

Kata Christon, Mataia, and Physikē Philosophia in Gregory Palamas's 14th Century Byzantine Philosophy of Education

By Matthew Penney & Theodore M. Christou†*

This paper is a presentation of Gregory Palamas's philosophy of education. It begins with an examination of the details and content of the educational curricula of the exothen and kath'ēmas traditions in Byzantium. Next, the study undertakes a close reading of Palamas's chief texts which serve to unpack his understanding of the difference of these traditions. Additionally, the study provides a clear critique by Palamas of the misuse of philosophical or academic study. He describes three types of study: 1) kata Christon philosophia (kath'ēmas paideia, or theological knowledge), 2) mataia philosophia (misused exothen paideia), and 3) physikē philosophia (exothen paideia proper or philosophical knowledge). In examining each of these, Palamas articulates practically what is meant by the content of philosophical and theological knowledge, and how the appropriate combination of the kata Christon philosophia and physikē philosophia provide the best tools for an educational system that facilitates the personal transformation and salvation of students. Finally, this study offers some concrete advice from Palamas on pursuing one's education and what pitfalls to avoid.

Introduction

This paper examines the work of Gregory Palamas, Christian saint and scholar (1296-1359) with respect to education and the diverse ways of acquiring knowledge. Gregory's writings on the subject are positioned within a longstanding tension between two distinct curricular traditions, the exothen paideia and the kath'ēmas paideia, which persisted throughout the Byzantine world. In Gregory's texts, these are referred to as the exo (or exothen) philosophia and the kata Christon philosophountōn, respectively. In framing the saint's position on the tension and use of these two distinct methodologies as they relate to the acquisition of knowledge, we discuss three categories that describe Gregory's understanding of the purposes and the application of philosophy: kata Christon philosophia, mataia philosophia, and physikē philosophia. The first is the ideal philosophic existence, which is nothing else than the practice of the Christian life reinforced by the kath'ēmas paideia. The second is the misapplication of the exothen paideia, whereby philosophy is applied to domains that exceed its natural bounds. The third is the right application of the exothen paideia, which works within its limits as a support to the kath'ēmas paideia.

*Assistant Professor (Term Adjunct), Queen's University, Canada.

†Associate Dean, Queen's University, Canada.

Consideration of this application is crucial since philosophy is understood as a way of right living, rather than a mere intellectual system or set of texts. Human salvation—the ultimate aim that education should facilitate—is defined here as it was by early philosophers and theologians, as a life lived virtuously and well.¹ In Gregory's conception, this virtuous life is exemplified by the life of Christ and the practice of his commandments. Gregory argued that Classical and Christian sources were both beneficial, and while the latter were superior with regards to the illumined spiritual guidance that they offered as paths to wisdom, the former should not be entirely forewarned due to their usefulness. Instead, the exothen sources should be used selectively and moderately in order to facilitate one's movement towards Christian perfection. About matters metaphysical and theological, though, the exothen paideia is nefarious and misleading.

Exothen Paideia in Byzantium

In many ways, Byzantine education is one of the most concrete demonstrations of the continuity of "pagan" Rome with Constantine's new Eastern Roman empire of Byzantium. As Markopoulos puts it: "The education system in Byzantium was in all major respects the ancient educational format inherited from its Hellenistic and Roman past, which it perpetuated with remarkable constancy down to the last years of the empire's life."² This preservation of classical Greek education has been an occasion for both praise and criticism in the historiography.³ The Byzantine system adopted both the form and the content of classical Greek education, a notable feature given the new Christian trajectory of the empire.⁴

1. Shawn Bullock and Theodore Christou, "The Case for Philosophical Mindedness," *Paideusis* 20, no. 1 (2012): 14-23.

2. Athanasios Markopoulos, "Education," in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon & Robin Cormack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 785.

3. Distressingly, as pointed out by Averil Cameron, *The Byzantines* (Maldon, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2006), 149: "It is a curious feature of the academic study of Byzantium that even notable scholars of Byzantium have gone out of their way to denigrate their subject, and judgements on its literature are particularly prone to be negative"; for an example cf., Cyril Mango, *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), 132-133.

4. Cameron, *The Byzantines*, 8-9; Mango, *Byzantium*, 125-127; Markopoulos, "Education," 785; Marcus Rautman, *Daily Life in the Byzantine Empire* (London: Greenwood Press), 281; Warren Treadgold, *A Concise History of Byzantium* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 83; N.G. Wilson, *Scholars of Byzantium* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1996), 9-10.

There were three stages to Byzantine education corresponding roughly to the contemporary divisions of primary school, secondary, and higher education.⁵ Primary school began around 6-8 years of age and generally lasted between three and four years. Small groups of students were taught by *grammatistes*, or a *daskalos*, who were available as tutors for hire in most villages and towns.⁶ Many of these seem to have been clergy and lessons were generally taught in churches or courtyards of monasteries.⁷ Education at this stage consisted of basic literacy skills: learning to recognize letters and their sounds, progressing to vowel and consonant combinations, to words, and eventually to texts themselves. At this level, the chief text used was the Psalter and some accounts of Gospel miracles, as well as references to classical mythology.⁸ For arithmetic, fingers and small stones were used as well as an abacus counting board.⁹

At the secondary level, the *trivium* of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic, and *quadrivium* of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music, served as the curriculum.¹⁰ This usually lasted four years under the direction of another private teacher called a *grammatikos*, though at this level groups of teachers would also form schools. For teaching the *trivium*, the key textbook was the work of Homer, among other things.¹¹ Likewise, the *quadrivium* was taught using classical works, such as those of Euclid and Ptolemy, but supplemented in this area by Byzantine authors as well.¹² All together the curriculum was referred to as the *enkyklios paideia*, or cycle of education.¹³

The final level, that of higher education, was only available in certain large cities around the empire, and varied greatly depending on which period

5. Markopoulos, "Education," 787-790; Rautman, *Daily Life*, 281-283; and Mehdi K. Nakosteen and Robert Browning, "Education: The Byzantine Empire," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed May 10, 2018, <https://bit.ly/2Nse6dk>.

6. Markopoulos, "Education," 787; Rautman, *Daily Life*, 281. Markopoulos also makes reference to the alternative names *paidodidaskalos*, *paidotribes*, and *paidagogos*.

7. Ioannis Anastasiou, "Η κατάσταση της παιδείας εις το Βυζάντιον κατά του 9^{ου} αιωνος," in *Κυρίλλω και Μεθοδίου Τόμος Εόρτοις επί τη Χιλιοστή και Εκατοστή Ετηρίδι*, vol. A (Θεσσαλονίκη: Ιεράς Μητρόπολη Θεσσαλονίκης, 1966), 32; Markopoulos, "Education," 788.

8. Markopoulos, "Education," 788; Rautman, *Daily Life*, 282.

9. Markopoulos, "Education," 788.

10. Anastasiou, "Η κατάσταση της παιδείας," 32-33; Markopoulos, "Education," 788-789; Rautman, *Daily Life*, 293-298.

11. Deno John Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984), 401; Rautman, *Daily Life*, 282, also notes that classical tragedies and comedies, works of rhetoric and classical philosophy, the Psalms, and some select Christian authors were key texts in Byzantine schooling. Cf., Wilson, *Scholars*, 18ff.

