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DISCOURSES OF THE INNER AND THE OUTER IN PRACTICES OF THE SELF

I. Concept of Spiritual Practice and its anthropological meaning

In my lecture I shall consider the problem of the Inner and the Outer in specific anthropological practices called *Spiritual Practices*. Our interest in these phenomena is brought about by their special place (which will be described below) among all practices, strategies and other activities of man. As a preliminary definition on the empirical level, let us say that we mean by Spiritual Practices methodical and holistic practices of spiritual assent developed within ancient spiritual traditions such as classical yoga, Tibetan tantric yoga, zen, daocism, sufism and Eastern-Christian hesychasm. Even as a preliminary one, the formula is rather loose: the circle of phenomena is not singled out precisely and borderlines with many adjoining kinds of practices like e.g. speculative mysticism (the border between the intellectual and holistic), ecstatic practices (the border between the methodical and spontaneous), mystery rites (the border between the individual and collective) are not clear. I hold this is natural as living things resist rigid classifications and hope that sufficiently precise view will emerge out of our analysis, a posteriori. As a basic example we shall use most often the hesychasm, but the analysis will be concentrated mainly on general and universal features of Spiritual Practice as anthropological phenomenon.

Let us make clear, first of all, what the specific and even unique character of Spiritual Practice consists in. Spiritual Practices belong to the category of so called Practices of the Self (*les pratiques de soi*, the term introduced by Michel Foucault). In these practices the man performs deliberate changes, transformations of himself, i.e. a certain self-transformation. Evidently, this self-transformation guided by man's consciousness is a goal-positing and goal-directed, teleological process, principal features of which are determined by (a) the final goal of a given practice and (b) the complex of means used for attaining the goal. The complex of means depends upon the final goal, but is not completely determined by it. Specific character of Spiritual Practice is caused, in the first place, by its goal: usually called a "higher spiritual state", this goal does not belong to the horizon of man's being-there (being-presence, *Dasein*); never and in no way can it be achieved and realized as a certain given thing in this horizon. Thus the very notion of goal needs a generalization in this case and as a variant of such generalization we say that Spiritual Practice is directed to a *trans-goal* or *telos*. The telos of Spiritual Practice is man's entry in, union with, drawing into a certain mode of being, ontological horizon different from man's being-there. Evidently, such union represents a transcendence of the present man's nature and actual ontological transformation: it implies the change of the ontological status of man and conversion into a certain meta-anthropological reality. A practice directed to such "goal" is not just anthropological practice, but meta-anthropological strategy. As for the aspect of means, the most important feature of Spiritual Practice is its holistic character: the self-transformation performed in this practice implies global transformation of a human being on all levels of its organization, intellectual, psychic and somatic. As a closer definition, we can say now that Spiritual Practice is a *holistic practice of the Self oriented to a meta-anthropological telos*. In other terms, the transcending and meta-anthropological nature of the telos means that Spiritual Practice belongs to the sphere of *mystical experience*, while the fact that part of it is formed by practices of somatic

autotransformation implies its *ascetic* character; and one can be said as a result that Spiritual Practice is mystico-ascetic practice.

These formulas arouse many questions. To start with, the statement about the transcending and meta-anthropological telos of the practice seems to be a contradictory, if not directly senseless statement. Man's self-transformation obviously cannot be an "actual ontological transformation" and "conversion into meta-anthropological reality": in any his activity, a man just realizes his nature, and his status in being and he cannot change them. Such changes, if thinkable at all, have some outer acting factor as their necessary condition and "outer" should be meant here in the strongest, ontological sense. Consequently, Spiritual Practice has essential ontological premises. Obviously, it demands an enlarged "picture of being" (Seinsbild), in which being (Sein) is not identical to essent (Seiende) and is not restricted to the horizon of being-there; but moreover it is incompatible with the deistic presentation of being, in which another horizon of being (the Divine being) has no effective contact with the being-there. As a rule, the ontological premises of Spiritual Practice are embodied in its belonging to a definite *religion of salvation*. While integrated into a large body of such religion, Spiritual Practice does not merge with it, however. It preserves some clear distinctions within it and usually it conceives itself as a kind of the quintessence of the religion in question, its most rigorous and purest expression. The telos of the practice is usually formed on the basis of the corresponding mythologem of salvation, representing a *sui generis* translation or transcription of this mythologem into the discourse of practice. Such a translation means a crucially important rethinking, reinterpretation of the mythologem: while in its usual function it was related to sacral rites and constituted a mystery cult, in the context of the practice it takes an individualized character. Not instead of the canonical interpretation, but in addition to it, it becomes introduced and integrated into the discourse of individual activity and constitutes an anthropological and meta-anthropological strategy realized in the experience of an individual adept of the practice.

