

1

Being and Its Presence

THE CONCEPT OF BEING is the most central concept of philosophy. The primary problem of every philosophical enquiry consists in the ascertainment of the reality of its object and, more particularly, of that reality that is presumed to be the reality *par excellence*, namely, the reality of being. Throughout the history of philosophy, the most general definition of being is the following: being is a structurally united, unique, and autonomous reality that lasts either by being “closed” (i.e., isolated) in itself or by tending to transcend its nature, expanding itself beyond its substantial constraints. In the first case, one conceives of being in a static way, whereas, in the latter, one conceives of being in a dynamic way. The basic perception of being that is formed by philosophizing consciousness originally stems from the real presence of man himself, but, at a later stage, this perception undergoes conscious processing in the context of which it is abstracted from its particularities, and, in this way, it facilitates the conception of the corresponding idea and the identification of its difference from and its functional connection with the world into whose functional presence the corresponding idea is integrated.

Every philosophical enquiry is concerned with the issue of being. Even when philosophical enquiry seems, *prima facie*, to be astounded at the cosmic order and to aim at investigating and interpreting the miracle of the world itself, it refers to the human being in an indirect way (i.e., from distance), and it aims at explaining the peculiar presence of the human being. On the one hand, humanity is related to the world, everything may seem to be an outgrowth of the world, and man persistently

tries to be integrated into the world according to the terms of a new equilibrium established by him. On the other hand, man imposes himself as the most magnificent manifestation of being, irrespective of whether one understands the human being in a static way (i.e., in isolation) or in a dynamic way (i.e., extended in the world). The idea of the human being as an independent and, to a large extent, free “whole” and, furthermore, as an indivisible actualization of a structural program underpins both materialist types of philosophical realism, such as the philosophies of Democritus (460–370 BC) and Epicurus (341–270 BC), and spiritualist types of philosophical realism, such as Plato’s theory of ideas and Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz’s monadology.¹¹⁵

The first cosmologizing Ionian philosophers (sixth and fifth centuries BC) sought the primary, mainly material, essence from which, according to their arguments, both the cosmic reality that surrounds the human presence and man himself as the “crown” of the cosmic reality had originated.¹¹⁶ In particular, according to Thales of Miletus, that primary essence was water; according to Anaximenes, it was air; according to Heraclitus, it was fire and the continuous changing of reality; according to Anaximander, it was infinity (in Greek, *āpeiron*), an endless, unlimited mass subject to neither old age nor decay, which perpetually yields fresh materials from which everything we can perceive is derived; according to Empedocles, it was a system of attractive and repulsive functions of the elements of matter. However, it was Parmenides, a Presocratic Greek philosopher from Elea in Magna Graecia, active in the earlier part of the fifth century BC, who first articulated a conception of being according to its wholeness, its uniqueness, and its dynamism, and he founded ontology as the focus of the philosophical investigation of reality.

From Parmenides’s perspective, being is a whole (in Greek, *houlon*), specifically, a unique set that imposes itself by being, and it opposes everything that is not. In the context of Parmenides’s ontology, being and non-being are not reducible to each other: “For this shall never be proved, that the things that are not are.”¹¹⁷ The previous dualist argument is the starting point of the classical Platonic perception of ideas as “real beings”¹¹⁸ (in Greek, *ōntos ōnta*). However, in his dialogue *Sophist*, Plato

115. Laos, *The Metaphysics of World Order*, chapters 1 and 3.

116. Graham, *Explaining the Cosmos*.

117. Parmenides, *Poem of Parmenides*, VII.

118. Proclus, *Initia philosophiae ac theologiae ex Platonicis fontibus ducta*, 152. Additionally, see Laos, *The Metaphysics of World Order*, chapter 1.

reconsidered the issue of being, and he argued that being and non-being are the extreme terms of an ontological series whose intermediate terms are the non-being of being and the being of non-being. According to Plato, the previous intermediate ontological terms (i.e., the non-being of being and the being of non-being) explain the presence of the world. In Plato's *Sophist*, the Stranger argues that, contrary to Parmenides, non-being is an essential condition of the existence of any object, because every object, except only being itself, participates in otherness in relation to being, and, therefore, in the extent to which they are "other than being," they must be described as "non-being." According to the Stranger, movement and rest and all other "forms," with the sole exception of being itself, are "non-beings," because, even though they participate in being, they participate also in otherness in relation to being, and, therefore, they are not identical to being.

Moreover, in the third century AD, the aforementioned Platonic argument was endorsed and developed further by Neoplatonism. In his *Enneads*, Plotinus identified four hypostases (or underlying states or substances). In particular, Plotinus's ontology is based on an ontological series of four hypostases: the totally transcendent "One" (which is beyond all categories of being and non-being, containing no division, multiplicity or distinction); the first emanation from the "One" is the "Nous" (which can be construed as "the divine mind" or "order"), which Plotinus identified (at least metaphorically) with the Demiurge (who can be construed as the "divine Architect") of Plato's *Timaeus* (unlike the "One," the "Nous" is not a self-sufficient entity, but it is capable of contemplating both the "One," as its prior, as well as its own thoughts and the ideas that are in its spiritual nature and they correspond to Plato's ideas); from the "Nous" emanates the "Soul" (in Greek, *Psychē*), the dynamic, creative temporal power, which itself is subdivided into the upper aspect, or "World Soul" (precisely, the contemplative part that governs the world and remains in contact with the "Nous," ensuring that the individual embodied souls eventually return to their true divine state within the "Nous"), and the lower aspect, which, according to Plotinus, is identified with "Nature," and it allows itself to be multiply divided into individual human souls. Finally, Plotinus, using the terminology of Plato's *Sophist*, describes matter as non-being.

In his own ontological works, Dionysius the Areopagite¹¹⁹ proposes a hierarchical ordering of beings according to their natural placements

119. The works of Dionysius the Areopagite are commonly referred to as the *Corpus*

and their freedoms and, also, according to the simultaneous immediacy of the unknown God's presence. In the context of Dionysius the Areopagite's ontological hierarchy, matter is not merely described as non-being, since, according to Dionysius the Areopagite, there is an epistemological, yet non-ontological, continuity between the Absolute and matter. During the era of modern philosophy, the perception of continuity between the Absolute and matter was reformulated by Baruch Spinoza's monistic philosophy, in the context of which there is an ontological continuity between the Absolute and matter (in contrast to Dionysius the Areopagite, Spinoza espoused pantheism).¹²⁰

Aristotle, mainly in his *Metaphysics*, articulated an ontology that provides a solid philosophical foundation for the interpretation of reality. In his ontology, Aristotle emphasized the distinction between being potentially (potentiality) and being actually (actuality). The previous distinction depends on a process of change ("becoming") according to which being is increasingly actualized and imposed, following its "entelechy;" a model that is intrinsic to being and constitutes the program of actualization of being; the previous program (i.e., entelechy) remains unchanged, independently of the particular changes that being may undergo. According to Aristotle, being is the simplest possible presence that can be perceived by the human mind, but it is not totally simple; being can be thought of as a resultant of categories.¹²¹ In his *Categories*, Aristotle argued that the categories of being are ten, namely: substance, quantity, quality, relatives (relation), somewhere (location), sometime (time), being in a position (position), having (possession), acting, and being acted upon (undergoing). In addition, in Aristotle's philosophy, substances are further divided into first and second: first substances are individual objects; second substances are the species in which first substances (i.e., individuals) inhere.

Aristotle's successors, including Plotinus, classified the categories of being as follows: substance, form, relation (between substance and form), time, and space. The previous categories are characteristics associated with being. Aristotle, like Plato, transcended the Parmenidean antithesis between being and non-being; Aristotle's method of transcending it was based on the distinction between being potentially and being actually. The entirety of medieval ontological thought was preoccupied with

Areopagiticum or *Corpus Dionysiacum*.

120. Laos, *The Metaphysics of World Order*, 60–61.

121. The word "category" is derived from the Greek *kategorēin*, meaning to predicate.

Plato's and Aristotle's solutions to the problem of the antithesis between being and non-being, a problem that was originally posed by Parmenides in the fifth century BC and continues to exist as an object of philosophical debate and enquiry in the context of modern philosophy.¹²²

In his *Topica*, the Roman philosopher and statesman Cicero (106–43 BC) mentions that Aristotle “was not known to the rhetorician, inasmuch as he is not much known even to philosophers, except to a very few,” because “the obscurity of the subject” discouraged them from reading Aristotle's books (I.1). Thus, in ancient Western Europe, a few philosophers wrote introductory textbooks on Aristotle's philosophy. One such textbook was Cicero's aforementioned *Topica* (Cicero wrote *Topica* for the benefit of his friend Gaius Trebatius Testa). Another such textbook was Porphyry's *Introduction to the Logical Categories of Aristotle* (known simply as the *Introduction*).

Porphyry was a Syrian student of Plotinus's. In 268 AD, Porphyry experienced a serious depressive episode, and he wanted to commit suicide. His teacher convinced him not to. In his book *On the Life of Plotinus*, Porphyry writes that Plotinus told him that the tendency to commit suicide does not spring “from reason but from mere melancholy,” and he advised him “to leave Rome” (11). Following Plotinus's advice, Porphyry left for Sicily. In Sicily, in 270 AD, Porphyry learned about Plotinus's death. A few years after Plotinus's death, Porphyry returned to Rome and became the head of Plotinus's school there. During his stay in Sicily, Porphyry wrote his seminal book *Introduction*. In the sixth century AD, the Roman philosopher Boethius translated Porphyry's *Introduction* in Latin, and, in the same century, the Syrian theologian Sergius of Resaina translated it in the Syrian language. Moreover, in the eighth century AD, Porphyry's *Introduction* was translated in the Armenian language, and, in the tenth century AD, it was translated in Arabic. In the cultural history of both Western Europe and the Arabs, Porphyry's *Introduction* was the first systematic educational textbook on logic.

In his *Introduction*, Porphyry studies Aristotle's arguments about “what genus, difference, species, property, and accident are.” In the first chapter, Porphyry poses the following problem: whether genera and species “subsist (in the nature of things) or in mere conceptions only; whether also if subsistent, they are bodies or incorporeal, and whether they are separate from, or in, sensibles, and subsist about these.” However, Porphyry does not provide an explicit solution to the previous problem,

122. Scruton, *Modern Philosophy*.

which he himself posed, and he argues that a solution to the previous problem “requires another more extensive investigation.”

Why does Porphyry’s *Introduction* not provide an explicit solution to the aforementioned ontological problem? The answer lies in the Neoplatonic argument that Aristotle was a Platonist, an argument that was widely accepted in the Hellenistic period. In this context, Porphyry wrote a book entitled *On the One School of Plato and Aristotle*. Therefore, in his *Introduction*, Porphyry avoided to delve into a problem (i.e., the ontology of genera and species) with regard to which Aristotle’s arguments are different from Plato’s theory of ideas.

In what follows, I shall study the aforementioned ontological problem, which Porphyry failed to investigate in his *Introduction*. In his *Phaedo*, Plato formulates his theory of ideas as follows: “if a person says to me that the bloom of color, or form, or any such thing is a source of beauty, I leave all that, which is only confusing to me, and . . . hold and am assured in my own mind that nothing makes a thing beautiful but the presence and participation of beauty,” and he goes on as follows: “I stoutly contend that by beauty all beautiful things become beautiful . . . this principle will never be overthrown . . . by beauty beautiful things become beautiful” (100c–e). In addition, Plato clarifies his method as follows: “this was the method which I adopted: I first assumed some principle which I judged to be the strongest, and then I affirmed as true whatever seemed to agree with this, whether relating to the cause or to anything else; and that which disagreed I regarded as untrue” (100a). Furthermore, in his *Timaeus*, Plato makes the following distinction: “What is that which is existent always and has no becoming? And what is that which is becoming always and never is existent? . . . [T]he one of these is apprehensible by thought with the aid of reasoning . . . whereas the other is an object of opinion with the aid of unreasoning sensation” (27d–28a). As I argued in my book *The Metaphysics of World Order*, “according to Plato, reducing a collection of phenomena to an idea is equivalent to understanding their unity into a ‘whole’ which is a universal signification or value (idea).”¹²³

On the other hand, Aristotle argues that Socrates never claimed that universals (genera and species) are self-subsistent. Thus, departing from Plato’s thesis about the nature of universals, Aristotle writes in his *Metaphysics*: “There are two innovations which may fairly be ascribed to Socrates: inductive reasoning and general definition . . . whereas Socrates

123. Laos, *The Metaphysics of World Order*, 13.

regarded neither universals nor definitions as existing in separation, the others gave them a separate existence, and to these universals and definitions of existing things they gave the name of ideas.”¹²⁴ Furthermore, Aristotle clarifies his own perspective as follows: “we must observe that some causes can be stated universally, but others cannot. The proximate principles of all things are the proximate actual individual and another individual which exists potentially. Therefore the proximate principles are not universal.”¹²⁵ In the previous section of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle, goes on as follows: “it is the particular that is the principle of particulars; ‘man’ in general is the principle of ‘man’ in general, but there is no such person as ‘man,’ whereas Peleus is the principle of Achilles and your father of you.”