12. For example, the *Tetrabiblos* of George Pachymeres (Markopoulos, "Education," 788).

13. Mango, *Byzantium*, 127; Markopoulos, "Education," 787; Rautman, *Daily Life*, 282.

one looks at.¹⁴ This education cannot be understood to correspond to what is contemporarily meant by higher education, though in a few instances something approaching that can be observed. Mango puts it well when he writes: "There was nothing, however, in the ancient world that corresponded to a university in the sense of a consortium of accredited teachers of various disciplines offering a syllabus of studies that led to a degree."¹⁵ But this does not mean that high levels of education were not taking place.

On the contrary, these schools often had particular subjects of specialization such as philosophy in Athens, law in Gaza and Berytus, Greek and Latin at an early period in Constantinople, and philosophy and theology later, etc.¹⁶ Higher education was largely designed for one of a few career paths: a career as a state bureaucrat (the most common), a position in the clergy, or a teacher oneself (the least common), among a few other options.¹⁷ The Byzantine state and its emperors were always conscious and concerned to facilitate (to varying monetary degrees) the continuous production of state functionaries required for the effective running of Byzantium.¹⁸ This was always a key goal of Byzantine education, and not only an intellectual program of mental or spiritual formation.

Kath'ēmas Paideia in Byzantium

In many ways the *kath'ēmas paideia* is less apparent than the *exothern*. We understand by *kath'ēmas paideia* what C. Galatariotou has in mind when she writes: "The reference ... to *exo paideia* points to the Byzantines' distinction between the *exothern* or *exothern* ('outside') learning, which was secular, based on ancient Greek literature and philosophy; and the *esothern* or *kath' hēmas* (sic) (the 'inside' or 'our') education, which was ecclesiastical, based on the Holy Books."¹⁹ The reason why the *kath'ēmas* is more difficult to assess is because a general formal education in the Christian faith did not exist *per se*.

14. Cameron, *The Byzantines*, 142; Mango, *Byzantium*, 128; Markopoulos, "Education," 785; Rautman, *Daily Life*, 282-284.

15. Mango, *Byzantium*, 128. Cf. Rautman, *Daily Life*, 282-284.

16. Mango, *Byzantium*, 128.

17. *Ibid.*, 129-130; Warren Treadgold, "Photius Before his Patriarchate," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 53, no. 1 (2002): 17; Markopoulos, "Education," 787.

18. Anastasiou, "Η κατάσταση της παιδείας," 35; Cameron, *The Byzantines*, 143; Mango, *Byzantium*, 130; Treadgold, *A Concise History*, 83.

19. Catia Galatariotou, *The Making of a Saint: The Life, Times and Sanctification of Neophytos the Recluse* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 154.

Village clergy seem often to have been the primary teachers, and lessons were generally taught in churches or courtyards of monasteries²⁰ (with the exception of salaried public teachers in bigger cities)²¹. As mentioned above, at this level the chief text used was the Psalter and some accounts of Gospel miracles, but these were used as a means to teach the basics of language rather than to teach religious *content*.²² As Moffatt writes: "Because information about the formal teaching of theology is very scarce and ambiguous in the preceding centuries in the Eastern Empire, scholars have resorted to searching for the origins of this eleventh and twelfth century system of schools even as early as the fifth century."²³ This is further borne out in the 4th to 7th centuries as presented in Moffat's study where the number of teachers of theology is almost non-existent.²⁴ So where did this education take place? The most obvious answer is: in the Church.

There exist a variety of collections of lengthy homilies, such as those of St. John Chrysostom. Collections of letters also abound, many of which have an explicitly didactic purpose, such as in the cases of Scriptural exegesis or responses to theological questions, etc.²⁵ Other major sources are the development of a detailed Church calendar of feasts and fasts,²⁶ the development of the *kontakion* or chanted sermon,²⁷ as well as other advances in church hymnology such as the *canon*.²⁸ There is the establishment and confirmation of the icons as a necessary part of Christian praxis through the 8th and 9th centuries,²⁹ the development of

20. Anastasiou, "Η κατάσταση," 32; Markopoulos, "Education," 788; Cameron, *The Byzantines*, 138.

21. Marjorie Ann Moffat, "School Teachers in the Early Byzantine Empire: 330-610 A.D.," (doctoral dissertation, University of London, 1972), 49.

22. Markopoulos, "Education," 788; Rautman, *Daily Life*, 282.

23. Moffat, "School Teachers," 41.

24. Cf. Cameron, *The Byzantines*, 143; and Mehdi K. Nakosteen and Robert Browning, "Education: The Byzantine Empire."

25. A brief survey of Patristic literature would easily suffice to demonstrate this point.

26. Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware, *The Festal Menaion*, trans. Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1998), 9-19.

27. Ephraim Lash, "Introduction," in *On the Life of Christ: Kontakia*, trans. Ephraim Lash (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), xxiii-xxxii; Andrew Louth, "Preface," in *On the Life of Christ: Kontakia*, trans. Ephraim Lash (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), xv-xxii. Also, cf., Cameron, *The Byzantines*, 142.

28. Robert Browning, *The Byzantine Empire* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), 70.

29. Constantine Cavarnos, *Orthodox Iconography* (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1992); Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era c. 680-850: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

the visual and auditory symbolism of the Church's liturgical worship,³⁰ and the emergence of collections of theological codification such as the work of John of Damascus.³¹

Each of these elements, which together made up the liturgical life of a Byzantine Christian, not to mention all the ways this intersected with social and political life, are key to understanding the *kath'ēmas paideia* within the territories of Byzantium.³² A further difficulty in accurately assessing this education is the tremendous variance from person to person and from community to community. There existed for those who wanted to study theology, especially at the higher levels, some monastic schools, such as at the Studion monastery in the 8th century and onward,³³ as well as at the Patriarchal School during certain periods.³⁴ It is also clear from various monastic sources and from a reading of Orthodox hagiography that elementary levels of education were also taking place in monasteries³⁵—though the degree to which this was organized or used a formal curriculum is unclear.

*Kata Christon Philosophia*³⁶

St. Gregory Palamas goes to great lengths in his writings to make a distinction between the *kata Christon philosophia*, *mataia philosophia*, and *physikē philosophia*. By doing this the saint depicts a clear picture of the right relationship that should exist between the *exothern* and the *kath'ēmas paideia*. As evidenced by the entirety of Gregory's first book of the *Triads*, this relationship can be extremely fruitful or extremely harmful depending on how one understands and applies this relationship in one's own education.

For Gregory, the *kata Christon philosophia* (lit., *των κατά Χριστόν φιλοσοφούντων*) is the true philosophy and it is not primarily a "speculative subject": "Certain people scoff at the aim recommended to Christians.... As they only know speculative science, they wish to introduce that into the church of those who practice the philosophy of Christ. They say that those who do not

30. Robert Taft, *The Byzantine Rite: A Short History* (Collegeville, MN: The Order of Saint Benedict, Inc., 1992), 16-19; Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church: Second Edition* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1993), chapter 13.

31. Frederic Chase, "Introduction," in *The Fathers of the Church: Saint John of Damascus, Writings* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1958), v.

32. Cf. Brubaker and Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era*.

33. Anastasiou, "Η κατάσταση της παιδείας," 43-46.

34. Anastasiou, "Η κατάσταση της παιδείας," 35; Robert Browning, "The Patriarchal School at Constantinople in the Twelfth Century," *Byzantion* 32, 167-202.

