

neapolis 1982). West argues that the aim of Mill's proof aims only for the conclusion that happiness is desirable and, indeed, the only desirable end. His analysis is also based on Mill's *System of Logic*, but has nothing to do with the rather vague idea of the *Art of Life*. Instead, West uses the distinction between factual and normative propositions, which in Mill's *Logic* is explicit. He concludes that Mill has never claimed that "desirable" or "good" is actually "desired", for he does not regard what is desirable as a matter of fact. It seems that his critics too often forget that Mill is an empiricist. As West rightly points out:

"The significance of the analogy that he is making between 'visible' and 'desirable' is announced in the first paragraph of the chapter: The first premises of our knowledge do not admit of proof by reasoning, but are subject to a direct appeal to the senses; the first premises of conduct are subject to a direct appeal to our desiring faculty (*Utilitarianism*, 10.234). The analogy is that as judgments of matters of facts such as visibility are based on the evidence of the senses and corrected by further evidence of the senses, so judgments of what is desirable are based on what is desired and corrected by further evidence of what is desired." ("The Proof", C: 333.)

The *Companion* is a valuable resource and contribution to scholars interested in the philosophy of John Stuart Mill. The editors have gathered some of the most notable authorities on Mill and have created a great source of information on the most crucial issues of Mill's philosophy. However, the scope of this companion goes even further. It examines sometimes neglected aspects of Mill's life, significant events, and certain people that had contributed to the formation of his thought. Although it is essential to differentiate between the author's biographical details and his theoretical framework, it is enthralling for the reader to get familiar with a somewhat intimate aspect of one's life. Having this in mind, some parts of this *Companion* can be used as an exciting read for non-philosophers. Regarding other parts, the *Companion* is a demanding read – both for its volume and its approach. Despite that fact, it is a valuable contribution and extension of various interpretations of Mill's thought, not only around "moral sciences". Of course, this is not a material for beginners. The volume demands pretty extensive knowledge of Mill's philosophy.

To the prospective reader, we could suggest a piecemeal approach. It is almost impossible to comprise the whole *Companion* at once. For professionals, selective reading should be helpful. For example, there is no need to burden an absorption of Mill's theoretical or moral philosophy with numerous details on his life.

Maybe the most significant value of the *Companion* is in its open call for debate. Its evident "revisionism" is almost tangibly meant to provoke. Beyond any doubt, many articles from the *Companion* will be subject of philosophical discussion for a very long time.

Nenad Cekić

Марија Тодоровска
[Marija Todorovska]

Неискажливата природа на божественото
[The Ineffable Nature of the Divine]

Филозофски факултет,
Универзитет "Св. Кирил и
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Cyril and Methodius University of
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The *Ineffable Nature of the Divine* which deals with *via negativa*, or *negative theology*, gives an important philosophical and historical account on the genesis of the apophatic idea that God's nature cannot in any way be known, or communicated to beings. The peculiar nature of negative theology is most obvious in the fact that those who have dealt with this particular way of thinking have coined many complicated and multi-layered metaphysical systems in order to express the ineffable nature of the Divine, or God's essence. This in its own right makes the subject of *via negativa* all the more obscure and susceptible to certain logical inconsistency, as Marija Todorovska posits in the preface of this book, for we must express the "inexpressible" using words. As she notes, when we use many words to express something ineffable, we are negating the negation of the expressibility – that is – we claim that God's essence is inexpressible by "expressing" its inexpressibility. This clearly makes for a very delicate logical position in the philosophical systems of many authors who wrote on this subject.

Furthermore, it is claimed that God's essence is unknowable, but if that is the case, then

how can we know “how much” of it is unknowable, or that it *is* (unknowable)? And if we can only speak through negations about the One (or God), this would surely imply that to say what the One is not, first we must have some – if not partial – notion of what It is. This could go further into the hole of *regressus ad infinitum*, so Todorovska posits that when it comes to negative theology, we must be aware that all the claims are presupposed with a certain reserve towards them. If one is to say that God is inexpressible – this must be said in a way that God is and remains unknowable, but our way of thinking about His inexpressibility will always suffer from certain limitations and insufficiencies.