In *Metaphysics*, 1038b, Aristotle expounds his variant of Platonism as follows: “The universal also is thought by some to be in the truest sense a cause and a principle[;] . . . it seems impossible that any universal term can be substance.” In the same section of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle elaborates on the previous argument as follows: First of all, “the substance of an individual is the substance which is peculiar to it and belongs to nothing else; whereas the universal is common; for by universal we mean that which by nature appertains to several things.” Thus, Aristotle is concerned with the following question: “Of what particular, then, will the universal be the substance?” His answer to the previous question is the following: “Either of all or of none. But it cannot be the substance of all; while, if it is to be the substance of one, the rest also will be that one; because things whose substance is one have also one essence and are themselves one.”

Secondly, Aristotle elaborates on the following argument: “substance means that which is not predicated of a subject, whereas the universal is always predicated of some subject. But perhaps although the universal cannot be substance in the sense that essence [or nature] is, it can be present in the essence, as ‘animal’ can be present in ‘man’ and ‘horse.’”¹²⁶ His response to the previous argument is the following: “Again, it is impossible and absurd that the individual or substance, if it is composed of anything, should be composed not of substances nor of the individual, but of a quality; for then non-substance or quality will be prior to substance or the individual. Which is impossible.”

124 Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1078b27–34.

125. Ibid. 1071a17–22.

126 Ibid. 1038b.

In Plato's philosophy, the reality of the world of ideas constitutes the supratemporal truth of beings, and the existence of beings stems from *methexis*, precisely, from their participation in the world of ideas. In other words, in the context of Plato's philosophy, the reality of the world of ideas is not a product of intellectual abstraction, but everything takes place with relation to the reality of the world of ideas. In order to understand better Plato's theory of ideas, let us consider, for instance, the following question: "What is bravery?" From the perspective of Plato's theory of ideas, when one asks this question, one does not seek to define the concept of bravery (as Aristotle will do later), but one aims at projecting the multitude of the empirical forms of bravery (e.g., "a brave man," "a brave woman," "a brave lion," etc.) into the unity of the idea of bravery as a universal spiritual reference.¹²⁷ Thus, by perceiving the unity of the idea as a universal spiritual reference, Plato perceives the spiritual unity of various empirical forms, and this is the essence of Plato's dialectic.¹²⁸

A "concept" is an abstraction or generalization. Abstraction was originally discovered by Aristotle. Plato's ideas are not abstractions, since the scope of Plato's dialectic was to take a synoptic view, in the context of which a multitude of phenomena refer to the unity of the corresponding idea; in other words, out of many, there emerges the one. In the context of Plato's philosophy, species and ideas declare the visible, rational form of the life-giving and all-encompassing "One," and, in the context of the *theoria*¹²⁹ of the "One" (i.e., metaphorically speaking, by gazing at the life-giving and all-encompassing "One"), the truth of idea is identical to the reality of substance. In other words, according to Plato, "truth" and "reality" are mutually inseparable.

On the other hand, Aristotle perceived the abstract character of concepts, and, from this perspective, he argued that Platonic ideas bring about a pointless doubling of the world. However, Aristotle and Plato agree that the object of knowledge does not consist in intellectual abstractions, but in the universal. Aristotle argues that being exists according to its substance (i.e., its actual matter), and the "material" cause (or mode of being) is supplemented by a formal (in Greek, *morphikōn*) cause

127. By the term "reference," I mean a relation that obtains between certain sorts of representational tokens (e.g., names, mental states, pictures) and objects.

128. Plato, *Phaedrus* 265d, and *Republic* 537c. Moreover, see Laos, *The Metaphysics of World Order*, 12–13.

129. The Greek word *theoria* means "gaze"; it is etymologically derived from the Greek words *thēa* ("view") and *horān* ("to see").

(or mode of being) which is due to the species; in this case, the term “species” is mainly a synonym for the Platonic term “idea.”

According to Aristotle’s *Physics*, *Categories*, and *Metaphysics*, form is predicated of matter as subject, substantial individuals are hylomorphic compounds (i.e., compounds of matter and form), and one can always analyze a hylomorphic compound into its predicates and the subject of which they are predicated. The role of form in this hylomorphic context is the topic of Aristotle’s *Categories* Z.7–9. Form is the principle of determination which accounts for the species of beings. Matter is the principle of potentiality, whereas form is the principle of actuality. According to Aristotle, whether we are thinking of natural objects (e.g., plants and animals) or artifacts (e.g., houses), we do not produce the matter (to suppose that we do leads to an infinite regress) nor do we produce the form (we cannot create form out of nothing), but we put the form into the matter, and, thus, we produce the compound.¹³⁰ Furthermore, according to Aristotle, both the matter and the form must pre-exist,¹³¹ but the source of motion in both cases (what Aristotle calls the “moving cause” of the coming to be) is the form. In artistic production, the form is found in the soul of the artisan (“the art of building is the form of the house,”¹³² and “the form is in the soul”¹³³). For instance, the builder has in mind the plan for a house, he knows how to build, and, ultimately, he “enmatters” that plan by putting it into the materials out of which he builds the house. In natural production, the form is found in the parent (“the begetter is of the same species as the begotten, not one in number but one in form—for man begets man”¹³⁴). Even though Aristotle substitutes species for Plato’s transcendent ideas, thus articulating a hylomorphic philosophy, he argues that knowledge is a mental function, and that the mind is immortal¹³⁵ and arises from the outside¹³⁶ (in Greek, *thyrathen*). Since, according to Aristotle, the mind arises from the outside, it is not confined to its own products (i.e., intellectual abstractions), but it can achieve *Good*, which refers to knowledge for knowledge’s sake, and it seeks the cause of being, in general. Therefore, Aristotle’s theory of being remains Platonic.

130. Aristotle, *Categories* 1033a30–b9.

131. *Ibid.*, 1034b12.

132. *Ibid.*, 1034a24.

133. *Ibid.*, 1032b23.

134. *Ibid.*, 1033b30–32.

135. Aristotle, *On the Soul*, III, 5.

136. Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, II, 3.

In addition to the material and the formal causes, Aristotle acknowledges two more causes, specifically, the efficient cause and the final cause. The efficient cause refers to the event that accounts for being, i.e., to the event that has produced and controls the existence of being. The final cause refers to the event at which being is aimed, and which is fulfilled by the existence of the given being. Hence, no being exists independently, since its existence is due to a factor that transcends the given being; the only exception, Aristotle contends, is the “prime mover,” which is the cause of itself and the first of all substances. According to Aristotle, the “prime mover” is a logical necessity, since there cannot be an infinite regress in essentially subordinated causes. The *telos*, or purpose, of being, which can be regarded as the reversal of being’s dependence on an efficient cause, is the existential vindication of being. The *telos* of being exists within being, and the non-fulfillment of the *telos* of being implies that such a being has no reason to exist, it is irrational and purposeless. In his book *On the Soul*, Aristotle argues that the soul is the formal, the efficient, and the final cause of the body.

The aforementioned ontological issues, which clarify the relation between Plato’s philosophy and Aristotle’s philosophy, were not addressed by Porphyry in his *Introduction*. However, in his *Commentary on Porphyry’s Introduction*, Boethius, a sixth-century AD Roman philosopher, addresses the problem of the nature of universals: “Porphyry bears in mind that it is an introduction he is writing, so he keeps to the style of a textbook. This is why he says he avoids the tangles of deeper questions and limits himself to a few reasonable conjectures about the simple ones.”¹³⁷ Boethius mentions that these deeper questions that Porphyry promises not to discuss in his *Introduction* are the following: (i) “Everything comprehended by the mind is either based in the real world, in which case the mind conceptualizes it and represents it to itself intellectually, or else it is not, in which case the mind represents it to itself through an empty image.” (ii) “If genus and species are said to be immaterial, we come down to another urgent problem demanding a solution: do they exist immanently in bodies themselves, or might they also exist as immaterial substances over and above bodies?”¹³⁸

In his *Commentary on Porphyry’s Introduction*, Boethius accepts that “it must not be thought that a concept is false simply because it is

137 Boethius, *Commentary on Porphyry’s Introduction* I.158–61.

138. For more details, see Chadwick, *Boethius*.

not an exact representation of its objects . . . someone who does this by compounding is deceived (e.g., when they think centaurs exist because they have joined a horse and a human),” but he argues that “someone who does it by analyzing, abstracting, and taking them [concepts] out of the things in which they exist, not only is not deceived, but is the only person who can discover what is genuinely true.”¹³⁹ In his previous argument, Boethius failed to bear in mind the difference between a “concept” (which is a product of intellectual abstraction, and, hence, can be known through analysis and syllogism) and a Platonic “idea” (which transcends the intellect, and can be known through methexis, i.e., through one’s participation in its reality). By failing to understand the difference between intellectual abstraction and participation in Platonic ideas, Boethius cannot understand the spiritual core of Plato’s philosophy. Additionally, by not paying enough attention to Aristotle’s argument that the mind arises from the outside, and, therefore, it is not confined to its own products (i.e., intellectual abstractions), Boethius cannot understand that, even though Aristotle substitutes species for Plato’s transcendent ideas, Aristotle’s theory of being remains Platonic. Thus, in his *Commentary on Porphyry’s Introduction*, Boethius argues as follows: “In one sense, genera and species do actually exist, but in another sense they are conceived: they are indeed immaterial, but they exist in sensible things in conjunction with sensible characteristics; on the other hand, they are conceived of as self-subsistent, and not as having their being in other things.”¹⁴⁰ Having a grossly misguided understanding of Plato’s and Aristotle’s philosophies, Boethius maintains that our mind needs to overcome the fallacies that are caused by “compounding” (*per compositionem*) and to contemplate pure species *through abstraction* (as opposed to methexis). Finally, Boethius argues that he does not consider it fitting for him “to judge between the opinions of these two [Plato and Aristotle], for that is in the province of deeper philosophy.”¹⁴¹

Boethius and the well-known Christian theologian and philosopher Augustine of Hippo¹⁴² (354–430 AD) confused Aristotle’s general

139. Boethius, *Commentary on Porphyry’s Introduction* I.165–66.

140. *Ibid.* I.166–67.

141. *Ibid.* 11.111.

142. Augustine of Hippo is venerated as a saint in both Eastern and Western Christianity. However, the Eastern Orthodox Church does not accept some of Augustine’s teachings, because they reflect his Manichean background. According to the Manicheans, who were a gnostic sect, there are two principles in the world: one of the light

concepts (universals) with Platonic ideas, i.e., they were assuming that Aristotle's universals were radically separate from the material world, but, contrary to Plato, they were treating Platonic ideas as if they were logical substances. The Neoplatonic distinction between the sensible world and the intelligible world dominated in Boethius's scholarly work, which exerted significant influence on the West during the early Middle Ages.¹⁴³ Until the thirteenth century AD, Boethius's scholarly work was the major channel through which the Latin West was accessing Greek philosophy; however, that channel was molded and determined by the characteristics of Latin culture. The difference between Greek culture and Latin culture corresponds to the difference between philosophy (Greeks) and law (Latins).¹⁴⁴ As a result, the primary pursuit of the Greek East is the ontological wholeness, or perfection, of the human being, whereas the primary pursuit of the Latin West is the historical self-affirmation of the human being, since Greek philosophy expresses a quest for metaphysics, whereas the Latin legal tradition expresses a quest for rhetorical power. Traditionally, the Greek East is focused on the integration of the world into the divine economy, whereas the West fights against the world, in the sense that, under the influence of its own Neoplatonic tradition, the West "exiles" God to intelligible spheres, and, thus, ultimately, by abandoning the world to the utilitarian plans of individuals who seek their historical self-affirmation, the West espouses the logic of worldly necessities, transforming spirit into historical power. The espousal of the

(spirit) and one of darkness (matter). Marriage, the Manicheans maintain, is of the devil's law, because the birth of children only continuously imprisons souls in new bodies. Moreover, with regard to Christ, Manicheans believed that Christ had taken upon himself nothing human in the incarnation, and that his crucifixion, death, and resurrection never actually took place. Even though, in his early 30s, Augustine of Hippo converted to Christianity, he maintained a Manichean-like dualistic way of thinking. Nevertheless, the ongoing influence of the gnostics' dualism on Augustine's thought was likely not something he was aware of (at least, not something he would have accepted as true), and it was present only as a significantly modified form of the dualism.