35. Cf. Anastasiou, "Η κατάσταση της παιδείας," 42-46.

36. It should be noted that quotations in this article from the writings of Gregory Palamas will be included in their original Greek in the footnotes.

possess scientific knowledge are ignorant and imperfect beings."³⁷ Gregory continues a little further down in his description by articulating what he means by the kata Christon philosophia:

"When I spoke of the purity that brings salvation, I did not simply mean separating from worldly ignorance. I know, in fact, that there is a blameless ignorance, and there is knowledge which can be criticized. So it is not that kind of ignorance which must be stripped away, but their ignorance of God and the divine doctrines. This is the ignorance that our theologians have forbidden. If you conform to the rules prescribed by our theologians, and make your whole way of life better, you will become filled with the wisdom of God, and in this way you will become truly an image and likeness of God."³⁸

For Gregory, the kata Christon philosophia is essentially a knowledge rooted in experience through praxis. This begins in a knowledge of "divine doctrines," which motivates and guides an individual's action, which in turn grants experiential knowledge and a deeper intellectual insight, whereupon the cycle begins again, growing and deepening each time. In effect, for Gregory, the kata Christon philosophia can be equated with the practice of the Christian life.

Elsewhere, Gregory describes in further detail the content of this tandem relationship of Christian knowledge and praxis that makes up the kata Christon philosophia:

"If we want to keep our divine image and our knowledge of the truth intact, we must abstain from sin, we must know the law and commandments not merely in theory, but by practising them, and we must 'persevere in all the virtues', and in this way turn back towards God through prayer and true contemplation. Without purity, one would not be any less mad, nor any the wiser, even by studying natural philosophy from Adam to the end. Yet even if you do not know this natural philosophy, if you

37. Gregory Palamas, *The Triads: Book One*, trans. Robin Amis (Chicago: Praxis Institute Press, 2002), 34. [In Greek], *Απάντα τα Έργα, τομ.2: Λόγοι υπέρ των Ιερών Ησυχάζοντων*, vol. 54 of *Έλληνες Πατέρες της Εκκλησίας*, edited by Παναγιώτη Χρήστου, and translated by Ελευθερίου Μερετάκη, (Thessaloniki, GR: Πατερικαί Εκδόσεις "Γρηγόριος ο Παλαμάς," 1999), 1.1.4, p. 54: "Νῦν δὴ τινες, ὡς σὺ φῆς, τοῦ τοῖς χριστιανοῖς προκειμένου τέλους ... ὡς ἐλαχίστου περιφρονήσαντες καὶ τὴν ἐπιστήμην εἰς γνῶσιν μεταλαμβάνοντες, τῇ τῶν κατὰ Χριστὸν φιλοσοφούντων ἐπισάγουσιν ἐκκλησίᾳ. Τοὺς γὰρ οὐκ εἰδότας τὰς μαθηματικὰς ἐπιστήμας ἀνάγνους ἀποφαίνονται καὶ ἀτελεῖς"

38. *Ibid.*, 35, *id.*, 1.1.4, 54, 56: "Ὁὐ ταύτης οὖν ἐγὼ τῆς ἀγνοίας ἀπαλλαγὴν ὑποτιθέμενος, καθαρότητα σωτήριον ἐκάλεσα ταύτην (οἶδα γὰρ ἀνέγκλητον ἄγνοιαν καὶ γνῶσιν ἐγκεκλημένην)-οὐκ οὖν ταύτης, ἀλλὰ τῆς περὶ Θεοῦ καὶ τῶν θείων δογμάτων ἀγνοίας ἀπαλλαγείς, ὅσῃν οἱ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἀπηγόρευσαν θεολόγοι, καὶ πᾶν ἦθος κατὰ τὰς αὐτῶν βελτιώσας ὑποθήκας, γενήσῃ Θεοῦ σοφίας ἀνάπλευς, εἰκῶν ὄντως καὶ ὁμοίωμα Θεοῦ"

purify and strip away the bad habits and evil doctrines from your soul, you will gain the wisdom of God, which has overcome the world."³⁹

Simply put, a true philosopher is a Christian.⁴⁰ Likewise, *true philosophy* is the Christian faith as practiced according to the commandments of Christ: "Do you not see that knowledge alone achieves nothing? And why speak only of knowledge of what we should do, or of knowledge of the visible world or of the invisible? No: even a knowledge of God, Who created all this, will not achieve anything on its own. 'What will we gain from the divine doctrine if we do not live a life pleasing to God.'"⁴¹

Where appropriate, though, the Christian may draw on the tools and resources that are lent him by the exothen paideia to support his development in the *kata Christon philosophia*. As Gregory argues, "worldly education serves natural knowledge. It can never become spiritual unless it is allied to faith and love of God, and it can never become spiritual unless it has been regenerated not only by love, but also by the grace which comes from love."⁴²

Gregory does not outline a particular set of texts as part of the *kata Christon philosophia*, although he does make copious references to church fathers, from

39. Ibid., 34, id., 1.1.3, p. 54: "Οὐκοῦν τούτου παντός μᾶλλον ἐπιμελητέον καὶ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἀφεκτέον καὶ τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν διὰ πράξεως ἀναγνωστέον καὶ ἀρετῆς πάσης ἀνθεκτέον καὶ δι' εὐχῆς καὶ θεωρίας ἀληθούς ἐπανιτέον πρὸς Θεόν, τὸν βουλόμενον τό τε κατ' εἰκόνα σῶον καὶ τὴν ἀληθογνωσίαν σχεῖν. Καθαρότητος γὰρ ἄνευ, κἂν μάθῃς τὴν ἀπὸ Ἀδάμ μέχρι συντελείας φυσικὴν φιλοσοφίαν, μωρὸς οὐδὲν ἦττον, ὅτι μὴ καὶ μᾶλλον, ἔση, ἢ σοφός· ἐκείνης δὲ ἄνευ, καθαρθεὶς καὶ τῶν πονηρῶν ἠθῶν καὶ δογμάτων ἀπαλλάξας τὴν ψυχὴν, τὴν νικῶσαν τὸν κόσμον τοῦ Θεοῦ σοφίαν κτήσῃ καὶ τῷ μόνῳ σοφῷ Θεῷ συνδιαγωνίσεις ἀγαλλόμενος."

40. Palamas, *Λόγοι*, 2.1.8, p. 232: "Ὁ δὲ ζητητικὸς τοῦ θείου θελήματος καὶ τοῦτ' ἐγνωκὼς ἐφ' ἐκάστου τῶν ὄντων, τίνος ἕνεκα παρὰ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ τῶν ὄλῶν προήχθη, καὶ κατὰ τὴν θεῖαν ταυτηνὴ βούλησιν αὐτοῖς χρώμενος, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ τοὺς αἰτιώδεις λόγους τῶν ὄντων εἰδώς, οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ τὴν γνῶσιν ἔχων τῶν ὄντων, οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθὴς φιλόσοφος καὶ τέλειος ἄνθρωπος" ["The one seeking the divine will and who has learned this by means of each being that exists, that is, for the sake of which they were brought into being by the Creator of all, and who uses these according to the divine will, he is the one who knows the principles underlying all beings. He is the one who possesses the knowledge of beings. He is the one who is the true philosopher and the perfect man."] (translation provided by the authors); cf., Palamas, *Triads*, 34; id., 1.1.4, p. 54.