Thus, all the claims in negative theology are somewhat conditioned, limited or approximate, which makes it so much more esoteric and essentially supra-logical. Sometimes the negations are used in order to posit God’s supra-goodness, power, beauty, wisdom, etc., saying that He is not good or mighty or wise, thereby expressing His transcendence and outstanding superiority in relation to these “human” attributes, which He has in an unimaginable, inexplicable abundance. This aspect of the negation which implies God’s transcendence is called *apophasis*; when we speak of negation in terms of lacking or deprivation (immobility, immutability) then it is called *steresis*; and when negation is understood as abstraction, which is the separation and dialectical negation of the appropriate notions we have about God, then it is called *aphairesis*. Todorovska’s book demonstrates the usage of these methods wherever they are present in the texts of the authors who wrote about it, and it presents the advantages and challenges of the apophatic approach. That being said, this divine transcendental sphere is so incomprehensible and inexpressible in certain authors that the apophatic way is not entirely equivalent to what we consider to be the broad realm of negative theology.

In this sense, Todorovska claims that negations (*apophasis*) are not simply opposites of affirmations (*kataphasis*), because the very negations sometimes remain unknown to us. God, the cause of all that exists, the ultimate reality, the One (depending on the conception in various philosophical systems) stands before all this, before the deprivations (*steresis*), beyond all denials (*aphairesis*), and above and before any assertion (*thesis*). Therefore, in a broad sense, negative theology contains all the formulae, concepts, attitudes and formulations that determine and describe – or better yet – that fail in the determination and description of God’s unknowable, transcendent, powerful, extraordinary and inexpressible abundance. Furthermore,

Todorovska posits that we must not equate every notion of God’s transcendence with an apophatic conception. Naturally, the concept of transcendence is expected to go hand in hand with the concept of the unknowable and the inexpressible, but it would be unfair to make such an eternal and universal statement. In addition, the author claims that we must not equate the apophatic conceptions that are grounded on “inexpressibility” with the cognitive conceptions that point to the “unknowability” of God. Although it seems that these two notions are mutually conditioned – what cannot be known cannot be expressed, and if something is inexpressible, it is obviously not known in a sufficiently appropriate way to enable expression – it should be borne in mind that although the unknowability of God is part of apophatic theology, it can stand separately and independently from the existence of a pronounced, explicit negative theology.

Facing with the Sisyphean task of presenting the historicity and philosophical implications of the *via negativa* – with all its supra-logical, esoteric, ambiguous, obscure, cryptic, paradoxical, dubious and abstract nature – in the metaphysical systems of the multitude of different philosophers, the author excels in observing all of the subtleties in their difficult philosophical and theological language when it comes to expressing the nature of the inexpressible. This book gives an in-depth voyage through the philosophical development of negative theology, starting with Plato, Philo of Alexandria, the Middle Platonists (Alcinous, Apuleius and Numenius), the apophatic elements in the “Latin *Asclepius*”, and further towards the Gnostic sources, the Neoplatonists (Plotinus, Proclus and Damascius), the Western Church Fathers (Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Augustine), the Cappadocian Fathers (Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa), concluding with the Neoplatonic influence on Christian negative theology in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius and John Scotus (Eriugena). Todorovska has presented all of the thinkers in historical succession accordingly to the corresponding schools of thought, but they are not grouped into schools. Instead, each thinker is presented separately. The author did this because each thinker has a unique and characteristic take on negative theology that does not perfectly reflect those schools and movements’ tendencies, so they all deserve separate chapters. For example, although roughly speaking, Plato and Philo are the pioneers of negative theology in the West, there is a chapter for each of them; and although Alcinous, Apuleius, and Numenius can roughly be considered representatives of Middle Platonism (or second-century Plato-

nism), the negative theology of each author is only scarcely related to that of the others, so it would not be fair to include them within the same framework only because they somehow belong to the same intellectual, philosophical tradition. With this in mind, the author has taken a very careful and serious approach with these thinkers, presenting them with the appropriate respect and consideration.

Todorovska makes an important contribution to the historicity of this idea, presupposing that the sprouts of apophaticism began in Plato's teachings. She posits that Plato was not the originator, but the inspirer of apophatic approaches and *via negativa*, because certain elements in his teachings can undoubtedly be considered mystical. Therefore, he is not to be counted among the fully formed "apophatic" authors who explicitly use the methodology of negative theology. Todorovska draws on Plato's conception of the Good from the sixth book of *Republic*, where he claims – through Socrates's person – that the highest knowledge is of the Idea of the Good. However, such knowledge is almost impossible and cannot be spoken of or fully understood. Todorovska concludes that the terms with which Plato describes – or fails to describe – the Good are mysterious, laying the foundation for assuming that he was the first inspirer of the *via negativa*. Through extensive research on his many works, she lays the case that although Plato never systematically uses the negations, he is still in some sense aware of the methodology of negative theology when he posits the idea of a transcendent and unknowable Good.