143. Chadwick, *Boethius*.

144. The intellectual roots of Roman law can be traced back to the book *Dodecadeltos* (in Latin, *Duodecim tabularum*), which was written by the Greek philosopher and jurist Hermodorus, who was born in Ephesus, in the fifth century BC, and he was a student of the famous Greek philosopher Heraclitus. However, whereas ancient Greek jurisprudence was always placed within a broader metaphysical framework in order to serve the goal of *theoria*, i.e., the ontological integration and perfection of man, Roman law, gradually, gave primacy to the pursuit of practical, managerial goals over the pursuit of spiritual goals.

logic of worldly necessities, which leads to the transformation of spirit into historical power, is the essence of secularization.

By assuming, in Neoplatonic fashion, that Aristotle's universals were radically separate from the material world and by construing Platonic ideas as if they were logical substances, the West has proclaimed that individual consciousness is a foundation of truth. The previous distinction (i.e., the distinction between Aristotle's universals and the material world) is founded on the Neoplatonic and Augustinian concept of man as a union between two totally distinct substances, namely, an immaterial soul and a material body. Moreover, in the context of Western culture, the previous distinction is associated with a broader distinction between the sensible world and the intelligible world; from the latter distinction, which underpins Western mysticism, Augustine of Hippo infers that the human soul knows only through an inward experience and not through its relation to the body, and that the salvation of man comes after one's soul has ascended to the intelligible world.

In his *De ordine*, Augustine defines reason (*ratio*) as "a mental operation capable of distinguishing and connecting things that are learned."¹⁴⁵ Additionally, in his *Soliloquies* I.6:12—8:15 and *De immortalitate animae*, 6.10, Augustine follows the terminology of Cicero's philosophy of law and describes reason as the "look" or "gaze" (*aspectus*) of the soul that may be oriented, through the body, toward the corporeal world or, alternatively, inward and upward toward intelligible reality. If Augustine is certain of anything, it is the rationality of the soul. In *De ordine* II, he describes reason as a discursive movement of the soul, and he thrice considers the exact relation between reason and the soul.

Augustine makes the distinction between superior reason (*ratio superior*), which gives knowledge of the eternal and incorporeal and underpins wisdom, or intellectual knowledge (*sapientia*), and inferior reason (*ratio inferior*), which gives knowledge only of the temporal and corporeal and underpins sense knowledge (*scientia*).¹⁴⁶ Whereas the Orthodox church fathers, particularly the Hesychasts (to whom I refer extensively in chapter 4), maintain that the glory of God in the experience of humanity's deification has no similarity whatsoever with any kind of created knowledge, the Augustinian theologians believe that they are united with the uncreated ideas of God's intellect of which creatures

145 Augustine, *De Ordine* II. 1.30.

146. Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* II.9

are supposedly copies. In other words, the Augustinian theologians treat God's wills as if they were logical substances in God's intellect, and, therefore, they give rise to a kind of theology that begins in rationalism and culminates in mysticism. In contradistinction to the Orthodox church fathers, Augustinian Neoplatonism searches for mystical experiences of supposed transcendent, ideational realities by liberating the mind from the confines of the body. On the other hand, as I explain in chapters 4 and 5, from the perspective of the Orthodox church fathers, particularly the Hesychasts, Orthodox theology is "secret" (in Greek, *mystikē*), in the sense that it consists in an ontologically founded mystical experience of human deification: the experience of humanity's deification through our participation in God's uncreated energies transcends any kind of created knowledge and propositional language.

In medieval Western Europe, the Augustinian distinction between superior reason and inferior reason led to the argument that inferior reason does not lead to truth, because the propositions that are based on inferior reason stem from the use of discursive reasoning in order to analyze and organize sensible things. Later on, during the medieval history of Western Europe, Augustine's superior reason was identified with the intellect, and, therefore, in the twelfth century AD, Bernard of Clairvaux, a French abbot and the primary builder of the reforming Cistercian monastic order, made the distinction between understanding through faith (*intellectus fidei*) and judgment based on discursive thinking (*judicium rationis*).¹⁴⁷ After the aforementioned developments in the intellectual history of Western Europe, and given that the rationalism of Western spirit stems from the decision to acknowledge the certainty of consciousness as a criterion of truth, the individualism of the Western spirit, which I have just delineated, gave rise to a quest for the control of reason by an authority whose declared purpose would be to ensure that man would always be aware of rational truth. The previous quest for the control of reason was one of the main issues of scholasticism, which I shall methodically study in chapter 2.

Scholasticism—namely, a rationalist method and, generally, a rationalist philosophy that dominated teaching by the academics ("scholastics," "schoolmen") of medieval universities in Western Europe from about 1100 to 1700—followed and developed further the aforementioned rationalist legacy of Boethius and Augustine. Therefore, as I shall explain

147. Storrs, *Bernard of Clairvaux*.

in detail in chapter 2, even though the history of scholasticism is inextricably linked to the Vatican's attempt to impose itself as the supreme authority on reason, scholasticism signals the emergence of a peculiar rationalist kind of humanism, in the sense that, according to scholasticism, God is the supreme being, and the human being can access the supreme being syllogistically, particularly, through natural theology, which consists in speculating about God in a manner similar to man's speculations about the natural world and its structure. Even though many scholastic philosophers emphatically argue that the Pope is the final authority on reason, and, hence, that the Pope's authority should guide natural theology, scholasticism, in general, and natural theology, in particular, ignore the methexiological character of Plato's theory of ideas, which I shall study further in chapters 2 and 3. In other words, scholasticism signals an attempt of the Western individual to assert his epistemological autonomy from God, and, therefore, scholasticism, involuntarily, opened the way to modern philosophy, in the context of which philosophical consciousness explicitly and completely asserted its autonomy from both God and the Papacy.

In the seventeenth century, René Descartes (Latinized: Renatus Cartesius), the acknowledged father of modern philosophy, attempted to reverse scholastic ontology, which was founded on the aforementioned peculiarly Western, Neoplatonic interpretation of Aristotle's metaphysics. Descartes was not an atheist, but, starting from Galileo's principle about the validity of mathematical proof, and arguing that philosophy can provide valid knowledge if it follows the deductive method of mathematics, he elevated the logic of *evidentia* into a criterion of truth,¹⁴⁸ and he proposed a geometrical theory of reality. Moreover, Descartes formulated a physical theory, in the context of which phenomena are explained only through the geometry of space and the laws of motion in a given space. Thus, Descartes proposed a soul-body dualism, arguing that the body's movements depend on formal biological processes and that the essence of body is extension while the essence of soul is thought. In other words, in the context of Cartesianism, the soul is not capable of movement and cannot give force to bodies, since it is assumed that it is essentially unrelated to the body. In Descartes's philosophy, metaphysics plays only an

148. According to Descartes's principle of *evidentia*, a thing is true if it is evident in consciousness, and, thus, in a fashion of mathematical axioms, one can formulate the first "evident" ideas, from which one can deduce universal laws; hence, the universe reduces to a mechanistic system.

auxiliary role, in the sense that it underpins Descartes's attempt to mathematize everything. Since he assigns primary significance to the principle of thought (*cogito*), Descartes—in contradistinction to ancient Greek metaphysical philosophers—appeals to metaphysics not in order to seek the prime principle, but in order to find ontological underpinnings for the rational study of physical problems.

In his *Metaphysical Meditations*, Descartes argued that being is present both in itself, i.e., independently of consciousness, and in consciousness, which, in its turn, is exactly the consciousness of being, and it underpins being.¹⁴⁹ Through the previous argument, Descartes and his “school” (namely, Nicolas Malebranche, Baruch Spinoza, and Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz) founded modern ontology. Reacting against the ontological excesses of Leibniz¹⁵⁰ and especially of Christian Wolff,¹⁵¹ Immanuel Kant, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, acknowledged the necessity

149. Laos, *The Metaphysics of World Order*, 58–60.

150. In his *Monadology*, Leibniz argues that the activity of soul corresponds to “monads,” which are immaterial, unextended, self-determining, and purposive substances (forces). Moreover, according to Leibniz, every monad is a process of evolution, it animates matter, it has perception and appetition, and it realizes its nature with an inner necessity. In his theological essays, Leibniz argues that God created the monads, and He transcends all monads, but man, even though he is a limited monad, can maximize the qualities which every monad possesses to a certain degree, and, in this way, man can achieve a partial knowledge of God, since, Leibniz contends, God is suprarational but not contra-rational. In Leibniz's philosophy, monads are united with regard to their existential *telos*, and, in this way, Leibniz sought to synthesize Descartes's ontology and biblical teleology, but, according to Leibniz, monads are mutually distinct and separate, and, therefore, they are entities-in-themselves. In Leibniz's philosophy, the knowledge of the whole, or God, concerns each monad individually as a conscious entity, and, therefore, ultimately, Leibniz's philosophy advocates and intensifies the individualism of the Cartesian ego. Laos, *The Metaphysics of World Order*, 62–63.

151. Christian Wolff redefined philosophy as the science of the possible, and, more or less, his philosophical work is a common-sense adaptation of Leibniz's monadology (Jolley, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Leibniz*). Thus, according to Wolff's *Ontologia*, the task of the philosopher is to provide “the manner and reason” of every possible thing, since, according to Wolff, everything, whether possible or actual, has a “sufficient reason” for why it is rather than not. In section 56 of his *Ontologia*, Wolff defines “sufficient reason” as that from which it is understood why something is or can be. In the “Preface” to his *Critique of Pure Reason* (2nd ed.), Kant argued that Wolff is “the greatest of all dogmatic philosophers.” Wolff's “strict method” in science, Kant argues, is based on “the regular ascertainment of . . . principles, the clear determination of . . . concepts, the attempt at strictness in . . . proofs, and the prevention of audacious leaps in inferences” (quoted in: Winkler, “Kant, the Empiricists, and the Enterprise of Deduction,” 41).

of the thing-in-itself, but he argued that the thing-in-itself is not knowable, and he accepted only its transcendentalism.¹⁵²

In his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, the major representative of German romantic idealism, proposed an alternative solution to the old, Parmenidean-like, ontological controversy.¹⁵³ According to Hegel, the thing-in-itself, namely, being, is the idea (universal reason) which, by giving rise to a contradiction to itself, moves away from itself in order, ultimately, to return to itself enriched by its adventure. Through his dialectical method, Hegel sought to synthesize the perception of being and the perception of becoming. According to Aristotle, the transition from potentiality to actuality indicates a principle of becoming that consists in the actualization of an ontological program (entelechy), but, on the other hand, according to Hegel, the transition from the “in-itself” to the “for-itself” through the “outside-itself” indicates a principle of becoming that consists in a process of alteration that resembles Heraclitus’s model of the world and is actualized in a clearly organized way, which is the core of Hegel’s secular teleology. Thus, ultimately, in Hegel’s philosophy, being is identified with historical becoming, and history takes the place of God.¹⁵⁴

Until now, the verbal form “to be” (in Greek, *einai*) and the present participle “being” (in Greek, *on*) have been used indiscriminately, but they correspond to different realities, and, more specifically, to different, yet complementary, aspects of reality itself. The difference between the verbal form “to be” and the present participle “being” has been emphasized by the philosophy of existence, known also as existentialism. The intellectual roots of existentialism can be traced back to the works of Augustine of Hippo and Blaise Pascal, but its pioneer in the context of modern philosophy is Søren Kierkegaard,¹⁵⁵ while Martin Heidegger¹⁵⁶ is the most prominent representative of existentialism. Whereas Aristotelian ontology emphasizes the essence of being (i.e., that of which a thing consists), what is most important in existentialism is not the essence of being, but its presence, its existence, the event that, somehow, it exists and is before me, or independently of me, or that it is me. In other words, from the perspective of existentialism, what is significant is that I am

152. Laos, *The Metaphysics of World Order*, 74–81.

153. *Ibid.*, 81–87.

154. *Ibid.*, 85.

155. *Ibid.*, 94–98.

156. *Ibid.*, 101–6.

consciously aware of my own existence and of that which exists outside myself; in the former case (i.e., when I am consciously aware of my own existence), objects exist not only “in themselves” but also “for myself,” just like me. The previous distinction has been emphasized by Jean-Paul Sartre¹⁵⁷ under the obvious influence of Hegel’s ontology.

The argument that essence and presence are not necessarily identical to each other follows from the fact that one can conceive of essence independently of its reality. For instance, let us consider a myriagon, which is defined as a polygon with ten thousand sides; this geometrical figure is practically non-existent in nature. By defining a myriagon, we declare its essence, without, however, imposing its existence. Similarly, by defining the mythical creature chimaera (according to Greek mythology, it was a monstrous fire-breathing hybrid creature, usually depicted as a lion, with the head of a goat arising from its back, and a tail that might end with a snake’s head), we declare its essence, but we do not impose its existence. Therefore, at the level of human consciousness, essence and presence are not necessarily identical to each other. However, in the Bible, the statement “I am that I am” (Exod 3:14) means that God is substantially present; this is an exceptional case in which God, who is absolute, reveals Himself.