41. Palamas, *Triads*, 40; Palamas, *Λόγοι*, 1.1.9, p. 66: "Ὁρᾶς ὡς οὐδένα ὀνίνῃσιν ἢ γνῶσις μόνῃ; Καὶ τί λέγω τὴν περὶ τὰ πρακτέα ἢ τὴν τοῦ ὄρατοῦ κόσμου ἢ τὴν τοῦ ἀοράτου; Οὐδ' αὐτὴ ἢ γνῶσις τοῦ κτίσαντος αὐτὰ Θεοῦ δυνήσεται τινα ὄνῃναι μόνῃ."

42. Ibid., 41; id., 1.1.9, p. 66: "Τῇ γὰρ φυσικῇ ταύτῃ ἢ ἔξω παιδείᾳ βοηθεῖ, πνευματικὴ δ' οὐποτε γένοιτο ἄν, εἰ μὴ μετὰ τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆ τοῦ Θεοῦ συγγένοιτο ἀγάπῃ, μᾶλλον δὲ εἰ μὴ πρὸς τῆς ἀγάπης καὶ τῆς ἐξ αὐτῆς ἐγγινομένης χάριτος ἀναγεννηθεῖ"

which one could easily compile a list.⁴³ Rather, the curriculum of the kata Christon philosophia, i.e., the kath'ēmas paideia, is an ongoing striving for purification and the keeping the commandments of Christ, the outcome of which is union with God in *theosis* and knowledge of God proceeding from *theoptia* (or divine vision). The highest knowledge—*certain* knowledge of the uncreated God—happens as an *encounter* between two persons, the one divine, the other human. This encounter generally takes place as *theoptia*, and is—as Palamas so clearly emphasizes—entirely different from knowledge, even if it also conveys knowledge: "Then [the *nous*⁴⁴ of a person] unites itself to God and [attains] supernatural and inexpressible visions filled with all immaterial knowledge of a sublime light... This is completely different from knowledge, but it can bring knowledge."⁴⁵ This divine vision is the goal of the kata Christon philosophia and is fundamentally rooted in a *praxis* of Christian purification through the keeping of the commandments.

43. Here is a list of some of the Church writers that Gregory refers to directly in his *Triads*, most of whom are cited numerous times by him: St. Dionysios the Areopagite (c. unknown), Origen (+254), St. Gregory Nazianzus (+390), St. Basil of Caesarea (+379), St. Macarius the Great (+392), St. Gregory of Nyssa (+394), Evagrius of Pontus (+399), St. John Chrysostom (+407), St. Neilos the Ascetic (+430), St. Cyril of Alexandria (+444), St. Diadochos of Photiki (+486), St. John Climacus (+649), St. Maximos the Confessor (+662), St. Isaac the Syrian (+700), St. Andrew of Crete (+740), St. Symeon Metaphrastes (+960), St. Symeon the New Theologian (+1022), St. Nikiphoros the Monk (c. +1300), Theoleptos of Philadelphia (+1322), St. Philotheos Kokkinos (+1379), as well as a wealth of quotations from the Old and New Testaments.

44. This word is often translated in English as simply "mind" or "attention", depending on the context. For a more precise definition cf., Elder Ephraim, glossary to *My Elder Joseph the Hesychast*, ed. & trans. Saint Anthony's Monastery (Florence, AZ: St. Anthony's Greek Orthodox Monastery, 2013), 690-691: "Nous (νοῦς): The Church Fathers employ the term 'nous' with several meanings. They mainly refer to the nous as the soul (the 'spiritual nature' of a man—St. Isaac the Syrian) and the *heart* (or 'the essence of the soul'—vid. *Philokalia*, vol. II, p. 109, 73). More specifically, it constitutes the innermost aspect of the heart (St. Diadochos, 79, 88). However, they also refer to it as the 'eye of the soul' (*The Orthodox Faith*, St. John of Damascus, FC vol. 37, p. 236) or 'the organ of theoria' (vision) (*Makarion Homilies*) which 'is engaged in pure prayer' (St. Isaac the Syrian). When referring to the energy of the nous, they call it 'a power of the soul' (*On the Holy Spirit*, St. Gregory Palamas, 2.9) 'consisting of thoughts and conceptual images' (*On the Hesychasts*, St. Gregory Palamas, p. 410, 413). However, it is more commonly known as the energy of the soul, whereas the heart is known as the essence of the soul (pp. 404-05)"

45. Ibid., 95-96; id., 1.3.5, p. 134: "ἐμφανῶς καὶ ἀπορρήτως ἐνωθεῖ τῷ Θεῷ ἐκεῖ καὶ τῶν ὑπερφῶν καὶ ἀπορρήτων ἐπιτυχάνοι θεαμάτων, πάσης ἀῦλου γνώσεως ὑψηλοτέρου φωτὸς ἀναπιμπλάμενος, ... ἄλλος παντάπασι παρὰ τὴν γνῶσιν, ὅς καὶ παρεκτικός ἐστὶν αὐτῆς"; cf., Basil Tatakis, *Christian philosophy in the Patristic and Byzantine tradition*, ed. and trans. George Dragas (Rollingsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2007), 158.

Furthermore, as the saint explains: "There is knowledge about God and His doctrines, a contemplation which we call theology... But this is not the dawn of the perfect beauty of the noble state which comes to us from above. This is not the supernatural union with the most resplendent light, which is the one source of sure theology"⁴⁶ This is an essential point when describing Gregory's understanding of the process of the *kata Christon* philosophy and how it contributes both to knowledge of God and to human salvation. But, as we shall see, this can also be facilitated—though never supplanted—through the proper use of *exothern paideia*.

Mataia Philosophia

Gregory goes to great lengths to make a distinction between the *kata Christon* philosophy and the *mataia philosophia* (*ματαιία φιλοσοφία*, or vain philosophy). In this, he follows a long tradition of the great teachers of the Church and sees himself as situated in a broader tradition of thought. The *Triads* is steeped in references and quotations that draw on these sources.⁴⁷

In Gregory's thought, *mataia philosophia* is the misuse of the *exothern* tradition. Gregory is not advocating a wholesale rejection of *exothern paideia*. Rather, he is critical of excesses in its application: "A man addicted to the love of vain philosophy [lit., *mataia philosophia*], wrapped up in its figures and its theories, never sees even the beginning of this [education in true knowledge]"⁴⁸ Gregory's critique is a longstanding one in the Orthodox tradition. The

46. Palamas, *The Triads*, 106; id., *Λόγοι υπέρ των Ιερών Ησυχαστών*, 1.3.15, p. 152, 154: "Ἔστι γὰρ καὶ ἡ περὶ Θεοῦ καὶ τῶν κατ'αὐτὸν δογμάτων γνῶσις, θεωρία, ὁ θεολογίαν ὀνομάζομεν, καὶ ἡ τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεων καὶ τῶν τοῦ σώματος μελῶν κατὰ φύσιν χρῆσις τε καὶ κίνησις ἀναμόρφωσιν ποιεῖται τῆς λογικῆς εἰκόνοσ· ἀλλ' οὐ τοῦτό ἐστιν ἡ τελεία τῆς ἀνωθεν ἡμῖν εὐγενείας εὐπρέπεια καὶ ἡ πρὸς τὸ ὑπερφαῆς φῶς ὑπερφυῆς ἔνωσις, παρ' ἧς μόνης ἐγγίνεται καὶ τὸ θεολογεῖν ἀσφαλῶς καὶ τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ἐστάναι τε καὶ κινεῖσθαι τὰς ἐν ἡμῖν δυνάμεις τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τοῦ σώματος· ταύτην οὖν ἀναιροῦντες, συνανεῖλον πᾶσαν ἀρετὴν καὶ ἀλήθειαν."

