
KANT OR THE PLATYPUS?

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Abstract

It is by cultivating the divine attributes that one can reach the highest form of knowledge, the best form of morality and the noblest art. This is the highest spiritual dimension that Man can reach, and we claim that Philosophy, but also Science and our entire life should be directed in this direction. This way we can be happy and make the others happy: it triggers happiness. This way we can recover the spiritual high of our initial creation, 'the second paradise', by fighting against any form of nihilism, by understanding the difficult notion of freedom and the good news, by living within/in love, the bond of the Universe. The title, which paraphrases Umberto Eco, sends back to the paradigmatic dispute between the system philosophy and the living, natural reality of nature. We personally opt for the platypus.

Keywords: happiness-maker, religion, freedom, nihilism, Gospel

1. Introduction

In my latest book [1], I discussed divine attributes, but I didn't mention an essential aspect: the fact that they should always be taken together, as a bunch. Moreover, these values coincide, so they shouldn't be considered separately, as the Moderns do. The latter wanted to measure everything - morality, aesthetics, utility - in quantitative terms, classifying, prioritising, etc., although Einstein warned us that not everything belonging to Science can be measured. How could one measure, for instance, the values of the good or of beauty? How can one measure truth?

2. Art and morality

Can we talk about morality in the absence of art and about art in the absence of morality? All the Moderns, starting with Vladimir Jankelevitch [2] will be angling to say yes; we have a different opinion. We consider that morality is beautiful in itself and that art is perfectly beautiful in itself. In ancient Greece such problems did not even exist, as the Greeks did not calculate, did not

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value everything in quantitative terms, the Greek spirit was not haunted by such passions. Xenophon, for instance, who was also the first economist to have created an original work, used to design the good and the beautiful by the same term: *kalokagathos*, considering them to be identical, just as Aristotle used to do when using *kalon*, or Cicero with *honestum*, which gave in Romanian the term *onest*. Likewise, Plato sets as an example the good, beautiful and happy man.

The Greek cannot conceive an ugly mind in a beautiful body. And *agathos* meant not only good, but also *prosperous*, so the virtues naturally made the good people prosper, and created a fair, firmly seated society. We are afraid that Jankilevitch is right when he claims that the “victory (meaning the welfare) of the bad is an idea born at the same time as Christianity” [2, p. 27]. Only that the Greeks dreamed of an ideal society on Earth, while Jesus promises the eternal kingdom in the other realm. To the Greeks happiness, *eudaimonia*, is the harmony between the good and the beautiful, which is not necessarily inconsistent with Christianity; the latter will, however, ask us to be perfect, following the absolute model of the celestial Father.

The same optimist Greek model (pessimism was yet to be invented), argues that wisdom is a work of art; the wise man is good and beautiful. Physical beauty is the same as spiritual beauty, which is translated into the beauty of laws, institutions and human actions, into the beauty of Science, up to the ideal of Beauty in itself, which escapes to common senses and forms, and which is encrypted, suggesting thus the idea that it is not accessible to everyone. Plotinus says even more; in *Peri tou kalou* he argues that “beauty is the mystery (*sacrament*) of the good”, which is an excellent formula, but also that the good would be superior [3]. He writes that “Beauty is the brightness of the Good”, it is the appearance which emerges, the Good being the essence of beauty, the hiding latency. It is also Plotinus who states that “Art is the antechamber to the Good”, the latter being invisible beauty, “the source and the principle of beauty” (in the *Enneads*). Pessimism was yet to be born, there was still a lot of innocence on Earth, or of unconsciousness, as some might call it today.

