destroy our terrestrial home with our progress, so, too, we have polluted our souls. "For what does it profit a man if he gains the world but loses his soul?" (Mk. 8:36; Mt. 16:26).¹⁰⁸ In the late fifteenth century, the Trans-Volga elder Nil Sorskii wrote to a fellow monk in this vein warning him about the snares of worldly knowledge and comforts:

Think very seriously about this statement: 'Of what profit is the world to those who have bound themselves to it?' Even if one has glory, honors, and wealth, are not all these as nothing? Are they not like a shadow that passes by and as smoke that disappears? [Wisdom 2:2–5]. And many of these people who are learned in the things of this world and who love its procession, in the time of their youth and happiness were harvested by death as flowers of the fields in full bloom are cut down [Ps. 103:15–16]. . . . When they were in this world, they did not understand its evil stench, but they reveled in adornment and in physical comforts. They were able to train their intellects for worldly gain and they passed their time in studies, for they crown the body in this fleeting time as the be-all and the end-all. . . . What is to be thought of such people? Are they not, as a certain wise saint said, the most foolish people in the whole world?¹⁰⁹

Since this world, the material world in which we live, is imperfect and deceptive, and since all of truth has already been revealed through the Bible, the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, and the writings of the Church Fathers, clearly there is no need for so-called Western values or what we might call the analytical approach to acquire new truths. The simple reason is that there are no new truths to be determined. And anyone who says they have new truths can only be trying to get you to replace the

¹⁰⁸ The word for "soul" is ψυχή, which is the same word as Plotinos used to refer to the Divine Soul. It may be significant that the RSV translates ψυχή as "life," which seems to be closer to the first-century meaning of the term, but which clearly departs from the Neoplatonist use of the word.

¹⁰⁹ Nil Sorskii, "Poslanie startsa Nila k bratu, v̄proshivshemu ego o pomyslekh," in G. M. Prokhorov, "Poslanie Nila Sorskogo," *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury*, vol. 29, 1974, p. 136.

real (old) truths with new falsehoods.¹¹⁰ This is why, among other reasons, the fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions* urges Christians to read only the Bible:

Avoid all gentile books. For what need have you of alien writings, and laws and false prophets that lead the frivolous away from the faith? What do you find lacking in God's Law that you should seek those gentile fables? If you wish to read histories, you have the books of Kings; if rhetorical and poetic writings, you have the Prophets, you have Job, you have the Proverbs, wherein you will find a wisdom that is greater than that of all poetry and sophistry, since those are the words of our Lord who alone is wise. If you have a desire for songs, you have the Psalms; if for ancient genealogies, you have Genesis; if for legal books and precepts, you have the Lord's glorious Law. So avoid strenuously all alien and diabolical books.¹¹¹

The *Izbornik of 1076*, likewise, commends the reading of Scripture "especially for every Christian."¹¹² Such a recommendation differs from the Catholic Church's admonition that the Bible should be read only with proper guidance, that is, of priests, so that the reader is not led astray.¹¹³ And Klim Smoliatich, metropolitan of Rus' from 1147 to 1155, felt obliged to defend himself in writing against the accusation of a certain Foma that he "had abandoned the revered Scriptures and had instead written using Homer and Aristotle and Plato..."¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Cyril Gordon pointed out a similar phenomenon encountered by those who attempt to innovate: "The very fact that it is an innovation means that it is not in keeping with the consensus of opinion. Politically astute people never buck consensus. Crusaders for the truth will buck it (and afterwards pay the price)." Cyril Gordon, *Riddles in History*, New York, Crown, 1974, p. 156. Or, as Mark Twain wrote: "A man with a new idea is a Crank until the idea succeeds." Mark Twain, *Following the Equator*, 1897, vol. 1, ch. 32. Gordon goes on to add: "The question that matters is not 'Does the majority like it?' but 'Does the innovation follow from the primary facts?'" Gordon's formulation well represents Western analytic ideals, although practice is often different. For example, in scholarly circles the idea of "the majority of historians believe," or some variant, is often invoked as a formulation for what the individual historian should believe.

¹¹¹ *Const. apost., i. 6*, ed. Francis Xaver Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones apostolorum*, 2 vols., Paderborn, 1905, pp. 13–15.

¹¹² *The Izbornik of 1076*, trans. William R. Veder in *The Edificatory Prose of Kievan Rus'*, Harvard Library of Early Ukrainian Literature. English Translations, vol. 6, Cambridge MA, Ukrainian Research Institute of Harvard University, 1994, p. 3.

¹¹³ Cardinal Gasquet, at the end of the nineteenth century advanced the argument that the Church supported Bible reading in the vernacular. Cardinal Gasquet, *The Old English Bible and Other Essays*, London, 1897. But a huge body of scholarly literature has shown the hostility with which Church leaders met attempts at lay Bible reading. On this point, see David Sandler Berkowitz, *In the Remembrance of Creation: Evolution of Art and Scholarship in the Medieval and Renaissance Bible*, Waltham MA, Brandeis University Press, 1968, p. 46.

¹¹⁴ Khrisanf M. Loparev, ed., "Poslanie Mitropolita k smolenskomu presviteru Fome. Neizdanyi pamiatnik literaturny XII v.," *Pamiatniki drevnei russkoi pis'mennosti*, vol. 90, 1892, p. ???. English translation in *Sermons and Rhetoric of Kievan Rus'*, trans. Simon Franklin, Cambridge MA, Harvard Library of Early Ukrainian Liter-

Christian Neoplatonism was reinforced in, and modified for, the Western medieval tradition through the writings of Augustine (354–430), Dionysios the Areopagite (end of fifth century), and, among others, John Scotus Eriugena (ca. 810–ca. 877).¹¹⁵ It became the dominant trend within that tradition, but not to the exclusion of other approaches. These other approaches had to challenge the dominant mystical outlook within the confines of the Neoplatonist framework.

Not all scholars, however, would agree with this formulation. Charles Bigg, for example, argued that Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–213) was the one who gave birth to Neoplatonism.¹¹⁶ Later, however, in the same work he hedged on that conclusion: “Numenius may not unfairly be regarded as the founder of Neo-Platonism, with the reservation already pointed out in favour of Clement.”¹¹⁷ And W. T. Jones stated that “Neoplatonic metaphysics and Christian orthodoxy are in many respects deeply antagonistic. Indeed, they are so far apart that it is unthinkable, but for the mistaken belief that the Pseudo-Dionysios was the divinely inspired convert of St. Paul, that John [Scotus Eriugena] or anyone else could have supposed they could be combined.” Furthermore, Jones asserted that Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysios, and “other Christian writers [were only] tinged in varying degrees with Neoplatonism...”¹¹⁸ It hardly seems likely, though, that Christian acceptance of the Neoplatonic framework depended solely on a “mistaken belief” in a forgery.

Instead, Neoplatonism had a number of important concepts in common with early Christianity, enough so as to allow easy correspondence between them, which in turn enhanced the significance of these concepts for subsequent Christian theology. For example, they both agreed on the unimportance of this world relative to the next (“My kingdom is not of this world” [Jn. 18:36]); the concept of the Trinity conforms to Neoplatonism’s three hypostases; and the dragon of Revelations (12:7; 19:11–21), that is, the Satan of the New Testament, was associated with the material world—the devil tempts Jesus in the desert with things of this world (Mt. 4:1–11; Lk. 4:1–13). Jones’ view reflects the anti-Neoplatonic attitudes expressed in early Christian sources, and, in that sense, he may be confined by the attitudes of his sources. For example, in 426, Augustine wrote that he regretted his previous commendation of Neoplatonism: “The praise that I bestowed on Plato and the Platonists [Neoplatonists]

ature, English translations, vol. 5, 1991, p. 31.

¹¹⁵ Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 161.

¹¹⁶ Charles Bigg, *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1886, p. 64.

¹¹⁷ Bigg, *Christian Platonists*, p. 253.

¹¹⁸ W. T. Jones, *A History of Western Philosophy*, 3 vols., New York, Harcourt, Brace and World, 1952, vol. 1, pp. 421, 422. See also Claude Tresmontant, *La Métaphysique du Christianisme et la naissance de la philosophie chrétienne*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1961, who argued that the Fathers defended an already existing Christian philosophy against Hellenistic (read: Neoplatonic) thought.

displeases me, and not without reason, especially because the Christian doctrine must be defended against gross errors on their part.”¹¹⁹ Pagan Neoplatonists and early Christian writers carried on a polemic for at least two hundred years. One of the characteristics of the resulting synthesis is the absence of a supernatural Devil or Satan as the source of evil in Christian theological formulations, even while the concept of Satan continues to exist, in parallel, at the popular religious level.¹²⁰

In the Western Church, the approaches that differed from the Christian-Neoplatonic consensus view developed into organized patterns and eventually even a Nominalist school, which challenged the prevailing Realist (i.e., idealist) view.¹²¹ In the Eastern Church, the views of Pseudo-Dionysios, were influenced, as W. Norris Clark has suggested, by the Hindu concept of the *shakti*, or multiple divine energies, and found further elaboration in the theology of Gregory Palamas.¹²² Furthermore, this concept along with Buddhist concepts of proper breathing and seeing the divine light no doubt also had an impact on the elaboration of hesychasm.

III

The question “Where was the Russian Abelard?” is not such a simple one to answer. It could very well be rephrased, “Where was the Byzantine Abelard?” or “Where was the Arabic Abelard?” or even “Why was there an Abelard at all?”