47. Vid., footnote 43 above.

48. Palamas, *The Triads*, 38; id., *Λόγοι υπέρ των Ιερών Ησυχαστών*, 1.1.7, p. 62: "Αὕτη παιδεία καὶ γνῶσις ἀληθῆς, ἧς οὐδέ την ἀρχὴν, ... δύναται χωρῶσαι τις ἐνεσχημένος τῇ τῆς ματαιίας ἀγάπῃ φιλοσοφίας καὶ ταῖς στροφαῖς αὐτῆς καὶ θεωρίας ἐνελοιμένός τε καὶ συστρεφόμενος."; cf., 2.1.19-20.

*Synodikon of Orthodoxy*⁴⁹ (ca. 1082), for instance, reads: "To them who undertake Greek studies not only for purposes of education but also follow after their vain opinions, and are so thoroughly convinced of their truth and validity that they shamelessly introduce them and teach them to others, sometimes secretly and sometimes openly, Anathema."⁵⁰ What sort of opinions? An example is given elsewhere in the *Synodikon*: "To them who prefer the foolish so-called wisdom of the secular philosophers and follow its proponents, and who accept the metempsychosis [transmigration] of human souls... and who thus deny the resurrection, judgment, and the final recompense for the deeds committed during life, Anathema."⁵¹

And "to them who dogmatize that matter and the Ideas are without beginning or are co-eternal with God... and the other created things are everlasting, unoriginate and immutable, ... anathema."⁵²

In these examples, what is being censured is not the undertaking of "Greek studies," but the adoption of their metaphysical views. Gregory believed that philosophy ought not to make claims about metaphysics and that when it does, it errs. As he notes: "We absolutely forbid them to expect any accurate knowledge of divine things from it [exothern paideia] since it is

49. This is a conciliar document produced by the Orthodox Church—originally in 843, though expanded in subsequent centuries—which is read publicly in Orthodox churches each year (particularly, cathedral churches) on the First Sunday of Great Lent. Vid., John Sanidopoulos, "Synodikon of Orthodoxy," *Mystagogy*, accessed February 3, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2pX9a7x>. Note that the Greek text of the Synodikon will follow in the footnotes for any quoted excerpts, "Το Συνόδικον της Ορθοδοξίας: Κατὰ τοῦ Ἰταλοῦ Ἰωάννου, κεφάλαια ΙΑ," *Συμβολή*, accessed Feb 3, 2020, <https://bit.ly/34NBLL7>.

50. "Το Συνόδικον της Ορθοδοξίας: Κατὰ τοῦ Ἰταλοῦ Ἰωάννου, κεφάλαια ΙΑ," *Συμβολή*, accessed June 6, 2015. <https://bit.ly/2Cs4dX2>. Κεφάλαιο ζ': "Τοῖς τὰ ἑλληνικὰ διεξιούσι μαθήματα καὶ μὴ διὰ παιδείωσιν μόνον ταῦτα παιδευομένοις, ἀλλὰ καὶ ταῖς δόξαις αὐτῶν ταῖς ματαίαις ἐπομένοις καὶ ὡς ἀληθέσι πιστεύουσι, καὶ οὕτως αὐταῖς ὡς τὸ βέβαιον ἐχούσαις ἐγκειμένοις, ὥστε καὶ ἐτέρους ποτὲ μὲν λάθρα ποτὲ δὲ φανερώς ἐνάγειν αὐταῖς καὶ διδάσκειν ἀνευδοιάστως, ἀνάθεμα."

51. Ibid. Κεφάλαιο Γ: "Τοῖς τὴν μωρὰν τῶν ἕξωθεν φιλοσόφων λεγομένην σοφίαν προτιμῶσι καὶ τοῖς καθηγηταῖς αὐτῶν ἐπομένοις καὶ τὰς τε μετεμψυχώσεις τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ψυχῶν ἢ καὶ ὁμοίως τοῖς ἀλόγοις ζώοις ταύτας ἀπόλλυσθαι καὶ εἰς τὸ μηδὲν χωρεῖν δεχομένοις, καὶ διὰ τούτων ἀνάστασιν καὶ κρίσιν καὶ τὴν τελευταίαν τῶν βεβιωμένων ἀνταπόδοσιν ἀθετοῦσιν, ἀνάθεμα."

52. Ibid. Κεφάλαιο Δ: "Τοῖς τὴν ὕλην ἀναρχον καὶ τὰς ἰδέας ἢ συνἀναρχον τῷ δημιουργῷ πάντων καὶ Θεῷ δογματίζουσι, καὶ ὅτι περὶ οὐρανὸς καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν κτισμάτων αἰδιά τε εἰσὶ καὶ ἀναρχα καὶ διαμένουσι ἀναλλοίωτα, καὶ ἀντινομοθετοῦσι τῷ εἰπόντι: «ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ παρελεύσονται, οἱ δὲ λόγοι μου οὐ μὴ παρέλθωσι», καὶ ἀπὸ γῆς κενοφωνοῦσι καὶ τὴν θεῖαν ἀρὰν ἐπὶ τὰς ἑαυτῶν ἄγουσι κεφαλάς, ἀνάθεμα."

not possible to extract any teaching about God from such an education."⁵³ This distinction is an old one. As Basil the Great (+379) wrote a thousand years before Gregory in his famous letter on education: "But that this pagan learning [lit., exothen] is not without usefulness for the soul has been sufficiently affirmed... But least of all shall we give attention to them when they narrate anything about the gods."⁵⁴

This is precisely what St. Gregory is also objecting to in his *Triads*. Throughout the text, we find Gregory's critique of *mataia philosophia*. While he clearly makes room for the use of philosophy, he is quite strict and prohibitive regarding *mataia philosophia*, writing: "The foolish philosophy of the worldly wise neither comprehends nor reveals the wisdom of God."⁵⁵ But what exactly constitutes *mataia philosophia*, as opposed to *kata Christon* or *physikē philosophia*? Gregory's answer is straightforward: *mataia philosophia* is philosophy which has "abandoned the end appropriate to simple human wisdom"⁵⁶ and oversteps its proper bounds. These proper bounds are rooted in the physical universe and in the ability to draw conclusions about it. Philosophy, though, should not speak about things which transcend the physical universe, such as the "transmigration of the soul"⁵⁷ or the eternity of the world, etc., as being beyond its scope to study. When it does it transforms itself into a *vain* form of philosophy – *mataia philosophia*.

Furthermore, Gregory refutes the claim that the study and application of philosophy is *necessary* for human salvation. He draws on St. Basil to support his argument noting that Basil "calls these worldly studies vain, harmful, and unintelligent... [And] certain people claim that this knowledge is the aim of contemplation and believe that it leads to salvation."⁵⁸ Here, Gregory argues that the *exothen* philosophy may serve as an aid to humans in their search for salvation, but in-itself, does not *save human beings*. The noted Palamas scholar,

53. Palamas, *The Triads*, 44; Palamas, *Λόγοι*, 1.1.12, p. 72: "Προσδοκᾶν δέ τι τῶν θεῶν ἀκριβῶς παρ' αὐτῆς εἶσεσθαι καὶ τελῶς ἀπαγορεύομεν· οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἐξ αὐτῆς διδαχθῆναι τι περὶ Θεοῦ ἀσφαλές."

