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## NATURE AS HYPOSTASIS

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### Abstract

While Science was born and grown under the auspices of Cartesian principles, Modern Science defies the Cartesian premises. Nature appears in continuous evolution, following triadic relational patterns, and constituting a hypostasis. We suggest analogies between this new paradigm and key aspects of the Eastern Christian Tradition.

*Keywords:* Nature, Relational Ontology, Modern Science, Hierarchy Levels, Apophaticity, Hypostasis, Temporality, Eastern Christian Tradition

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We would like to explore our relation to Nature, the image we have built of Nature, and to what extent we are part of Nature, or rather detached from Nature. It is a very old issue, with deep historical roots.

We may consider the following offered proposals:

#### *First proposal*

- Nature is a cosmos, something where reigns logos and harmony. We have to get inspired by this order and perfection, existing out there in Nature. This attitude is especially shared by the Ionians, the Greeks living in Asia Minor in 600BC.

#### *Second proposal*

- The modern proposal where Nature is inert, and the sole source of knowledge and authority is the human being. The leading proponent of this type of approach is clearly R. Descartes.

Both these models are actually hierarchy models. In the first model, the paganist model, we are very close to the deification of Nature, with human being trying to reach the divine cosmos. In the second model, the human being and the human intellect is raised to the highest place, with Nature clearly debased. This drift is criticized, especially by Nietzsche, who realized that leads to the disappearance of God, and the emergence of the human being as a super-man.

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### **Third proposal**

- With the two poles rather well defined, Nature versus human being, we may explore a third option, an ‘interacting’ model, where the human being and Nature interact, affect and influence each other. In this type of approach, the emphasis is not on the ‘subject’, we try to avoid what is qualified as the ‘monism of the subject’, but rather on the *relation*, the inter-action which brings together into a community and a communion the different entities. This interaction is so strong that it is inconceivable to consider these entities as isolated subjects. Rather, the other way around, the relation and the interaction itself, establishes the very existence of these entities.

Moving into the realm of Relational Ontology, a seminal work with deep insights is provided by Metropolitan John Zizioulas, in his well known book ‘Being as Communion’ [1]. There the relationality principle is immersed into God's existence. Relationality is the supreme ontological predicate of God, and serves as the constitution of God's being.

The question then is unavoidable and pressing: *How is the Creator's relationality reflected and embodied in the Creation?* We may explore this issue by studying the developments in Modern Science, notably in Special Relativity, General Relativity, Quantum Mechanics, Complex Systems, Cosmology, Cantorian infinities, Gödel's theorem. I skip the actual details and I present briefly the emerging picture [2].

Nature is not governed or shaped by a single law, a sort of a *passse-partout key*. Rather than having uniform laws valid at all scales, we find different levels of organization and different levels of knowledge.

For example the macroscopic phenomena are described by Classical Physics, while the microscopic ones by Quantum Theory. The two paradigms, Classical and Quantum Theory, refer to different notions and employ different formalisms. From the Mathematics side, we may refer to the Cantorian infinities, which are grouped into different hierarchy levels ( $\aleph_0, \aleph_1, \aleph_2, \aleph_3 \dots$ ). From Russell we know that the different entities are classified as belonging to distinct *types*. The consistency of a system, Gödel implies, can be examined only from another higher system, and not within the system itself.

There is an increased unification process, which leads to new levels of reality, where there are less predicates, and the corresponding ‘language’ is further evolved, more complicated and abstract, less connected to immediate experiences.

Is there any *intention*, or in Greek *telos*, in this unification process, in this evolution? We may remark that lower levels of reality are dominated by strict causality, while in higher levels we encounter the dominance of spontaneity and freedom.

Each level of knowledge is characterized by a *relative apophaticity*, with regard to the previous one: we cannot use the predicates of a lower level to determine an entity living in a higher level (for example the quantum beable is *not* a particle and is *not* a wave). As the unification proceeds, we tend to approach the *unthinkable limit of thought*, the EN (one), the unifying principle that is beyond the categories of logic. With regard to EN, there is the absolute apophaticity. No logical predicate can approach or explain this entity. In a schematic way, we could say that we encounter the relative apophaticity in Science, while the absolute apophaticity in Theology.