For an answer to this last question, we should look at Abelard’s own writings and the influences on him. In that way, we may get some clues why Abelard appears where he does and when he does. Abelard, besides having attended the lectures on logic and rhetoric of William of Champeaux (1070–1120) and the lectures on theology of Anselm of Laon (ca. 1050–1117), discusses his own view of universals within the context of his *Glosses on Porphyry*, a commentary on Boethius’ translation of and commentary on Porphyry’s *Isagoge*. In each of his four major works on logic, parts of which have been lost, Abelard discusses Porphyry’s work. Porphyry was a pagan Neoplatonist and had written an *Introduction to the Categories of Aristotle* (called by Medieval writers, the *Isagoge*), which became a standard manual on logic in the Medieval West. Edward W. Warren stated that the

¹¹⁹ Augustine, *Retractions*, i.14. See also Paul Shorey, *Platonism: Ancient and Modern*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1938, pp. 79–80 for a brief description of what Church fathers approved and disapproved in Plato.

¹²⁰ See Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1981.

¹²¹ On the Nominalists, see, inter alia, Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, New York, Random House, 1955, pp. 499–520.

¹²² W. Norris Clark, “The Problem of the Reality and Multiplicity of Divine Ideas in Christian Neoplatonism,” in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. Dominic J. O’Meara, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1982, p. 121.

influence of the *Isagoge* is attributable: “(1) to its opening page where Porphyry lists a few deeper issues concerning the kind of existence enjoyed by generic and specific terms, (2) to its translation by Marius Victorinus and by Boethius, and (3) to its publication as the initial treatise in subsequent Latin editions of Aristotelian logical works. The *Isagoge* became a standard preface to work in Aristotle’s logic.”¹²³ John of Salisbury (ca. 1115–1180), in his *Metalogicon*, describes how Porphyry was used in the twelfth century: “One who withdraws what he never deposited, and harvests what he never sowed, is far too severe and harsh a master, as also is one who forces (poor) Porphyry to cough up the opinions of all philosophers, and will not rest content until the latter’s short treatise teaches everything that has ever been written.”¹²⁴ The hyperbole notwithstanding, it is well documented that the *Isagoge* was a work that heavily influenced Western thought as the result of its being the equivalent of an introductory textbook to Aristotle’s logic.¹²⁵ Concerning the “deeper issues” that Porphyry raises at the beginning of his work, it is ironic that he raises them only to say what he will not discuss:

I shall avoid the deeper issues and in a few words try to explain the simpler notions. For example, I shall put aside the investigation of certain profound questions concerning genera and species, since such an undertaking requires more detailed examination: (1) whether genera or species exist on their own or reside merely in thought; (2) whether, if they exist, they are corporeal or incorporeal; and (3) whether they exist separate from sense objects or only in dependence on them.¹²⁶

Yet, by articulating in such a way what he was not going to discuss, Porphyry at least raised the possibility that Aristotelian categories of genera and species are the same as Platonic transcendent forms.¹²⁷ According to Artz, not only does this passage focus on the crux of the differences between Platonism and Aristotelianism, but also on the crux of the differences between medieval Realism and Nominalism. Furthermore, Artz asserted that “[t]hese lines of Porphyry play, from Erigena on, as

¹²³ Edward W. Warren, “Introduction,” in *Porphyry the Phoenician, Isagoge*, Toronto, The Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1975, p. 12.

¹²⁴ *The Metalogicon of John of Salisbury: A Twelfth-Century Defense of the Verbal and Logical Arts of the Trivium*, trans. David D. McGarry, Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1971, p. 148 (bk. 3, ch. 1).

¹²⁵ *Metalogicon of John of Salisbury*, pp. 110–111 (bk. 2, ch. 16). See also I. M. Bocheński, *A History of Formal Logic*, trans. and ed. Ivo Thomas, South Bend, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 1961, p. 134; William Kneale and Martha Kneale, *The Development of Logic*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962, p. 198; A. C. Lloyd, “The Later Neoplatonists,” in *Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, p. 281; Walzer, “Porphyry and the Arabic Tradition,” p. 278.

¹²⁶ *PL*, vol. 44, col. 82; for an English translation, see *Porphyry the Phoenician, Isagoge*, pp. 27–28.

¹²⁷ Knowles, *Evolution of Medieval Thought*, p. 110.

important a role in the history of thought as any passage of equal length in all literature outside the Bible.”¹²⁸ Even if one does not fully agree with Artz’s characterization of the importance of this passage for Western intellectual history, one nonetheless must agree that it did play a prominent role in the thinking of Abelard. As the historian Brian Stock has pointed out, Abelard’s answer was an ambivalent one, or rather he came down decisively on both sides of the issue: “He [Abelard] attempted to answer three questions from Porphyry’s *Isagoge*: Do universals exist? Are they corporeal or incorporeal? And are they part of the sensible world or not? His answer in each case was both yes and no.”¹²⁹ Such an answer bears resemblance to John Italos’ cosmological views on the status of the world: “Thus, the universe is out of nothingness and also has being; thus, it both exists and does not exist, it is and will not be, and is not and will be.”¹³⁰ This splitting into two parts, this making of distinctions, is the core of dialectical thinking (*dia* = between + *legein* = to choose).

In the Western Church, the tentative solution to Porphyry’s questions was a “two-tiered,” dialectical one. The imperfect world belongs to Aristotle; the perfect world to Plato. The compromise reconciliation by Thomas Aquinas merely provided a formal theological articulation of this tentative solution.¹³¹ The two-tiered solution developed out of the Neoplatonic schools in Athens and Alexandria, where the study of the natural world belonged to Aristotle while theological study belonged to Plato.¹³² Those who studied the natural world were allowed to use dialectic, while those who studied theology were to subsume its use to a higher epistemological method, i.e., revelation. The irony here is that Plato placed dialectic as the capstone of education, the means by which we are “able to ques-

¹²⁸ Artz, *The Mind of the Middle Ages*, p. 255. Cook and Herzman make a similar claim for Anselm’s passage that contains the ontological proof. William R. Cook and Ronald B. Herzman, *The Medieval World View: An Introduction*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. 266–267: “The text of Anselm’s argument has been commented upon more than any other philosophical text of comparable size from the Middle Ages.” Admittedly, Anselm’s proof is longer than Porphyry’s passage.

¹²⁹ Brian Stock, “Science, Technology, and Economic Progress in the Early Middle Ages,” in *Science in the Middle Ages*, ed. David C. Lindberg, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 46.

¹³⁰ John Italos, *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, ed. Perikles-Ierre Joannou, *Studia patristica et byzantina*, 4, Ettal, 1956, p. 123. We have no information about John Italos’ education before his coming to Constantinople. Speculation about his name has led some scholars to suggest that he was born and raised in Sicily. If so, he may have come in contact there with the West’s trivium and, in particular, with Porphyry’s *Isagoge*, which had been composed in Sicily some 800 years earlier.

¹³¹ Friedrich Heer’s phrase is “two-tiered theological structure” in his *The Medieval World: Europe 1100 to 1350*, trans. Janet Sondheimer, Cleveland, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962, p. 222.

¹³² On this point, see Warren, “Introduction,” p. 10.

tion and answer most knowledgeably.”¹³³ Another irony is the identification of Plato’s views with rhetoric. Plato, a consummate rhetorician himself, declared rhetoric to be one of the “forms of flattery,” which he opposed as a “counterpart” (ἀντίστροφος) to the “true arts”—legislation, justice, gymnastics, and medicine.¹³⁴ Plato opposed the rhetoricians, that is, those who believed only in rhetoric, namely the Sophists, and tried to defend Socrates from the charge of Sophistry.

Rhetoric grounded in Patristic literature has been the main instrument in the Eastern Church to defend its synthesis of Neoplatonism with Christianity. A combination of rhetoric and dialectic was being used in the Western Church to defend its synthesis even before the introduction of Aristotelianism. The difference in “weapons” of defense may have resulted from the stronger influence of Porphyry’s unanswered questions on the Western Church. Thus, while the mystical conception of the One was primary in Plotinos’ cosmology, Porphyry and his commentators left the door open for the use of analytical reasoning, and, in doing so, provided an opening for Abelard’s questioning of, and later for those who have been called Nominalists to attack, the prevailing Neoplatonic mysticism of the Realists. In other words, the ground was already well prepared for the Western Church’s acceptance of Aristotle in the thirteenth century. Nonetheless, this acceptance was conditional, for it depended upon the stipulation that Aristotelian thought not be applied to theological matters, or as Warren described it: “The notion that Plato and Aristotle were in harmony was partially purchased at this time by assigning to each different spheres of interest.”¹³⁵ This notion emerged, however, only after the Council of Sens in 1210 attempted to ban Aristotle’s scientific (i.e., natural philosophy) writings.¹³⁶ In 1215, Robert, a papal legate, in describing the Rules of the University of Paris, prohibited lecturing “on the books of Aristotle on metaphysics and natural philosophy or on the summaries of them.” Yet, significantly, he allowed lecturing “on the books of Aristotle on dialectic old and new . . . in the ordinary but not in the cursory (*ad cursum*) manner,” that is, by full professors only.¹³⁷ In 1231, however, Pope Gregory IX decreed that expurgated versions of Aristotle’s works on meta-

¹³³ Plato, *The Republic* 533c–534e. Cf. Robert Pirsig, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values*, New York, Bantam, 1974, p. 330.

¹³⁴ Plato, *Gorgias*, 464–468.

¹³⁵ Warren, “Introduction,” p. 10.

¹³⁶ *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, no. 11, vol. 1, p. 70.

¹³⁷ *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, no. 20, vol. 1, pp. 78–79. On the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary or cursory lectures, see Lynn Thorndike’s comment in *University Records and Life in the Middle Ages*, ed. Lynn Thorndike, New York, Columbia University Press, 1944, p. 28, fn. 1.

physics and natural philosophy could be used in the schools.¹³⁸ Thus, the very works of Aristotle that the Western Church found so threatening (those on metaphysics and natural philosophy) were a normal part of Byzantine education, while the works of Aristotle on dialectic, which were a normal part of the curriculum in the West, were considered threatening within Byzantine education.