In the next chapter, Philo of Alexandria is taken to be the first thinker who, whilst following the biblical texts and Greek philosophy, concluded that God is unknowable, unnameable and ineffable, but is manifested in the world through the immanent Logos. Thus, Philo, unlike Plato, has a clear negative theological position at the base of his metaphysics, namely, that God's nature is ineffable. Further, his negative theology is viewed in his attempts to reconcile the Greek concept of "being" (*to on*) with the living God of the Jews. Todorovska here concludes that Philo should not be considered the founder of systematic negative theology, in the sense that he provides a clear and stable basis upon which negative theology can be built in the context of Platonic tradition, rather, he is the first author to have a clear philosophical and theological view on the transcendence of God. Todorovska posits that in his teachings, we can sense the beginning of negative theology or the "inauguration" of negative theology, but there is no fully developed and systematic apophatic method. According to the author,

Philo should rightly be considered the originator of negative theology, not only because of the negative-theological construction of his exegetical and philosophical approach to divine transcendence but also because of his awareness of the challenges and the value of using the apophatic approach.

Afterwards, Todorovska dwells into the teachings of the Middle Platonist philosophers whose ontological systems are inspired by Plato's ontology, but also have their eclectic solutions and new concepts. The author raises the question of the possible anticipation of the Plotinus' One in the general philosophical atmosphere of Middle Platonism and the problems that opened in that period (such as the critique of the anthropomorphism of deities, the superiority of mind over the soul, the attributes that can be ascribed to God and the ideas of the first God and the Second God). Starting with Alcinous, Todorovska argues that he is the first philosopher to consciously use the benefits of apophatic theology methods. She focuses on Alcinous' concept of an ineffable God and how he proposes knowledge of God: through negation or abstraction, analogy and pre-eminence, but especially through abstraction (*aphairesis*), because Alcinous was the first thinker who explicitly used this method. The author concludes that although the method of *aphairesis* does not inspire any mystical experiences within the Platonism of the second century, it is an instrumental notion in the further development of negative theology and the other apophatic methods which Alcinous uses when speaking about the nature of God. Unlike Alcinous, Apuleius was initiated into the mysteries of Isis, so he was inclined to a more developed theology. Todorovska here posits that Apuleius does not attempt to gain any knowledge of God because of his esoteric inclination and clearly states his views on refraining from speaking about God. That being said, she draws a parallel between Wittgenstein's seventh proposition in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* that "whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent" with Apuleius's refraining from speaking about the transcendent. When it comes to Numenius, although he is considered a representative of Middle Platonism – because he examines different religious beliefs through the prism of Plato's philosophy – his views show strong and historically confirmed Pythagorean influences, which is why Todorovska describes him as a representative of Pythagorean Platonism, or, to some extent, Neopythagoreanism. She posits that there are no obvious references to the apophatic methods of negative theology in his complex metaphysical system. However, there can be no doubt that his theology has an

apophatic basis – the world is arranged so that the supreme deity remains unknowable, and the only thing known is the ordered world.

The next chapter deals with the apophatic elements in the famous “Latin *Asclepius*”, part of the *Corpus Hermeticum* (or *Hermetica*), whose author is presumed to be Hermes Trismegistus. This text also belongs to the somewhat Platonic current in the history of philosophy, because it emphasises the strong transcendence of divinity, a position similar to that of Apuleius and other Platonists about a century earlier. Todorovska here skilfully locates the apophatic constructions to be found in the form of clearly formulated deprivative attributes for God, and also in the form of emphasising his unknowability or his “mediated knowability” through the world or through the ultimate Good.

The seventh chapter deals with the negative theology in the Gnostic sources. In some of the Gnostic texts, there are clear negations when speaking about the highest and unknowable – or barely recognisable – God, like the partial knowledge of the elect who possess *gnosis* in the sense that they can know God – or the transcendent ontological spheres – only partially. There is also usage of deprivative attributes about God; and insistence on the impossibility of rational speech about God or the highest reality to the point of ineffability. But some Gnostic texts do not contain such formulations at all, and even those that do are characterised either by milder versions (God is partially unknowable), or by a combination of apophatic approaches and cataphatic forms. Due to the rich variety of Gnostic texts, Todorovska examines the problem of negative theology through several Gnostic traditions, and that is why this chapter has six segments. Analysing relevant texts and sources of Gnostic theology dealing with this issue, the author systematises the formulas of negative theology in the Gnostic teachings. Therefore, she posits that one should not generalise and insist on God’s unknowability and inexpressibility as a basic and essential feature of Gnosticism. However, one should still acknowledge that there is an indisputable presence of negative theology in some of the preserved sources.