54. St. Basil the Great, "Address to Young Men on Reading Greek Literature," in *The Letters*, vol. 4, trans. Roy Deferrari & Martin McGuire (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), 387, 389: "Ἄλλ' ὅτι μὲν οὐκ ἄχρηστον ψυχαῖς μαθήματα τὰ ἔξωθεν δὴ ταῦτα ἰκανῶς εἴρηται· ὅπως γε μὴν αὐτῶν μεθεκτέον ὑμῖν ἐξῆς ἂν εἶη λέγειν.... Πάντων δὲ ἥκιστα περὶ θεῶν τι διαλεγόμενοι προσέξομεν"

55. Palamas, *The Triads*, 46; Palamas, *Λόγοι*, 1.1.14, p. 76: "Οὐκ οὐκ διορατικὴ καὶ ἐξαγγελτικὴ ἐστὶ τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ σοφίας ἢ τῶν ἔξω σοφῶν μεμωραμένη φιλοσοφία."

56. *Ibid.*, 46; *id.*, 1.1.13, p. 76: "...ὡς καὶ τοῦ προσήκοντος ἀπολειφθῆσα τῆ κατ' ἀνθρώπον σοφία τέλους."

57. *Ibid.*, 42; *id.*, 1.1.10, p. 68: "μετεμψυχώσεις."

58. *Ibid.*, 39; *id.*, 1.1.8, p. 62, 64: "Ορθῶς πῶς ματαίαν, βλαβεράν, ἀνόητον, τὴν ἔξω παιδείαν καὶ αὐτὴν τὴν τῶν μαθημάτων καὶ τὴν ἐξ αὐτῶν προσαγορεύει γνῶσιν, ἣν τινες, ὡς σὺ φῆς, τέλος θεωρίας καὶ σωτήριον ἀποφαίνονται;"

J. Meyendorff, confirms this: "Palamas admits the genuine character of natural knowledge; but the difference between it and revealed wisdom is that, by itself, it cannot procure salvation."⁵⁹

Philosophy's right use, as well as the kath'ēmas tradition in general, consists in facilitating a person to draw nearer to God: "The beginning of wisdom is to become wise enough to distinguish and prefer what is serviceable, heavenly, and spiritual—which comes from God, leads towards God, and makes those who acquire it Godlike."⁶⁰ Conversely, mataia philosophia is the ignorance of this distinction and a distortion of philosophy's purposes: "It is the Hellenic heresy that concentrates all its enthusiasm and interest on those who research the science of such things. Indeed, all the Stoics define this science as the aim of contemplation."⁶¹

Here, we can distinguish between two conceptions of how one ought to be educated and where education can lead: one where natural philosophy is equivalent to kata Christon philosophy in leading toward human salvation and perfection (mataia philosophia), and one where natural philosophy is bound to follow kata Christon philosophia in order to facilitate and achieve these goals. Gregory presents various refutations of the position that exothen philosophy is equal to, or supersedes, the kata Christon philosophy. In one characteristic example, he writes: "If a person could rediscover and perceive the [divine] image, transforming his character for the better and ridding his soul of the shadows of ignorance simply through worldly education [lit., *exothen paideia*], then the wise ones of the Greeks would have been more closely conformed to God. They would have seen God better than did the fathers who came before the Law, and the Prophets... Where in the desert were the schools of that futile philosophy which those people call 'saving'?"⁶² As Meyendorff highlights, the Italian-monk Barlaam, the initial opponent of

59. John Meyendorff, *Study of Gregory Palamas* (London: Faith Press, 1964), 127.

60. Palamas, *The Triads*, 33; Palamas, *Λόγοι*, 1.1.2, p. 52: "Καὶ ὄντως ἀρχὴ σοφίας γνῶναι σοφίαν, ὥστε διελέσθαι καὶ προελέσθαι τῆς χαμερποῦς καὶ γηϊνῆς καὶ ἀνονήτου τὴν μεγαλωφελῆ καὶ οὐρανίαν καὶ πνευματικὴν καὶ παρὰ Θεοῦ καὶ πρὸς Θεὸν ἐρχομένην καὶ Θεῷ τοὺς κτησαμένους συμμόρφους ἀποδεικνῦσαν." Cf., *ibid.*, 2.3.7, p. 358, 360.

61. *Ibid.*, 34; *id.*, 1.1.3, p. 54: "Πρὸς γὰρ τὴν ἐπιστήμην τῶν τοιούτων βλέποντες πᾶσαν ἀπευθύνειν σπουδὴν τε καὶ ζήτησιν, αἴρεσις ἐστὶν ἑλληνικὴ· οἱ γὰρ Στωϊκοὶ πάντες τέλος τῆς θεωρίας τὴν ἐπιστήμην ὀρίζονται." Cf. Tatakis, *Christian Philosophy*, 158.

62. *Ibid.*, 53; *id.*, 1.1.4, p. 56: "Εἰ δ' οὐκ ἀληθὴς ὁ λόγος οὗτος, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῆς ἕξω παιδείας τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα τὸν ἄνθρωπον εὐρεῖν καὶ ἰδεῖν ἐστὶν, ὡς τοὺς χαρακτῆρας ἐπὶ τὸ κρεῖττον μεταρρυθμιζούσης καὶ τὸ σκότος τῆς ἀγνοίας ἐξαιρούσης τῆς ψυχῆς, οἱ καθ' Ἑλληνας σοφοὶ θεοειδέστεροι ἂν εἶεν καὶ θεοπτικώτεροι τῶν πρὸ νόμου πατέρων καὶ τῶν ἐν τῷ νόμῳ προφητευσάντων... Ποῦ τοίνυν ἐν ἐρημίᾳ διδασκαλεῖα τῆς ματαίας, ὡς δ' λέγουσι, σωτηρίου φιλοσοφίας;"

St. Gregory, "was clear that 'theological wisdom and the philosophy of the profane sciences had the same end'."⁶³ Barlaam taught that the exothen and the kata Christon philosophies were distinct curricula but each respectively leading to knowledge of God and human salvation. For Gregory, conversely, while the end of each educational tradition can and ought to be human salvation, exothen paideia can never achieve this end by itself, let alone an accurate knowledge of supra-natural things. Rather, it may do so only in service to the kata Christon philosophia. Thus, when exothen paideia is used to try to achieve some form of human perfection or salvation without reference to kata Christon philosophia, it easily overestimates and oversteps the limits of its knowledge and becomes corrupted into mataia philosophia.

Physikē Philosophia

Here it is important to qualify what is meant by Gregory's critique of mataia versus *physikē philosophia* (φυσική φιλοσοφία, or *natural philosophy*). By *physikē philosophia* Gregory has in mind philosophy, scientific knowledge and investigation, academic study and education used and directed toward its proper goal. He returns to this point on several occasions. For instance, Gregory notes: "But if someone says that philosophy, in the sense that it is natural, is a gift from God, then they speak the truth, without contradicting us."⁶⁴ Elsewhere, he continues, "if you put to good use that part of the secular [lit., *exothen*] wisdom which has been clearly separated from the rest, no harm can result, for now by its nature it will have become an instrument for good."⁶⁵ So *physikē philosophia*, well-used, is a good and beneficial educational tool that can help facilitate the wider goals and practice of the kata Christon philosophia in the lives of students.