On the upper tier were Neoplatonic doctrines and dogmas of the Church (for example, the doctrine of the Trinity). Matters on this level were fundamentally mystical and mysterious, beyond argument or disputation, unable to be comprehended by the human mind (διόνοια), but only by the intellect (νοῦς). In 1228, Pope Gregory IX reasserted the hegemony of the upper tier when he told the Faculty of Theology in Paris that “theology, dominant over all the other disciplines, exercises its authority over them as the spirit exercises it over the flesh.”¹³⁹ On the lower tier were the perceptions and conceptions of this world (for example, the question of motion, which was Aristotelian). Questions on this level were fit subjects for argument and comprehension by the human mind. Problems with this bifurcation of roles resulted when attempts were made by those who wanted to apply Aristotelian logic to Neoplatonic doctrines. Eriugena challenged the mystery of the upper tier with his belief that reason could figure it out, but his work was condemned. Eriugena’s magnum opus, *On the Division of Nature*, did not attract much attention until Amalric of Bène appealed to it for support when he was being accused of pantheism. Pope Honorius III then in 1225 declared the work heretical. It is likely that, had Eriugena’s work remained unrecognized for a few more years, it would never have received papal approbation. On the other hand, the papacy may have viewed Eriugena as representative of the rival Celtic-Irish tradition within Western Christianity anyway.

In the early eleventh century, Berengarius (ca. 1000–1088), French theologian and head of the Cathedral School at Tours, applied dialectic to theology and, as a result, denied transubstantiation and, in a reply to Lanfranc of Bec, rejected authority. The then prevailing view of transubstantiation derived from the idea of Paschasius Radbertus, abbot of Corbie in the ninth century, that after consecration in the Mass the bread became the real body and the wine became the real blood of Christ. Berengarius, in his *De corpore et sanguine Domini*, favored the view, espoused by Ratramnus, a

¹³⁸ *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, no. 79, vol. 1, pp. 136–139 (April 13, 1231) and no. 87, vol. 1, pp. 143–144 (April 23, 1231).

¹³⁹ Quoted in Etienne Gilson, *La philosophie au moyen age des origines patristiques à la fin du XIV^e siècle*, 2 vols., Paris, Payot, 1952, vol. 2, pp. 395–396.

monk at Corbie, that the bread and wine became the body and blood of Christ only symbolically.¹⁴⁰ In doing so, Berengarius claimed that it was the attribute of reason that meant man was created in God's image. Therefore, since dialectic is reason, one should have "recourse to dialectic in all things."¹⁴¹ A series of Church councils from 1049 to 1079 condemned Berengarius' views on the Eucharist and compelled him to recant. Toward the end of the eleventh century, Anselm of Canterbury suggested that Roscellinus of Compiègne (ca. 1045 or 1050–1120) was, in effect, challenging the very Neoplatonic basis of the upper tier by denying universals altogether, that they are "no more than verbal expressions (*flatum vocis*)."¹⁴² It is difficult to know exactly what Roscellinus' views were, since the only work we have that is generally attributed to him is a letter to Abelard on the Trinity.¹⁴³ But it seems unlikely Roscellinus denied universals as such. The Council of Soissons in 1092 only questioned his views but did not condemn them. If he had been denying the existence of universals, then that would certainly have ensured his condemnation. Instead, Roscellinus may have been merely raising an epistemological question of how we know what we call universals are really universals and not merely verbal expressions.¹⁴⁴

Some scholars have proposed that Abelard, rather than Roscellinus, be considered the founder of Nominalism.¹⁴⁵ Other scholars have suggested that Abelard attempted to find a middle way (sometimes called Conceptualist) between the prevailing Neoplatonic consensus views of the Realists and the challenge to them of the Nominalists. Yet, Nominalism as a school of thought was formed only after the time of Abelard, so it is unlikely he was trying to find a way to reconcile Realism with that

¹⁴⁰ Jean de Montclos, *Lanfranc et Bérenger. La controverse Eucharistique du XI^e siècle*, Leuven, Spicilegium sacrum lovaniense, 1971, pp. 49–50.

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Haskins, *Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, p. 27. Cf. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages*, pp. 198–200; Gordon Leff, *Medieval Thought: St. Augustine to Ockham*, Baltimore, Penguin, 1958, p. 95.

¹⁴² Anselm, *De fide Trinitatis*, c. 2 in *PL*, vol. 158, col. 265. See also John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, p. 112. Although pointing out that Anselm cites no work of Roscellinus where he expressed such a view, Gilson accepts Anselm's characterization of Roscellinus' views as "probable." Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy*, p. 625, n. 89.

¹⁴³ *PL*, vol. 178, cols. 357–372.

¹⁴⁴ Intriguingly, Hauréau attributed a text on universals to Roscellinus. Barthelemy Hauréau, *Notices et extraits quelques manuscrits latines de la Bibliothèque National*, 6 vols., Paris, 1892, vol. 5, pp. 325–333. De Wulf dismisses this attribution as "only a conjecture" apparently because in the work the author acknowledges that universals do exist. Maurice de Wulf, *History of Mediaeval Philosophy*, New York, Dover, 1952, vol. 1, p. 148, fn. 6. We can, in turn set aside de Wulf's dismissal because it seems based on acceptance of the questionable accusations of Roscellinus' opponents, Anselm and John of Salisbury, rather than on Roscellinus' own words.

¹⁴⁵ See, e.g., Calvin G. Normore, "The Tradition of Mediaeval Nominalism," in *Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. John F. Wippel, Washington DC, Catholic University of America Press, 1987 (= *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*, vol. 17), pp. 203–205.

which had not even been formed. Instead, the concern of the Realists was most likely that Abelard and Roscellinus were articulating ideas that undermined their (the Realists') position. The Nominalists later did exactly what the Realists of the eleventh century were concerned that Abelard and Roscellinus were doing. While any questioning of the consensus view was not tolerated by the Realists, it makes more sense for us, in describing the position of Roscellinus and Abelard on universals, to keep their views distinct from the Nominalists.

And, if we think of Nominalists as those who deny the existence of universals, then neither Roscellinus nor Abelard were Nominalists. Instead, both Roscellinus (insofar as we can determine his views) and Abelard were more likely suggesting that the study of this world through dialectic might allow one to understand universals. That is, they doubted the efficacy of intuitive, inborn universal concepts in the mind. It was exactly these intuitive, inborn concepts that the prevailing Neoplatonic Realists were saying are universals, divorced from the things of this world. According to them, sense perceptions can unlock the knowledge of universals already within us. Otherwise, sense perceptions can only lead us astray. Roscellinus and Abelard did not raise the question of the existence of universals as such. They were merely questioning how one can come to know them. Abelard's answer was through using dialectic as a diagnostic tool. Thomas Aquinas attempted to resolve the issue through compromise. He accepted that through faith we know when we have unlocked an internal understanding of universals, but that this understanding can also come through using dialectic as a diagnostic tool. Since universals are in God's mind before the particular (*universalia ante rem*), they can also exist in the human mind after the particular (*universalia post rem*). Aquinas thereby accepted both "intuition" and dialectic as ways to the truth, provided dialectic did not contradict faith. If dialectic did contradict faith, then for Aquinas it was being used incorrectly. To some of us on this side of the Scientific Revolution it looks suspiciously as though Aquinas was trying to use dialectic to reach preconceived notions. Yet, the wider diagnostic area that Aquinas allowed for dialectic opened the door for the true Nominalists and other practitioners of the "modern way" to challenge that attempted resolution of the issue by questioning the very existence of universals themselves.¹⁴⁶

It may have been from Roscellinus directly, or through William of Champeaux, that the significance of Porphyry's questions was first brought to the attention of Abelard. Thus, through Porphyry's articulation of the fundamental problem of trying to resolve Plato with Aristotle, and through the

¹⁴⁶ For a fuller discussion, see Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy*, pp. 489–520.

widespread distribution of his *Isagoge* in which this formulation appears, as well as through Boethius' commentaries, Porphyry's questions remained not only unresolved but became a focus of dispute within the Western Church.

In the Eastern Church, no organized view opposed to the Christian-Neoplatonic consensus was allowed to develop. In this sense, there was no need for anyone to attempt to adjudicate the differences. The questions of Porphyry played no significant role in the Eastern Church. His writings had aroused the ire of Constantine, and Theodosius II ordered all copies of his *Against the Christians* (ca. 270) burned in 448.¹⁴⁷ Pagan Neoplatonic philosophers and teachers were not tolerated in fifth-century Byzantium. Under the Emperor Zeno (477–491), pagan professors accused of propagating Neoplatonic doctrines had either to convert to Christianity or resign their positions. As early as 415, in Alexandria, the Neoplatonist philosopher Hypatia was kidnapped and carried off to a church where she was stripped, then beaten to death by Christian fanatics.¹⁴⁸ The Muslims took over the Neoplatonic Academy in Alexandria in the mid-seventh century. And the Neoplatonic Academy in Athens, which presumably could have continued the two-tiered structure in the Eastern Church (and thereby continue to raise Porphyry's questions), was closed by Justinian in 529. The continued existence of the Eastern Imperial apparatus meant that it was difficult for officially proscribed writings to survive undetected. After the disintegration of the Western Empire, the absence of such a centralized political authority allowed writings and ideas perceived as dissident not only to survive but to flourish. And even when a comparable secular authority reconstituted itself in Europe, that is the Carolingian Empire, we find the trivium propagated through Charlemagne's own "minister of education," Alcuin of York.

It would be incorrect, however, to think that the Eastern Church did not tolerate the writings of Porphyry, and that manuscript copies of his *Isagoge* survived only in the West,¹⁴⁹ or that Abelard arose to try to answer those questions in the Western Church while no one even knew of the questions in the Eastern Church. They knew of Porphyry's questions in areas served by the Eastern Church.

¹⁴⁷ Psellos refers to an order requiring all Porphyry's works to be burned. See Edward Kurtz and Francis Drexler, *Michaelis Pselli. Scripta minora*, 2 vols., Milan, Società editrice "Vite e pensiero," 1936–1941, vol. 1: *Orationes et dissertationes*, p. 267.