Another basic feature of Spiritual Practice is its *energetic* character, its connection with man's energies. The self-transformation realized in the practice is performed not over man's substantial composition, but over his energies; and it is this fact that explains why the phenomenon of Spiritual Practice remained not studied and not understood properly in the European thought till recent times. Classical European metaphysics was built in the essentialist discourse; as Heidegger has pointed out, due to the translation of the Greek ενεργεια by the Latin *actus*, act, it has lost the concept of energy, and together with it a whole world of representations crucially important for the Greek mind. "Ενεργεια has been translated by the Romans as *actus*, and due to this all the Greek world has been buried with one stroke"¹. Complementing Heidegger, we can say that the chance of understanding Spiritual Practice has been buried with the same stroke. Spiritual Practice considers the man as an energetic formation, a set of energies of all kinds and directions which change permanently and irresistibly: a set which might be called the *energetic projection* or *energetic image* of man. It classifies these energetic images into definite types, studies their relations and dynamics of their changes and finds ways to steer this dynamics. All this is the very core of Spiritual Practice since, as the next definition, it can be characterized as the process of the directed transformation by man of his energetic image, in which the latter goes over successively from some initial type to that corresponding to the telos. This means that the telos itself is also

¹ M. Heidegger. Vom Wesen und Begriff der Φύσις. Aristoteles Physik B 1. In: M.Heidegger. Wegmarken. Fr.a.M. 1967. S. 349.

treated not substantially, but energetically, as a certain type of energetic image. However, due to its meta-anthropological nature, it is a very specific type which cannot be formed by usual man's energies. The language of mystical experience speaks here about the union, the drawing into, the merging with God, the participation in Divine being, etc. etc. Spiritual Practice is the most self-analytical kind of mystical experience and it gives to its telos a rather constructive description, in which facts and language of theological discourse and experiential ascetic discourse are joined. In particular, in hesychasm the telos is characterized as the "deification" (theosis) meaning the perfect union of all man's energies with the Divine energy (the grace) and this concept has a quite specific nature and status, being the link between dogmatic theology and ascetic practice.

Thus we proceed gradually to the clear conceptual picture of Spiritual Practice. The practice presents itself as a systematic attempt at the *anthropological alternative*: it is not just an impulse to the transcendent, a momentary act of ecstasy, like the experience of the ecstatic mysticism, but a complete anthropological strategy oriented to a different mode of being, to the transcension of the present man's nature, and due to this it is alternative to all usual strategies of human existence, because in these strategies a man strives only for the unfolding and realization of this nature. This unique character of the strategy reveals itself, first of all, in those of its features, in which the constitutive role of the meta-anthropological telos is reflected. This role is realized in the form of the action of a certain energy which the man experiences as one not belonging to the man, but having its source out of the horizon of being-there. The action of this energy of the "Source-Beyond-There" generates a certain specific mechanism of interaction of the inner and outer energies which will be considered in detail below. This action is constitutive for all the practice: as it has been discovered experientially, it initiates and supports a special stepwise process of the transformation of man's energetic image, a kind of a ladder, which term appears already in the title of the first systematic treatise on the hesychast practice, "The Ladder of Paradise" by St. John Climacus (7 c.). Each step of this process is a stage of the spiritual ascent identified in the practice with a certain characteristic configuration of all man's energies or type of the energetic image. Although the number, properties and concrete contents of the steps can be given differently not only by different practices, but even by different descriptions of the same practice, it must be said that the general structure of the Spiritual Ladder is presented in all spiritual traditions with surprising coincidence. This gives us good reasons to affirm that there exists an universal anthropological "paradigm of Spiritual Practice".

In its structure, it is a triple paradigm: the steps of the Spiritual Ladder are quite distinctly grouped into three big cycles or blocks. The process opens up with the *conversion*, as a spiritual event of entering the path of the ontological alternative. It is followed by the group of initial steps, the purpose of which is to complete the separation from all the habitual, un-alternative mode of the existence; in their general character, they are the steps of *purification*, in its various aspects and meanings. In particular, in the psychological sphere this block includes the removal of "passions", which are conceived in the practice much like neuroses in the psychoanalysis: as cyclic configurations of the energies of consciousness. Due to their cyclic character, they are self-reproducible and stable and when the consciousness is trapped in one of them, its further autotransformation becomes impossible. In this initial part of the Ladder even the terminology is highly universal: nearly in all practices there appear independently the terms Spiritual Gate (conversion), purification, Invisible Battle (removal of passions). The next, central block of the Spiritual Ladder serves to the formation of, so to say, "anthropological engine": in its steps the specific dynamics of the practice is being formed