According to existentialism, existence precedes essence, not so much in the temporal sense as in the sense of importance. What is most important in existentialism is the event of the emergence of existence out of non-existence; in fact, existentialists assign primary importance both to the previous process of emergence itself and to the reality of non-existence out of which existence emerges. Thus, an existentialist is ultimately preoccupied with the “archaeology” of existence, and, more particularly, he seeks to find the reason for the emergence of existence out of non-existence and to investigate if existent reality emerges of itself for the sake of existence, or if, as Karl Jaspers¹⁵⁸ has argued, it is thrown out of its original Encompassing (*Umgreifende*), which is a transcendent and obscure reality (the Absolute Being) within which existence is formed, and from which it is nurtured, before being “thrown into the world”; in the languages of mythology and science, at the precise moment of existence and non-existence, the previous Encompassing is called chaos.

However, the aforementioned existentialist theories are not complete. Apart from seeking to find the reason for the emergence of

157. Howells, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*.

158. Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*.

existence out of non-existence, one must try to clarify both the process of the creation of existence and the precise moment of the transition from non-existence to existence (“borderline situation”), hence clarifying also if the reason for the emergence of existence out of non-existence is directly related to the moment of the transition from non-existence to existence; if the reason for the emergence of existence out of non-existence is directly related to the moment of the transition from non-existence to existence, then that particular moment is immensely significant, and its conception helps us to interpret the very event of existence, that is, the presence of being.

From the perspective of the philosophy of methexis, the ontological questions that we have discussed until now can be elucidated by studying the concept of *hypostasis*, which was originally used in the fourth century AD by the Greek church father Gregory of Nyssa in order to explain the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. In general, the Greek church fathers explain the doctrine of the Trinity by using concepts of classical Greek philosophy. For instance, in his treatise *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil the Great¹⁵⁹ explains the important role of the Holy Spirit as follows: “And He [the Paraclete = Holy Spirit], like a sun joining itself to your purified eye, will show you in himself the image of the invisible. And in the blessed vision of the image [i.e., the Son = Logos], you shall behold the unspeakable beauty of the Archetype [Father = Nous or Mind]” (9:23). Based on Basil’s theological essays, Gregory of Nyssa stresses that the three Persons are “hypostatic,” that is, essentially equal and the same; the only way to tell them apart is their mutual relations.

The concept of hypostasis was methodically studied by John of Damascus¹⁶⁰ in his book *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, where he defines “nature” as the principle of motion and repose, and, on this ground, he identifies the nature of a subject with its substance. However, he adds that, according to some pre-Christian philosophers, such as Aristotle, in contrast to substance, which is simple being, nature is substance

159. Basil the Great (also known as Basil of Caesarea) was a fourth-century AD Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, Asia Minor. He is a saint in both Eastern and Western Christianity. Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa are collectively referred to as the Cappadocian fathers. The Cappadocian fathers worked methodically in order to synthesize Christianity and Greek philosophy or, more precisely, in order to expound the Christian doctrines by using concepts of Greek philosophy.

160. John of Damascus was a Syrian Christian monk and priest, who died at his monastery, Mar Saba, near Jerusalem in 749 AD. His fields of interest included theology, philosophy, music, and law. He is a saint in both Eastern and Western Christianity.

that had been made specific by essential differences so as to have, in addition to simple being, being in such a way. Thus, substance *qua* substance, to which belongs simple being, is amounted to unqualified subject. On the other hand, “nature” as substance that had been made specific by essential differences relates to qualified substance, which is specified by the essential difference, i.e., it has not only being in the former sense, but also being in such a way according to its essential differences.

Furthermore, in his book *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, John of Damascus introduces the term “hypostasis” in order to clarify the Trinitarian formula: in this case, “hypostasis” means the existence of an individual substance in itself (i.e., an individual that is numerically different). Consequently, according to the consensus of the early church fathers, nature *qua* species is a common thing, which is predicated of hypostases and has its existence in them, while hypostasis is a particular thing in a numerical sense, as an individual of some kind. Hence, according to John of Damascus, hypostasis not only possesses common as well as individual characteristics of the subject, but also exists in itself, whereas nature does not exist in itself, but is to be found in hypostasis. The previous definition of the hypostatic mode of existence implies that Christianity’s Holy Trinity, being a communion of three hypostases, is not conceptualized in the same way as the God of general, abstract “monotheism.” Christianity stresses God’s personhood (i.e., God’s hypostatic mode of existence), whereas general, abstract monotheism stresses merely the unity of God’s nature.

Through the distinction between “hypostasis” and “nature,” the Greek church fathers, and especially the Cappadocian fathers, explain how it is possible for God to assume the human nature without losing or degrading His deity. God’s hypostatic mode of existence implies that God’s nature does not constrain Him, that is, God’s existence is characterized by absolute freedom. In particular, according to the New Testament, in the case of Jesus Christ, the same hypostasis of the Logos personalized both the divine nature and the human nature. Thus, according to 1 John 2:23, “No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.”

In his treatise *On the Holy Spirit: Against the Macedonians*, Gregory of Nyssa stresses that the Holy Trinity should not be understood as three separate Gods (e.g., Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier). As Hans von Balthasar has argued, after the Cappadocian Fathers, “it is no longer possible to infer Divine Persons on the basis of different regions of the

world . . . [for] there is a ‘common operation’ which links their divine essence.”¹⁶¹ In order to explain the meaning of the Christian Trinitarian formula, one may put forward the following simile: Let us consider the poet T. S. Eliot. The poetry of T. S. Eliot is his “logos” (word); Eliot’s logos proceeds from Eliot’s “nous” (mind); and Eliot’s logos provides its readers with his “spirit,” i.e., with a special culture that makes them feel that they participate in Eliot’s personal world. Eliot’s spirit remains with the readers of Eliot’s logos even when they do not have his poems before them. Similarly, we may argue that God the Father is the Nous of God, God the Son is the Logos (Word) of God, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. However, in the case of the Holy Trinity, the Nous of God (Father), the Logos of God (Son), and the Holy Spirit are not attributes or functions of a being, but they are three Hypostases of the same divine Nature.

The aforementioned Trinitarian formula leads to the following ontological conclusions: God does not exist as a pure individual, i.e., as an isolated being; but He exists as a communion of three hypostases. Thus, as John D. Zizioulas has argued, “communion” is an ontological category that describes God’s mode of existence.¹⁶² In addition, communion comes from the three hypostases of God, i.e., it is founded on concrete and free persons. By analogy, since, according to the Bible, man is the image of God, “communion” is an ontological category that describes human personhood: no human being can exist without communion, i.e., no human being can exist as a pure individual, and communion comes from hypostases, i.e., from concrete and free persons. In general, a “person” (or “hypostasis”) is an individual-in-communion, i.e., human personhood is impossible without communion, and any kind of communion that suppresses or eliminates individuality (“otherness”) is inhuman and ungodly.

From the perspective of the philosophy of methexis, which is focused on the hypostatic mode of being, the term “soul” refers to a being that bears and manifests the life-energy in a personal (hypostatic) way; hence, the soul is the essence of “personhood,” and not a naturally immortal substance. The previous argument is in conformity with the following arguments of the Greek church fathers: the soul is created by God, and, thus, it is God’s grace that makes it immortal. In the second century AD, Justin Philosopher and Martyr¹⁶³ writes in his book *Dialogue with*

161. Von Balthasar, *Presence and Thought*, 19.

162. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*.

163. Justin (103–65 AD) was an early Greek apologist and martyr. He is venerated as a saint by many Christian denominations, including the Eastern Orthodox church

Trypho 4–6, “if the world is begotten, souls also are necessarily begotten. . . . They are not, then, immortal? . . . No; since the world has appeared to us to be begotten. . . . If, then, it [the soul] is life, it would cause something else, and not itself, to live, even as motion would move something else than itself.” In the same book, Justin continues as follows: “Now, that the soul lives, no one would deny. But if it lives, it lives not as being life, but as the partaker of life; but that which partakes of anything, is different from that of which it does partake. Now the soul partakes of life, since God wills it to live.”

The soul not only “pervades” (in Greek, *chorousa*) the “entire body” (in Greek, *hōlou . . . tou sōmatos*), as Maximus the Confessor writes, but also every member of the body responds to the presence of the soul, though the soul is incorporeal.¹⁶⁴ In contrast to radically dualist theological and philosophical arguments—according to which the soul is a substance that is naturally immortal and exists in the mortal human body distinct and separate from it and unmarked by any essential interaction with the body—the Greek church fathers emphasize that the two substances that make up the human being—namely, the body and the soul—are different from each other without being separate, and they are united without being confused; thus, according to Maximus the Confessor, every action and every movement of the human being is simultaneously an act of his soul and his body.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, in the context of the philosophy of methexis, and in accordance with Aristotle’s argument that the soul is the entelechy of the body, the integral union of the body and the soul is characterized by a hierarchy of interaction, in the sense that the soul precedes the body in that interaction, not only in the temporal sense but also in the sense of importance.

and the Roman Catholic church.

164. *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. 91, 1100AB. Maximus the Confessor (ca. 580–662) was a Christian monk, theologian, and scholar. He methodically and systematically supported the Council of Chalcedon’s position that Jesus Christ had both a human and a divine will, fighting a heresy called Monothelitism (for Greek meaning “one will”). Following an Asian tradition of transcendentalism, Monothelitism was an attempt to “reduce” the humanity of Christ by arguing that Christ had only one will, particularly, a divine one. Maximus the Confessor is a saint in both Eastern and Western Christianity.

165. Maximus the Confessor, “*Peri Theologias kai tes Ensarkou Oikonomias*” (“Regarding Theology and the Incarnate Economy”), 90.

2

Access to Being

“**T**O BE” AND “BEING” are concrete situational realities, and the extent to which one’s mind has access to them depends on the manner in which one can experience them. The most common way for consciousness to obtain this kind of experience is related to methexis. Methexis is one of the most ancient concepts in the history of philosophy. In fact, the history of methexis as a relation (and, particularly, as an event of participation) experienced by consciousness is older than the history of the definition and the use of methexis as a formal concept in the context of philosophy. The achievement of methexis was the purpose of the great ancient mystery traditions, such as the Osiris Mystery (in which Osiris symbolizes the drama of the human soul that has descended from the world soul symbolized by Isis) and the Mysteries of Eleusis (where Demeter symbolizes the world soul, and Persephone symbolizes the human soul). Moreover, according to Kabbalistic *midrashim* (i.e., mystical Jewish traditions), the “history” of Israel as chronicled in the Torah is a symbolic history of the human soul and its mystical rebirth through methexis in the Absolute, which was achieved after the children of Israel (souls), led by Moses (divine Logos), had passed through the Red Sea (chaos). Moreover, Jesus Christ himself emphasizes methexis as follows: “Remain in me, and I will remain in you” (John 15:4). Thus, in Acts 17:27–28, we read the following: “God . . . is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being.” In general, in the context of the so-called ancient mentality, ontology is founded on methexis, which is based on the assumption that there is a kind of continuity among beings, ontological states, and conscious experiences.

The development of philosophy helps to understand the relation between the objects that are experienced by consciousness in the context of methexis and the idea that consciousness expands toward the direction of those objects, which are embraced and, ultimately, assimilated by consciousness. From the perspective of ancient philosophizing of consciousness, methexis is achieved through a series of distant and obscure “prime causes” (i.e., supernatural forces) which operate according to a complicated system of preferences that is known only by concrete initiated conscious beings, namely, the magi, who are also capable of intervening in the operation of the world by controlling the previous forces in conformity with the intentionality of human consciousness.¹ The previous mentality is characterized by creativity and spiritual freedom, in the sense that—even though it admits that humanity cannot create out of nothing (since species is not a human creation)—it favors and encourages the intervention of human consciousness in the operation of the world, and it is expressed by being crystallized in the context of myth, which is also the major underpinning of magic. Thus, in this context, philosophers are as religious as they are rational, scientists are as rational as are mystics, and psychologists are as much spiritual healers as are scientific therapists.