Thus far, Todorovska has presented the numerous apophatic views and formulations in Platonism, Hermetic philosophy, the Gnostic systems, and various accompanying authors. However, in Neoplatonism, there is already a clear systematic negative ontology, embedded in the theoretical basis of the ontological conceptions. In Plotinus, this is evident throughout his Enneadic system, through the basic characteristics of the One which creates and sustains the world – but at the same

time is beyond existence – and through the different orders of ontological categories or realities, or hypostases (One, the Intellect and the Soul). Here the author gives a broad and extensive explanation of Plotinus’s usage of the apophatic method in terms of his conception of the three hypostases, the equation of the One with what can be considered God, as well as his awareness of the need for different apophatic approaches in trying to speak about the ineffable and unknowable One. Then the author presents the development of Neoplatonic negative theology in the logically set, but also poetically inspired teaching of Proclus, and in Damascius’s ontology. She posits that in the context of the research of negative theology, Proclus’s complicated system is clear, intentional, self-reflective, and ontologically apophatic. The One is beyond the possibility of any understanding, defining, expressing, naming, and knowing; negations are a superior way of talking about the One, but they also lead to what is most appropriate about the One’s supreme transcendence – silence. Damascius’s philosophy, unlike that of Plotinus and Proclus, was replete with notions typical for Eastern sensibility, so it proved to be an excellent blend of Greek philosophy and Eastern teachings. He insisted on silence, on the shortcomings of reason and the value of supreme ignorance, which puts him closer than any Neoplatonist to the Eastern notion of meditative silence. Therefore, one of the main apophatic goals of Damascius is to place supreme ignorance (or transcendent “hyper-ignorance”) as an important human (in)ability. The author appropriately emphasises Damascius’ transformation of the previous Neoplatonic philosophy of the One, his insistence on hyper-ignorance, the renunciation of language, the necessary attainment and maintenance of silence, and his consideration for the inconsistency of the apophatic method to express, determine, and know the supernatural abundance of the incomprehensible.

Leaving Neoplatonism, Todorovska introduces the apophatic tradition of Christianity in the early post-apostolic period and late antiquity. She starts with the Western Church Fathers (Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Augustine), due to their chronological relevance to the development of Christian negative theology. In that sense, the author posits that they are the first Christian thinkers to be located in the Platonic tradition who deliberately speak of God in negative terms, and not only in attempts to prevent God’s anthropomorphising but through a broad – though not fully developed – a framework of approaching God’s transcendence and inexpressibility. The purpose of Todorovska’s review of negative theology in the works of

the Western Church Fathers is to show that although an elaborate and systematic negative theology cannot be pointed out explicitly, still their writings abound in apophatic formulations, both in terms of some of their ontological and theological teachings and in the intentional negative approaches towards the inexpressible principles they investigate. She points out that there is no exactly negative theology in the writings of Justin Martyr – at least not in terms of the methods of negation or abstraction – but his views on the unnameness, ineffability and transcendence of God are unequivocal, which is the basis for the future development of Christian apophatic approaches.

For Clement of Alexandria, traditional speech is a continuous symbol, a jigsaw puzzle, a riddle that the intellect tries to solve. However, it does not show reality but serves to symbolise the transcendent truths about supra-existence. So, Todorovska claims that through his philosophy of language we immerse ourselves into the greatness of God, moving into the unimaginable radiance of holiness, and thus gaining (some) knowledge about what God is not. Therefore, she proclaims that one notices a standard apophatic formulation and the use of abstraction, which unequivocally sets Clement as a thinker within the negative-theological methodology. When it comes to Origen, despite emphasising the shortcomings of language and human cognitive abilities, he does not systematically support the importance of the negative method as an appropriate way of coming to God. The author proposes that his contribution to apophatic theology lies in his views about silence, the limitations of language and thought when approaching God, and the fascination with riddles, secrets, and hidden layers of reality and meaning. Finally, in respect to Augustine, Todorovska posits that he cannot be considered a supporter of the negative method, but nonetheless, there are several places in his extensive opus where we can locate negative-theological views, which is why it is appropriate for him to be included in this review.