which secures the ascent by the Ladder, the transition from one step to the next one. As we stressed, it is only the energy of the Source-Beyond-There that can be a motive power for the ascent to the meta-anthropological telos. The experience of the practice finds, however, that the dynamics of the ascent in its complete form includes not only the action in a man of this “outer” (by its source) energy, but also the action of “inner” energies which have their source within the access of the consciousness and can be operated by the latter. The inner energies must become oriented to the outer energy, must coordinate themselves with it and reach full accordance, harmony and coherence with it. This accordance of the two energies of different source and status plays a key role in the ontological ascent, and Byzantine theology has expressed it with a special notion and term “synergy” (συνεργία). Thus it can be said that the task of the central block of the practice is to produce conditions for the synergy (this concept being tightly connected with the dichotomy the Inner – the Outer, we shall return to it and its conditions below). Finally, if the dynamics of the ascent was created and achieved the fully developed form, the practice enters into its highest block, a zone approaching the telos. It has a special distinction: on higher steps of the Ladder there appear already some perceptible manifestations of a fundamental transformation of a man. As shown by experiential data, these manifestations become visible, first of all, in the sphere of perceptive modalities and this fact reveals the logic of the process: one can think that in the alternative strategy oriented to a different horizon of being a man must achieve, in the first place, a radical re-orientation of his perceptions since he will need to perceive radically different things. Consequently, the transition to a meta-anthropological reality needs first the development of a new meta-anthropological perceptive modality. In perfect accordance with this logic, experience of all traditions of Spiritual practice includes very similar firsthand authentications witnessing that on the higher steps of the practice radical changes of the perceptive sphere and formation or “opening-up” of some new perceptions take place. In hesychasm these new perceptions were long called the “intellectual feelings”.

As a result, the whole anthropological process of Spiritual Practice is presented as the generation of an ascending to the telos hierarchy of dynamical structures or “energetic forms” which emerge in a strict order and form an indissoluble unity. As ascertained also by the experience, another specific feature of inner life in Spiritual Practice is that this dynamics realizes not the change of separate static forms or stable states, but the change of *energetic* forms which are definite regimes or modes of activity. The principal distinction of such forms is that any of them cannot be realized separately, out of the process; they only exist inseparably and in a definite succession (although the breaking-up of the process due to external factors is possible at any step, of course). This is the *synergetic* type of dynamics discovered and well-studied in physics. It explains, in particular, often heard statements that mystical experience is utterly unique and totally inexpressible: indeed, the configurations of man’s energies arising in the spiritual ascent are not reproducible in usual empirical experience of non-alternative anthropological strategies.

This fluent description of Spiritual Practice as an alternative anthropological strategy shows clearly that this phenomenon involves a large circle of anthropological ideas, attitudes, practices, methods – in short, a whole experiential anthropology. It evokes a vivid interest today. Deep crisis processes in contemporary culture include, in particular, the crisis of the classical European model of man. In this model the man is represented as a subject and substance and these basic representations have to be rejected today. The anthropological crisis

has generated the situation of a search, when all anthropological models based on different grounds and attitudes draw heightened attention. Energetic anthropology of Spiritual Practice has obvious potential to be developed into a sound alternative to the old substantial anthropology. It displays some limiting abilities and resources of man which makes it today the object of not just scientific study, but also excited mass interest. However, the energetic character of this anthropology is quite unusual for European thought which creates serious obstacles for its philosophical assessment. Firstly, as we have seen, a new concept of form is necessary here since the form becomes dynamic and energetic. Similar properties the form has in the cinema which brings about the suggestion that, like the usage of the language of musical score by Levy-Strauss in his structural anthropology, energetic anthropology might possibly use elements of the cinema discourse. Still more difficult problem concerns the concept of energy. The notion used in the discourse of Spiritual Practice is not a philosophical concept, it is just an operational concept or working instrument which is specifically connected with the anthropological context; one can even say that it is only a little bit more than a collective name for all kinds of man's impulses, intellectual, psychic and somatic, including those not developed into full-fledged acts. It can be identified with neither the concept of energy in European philosophy, from Aristotle to Heidegger, nor the energy in natural sciences, as a measurable physical quantity. The closest analogy to it is the notion of the *dharma* in Buddhist anthropology and like this notion it resists strongly the turning into an philosophical concept.

Our description makes also clear that the problem of the relation the Inner – the Outer is central for studying the structure of Spiritual Practice, already for the reason that the constitutive principle of this practice consists in a definite kind of interaction of the inner and outer energies. But besides this one, there are many other appearances of this problem in the context of Spiritual Practice. The analysis should start with a survey of all the field of the practice in the light of the dichotomy the Inner – the Outer. In what forms do we find it here? The most obvious aspect is presented in the title of this encounter: *Inner Life and Outer Forms*. Spiritual Practice is a practice of man's inner life, but this individual practice develops necessarily in the bosom or organism of a spiritual tradition which represents a collective phenomenon, historical, social and cultural. Hence the practice turns out to be connected with definite forms of this kind: institutions of monasticism, schools of asceticism, patterns of worldly spirituality etc. These outer forms are, in their turn, influenced by "more outer" forms of the surrounding socium reflecting the features of the historical period, ethnic group, economical organization and under these influences – but also, of course, by inner reasons – they get changed and diversified. As a result, a rich and intricate web of interwoven inner and outer factors emerges; but I shall leave it aside. The study of this web corresponds to the traditional approach of cultural anthropology practiced long enough and recently a new wave of such studies (relating, in the first place, to the age of Late Antiquity, very important for our theme) was produced by the so called postmodernist reception of the asceticism. Although this field still includes many understudied subjects – e.g., in the history of the Russian hesychasm – it seemed to me more important to try a different positing of the subject.

