

COMPLEMENTARY VIEWS ON THE ORIGIN OF VALUES

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I must, of course, begin by expressing my profound gratitude to the Athens Academy. It is indeed a great honour to have been given this opportunity to set out not so much my opinions but my inner thoughts borne of experience, questioning and searching. This is a time when many speak about the “transmutation” of values, this is a historic hall where they are debated and promoted, and this is a unique initiative to support dialogue between traditional and contemporary values.

I am deeply thankful to you also for the subject you have chosen. We have the word *complementary* or *sympleromatikos*: any word containing the prefix *syn-* or *con-* necessarily indicates meanings that pertain to unity and fullness. In a world that is content with the “little” that isolates, and promotes the “in part” that divides, in a world that prefers ant-agonism to co-operation, in a world that fluctuates between arbitrary relativising and inflexible absolutising, without finding any balance or middle way; in such a world, the possibility that one can speak about the complementarity of philosophies, experiences and the sciences, allows us to hope that what is called the “fullness of truth” can be approached in a spirit of wisdom. For above and beyond the self-sufficiency we feel in our own knowledge, we are humbled before our ignorance and we have respect for the knowledge that others possess.

This realization allows me to turn to the very foundation of values, which is none other than the sacred notion of unity. It is a concept that has biological, social, pan-human, universal, and theological dimensions, and it is one that pervades and shapes everything.

Unity as a Source of Values

Given intuition and experience, one can see in the deeper mystery of nature, in our inner sense of goodness and in our most finely attuned strivings

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for the truth, that all converge on meanings such as harmony, unity and oneness. Likewise, it is commonly accepted that whatever divides, splits apart, or separates, takes us further from the truth, disorientates, and clouds any aim.

One needs only to glance at the universe to be convinced that it is governed by harmony. It might be expanding and all its points moving further away from each other, but this only bears out the one beginning of the world, when all space was gathered into one point, time was one moment, matter was a condensed physical entity with a tremendous dynamic, when everything was one. In the cause and effect of physical laws, in the relativity or the uncertainty of these laws, even in the cosmic chaos, one can detect regularities, symmetries and organisation: there is a harmony between the small and the large, the slow and the fast, the extremely hot and the cold, the new and the old.

Two galaxies, each with more than a hundred billion stars, can pass through each other without even one of their stars colliding. That is just how big and how empty the universe is. That is how harmonious and stable the world is. The universal constants have specific values, and the slightest variation would destroy the balance of the world. In the universe everything is linked in concord.

In the present day, the great theories that try to explain the deeper laws of nature are called Grand Unification Theories (GUT). The efforts of scientists are focused on demonstrating that the four fundamental forces, Weak Interaction, Strong Interaction, Electromagnetic Forces, and even Gravitational Forces, are in essence manifestations of one single force.

Quantum Mechanics and the Standard Model Theory describe phenomena at the level of the very small, while the theory of General Relativity explains gravity and the phenomena of the macrocosm. It is believed that theories known as Superstring Theory, Super-symmetry, Cosmic Inflation and the multi-dimensional Membrane Theory of Gravity may help link Quantum Physics with Relativity and, in this way, create the basis for uniting the laws of nature.

Moreover, research on the beginning and the very secrets of the universe, namely of the very large scale, is carried out today by high energy physicists, specialising on the very small scale. In the study of the early universe, we find Cosmology meeting Elementary Particle Physics.

Biology reveals a similar story. In this field we observe that life begins with the fusion of two cells. As we step backwards, Evolution Theory maintains that there was an initial convergence of beings and a relation between them. Our

genomes are more alike than different, and this observation binds us to each other and, in turn, links us to nature.