The first to have made a clear cut distinction between the two virtues seems to have been Kierkegaard, in *Either-Or* [4], a pessimist fighting against his disharmony and that of the world, preceded or followed by a whole myriad of modern philosophers who separate them (Pascal, Leibniz, Kant, Schopenhauer, etc.). Kant, for instance, claimed that morality should impose respect, not admiration. Christianity will have modified this perspective, as the Fathers of the Church argue that ‘the virtues of Antiquity are brilliant vices’. This separation of the divine attributes made people think that one can make one’s way into society in the absence of moral conduct, just as one can fail while showing the highest moral virtues. In conclusion, the modern man is convinced of the divorce between the good, the moral dolorist ideal, and the beautiful, which is the hedonist ideal, *per se*.

This incongruence gave rise to the dilemma in the title: Kant or the platypus? (a paraphrase to Umberto Eco, *Kant and the platypus* [5]). I will let you decide who represents the good and who represents beauty... Eco makes

some other important distinctions, such as that between an elephant and an armadillo, between a bachelor and a tiger, or the essential one, between a wife and a hat. Can you see where this separation path, between the significant and the signifier, we might add, between subject and object or between the being and coming into being - all of them sources of misfortunes for philosophers – might lead?

I consider that all these things are also an effect of chasing away religion from the public spaces. For instance, as Aurelian Crăiuțu rightly argues [6], there is no mention of the word religion in political philosopher John Rawls's seminal book *A Theory of Justice* [7], which has had a huge impact over the last decades, and Europe has become *par excellence* the space of the 'death of God'. However, influential sociologists, such as J. Casanova and P. Berger, do announce a return of religion and promote the idea of the 'deprivatization or desecularization of religion' [8, 9]. I would suggest them to preserve their calm, as religion is far from being a volcano which erupts from time to time, and it has never left us. Where would we have been today without Gandhi, Reagan, Havel, Solzhenitsyn or Mandela, or without R. Guenon, F. Schuon, M. Eliade, E. Voegelin, R. Aron and so many others? To quote P. Țuțea: up in the trees.

Religious life supposes an assumed morality, which extends upon all the spheres of the social, including the allegedly imperialist economy. Someone thought that humans could be controlled better through money, if they are inoculated the ideal of getting rich at any cost, but this made them all fight against one another and quit morality. In Greece, the gods themselves were immoral, but Socrates (just as Xenophan or Antigone) was a great moralist, and he was condemned for not showing respect to the gods (!). Time of repentance did not fail to come, and virtues re-emerged to the surface. As there is such thing as moral conscience, beyond religious esotericism, our inner conscience, to which Kant made reference, which identifies vanities and vainglory, orgies and futilities, and which does not let you live. Death approaches and full barns prove to be useless.

Certain religious systems, such as original Protestantism and Confucianism, privilege morality. For instance, there is a difference, from a moral point of view, between obligations and duty, the latter being much more important (*quod erat demonstrandum*). Morality leads to order (*Cosmos*), and order leads to wellness. But this is not all. Morality is ontological, it is inscribed in conscience, it is irreducible. "Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but not the smallest letter shall pass from the Law" (Matthew 5.18). Remorse can be the worst punishment, this is why the justification of morality is an intrinsic one. Let us take an example: loving one's fellow. It is self-based, although it also has a religious and a scientific fundament: in the quantum field, we are one. Moreover, it is through one's love for one's fellow that Adam Smith justified, in *The Wealth of Nations*, the necessity and the opportunity of the economic approach [10].

With Plato, morality draws its roots in metaphysics, while with Kant it is an absolute imperative. Morality, I contend, is born within freedom. This is only apparently a paradox, as it is only in a climate of moral freedom that one can

choose, and it is better than when it is imposed. The question is where can we find this freedom? Within ourselves, by searching our inner depths. Pure freedom is waiting for us. Jankelevitch claims that the quintessence of the moral act unfolds itself in a climate of maximum freedom [2]. However, in any religion, the Law comes from above, it is not chosen. We will surpass this apparent paradox by asserting that the true freedom comes from observing the Law. This is explained by the fact that man depends on the Absolute. Even the wise man is only a spark stemming from Him.