The universe is ever changing, and its history points to the elimination of sharp dualisms and the emergence of triadic relational patterns. The manifest evolutionary process transforms the universe from an un-determined, homogeneous amorphous object, 'a chaos of impersonalised feelings', to a particular, heterogeneous, concrete, and unique entity, a *hypostasis*.

We searched for vestiges of God's Relationality in the Creation. A journey through the achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Science portrayed Nature as an immense and very dense web of relations. These relations are linked together and they form a continuum, following patterns suggested by Relational Logic [3, 4]. All dualisms are abolished. The dualisms appear as inadequate approximations, poor descriptions, or degenerate forms of an underlying genuine triadic relationship. An important element of our considerations is *evolution*: everything changes. Nature is continually transformed on all scales. Human being presents a very rich biological history, with an unpredictable future. Our own knowledge and experience increase in a dramatic way and new forms of intelligibility appear. Evolution is the principle, the driving force and the result of a very complex dynamics.

We realize also that we turned swiftly our back to the Greek preoccupations. Greek mind searched behind the appearance, the multiplicity, the change, behind the γίγνεσθαι-becoming, looking for the invariant element, the first principle, the foundational εἶναι-being. In our case we are faced with the omni-presence of Time, time as 'the all-begetting one', and Becoming-ness as the essential condition for the fulfilment of the existing [5-7]. These notions, the pre-eminence of Temporality and Becoming, may be traced back to their biblical roots. Another important shift is the transfer of ontological interest from 'τι ἐστί' (what is it) to 'πῶς ἐστίν' (how is it). In other terms, the category of relation, or the functionality, takes prevalence over that of essence (οὐσία). Can we formulate then, a coherent framework incorporating these prospects? It appears that within the Eastern Christian Tradition we may find the key elements for restructuring our thoughts and intuition in the sought direction.

According to Dionysius the Areopagite, the human being may perceive God's creative energies by looking into the 'πάντων των όντων διάταξις' (ordering of all beings) [*On the Divine Names*, Migne P. G. 3, 869CD-872A]. The truth does not reside in the beings themselves, but in their ordering, in the way the beings exist and correlate. This διάταξις then is an analogue 'icon' of the 'divine paradigms'. Saint Maximos also, by putting the emphasis on the 'τρόπος υπάρξεως' (mode of existence), underscored the prime importance of relationship, for both gnoseological and ontological purposes [8]. The immanent-transcendent nature of Creation is best presented by Saint Maximos. Sidestepping Plato and Aristotle, Saint Maximos suggests that the human being, entering the universe of the intelligible, explores the logoi of all beings, and then unifies all different logoi to the unique Logos. A fundamental aspect of Orthodox Theology is the distinction between Divine essence and Divine energies, advanced by Saint Gregory Palamas. This distinction allows the Creation to be a manifestation of the Divine energy and will, preserving at the same time the ontological gulf between Creation and God. For Saint Gregory Palamas the Divine energies are ανείδεοι (un-specified) and ασχημάτιστοι (un-formed). We may interpret then the un-determined and vague character of the newly born universe, as a sign of God's energy and will.

We understand that there is an ongoing dialogue between the human logos and the Divine Logos. Next to the Creation, the human being creates an entire universe composed of signs, thus he becomes a 'created creator' [9]. With man the image of God, nature becomes 'the image of the image' (Saint Gregory of Nyssa). The profound inter-connection and affinity between cosmos and anthropos is at the basis of a suspected hidden 'duality': anthropos is a micro-cosmos and cosmos is a macro-anthropos (Saint Maximos).

These strong ties between Nature and the human being find within the Christian Religion the ultimate foundation: in the Incarnation, God enters into the Creation and the divine co-exists with the natural, the uncreated with the created. Thus the most essential triadic relationship is God-human being-Nature, and it is our duty to preserve and strengthen this relationship, which is the ground of the very existence of the Creation.

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