

**STANIMIR PANAYOTOV (Sofia)**

**Non-Theurgy: Iamblichus and Laruelle**

---

**Abstract**

*Mysticism, theurgy, non-philosophy: this text will experiment with the three in an attempt to perform a non-philosophical hijacking of so-called theurgy (theurgia). I will experiment with a comparison between Iamblichus' theurgy, Laruelle's non-philosophy, and the notion of the Vision-in-One. I claim their point of convergence is their allegiances to the theory of the One, derived from Plato's Unwritten Doctrines. The ancient notion of the One is subject to a similar procedural gesture in both Iamblichus and Laruelle, namely, the procession of the One from the noematic to the aesthetic realm. What connects them is their rejection of the theory that the soul's descension from the One to the visible realm represents a degeneration of the Nous. In a concept akin to the very idea of theurgy, Laruelle proposes his Vision-in-One, which is to think from the One rather than the One. The Vision-in-One is an attempt to materialize the disembodied fate of the noema against realistic skepticism.*

**Keywords:** Iamblichus, Laruelle, non-philosophy, theurgy, the One

---

**I. On Theurgy**

Theurgy was a set of ritual practices among Neoplatonists and other late antique circles to invoke the gods and unite with the divine – it allegedly involved incantations/chants and sacrificial offerings, of which we know very little. The historical evidence for its existence is flimsy and esoteric. Indeed, it is this flimsiness that invites for imaginative re-performance based on quasi-religious speculation and esotericism, which I take up here and call it non-theurgy, in an attempt to synthesize Iamblichus and Laruelle.

Iamblichus' exposition of theurgy already offers a redemptive design of the divine which, as I suggest later, embodies some of Laruelle's ideas and his reception.<sup>1</sup> By way of speculative designing of a "non-philosophical theurgy", I call for embodied practices (sound/chants/prayers) to suggest the body of the theurgist – be it Iamblichus or Laruelle –

---

<sup>1</sup> There is a kind of enthusiastic ritualism and anything-goes Gnosticism attached to Laruelle's reception going on.

is the vehicular agency of embodying the One on this unilateral side of the Real/World. The body of the theurgist must become the receptacle of absolute non-thinking so that the Divine can arrive and descend into the embodied One of unilateral reality.<sup>2</sup>

I will experiment with a comparison between Iamblichus' theurgy and Laruelle's non-philosophy and the notion of the Vision-in-One. I claim their point of convergence is their allegiances to the theory of the One, derived from Plato's Unwritten Doctrines. However, I try to update the Laruelian engagement with the One by *gnosticizing* and de-philosophizing theurgy. The ancient notion of the One is subject to a similar, but not identical, procedural gesture in both Iamblichus and Laruelle, namely, the procession of the One from the noematic to the aesthetic realm. What connects them is their rejection of the theory that the soul's *descension* from the One to the visible realm represents a degeneration of the Nous. In a concept akin to the very idea of theurgy, Laruelle proposes his Vision-in-One, which is to think from the One rather than the One (Laruelle et al. 2013, 165-168). Iamblichus' exposition of theurgy already offers a similar redemptive design of the divine.

What we know for sure is that theurgy represented a set of practices for the invocation of the divine. It was a spiritual practice in the heights of what Hadot insistently terms "philosophy as a way of life" (Hadot 1995, 264-277). Theurgy was a radical way of bringing back the role of and exercising the divine in human life. In modern times, theurgy is associated with some strands of occidental magic(k), i.e., Hermeticism, white magic, and Ordo Templi Orientis (see Webster 2016, 149-153).

According to Proclus, theurgy is "more excellent than all human wisdom, and which comprehends prophetic good, the purifying powers of perfective good, and in short, all such things as are the effects of divine possession" (Proclus 1816, 81). It is a veritable zeal to outscore the centuries-long Platonic intellection syllogistically and to condense it into an "irrational" short-cut to becoming one with the One. This ambition to create a spiritual "shortcut" to the Divine often downgrades theurgy to an irrational aberration of late Neoplatonism, and deep into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century studies and interest in it were suppressed by sidelining it as a parascholarly infatuation. Dodds partially corrected this pattern, though famously calling Iamblichus' *On the Mysteries of Egypt* "a manifesto of irrationality" (Dodds 1959, 287), while some retribution has been done on the *Chaldean Oracles* by the