It is clear from our discussion that the habitual approach supposes the habitual old concept of the form, Aristotelian, essentialist and static. This concept is closely related to the old philosophical conception of life as an element of the opposite kind, ever mobile, changing and rejecting all forms like fetters – because in the old interpretation the form was synonymous to the "outer rigid form". But these representations are obsolete and unsatisfactory today. As shown above, Spiritual Practice demands a new conception of form as a dynamic and energetic form and if this practice is a mode of inner life, then it demands a new

conception of life too. The life, as it presents itself in Spiritual Practice, is in no way in the opposition to the form: quite the opposite, it realizes itself only in an incessant production of its own unique forms organizing themselves in a strict order and unity. But this is fully in accordance with the modern image of life in general: life is conceived today as an incessant self-organizing generation of forms and structures which have the dynamic character and are determined by strict genetic programs. Hence our picture of the inner life in Spiritual Practice fits the modern conception of life and it can be said that it presents Spiritual Practice as a *sui generis* meta-life or meta-biological life. As for the outer environment, it threatens permanently to destroy the delicate form-building activity of life by its rude chaotic intrusions. And this picture would rather suggest the opposite view of the dichotomy the Inner – the Outer: *Inner Forms and Outer Destructive Chaos*; with the complement that forms are conceived as “living forms”, in the discourse of energy, and not as essentialist forms of the old metaphysics.

The last formula is also insufficient, however. For living forms of the life, the relations of the principles of the Inner and the Outer are not at all exhausted by the threat of outer chaotic intrusions. There is also a relation of the opposite kind which is even more important: the inner forms are being created only by virtue of a certain outer factor, namely, the influx of outer energy. Thus a new essential aspect of the dichotomy the Inner – the Outer comes out: *Inner Form-building and Outer Motive Power*.

All these aspects of the problem are present in Spiritual Practice and manifest themselves in diverse ways, of which we shall analyze the two principal ones. Firstly, in the horizon of *experience* there is the classical theme of inner experience, its verification and interpretation; in Spiritual Practice it takes a quite singular form. Secondly, in the horizon of *dynamics* the problem comes out in the exact correspondence with the last of our formulations above. Here a specific mechanism emerges which was studied before in physics only and was not brought into the context of anthropology or philosophy: energetic forms of Spiritual Practice are constituted by the form-building action of an outer energy.

II. The Inner and the Outer in the horizon of experience

It is the inner experience that tells about the inner life. This trivial statement is needed before we recall that the inner experience has an extremely notorious reputation: its data are very often considered completely dubious and not deserving attention. This reputation is worst of all in natural sciences. Here the experience is required to have the properties of scientific experiment and it is very easy to see that the inner experience does not possess any of the most important of these properties (the list of them usually includes the possibility of registration, reproducibility, possibility of verification as well as of refutation). That's why in the discourse of natural sciences the inner experience is refused of any veritableness and its data are not accepted as grounds for any scientific conclusions. Philosophy criticizes the inner experience too, although it does not reject it so categorically. Critical arguments against it are different, depending upon the philosophical direction. In linguistic and analytical philosophy one points out that the inner experience uses its own language, the “inner speech” which is so specific that its translation into the language of the usual communication is impossible and it should be considered as a mere symbolization of some states of the inner reality. In addition, a general epistemological argument is put forward concerning already not the forms of expression, but contents of the inner experience. This experience is usually conceived as the experience of introspection, i.e. observation of the inner (psychic) reality; but when the consciousness tries to fix up contents of the inner reality, single out some objects for observation, it can only find

imaginary and illusory objects or simulacres. The fact is that psychic contents are not objects, they are energetic formations and when the consciousness attempts to describe them as objects, it performs the act called *Vergegenständlichung* by Hegel and “objectivization” by Berdyaev: it creates itself and perceives certain perverted forms of these psychic contents, the *forms of falsely substantiated Ego*. One can expect that in the sphere of mystical experience, including Spiritual Practice, both described features of the inner experience are expressed especially strongly.

Nevertheless the thorough analysis of the critical arguments against the inner experience² does not come to the conclusion that its data are useless as a source of information on inner life. Quite the opposite, these arguments play a constructive role, displaying the conditions under which the inner experience can be used for the obtaining of authentic and universally valid information. It now appears that in the aspect of its ability to be a source of such information, the inner experience is extremely inhomogeneous. It can be, indeed, purely subjective and incommunicable and as such, only a symptom of some inner states or processes. But it can also carry and express the most sensible and veritable contents. It is important that it is not the profundity of the experience that differs these two cases: it is not at all a firm law that the superficial everyday experience is clear and expressible and the profound spiritual experience is subjective and incommunicable. The directly opposite situation is possible too, when the superficial and primitive experience is purely subjective and completely muddled, while the spiritual and even mystical experience finds a precise and verifiable expression. Extraction of authentic and ascertainable information out of the inner experience turns out to be a complicated and many-sided task including a series of conditions and procedures. One part of them represents requirements to the experience as such: it singles out definite kinds of it and rejects other ones. The other part represents rules and methods of the interpretation of the experience; a special hermeneutics of the inner experience should be necessarily developed.