In particular, Gregory provides two noteworthy examples of how best to approach the use of *physikē philosophia* in order to maximize it as an "instrument for good." He speaks in terms of the need to separate out what is useful for the Christian life in exothen philosophy drawing on the image of

63. Meyendorff, *Study*, 126. With respect to Barlaam's views on philosophy and theology being a single kind of knowledge, and of equal value cf., Panayiotis Christou, "Double Knowledge According to Gregory Palamas," *Myriobiblos*, last accessed February 3, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2WTPD41>, paragraph 13. In Greek: Π. Κ. Χρήστου, *Θεολογικά Μελετήματα*, τ. 3 (Νηπτικά και Ησυχαστικά), Θεσσαλονίκη, 1977.

64. *Ibid.*, 52; *id.*, 1.1.19, p. 86: "Εἰ δέ τις τῷ φυσικῇ εἶναι τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἐκ Θεοῦ δεδόσθαι λέγει ταύτην, ἀληθῆ μὲν λέγει καὶ ἡμῖν οὐκ ἀντιλέγει." With respect to philosophy as a *natural*, but not *spiritual* gift, cf., Christou, "Double Knowledge."

65. *Ibid.*, 54; *id.*, 1.1.21, p. 90: "ὅμως εἰ καὶ καλῶς χρῆσι τῷ καλῶς ἀπειλημμένῳ μορῷ τῆς ἔξωθεν σοφίας, κακὸν μὲν οὐκ ἂν εἴη τοῦτο, καὶ γὰρ ὄργανον πέφυκε γίνεσθαι πρὸς τι καλόν."

someone trying to separate honey from hemlock in a mixture of poison: "There is some benefit to be had even from words of the worldly wise... but we must take care to separate the honey from the mixture and not mistakenly drink the deadly remnant."⁶⁶ The second example portrays exothen paideia as a serpent:

"If you begin with worldly [thyrathen, i.e., exothen] wisdom... it is first necessary to kill the serpent, after overcoming the pride that comes to you from this philosophy... After you have overcome it, you must separate and throw away the head and tail, for these the extremities are evil in the highest degree. By the head, I mean manifestly wrong opinions concerning things noetic, divine, and primordial. By the tail, I mean assumptions about created things. As to what lies between, that is, discourses on nature, you must separate out the harmful ideas by using the abilities in critical analysis and observation."⁶⁷

This generally represents the care with which Gregory advocates approaching philosophy, so that the "discourses on nature,"⁶⁸—or, *physikē philosophia*—can be of benefit to a person in his education.

Much more about Gregory's exact views on *physikē philosophia* can be gleaned from a close reading of his *Topics of Natural and Theological Science and on the Moral and Ascetic Life: 150 Chapters*.⁶⁹ One major aspect of this work is as Costache writes: "The message conveyed is transparent: on the one hand, there are areas of confluence between theological and natural epistemologies; on the other hand, there are domains that cannot be dealt with outside the

66. *Ibid.*, 53; *id.*, 1.1.20, p. 88: "Ἔστι τοίνυν χρησίμιον ἐν τούτοις καὶ πολὺ γ' ἴσως ὡς μέλι κωνεῖω παραμιχθέν· ἀλλὰ καὶ πολὺ τὸ δέος μὴ διακρίνουσιν ἐκεῖθεν λάθη τι συναποληφθέν λείψανον θανατηφόρον." While Gregory makes no mention of it, Basil the Great uses a similar analogy about poison in his *Address to young men on reading Greek literature*, 387 & 389.

67. Palamas, *The Triads*, 54; *id.*, *Λόγοι υπέρ των Ιερών Ησυχάζοντων*, 1.1.21, p. 90: "Ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς θύραθεν σοφίας, δεῖ μὲν πρῶτον τὸν ὄφιν ἀποκτείνειν, καθελόντα σε τὸ παρ' αὐτῆς προσγενόμενον σοὶ φύσημα ... · καθελόντα δ' ὅμως, ἔπειτα διελεῖν καὶ διαρῶσαι κεφαλὴν τε καὶ οὐράν, ὡς ἄκρα καὶ ἄκρατα κακά, τὴν περὶ τῶν νοερῶν καὶ θείων καὶ ἀρχῶν δηλαδὴ σαφῶς πεπλανημένην δόξαν καὶ τὴν ἐν τοῖς κτίσμασι μυθολογίαν. Τὸ δὲ μεταξύ, τοὺς περὶ φύσεως τουτέστι λόγους, ὡς οἱ φαρμακοποιοὶ πυρὶ καὶ ὕδατι τὰς τῶν ὄφρων σάρκας ἀποκαθαίρουσιν ἔψουντες, οὕτω δὲ τῷ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐξεταστικῷ καὶ θεωρητικῷ τῶν βλαβερῶν διακρίναι νοημάτων."

68. *Ibid.*, 54; *id.*, 1.1.21, p. 90: "τοὺς περὶ φύσεως τουτέστι λόγους."

69. St. Gregory Palamas, "Topics of Natural and Theological Science and on the Moral and Ascetic Life: 150 Chapters," in *The Philokalia: The Complete Text, Vols. 1-4*, trans. G.E.H. Palmer, P. Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (London: Faber and Faber, 1979).

confines of divine revelation.⁷⁰ These "epistemologies" correspond roughly to *kata Christon* and *physikē philosophies*, with *mataia philosophia* occurring when the "domains that cannot be dealt with," are dealt with.

In other words, "Natural sciences [or philosophy] have their well-grounded competence yet this does not extend to matters pertaining to the domain of the spiritual life"⁷¹ P. Christou, likewise, writes: "according to Palamas' teaching worldly knowledge and theological knowledge are clearly distinguished and proceed on parallel paths. The *destination* of each determines its value."⁷² For Gregory, the ultimate goal for *physikē philosophia* is to "naturally [impel] our soul to understand God's creatures: Then it will be filled with admiration, will deepen its understanding, and continually glorify the Creator."⁷³

Gregory draws our attention to the fact that *exothern paideia*, "can never become spiritual unless it is allied to faith and love of God, and it can never become spiritual unless it has been regenerated not only by love, but also by the grace which comes from love. Then, it becomes different from what it was, new and deiform, pure, peaceful, tolerant, persuasive, full of words which sustain those who listen to them, and full of good fruits."⁷⁴ The product of this transformation is the possibility of a curriculum "which purifies the soul".⁷⁵ This is the direct result of the interrelationship of the *kata Christon* and the *physikē philosophies*. The *right use* of *physikē philosophia* has the ability to transform and redeem the errors of *mataia philosophia*. The two pedagogical traditions of the *exothern paideia* and the *kath'ēmas paideia*, far from being inherently in conflict, have the possibility of working harmoniously in such a way that a student is provided with a set of beneficial tools that help contribute to the ultimate goal of a human life—personal transformation and salvation.

70. Doru Costache, "Theology and Natural Sciences in St Gregory Palamas," in *God, Freedom and Nature*, eds. Ronald S. Laura, Rachel A. Buchanan and Amy K. Chapman (New York: Body and Soul Dynamics, 2012), 132.

71. *Ibid.*, 34.

72. Christou, "Double Knowledge." Italics added.

73. Palamas, *The Triads*, 53; Palamas, *Λόγοι*, 1.1.20, p.90: "Ἄφροντις γὰρ βίος διὰ τὴν εἰς Θεὸν ἐλπίδα φυσικῶς κινεῖ τὴν ψυχὴν πρὸς κατανόησιν τῶν κτισμάτων τοῦ Θεοῦ· ἐκπλήττεται τε ταύτῃ προσανέχουσα καὶ ἐμβαθύνουσα, καὶ παραμένει δοξάζουσα τὸν κτίστην."