Turning to the Cappadocian Fathers, the author presents the teachings of Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa in opposition to the views of Eunomius, whose well-known view is that the essence of God (*ousia*) lies in his unbegottenness (*agemesia*). The Cappadocians are greatly disturbed by Eunomius' assertion that unbegottenness is the main attribute and essence of God, so they begin to insist on the separation of the divine essence and energies, that is, on the unknowability of the divine essence and on the manifestation of God through his energies – a teaching that is further developed through the Byzantine

philosophy. For example, Basil the Great writes that God is beyond human comprehension, and the peace of God transcends all human intellect. Eunomius does not seem to acknowledge that God's essence is beyond human intelligence and human knowledge, and this bothers Basil. Here, Todorovska posits that Basil's serious criticism is especially relevant because he affirms the transcendence and incomprehensibility of God, and thus – although in an underdeveloped form – he advocates negative theology. Gregory of Nyssa also emphasises that God is beyond any name, referring to a biblical verse (Philippians 2: 9), thus representing both God's transcendence and the impossibility of God's naming. Moreover, he is perfectly aware that negative names reveal what God is not, not what he is. God transcends all intellectual endeavours and is far above being revealed by any name, so in this Gregory finds evidence of His unspeakable majesty. Todorovska underlines that although he allows for negative statements, he thinks they do not tell us anything. Language is an essential part of the human cognitive process, but names do not give the essence of objects, and even more so – God cannot in any way be named. In this sense, Todorovska correctly concludes that although part of Gregory's main views is undoubtedly inspired by negative theology, it cannot be said that there is a clear systematic apophatic theology in his opus. So, she deems it honourable for Gregory to be acknowledged for the presence of views that are characteristically apophatic, rather than be blamed for the lack of critical meta-analysis of negative theological strategies. In conclusion, Todorovska posits that the negative theology through the opus of Basil and Gregory is neither systematic nor self-reflexively developed, but is at the core of their theological teaching, namely, in the claims of the impossibility of knowing the essence of God.

In the final two chapters, the author turns to Neoplatonic-Christian negative theology through the works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and his Latin translator John Scotus (Eriugena). Pseudo-Dionysius, a Christian Neoplatonist (or Neoplatonic Christian) of the late fifth or early sixth century, stands out as an author who contextualised Neoplatonism in Christian circumstances. It would not be an exaggeration to say that Pseudo-Dionysius' philosophy and theology contain all of the aforementioned ways of speaking about God – from the affirmative cries of admiration for God's goodness, beauty, beauty, power, abundance, to the realisation of the inadequacy of names and attributes applied to God, and the emphasis of complete and ultimate ignorance and the impossibility of

any expression. Todorovska notes that there are several types of negations in his writings and the beginning of the “dialectic of affirmations and negations” later developed by his successor, Eriugena. In this sense, positive and negative approaches are part of the three types of Pseudo-Dionysius’ theology: affirmative (cataphatic), symbolic, and mystical (negative or apophatic theology). Todorovska explains that the names that he gives to God in his affirmative approach are for the most part applicable only to the manifestations of God, not to God himself, and should therefore be considered symbolic names (or titles) for God – they serve only us, they apply only to us. His use of hyper-negations – through which he describes the Supreme Cause as wordless, mindless, but also non-existent, lifeless, non-material, formless, atopic, etc. – functions as a negation not only of the negation but also of the affirmation. Therefore, Pseudo-Dionysius comes to a point where he does not dare to speak at all because what we are trying to speak about is beyond any possibility of speech.

Todorovska posits that in the works of Dionysius it is important always to remember that cataphatic and apophatic theology operate for the same purposes, sort of like a “dialectical game”, that is – each is acting as an assessment of the other. This can be most clearly seen when Dionysius ends *The Divine Names* with affirmations like “King” or “Master”, and then delivers those notions from anthropomorphism through the apophatic apparatus of *The Mystical Theology*. In the same way, his apophatic theology ends with the negation that God *is* and therefore needs the affirmation that God is the Cause of all created beings and therefore, cannot simply not be. Thus, with this in mind, Todorovska concludes that Pseudo-Dionysius gives importance to all the different approaches of (not) speaking about God, but with a clear inclination towards negative theology. The cataphatic, symbolic and mystical (apophatic) theology of Pseudo-Dionysius are in perfect complementarity, leading us to the knowledge that nothing is known. She notes that his philosophy is a shining example of a tense fusion of traditions (pagan and Christian, Byzantine and Western), and his ideas on the application of apophatic strategies, combining apophatic and cataphatic approaches, and defining the supreme principle of existence as “non-existent”, are a direct inspiration for the further development of negative theology and ontology in the Neoplatonist-Christian spirit, in Eriugena’s thought.