The essence of all this program can be adequately expressed by a spatial metaphor: the inner experience should be extracted or brought out into the open, out of intimate depths of the personality, where its uniquely-individual and subjective character is most condensed, -- to the world, to others. It should be made universal and communicable, and at the same time it should preserve maximally not just its factual information, but also its complexion, all its dimensions and nuances which are an integral part of its authenticity. This is a specific extraction of the inner experience out of the depth outwards, its “outerization” or, in other terms, its de-subjectivization (universalization, transcendentalization), aiming not to lose anything essential. In the way of its extraction out of the depth the experience passes through a series of epistemological and hermeneutic stages. On the deepest, most inner level, those are the stages of the set-up and organization of the experience whose function is mainly to cut off the “noise”, the purely accidental and chaotic, empty experience. Then there follow the stages of primary expression, purification and checking of the data of the experience. In these stages, by means of some criteria (the elaboration of which is a special problem) the distorted and illusory experience is recognized and singled out. Finally, there follow the stages of the interpretation which complete the reflexive processing of the experience and perform its integration into the thesaurus of universally valid experiential data. All this way as a whole can be qualified as an *organon*, in the sense which has been given to this notion in the theory of scientific knowledge: complete practical as well as theoretical canon of a definite kind of

² S.S. Horujy. To the Phenomenology of Ascesis. Moscow, 1998, Part II. (In Russian).

experience, embracing all the way of its preparation, realization and interpretation. Obviously, such organon cannot be the same for all the vast manifold of the inner experience; organization of the experience and criteria of its checking-up should be strongly dependent upon the sphere and form of the experience.

The phenomenology of Husserl can be considered as the first example of the organon of the inner experience. In its general tasks it was not planned to be the theory of the inner experience, but nevertheless such theory can be found within its vast building (although the term “inner experience” is not used here since it lacks a correct phenomenological definition). The phenomenological concept of experience is well-adapted to the sphere of the inner experience already in the choice of the basic term: Husserl, as is well-known, has chosen the “lived experience” (Erlebnis) as such term, instead of the usual term “experience” (Erfahrung), as too objectivized and impersonal. It is easy to see that the system of basic elements and procedures of the phenomenological epistemology – the phenomenological reduction, epoche, intentional grasping, intersubjectivity – when applied to the inner experience, includes all the listed above stages of its “extraction outwards”. Indeed, the phenomenological construction of the act of cognition, describing gradual purification of the experience from the subjective arbitrariness and its reduction to universal structures of the transcendental subjectivity, is conceived fully in accordance with our metaphor of the extraction out of the dark depths of the Inner outwards, into the lightened horizon of the universally valid. The starting phases of the intentional act, the transition from the “natural attitude” to the “intentional attitude” by means of the phenomenological reduction and the preliminary, not yet complete removal of psychological arbitrariness, play the role of the stages of the set-up and organization of the experience. Next, the main tasks of the extraction of the experience outwards are accomplished by the core of the intentional act, the noesis or intellectual grasping, which places the experiential contents into the focus of the inner sight and the vision of these contents is made more and more precise, advancing to clarity (Evidenz). Then the experiential contents are reduced to the structures of the transcendental subjectivity or noemas and this concluding noematic phase of the intentional act can be thought of as accomplishing hermeneutic functions; with this phase the inner experience obtains the interpretation in terms of noumenal structures.

We have recalled these well-known things with the purpose of the comparison, since the processing of the inner experience in Spiritual Practice has important affinities with the phenomenology. Mystical experience can be considered as inner *par excellence* and it was always maintained to be maximally inexpressible and not verifiable. I do not want to discuss this view as a whole, but I just state the following: the experience of Spiritual Practice represents a full-fledged organon, the system of rules and procedures of the preparation, organization, estimation, checking and interpretation of the experience. This mystical experience of the holistic autotransformation is extremely different from the phenomenological experience of intellectual grasping and hence its organon should be also extremely different from the phenomenological organon; Husserl and his orthodox followers stressed repeatedly that they do not consider the phenomenological theory of the experience as applicable to the religious and mystical experience. Nevertheless the fact is that any well-developed Spiritual Practice possesses the organon of its experience which is created and stored in the corresponding spiritual tradition. Presence of such organon is the constitutive property of Spiritual Practice: since its telos, from one side, does not belong to the horizon of being-there, unlike the goal of a usual anthropological strategy, while, from the other side, it is not an arbitrary, uncontrollable ecstatic state, but a definite mythotheological concept linking the

practice with a certain religion of salvation, then necessarily a system of strict rules and procedures should exist which would point out, how to advance to such “goal” – how to find the direction to it and adhere to this direction, how to check that the right way is not lost, etc. And all this is exactly what the organon does. *The organon of Spiritual Practice is nothing but the travel instruction for the following to an absent (empirically), transcendent goal.* Creation of every such instruction, the reliable itinerary of the meta-anthropological way, is a unique spiritual achievement which needs several centuries of intense efforts. Of course, in different practices the organon is detailed, rigorous, processed by the reflection to the very different extent. In my opinion, the examples of the most complete and considered organons are given by the Tibetan tantric Buddhism and Eastern-Orthodox hesychasm. The essence and function of the organon are always the same, however. To the list of its general features the last and very important point should be added now: not only its creation, but also its further exploitation, reproduction, translation demand a living environment. The organon exists only in a spiritual organism and this organism, the function of which is to provide the living environment for the existence of the organon is spiritual tradition.