Methexis is of decisive importance not only in the context of the so-called ancient mentality, but also in the context of a purely philosophical mentality. Originally, Platonism and, later on, Neoplatonism were the major philosophies through which perceptions of methexis were developed and disseminated among the philosophers of the ancient world. The acceptance of the concept of methexis is the most important expression of a dynamic conception of reality; this dynamic conception of reality opposes the static conception of being, according to which being is a closed world engrossed in itself. The concept of methexis implies a continuous, dynamic relation among ontical realities and among the conscious beings that express or seek ontical realities. Methexiological perception is based on the thesis that every being (and every situation) is related to other beings (and to other situations), and it remains “open” to them in order to participate in them and, ultimately, with them and through them, to

1. According to ancient Zoroastrian and Hellenistic traditions, “magus” (plural: “magi”) means a wise man. Moreover, in the New Testament, we read that magi traveled thousands of miles to worship Jesus Christ for who he was (Matt 2:1–2, 11), thus disclosing the essence of true worship: we should worship God because he is perfect and almighty Creator of the universe, worthy of the best we have to give.

participate in the unique cosmic reality from which each and every being is individually derived. The previous methexiological perception is in conformity with the following biblical passages: John 1:3, where we read that all beings and things were made through the divine Logos; Matthew 22:37–39, where Jesus Christ says: “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,” and “Love your neighbor as yourself”; Luke 10:36–37, where Jesus Christ clarifies that everyone must become a psychically open “neighbor” to everyone else.

There are two varieties of methexiological relations: an essentialist (and mainly passive) one and a teleological (and more active) one. The essentialist variety of methexis refers to the original attributes that are maintained by a being or a situation, and, therefore, it emphasizes the common origin of the beings or the situations under consideration. A characteristic example of the previous essentialist perception of methexis can be found in Plato’s *Symposium*, where Aristophanes describes the mythical beings from which the two genders, namely, male and female, were descended “as each person was cut in two,” and he mentions that the two genders tend to resynthesize their previous common existence through *eros* (holy love passion).² The teleological variety of methexis refers to an attempt to improve one’s existential state by pursuing and fulfilling the purpose of one’s existential program, i.e. one’s *telos*. A characteristic example of this kind of methexis is any collective attempt to achieve moral or scientific goals; those who participate in a collective attempt to achieve moral or scientific goals endorse a common set of values and interests.

Through his theory of ideas, Plato has shown that teleology is the quintessence of spirituality and the core of philosophical life. He argues that the *telos*, or purpose, of our existence is our methexis, or participation, in the pure being (i.e., the Absolute Good) and our unification with it.³ Moreover, he maintains that “the only way to acquire lasting knowledge” is to “bring together the disconnected subjects . . . and take a comprehensive view of their relationship with each other and with the nature of reality.”⁴ In Plato’s philosophy, idea and species display the visible rational form of the life-giving universal One, and the *theoria* of, or mental gaze at, the life-giving universal One leads us to the conclusion

2. Plato, *Symposium* 189c–193e.

3. Plato, *Republic* 585b.

4. *Ibid.* 537c.

that the truth of the world of ideas is identical to the essence of reality. Thus, according to Plato, a dialectical philosopher is “synoptic” (or “comprehensive”), in the sense that he reduces a multitude of phenomena to the archetypal “one,” instead of analyzing phenomena themselves.

According to Plato’s *Phaedrus*, truth is the event of the soul’s transcendent movement toward the transcendent sphere of being (i.e., toward the Absolute Good).⁵ The subject/object dichotomy is something irrelevant to Plato’s theory of philosophical vision, because, according to Plato, philosophical vision consists in the philosopher’s methexis, or participation, in the object of philosophical vision, i.e., it is based on “seeing,” or “gazing,” and not merely on “being aware of.” Therefore, in his *Republic*, Plato inveighs against “mimesis,”⁶ because it leads to an abstraction of truth from sensible data, whereas, for Plato, truth consists in participating in the transcendent sphere of being.

Even though Aristotle discovered abstraction and substituted species for Plato’s transcendent ideas, nowhere in his *Metaphysics* Λ (Book Lambda), does Aristotle argue that God, i.e., the Absolute Being, is a form. In *Metaphysics* Λ, Aristotle understands God as energy, life, “nous” (mind) or “noesis” (mental energy), and, in Λ9, he emphasizes that God is a kind of noesis that is simply noesis of the divine reality itself and of nothing else, which seems to yield no positive content to the description of God. Hence, in *Metaphysics*, Λ, Aristotle endorses apophatic theology, and he treats apophatic theology as the culmination of his ontology, thus paving the way to the apophatic theology of the Greek church fathers, particularly the Hesychasts. Additionally, in *Metaphysics* Λ, Aristotle paves the way to the Hesychasts’ argument about the essence–energies distinction, by arguing that God is somehow a cause of the sensible world, but God seems to be directly a cause only of the outermost heaven, and everything else that is produced by God is a consequence of heavenly motions. Aristotle maintains that God is an efficient cause only by being a final cause, i.e., by being the ultimate and transcendent source of the significance of the beings and things in the world. The previous Aristotelian arguments about God’s relationship with the world are very similar to arguments that have been put forward by the Hesychasts, and they underpin a methexiological attitude toward the problem of knowledge.

5. Plato, *Phaedrus* 76–77.

6. The Greek term “mimesis” carries a wide range of meanings, which include imitation, representation, and mimicry.

From a purely philosophical viewpoint, access to being is inconceivable without the use of a concrete method. In general, philosophical methods can be divided into two categories: the *a priori* methods and the *a posteriori* methods; the first were playing a dominant role in philosophy until the eighteenth century AD, whereas the latter played a dominant role in the development of philosophy after the eighteenth century. The common characteristic of the *a priori* methods is that they are based on original hypotheses that are accepted as axiomatic and deductively produce series of syllogisms that lead to guaranteed specific conclusions, which, as much as it is possible, are flawlessly related to the propositions that precede them in the given series of syllogisms. The more coherent a philosophy is, the higher its chances of being imposed are. However, often, hypothetico-deductive systems exhibit logical “cracks,” and, therefore, they are less solid than initially assumed.

Among the *a priori* philosophical methods, some were created in ancient times, others were created during the medieval times, and others were created during the modern era. In chapter 1, it was made clear that the Presocratic philosophers’ general model consists in axiomatically accepting a principle as the prime principle of the world and in assuming that all particular realities are deducible from that principle. Socrates and the sophists were the first to extricate philosophy from the intellectual shackles of the previous cosmological, physicalist/ontological dogmatism: the sophists indicated the reasonableness of particular doubts about the general validity of their predecessors’ philosophical achievements; Socrates sought an undeniable criterion of philosophical truth through the method of maieutic, which was originally developed by Socrates himself, and it was expounded by Plato in his *Symposium*. Besides the controversies between Socrates and the sophists, both sides have played a decisive role in shifting philosophical enquiry from the world to the human being.

In his first dialogues, Plato expounded Socrates’s method of maieutic—according to which, truth cannot be taught directly as a transmission of knowledge from an instructor to a learner, but instead the learner learns truth by interacting with an instructor and through his own experience—in conjunction with the method of Socratic irony, which consists in admitting (pretending) that you are ignorant and willing to learn while exposing someone’s inconsistencies by close questioning. However, Plato developed his own philosophical method, which he called dialectic. In Plato’s dialogues, it is clear that Plato perceives dialectic as a form of

internal dialogue that is motivated by the philosophizing soul's pursuit of truth in order, ultimately, to achieve existential perfection.⁷ On the other hand, when a Latin scholar, such as Augustine of Hippo, seeks the reason (*ratio*) of the world, he mainly seeks to collect, define, and organize various elements into a consistent whole, specifically the world.

Plato's dialectic has two complementary aspects: an ascending aspect and a descending one. According to the ascending aspect of Plato's dialectic, by classifying things into genera and species, philosophical enquiry proceeds from one concept to another until the philosopher's mind perceives the ultimate causes of things, and, therefore, the philosopher manages to know the truth of phenomena through their corresponding ideas. According to the descending aspect of Plato's dialectic, philosophical enquiry proceeds from ideas, in which the philosopher's mind has already managed to participate, to the interpretation of phenomena.

Plato's myth of the cave is a parable narrated by Plato in his *Republic* (Book 7, section 7) in order to illustrate "our nature in its education and want of education."⁸ Imagine, says Plato, a cave in which prisoners are chained since their birth in such a way that all they can see are shadows thrown on a wall in front of them. They would have the illusion that these shadows were reality. If, however, one of them were freed, and he managed to emerge into the sunlight, he would acquire a new kind of knowledge and he would realize how limited his vision was in the cave.

In his presentation of the myth of the cave, Plato discerns four different types of "seeing," which are four different types of knowledge and four different states of consciousness, or existential conditions: (i) Illusion, or conjecture (in Greek, *eikasia*): it provides only the most primitive and unreliable opinions. Illusion is the level of consciousness at which one establishes arbitrary correspondences between reality and the things that are present in one's consciousness. At this level of consciousness, a person confuses reality with desires. (ii) Belief (in Greek, *pistis*): it is an experiential form of knowledge that enables one to discern between the images of things and the prototypes, but, at this level of consciousness, a person has not developed scientific consciousness, yet. (iii) Rule-based reasoning, or logic (in Greek, *dianoia*): at this level of consciousness, a person can achieve systematic knowledge of the objects of consciousness through a disciplined application of the understanding. By the term "science,"

7. Plato, *Theaetetus*, 154d–e, *Charmides*, 166c–e, *Philebus*, 38c–e, *Sophist*, 263e, and *Laws*, 893a.

8. Plato, *Republic*, 514a.

we mean an intentional and methodical enterprise whose purpose is to identify the reason of beings and things, and logic is a way of expressing a person's need to explain the itinerary of the scientific thought to other persons by using a formal language. (iv) Intelligence (in Greek, *noesis*): it is the supreme (*ne plus ultra*) level of consciousness, and it corresponds to the knowledge of the Absolute Good. In particular, at this level of consciousness, a person participates in the world of ideas, and, because, according to Plato, ideas constitute the life of God's essence, those who participate in the world of ideas attain to existential perfection. This level of consciousness requires a different philosophical method. According to Plato, the philosophical method that leads to this level of consciousness is dialectic, and it is a logical as well as metalogical method: it is logical in the sense that the knowledge of the Good presupposes that one's consciousness has progressed from the first level of knowledge to the third level of knowledge (logic); it is metalogical in the sense that, in order to ascend to this level of consciousness (intelligence), one must be aware of the limits of logic and to have acquired a kind of knowledge that is derived from an experience of enlightened intuition. Hence, as we read in Plato's *Republic* 476b, as well as in the entire Platonic dialogue *Phaedrus*, the relationship between the philosopher and the Good is not only a cognitive one, but also an erotic one.

According to Plato, humans can attain to a personal experience of the Absolute Good, but they cannot logically deduce the Absolute Good from any deterministic series of syllogisms. Thus, Plato emphasizes that the knowledge of the Absolute Good presupposes not only the ability to give an account, but also a psychic cleansing or cure. The metaphysical kind of knowledge that corresponds to intelligence is what Plato has in his mind in *Phaedrus*, where he describes the soul journeying in "that place beyond the heavens" where "true being dwells, without color or shape, that cannot be touched."⁹ Additionally, in his *Republic*, Plato argues that one has cured his soul if he has "attained to self-mastery and beautiful order within himself, and . . . harmonized these three principles [the three parts of the soul: reason, the emotions, and the appetites] . . . linked and bound all three together and made himself a unit, one man instead of many, self-controlled and in unison."¹⁰ Since, as we read in *Republic* 585b, the purpose of our existence is our participation in the

⁹ Plato, *Phaedrus* 247c–e.

¹⁰ Plato, *Republic* 443d–e.

pure Being (the Good) and our unification with the Good (i.e., the Good-in-itself), psychic cleansing is a necessary presupposition of our transformation into the corresponding absolute principle; for “it cannot be that the impure attain the pure.”¹¹

Plato’s concept of “intelligence” (*noesis*) is a kind of spiritual intuition, and there is a striking resemblance between Platonic *noesis* and the kind of spiritual intuition about which we read in the Bible, particularly, in Luke 11:33–36, Mark 9:3ff., and Matthew 6:22 and 17:1. The kind of spiritual intuition that is mentioned in these biblical passages is the core of Hesychasm. Michael Psellus (Michael Psellōs; 1018–ca.1081), a Hesychast and Neoplatonic philosopher, has written extensively on the nature of light emanating from Christ during Christ’s Transfiguration. He describes the relation between God’s activity and man’s as follows: at midday, the sun is always shining, but only those who have healthy eyes are capable of gazing at it; by analogy, only those who have a mental eye purified in their soul are capable of participating in God.¹²

In the context of classical Greek philosophy, cognition does not produce knowledge by itself, and, whenever knowledge is produced by cognition alone, it is identified with imagination. According to classical Greek philosophy, knowledge is intimately associated with a process whereby the mind receives and processes sensible data. In particular, in Plato’s *Timaeus*, the soul, like the body, is characterized by “that sensation which we now term ‘seeing’”¹³; and, in Aristotle’s *On Sense and the Sensible* 438b10, the soul operates as the center of sensation. Hence, the classical Greek philosophy of vision is focused on a consciousness-independent light that enables one to see an image without the mediation of mental representations. Since, according to Plato’s and Aristotle’s theories of vision, an image can be seen independently of (and prior to) images formed in the mind (mental representations), it follows that, in the context of classical Greek philosophy, knowledge is obtained when a conscious being moves outside itself in pursuit of the consciousness-independent reality of the idea, and not through mental representations. In other words, in the context of classical Greek philosophy, knowledge is based on a vision that is prior to conceptual thinking, and it consists in one’s participation in the light of the idea.