Unity is also the cornerstone of society. The ideal and the best or *ἀριστον*, according to Plato, is “to make the city one”.¹ An aim pursued by every society, which is also the precondition for their survival, is the concept of social cohesion—the idea of the Bible that “all may be one”.² In this way, we see others not just as *other* human beings but as our *fellow* human beings or “*syn-anthropoi*,” as our neighbours, as our brothers (in Greek the word *brother* is *adelphos*, originally meaning “born of the same womb”), as children of God, as brothers of Christ, as our very selves. Another person is no longer the *other*, a stranger, but the best part of our self. This means that the many “are one body, and individually members of one another”³ and “many parts, yet one body”.⁴

Finally, in psychology and in Christian anthropology the lack of unity and harmony between the forces and the faculties of the soul manifests a pathological condition. Schizophrenia, bipolarity, inner split, or the rupture between what we truly are and what we appear to be, between what we want and what we can, between feeling and thinking, acting and becoming, constitute unhealthy conditions causing all kinds of different aberrations and unhappiness. The union of the mind with the heart, the eradication of the afore-mentioned ruptures and the cultivation of every kind of virtue underline the importance of wholeness, of the unification of the person. This is the way to genuine life and true freedom, to the consistency of one’s conduct with his beliefs and ultimately to the virtues. Virtue means composition, synthesis and unification of the person’s forces into what is good. The final pursuit is not psycho-analysis but, if I may say, psycho-synthesis.

It is interesting to note that the three words *armonia* (harmony), *ariston* (the best) and *areti* (virtue) that I have used to describe, unity in nature, unity in society and unity in the person, respectively, in Greek, all begin with the syllable “*ar*”. This points to their common etymological derivation from the Greek verb *ararisko*, which means to “bring together”.

Likewise, in theology the entire Christian tradition is based on the dogma that God is “One in three persons” and that the communion of the three persons

¹ “each man, practicing his own, which is one, will not become many but one; and thus, you see, the whole city will naturally grow to be one” (Plato’s *Republic* D, 423d).

² John 17:11.

³ Rom. 12: 5.

⁴ 1 Cor. 12: 20.

leads to “One God in Trinity”. God is Trinitarian, but at the same time Single and One,⁵ God is “Trinity of absolute oneness and of equal glory.”⁶

This unity is not only proclaimed in the dogma of divinity, but it is also expressed in the potential of man to share in, to become partaker of the divine nature⁷, namely to unite with God.⁸

Perfection is understood only in terms of unity, “that they may be perfect in one”.⁹ This is the very essence of both the teaching and the lived experience of the Orthodox Christian Tradition.

Thus, everything refers to unity, communability and oneness. Returning to unity forms a universal law of balance, a condition for harmony, a prerequisite for integration and a means for restoring to health. This all-pervasive sense of unity that is found in the forces of nature, in the laws of life, in the expressions of the soul, in our relations with each other and with God constitutes the basis of social values such as solidarity, brotherliness, love, forgiveness, communion, mutual indwelling, our relation to nature and our thankfulness towards and communion with God.

Diversity and Multiplicity

Furthermore, in the world we find not only one colour, one frequency or one species; there exists no photographic likeness or monotonous symmetry. There is instead an easing asymmetry, a beauty of difference, a balanced diversity and a harmonious variety. This multiplicity is the melody and the harmony of the universe, it underlines the importance of complementarity and it reveals the uniqueness of each person.

Diversity is a feature of the natural world. In the universe we speak of billions of galaxies that have many likenesses but no sameness; not one is the same as any other. Every galaxy has billions of stars that in turn have a wide

⁵ “the Trinity, the hyper-God, is indivisible oneness according to essence. Being united according to nature it is divided according to the particular persons; it is divided without being divided. Being one it is also three” (9th Ode, Wednesday, 2nd Week of Great Lent).

⁶ Triodion, 9th Ode, 1st Week of Great Lent

⁷ 2Peter 1:4

⁸ “Lord, the threefold light of your monarchy shines on our minds with revelatory radiance and leads us back from multifarious error to unifying deification.” (Glory, 9th Ode, Friday before Palm Sunday)

⁹ “And the glory which you gave me I have given them, that they may be one just as we are one. I in them and you in me that they may be perfect in one” (John 17: 22–3).

spectrum of properties, color, age, characteristics, different types of chemical composition and nuclear content.