Let us point out some structural features of the organon of Spiritual Practice showing its affinity to the phenomenological organon. Obviously, the rules and procedures included in the organon should be maximally concrete and hence they are, generally speaking, different for each step of the practice. There is, however, a number of general elements relating to the global structure of all the anthropological process. The most important of them establishes a dual division in this structure: in its greater part, Spiritual Practice combines two kinds of activity which are of different character and perform different functions. The first kind is related directly to the main task of the process, the ascent to the telos. As described above, this ascent is realized by means of an energetic mechanism which represents a united and coordinated, coherent action of man’s energies and the energy of the Source-Beyond-There. This specific mechanism creating extraordinary accumulation of energy needed for the generation of the energetic forms of the practice will be discussed in more detail in the last section. Concrete forms in which it is embodied are based on *prayer*, the central and key element of Spiritual Practice. The phenomenon of prayer is infinitely diverse not only as a whole, but even within the limits of Spiritual Practice. In the Far-Eastern practices, the telos of which is connected with representations of the impersonal absolute being (or non-being), the prayer tends to meditative and mantric forms, having the character of psychotechniques; in practices in which the different horizon of being is conceived as that of personal being the prayer develops in the element of personal dialogue. As a rule, each practice includes a large spectrum of various forms of prayer associated with its steps and changing radically in the course of the ascent. In other words, it develops its own art or discipline of prayer.

There is a completely universal fact, however: *any prayer needs to be guarded.* It demands the concentration of energies of the consciousness and energies tend to scatter around and hence the preservation of the prayer necessitates the struggle with this scattering. Such a struggle guarding the process of prayer is performed by the *technique of attention.* It is the second key element in the structure of Spiritual Practice. In the formation of every practice the same discovery has been made: the union of these two elements, the incessant and deepening concentration of energies in prayer and the technique of attention guarding this concentration, is able to produce a unique effect of generating the spontaneous process of spiritual (in fact, holistic) ascent, serving as a sort of anthropological engine. Here is the formulation of this discovery by sinaitic hesychasts of the 9th c.: “The attention and prayer, when they are combined, perform something similar to the Elias’ chariot of fire, lifting to

heavenly heights whoever possesses them”³. In the course of approaching the telos these two components of the practice draw nearer to each other: the ascent becomes more and more spontaneous, “automobile” (the ancient ascetic term) and needs to be guarded less and less so that the attention can be gradually diverted from outer interference to the coordination with the energy of the Source-Beyond-There, like the prayer. In this advancement of the two kinds of energies to their union the type of man’s energetic image corresponding to the telos is getting formed.

If the organon of the experience is conceived as a “travel instruction”, i.e. on a purely operational level, it does not need going out of the boundaries of the spiritual tradition (its language, attitudes and representations). But this means, obviously, that by its tasks it makes only a certain part of the way of the “extraction of the inner experience outwards”. It may be extremely ingenious and precise, but in its very principle it does not include certain stages of the universalization of the experience, namely, the stages of its final “outerization”, in which it has to be extracted beyond the horizon of the tradition and into the horizon of the universally valid. Hence it follows that for the completion of the universalization of the experience of Spiritual Practice the organon created in the tradition and used as the “travel instruction” of the practice (the “organon of the tradition”) must be complemented. Such complement should represent another organon, the “outer” one, which is related to the “organon of the tradition” in the same way as the latter to the experience of the practice: the “organon of the tradition” must be conceived as the “inner experience” for the new organon and the new organon should perform the universalization of this experience in the same way as the “organon of the tradition” has performed the (incomplete) universalization of the primordial experience of the practice. Hence its construction should obey the same general rules for the process of the “extraction of the inner experience outwards”: one should achieve the expression of the “organon of the tradition” on the required level of universalizing reflection without destroying its authenticity and preserving all its dimensions and aspects. The last condition is essential: it rules out, e.g., the positivist paradigm of experiential knowledge based on the conception of the external and distanced subject in a fixed position registering processes in the object.

In my book “The Phenomenology of Ascesis” the outer organon is constructed for the case of the hesychast practice, but its principal features are universal enough to belong to the general paradigm of Spiritual Practice. What makes it possible to achieve the compatibility with the “organon of the tradition”, thus securing the adequate reading of its data, is the *dialogical paradigm* elaborated in modern dialogical philosophy and used by me in the form close to Bakhtin’s philosophy. It is based on the attitude of “participative consciousness” which represents exactly what is needed in our case: an intermediate methodological and epistemological principle filling the gap between the purely theoretical “non-participating consciousness” and purely immanent consciousness absorbed in “experiencing activity” (Bakhtin’s term). Adopting the attitude of participativeness, the outer organon develops its universalization of the “organon of the tradition” by the model of dialogical communion: it considers successively the blocks of this organon and in each case partly accepts its positions and partly reinterprets, corrects and complements them.