What is the original sin, if not man's attempt to know all by himself, outside of the Law, an impossible fact given God's omniscience. This is an innocent sin, a sin without sin, if you wish, because God is and was and remains within us. What is the lost paradise? Everything that man knew when he didn't know 'anything'. A gift of grace. Thus, guided from within, man can both be foredoomed and endowed with free will, the theologians' dispute between the two is a false one. Thus, everything becomes a question of merit.

Moral rules should take into consideration the free will. God is not an 'absolute other', as Pascal thought. He is within me, and thus everything becomes a problem of consciousness. I would call consciousness Self consciousness, which means that I know who I am, I know what I do and I become a source of morality, and not an object of morality. Even religious commandments apply differently to each of us, function of each individual's consciousness. We do not consider that man's attitude towards his God should be one of humility, but one of piety. God, who manifests Himself in the immanent, does not lose anything of His transcendence, He is only the Absolute. Light out of Light, the Self can be transcended until it becomes the same as the Spirit. Until then, I am left with prayer.

I discover, my Lord, that I sometimes love you more and sometimes less, which is really tragic. This sign of my instability is also a sign of the immaturity of my love. According to Saint Augustine, there are no limits to love. If you love God as He loves you, than you can do whatever you please, for everything you will do will be as if it were done by God, therefore there is no need for morality, nor for commandments. The latter come from God, but as we are within God...

The Jesuits' Molinism places human freedom on the first level. This doctrine, which was imposed in the 16th century by Luis de Molina, states that Man is a collaborator in the manifestation of the supernatural. In the immanent, moral rule is thus a personal one and it has to be called in/by freedom, as something very attractive. There is no greater happiness than to have a clear conscience, to have no remorse, to be aware that divine grace, Christ's sacrifice has washed away every sin. The Son of Man has left for a certain time, but Christ endures forever. What can one say about the Almighty? There is nothing to be said, according to Wittgenstein, 'what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence' [11].

3. The happiness-maker

Jesus is the ‘chief cornerstone’, ‘the philosopher’s stone’, He established god as a Saviour on Earth. “No one comes to the Father, except through me” (John 14.6). Through forgiveness and love, although He explicitly condemned everything that had to be condemned. Jesus was not ‘tolerant’, as some say about themselves in order not to make things go better; as only love heals, not tolerance, given as a substitute. And healing means justification and right standing, it means order, and justification can be painful at first. This is true in all fields, including economy. ‘The stone’ I was talking about can make some stumble. It is not Jevons who teaches me how to be happy, but the author of the ‘Beatitudes’. *Ecce homo!* What a pity Pilate didn’t write a Gospel, too.

Religion, just as morality, is a form of conscience. It is the highest form of conscience than human race can acquire. If there is conscience, there is science and knowledge. As one can be dead in life and resurrect from any form of death. When a soul emerges from darkness and goes towards Light, we can say that it has resurrected, as it receives the consciousness of eternal life. In Antichrist, Nietzsche said that the world of the Gospels was like in Dostoevsky’s novels, an extremely interesting decadent painting, with a seducing charm, made of a mixture of the sublime, of illness and childlike [12]. Who is judging whom? What did the philosopher do with his life? What would he have become, had he understood the Resurrection? How many other smart people did the same thing? Empty intelligence can be an obstacle. The biggest obstacle. Some call it ‘scientific folly’, but, I have to say it again, science has its own rhythm, but there is hope. This is why I say: we need to know with our heart.

The worst thing is nihilism. We were then seized by a sort of myth mania, which also explains the Gospel thought a myth. So there would be no difference between Jesus and Bacchus. I do not deny the charm of myths; humankind would suffocate without myths. However, we are dealing here with Truth, and not with the myth of the Ante-Caesar, so to put it. Could so many Gospel authors, including the apocryphal ones, invent all of a sudden the same ‘myth’, all the more that some were splashed over with His blood? You shouldn’t climb a mountain to see the mice at its foot! This belief in the myth of Christianity founded all totalitarian systems, be them political, military or economic, over the last century.