¹⁴⁸ Damascius, *Vita Isidori*, ed. Zintzen, fr. 104; Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* 7:13; John, Bishop of Nikiu, *Chronicle*, 84:101–102.

¹⁴⁹ Richard Walzer, "Furfurius," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 2, p. 948. The *Isagoge* is the only work of Porphyry's to survive both in Greek and in Arabic. Richard Walzer, "Porphyry and the Arabic Tradition," in *Porphyre*, vol. 12 of *Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique*, 1965, p. 278.

Jerome reports that the *Isagoge* was used for pedagogical purposes at Antioch already in the 370's.¹⁵⁰ In his fourth-century *Life of Antony*, Athanasius has Antony pitying certain Greeks who visited him and “attempted to construct syllogisms.” Antony told them that “demonstration through arguments is unnecessary, or perhaps even useless.”¹⁵¹ But these issues were resolved in a one-tiered hierarchical schema of apophatic theology based on negation.¹⁵² That is, the only way to speak of God, as the pagan Neoplatonists spoke of the One, was in negatives. Maximos the Confessor (580–662) wrote that “negative statements about divine matters are the only true ones.”¹⁵³ An individual can therefore communicate with God only through silence and through “knowing ignorance.” Both Gregory of Nazianzos and Dionysios the Areopagite had stated that “the very fact of knowing nothing is knowledge surpassing the mind.”¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, Maximos the Confessor wrote: “God becomes knowable by means of ignorance.”¹⁵⁵ Therefore, as he wrote elsewhere: “a perfect mind is one that, by true faith, in supreme ignorance knows the supremely unknowable one.”¹⁵⁶

The early theologians of the Eastern Church were well grounded in Aristotelian logic, in dialectic, and even in Porphyry's *Isagoge*. Leontius the Hermit (475–543/4), who has been called the founder of Byzantine Aristotelianism,¹⁵⁷ argued that applying Aristotelian categories of genera and

¹⁵⁰ Jerome, *Ep. L*.

¹⁵¹ Athanasius, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, trans. Robert C. Gregg, New York, Paulist Press, 1991, pp. 84, 87.

¹⁵² Émile Bréhier in his study of medieval philosophy, pointed out, perhaps with a sense of regret, that “in the Eastern countries... any intellectual activity seems to have been absorbed by the sciences of divinity...” Emile Bréhier, *Philosophie du Moyen Âge*, Paris, 1927, p. 3.

¹⁵³ Maximos, *Ambiguorum liber*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Graeco-Latina (PG)*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 161 vols., Paris, Migne, 1857–1866, vol. 91, col. 1241. See also Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Lund, 1965, pp. 436–442.

¹⁵⁴ See also *Ep. I*, in *PG*, vol. 3, col. 1065 where Dionysios talks about how it is only through “unknowing” (αγνώστια) that we may know God. Cf. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, London, James Clark, 1957, p. 25: “Proceeding by negations one ascends from the inferior degrees of being to the highest, by progressively setting aside all that can be known, in order to draw near to the Unknown in the darkness of absolute ignorance. . . .”

¹⁵⁵ Maximos, *De Divinis nominibus. Scholia*, in *PG*, vol. 4, col. 216.

¹⁵⁶ Maximos, *De Charitate*, in *PG*, vol. 90, col. 1048.

¹⁵⁷ Wilhelm Rugamer, *Leontius Von Byzanz. Ein Polemiker aus dem zeitalter Justinians*, Wurzburg, Andreas Gobel's Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1894, p. 72; David Beecher Evans, *Leontius of Byzantium: An Origenist Christology*, Washington DC, Dumbarton Oaks, Center for Byzantine Studies, 1970. See also Friedrich Loofs, *Leontius von Byzanz und die gleichnamigen Schriftsteller der griechischen Kirche*, Leipzig, J. C. Hinrichs, 1887, pp. [297–303]; Adolf von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, 3 vols. in 2, Freiburg i. B.: Akademische Verlagsbuchhandlung von J. C. B. Mohr, 1886–1890.

species to the world does not lead to truth but to an infinite regress from the truth.¹⁵⁸ In other words, we become clearer and clearer about less and less. John of Damascus (676–754) was also well aware of dialectic. The first section of his *Font of Knowledge* deals in general with dialectic, which he subsumed as “a servant of theology,” and specifically with Porphyry’s *Isagoge*. Like Leontius, John claimed no originality: “I say nothing of my own,” which indicates his acceptance of the conception that all of truth has already been revealed. This was a standard topos that Gregory of Nazianzos and Dionysios the Areopagite, among others further east, had also adopted.¹⁵⁹ Since John of Damascus says a lot that is his own, what he means is that what he is saying coincides with previously known truth. For John of Damascus, as for subsequent Eastern Christian writers, dialectic is not to be carried any further than is necessary for supporting faith, that is through the truth that has already been revealed, but not to be used for determining new, i.e., previously unknown, truth because such “truth” cannot, by definition, exist. In other words, dialectic was merely a descriptive not a diagnostic tool. This was also the view in the Western Church before Abelard.¹⁶⁰

Abelard used dialectic not only to describe the received truth but to diagnose new truths. Bernard of Clairvaux and those who held the prevailing consensus view perceived such activity as threatening the good and the beautiful. In a letter to Pope Innocent II, Bernard characterized Abelard as “an old teacher turned into a new theologian, who in his youth amused himself with the art of dialectic and now rages against the Holy Scriptures.”¹⁶¹ By characterizing him this way, Bernard clearly indicated that he saw the threat to old, superior theology from dialectic, which the new (read: inferior) theologian had dabbled in. Furthermore, Bernard criticized Abelard’s arrogance to think that through dialectic he could understand the mysteries of the faith:

¹⁵⁸ Leontius, *Libri tres contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos*, in *PG*, vol. 86, pt. 1, col. 1296.

¹⁵⁹ For example, Confucius: “I have transmitted what was taught to me without making up anything of my own.” *The Analects of Confucius*, 7:1–3, trans. Arthur Waley, New York, Vintage, 1989, p. 123.

¹⁶⁰ Umberto Eco places in the mouth of his character Jorge de Borges words that represent this prevailing view of the Western Church: “the work of our order and in particular the work of this monastery, a part—indeed, the substance—is study, and the preservation of knowledge. Preservation of, I say, not search for, because the property of knowledge, as a divine thing, is that it is complete and has been defined since the beginning, in the perfection of the World which expresses itself to itself. Preservation, I say, and not search, because it is a property of knowledge, as a human thing, that it has been defined and completed over the course of the centuries, from the preaching of the prophets to the interpretation of the fathers of the church. There is no progress, no revolution of ages, in the history of knowledge, but at most a continuous and sublime recapitulation.” Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, trans. William Weaver, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983, p. 399.

¹⁶¹ *Sancti Bernardi abbatis Clarae-Vallensis Opera Omnia*, ed. John Mabillon, 6 vols., 4th ed. Paris, 1839, vol. 1, pt. 1, cols. 1441–1442.

Of everything that is in heaven above and in the earth below there is nothing that he pretends not to know. He raises his eyes to Heaven, and investigates the greatness of God. Then returning to us, he brings back unspeakable words that it is not allowed for a man to say, while he is prepared to give back a reason for everything, even of those things that are above reason. He presumes against reason and against faith. For what is more against reason than by reason to endeavor to transcend reason?¹⁶²

Bernard complained that “Abelard is trying to destroy the virtue of the Christian faith, when he thinks himself able by unaided human reason to comprehend the whole that God is. . . . He is a man great in his own eyes [alone], a disputer of the faith, a man who busies himself about great and wonderful matters that are out of his reach, a prier into the Majesty of God. . . .”¹⁶³ Such criticisms are similar to the Archbishop of Canterbury Lanfranc’s complaints against Berengarius that he attempts to understand “those things that cannot be understood.”¹⁶⁴ For Bernard, “The faith of the righteous believes; it does not dispute.” And what Bernard believed was that one attained mystical union with God through “vigilance and prayers and much effort and showers of tears,” not through dialectic.¹⁶⁵ Abelard, on the other side, not only defends the use of dialectic but, in his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*, exalts its position as discerner of truth:

especially one must insist upon the study of that doctrine by which the greater truth is known. This is dialectic, whose function is to distinguish between every truth and falsity: as leader in all knowledge, it holds the primary and rule of all philosophy. The same also is shown to be needful to the Catholic Faith, which cannot without its aid resist the sophistries of schismatics.¹⁶⁶

Matthew Paris took the same position when he referred to “the rules of logic, which is the infallible guide to truth.”¹⁶⁷

Western Churchmen, like Anselm and Bernard, realized that dialectic could be used to reach conclusions that were destructive, and they wanted to prevent that. While we in the twentieth century may think of Abelard as a constructive and progressive thinker, we should remember that he was perceived as obnoxious and dangerous by the authorities of his time. H. O. Taylor declared that Abelard

¹⁶² *Sancti Bernardi Opera Omnia*, vol. 1, pt. 1, col. 1442.

¹⁶³ *Sancti Bernardi Opera Omnia*, vol. 1, pt. 1, col. 1465.

¹⁶⁴ *De corpore et sanguine Domini*, in *PL*, vol. 150, col. 427.

¹⁶⁵ *Sancti Bernardi Opera Omnia*, vol. 1, pt. 2, col. 2870.

¹⁶⁶ *Ouvrages inédits d’Abélard*, ed. Victor Cousin, Paris, 1836, p. 435.