In Molecular Chemistry we meet a whole host of elements. As we penetrate into the depths of the subatomic world, we meet a great many elementary particles, each of which has its role and fulfills its distinct purpose. Some of those are material (such as quarks and leptons), others are carriers of the forces, while others are much heavier -the super-particles-, and seem to complete the requisite symmetry.

In the plant and animal kingdoms one also sees a similar state of affairs. A huge number of species, each with its own characteristics and its genetic complexity and variety, contributes to and adorns the world in a unique way. Likewise, some tens of thousands of genes combine to give morphological characteristics and to determine the dynamics of the health of every person.

The power of diversity emerges also from the fact that we are all so different. Each person has 23 pairs of chromosomes, and at the fusion of a sperm and an ovum 23^2 different pairs can be formed. These when combined per 23 form an incredible genetic "mix" that produces 10^{40} independent possibilities. This means that two parents could give birth to 10^{40} different children.¹⁰

If we add the modifications that occur after fertilization, for instance the inactivity of certain genes as a result of methylation, which is responsible for the genomic imprint, such as the phenomenon of brain ductility, then the statistical probability of meeting two similar human beings can be calculated as being in the region of 10^{-87} . That means that no two alike human beings exist nor will they ever exist.¹¹

Moreover, according to Christian theology, God, even if He is One, is Triune: "one nature in three persons". At Pentecost we see a sharing out of gifts, a wealth and otherness of tongues, which, however, are not confused nor do they divide, but unite,¹² "there are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit."¹³

This multiplicity and variety gives to the world, on the one hand, the element of overabundance and magnitude in volume, in time, in knowledge, and, on the other hand, the need for respect for the other person. The encounter with variety inspires us to inquiry, research and progress; the encounter with

¹⁰ Claudine Guérin-Marchand: *Les manipulation génétiques*, p. 28, coll. "Que sais-je?" P.U.F. Paris 1997.

¹¹ André Boué, *La médecine du fœtus*, p.39, éd. Odile Jacob, Paris 1995.

¹² Acts 2: 3, 4, 6.

¹³ 1 Cor. 12: 4.

multiplicity engenders the values of mutual respect and justice, equality and autonomy. Although we are dissimilar we are equal.

Transcendence as a Source of Values

A third feature of our world is that opposites co-exist: big and small, comprehensible and incomprehensible, knowledge and unknowability, magnificence and pettiness, good and evil, unity and dissimilarity. We speak about the theory of everything, yet we declare that “we are a redistribution of nothing”; we speak about theories of super-symmetry, yet the theories which we adopt with confidence nowadays go under the names of “Relativity” and “Uncertainty”. We believe that we are decoding the genetic secrets, yet we are unable to combat our great and small biological enemies. We may well be able to discover the secrets of our theories and describe our very first beginning or end, or the details of the microcosm and macrocosm, yet we fail to deal with present time reality. By using the conceptual tool of what is very small and infinitesimal in terms of time, we may be close to discovering the mystery of the origins of the world and the vastness of the universe, yet we succeed in making mountains out of molehills in our everyday life. Some, in fact a very few, claim that they comprehend the mystery of the world, but none of us can understand them. They reject faith, but the only way to convince us about their theories, which are incomprehensible, is for us to have faith in them.

It seems that the more we draw near to its heart, the more nature likes to withhold its secrets. We are nearing the point of the beginning of the world, we are only 10^{-43} seconds away from the Big Bang, and before we can seize upon this moment, our equations collapse and we are left with singularity. We chase after the ends of the universe and we realise that the closer we approach, the faster they are drawing away from us (Hubble’s Law). The more our knowledge of the world increases, the more it reveals our expanding unknowability. This is also expressed with the Uncertainty Principle. We designate with accuracy a certain quality of nature and at the same time we make an error on a respective one.

The same applies to the universe: we carry on researching into it and we find black holes, dark matter and energy, hidden symmetry, unknown particles, strange entities, to which we give names that pertain to the metaphysical (i.e. strange quark, God’s particle), and which conceal the most beautiful secrets.