Knowledge is more difficult, ignorance much more easier, but terribly misleading. Aren’t there enough stains on our cheeks that we need to wash away? An obscure author, Robertson, calls Jesus a ‘crucified ghost’ [13]. I do think that Robertson’s ghost is still wandering in search of the cross. Do you realize what a bleak spectrum of ignorance, what darkness is hovering over the world? What this can lead to? But could Jesus have never existed? What would humankind look like is He didn’t exist? What about our souls? What would you have done in the absence of the God of love?! Does this seem too pathetic?

Who could have invented Jesus? No one, let us face it. Could there be evangelists in the absence of the Word, “and all things were created by Him? He represents the poet and the poem, the Creator and the creation, the mystery and the miracle. Non-Christian witnesses speak about Him even before Christianity became a religion. But historians, Jewish, Roman or Greek, although they mention Him, do so in few words, so they do not consider Him to be important, but rather speak evil of Him (see, for instance, the letter Pliny the Younger, governor of the Roman province Bithynia, wrote to emperor Trajan in 111, and where he complains about the spread of the Christians, as if it were an epidemic). What do they do? “They sing a song to the Christ, as he were God”. He who has taken communion can understand this...

Human *pathos*, our whole sentimental and affective life should be subordinated to the spirit, which is directed upwards, and which does not exclude, but rather include the relationship with the other. Art cannot be of much help here. Nor the Hindu *Artha*. The strings of our heart can vibrate when we see Cecily, but that does not mean that we replace God with Cecily; we simply include her in a higher vibration, in a mystic drunkenness, which can include Gregory, which can include everybody, “that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you” (John 17.21).

Unlike what Goethe and many other Christians thought, the cross is not just for passions (“A living body will be better suited for passions”, says the poet), it is a pre-Christian and a much higher symbol, of life and of the renewal of life, of rebirth within the Spirit. All these things happened out of love. How can I feel close to philosophy when Kant rejects all affection, when he considers sentimental fervour as being ‘suspect’ and even ‘pathologic’? How can he take away my right to ardour? But there is no life without love, and pure love for God belongs to the sphere of the human, it does not represent just an abstract ideal. Just as Nietzsche, Kant rejects pity, compassion, which he considers ‘too emotional’, too ‘bleak’, and not a true moral feeling. I can only feel a deep pity for such statements and for those who uttered them.

4. The second Paradise

The relationships between God and man are not intermittent, as the ignorant majority might think. You cannot just talk to God five times a day like the Muslims do, and at fixed intervals. And we cannot even talk here about relationships, as this would involve two parties, when we are, in fact, just one. This is what religion is: *re-connection*; this is what morality is – one. We no longer read the *Holy Book*, and this is visible in everything we do. We forgot about the ‘Good news’, the *Gospel*, “wonder of all wonders, endless astonishment!”, as the great Gnostic Marcion called it. Additionally, a Jesuit monk stated it was not above all human books, but ‘beyond’ them, of a whole new nature. Dmitri Merejkowski goes even farther, considering that “the world, as we know it, and this book, cannot coexist; it is either the book, or the world, that is to come to an end” [13, p. 8].

The Heaven and the Earth will fade away – we are told; thus, the *Gospel* will remain, as the word of the new world, a word we stopped benefitting from – alas! – two thousand years ago, when God used to be with us. Some are still searching for Him in history, forgetting that time is nothing but illusion; God is in our hearts. Christ is born every moment and we keep crucifying Him. Will we ever completely accept ‘the Good news’? Will we start believing without constantly forgetting? Only then will we gain a new life, eternal, full of light, a second Paradise.