---

<sup>2</sup> As a first and experimental example of an already existing non-theurgical prayer I will suggest here the work of Hunter Hunt-Hendrix of Liturgy. Consider, in his own words: "What I am doing is trying to spin out a new kind of system of philosophy – just like, say, Hegel's system, but more mobile: an RSS feed, album, actions, diagrams – all gesturing at a logic of becoming and an ethics but never landing on one, because in any case this is not possible to do, as I think Laruelle's philosophy of immanence has shown." (Rothbarth 2016)

likes of Majercik (Majercik 1982); thus, theurgy entered the scholarly world of investigating late antique philosophies quite of late. Theurgy was as close as becoming an official Roman doctrine with the rule of Julian (332-363 CE) whose commitment to theurgy and influence of Iamblichus almost led him to an ecumenical version of theurgical paganism, with an emphasis on prayer. Julian, describing the celestial workings of a henadic cosmology, strikes a powerful balance between rational and irrational, which defies Dodds' insistence on irrationality and opposition to mysterial thought, by saying

[...] confining the appellation of hypothesis to the doctrine of the sphere: for the truth of the former is testified by men who audibly received this information from gods, or mighty daemons; but the latter is founded on the probability arising from the agreement of the phenomena. Hence, if any one should esteem it better both to praise and confide in the former, such a one, whether I am trifling or in earnest, will meet with my esteem and admiration. (Julian 1932, 73)

If Iamblichus and Julian sought more manifest forms of the One in/as ritual, this was because it was preceded by Plotinus' *henosis* (oneness, unity). The idea comes from his henology as developed in the *Enneads* (see Plotinus 1988, 327-331), where Plotinus advocates a meditative withdrawal of thought from the highest hypostasis of the One. In Plotinus, for the One to be identical with itself, it cannot be ever thought (see *ibid.*, 319-323). This precept, of course, is an idea juxtaposed to his more elaborate teaching of emanationism – the processual emanation of the world of beings from the One in four stages. But Plotinus never went as far as to suggest that lack of thought of the One can be *performed* in an embodied way. Plotinus advocated contemplation, while Iamblichus sought the path of incantation. A similar enthusiasm in the reception of Laruelle's work is being manifested today, one ripe with voluntarist ritualism and mysticism.<sup>3</sup>

The major sources for theurgy we have are the anonymous *Chaldean Oracles* and Iamblichus' *Mysteries*. In the *Oracles'* famous fragment 153, we read: "The souls that are re-established in this (pentad) come under the sway of destiny, says the oracle: 'For the theurgists do not fall into the herd which is subject to Destiny'" (Majercik 1982, 181). In her commentary (*ibid.*, 386-387), Majercik clarifies that the theurgist is not subject of passion (the herd) and is one of the "few" (*hoi oligoi*). Now, Iamblichus clearly singles out the

---

<sup>3</sup> It is thus not by chance that non-philosophy has entered the Anglophone academia with more success in arts programs rather than philosophy departments. See as examples the event "Dark Nights of the Universe" (2012) and the subsequent publication (Thacker et al., 2013), as well as the video based on the same work, directed by Aaron Mett  (2012).

theurgists as the "few," and in this respect, he is a sound Platonist. What is odd is his theurgical insistence on incorporeality:

A certain few individuals, on the other hand, employing an intellectual power which is beyond the natural, have disengaged themselves from nature, and turned towards the transcendent and pure intellect, at the same time rendering themselves superior to natural forces. ... Those, on the other hand, who conduct their lives in accordance with intellect alone and the life according to intellect, and who have been freed from the bonds of nature, practice an intellectual and incorporeal rule of sacred procedure in respect of all the departments of theurgy. (Iamblichus 2003, 258-259)

In the *Oracles*, the Supreme God is nothing less than the Nous/The Father. In Neoplatonism the highest hypostasis is not a God, but nonetheless its gender is quite ambivalent. This gendering, which we now see as a sign of embodiment, does not in the least bother late antique writers. But the insistence on incorporeality and disembodiment in Iamblichus' version of ascending to the One is odd for the simple reason that the theurgist's body does remain a material obstacle to henosis; and it is an obstacle because the One cannot be contaminated with division caused by thought. Iamblichus' theurgy was a way to overcome this problem: it is, however, and remains, a spiritual ordeal, not a materialistic quasi-Platonism. What matters here is that Iamblichus defends the descending of the soul from the One as *non-degenerative* of henosis. The text of *Oracles* does not espouse, however cryptic and enchanting its nature, reverence to de-conceptualized abstractions of divinations. "What can be affirmed of the Chaldean father is the fact of his transcendence" (Majercik 1992, 8-9). The Father is still second intellect, because it is divided in nature. Therefore, a way must be established for the theurgist to sideline transcendence, and that way clearly cannot account for *logoi*.

In Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* [*On the Egyptian Mysteries*], the emphasis put in his version of (bypassing) emanationism is that, in theurgical practice, nothing emanating from the One is lost to the lower spheres of beings and becomings. The practice certainly invites imitation of the gods, having in mind that no morsel of the desired henosis degrades the One to the realm of anthropic existence. In this regard, Iamblichus' supposed "irrationality" is indeed an even more radical form of Platonic monism. What bothers post-Iamblichean Platonism is the peculiar idea that a representative of the "few" can paradoxically utilize embodiment to achieve such a ritualistic shortcut to the One. Actually, the first recorded mention of "theurgia" in fragment 153 already affirms that those "few" are but a standard subset of the philosophers chosen to commune with the One. But why invent another name, the theurgists? There must be some sort of deficiency in "philosophy."

It is to this philosophical deficiency that I now turn to claim a proximity between theurgy and non-philosophy later. The theurgist compensates something for the philosopher: in divination and ritual *for* the One, s/he performs God-work, not God-talk (Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell 2003, xxix). Iamblichus has been versed in the hermetic literature and aware of the *Oracles*, as well as Orphism, which he intimates. To understand this God-work and move on to the comparison with Laruelle, one should know that the *Mysteria* are an answer to a Christian Neoplatonist, Porphyry. The text is a reply that seeks to provide answers in three areas: philosophy, theology and theurgy. We should also remember that "Iamblichus felt that his task of producing a written defense of theurgy was inherently impossible" (ibid., xlix) and that, thus, "philosophical speculation is futile." But is/was performance/ritual the answer? Theurgy is certainly very akin to the contemporary theories and practices of performance, but it is devoid of performance's inherent noumenal skepticism. It is a passage from philosophy and logos to theosis, not from philosophy to theosophy. The skepticism for philosophy comes from a religious critique of Hellenism, which is not the same as anti-rationalist ritualism. In his own words, having lost the power of prayer,

[the things] are endlessly altered according to the inventiveness and illegality of the Hellenes. For the Hellenes are experimental by nature, and eagerly propelled in all directions, having no proper ballast in them; and they preserve nothing which they have received from anyone else, but even this they promptly abandon and change it all according to their unreliable linguistic innovation. (Iamblichus 2003, 301)<sup>4</sup>

Iamblichus contends that the "Greeks" as philosophers are degenerating to the level of the herd, and the herd is fate-ridden. (This critique should not be conflated with Socrates' critique of speech.) His response to Porphyry aims to liberate the few from fate and bring them to revelation. The providential motif of liberation is laid out clearly at the very end of the *Mysteria*:

But this part (sc. of philosophy) is not, as you suspect, "overlooked" by the Egyptians, but is handed down in an appropriately pious manner. Nor do the theurgists "pester the divine intellect about small matters," but about matters pertaining to the purification, liberation and salvation of the soul. (ibid., 353)

---

<sup>4</sup> Note the semblance carried by this passage from *Corpus Hermeticum*: "For the Greeks, O King, who make logical demonstrations, use words emptied of power, and this very activity is what constitutes their philosophy, a mere noise of words. But we [Egyptians] do not [so much] use words (*logoi*) but sounds (*phônai*) which are full of effects" (translation from *Corpus Hermeticum* adapted by and cited in Shaw 2016, 109 n.6). See further reflection, especially with regards to the use of words like barbarism, in Iamblichus 2003, 301-302.

In Book X, just before his final exhortation, we find the place where Iamblichus *claims* (again, this is not a "defense") that theurgy is the only salvific path to the good (ibid., 345-346) – or whatever good there is in "predicting the future" (Porphyry's concern):

Does truth not co-exist in its essence with the gods, and not merely in harmony with them, based as it is in the intelligible realm? In vain, therefore, are such allegations bandied about by yourself and some others. And not even those gibes with which some ridicule those who worship the gods as "vagabonds" and "charlatans," the like of which you have put forward, apply at all to true theology or theurgy. (ibid., 345)

Iamblichus' projection of theurgy is not riddled with the consequences that Porphyry seeks in his "predicting the future." By insisting on moving on beyond philosophy (an interpretation I suggest but which clearly needs more detailed work) to theurgy, or the God-work, Iamblichus offers a pragmatic account of the original meaning of henosis. For what use is there in the pessimism that the One is unachievable if that will render the philosophical life not-Good? Therefore, there is something wrong with words and something good in sounds. However paradoxical it might seem, sound is closer to the imperative of *not changing the prayer*. The elaboration of theurgy is thus a pragmatic and instrumental update of the philosophical life. Iamblichus operates with the polarity utility vs futility:

Only divine mantic prediction, therefore, conjoined with the gods, truly imparts to us a share in divine life, partaking as it does in the foreknowledge and the intellections of the gods, and renders us, in truth, divine. And this genuinely furnishes the good for us, because the most blessed intellection of the gods is filled with all goods. ... along with the foreknowledge, they [the theurgists] receive Beauty itself, and the order which is both true and appropriate – and also present with this its utility. [...] whenever this (uncertainty) does not matter for this purpose, and foreknowledge rather is advantageous to souls for saving and leading them upwards, then the gods implant in the midst of their essences the foreknowledge inherent in divination. (ibid., 347-349)

All of this is consistent with the definition of theurgy as ritualized cosmogony. Because nothing is lost to the lower spheres of being, intellection cannot achieve the One – and giving it up means resorting to Gnosticism. The noosphere is supra-rational and in a way supra-transcendental. Iamblichus does not (at least consciously) try to be a gnostic, but the theurgical few constitute an elite circle of divine correspondence with matter. There is an *unknown* in theurgy which is, in the Laruellian sense, philosophically sufficient. Iamblichus neither presents a defense of theurgy nor philosophizes the ritual. But this does not mean theurgy is not philosophically sufficient.

In such context, it is understandable why scholarship is divided on the question where to place theurgy in the dyad rationality-irrationality, as it seems to discursively destroy the very idea of henosis: whether it is a cult of the Sun or mysterious incantations, theurgy is largely grasped as a nuisance to Plotinian emanationism.<sup>5</sup> Given all the emphasis on ritual, one could infer that it is not irrationality that was jettisoned from the post-Neoplatonic Platonism and imperial Christian dogmas: it was the *ritualistic rationality* that was degraded. The Empire found *eucharistia* later, without, as usual, ever accounting for antecedent forms of condensed rational motifs. Yet both sides of the dyad rationality-irrationality are contemporary depletions of the ideal of anthropological self-perfection in late Hellenism and leading a philosophical life, which, as Hadot claims, was just the beginning of that life (1995, 82-83), and not its final destination.

## II. On Non-Theurgy<sup>6</sup>

To offer a practice of theurgy today, to collaborate with non-philosophy and spirituality, to impoverish Iamblichus' theurgy: these are the aims in conceptualizing non-theurgy. It is in effect a *fuite-en-avance* before Neoplatonism. Therefore, let us first clarify the status of the One and the remainders of henosis in Laruelle juxtaposed to the Neoplatonic tradition.

The One is what is already-given prior to any thought of it (Srnicek 2010, 3). Srnicek calls the One "infinitely conceptualizable." Because the One has always already determined in-the-last-instance everything in the world (on determination, see below), every object pertaining to reality is already a perspective on/from the One. Within the confines of Laruelle's attack on philosophical sufficiency and decisionism, "[s]ince a decision is external, any particular philosophy is incapable of thinking its own decision; rather the decision is its blindspot" (ibid., 5). If philosophy remains blind to this decision in order to operate, non-philosophy is then defined as the science of philosophy. This science of non-

---

<sup>5</sup> The way we can approach this problem is through the work of Sara Ahbel-Rappe and her findings on the operations of "non-discursivity" in late Neoplatonism. For her, this is the blending of doctrinal and ritualistic thought (Ahbel-Rappe 2000, xiii).

<sup>6</sup> The only writer I have seen mentioning both theurgy (not Iamblichus) and Laruelle is Steven Craig Hickman in a blog post called "Laruelle: Prophet or Charlatan? - Or, Philosophy as Neo-Baroque" at his blog *Social Ecologies* (see Hickmann 2012). However, it is just that - a mention, claiming Laruelle is "a Mystagogue or Therapeutiae or Theurgic Mystic of a darker Neoplatonism, or of an inverted gospel and anti-philosophy." A more general and similar comment is made by Woodard (2009); whether Laruelle could be seen as a modern-day Neoplatonist is an ongoing debate.

philosophy is not productive of metaphilosophical positions, because it remains uninterpretable (Brassier 2003, 25) and is not part of philosophy itself.