The world becomes very alluring but is revealed to be tragically isolating. The great constants of physics have values that justify our existence as human beings (Anthropic Principle), but necessarily lead to our isolation as beings. The

universe is enormous and speeds are insuperably low. The speed of light, the greatest speed there is, the speed of communication, is at once both unsurpassable and finite. We can hear -receive stimuli-, we can speak -send messages-, but we cannot develop a cosmic communication with the universe. We can only see with our telescopes 4% of the entire universe. The remaining 23% is dark matter and 73% is dark energy. And this is where the secret of our world lies. We know so little and there is so much more that we are unaware of.

We open the book of the code of life and we find out that we cannot read it. We learn more about the genome in the hope that we are discovering the truth of our genetic identity, and we are led to the proteome, which confirms our greater ignorance. Before we can even get to grips with one alphabet, we are forced to learn an even more difficult language.

Yet, how amazing this game with the mysteries of the world and life is! The Orthodox Christian tradition offers to the modern world a theology that confesses that we know much less than what we ignore; that the conceivable is less than the inconceivable and apart from the affirmative way of knowledge there is also the apophatic way. We cannot partake of God's essence but we can partake of His uncreated energies. The term "uncreated" refers to our inability to understand but it does not affect our ability to partake.

What we can ultimately understand is that "God is infinite and incomprehensible and all that is comprehensible about Him is His infinity and incomprehensibility."¹⁴

At this point we are introduced to the transcendental and spiritual values; the need to communicate with the mystery, with what is beyond our capabilities and knowledge; we are called to replace understanding with revelation, to abandon the logic of human limits and to become familiar with the transcendental communion with God.

Contemporary science uses terms that sound metaphysical, knowing that its means and instruments are in essence inaccessible. For example, infinity –it also has a mathematical symbol- and the eternal – which is now used in Physics - are used more and more often. In expounding the latest theories scientists are anxious to speak of perfection and a completeness of interpretations.

The very big, the almost infinite, resembles more to the infinite but its distance from it is much greater than its distance from the very small. The same applies to what is almost eternal. It is further away from eternity than it is from

¹⁴ St. John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of Orthodox Faith*, Book 1, ch. 4.

anything recent in time. Moreover, the almost perfect is further away from the perfect than it is from the most imperfect. The difference lies in the word “almost”.

The human soul has an innate need to experience its freedom in the absolute, the perfect, the infinite and the eternal. It cannot be reconciled with this “almost”. This need forms the basis of the spiritual and transcendental values. We feel that the real universe is the one of our unknowability, in which, however, we can enjoy scattered stars and galaxies, namely viewpoints and theories of an impressive but partial knowledge “seen in a mirror dimly”.¹⁵

The Value of the Minor

One more glance at our world persuades us that its truth and beauty co-exist with imperfections, disabilities, decay and death. After the “death” of a star, from its remnants new stars are born. Along with super-symmetry in the early universe as big as 10^{-33} cm in diameter or 10^{-36} sec from the Big Bang, there is a great asymmetry in the world that we perceive with our senses. As forms of life disappear, other more developed forms emerge. In the genetic content of a human cell, even in the so-called “junk DNA”, there seems to be a host of finely-concealed riddles. These play a role that is far from insignificant in the whole hereditary procedure and in determining the biological characteristics of the individual.

Despite all our remarkable achievements, illnesses, physical decay and death do not simply make their presence felt daily; in the world of “relativity” and “uncertainty”, they constitute its most absolute, certain and unavoidable parameters.

All these negative aspects of life, even death itself, also seem to have a positive side, which is so different to anything we are used to. All medical achievements that lead us closer to discovering and understanding of the mystery of life are based on the unceasing efforts of man to confront a number of diseases and pathological symptoms. Imperfection and illness in the end engender the most fundamental and creative knowledge.

We are made of “earth and ash”.¹⁶ This is what both the theory of evolution and the Scriptures say. The Bible, however, adds to this that we are

¹⁵ 1 Cor. 13: 12.