Penetrating the “organon of the tradition” with the help of the dialogical paradigm, we find there profound correspondence and affinity with the phenomenological organon. As said

³ St. Philotheus of Sinai. Forty Chapters on Vigilance. In: Philokalia. Vol.3. Moscow, 1992. P.414. (In Russian).

above, the “organon of the tradition” in its main part can be considered as consisting of the “organon of prayer” and “organon of attention” and the latter turns out to be very close to the constitution of the intentional act. The economy (in the Byzantine sense of *oikonomia*) of the attention guarding the incessant prayer is described in the hesychast texts by a surprisingly rich and detailed set of notions: attention, vigilance, soberness, memory of diverse kinds, guarding of heart and guarding of mind, etc. etc. They are connected by a finely elaborated system of conceptual and operational links and the principal contents of all this conceptual and experiential complex is the same as that of the Husserlian description of the intentional act: the direction of the inner sight to a definite content of the consciousness – the putting and holding this content in the focus of the inner sight – the grasping and successively deepening comprehension of this content. Both the attitude of attention in Spiritual Practice and the intentional act in phenomenology are certain variations of the generalized optical modality or “intellectual sight” well-known already to the Greek thought. But differences from the theory of intentionality implied by the specific nature of the mystical and holistic experience of Spiritual Practice are not less important. As noted above, on the higher steps of the practice the activities of the attention and prayer get closer to each other and gradually merging they both are getting included into the holistic activity of synergy. In this activity characterizing already the area approaching the meta-anthropological telos the consciousness is not the intentional consciousness anymore. Our analysis shows, however, that the type of man’s energetic image which is generated here can be interpreted as a certain generalization of the consciousness in the intentional act. This generalization represents a *sui generis* holistic intentionality: the intention is performed here not by intellectual energies alone, but by all energies of a man, and the role similar to that of the intentional object is played by the energy of the Source-Beyond-There.

Thus the idea of the two organons brings us to the result, the possibility of which was for a long time a matter of discussion in phenomenology: the outer organon provides a generalization or extension of phenomenology to the sphere of mystical experience.

III. The Inner and the Outer in the horizon of dynamics

The type of dynamics of any phenomenon is its basic constitutive property. In Spiritual Practice this type is directly related to the opposition the Inner – the Outer: it is formed in the interaction of the outer energy (outer in the strongest, ontological sense) with the inner reality of the man. It is crucial that in this interaction the role of the outer energy turns out to be not destructive or chaotic, but structuring and form-building. Interactions of such kind have been discovered by science only recently, in the middle of the 20th c., and exclusively in natural phenomena and processes, first of all, in physics. These processes have attracted great interest and their study has developed soon into a special physical sub-discipline, to which its main founder Hermann Haken in 1972 has given the name of *synergetics*. In the next period, numerous examples of synergetic processes have been found in most diverse spheres of reality. Today one tries more and more actively to apply ideas and principles of synergetics in the area of human sciences as well. In the field of social, historical, cultural phenomena such attempts abound and there is a growing danger of diffuse amateurish interpretations of these ideas resulting in unfounded if not directly senseless speculations. In our case it is doubtless, however, that the dynamics of man’s energetic autotransformation in Spiritual Practice has at least some synergetic features: the concept of synergy developed by Byzantine theology in the closest contact with the hesychast experience spoke directly about the transfigurative action of Divine energy in the man and the hesychast organon described the spontaneous transformation

of human being by the action of this energy. But nevertheless it is surely impermissible to equate a priori synergic principles and patterns in theology and asceticism with synergetic principles in physics and theory of complex systems. The relation of synergic and synergetic paradigms needs a careful analysis. As a preliminary approach to such analysis, we present here a brief comparison of representations of the universal “paradigm of the form-building action of outer energy” in different levels of reality.

A. Physical (or system-theoretical) level

A prominent specialist in system studies describes the principal features of the paradigm in question as follows: “Flux of outer energy passing through an open non-equilibrium system in a state far from the equilibrium causes the structuring of the system and its components and allows the system to accept, use and store ever-growing amounts of free energy. At the same time the growth of the complexity of the system takes place”⁴. Out of this description two principal preconditions of the energetic mechanism in question are clearly seen:

- 1) openness of the system (it is necessary for the influx of outer energy);
- 2) remoteness from the equilibrium, and what is more, the extreme, maximal remoteness, strong disbalance, removal from all the area of stable regimes of activity.