11. Plato, *Phaedo* 67b.

12. Psellus, *De Omnifaria Doctrina*.

13. Plato, *Timaeus* 45d.

As I argued in chapter 1, even though Aristotle substituted species for Plato's ideas, he endorsed the transcendent purpose of Plato's philosophy. Thus, in his *Physics* V.265a, Aristotle writes that God is the direct object of the universal eros that characterizes the eternal physical beings (i.e., the celestial spheres), which imitate the perfection of the divine mode of life through their harmonious motions. In addition, in his *Metaphysics* 1072b, Aristotle argues that "God is a living being, eternal, most good; and therefore life and a continuous eternal existence belong to God; for that is what God is." In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle—who places God, as the ultimate source of the significance of beings and things in the world, on the top of his metaphysical system—argues that the communion between God and humans takes place through the perfection of the human mind and the mental vigilance that is caused by mental pleasure.¹⁴

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle argues that mimesis, as a natural inclination of the human being, is a creative act, not because it passively represents something, nor because it maintains a form, but because it "enmatters" species, and, hence, it discloses the absolute purpose of being, i.e., the real truth of being. Thus, in *Poetics* 50a15, Aristotle understands mimesis as "the constitution of things" (in Greek, *he ton pragmatōn systasis*).

If, in the context of mimesis, humanity could create species—as sophists and modern philosophers claim—then human creative activity would be of a purely imaginary nature, and, therefore, every statement about real truth, i.e., about the Absolute, would be cognitively insignificant, since, in that case, only sensible stimuli and products of the subject's intellect would be cognitively significant. The faculty of imagination develops because the intellect (i.e., the faculty of reasoning and understanding objectively, especially with regard to abstract matters) cannot perceive the Absolute in an objective way; however, imagination cannot create species. Imagination is a natural function of consciousness that is not constrained by the world, and, more generally, it does not submit to the principle of reality. Therefore, imagination can perceive things that may only apparently represent the reality of the world, and it can even perceive things that may not represent the reality of the world at all. Imagination endows the things that it perceives with new significances, and it reorganizes them into new historical forms, utilizing elements of its external existential conditions (e.g., latent societal trends and changes)

14 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1177a.

that are not historically crystallized forms, yet. Hence, imagination is a kind of visionary perception that assigns its own logical forms to the sensible world, which is relative and impermanent, in order to accommodate the absolute world. In other words, imagination reshapes empirical data into mental images in order to disengage them from the semantics of the empirical world and to transform them into members of a new world of significations that has been instituted by imagination itself.¹⁵ But, since it is characterized by subjectivity, imagination does not have universal significance. Therefore, the activity of imagination is unstable, and, for this reason, imagination is compelled to overcome the lack of universal significance by resorting to other (i.e., external) sources of significance.

In contrast to Platonic ideas, imagination does not consist in establishing a relation between a varied and changeable world and a stable meaning, but it simply depicts empirical data through mental images. Similarly, in the context of logic, empirical data are intellectually “depicted” (i.e., organized) by causal relations. The empirical world is stable only with regard to the meaning of its existence, since its effective and final cause is the “absolute” (God). On the other hand, at the level of representations, the empirical world is always unstable, since the physical world and history are subject to change, and conscious states are subjective. Therefore, the world of imagination is necessarily unstable. Because the world of imagination is constituted of images, it cannot be the only source of the significance of being, and it depends on an external source of significance.

Imagination can assign significances to beings and things, and it can change the significances of beings and things, but it cannot create significance out of nothing. Images endow significances with logical shapes, i.e., they transform meaning into something sensible, and, therefore, they enable consciousness to assign meaning to sensible objects. But the formation of a universally acceptable image presupposes the universality of the corresponding meaning, i.e., it depends on significance. Therefore, significance always transcends the limits of its image, and this is the limit of imagination. Even if we accept the Aristotelian and Kantian argument that imagination creatively unites sense and understanding (in the sense that imagination provides cognition with mental images of sensible things which are subject to synthetic reasoning), the creativity of imagination is

15. Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*.

not original, because it depends on a concrete prior significance. In other words, significance precedes imagination.

Species *qua* truth is not an imaginary creation, but it is disclosed by the ultimate, suprahistorical purpose of beings, i.e., it is a divine creation, as it is indicated by Plato's example of the three beds: a carpenter's task is to create an empirical bed, which is an imitation of the idea of a bed, a painter's task is to create an image of an empirical bed, and God's task is the creation of the real bed-in-itself, i.e., the idea of a bed.¹⁶ When human creative activity imitates God, it is *poiesis*, and, in this sense, it can be understood as the transition from non-being into being, since it produces a meaningful world from formless matter.

In the context of methexiology, a being or a world of beings A is significant if it refers to a reality X that transcends A, and, particularly, the significance of A consists in its relation to the reality X. Furthermore, in the context of methexiology, and according to my argument that significance precedes imagination, the significance of significance (i.e., the source of significance) is God. Thus, humans can be united with the source of their significance by participating in God, whereas, if they try to be united with the source of their significance through their discursive reason and selfish sentiments, they will, ultimately, be confined to the realm of imagination. For this reason, as the Orphic Mysteries and Plato maintain, the union of the soul with the source of the significance of being, i.e., with God, presupposes "initiation," i.e., a process of psychic cleansing or cure.

On the other hand, as I argued in chapter 1, in the Middle Ages, many Western scholars were assuming, in Neoplatonic fashion, that Aristotle's universals were radically separate from the material world, and they were treating Platonic ideas as if they were logical substances, thus giving rise to Western rationalism. In the context of Western rationalism, consciousness is confined to its own creations, and, since Western rationalism construes Platonic ideas as if they were logical substances, the rationalist variety of methexis consists in a series of abstract concepts which are hierarchically arranged according to their degree of generality; according to the Western rationalist variety of methexis, the degree of generality is assumed to be equivalent to the degree of reality. This

16. Plato, *Republic*, 597b-c.

rationalist variety of methexis was solidified by Thomas Aquinas, the major representative of scholastic philosophy.¹⁷

In his book *Scripta super libros sententiarum*, Thomas Aquinas argues that superior reason (*ratio superior*), which is identified with intellectual truth, is the knowledge of God. According to Thomas Aquinas, God knows all things in One (i.e., in Himself) and, therefore, He does not need any methodologies, syllogisms, analyses or syntheses, whereas humans know only under particular conditions and through particular mental processes. In his *Scripta super libros sententiarum* III.31, Thomas argues that, “in the present life, it is true what the Philosopher [Aristotle] says, namely that, without images [‘phantasmata’], the soul could neither develop science nor revise the things that it already knows; since images are for the intellect what sensibilia [i.e., sensible data] are for the senses.” Therefore, Thomas Aquinas discarded Augustine’s qualitative distinction between superior reason and inferior reason. In his book *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas substituted Augustine’s qualitative distinction between superior reason and inferior reason with a distinction between the supernatural end and the natural end of human life. According to Aquinas, the supernatural end of human life is the object of theology and is based on faith, whereas the natural end of human life is the object of philosophy, and, due to reason, the knowledge of the natural end of human life can be achieved by man himself.

The continuity of faith and reason, of grace and nature, is central to Aquinas’s philosophical and theological system. For Thomas, there is only one truth—namely, the divine truth—and the soul unites the sensible world with the intelligible one. He maintains that the soul is essentially different from the body, and, even though it is not self-existent, it is hierarchically the supreme intellectual creature of God, and it is immortal, immaterial, and capable of knowing the intelligible realm. However, according to Thomas, because the soul is united with the body, the soul cannot know non-corporeal beings directly, but it can only know them through reason, in the context of which general concepts are distanced from objects, specifically, through abstraction, which is a process whereby higher concepts are derived from the use and classification of concrete, individual forms.

17. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) was an Italian Dominican priest and one of the most influential medieval philosophers and theologians. In the Roman Catholic church, Thomas Aquinas is venerated as a saint (in 1323, Pope John XXII pronounced Thomas Aquinas a saint).

According to Aquinas, in the sensible world, the universal (general concept) cannot exist as such, apart from the individual; it is immanent in the individual as the essence specifically common to all members of the same species. This essence constitutes the thing specifically what it is. Therefore, he argues that knowledge starts from the sensible world (i.e., he disagrees with Augustine's argument that inferior reason leads to false knowledge) and culminates in superior reason, and that, in this way, man attains to the knowledge of the universal, i.e., he can logically discern species. Furthermore, Thomas argues that there is a group of truths, such as the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation, quite incapable of justification by reason. In this case, Thomas Aquinas argues that faith, which is a gift from the Creator, perfects the finite nature of man, but this does not reduce the significance or power of human reason. According to Thomas, the grace that confers faith comes from the outside, but, since it comes from the Creator who is responsible for the existence of humanity, faith is intrinsic to the nature it perfects. Hence, Thomas Aquinas claims that we are impelled to comprehend the mysteries of faith through reason. From the aforementioned arguments of Aquinas, it is clear that his philosophical and theological system carries on Boethius's misinterpretation of classical Greek philosophy, and it indicates that Thomas Aquinas was not only ignorant of Plato's and Aristotle's quest for an experiential ("erotic") knowledge of God, but also he was disregarding the difference between knowing God and knowing *about* God, a difference that is explicitly mentioned in Matthew 15:9, where Jesus Christ repeats the prophet Isaiah's criticism of hypocrites: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men."

In medieval Western Europe, apart from Thomas Aquinas, many other advocates of philosophical realism—such as the ninth-century Irish Neoplatonic philosopher Johannes Scotus Eriugena, author of the book *De divisione naturae* (*On the division of nature*), and Anselm of Canterbury,¹⁸ author of the book *Proslogion*—were philosophizing as logicians, in the sense that—due to their fragmented and profoundly misguided knowledge of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies—they were assuming that the logical and the real orders are exactly parallel, and that the human intellect, the seat of logic, is an ontologically sufficient

18. In 1093, Anselm of Canterbury (ca. 1033–1109) was enthroned as Archbishop of Canterbury. In the Roman Catholic church, he is venerated as a saint, and, in 1720, he was named a doctor of the church by the same church.

foundation of theology. In a sense, the previous philosophical realists were adapting the idea of God to the requirements of their intellect, and, in this way, they were forming the impression that they had understood God.

Having erroneously construed Plato's ideas as if they were logical substances, the scholastics' philosophical realism implies that general concepts, called "universals" by the scholastics, constitute the authentic reality, whereas individuals belong to the world of imperfect phenomena. In other words, according to the scholastics' philosophical realism, the "human being" as a general concept is more real than me as an individual; hence, one's life and relation with the world are (and should be) subject to rules and axioms that are superior to any significance that one may have as an individual.

Logical structures are always authoritarian and coercive, since, according to logic, the degree of generality is equivalent to the degree of reality, and the more general concept imposes its authority on the less general one "from above." According to the scholastic philosophical realists, universals are logical substances separate from the sensible world, and the behavior of the individual (i.e., the empirical representative of the human species) must conform to the commands of the universal. In other words, according to the scholastic philosophical realists, the duty of the individual is to learn the commands of the universal and to try to comply with them, since they are more real than the individual. Thus, the individual's life is meaningful only if and to the extent that it complies with the commands of the universal. In other words, man is real to the extent that he negates his existential otherness for the sake of the universal.

The scholastics' realist arguments imply that society must be structured in such a way as to serve the corresponding universal, which, in this case, is the "kingdom of God" (perceived as the most general concept of society). From the previous perspective, the Pope is logically the person who has the supreme authority and duty to disclose and impose the commands of the universal. Thus, in medieval Western Europe, philosophical realism was a philosophical weapon with which the Vatican attempted to consolidate its authority. Due to the scholastics' philosophical realism, the Pope managed to impose his "*plenitudo potestatis*," i.e., his overlordship. On the other hand, as I argued in chapter 1, for Plato, ideas are not logical concepts, but the energies of the Absolute Good, and, therefore, Plato's ideas neither command humans "from above" nor

underpin authoritarian regimes, but they call humans to participate in them through a process of psychic cleansing or cure. Additionally, as I argued in chapter 1, even though Aristotle discovered abstraction, he did not discard the methexiological character of Plato's philosophy, and, thus, he argued that the mind is immortal and arises from the outside (*thyrathen*).