¹⁶ Gen 18: 27.

also made “in the image and likeness of God”,¹⁷ which underlines that our origin is not only physical or biological, but that we are created by and out of God. Therefore, what is important is not so much our biological evolution from the beginning until now, but our spiritual development from this moment until “we all come to the unity of the faith, to perfect manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”.¹⁸

We often discover that disabled people have amazing abilities and capabilities, which perhaps might not have been brought to the fore otherwise. One could cite the well-known example of Stephen Hawking, but even more astounding are the achievements of others who have learning or developmental disabilities, yet who conceal within them a surprisingly hidden spiritual world.

In Orthodox theology, pain, indeed any kind of suffering, is often seen as an “aid towards salvation” and sometimes even as “better than health itself”.¹⁹ Pain generates humility, it reveals sensitivities normally unknown to man, and often helps us to discover spiritual strength so far unknown.

Similarly, biological death does not mean the inevitable and final end. On the contrary, in Christianity it is a transition from sorrow to joy, from corruption to a state of imperishability, “where there is no pain, nor sadness nor sighing, but life everlasting”.²⁰

This reality of death reveals, through another vision of course, the value of life, just as it is revealed through the prism of death.

The Value of Life

We could say that life is the greatest gift man has and death his greatest enemy, yet his most certain companion. Moreover, life and death are the most sacred mysteries. It is through biological life that the human person comes into being and is expressed. The countenance of a human being is what remains engraved in our memory. His words and thoughts are not foreign to the characteristics of his brain and person. The way he moves, his strength or weakness have also biological grounds.

¹⁷ Gen 1: 26.

¹⁸ Eph. 4: 13.

¹⁹ St. Gregory Palamas, GFC (ΕΠΠΕ), Thessaloniki 1985, vol. 9, p. 264.

²⁰ Funeral Service.

Nevertheless, it seems that a human being is much more than a biological cell system. The variety of choices every man makes, his characteristic otherness, the uniqueness of his psychology, the creativity of his intellect and the formation of his personhood are much more than just anatomic features and detectable biochemical processes. His biological nature bestows upon him the beauty of a well-organised determinism, while his spiritual identity the grandeur of a free will that is unique.

The biological beginning bears the weight of the onset of personhood, while the end refers to an unknown continuation in a higher state of being. The realisation of the grandeur and uniqueness of each human being hints at his unending life and the sense of his eternal perspective.

In that respect, the 'if', 'how' and 'when' of the beginning and end of the life of every person is also of utmost importance for the Orthodox Church. In our modern age, we have the technology for preventing and terminating a pregnancy, and therefore we can determine whether someone will be conceived - that is if he will come into being, and whether in the end he will be born- that is if he will live. Our age can alter at will the form and the characteristics of life. It can also delay death, relieve pain and be invasive by using advanced technology and thus create new forms of life and novel conditions of death. It can create the possibility of a vast number of choices. Ultimately, it poses unprecedented questions, to which it gives no replies and provokes serious dilemmas that unfortunately are underestimated.

It has created bio-banks so as to cryo-preserve millions of embryos in vitro -such embryos have not existed until now. In naming these embryos it uses misleading terms and questions their value as human beings, but it overestimates their value for the sake of experimenting. It claims that they are not human beings, but its arguments about when and how life begins are not persuasive. Symposia, committees and parliamentary bodies give their own versions of what constitutes the beginning of life, none of which is the same. Thus, in several states of America, or in Italy and Germany these embryos might be considered human beings, but in other states, in the United Kingdom and Greece they might not. Although they might until now have been called embryos with specific rights, all of a sudden a special resolution refers to them using the awkward term "natal material" that has an uncertain future, yet is legally protected.

The same applies to death. The thinking behind euthanasia is that death should not come by itself but that, in certain cases, we should bring it about, whenever and however we want. This is thought to be a human right. We

demand that we ourselves designate the quality of life, actually as a precondition for its continuation.