¹⁶⁷ Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, vol. 5: *A.D. 1248 to A.D. 1259*, London, Longman, 1880, p. 211.

was imbued with a “fatal impulse to annoy” and “was certainly possessed with an inordinate impulsion to undo his rivals.” Thus, he “would have led others and himself a life of thorns” even in later centuries “when some of his methods and opinions had become accepted commonplace.”¹⁶⁸ While Abelard’s personality was certainly contributory to his success among his students, such cannot be considered significant for explaining why analytical thinking triumphed in the West. No doubt there were arrogant personality types with a propensity for annoyance in the Eastern Church as well, although John Italos was not one of them. Italos’ attempt to apply dialectic to theological matters occurred only after he had reached the top of his profession and when he was already advanced in years. For those authorities who were being annoyed by Abelard, the three attributes of the One—Truth, Goodness, and Beauty—could not be in opposition. Therefore, whatever “truths” Abelard and dialectic apprehended that were antithetical to Goodness and Beauty, as they understood them, had to be wrong and, therefore, not Truth. In the Eastern Church, John of Damascus, several centuries earlier, had realized this problem and had clearly formulated this very position denying the diagnostic value of dialectic. Since there was only a weak subcurrent of dialectic in the Eastern Church, there was no one to seriously challenge the consensus view and essentially nothing to “hold back.” John of Damascus may merely have dealt the death blow to a concept that had exhibited no vitality of its own in Eastern Church thought. The late ninth-century anonymous author of the *Life* of John Psichaites assures us that his subject had no use for dialectic, “premisses and syllogisms and logical arguments being like spiders’ webs, he assigned to the dung-heap.”¹⁶⁹ In the fourteenth century, Demetrios Kydones expressed surprise that the Western theologians “show great thirst for walking in those labyrinths of Aristotle and Plato, for which our people never showed interest.”¹⁷⁰ And those who had shown an interest, such as John Italos and his pupils, were successfully suppressed.

I have argued that the difference in mentalité between the Eastern and Western Churches can be attributed to a difference in interpretation of Neoplatonism. Here I will be as clear as I can about the way I see the different mentalités. The three aspects of Neoplatonism that seem to have had the most impact on Christianity were hypostases, hierarchy, and emanation. The theologians of the Eastern

¹⁶⁸ Taylor, *Medieval Mind*, vol. 2, pp. 372–373.

¹⁶⁹ P. Van den Van, ed., “La vie grecque de S. Jean le Psichaï, confesseur sous le règne de Léon l’Arménien (813–820),” *Le Muséon*, n.s., vol. 3, 1902, p. 109.

¹⁷⁰ Demetrius Cydones, “Apologie della propria fede,” in *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone*, ed. Giovanni Mercati (Studi e Testi, 56), Città del Vaticano, 1931, p. 366. For a general study of the “Apology,” see Frances Kianka, “The Apology of Demetrius Cydones: A Fourteenth-Century Autobiographical Source,” *Byzantine Studies*, vol. 7, 1980, pp. 57–71.

and Western Churches applied the concept of hypostases differently to the mystery of the Trinity, which contributed to the ultimate split between them. And the Western Church's concept of purgatory clearly violated the Eastern Church's concept of a single hierarchical continuum, as first formulated by Dionysios the Areopagite,¹⁷¹ and crystallized by John Climacus.

But it was the concept of emanation that was most significant for the differing intellectual interpretations. For the dialectical tradition of the Western Church, the interpretation goes this way: if this world is an emanation from God, then this world provides clues to the nature of God. These clues stimulate the motivation for further study of the material world in order to understand the Mind of God, but these clues have to be analyzed in the light of dialectic, that is, the analytical approach that has become so closely associated with Western cultural values, both religious and secular.

We see the culmination of this line of development in the historical philosophy of Hegel, who argued that history is the unfolding of the Absolute, and that if we understand history we understand the Absolute and become quasi-divine ourselves.¹⁷² Hegel testifies that the Neoplatonist Proclus was an influence on his thinking.¹⁷³ During the seventeenth century, the German mathematician Johannes Kepler believed that mathematical reasoning provided the means for understanding God and came to believe that "Geometry, coeternal with God and shining in the divine Mind, gave God the pattern... by which He laid out the World so that it might be Best and Most Beautiful, and finally most like the Creator."¹⁷⁴ Elsewhere, Kepler claims that "Geometry is one and eternal shining in the Mind of God. That share in it accorded to men is one of the reasons (*causae*) that Man is the image of God."¹⁷⁵ A parallel to this concept is the claim of the present-day physicist Steven Hawking that if we discover a complete theory of the universe, then we may be able to answer the question why the universe exists, which "would be the ultimate triumph of human reason—for then we would know the mind of God."¹⁷⁶ It could be argued that the concept of a Big Bang, before which the laws of physics as we

¹⁷¹ Paul Tillich asserted that Dionysios may have coined the word "hierarchy." Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought: From Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism*, ed. Carl E. Braaten, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1968, p. 91. Le Goff did not discuss this issue in his comprehensive study of purgatory. Jacques Le Goff, *La naissance du Purgatoire*, Paris, Editions Gallimard, 1981.

¹⁷² See Martin Malia's discussion of these aspects of Hegel's philosophy in his *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1961, pp. 228–233.

¹⁷³ Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 130.

¹⁷⁴ *Johannes Kepler Gesammelte Werke (KGW)*, eds. Walther von Dyck et al., 20 vols., Munich, C. H. Beck, 1937–, vol. 6, pp. 104–105 (from *Harmones Mundi*, Chap. 1).

¹⁷⁵ *KGW*, vol. 4, p. 308, ll. 9–10.

¹⁷⁶ Steven Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*, Toronto, Bantam, 1988, p. 175.

know them did not exist, is itself a Neoplatonic construct. More recently, Chet Raymo, a physics professor at Stonehill College, gave further expression to this formulation: “that is where I would start constructing a concept of God that is relevant to our time—with mathematics. . . . If we are mathematical creatures, it is because the world is in some deeply mysterious sense mathematical. Call it, if you will, the mind of God.”¹⁷⁷

The underlying assumption of these attempts to understand the Mind of God is theophany, that is, this world is the unfolding of the ideal and eternal forms of the Divine Intellect. Indeed, the trivium and quadrivium provide the basis for the two distinguishing principles of Western intellectual achievement: the art of reasoning and the science of numbers. The subjects of the trivium—grammar, rhetoric, dialectic—are concerned with articulating one’s argument in a convincing manner, while the subjects of the quadrivium are concerned with numbers: numbers in themselves (arithmetic); numbers taking form but immovable (geometry); numbers in motion (astronomy); and the relationship of numbers to each other (music).¹⁷⁸ When Boethius in the early sixth century wrote about the study of numbers in themselves (arithmetic), he was one of the first to provide the argument that Kepler and Hawking are merely modern practitioners of, that is: “everything that is formed from natural origins seems to be formed on a numerical basis. For this was the design foremost in the mind of the creator.”¹⁷⁹ While Kepler saw his cosmographical views as deriving from Plato and Proclus, his use of quantifiable units rather than abstractions to describe the Mind of God would seem to owe more to Euclid and Boethius.¹⁸⁰

Attempts to figure out the Mind of God, from the Eastern Church point of view, are hopeless and bound to fail. For theologians of the Eastern Church, the interpretation of their Neoplatonic heritage goes this way: If God is a mystery, and this world is an emanation from God, then this world is a mystery too. In the Eastern Church, they did not ask “Why” probably because, for them, any answer, any

¹⁷⁷ Chet Raymo, “True Nature of Math Remains, in Sum a Mystery,” *Boston Globe*, December 28, 1992, p. 26. See also Steven Weinberg, *Dreams of a Final Theory: The Search for the Fundamental Laws of Nature*, New York, Pantheon, 1992, p. 242. Recent books that invoke this concept include: James Trefil, *Reading the Mind of God: In Search of the Principle of Universality*, New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1989; Edward Craig, *The Mind of God and the Works of Man*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987; Paul Davis, *The Mind of God: The Scientific Basis for a Rational World*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1991; and Robert Matthews, *Unravelling the Mind of God: Mysteries at the Frontiers of Science*, London, Virgin, 1992.

¹⁷⁸ Hans Martin Klinkenberg, “Der Verfall des Quadriviums in frühen Mittelalter,” in *Artes Liberales von der antiken Bildung zur Wissenschaft des Mittelalters*, ed. Josef Koch, Leiden and Cologne, 1959, p. 2.

¹⁷⁹ Boethius, *De Arithmetica*, bk. 1, ch. 2, in *PL*, vol. 63, col. 1083.

¹⁸⁰ For a discussion of Kepler’s relationship to Plato, Euclid, and Proclus, see J. V. Field, *Kepler’s Geometrical Cosmology*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988.

explanation, was merely a begging of the question. Why divide into categories what is whole and seamless? Why try to articulate what is ineffable? The mystery of it all is what is beautiful and good and true. That is what is “brute fact.” That is just the way it is. Even the question “Where was the Russian Abelard?” would have been alien to their way of thinking. There just wasn’t one and that’s all there is to it.

Although apophatic theology was also dominant in the Western Church before the thirteenth century, there was another tradition, a kataphatic one, which asserted that this world and some parts of the Divine Soul and the Mind of God were knowable through our minds, through rational argument, and through disputation. Thus, Aquinas’ reconciliation of apophatic and kataphatic theologies was this: faith and reason (when properly applied) could never be truly in opposition. For the Eastern Church, faith was always superior to reason. Eastern Church thinkers did not see any worth in disputation, since God could not be known through rational argument, only through the intuitional communion of our souls with the Divine Soul, and then only in a negational sense—what God was not.

Robert Pirsig, in his analysis of the relationship of Plato’s dialectic to Sophist rhetoric draws a distinction between the truth (the dialectic) and the good (rhetoric). While we in the West tend to associate dialectic with what is logical and reasonable, and rhetoric with what is false, artificial, and showy, Pirsig perceived their value in reverse. Here is how he described the working of the mind of his character Phaedrus when asked a question by a philosophy professor:

His mind races on and on, through the permutations of the dialectic, on and on, hitting things, finding new branches and sub-branches, exploding with anger at each new discovery of the viciousness and meanness and lowness of this “art” called dialectic. . . . Phaedrus’ mind races on and on and then on further, seeing now at last a kind of evil thing, an evil deeply entrenched in himself, which *pretends* to try to understand love and beauty and truth and wisdom but whose real purpose is never to understand them, whose real purpose is always to usurp them and enthrone itself. Dialectic—the usurper. That is what he sees. The parvenu, muscling in on all that is Good and seeking to contain and control it. Evil.¹⁸¹

Bernard of Clairvaux and Eastern Church theologians would tend to agree with Pirsig’s characterization of dialectic.