The standard objection/question to Laruelle is: How does he escape the decisional character of philosophy? By going back to the ancient notion of the One and by maintaining a non-decisional relationship to it, where non-decisional means internal (in as much as "decision" is external to philosophy). The desired pragmatics of non-philosophy is to "suspend the decisional authority of philosophy" (Srnicek 2010, 5) and the blindspot of the One. In a concept akin to the very idea of theurgy, Laruelle proposes his Vision-in-One, which is to think from the One rather than the One. Smith explains that in proceeding from the Vision-in-One, thought is "according to the Real," and not of the Real. As well as the subject, all things become equal before the Real (Smith 2013, 55). It is this non-decisional relation to the One and the Real that carries the spirit of anti-correlationism. Laruelle states:

In any case, vision-in-One "gives" the One and it alone; it is "the" given entirely, the given as the identity (of the) given, as given-without-giveness, outside-the-fold or the doublet of the given and giveness. It is thus radical phenomenon without the phenomenological hinter-world in its broadest sense: without Being behind the phenomenon or connected with it, without giveness behind the given or connected with it. (Laruelle et al. 2013, 167)

For Laruelle the One is "in effect indifferent to what it determines" (ibid., 44). This is so because whatever it determines, it does so a) in-the-last-instance and b) through its being-foreclosed. "In-the-last-instance" means that the One effectuates a refusal to split objects (in the way philosophy does that); that in trying to overcome philosophical dualisms (the result of its decisionism) it relates unilaterally to them; in this, it is not temporal but real (Smith 2013, 87-88, with the precise definition of in-the-last-instance found on p. 89). "Being-foreclosed" means that the One is foreclosed to thought and is thus relationally unilateral to thought. Laruelle also defines the One as: "[a]n ancient transcendental utilized as a first name under the forms One-in-One, One-in-person, vision-in-One" (Laruelle 2010, xxvii). For Smith, the One in Laruelle is "a kind of 'spiritual element,' which he calls relative transcendence [...] in addition to something that outstrips philosophy, that is foreclosed to philosophy: this is what he calls the One" (Smith 2012, 23).

Non-philosophy as a science does not remain blind to its being reliant on the Real. In non-philosophy there is a Real which is not malleable to synthesis and is beyond its own description: a rupture "between the real and its intellection." (Plotinus' One is a good example of such an ineffable rupture.) The "thinking" of this rupture is exercised by the human-in-person through the practicing of the Vision-in-One: a subject that thinks from the Real.

The practice of non-philosophy distinguishes it from philosophy; it does so by non-philosophy practicing the One, which is best expressed in Laruelle's "Vision-in-One" (Brassier 2012, 117). The Vision-in-One is thinking from the One, not for the One (Smith 2013, 87), and therefore it is its practice, because in thinking from the One the collapse between thought and reality is superseded. To understand non-philosophy's One is to understand formally the practice of non-philosophy in its Vision-in-One. Under the rubric "Vision-in-One (One, One-in-One, Real)" we find the following definitions:

Vision-in-One is radically immanent and uni-versal; this is why it gives-without-giveness the givenness of the world-thought-World. [...] Non-philosophy formulates an open series of axioms on the One understood as vision-in-One and no longer as desire One:

- 1) The One is radical immanence, identity-without-transcendence, not associated with a transcendence or a division.
- 2) The One is in-One or vision-in-One and not in-Being or in-Difference.
- 3) The One is the Real insofar as it is foreclosed to all symbolization (thought, knowledge, etc.).
- 4) The One is given-without-giveness and separated without-separation-of-giveness.
- 5) The One is that which determines or gives in-the-last-instance world-thought as given (object of a givenness). (Laruelle et al., 2013, 165-156)

Now, to approach something like "non-theurgy," several issues should be addressed.

First, to account for the inherent reversing of Neoplatonism in Laruelle. It is this Neoplatonic reversal that could serve first and foremost for the *de-religionizing of the One* and philosophy, and consequently Christian gnosis.<sup>7</sup> The initial result is divination *from* the One. In Neoplatonism, the function of the One can be largely defined as serving to divide noesis from soma. This division depends on a spiritual and scholarly synthesis reliant on the quiddity of an ineffable real, and what sort of telos and question confront the theurgist. At any rate, in Neoplatonism and theurgy we can speak of divination *of* the One. Yet in Laruelle the question is: How to *see* the One? This is not the same as the Neoplatonic question: How to *know* the One?

A quick comparison with Plotinus' One will help to elucidate how Laruelle's hijacking of the term subverts this rather disembodied ideal. Srnicek says that, unlike philosophy, non-philosophy abandons the idea that it should aim at knowledge of the One. Since

---

<sup>7</sup> This is an important step in clarifying the matter, because Neoplatonism can very rarely be read as a gnostic body of literature (it could, for example, only with regard to the non-Christian Sethian treatises in *Nag Hammadi*).