For two thousand years, people have gotten used to luxuriating in their habits, hidden under the cover of ignorance and dreaming about the Truth. In fact, they did not dream about the Truth, but the Truth dreamt about them. When the Truth came to them, showed them the Way and gave them Life, they continued their sleep. Like fog falling on our eyes, preventing us from seeing the light. We feel our way under false, feeble lights. It is like dark water staining our life, like a non-promised land, deprived of wonder, a land that no longer astonishes and no longer invites to worshipping. It is a land of death stepping on life, where the spirit is gradually fading away, turning us into obedient lifeless beings, completely deprived of the dignity of being. For one can only exist in dignity.

Free your mind, make peace with your thoughts and, within this state of innocence, read the Gospel as if it were the first time. You will shudder just like the first Christians did, you will be reborn reading and then living the words you read; the words will burn within us, lighting up the light, that inner light described in the parable of the ten virgins waiting for their Bridegroom. Light alone recognizes the light. And then the fire will burn up like the feeling of longing that you experience when love shows you the light in the eyes of the beloved person. You will see it right away! It is the first step.

Pascal states that Christianity begins with amazement. Abandon yourself in this amazement. It is the first step towards superior knowledge, towards the *gnosis*. Mathew and Plato equally state this, while Clement of Alexandria argues that he who restlessly seeks will find; he who discovers will be amazed; he who marvels, and he who inherits will find peace. Then you will learn to read the unwritten words, the blanks, the Spirit. You will become one with this Spirit. The *Gospel* also talks about your life, your salvation, in the name of God. Jesus has to live in you, if you want to live His life. “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2.20).

5. Suffering and love

What words are able to reunite a heart with its peace? What crystal world, transparent and immaculate may arise from a peaceful heart? What work may be greater than the one achieved by the indwelling Father? (John 14.10) I work with Him and all that is His is also mine, and all that is mine is also His. In fact, I do not have anything of my own. All that I have comes from divine grace. First of all, life: I have life from Him, as Son by spirit (John 1.10-14). The rest is

figment. This is why I shall no longer wonder, I shall return to the immutable Father. I shall cast away the face of creature and become one with Him “from God, in God and God” (Meister Eckart).

I shall rejoice in accomplishing justice more than the most righteous angel may rejoice. In this world, all suffering springs from love, and love springs from suffering. If I suffer because of the transient, it means that I love it, instead of loving God and the divine, which does not inflict suffering. What more can I wish for, than to have Him everywhere? Everything else is false, delusive, everything that does not come ‘from a full heart’. For there is a law of affinities, saying that the pure man loves purity, the righteous loves justice, the kind loves goodness, and so it is with all divine attributes. And man shall be known, as the Scriptures say, by his actions and harvest. And one Scripture says that the lowest level of the soul (which is life breath, let us not forget it) is, in fact, higher and nobler than all celestial heights. Why is man so cherished? Because he is one with the Father in heavens. This is eternal life: know God as you know yourself (John 17.3), and vice versa. Such a man is in God’s graces. Then suffering and love become one.

No vessel can contain two different drinks at the same time. When we change the drink, the vessel must remain empty and clean. Similarly, if one wants to be fulfilled with God, one must empty oneself from all that belongs to the creature. Saint Augustine said “To pray is to love, in order to empty oneself of worldly love and to fill oneself of God” [Order of Augustinian Recollects, *Decalogue of Prayer in Saint Augustine*, online at http://www.agustinosrecoletos.com/especiales/oraciones/index_eng.html]. Thus you will return and be one with the unity, from One and One, into love. As love overflows by its own nature, and through love, and only through love, we all become One, in His Saint Name.

Where there is love, there is no suffering “This is My commandment: Love one another as I have loved you!” (John 15.12) This is the Great Work. The outer work is done with the help of the inner work, drawn in a waterfall of divinity, which flows into the world and, soon, dresses in multitude, in plurality, involving the penumbral chasm, if only sparsely. But that is also doing the will of the One pure, untouched by any chasm. Thus one becomes a loved son, in whom the Father is loved and one feels as in His bosom.