And since we deny life after death with confidence, we reduce man to a biological or physical entity with a specific weight, a transient life span that is subject to uncontrollable determinism. The eugenic character of his perishable life becomes his sole purpose which of course can “justify all means”.

In other instances, by adopting an entirely different logic we try to prevent the occurrence of death when it comes. We do not let people who are close to dying to actually die. We refuse to consent to their biological decomposition, although their systems are slowly collapsing and their consciousness, physical senses and the ability to express themselves have been irrevocably lost.

The Church respects the end of man’s life. It waits for his hour to come. And when it does come, it simply confesses it and accompanies him into his life ever after. Illness, pain, disability and imperfection are all part of life, which should be met with patience, love and humility. None of these can be cured by “provoking death”. Any means that is called therapeutic, i.e. abortion, cloning etc. ought to cure the person to whom it is being applied so as to justify its name.

The beginning of human life “from the very moment of conception” acknowledges the value of the person from the point at which he or she first appears. It grants him the time that belongs to him, and the respect he deserves. Man does not lose his dignity when he endures pain and suffers patiently. He loses his value when, based on myopic criteria, we identify his good with the provoked termination of his biological course either at its initial or final stage.

No one would ever dream of locating the beginning of the universe at some other moment after the Big Bang, just because it took a little while for the first particles to appear, the first nuclei to be formed, the first stars to be born or, even more importantly, for the conditions of life to appear. Nevertheless, many scientists nowadays struggle to convince us that there is no proof that the beginning of human life and the overwhelming moment of fertilisation coincide. Furthermore, they try to appraise life based solely on “quality” criteria. But do we speak about the universe as being something of value only when stars are born and not when they die?

The question as to when human life begins or ends is not a simple scientific matter, nor can it be defined in precise terms or expressed as an observation, resolution or number. The beginning of any human being is his *very first beginning*, the moment of fertilisation. The other stages are phases of his life.

The “how” and “why” remain an inscrutable mystery. The same applies to death.

Life is granted; it is not chosen. It reveals the secret grandeur of the soul and the person. Its end is unavoidable. No matter what man does, he will always fight for life, yet he will still inherit death. The massive destruction of embryos so that those alive may improve their life, reminds us more of death than it supports life. Similarly, relief through euthanasia does not draw death further away but rather it hastens it. Life is promoted only when one embraces death spiritually; namely, when one recognizes death as the clearest reflection of life and not as its irrevocable end.

For these reasons, we do not look upon life as a right that belongs to us, but we respect it as a mystery that transcends us. Its value does not depend on any right of man, but on the respect of all of us.

Values and the Truth – Transcending Values

I hope you will allow me, in my concluding remarks, to speak more as a clergyman than as a scientist; not as a clergyman who sees truth through his theological education but as an Orthodox faithful who discerns it through the awareness of his own unknowability, which eventually helps us experience the unknown mystery of the world in which we live. I would like to take this perspective, for I could not have concluded my viewpoints on the complementarity of values, without presenting at the same time the transcendence of values.

In the end, we must admit that on the cosmic scale we are very insignificant, extremely alone and our life span is all too short. Thus, we are incapable of knowing the very truth of the cosmos, of comprehending all its secrets and details and of communicating within it.

The greatest speed of communication, the breathtaking speed of light, is finite, while the universe is inconceivably vast. That makes this extraordinary speed to be actually extremely low. While, according to Aristotle, we are social beings, we are obliged to live so lonely in the universe.²¹ While, according to the same ancient Greek philosopher, “all men, by nature, desire to know,” we are compelled to remain within limited knowledge.²² The inadequacy of science as well as of our technology thus becomes apparent. Although, our achievements and

²¹ W.D. Ross, *Aristotelis Politica*. Clarendon Press. Oxford, 1957.

²² W.D. Ross, *Aristotelis, Post Naturalis*, 922α, first line, Oxford, 1955.

knowledge are, in human terms, incredible, yet, in cosmic terms they are close to nothing and most likely erroneous.