"philosophy has always framed the Real in its own philosophically-saturated terms, rather than letting the Real itself act" (Srnicsek 2010, 3), the Real is unshackled by the epistemological program of philosophy's and Neoplatonism's One. With the changed question, Neoplatonism (more precisely its doublet One-Being) is reversed by non-philosophy, since the idea of knowing the One is questioned by the idea that the Real gives us access to knowledge: in Laruelle, the Real-One is radically unilateral and alien to thought. Unilaterality breaks away with decisionism. But it does not undo the question of how to see the One. For the One is an instance of (non-theurgic) embodiment that is utterly blinding; so blinding that its might and radiation made the Neoplatonists see it as the evaporating figurality of disembodiment. Laruelle's One announces a primate of unilateral theory of the embodied One. He achieves this (treating the world/philosophy, and also the One, as materials) through the procedure of "unilateralization," which turns philosophy's dualisms into "materials" (Smith 2013, 88). Unilateralization manifests that philosophy is an object determined by the One, instead of the One not determining anything in the world. The practice of the Vision-in-One by the human-in-flesh is determined in the last instance by non-philosophy's unilateral relation to the Real and therefore its non-decisional character.

Second, to conceptualize something like "non-theurgy" is to pollute the philosophically sufficient practice (and theurgy is still such a practice, despite all the mysterical objections of Iamblichus favoring the phoneme) with the undetermined real of the non-philosophical thetic posture of thought. It is, in practice, not only to de-religionize the Neoplatonic One, but to also willfully *gnosticize* theurgy.<sup>8</sup> The result of gnosticizing theurgy is non-theurgy (and not all of Neoplatonism). But how to do this outside the boundaries of religion? Does not gnosticizing theurgy also imply that theurgy in particular should be de-religionized? Absolutely. Other than conceptualizing "non-discursivity" in late Neoplatonism, we need to address the problem of how do we actualize theurgy as a modern-day pluralistic concern of spirituality.

Haar Farris offers that we introduce interdisciplinarity as a form of theurgy beyond the framework of religious studies. In this way one is free of the shackles of both confessionalism and ecumenism. This would be an "*enactive* understanding of the sacred" (Ferrer and Sherman cited in Haar Farris 2016, 121). He suggests that interdisciplinarity, then, is a

---

<sup>8</sup> In a conversation with Laruelle in June 2015 in Ohrid, Macedonia, he told me that as a younger scholar he did read voraciously Iamblichus. When I asked him whether he sees a possible proximity between Iamblichus and his work he did respond that this is a very likely comparison to be done (although I have not found any mention whatsoever of Iamblichus in his oeuvre so far). I take the freedom to bring in Gnosticism to the comparison. Again, gnosticizing here does not mean that Neoplatonism is a gnostic corpus; the procedure only entails a non-philosophical subsumption of philosophically impoverished theurgy.

"form of scholarly theurgy" (ibid., 127). He too defines theurgy as practical collaboration (with the divine): "Interdisciplinary scholarship can be conceived as theurgic practice that aspires to work in the context of a sacred plurality" (idem). This is a model that indeed allows for the creative polluting of theurgy with non-philosophy and vice versa. Haar Farris' proposal, however, relegates theurgy to the realm of philosophia, while I contend that theurgy as interdisciplinarity and the desired result here – non-theurgy – is not only de-religionizing but further gnosticizing theurgy. If both of these premises are followed, then non-theurgy is a possibility. The problem with theurgy as philosophia within participatory interdisciplinary research is that it relies on the impossibility of monolingualism and universality (a Derridean reliance on God as  $n+1$ , *plus d'Un*).

Non-theurgy, as with the entire project of non-philosophy, would be first and foremost a ritualized impoverishment of theurgy and its corollary of the impossible and the ineffable, for the non-philosophical spiritual venture is to practice the One in this world in its infinite effability. When theurgy is impoverished of its non-alterability, non-philosophical speculation on non-theurgy is productive rather than futile. Offering non-theurgy implicates it bears a spiritual, and not only mantic, quality. But what is the spiritual element of non-theurgy? It is the impoverished Neoplatonic One as the Laruelian Vision-in-One without a hinter-world of Being and with a human-in-person. For the Vision-in-One is an attempt to materialize the disembodied fate of the noema against realistic skepticism. This Vision does not need to remix or be confined to a Gnostic/sectarian Christianity should we resort to interdisciplinarity modeled as theurgy.