We can apply this distinction between dialectic and rhetoric, with appropriate reservations, to the differences in which Neoplatonic Christianity developed in the Western and Eastern Churches. In

¹⁸¹ Pirsig, *Zen*, p. 334.

Western Christendom, after the thirteenth century, the search for greater, previously unknown, truths (through dialectic) was seen as good and won out over lesser, known truths, which were only there to be preserved. In Eastern Christendom, the preservation of the old (and only) truths was seen as good and won out over the search for new (and thereby false) truths. It is more exciting, however, for the young to search for the new and to be innovative than it is to have to be restricted to the old. Pedagogically, this difference resulted in a lively reawakening of learning in the Western cathedral schools and universities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. When Abelard taught, he excited thousands of students because his approach resonated with them. He had a ready audience that had been prepped in dialectic for some time preceding. Friedrich Heer has written about this audience in evocative terms:

It was, indeed, during the twelfth century that youth made its first real appearance on the European stage, full of physical and mental curiosity, hungry to taste reality. Especially remarkable is the preponderance of youthful clerks, ready to work and learn, to explore the cosmos of mind and spirit; a *Sturm und Drang* of young men—very soon to be joined by young women—always eager to know more, to find out more, experience more, to love and even suffer more. For the first time large numbers of these “young people” (who might be any age, 12, 17 or even 40) were aroused to the depths of their being, depths as yet unclaimed by conversion to Christianity or by folk culture. . . .¹⁸²

The mention of clerks is significant. This is right at the point in European history when a secular bureaucracy was beginning to develop. There was a need for literate clerks in the households of kings and nobility. The intellectual descendents of these clerks were the civil servants who along with lawyers made up the National Assembly, proposed the French Revolution in 1789, and enthroned Reason as the new divinity. In addition, some twenty cardinals and fifty bishops could claim to have been students of Abelard.¹⁸³ It is estimated that, by the year 1200, there were 5000 students in Paris alone. The Medieval Peripatetics had instigated an educational revolution by showing their students how to use the knife of dialectic to slice and dice the ideas, arguments, and even the very words of their opponents. Abelard and his co-dialecticians transformed dialectic from an subject to be studied into a method that could be applied to the study of any subject. It must have been exhilarating for these students to be given a whole new way of thinking.

¹⁸² Heer, *The Medieval World*, p. 81.

¹⁸³ Lehmann, *The European Heritage*, p. 61. Lehmann pointed out that among his students were the future Pope Innocent III and Maurice de Sully, who masterminded Notre Dame.

Haskins raised the question “why, with the translation of Boethius in existence, the *New Logic* was neglected until the twelfth century, and why it was so suddenly revived.” Haskins begged the question by suggesting as an answer that “in an age which had use for only elementary logic... the advanced treatises fell into neglect...” and that with “the revival of dialectic in the twelfth century men begin to seek additions to the store of logical writings and they discover the Boethian text.”¹⁸⁴ It seems to me that it is more than merely one age having use for only elementary logic while another age had use for more advanced logic. Instead, it is what one uses logic for—as an exercise of the mind or as an approach to the world. People like Berengarius, Roscellinus, and Abelard probably saw dialectic as a means of rousing popular support against their opponents in the Church. Henry Adams attributed Abelard’s success among the young to his use of a particular type of logic, the *reductio ad absurdum*.¹⁸⁵ Those who resort to *reductio ad absurdum* often seem to relish doing so. In contrast, Theodore Prodromos describes in some detail the disrespect students in Byzantine universities had for learning.¹⁸⁶ Students need to be engaged with their subject matter. They need to interact with it. While repetition may be the mother of learning, continued repetition smothers it.

It may not be too much of a generalization to characterize Eastern Church thought as synthetic, as bringing everything together into one whole, one entirety, one eternity. This is what Jean Gimpel was referring to when he wrote about the fact that Orthodox priests did not allow mechanical clocks to be installed in churches until the twentieth century. For the clerics of the Eastern Church a clock “would have been blasphemy; for the mathematical division of time... had no relationship with the eternity of time.”¹⁸⁷ The political structure reflected that view—one basileus over the whole world, the kingdom of Heaven on earth.¹⁸⁸ This approach characterized the individual as inseparably part of the whole, and the whole encompassed all the individual parts. Western Church thought began as basically synthetic, but due to various divisions—political, religious, intellectual—an analytic trend developed. Ideas and concepts were broken down (analyzed), categorized, then re-combined in different ways. Two swords theory was one manifestation of a this-is-this-and-that-is-that approach. Now we in the West are trying to recapture the synthetic wholeness of things, the beauty of it all, for

¹⁸⁴ Haskins, *Mediaeval Science*, p. 233.

¹⁸⁵ Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*, London, Constable, 1950, p. 288.

¹⁸⁶ Ptochoprodromos, *Poeti bizantini*, ed. R. Cantarella, Rome, 1948.

¹⁸⁷ Jean Gimpel, *The Medieval Machine: The Industrial Revolution of the Middle Ages*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976, p. 169.

¹⁸⁸ A. C. Lloyd raises this point of a philosophy’s “mirroring of political structure” in regard to the development of Neoplatonism within the Roman Empire in the third century. Lloyd, “The Later Neoplatonists,” p. 274.

example, in quantum physics in the search for the Grand Unified Theory (GUT) and in the trend toward a world government, but thus far we have too many categories, too many distinctions, too many “ugly facts” slicing and dicing our beautiful GUTs.

For Eastern Church theologians, it is senseless to argue about the mystery of things for there was nothing to argue about. When a reporter asked Louis Armstrong to describe what jazz is, he replied, “Man, if you gotta ask you’ll never know.” Orthodox Christianity is like jazz in this sense; either you get it or you don’t.

IV

I will provide here only one example of the difficulty Western-trained scholars have in understanding the Eastern Church mentalité. Steven Runciman describes the exchange of correspondence between the Lutherans and the Patriarch of Constantinople Jeremiah II in the sixteenth century this way:

in the middle of the century the Lutherans, under the philhellene Melancton, began to make overtures to the Greek Church, as an ally against Rome. This was a little embarrassing to the Greeks. When the Confession of Augsburg, translated into Greek for his benefit, was sent to the patriarch, he returned no answer. A second copy was then sent, and eventually the Patriarch Jeremias II was obliged to reply, in a polite but firm statement in which he pointed out where, in Orthodox opinion, the Augsburg Confession was heretical, in particular over its attitude to monastic vows and to icons, to the Sacraments and to justification by faith and to free will, and to the procession of the Holy Ghost (over which the Lutherans followed the Latin error). The Lutherans attempted to argue the points; whereupon Jeremias repeated his objections and wrote back at last asking them not to send more arguments, but only to write letters in the cause of friendship.¹⁸⁹

Runciman attributed the Patriarch’s reluctance to engage in disputation to political embarrassment, but it is difficult to see what was embarrassing to the Eastern Church to be involved in political discussions with the Protestants against their common enemy, the Latin Church. After all, Jeremiah ends his third reply with these words: “write no longer concerning dogmas; but if you do [write], write only for friendship’s sake.”¹⁹⁰ It would seem clear that Jeremiah is not embarrassed by potential

¹⁸⁹ Steven Runciman, “The Greek Church Under the Ottoman Turks,” *Studies in Church History*, vol. 2, 1957, p. 47.

¹⁹⁰ “The Third Answer of Patriarch Jeremiah [II] of Constantinople to Tübingen in the year 1581,” in George Mastrantonis, *Augsburg and Constantinople: The Correspondence Between the Tübingen Theologians and Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople on the Augsburg Confession*, Brookline, MA, 1982, p. 306.

friendly relations with the Lutherans. Nor does he seem ignorant and unable to engage in disputation. One need only look at his replies to see his (or his amanuensis') command of the literature. Instead, if one understands the Patriarch as acting within the Eastern Church Neoplatonic tradition, then one can more easily understand his reluctance to engage in idle disputation. Jeremiah makes that clear in the same "Epilogue" where he writes:

Therefore, we request that from henceforth you do not cause us more grief, nor write to us on the same subject if you should wish to treat these luminaries and theologians of the Church in a different manner. You honor and exalt them in words, but you reject them in deeds. For you try to prove our weapons which are their holy and divine discourse as unsuitable. And it is with these documents that we should have to write and contradict you. Thus, as for you, please release us from these cares.¹⁹¹

If we take his words at face value, then Jeremiah is pained by the contentiousness of the Lutherans over theological matters. "Why do they quibble with the Truth?" Jeremiah must have asked himself. This was also basically the position of the Moscow Church Council of 1554, which refused to dispute with the German residents of Novyi Gorodok because Orthodoxy was obviously superior.¹⁹² Vasilii, the bishop of Novgorod, gave a similar response to Magnus, the King of Sweden, when in 1347 or 1348 the king wanted to hold a council for a debate between Catholic and Orthodox theologians:

If you want to find out whose faith is better, just, and right, send your people to Constantinople to the Patriarch, because we received the true faith from the Greeks, and we adhere to the laws of the Greek Church, which we received from them; and we do not want to argue with you about the faith... we do not become involved in disputes, arguments, or accusations about the faith and will have no argument with you.¹⁹³

When the Lutheran theologians persist in their efforts to dispute with Jeremiah a fourth time, he politely tells them that he has read their rejoinder, that he has not had time to write his reply, and that he will do so sometime soon. He does not seem, however, to have found the time for he does not

¹⁹¹ "The Third Answer," p. 306.