In medieval Western Europe, the major opponent of philosophical realism was nominalism, whose founders are Roscelin, an eleventh-century monk of Compiègne, and William of Occam, a thirteenth-century English Franciscan friar and philosopher. Because Roscelin's and William of Occam's knowledge of classical Greek philosophy was not better than that of their realist opponents, they attempted to fight against philosophical realism by advocating a radical form of individualism. Thus, Roscelin argues that *universalia sunt nomina*, i.e., the universals (general concepts) are names; universals are not things, but they are merely words (*flatus vocis*), which are used for taxonomic purposes.¹⁹ Moreover, according to William of Occam, only individuals exist, rather than supra-individual universals, and universals are products of abstraction and do not exist independently of the human intellect.²⁰ Because nominalism emphasizes abstraction and the operations of the individual's intellect, while the scholastics' philosophical realism maintains that general concepts are substances, many medieval Western scholars formed the impression that nominalism is founded on Aristotelianism, and that the scholastics' philosophical realism is founded on Platonism; however, as I have already argued this impression is wrong.

At the political level, the scholastics' philosophical realism underpins the Papacy's absolutism and, generally, authoritarian regimes, whereas nominalism underpins civil society (known also as the "bourgeois" society). Nominalism was the major philosophical weapon of the medieval civil class (known also as the "bourgeoisie") against the Papacy's absolutism. Already in medieval Western Europe and in the Renaissance, civil society instituted its own "church," namely, the "university," its own "priesthood," namely, university professors striving for scholarly pontification, and its own "saints" and "heroes," namely, technocrats and accomplished businessmen. Thus, medieval nominalism was

19. A taxonomic scheme is a particular classification ("the taxonomy of . . .") arranged in a hierarchical structure or classification scheme. Of Roscelin's writings there exists only a letter addressed to Abelard.

20. Laos, *The Metaphysics of World Order*, chapter 2.

a major philosophical underpinning of a liberal educational movement that emerged at the University of Paris in the thirteenth century, and it encouraged the development of empiricism. In 1210 and in 1229, major riots took place at the University of Paris, and, eventually, on April 13, 1231, after two years of negotiations, Pope Gregory IX issued the Bull “Parens scientiarum,” which guaranteed the University of Paris independence from local authority, whether ecclesiastical or secular, placing it directly under Papal patronage. Moreover, in 1251, new fierce riots took place at the University of Paris, and they were settled in 1261, when it was decided that the University of Paris would continue allowing monks to become members of its faculty, but no monk would be allowed to teach at the school of arts,²¹ which thus was given the right to maintain a liberal intellectual environment. In medieval Western Europe, nominalism was an outlet for the oppressed civil class, and it paved the way to the individualism of modern philosophy, whose pioneer is Francis Bacon, and whose acknowledged founder is Descartes.

Rationalism is a theory according to which knowledge is innate, independent of experience and self-confirming. Hence, the opposite of rationalism is empiricism, i.e., a theory according to which knowledge is derived from experience. In the sixteenth century, Francis Bacon, an English philosopher, statesman, scientist, and jurist, articulated a systematic study of the empirical method. In his *Novum Organum Scientiarum*, Bacon argues that classic induction proceeds at once from sensible data and particulars up to the most general propositions and then works backward (via deduction) to arrive at intermediate propositions; thus, Bacon maintains, a serious problem with this procedure is that one contradictory instance suffices to falsify the conclusions. For this reason, Bacon proposed a different inductive method, according to which the philosopher must proceed regularly and gradually from one axiom to another, so that each axiom (i.e., each step up “the ladder of intellect”) is thoroughly tested by observation and experimentation before the next step is taken (i.e., each confirmed axiom becomes a foothold to a more general axiom, and the most general axioms represent the last stage of the process). By the term “experience,” Bacon does not refer to everyday experience, but he prescribes a different approach to experience: his empirical method is

21. At the school of arts, students were studying the “trivium” (i.e., grammar, rhetoric, and logic) and the “quadrivium” (i.e., music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy).

to correct and extend sensible data into facts by setting up tables.²² By the term “table,” Bacon refers to a compilation of observational data. Bacon prescribes the following tables: the table of essence and presence (which enables the investigator to survey all known instances where the nature of the phenomenon under investigation appears to exist), the table of absence in proximity (which enables the investigator to survey all known instances where the nature of the phenomenon under investigation is not present), and the table of degrees (which enables the investigator to categorize the instances of the nature of the phenomenon under investigation into various degrees of intensity). Thus, Bacon assumes that, from lower axioms, more general ones can be derived by induction, and, from the more general axioms, Bacon strives to reach more fundamental laws of nature, which lead to practical deductions as new experiments or works.

Even though Bacon’s empirical method clarifies the importance of investigating phenomena that are objects of human experience, it separates the objects of human experience from their telos (i.e., their transcendent purpose), and, therefore, from Bacon’s perspective, in the sensible world, only two kinds of forces operate: the natural laws and the selfish desires of human consciousness. There is a clear difference between Bacon’s understanding of experience and Plato’s understanding of experience. In the context of Plato’s theory of ideas, knowledge is not founded on bodily sensations, but, as I have already argued, this does not mean that it is founded on representations created by the subject’s mind; instead, according to Plato’s philosophy, knowledge is founded on a peculiar mental *sensation*.²³ Thus, according to Plato, the mind does not reproduce an external object through a visualization/conceptualization process, nor does it create mental models of external objects, but it knows an external object by participating in the corresponding idea. For this reason, in his *Republic*, Plato argues that those artists who wield art in order to transform truth into a mental representation should be exiled from the ideal republic.

Descartes understood the significance of Bacon’s empirical method, and he attempted to reverse scholastic ontology. In the field of mathematics, Descartes proposed the analytical method, and he articulated a kind of geometrical philosophical method that is *a priori*, and, yet, its foundation is not an arbitrary external (i.e., consciousness-independent)

22. Peltonen, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon*.

23. Plato, *Timaeus*, 27d–28a.

object, but conscious experience itself. According to Descartes, all things, including the sensible world, have an inner essence or form, whose presence explains the structure of things as they ordinarily appear. Moreover, Descartes takes for granted that, when the form is known, it exists in the mind of the knower; in other words, in the context of Cartesianism, the knower is identified with the known. Whereas Aristotle maintains that the knowledge of the form is given by real definitions of species concerning genus and specific difference, Descartes maintains that the essence of the world is given by the laws of geometry together with the principle that, in any change, quantity of motion is conserved (according to Descartes's geometrical philosophy, the previous conservation principle follows from the unchanging nature and stability of God the Creator). Two factors that expedited the formulation of criticisms against Descartes's method were Spinoza's mechanistic world-conception, which is based on Descartes's geometrical method, and the ontological excess that characterizes Leibniz's interpretation of Cartesianism.

In the history of modern philosophy, Cartesianism signals the first major philosophical shift from the study of the world to the study of the human subject. The second major philosophical shift from the study of the world to the study of the human subject in the context of the so-called modernity was due to Kantianism. Kant was impressed by David Hume's empiricism, which was formed in the context of English philosophers' elaborations on Bacon's method.²⁴ In the field of philosophical research, Kant's "critical" and, in reality, ambivalent attitude toward *a priori* and *a posteriori* methods (since, according to Kant, *a priori* intuitions and concepts provide some *a priori* knowledge, which, in its turn, provides the framework for *a posteriori* knowledge) underpins the two major directions that have been followed by modern philosophy ever since, namely, idealism and positivism. According to "idealism," in its modern sense, philosophy is founded exclusively on inner experience (before Kant, Descartes had already highlighted the previous concept of idealism, but Descartes did not negate the objective extension of consciousness). On the other hand, "positivism" is founded exclusively on what is regarded as certainly knowable, and, simultaneously, it discards every object that is associated with transcendentalism, which is regarded as inaccessible to the human mind. Moreover, there are mixed philosophical methods, which aim at synthesizing or, at least, combining idealism and realism.

24. Laos, *The Metaphysics of World Order*, 63–70.

Hegel's dialectic—usually presented in a threefold manner, precisely, as comprising three dialectical stages of development: a thesis, giving rise to its reaction, an antithesis, which contradicts or negates the thesis, and the tension between the two being resolved by means of a synthesis—is simultaneously a method of philosophical research and a model of the process according to which, Hegel maintains, reality develops and tends toward a state of integration and wholeness. Because of the previous twofold use of the term “dialectic” by Hegel, the Hegelian dialectic is characterized by vagueness. In addition, because of the vagueness of the Hegelian dialectic, a similar kind of vagueness characterizes also those theories which are influenced by Hegelianism, and it is, to a large extent, responsible for the latter's determinism and prophetism. For instance, “scientific materialism,” including both “dialectical materialism” and “historical materialism,” has not managed to clarify if it is a method of philosophical research or if it only refers to particular objective processes which are interpreted by it, and, therefore, from a purely philosophical perspective, it is confusing.²⁵ Similarly, even though they seek to follow an *a posteriori* method, several variants of positivism, especially Auguste Comte's positivism, make the mistake of philosophically depending on an *a priori* model of a threefold advancement of human affairs, such as Comte's law of three stages,²⁶ whose roots can be traced back to the beliefs of Gerardo di Borgo San Donnino, an Italian thirteenth-century friar and follower of the millenarian ideas of Abbot Joachim of Fiore. Thus, ultimately, Comte's positivism failed to provide a sustainable philosophical

25. Heyer, *Nature, Human Nature, and Society*. Dialectical materialism is the world outlook of Marxism–Leninism, and historical materialism is the extension of the principles of dialectical materialism to the study of social life. Marx inverted Hegel's dialectic by arguing that “the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought” (Marx, *Capital*, 25). In his book *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (written in 1859), Marx reformulated the determinism and the prophetism of Hegel's dialectic from a materialist perspective by arguing that “it is not consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness” (Smelser, ed., *Karl Marx*, 5).

26. In his book *The Course in Positive Philosophy*, Comte formulated the law of three stages, according to which society as a whole and each particular science develop through the following mentally conceived stages: (i) the theological stage (which, according to Comte, refers to explanation by personified deities), (ii) the metaphysical stage (which, according to Comte, refers to explanation by impersonal abstract concepts), and (iii) the positive stage (which, according to Comte, refers to scientific explanation based on observation, experiment, and comparison).

method, and it merely provided theoretical underpinnings for the development of mysticism.¹

In the twentieth century, positivism gave rise to neopositivism, which is founded on the thoughts of the so-called Vienna Circle, i.e., an association of philosophers gathered around the University of Vienna in 1922, chaired by Moritz Schlick. The Vienna Circle admitted no third category of significance besides that of *a priori* analytical and *a posteriori* synthetic statements; in particular, Kant's category of synthetic *a priori* statements was banned as having been refuted by the progress of science itself, since the theory of relativity proved that what had been held to be an example of a synthetic *a priori* system of statements, namely, Euclidean geometry, is not the global geometry of physical space. Hence, the Vienna Circle rejected the knowledge claims of metaphysics on the grounds that they are neither analytic and *a priori* nor empirical and synthetic.

The Vienna Circle's mentality is characterized by formalism, according to which any scientific discipline can be reduced to a system of formulas with symbols and of rules for the production of formulas from an axiomatic system. In the context of formalism, scientific existence and scientific truth are identical to the production from a given axiomatic system. David Hilbert, the acknowledged father of mathematical formalism, has argued as follows: "If the arbitrary posited axioms do not contradict one another or any of their consequences, they are true and the things defined by them exist. That is for me the criterion of truth and existence."² In order to apply the formalist program to geometry, Hilbert decided to develop a model of geometry based on real numbers, because the axioms of analytic geometry can be reduced to those of real numbers. Hence, the

1. Comte proposed a new religion of humanity; in particular, he articulated a catechism based on the worship of reason and humanity, he proposed replacing priests with a new class of scientists and industrialists, and he even developed a new solar calendar replete with positive "saints," i.e., great figures in Western European history in the fields of science, religion, politics, philosophy, industry, and literature.

2. Quoted in Laos, *Topics in Mathematical Analysis and Differential Geometry*, 95.

problem of the consistency³ and the completeness⁴ of geometry shifted to that of the real numbers and, finally, of natural numbers (on which the reals are based).