Just as Iamblichus offers a ritualized and, per Haar Farris, a "participatory" shortcut to the divine, we can update Haar Farris' (Derridean) interdisciplinary theurgy by not allowing it to serve as a philosophical blindspot. It would mean to betray both Iamblichus and Laruelle, for both of them *have impoverished* philosophy's transcendental processualism: the first by opposing Porphyry, the second by opposing Derrida. Only that Iamblichus did not go far enough in impoverishing the Greeks' philosophia.

Third, we need to address the relation of non-theurgy to Christianity. Thus, a final determination of non-theurgy is that both theurgy and non-philosophy are of non-Christian character. "Unlike Porphyry, who was a formidable opponent of Christianity, Iamblichus seems to have taken little notice of the new religion, whose full domination of the empire he did not live to see. In no extant work does he specifically mention the Christians" (Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell 2003, xxviii). In the concluding pages of *Future Christ*, Laruelle says:

Having thus avoided a philosophical-idealist deviation and a scientific deviation within the method, what material is utilized for this operation, what exactly models so that we do not fall into another deviation, this time "Christianist," that comes from an excess of Christianity's presence alone in the object? "The-gnosis" may be that way of universalizing "the-Christianity" from the point of view of the experience to model. ... Re-activate the heretical posture in its challenging of every worldly authority, revive its long and burning struggle with the Church and its hatred of heresy, combine them in a unified posture of faith and knowledge of salvation, this does more than intensify Christianity, it carries it to the *non*-Christian universality that applies to every man beyond his religion and confessional background. (Laruelle 2010, 127).

Strictly speaking, here Laruelle does not call for the de-religionizing of universality; the spasmodic syllogism of the "non" is not anti-spiritual, it is merely heretical. Thus, gnosticizing theurgy should build not on a programme to de-spiritualize religious affects and thought, but to reignite them through a generic hereticism, which "applies to every man." And to manifest the heretic in a generic modality would mean to destroy the last bits of philosophical sufficiency in Neoplatonism.

Because the One has always already determined the Real and because the latter is unilateral, non-theurgy proceeds with/as Vision-in-One and can thus be beneficial for spiritual circles and practitioners only by totally depleting the Iamblichean sufficiency of the prayer's non-alterability.<sup>9</sup> Envisioning non-theurgy implodes theurgy's core of henosis, without becoming a science. The very idea of a non-philosophical update of theurgy is political: if non-theurgy is not envisioned from the perspective of a generic humanity, then it does remain with the oligarchic critique of the herd.

Fourth, and final, even though Laruelle submits his reading of Christianity to the banner of "science," non-theurgy cannot be a science, a "scientific ritual," in the spirit of a Science-in-Christ (see Laruelle 2015, 31 ff.), for theurgy remains too philosophical in its doctrinal dissent to "the Greeks." Iamblichus is not an anti-philosopher – by being a theurgist, he tries to be a *better* philosopher. We can become (better) non-theurgists by being austere non-philosophers with theurgy. Non-theurgy should remain in the realm of spirituality, the sacred and the divine within the limits of (Valentinian and Carpocratian) gnosis, not of the (Hebraic) Good News. And it cannot be any more Iamblichean than in its insistence of prayer – and any non-philosophically envisioned prayer should be alterable. The faith of non-theurgic prayer is alterity under the banner of unilaterality.

---

<sup>9</sup> It is no wonder that chaos magick and its practitioners, as Webster shows, have so voluntaristically not followed Iamblichus' admonishment.

But how to achieve this prayer without the extortionism of the phenomenological ineffable? We cannot bring the blindspot back into theurgy as a *plus d'Un*. However, we can override the ineffable by employing Laruelle's notion of the Vision-in-One in our prayers. Non-theurgy is – and could be – a subset of philo-fiction. All non-theurgic prayers are fictions on the side of embodied unilaterality and spirituality. Non-theurgy amplifies the kernel of the Real, in the sense that the lived of the Real is of the human, and the human-in-person. Thus, the practice of non-theurgy is both not-philosophical and non-philosophical and does not devolve to metareligious concerns, since it is enactable participation *with* the divine. Both of these premises are already contained in the Vision-in-One. Non-theurgy is an under-scientific manifestation of the Vision-in-One; it is underdetermined by the unilateral One and remains under the scientific ritual of generic gnosis. We could say that in trying to define non-theurgy we see in Laruelle something like henosical ritual that is universal to man in the sense of generic humanity.