I shall search the Truth of the Scripture within myself, in the Spirit in which it was written and spoken. For the Son is forever born in the Lord, in a love that He loves. Although Saint Paul said that the Lord tests with pain the ones that are to become His sons. But what pain may that be when the Lord is with you? Just as ‘willing’ comes from loving, ‘needing’ comes from not loving. Hence, we may be in need for a while – for as long as God decides to test us – but never deprived of His love. We shall abide everything joyfully, offering our life and this world, as humanly possible, until the promised army shall come.

I strive to retrieve the childhood state, that pure state, naive and innocent. Being credulous may be of more use than being a sceptic. In this sense, Jesus said: “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the

kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Luke 18.16). It was a state of grace, when everything around was enchanted, as in a fairytale. Everything was magic and authentic. Even the fairies were real. I read somewhere that if we activate our pituitary gland (‘the seventh seal’), it releases a hormone that opens ‘the fourth seal’ (*Anahata*) and increases again the thymus, which is the gland of the youth, a large one during childhood and small in older age. Hence, we could grow young and live in our bodies ‘even ten thousand years’.

It is certain that salvation comes from the inside, while we are waiting for it to emerge from the outside. “The Kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17.21) and “But seek first the Kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6.33). If we succeed in setting ourselves free from adversities and relighting in ourselves the divine spark that we experiment between order in chaos, and which represents all the charm we carry with us, we will rapidly achieve an explosion of Light. And then we return to the counsel of the ancient to know ourselves, for all we seek lies within us. As the good rabbi Bunam says, in Heinrich Zimmer’s and Mircea Eliade’s accounts: “There is something you cannot find anywhere else in the world, not even in the presence of the Righteous and the Saint (*the Zaddick*), but there is nevertheless a place where you can find it” [14]. That place is within us, of course. But once found, the treasure, the priceless pearl, does not have to be kept solely for ourselves; it must be offered to others also, to the indispensable Neighbour. He also has his treasure, but he may need help to find it. We all have it and it is one in One. But why did it take such a profound and long estrangement from ourselves, practically an alienation, to return to the not-place from where we left lost, in the rediscovered Self? It may be a ritualistic path. Like Andrei Pleșu says, ‘the Neighbour’ is valued only after a laborious experience of the ‘remote’ [15].

6. Conclusions

Two millennia later, Jesus remains unknown to us. We barely discern some ‘earthly fires’ flickering now and then to help us find the Way. But us, poor foolish people... History is never enough, you have to know the beginning and the end, Alpha and Omega; you can do this instantly, at any moment. Jesus is there forever, transcending history, judging it. “Remain in me, as I also remain in you” (John 15.4). He remains, but let us challenge ourselves in order to re(acquaint) Him, let us long for perfection, for we can only be perfect if Jesus Christ abides us, and we are aware of this.

What children know the wise men who mistake their shadows for their bodies and their bodies for their soul are ignorant of. Historians seek for the shadow of the Christ on Earth. But the Christ time cannot be mistaken for the mundane time, this is why true history begins with Him and it is a history of Salvation, not a history to be inscribed in books. For two thousand years we have been feeding ourselves with the wood of His cross. But Jesus Christ, although he took on a human nature and made Man perfect, remains unknown,

for many hearts are still hardened. Let the stone flow... and you shall experience miracles in your heart: Christ will be born with the whole Heaven of His Glory.

We are cosmic beings with reunified dignity. We haven't stolen light, it was given to us. We are not afraid, for we are responsibly established by our own ascension. Father Teofil Pîrîian said that "we are candidates for ascension" [16]. Let the current rebellious Europe know this, let it acknowledge that everybody is born for a reason, there is no *massa perditionis* and that the attitude we adopt is one we take forever. Who will save this seed of destruction that chased God out of the citadel? Who will wash these so-called leaders who lose their lives suffocating the wheat of the Lord and covering it with weeds? Christ alone. He did it already, but they do not know it. They will find out, however, at least when the Angel will sound his trumpet.

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