74. *Ibid.*, 41; *id.*, 1.1.9, p. 66, 68: "γένονται καινὴ τε καὶ θεοειδής, ἀγνή, εἰρηνική, ἐπιεικής, εὐπειθής, μεστή τε λόγων τοὺς ἀκούοντας οἰκοδομούντων καὶ καρπῶν ἀγαθῶν."

75. *Ibid.*, 38; *id.*, 1.1.7, p. 60: "τῆς καθαιρούσης τὴν ψυχὴν."

Conclusions

It should be clear that it is an error to conflate the exothen paideia with the mataia philosophia in Gregory's educational thought. In rejecting the mataia philosophia, Gregory does not reject the entire exothen tradition. Instead, he draws attention to the use and application of exothen sources and argues that the Christian in his search for salvation may use these selectively, moderately, and judiciously. They have an important role to play, even if somewhat limited in scope from what Gregory's opponents would desire it to be. It is not an absolute necessity for human salvation, but it can be an important tool.

Palamas's critique simply centers around what he considers the *misuse* of the exothen tradition in such a way that it replaces the distinct methodology and content of the *kath'imas* tradition. The real problem for Palamas is that these views *necessitate* that a person abandon pursuing the highest experiential knowledge within the *kath'emas* tradition in exchange for that of the exothen, which is only meant to *facilitate* the former.

Furthermore, Palamas criticized his opponents for adopting uncritically the philosophical categories of the exothen tradition from Plato, Aristotle, and the Neo-Platonists, and for trying to apply these philosophic principles—particularly in epistemology—to the Christian revelation and *kath'emas* educational tradition in ways Palamas considered inconsistent with them.⁷⁶

Exothen paideia trains the mind to understand "discourses on nature,"⁷⁷ and through this process develops "abilities in critical analysis and observation."⁷⁸ But St. Gregory laments that the Greek philosophers have failed to achieve this—not because exothen paideia is inherently deficient—but because these philosophers and their ideas have, "justly earned the name of folly... as a result of a lack of knowledge of the truth, since [their philosophy] had abandoned the end appropriate to simple human wisdom. Not only did it abandon this [truth], but it strayed in the opposite direction, and persisted in telling lies and presenting them as truth."⁷⁹ Again, exothen paideia can be of great value as

76 Cf., Aristeides Papadakis, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1994), 297: "[St Gregory] found inadmissible only the degree of authority assigned to the profane science of philosophy It is the pretentious claims made for secular philosophy by his opponents that was at issue"

77. Ibid., 54; id., 1.1.21, p. 90: "τοὺς περὶ φύσεως τουτέστι λόγους."

78. Ibid., 54; id., 1.1.21, p. 90: "οὕτω δὲ τῷ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐξεταστικῶ καὶ θεωρητικῶ τῶν βλαβερῶν διακρίναι νοημάτων."

79. Ibid., 45; id., 1.1.13, p. 76: "τῆς μωρίας δικαίως ἐπώνυμος, ... ἀλλὰ τῆς κατ' ἔλλειψιν ἀληθείας ἐχομένης γνώσεως, ὡς καὶ τοῦ προσήκοντος ἀπολειφθῆσα τῇ κατ' ἄνθρωπον σοφίᾳ τέλους, οὐκ ἀπολειφθεῖσα δὲ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰς πᾶν τοῦταντίον ἀποβουκοληθεῖσα, καὶ τοῦ μὲν ψεύδους ὡς ἀληθείας ἀντεχομένη."

long as it is not misused, and the exaggerations of the Greek philosophers—particularly with respect to metaphysics—are avoided.

In light of the potential dangers, Gregory offers some guidance. He writes: "We do not forbid anyone to initiate himself in worldly education [lit., *exothern paideia*] if he wishes, at least if he has not adopted the monastic life. But we would not advise anyone to devote himself to this unendingly."⁸⁰ This is a principle to which Gregory adhered in pursuit of his own education.⁸¹ While often construed as always a good and beneficial thing, one must recognize that education *can* become an obstacle to salvation if one lacks discretion.

Gregory points to individuals who become distracted from their purpose and drown themselves in the "vistas of deep and diverse knowledge"⁸² along with other earthly ends. They expend their energies on vanities—among these, academic learning—and lose sight of the aim of education, which is to facilitate human salvation. As a consequence, they spend their "whole lives seeking these things, and never have enough strength left to set [their] hand firmly to the education which purifies the soul."⁸³ With particular respect to monastics, Gregory counsels a judicious and limited concentration on reading texts, both *exothern and kata Christon*, when these texts become a distraction from the spiritual life.

The way that Palamas harmonized these seemingly opposed traditions was through a careful and clear prioritization of them that simultaneously valued each form of knowledge for what it offered to a human being, but which needed to be delicately balanced so as not to undermine one or the other through excesses in either direction. In the same way that a coach would caution an athlete against over-practicing to the point of injury and exhaustion before the championship game, or that a professor would counsel one's students not to research so excessively that there remained no time to write the assignment, so Gregory emphasizes not a rejection of *exothern* education, but a prioritization of its use in relation to the goals of human life. The point in this, as for the athlete and for the student, is to avoid unwittingly undermining one's ultimate goals.

In Palamas's own philosophy of education, he always advocated a tandem relationship between the theoretical and the practical. That which is learned based on theory or intellectual knowledge must always be related to and

80. *Ibid.*, 44; *id.*, 1.1.12, p. 72: "Ταῦτ' ἄρα καὶ τὴν ἔξω παιδείαν μετιέναι τοὺς βουλομένους τῶν μὴ τὸν μονήρη βίον ἐπανελομένων οὐκ ἂν ἀπειρῶσαιμεν, διὰ τέλους δὲ ταύτη προσεσχικέναι παραινοῦμεν ἥκιστα τῶν ἀπάντων οὐδένα."

81. Meyendorff, *Study*, 28-31.

82. Palamas, *The Triads*, 38; *id.*, *Λόγοι υπέρ των Ιερών Ησυχαστών*, 1.1.7, p. 60: "τὸ πολὺ τε καὶ μακρὸν ὑποτίθεται μῆκος καὶ πλῆθος τούτων τῶν γνώσεων."

83. *Ibid.*, 38; *id.*, 1.1.7, p. 60: "τὸ πολὺ τε καὶ μακρὸν ὑποτίθεται μῆκος καὶ πλῆθος τούτων τῶν γνώσεων, ... τῶν ζητήσῃ διὰ βίου παντὸς ἀπασχολήσαντες ἑαυτοὺς, ἀπρὶξ ἐπιλαβέσθαι τῆς καθαιρούσης τὴν ψυχὴν παιδείας οὐκ ἐξισχύσωμεν...."

informed by the implementation of this knowledge through praxis by an individual. For Palamas, the two function cyclically to produce an expanded knowledge of both theory and practice as a result.

In the end, Gregory's main concern is for the salvation and transformation of human beings. It is according to this principle that he assesses the usefulness of exothen paideia in its relation to kath'ēmas. For Gregory, exothen paideia has the potential to be either fruitful or destructive, depending on its application. In this respect, St. Gregory follows the Apostle Paul, who writes: "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."⁸⁴

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