At the same time, we are so different and special within the universe. We are unique! We have *logos* in terms of our intellectual and thinking abilities, as well as in terms of the ability to express ourselves articulately. Nature and the universe do not possess *logos* in the aforementioned sense, still we can observe rationality in the workings of both. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork."²³ This cosmic rationality can be approached scientifically, while its truth is better revealed spiritually.

Modern scientific philosophy is fixated on proving its self-sufficiency and therefore it questions the existence or disregards the presence of God, the reason probably being that it tries to compete with Him on the level of power. It does not want an almighty God; rather it favors an all-powerful man. That is why it looks for values that, according to its opinion, can stand better without God.

Orthodox tradition, faith and theology are not concerned with the question of the *existence* of God, but with that of His revealed and experienced *presence*. Science fails to prove either the existence or the non-existence of God. Every attempt to prove His existence is pointless. God is an inscrutable mystery! Therefore, it is better to question His presence spiritually than to try to prove His existence rationally or scientifically. A god whose existence or non-existence can be proven does not exist. He is not the God!

God as "HE WHO IS" (Ο ΩΝ) appears to be an adversary to creation; we look for Him and He hides Himself, He is not partakable in His essence, His existence is unprovable. On the contrary, God as "HE WHO IS PRESENT" (Ο ΠΑΡΩΝ), is a friend and father to creation; He reveals Himself and is partakable in His uncreated energies. His presence can be experienced.

Augustine proclaimed that we can see God with our mind or intellect (*nous*) since our *nous* is akin to Him, and thus he led Western thought on a fruitless quest to comprehend the incomprehensible. On the other hand, the Fathers of the Eastern Church maintain that we can transcend the limitations of our created nature only through the Holy Spirit. God combines both that which is comprehensible and that which is not.²⁴

²³ Psalms 19: 1.

²⁴ "As I conceive, by that part of It which we can comprehend to draw us to itself (for that which is altogether incomprehensible is outside the bounds of hope, and not within the compass of endeavour), and by that part of It which we cannot comprehend to move our wonder, and as an object of wonder to become more an object of desire, and, being desired, to purify, and by purifying to make us like God, so that, when we have thus become like Himself, God may, I being

God, as experienced in the life of the Orthodox Church, is of course transcendent in His power, although He is transcendent mainly in His wisdom and love. He is Super-substantial, He is All-perfect; He remains not distant from us but always self-emptying for us; he does not punish us but is Himself crucified; it is not that we die and He lives, but that He dies in time for us to live eternally. He does not express His love to us by arrogantly demonstrating His power but by offering us the possibility of partaking in His uncreated energies and love. God is not an opponent that science should either ignore or extinguish but rather He is the God of love that science must on all accounts discover.

God can also be communioned through scientific knowledge, yet He reveals His wisdom and His truth to the "lowly in heart". He conceals it from the arrogant. The way towards true knowledge is the acceptance of our limited knowledge. As Socrates claims "I neither know nor think that I know. All I know is that I know nothing"; and concludes that "it is better to have honest ignorance than self-deceptive knowledge".²⁵ There are values that derive from our knowledge; however, there are values that spring from the way we reconcile ourselves with our limitations.

Here lies the greatest value: the "right" to transcend our ego and even our own human nature; to escape from the "gravitational field" of the limitations of our humanness, to partake in the "unknown knowledge", and comprehend the world and cosmos in the spirit of God.

Ultimately, what is important is not to identify certain values in the life of our societies, but to allow those people who constitute society to discern shining glimpses of divine truth. Values are based on one's vision of truth. Truth can be disclosed through scientific research; it can be comprehended through philosophical thought, questioning and analysis; it can be assimilated given a balanced psychological condition. Finally, it is revealed and experienced only through the illumination of a genuine spiritual life. Divine truth cannot be understood through complementary ideas; it can be partaken of through transcendental experience.

united to us, and that perhaps to the same extent as He already knows those who are known to Him" (St. Gregory the Theologian, *On Theophany*, Homily 38, 7, GFC (EΠΓΕ) 5.44-46).

²⁵ Plato: *Socrates' Apology*, 21d.