The process of structuring launched by the flux of outer energy, when these conditions are fulfilled, belongs exactly to the type found in Spiritual Practice; it represents spontaneous generation of an ordered series or hierarchy of dynamical structures or “energetic forms”. Their main distinction from usual static and stable structures is that they are not “states”, but “regimes of activity” and hence cannot be produced as isolated units, separately from the whole process. It matters also that with the acceptance of “ever-growing amounts of free energy” not only the amount, but the density of energy in the system grows. It means that the dynamics of the system steadily intensifies, the energy gets more and more concentrated and condensed and due to this the system may reach the thresholds of “phase transitions”, in the wide sense, i.e. transitions to spheres of reality (in physics, regions of the phase space) with radically different properties. The science knows today plenty of processes of this type, in particular, such processes of self-similarity and self-organization as the generation of structures of turbulence, classical chaos, etc.

B. Anthropological level

In the anthropological discourse we find a very different conceptual situation. First of all, here the notion of energy is different from physical one and has completely different properties. A prominent contemporary physicist Steven Weinberg said to me: “Everything that one says about energy outside of physical discourse, is nothing but a metaphor”. Of course, this is a gross exaggeration, but still the difference of the discourses is such that it surely is impossible to establish an exact and detailed correspondence (not to say identification) with the action of the synergetic paradigm in physical systems. Still on a general level a certain correspondence can be traced down. To start with, it should be noted that there may be two kinds of outer energy acting in the man: the energy of the Source-Beyond-There which constitutes Spiritual Practice and is outer in the strongest, ontological sense, and the energy which is outer only in the usual empirical sense, i.e. not in being (Sein), but only in essent (Seiende), not ontologically but only ontically. One can consider as such “ontically outer” energy acting in the man, e.g., the energy of the Unconscious (since it is perceived by a man as

⁴ E.Laszlo. The Age of Bifurcation. Understanding the Changing World. OPA, Amsterdam, 1991. P.118.

not belonging to him and he cannot locate its source anywhere); such energies can also be provided by external forces and bodies represented in a man by various ways and on various levels. The action of such energies cannot generate phenomena of Spiritual Practice (it can only generate passions which must be removed in the course of the practice), but nevertheless it also generates processes of synergetic character, in a wide sense.

Such processes, examples of which are provided by many psychoanalytical phenomena like neuroses, complexes, psychoses, etc. and some practices of transgression, attracted most active interest of poststructuralist anthropology (or anti-anthropology) by Foucault and Deleuze. In their theories an energetic anthropological model is outlined, which represents the man as a dynamical form, *la forme-Homme*, generated by a definite combination of different inner and outer forces. The roots of such model they trace down to Nietzsche” “The correct statement of the problem which has been called “Superman” by Nietzsche” is as follows: if the forces in the man produce a form only by means of entering into relations with the forces of the outer [synergetic idea of the form-building role of outer energy – S.H.], then with what new forces do they risk to enter into relations now, and what new form which will be neither God nor Man might emerge out of it?”⁵. Thus in this trend of contemporary anthropology the discourses of the Inner and the Outer, taken in the plan of energy, generate in their interplay an anthropological model of the Nietzschean type: in such a model the anthropological reality is plastic and admits rich metamorphoses, although no ideas of ontological transformation and meta-anthropological strategies are present.

C. Meta-anthropological level

Coming back to the case of Spiritual Practice, when the outer energy is ontologically outer and the form-building process is constituted by the principle of synergy, we see that the economy (*oikonomia*) of synergy has the same two preconditions as the synergetic paradigm, i.e. the openness and remoteness from the equilibrium. Their role is even greater here, they emerge as important and very restrictive conditions, the ensuring of which if a special task of the organon of the practice. It is only natural since the process is ontological in its nature and this unique nature implies that its prerequisites are highly specific and restrictive. Openness is here an ontological notion too and, generally speaking, a man is not at all open to the energy of the Source-Beyond-There. According to Heidegger, openness is the definition of truth and in the hesychast organon a similar conceptual connection can be noticed: here the experience ascertained as that of Spiritual Practice is called the “true experience” and whereas the constitutive property of the process of the practice is the openness to the ontologically outer energy, hence it follows that the true experience is the experience of the openness. As a certain development of the predicate of openness characterizing anthropological reality as a kind of medium for the ontologically outer energy, the discourse of Spiritual Practice includes the notion of transparency, also treated ontologically. As for the second precondition, it is included in the process of the practice as its initial step, the “spiritual gate” opening the process. This step represents radical disbalance, shaking, leaving all the regimes and stereotypes of stable existence and these synergetic qualities are especially accentuated in the practices, in which the step includes some or other form of repentance. The repentance took the sharpest form in the ancient Syrian hesychasm, where many extreme ways of expressing it have been practiced, such as compunction (*πενθοφ*), tears, etc. and the very term for a monk meant literally “crying one”.

⁵ G. Deleuze. Foucault. Éd. de Minuit, Paris, 1986. P.139.

As we noted already, the dynamical principles of the central block of the practice, where the generating mechanism of anthropological energetic forms is created, are also common for the synergic and synergetic process. The same can be said about the dynamical principles of the higher block since the synergetic dynamics includes the advancement to radical transformations of a system which can be compared to the ontological transformation of the anthropological reality. Thus, as a final result, we can draw the conclusion about the existence of an universal paradigm of the interplay of the inner and outer energies which is represented in the three levels of reality. The phenomenon of Spiritual Practice is one of these representations.