The strongest demonstration of the falsehood of the formalist viewpoint is due to the Austrian logician and mathematician Kurt Gödel. In 1931, Gödel proved the following incompleteness theorem: “In every consistent formal system Φ which contains the system of natural numbers, there exist propositions Π such that neither Π nor $\neg\Pi$ (the negation of Π) can be proved in Φ , i.e., there exist undecidable propositions.”⁵ Thus, because of Gödel’s incompleteness theorem, “no matter which ω -consistent axiomatic system we choose, there exist propositions Π such that neither Π nor $\neg\Pi$ is provable by means of the given axioms.”⁶ Gödel himself drew an important corollary from his incompleteness theorem: in order to prove the consistency of any language adequate for arithmetic, one must go outside that language. In 1931, Gödel proved the following inconsistency theorem: “The consistency of any formal system Φ containing the system of natural numbers cannot be proved in the system itself.”⁷ In other words, according to Gödel’s inconsistency theorem, “a mathematical system cannot be proved except by methods more powerful than those of the system itself.”⁸

The aforementioned theorems of Gödel do not suggest that we should advocate agnosticism, but they imply that truth transcends any formalist program (including, of course, first-order logic, higher-order logic, i.e., type theory, intuitionist type theory, etc.).⁹ Furthermore, in 1936, the American logician and mathematician Alonzo Church proved the following theorem: “There exists no efficient method by means of which one can determine which propositions of a consistent formal sys-

3. The absence of contradiction in an axiomatic system is known as consistency.

4. An axiomatic theory is said to be complete if each statement in the theory is capable of being proven true or false.

5. Laos, *Topics in Mathematical Analysis and Differential Geometry*, 96.

6. *Ibid.*, 98. By the term “ ω -consistent theory,” Gödel refers to a collection of statements that is not only syntactically consistent (i.e., it does not prove a contradiction), but also avoids proving certain infinite combinations of sentences that are intuitively contradictory.

7. *Ibid.*, 99.

8. Cohen, *Set Theory and the Continuum Hypothesis*, 3.

9. Henkin, “Completeness in the Theory of Types”; Lambek and Scott, *Introduction to Higher Order Categorical Logic*.

tem Φ containing the system of natural numbers are provable in Φ .¹⁰ Gödel's and Church's theorems imply that the truth of mathematics is a metamathematical question, and that logic (i.e., the science of formal principles of reasoning or correct inference) can organize or formalize other scientific disciplines, but it cannot fully organize or formalize itself.

One of the most influential members of the Vienna Circle was the Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, a paradigmatic representative of analytic philosophy.¹¹ According to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, language, thought, and the world are all isomorphic, and philosophical problems arise from misunderstandings of the logic of language. However, Wittgenstein's linguistic formalism and Hilbert's mathematical formalism have been shattered by the aforementioned theorems of Gödel and Church. Moreover, even though analytic philosophy has helped philosophers to develop particular methods of clarifying linguistic forms that express mental processes, it tends to lead to a philosophical stalemate, since, in essence, it repeats, in a more technical manner, Kant's fruitless attempts to define the presuppositions of the presuppositions of philosophy, whose rationalist investigation may continue indefinitely (i.e., it may give rise to an infinite regress).

In addition to the aforementioned philosophies, other philosophies that were faced with difficulties when they attempted to form *a posteriori* methods are pragmatism and Bergsonism. According to pragmatism, whose most prominent representative was William James, truth, understood as the agreement between reality and its image that is present in consciousness, is not a static relation but a process that is due to the functions of consciousness, so that reality undergoes changes because of the fact that consciousness refers to reality.¹² The previous thesis is shared by every philosophy of action. However, in this way (i.e., by advocating the previous pragmatic thesis), philosophy ceases to be scientific, and, furthermore, it ceases to be a worthy cause, precisely, it becomes contradictory and self-defeating: if we adhere to pragmatism, then no conclusion of any philosophical investigation should be accepted, because, according to pragmatism itself, reality is continually being created due to the functions of consciousness, and, therefore, the conclusions of any philosophical investigation are meaningless.

10. Laos, *Topics in Mathematical Analysis and Differential Geometry*, 98–99.

11. Sluga and Stern, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*.

12. Brandom, *Perspectives on Pragmatism*.

Pragmatism is based on the philosophies of William James, Charles Pierce, and John Dewey, and it attempts to combine the rationalist thesis that the mind is always active in interpreting experience and observation with the empiricist thesis that revisions in our beliefs are to be made as a result of experience.¹³ According to pragmatism, theories are underdetermined by the evidence, and, therefore, scientists have to choose between a number of theories that may all be compatible with the available evidence. Hence, as William James has put it, truth is “only the expedient in the way of belief,” meaning that we need to adjust our ideas as to what is true as experience unfolds. Pragmatism, then, defines what is true as what is most useful in the way of belief (a utilitarian epistemology). However, pragmatism is ultimately self-defeating. Even though pragmatism appears to reflect a dynamic attitude toward reality and epistemology and to be a progressive epistemological stance, it is profoundly narrow-minded and assigns a deeply passive role to the human spirit. By stressing the adaptation of our ideas to an unfolding experience, pragmatists ignore the dynamic continuity between the reality of the historical world and the reality of consciousness, a dynamic continuity that allows conscious beings to impose their intentionality on historical reality, instead of merely adapting to a reality that is external to their consciousness. Conscious beings are not merely obliged to look for methods of adaptation to historical reality, but they can utilize and restructure historical reality according to their intentionality.

During his attempt to form an *a posteriori* method, Henri-Louis Bergson, whose philosophy has exerted an important influence on the final formation of pragmatism, faced important difficulties, too. According to Bergson, the only reality is duration, and the conception of duration can be achieved through intuition. Bergsonian intuition is always an intuition of duration, and it consists in entering into the thing, rather than going around it from the outside. For this reason, Bergson calls intuition “sympathy.”¹⁴ Bergsonian intuition is an *a posteriori* method,

13. Misak, ed. *Pragmatism*.

14. Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 159. According to Bergson, our experience of sympathy begins with our putting ourselves in the place of others. Moreover, Bergson argues that intuition enables us to transcend the divisions of the different schools of philosophy like rationalism and empiricism or idealism and realism. Bergsonism and pragmatism maintain that the antinomies of philosophical concepts and positions result from the habitual way human intelligence works. According to Bergson, intuition reverses the habitual working of intelligence, which is analytic (synthesis being only a development of analysis), and this reversal of habitual intelligence is called “the turn

but its only difference from the *a priori* methods is that its object, which is an inner experience, is identified with consciousness. At this point, it becomes clear that inherent in Bergsonism is an inverted Cartesianism, which is an antinomy, since Bergson formulates his anti-rationalist and anti-Cartesian arguments in a rationalist and Cartesian way. However, Bergson's most important philosophical achievement is that he realized and emphasized that the major object of philosophical enquiry lies beyond the phenomena from which scientific knowledge starts, and, contrary to Kant's arguments, it is accessible to consciousness. At this point, it becomes clear that Bergson's intuitionist *a posteriori* method has important similarities with Edmund Husserl's phenomenological *a posteriori* method.¹⁵

The term phenomenology has been coined by Hegel. In the context of Hegel's philosophy, phenomenology refers to Hegel's conception of the itinerary of spirit, which is actualized in history. According to Hegel, "spirit" is "the subject that has returned to itself," and "this subject exists as a people, and its spirit is the national spirit."¹⁶ On the other hand, according to Husserl—who starts from a Cartesian position combined with scholastic views—phenomenology consists in a continuous attempt of consciousness to remove from reality all those acquired features that conceal its core and to gaze at pure essences (*Wesensschau*).¹⁷ In other words, Husserl's phenomenological consciousness tends to look past the empirical facts, and it neglects the existential otherness of the person in favor of the abstract universal. Therefore, Husserl's phenomenology should not be confused with classical Platonism, since, as I have already emphasized, Plato's ideas are not concepts (abstract generalizations), and the knowledge of Plato's ideas consists in a peculiar spiritual sensation which presupposes psychic cleansing. Phenomenology has exerted an important influence on existentialism, and the latter has adopted phenomenology as its method.

In the twentieth century, phenomenology was applied in the study of the most distant elements of reality whose knowledge precedes the essence of reality; these elements constitute the structure of reality. In the context of modern philosophy, the term "structure" refers to an inner

of experience"; Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 184–85.

15. For an extensive introductory discussion of the principal works of the classical phenomenologists, see Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*.

16. Laos, *The Metaphysics of World Order*, 84.

17. *Ibid.*, 98–101.

reality that is being organized and reorganized by itself, and it is conditioned by its own order, which also constitutes its own core. The term structure has originally been used in physics, biology, and linguistics; ethnology, sociology, and philosophy have borrowed this term from linguistics. The acknowledged father of structural linguistics is Ferdinand de Saussure. In Ferdinand de Saussure's *Cours de Linguistique Générale* (compiled by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye from notes on lectures given by Ferdinand de Saussure at the University of Geneva between 1906 and 1911), linguistic analysis is focused not on the use of language (called *parole*, or speech), but on the underlying system of language (called *langue*), and, therefore, this approach examines how the elements of language relate to each other in the present, i.e., synchronically rather than diachronically.¹⁸

Heidegger, the most prominent representative of existentialism, attempted to break with the thought of his predecessors in the history of modern philosophy and to eliminate the metaphysical foundations of the modern subject. In Heidegger's philosophy, Being is the openness of a relation to otherness, being (*Sein*) is constitutively being-with (*Mit-Sein*). Therefore, in Heidegger's philosophy, Being is a principle without ontological substance, the most proper problem of Being is the other, and the Present exists as a structure and not as subjective consciousness. The previous arguments of Heidegger seem to express a methexiological quest, but this is not true. As I have already argued, methexiology, being founded on the metaphysical principles and pursuits of Plato, Aristotle, and the Hesychasts, is focused on the communion between the human being and the Absolute (God), and this communion is a personal methexiological experience, in the context of which man is open to the "Other" (God), he participates in the "Other" (God), and, therefore, he achieves to improve his existential conditions and to become ontologically integrated and whole through non-temporal means. On the other hand, Heidegger proposes a profane and time-dependent method of transcending one's existential conditions.

Heidegger is aware of the philosophical problems that his predecessors faced throughout the history of modern philosophy, and he argues that the previous stalemate can be overcome by understanding Being¹⁹

18. Harris, *Reading Saussure*.

19. In the context of Heidegger's philosophy, the word Being with capital B indicates Heidegger's analysis of being as activity, i.e., as the cause of individual entities (beings with small b). For more details, see Heidegger, *Basic Writings*.

as otherness, which discloses the truth of a new possibility of existence through a direct and unmediated awareness of the Present. Therefore, Heidegger tries to remove every element associated with the consciousness of the external world from the ego, because, even indirectly, such elements connect the ego with a transcendent reality. According to Heidegger, the Present should be understood as the structure of existence, and not as consciousness of existence, and, furthermore, for him, the Present is the event on which the understanding of Being is founded. In this way, Heidegger believes that he has achieved to eliminate the thinking subject of Western metaphysics, whose paradigmatic representatives are Kant and Descartes. But, contrary to Heidegger's expectations, the subject cannot be eliminated in the previous way, because, in a rather subconscious way, the subject participates in every philosophy whose most proper problem is the subject. In particular, in his philosophy, Heidegger eliminated the subject as a syllogistic, or representational, certainty, but, ultimately, the subject is restored in Heidegger's philosophy, because Heidegger's endeavor is to substitute the "ego" with the "I am." In the context of Cartesianism, the power of the subject is founded on Descartes's resolution "cogito ergo sum" (I think therefore I am). In the context of Heidegger's philosophy, the subjectivism of the Cartesian "cogito" is replaced with the subjectivism of the Heideggerian "I am," and, thus, the modern subject (even indirectly, or subconsciously) is still present in Heidegger's philosophy. The ego as individuality (otherness) is the core of the reality of the manifestation of the Heideggerian Being in the Present (*Dasein*). It is exactly for the previous reason that Heidegger's philosophy (which, to a large extent, can be considered as a form of inverted Cartesianism) is an integral part of modern Western philosophy and philosophically alien to Plato, Aristotle, and Hesychasm.

In contrast to Heidegger's philosophy, Plato, Aristotle, and the Hesychasts understand *theoria* as the entelechy of philosophy, and, as Aristotle writes in his *Metaphysics* $\Lambda.1-9$, *theoria* (wisdom, or first philosophy) is not concerned with the learning, knowledge, or discovery of truth, but it is an active orientation of the mind toward a truth with which the mind is already familiar, i.e., it is an active orientation of the mind toward the divine reality. Thus, Aristotle equates pleasure with the energy of *theoria* and not with the acquisition of knowledge. Furthermore, according to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (Book Lambda), *theoria* is superior to "knowledge," exactly due to the fact that the first is concerned with the divine reality, whereas the latter is exhausted in human reason. Thus,

theoria is achieved through man's "mental eye" (and is related to spiritual intuition), whereas knowledge is merely founded on and derived from the subject. The "subject" is a historical being filled with reason and will, and, more precisely, a historical actor capable of acting on the basis of reason and will. In order to obtain an integrated understanding of methexiology's approach to being and *theoria*, one must study the modes of being—both God's modes of being (since, as I have already argued God is the source of the significance of being) and man's modes of being; this will be my task in chapter 3.