¹⁹² *Akty, sobrannye v bibliotekakh i arkhivakh Rossiiskoi imperii Arkheograficheskoi ekspeditsiei imperatorskoi Akademii nauk*, 4 vols, St. Petersburg, 1836, vol. 1, pp. 251–252.

¹⁹³ Nikonian Chronicle, vol. 3, p. 159. See also the account of Vasilii's words in the *Chronicle of Novgorod*: "If thou wishest to know whose is the better faith, ours or yours, send to Tsargrad to the Patriarch, for we received the Orthodox faith from the Greeks: but with thee we will not dispute about the faith" (*Chronicle of Novgorod*, p. 141).

write them again, not because he and Eastern Church theologians could not engage in disputation, but because they would not. It was pointless from their point of view to split theological hairs. We can see a parallel to Jeremiah's refusal to engage in dialectic with the German theologians in Christ's refusal to respond verbally to the Grand Inquisitor in Dostoevskii's *Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*. The Grand Inquisitor represents reason and Christ represents faith, or the Western Church and Eastern Church, respectively. For Jeremiah, as for the Eastern Church in general, disputation, since it was based on dialectic, could lead only to error. Lanfranc had made a similar criticism of Berengarius: "you desert the sacred authorities and take refuge in dialectic."¹⁹⁴

Likewise, the seventeenth-century Ukrainian Orthodox polemicist Ivan Vyshens'kyj called for the total rejection of innovations, including such "pagan tricks... as grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, and other vainglorious guiles."¹⁹⁵ Subsequently, he refers to "grammatical, dialectical, rhetorical, and philosophical tricks and artifices."¹⁹⁶ He was not so much condemning the guiles and tricks that happened to be grammatical, rhetorical, and dialectical in nature as much as the use of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic themselves to advance one's views. For Vyshens'kyj, even the trivium was an innovation that distracted one from the true path. The bulk of the historiography has interpreted Vyshens'kyj's views in the context of an Eastern Orthodox spiritual reaction to the Jesuit-led Counter Reformation in Eastern Europe. As a result, according to this line of interpretation, Vyshens'kyj was "unaffected" by the rhetorical devices and thinking of the Counter Reformation.¹⁹⁷ Instead, I see Vyshens'kyj's views as being a continuation of the Eastern Church's apophatic tradition that began with Iamblichos and Proclus, continued through the writings of Leontius the Hermit, Maximos the Confessor, and John of Damascus, and includes Patriarch Jeremiah II. The encroachments of the Counter Reformation provoked Vyshens'kyj's response just as the enquiries of the Tübingen theologians provoked Jeremiah's, but their opposition to their respective provocateurs shows that both well understood the views they were opposing. In this respect, I can agree with Goldblatt's conclusion that Vyshens'kyj relied on the "formulations linked with the language policies of the post-Tridentine

¹⁹⁴ *De corpore et sanguine Domini*, in *PL*, vol. 150, col. 416.

¹⁹⁵ *Ivan Vyshens'kii. Sochineniia*, ed. I. P. Eremin, Moscow and Leningrad, Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1955, p. 23.

¹⁹⁶ *Ivan Vyshens'kii. Sochineniia*, p. 123.

¹⁹⁷ For a brief survey of the historiographical views, see Harvey Goldblatt, "On the Language Beliefs of Ivan Vyshens'kyj and the Counter-Reformation," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, vol. 15, 1991, pp. 7–13.

Catholic Church” in opposing those same policies.¹⁹⁸

If all of truth has already been revealed in the Bible, the Seven Ecumenical Councils, and the writings of the Church fathers, and we can know it as well through our souls by using these writings as a guide, then clearly anything new, any new ideas that are not already contained therein must, by definition, be wrong and not truthful. Those theologians and philosophers of the West who were imbued with kataphatic concepts in addition to the Bible, Decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, and writings of the Church Fathers also used their perceptions of this world as their sources, and their rationality as guide. The Churchmen of the Eastern Church, in contrast, used only the Bible, the Decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, and the writings of the Church Fathers, in particular those heavily influenced by Neoplatonism as their sources, and the intuition of their souls as guide. In Patriarch Jeremiah’s correspondence with the Lutherans, for example, it is precisely these Church Fathers he cites most: Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzos, John Chrysostom, and Dionysios the Areopagite.

In the Western Church, Abelard could juxtapose 158 contradictory statements in the writings of the Church Fathers, and create a sensation. To do so in the Eastern Church would have been senseless—so-called contradictions in the Divine Writings are only apparent, not real. If a Church Father appears to contradict himself or another Church Father, this is only because the statements are taken out of context. In other words, one’s own method of understanding is faulty, not the statements of the Church fathers. Besides, for the Eastern Church, as for Eastern thought in general, reality was inherently paradoxical, a blending of opposites (e.g., in Chinese thought, Yin and Yang). Paradoxical statements, therefore, were most likely closer to reality.¹⁹⁹ In the Western Church, Abelard could argue that “a distinction must be drawn between the work of later authors and the supreme canonical authority of the Old and New Testaments,” for while one must not question the Scriptures, “if anything seems contrary to truth in the works of later authors . . . the reader or auditor is free to judge, so that he may approve what is pleasing and disapprove what gives offense, unless it is defended by certain reason [*certa ratione*] or by canonical authority. . . .”²⁰⁰ For the Eastern Church, the Bible, the Decisions of the Ecumenical Councils, and the writings of the Church fathers are the only reliable sources of knowledge, because they are connected with and, along with our own souls, the only

¹⁹⁸ Goldblatt, “On the Language Beliefs of Ivan Vyšens’kyj,” pp. 33–34.

¹⁹⁹ My thanks to Holly Seeling for this observation.

²⁰⁰ Peter Abelard, *Sic et non: A Critical Edition*, eds. Blanche B. Boyer and Richard McKeon, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1976–77, p. 101.

means of entry to the Divine Soul. They are not to be questioned or distinctions drawn between them. The question whether the Eastern Church ranked its authorities was ably answered by Pelikan in his investigation of this question in the writings of Maximos the Confessor:

Such, then, was the structure of authority in the theology of Maximus: the teaching “of a council or of a father or of Scripture,” but in fact of all three in a dynamic interrelation by which no one of the three could be isolated as the sole authority. Scripture was supreme, but only if it was interpreted in a spiritual and orthodox way. The fathers were normative, but only if they were harmonized with one another and related to the Scripture from which they draw. The Councils were decisive, but only as voices of the one apostolic and prophetic and patristic doctrine.²⁰¹

The building blocks, the elements of knowledge, are quotations from, and the works of, the Divine Writings. Jeremiah, for example, rebukes the Lutheran theologians for questioning the reliability of these sources, which were the flowers from which the believer, like a bee, gathered sweet nectar. Indeed, one of the most widespread collections of Patristic sayings in Rus’ was a Byzantine compilation called *Melissa* (the *Bee*). Or we could think of any written work or compilation as a bouquet in which the sayings were like flowers that could be arranged in different ways. For example, the *tropar* to Nil Sorskii has the following: “Rejecting a worldly life and fleeing from the snares of the world, O confessor and God-bearing, Father Nil, you were most diligent in gathering heavenly flowers from the writings of the Fathers.”²⁰² Practitioners of Neoplatonic epistemology were allowed to rearrange the “flowers” so as to, as we would say, defamiliarize them in order to understand them anew. This, I submit, is why many works from early Rus’ appear to be merely mosaics of quotations from the Bible and Church fathers, and why the “kaleidoscopic randomization” of the order in which the quotations in a written composition, or the order of compositions in a codex, becomes so important.²⁰³ If one hears the same things in the same order all the time, diminishing returns sets in. One becomes

²⁰¹ Jaroslav Pelikan, “‘Council or Father or Scripture’: The Concept of Authority in the Theology of Maximus Confessor,” *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, vol. 195, 1973, p. 287.

²⁰² Iustin Polianskii, *Prepodobnyi Nil Sorskii i ego Ustav o zhitel'stve skitskom*, Berlin, 1939, p. 114.

²⁰³ The term “kaleidoscopic randomization” to describe the constant rearrangement of works from codex to codex was coined by Veder. William R. Veder, “Literature as Kaleidoscope: The Structure of Slavic *Chetii Sborniki*,” in *Semantic Analysis of Literary Texts: To Honour Jan van der Eng on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Eric de Haard, Thomas Langerak, and Willem G. Weststeinjet, Amsterdam, Elsevier, 1990, pp. 599–613. Veder later substituted the term *chaotization* for *randomization* because the latter “still reflects a definite structural principle.” Veder, “Old Russia’s ‘Intellectual Silence’ Reconsidered,” p. 26, fn. 41. But it is *chaotization* that reflects a structure beyond our understanding, while randomization implies no such structure. Veder compares these works to pre-twelfth-century florilegia in the West.

numbed to their message or function as catalyst. By rearranging them, the reader or listener sees and hears them anew, in a different light, and they again can function as a catalyst to startle the reader or listener into some new internal revelation.²⁰⁴ Not only does the randomization have aesthetic value, as Veder has suggested, but it also has epistemological value.

For us secular types, with our analytical minds, with our concerns for things of this world, where concern for our souls is secondary or non-existent, such views may seem to result only in the mindless repeating of nonsensical formulas. One prominent Harvard professor of Russian literature is noted for saying in his lectures that the early Russians isolated themselves from the rest of the world “so they could concentrate on their own ignorance.” Ignorance it may have been. But for them, it was not ignorance of the Truth, but ignorance of Falsehood from which they sought to isolate themselves. They thought they were already on the path of Truth, just as we think we are on the path of Truth, so we remain ignorant of the “falsehoods” of Rus’ culture. We consider them to be ignorant and obscurantist, and, therefore, wrong, while we consider ourselves to be rational-scientific and enlightened, and, therefore, correct. But Vyshens’kyj, for one, would have viewed us as wrong, ignorant, and headed for damnation *because* we did not hold to the Truth as already revealed in the Divine Writings. Deviation from that truth means trouble and the potential loss of one’s soul:

Is it not better for you to study the *horologian*, *psaltry*, *ochtoechos*, *apostolos*, *evangelion*, and other books appropriate to the Church and be a simple person pleasing to God and receive eternal life, than to achieve an understanding of Aristotle and Plato and be called a wise philosopher in this life and to depart unto hell? Judge for yourself. It seems to me that it is better not to know even the letter “a” as long as you make your way to Christ.²⁰⁵

He has not been proven wrong. We have no way of knowing whether, as a result, his soul has been saved for all eternity in Paradise, while our rational-scientific minds have led our souls to eternal damnation.