*Stanimir Panayotov, PhD candidate, Central European University, Budapest/  
Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities, Skopje, spanayotov@gmail.com*

## References

- Ahbel-Rappe, Sara. *Reading Neoplatonism. Non-discursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus, and Damascius*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Brassier, Ray. "Axiomatic Heresy. The Non-Philosophy of François Laruelle." *Radical Philosophy*, No. 121 (September/October 2003): 24-35.
- Brassier, Ray. "Laruelle and the Reality of Abstraction." In John Mullarkey and Anthony Paul Smith (eds.). *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012. 100-122.
- Clarke, Emma C., John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell. 2003. "Introduction," in Iamblichus. *De Mysteriis*, trans. by Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003. xiii-xlviii.
- "Dark Nights of the Universe." *Archive*, May 5, 2012. <<http://www.archive.org/details/DarkNightsOfTheUniverseEtNoxSicutDiesIlluminabitur>>.
- Dodds, Eric Robertson. *The Greeks and the Irrational*. California: University of California Press, 1959.
- Haar Farris, Matthew S. "Some Admittedly Bold Interdisciplinary 'Participatory Turn' Hypotheses for Scholarly Collaboration with the Divine." In Joshua Ramey and Matthew S. Haar Farris (eds.). *Speculation, Heresy, and Gnosis in Contemporary Philosophy of Religion. The Fragile Absolute*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016. 117-133.
- Hadot, Pierre. *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, trans. by Michael Chase. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995.

- Hickman, Steven Craig. "Laruelle: Prophet or Charlatan? – Or, Philosophy as Neo-Baroque." *Social Ecologies*, December 11, 2012. <<http://www.socialecologies.wordpress.com/2012/12/11/laruelle-fraud-or-prophet>>.
- Julian. *Two Orations of the Emperor Julian One to the Sovereign Sun and the Other to the Mother of the Gods*, trans. by Thomas Taylor. London: Hermetic Publishing Company, 1932.
- Iamblichus. *De Mysteriis*, trans. by Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon, and Jackson P. Hershbell. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003.
- Laruelle, François. *Future Christ: A Lesson in Heresy*, trans. by Anthony Paul Smith. London and New York: Continuum, 2010.
- Laruelle, François et al. *Dictionary of Non-Philosophy*, trans. by Taylor Adkins et al. Minnesota, Minneapolis: Univocal, 2013.
- Laruelle, François. *Christo-Fiction. The Ruins of Athens and Jerusalem*, trans. by Robin Mackay. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.
- Majercik, Ruth. *Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation, Commentary*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1982.
- Metté, Aaron. *On the Black Universe in the Human Foundations of Color*. Vimeo, April 24, 2012 <<http://www.vimeo.com/40918311>>.
- Plotinus. *Enneads VI.6-9*, trans. by Arthur Hilary Armstrong. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988.
- Proclus. *On the Theology of Plato*, Vol. 1, trans. by Thomas Taylor. London: A.J. Valpy et al., 1816.
- Rothbarth, Adam. "Hunter Hunt-Hendrix (Liturgy, Kel Valhaal): I Like to Trigger Emotion and Undercut It at the Same Time." *Tiny Mix Tapes*, August 3, 2016. <<https://www.tinymixtapes.com/features/hunter-hunt-hendrix-liturgy-kel-valhaal>>.
- Shaw, Gregory. "The Neoplatonic Transmission of Ancient Wisdom." In Nathaniel P. DesRosiers and Lily C. Vuong (eds.). *Religious Competition in the Greco-Roman World*. Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature, 2016. 107-119.
- Smith, Anthony Paul. "Thinking from the One: Science and the Ancient Philosophical Figure of the One," in Mullarkey, John and Anthony Paul Smith (eds.). *Laruelle and Non-Philosophy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012. 19-42.
- Smith, Anthony Paul. *A Non-Philosophical Theory of Nature. Ecologies of Thought*. London: Palgrave, 2013.
- Srnicek, Nick. "François Laruelle, the One and the Non-Philosophical Tradition." *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, No. 22 (2010): 1-9.
- Thacker, Eugene et al. *Dark Nights of the Universe*. Hong Kong: NAME, 2013.
- Webster, Sam. "'More than Human,'" in Ramey, Joshua and Matthew S. Haar Farris (eds.). *Speculation, Heresy, and Gnosis in Contemporary Philosophy of Religion. The Fragile Absolute*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016. 147-157.
- Woodard, Ben. "The One: Plotinus, Laruelle and Deleuze." *Naught Thought*, February 23, 2009 <<http://www.naughtthought.wordpress.com/2009/02/23/the-one-plotinus-laruelle-and-deleuze>>.