²⁰⁴ Some compact disc players have a device called a “shuffler” that randomly chooses the track to be played. The principle is the same as monks’ rearranging texts randomly in their codices, but the intent, of course, is different.

²⁰⁵ *Ivan Vyshens’kii. Sochineniia*, pp. 23–24. Trans. of this passage taken from Harvey Goldblatt, “Godlike ‘Simplicity’ Versus Diabolic ‘Craftiness’: On the Significance of Ivan Vyshenskyi’s ‘Apology for the Slavic Language,’” in *Living Record: Essays in Memory of Constantine Bida (1916–1979)*, ed. Irena R. Makaryk, Ottawa, University of Ottawa Press, 1991, pp. 3–4.

The Rus' Church inherited the prevailing tradition of the Byzantine Church that learning was descriptive (“a continuous and sublime recapitulation”) of what was already known, not diagnostic for determining previously unknown truths. In addition, we have no evidence of schools being set up in Rus' to teach the trivium and quadrivium. But, even if such a curriculum existed in Rus', it would have subsumed dialectic to a place as insignificant as the Byzantine Church did. It would not have produced an Abelard to challenge prevailing theological notions with the knife of dialectic. And if it had, he would have been suppressed as an apostle of falsehood.

In all of pre-Petrine Rus', we have evidence for only two works, both written in the late fifteenth century, that discuss any part of Aristotelian logic—free translations of parts of al-Gazzālī's *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* and of Maimonides' *Logical Terminology*. But neither of these paraphrases contains any discussion of dialectic.²⁰⁶ Other than those two, we have only an expurgated translation of John of Damascus *On Dialectic* that in fact contains no detailed discussion of the subject, at least nothing that anyone could put to any use. We should not, however, condemn Byzantium thereby for negligence in regard to its offspring, the Rus' Church, for Byzantine prelates were providing the provincials (from their point of view) all they needed to know to save their souls.

Kenneth Clark voiced a remarkable insight about the abstract decoration of the Irish-style manuscripts from the eighth and ninth centuries, such as the Lindisfarne Gospels and Book of Kells: “We look at them for ten seconds, then we pass on to something else that we can interpret or read. But imagine if one couldn't read and had nothing else to look at for weeks at a time. Then these pages would have an almost hypnotic effect.”²⁰⁷ Some historians have expressed frustration that saints' lives are an unreliable historical source. There are irritating silences in them on crucial questions we would like to have the answers to; they exhibit a predilection for clichés; and they aim less at

²⁰⁶ Bruce Parain, “La Logique dite des Judaisants,” *Revue des études slaves*, vol. 19, 1939, pp. 315–329; D. Tschizewskij, “Altrussische wissenschaftliche Literatur und die ‘Judaisierenden’,” *Die Welt des Slaven*, vol. 11, 1966, pp. 353–366; Vladimir Kolesov, “Traces of the Medieval Language Question in the Russian *Azbukovniki*,” in *Aspects of the Slavonic Language Question*, ed. Riccardo Picchio and Harvey Goldblatt, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1984, vol. 2, pp. 87–124; Sobolevskii, *Perevodnaia literatura*, pp. 401–409; P. Kokovtsev, “K voprosu o ‘Logike Aviasafa’,” *ZhMNP*, 1912, no. 5, pp. 114–133; Lur'e, *Ideologicheskaia bor'ba*, pp. 194–197, esp. fn. 411; R. A. Simonov and N. I. Stiazhkin, “Istoriko-logicheskii obzor drevnerusskikh tekstov ‘Kniga, glagolemaia logika’ i ‘Logika Aviasafa’,” *Filosofskie nauki*, vol. 20, 1977, no. 5, pp. 132–143; P. S. Popov, R. A. Simonov, and N. I. Stiazhkin, “Logicheskie znaniia na Rusi v kontse XV v.,” *Estestvennonauchnye predstavleniia drevnei Rusi. Sbornik statei*, ed. A. N. Bogoliubov, Moscow, Nauka, 1978, pp. 98–112. W. F. Ryan, “Maimonides in Muscovy: Medical Texts and Terminology,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtland Institutes*, vol. 51, 1988, pp. 46–49.

²⁰⁷ Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation: A Personal View*, New York, Harper, 1969, p. 11.

an accurate biography than at depicting the saint as a model of Christian piety.²⁰⁸ But such questions, like those of Thomson, are missing the point. For, it is this relatively uninteresting material, the “monotonous, repetitious, and stereotyped,” which we Western-trained, analytical scholars choose to ignore to get on to what, from our point of view, is the “more interesting” material, that is the real stuff of Rus’ culture. It is simply bad form for us to exclaim about the lack of achievements of the brain’s mind (διόννοια) in a culture that devoted itself to achievements of the soul’s intellect (νοῦς). These fragments, which appear mundane to us, represent ideas so abstract and ineffable that we tend to miss the point, not because we are unable to comprehend them, but because our agenda is different from theirs. The number of *psaltyry*, *evangeliia*, *apostoly*, *oktoikhi*, *chasoslovie*, *chet’i sborniki*, and *zhitiia* copied and still extant, as well as the numerous indigenous icon paintings, testify that Rus’ culture was not entirely intellectually silent. Instead, its pitch, for the most part, has been beyond our range of hearing.

Summation of Findings

My research began as an attempt to understand the context within which the Russian hesychastic monk Nil Sorskii was writing—not just the religious-political context of late fifteenth–early sixteenth-century Muscovy, but the theological context of 1500 years of Christian intellectual culture. The question I sought to answer is why Eastern Church writers show no interest in analytical reasoning and even an open hostility toward it, while Western Church writers, by the time of the Scholastics, matter of factly incorporate analytical reasoning into their defenses of the faith. My answer is that we have to look to the third century when the Roman Empire was splitting into eastern and western halves, and Christian thinkers were synthesizing Greek idealist philosophy with Christian teachings. In particular, the amalgamation of pagan Neoplatonism with Christian theology occurred in slightly different ways in those areas that came to be dominated by the Western Church and the Eastern Church, respectively.

In Western Christendom, Porphyry’s *Isagoge* came to be the standard introduction to dialectic within the trivium, and it raised the question of whether Aristotelian categories were the same as

²⁰⁸ Wallis makes these same criticisms of Porphyry’s *Life of Plotinus*. See Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, p. 8. See also V. O. Kliuchevskii, *Drevnerusskie zhitiia sviatykh kak istoricheskii istochnik*, Moscow, 1871, pp. 402–428. Kliuchevskii did think that the posthumous miracles attached to saints’ lives provided evidence about daily life in the monasteries (*ibid.*, p. 438). For a discussion of these points, see Richard Bosley, “A History of the Veneration of SS. Theodosij and Antonij of the Kievan Caves Monastery, from the Eleventh to the Fifteenth Century,” Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1980, pp. 5–8.

Platonic forms. In other words, could we know the divine by means of things of this world? Porphyry left the question unanswered. In Eastern Christendom, the *Isagoge* was known but did not have the same impact. And dialectic, as such, does not seem to have been taught in schools of the Byzantine Empire before the thirteenth century. In part, this may be because Porphyry's works were suppressed more systematically (since he was an articulate opponent of Christianity) and, in part, because the views of John of Damascus and others, who dismissed the value of teaching about this world, held sway. The particular synthesis of Neoplatonism with Christianity in the Eastern Empire did not allow an opening for Aristotelian categories or dialectic. In the Western Empire, and its successors, there was such an opening, but it was not utilized until the time of Abelard. Even so, Western Church authorities fought the introduction of dialectic into theological matters, but without success. The result was at first the acceptance of a bifurcated approach—Aristotelian categories and dialectic, this world; Platonic forms and syllogisms, the divine world. And later in Scholasticism we see the incorporation of dialectic into theology although in a circumscribed way. Roughly contemporaneous with Abelard in Paris was John Italos in Constantinople who attempted the introduction of dialectic into theological matters there but failed. The ground work in the Eastern Church had not been laid as it had been in the Western Church by centuries of teaching dialectic.

What this difference helps to explain is the opposition of Gregory Palamas and other hesychasts to dialectic, as well as the opposition of seventeenth-century Orthodox writers like Ivan Vyshyns'kyj to "pagan tricks," such as grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic while at the same time utilizing those "tricks" in his own writing. I also see the Western desire for knowledge of this world, the use of mathematics and reasoning to acquire that knowledge, and the entire phenomenon of the Scientific Revolution resulting from the Medieval West's revival of the trivium and quadrivium. It is somewhat ironic, then, that when E. H. Hall wrote in 1872 that "theology to become a science must adopt the scientific method,"²⁰⁹ he probably did not realize that this very method, indeed the entire Scientific Revolution, had its roots in the very trivium and quadrivium that the medieval theologians immersed themselves in. Finally, the difference explains why hesychastic writers like Nil Sorskii are concerned almost solely with the soul's intellect (νοῦς), that is, as a means for attaining the silent mystical union with God. In contrast, a strong current in Western Church thought allowed for understanding of God through the human mind (διάνοια). One of the modern-day results is people like Stephen Hawking talking about figuring out the mind of God, which is what Boethius was saying in the sixth century.

²⁰⁹ *The Index*, ed. Francis Ellingwood Abbott, 21 September 1872, p. 298.

No one within Eastern Church theological culture would for a moment entertain such a ridiculous notion.