Finally, as a conclusion of all the aforementioned negative approaches, Todorovska gives an in-depth insight into the philosophical sys-

tem of John Scotus (Eriugena) through his main opus *The Division of Nature*. This work shows a complex Neoplatonist-Christian system in which all things originate from the One (God) and afterwards return to it. Through the conception of the four types of nature, the five modes of existence and non-existence, and through the numerous explanations of almost all the key ontological and psychological elements, Todorovska shows how Eriugena tries to give a compact system of existence, clearly and thoroughly. A large part of Eriugena’s attention is focused on the concepts of God’s transcendence and immanence, similarity and complete difference, concealment and revelation, that is, on how the divine essence, which is incomprehensible and ineffable, can be understood and expressed through its manifestation in the creation. In this sense, the concept of theophany is closely related to the problem of God’s unknowability and inexpressibility, Todorovska remarks. For Eriugena, God manifests Himself through created nature just as the invisible and incomprehensible mind manifests itself through words and signs. God passes (without moving physically, of course) from darkness to light, from self-unknowability, to self-knowledge, which is in fact unknowability in the form of supreme wisdom.

Eriugena tries to illustrate that the divine essence is in itself incomprehensible, but when it is “attached” to an intellectual being, it becomes apparent miraculously and wonderfully so that it can be observed. The inexpressible essence transcends every nature that participates in it, and it is represented in all those who try to gain knowledge for it, but it is in no way manifested while it is in itself. Todorovska shows that the apophatic formulation is constantly present throughout *The Division of Nature*, and there are clear formulations in which Eriugena expresses a preference for the negative method. In this sense, he claims that God is supra-essential, in that He is so above or beyond essence that He is said to be non-essential. Here Todorovska concludes that the beginning of the “dialectical game” between cataphatic and apophatic theology reaches its final stadium in the “hyperphatic” theology of Eriugena which goes beyond both approaches. She notes that both affirmations and negations are present in all names containing “supra” and in all formulations with “more-than-x”, so therefore it cannot be clearly and exclusively determined whether names and formulations of that type belong to the cataphatic or apophatic approach. So, the inexplicable and inexpressible nature of God reconciles all opposites; God is the opposite of opposites. The metaphysical duality of nature consists in the fact that God is above and below – and in and out of all things; He is

the measure of Himself who has no measure, number without number and thought without thought; unformed form of all things, and that which contains all things without Himself being contained in anything else. However, Todorovska explicitly points out that apophatic theology in Eriugena's ontological system is more emphasised when approaching the divine supra-essentiality. The formulations with "supra-", i.e. "hyper-", possess the form of affirmations, but they hold the meaning of negations – although they are superficially affirmative, their meaning is purely negative. Finally, Todorovska concludes that Eriugena's dialectical combination of cataphatic and apophatic theology through the "hyperphatic" synthesis is of particular importance because it gives a full, clear and systematic usage of negative theology.

It can be said that this comprehensive and wide-ranging, yet concise book, analyses the journey of negative theology through the works and philosophical systems of its key authors, thereby contributing to the academic research of *via negativa* with all its philosophical implications. The author presents a rather different take on the history of Ancient and Medieval philosophy seen through the lens of the negative approach, which reveals many of the otherwise overlooked teachings in the metaphysical systems of the thinkers who have not explicitly written about *via negativa*. In that context, it would be safe to say that this book solemnly expresses the inexpressible.

Jovan Jovanovski

Gernot G. Falkner,
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Die Selbstgestaltung **der Lebewesen**

Eine prozessbiologisch- **ökologische Theorie der** **Organismen**

Verlag Karl Alber, Freiburg –
München 2020

Der Ursprung organismischen Denkens lässt sich in der griechischen Philosophie bei den Vorsokratikern, Hippokrates und Aristoteles ausmachen. Von ὄργανισμός ist zwar in antiken Texten noch nicht die Rede, wohl aber von ὄργανον und ὄργανικός. Im 17. Jahrhundert gewinnt der Organismus-Begriff in der Auseinandersetzung mit dem erstarken mechanistischen Denken zunehmend an Bedeutung. Im zurückliegenden 20. Jahrhundert ist der Organismus-Begriff zurückgedrängt worden. Nicht mehr die Vorstellung des lebendigen Organismus, sondern die eines wirkkausalen Mechanismus ist heute vielfach leitend.

Das Biologen-Ehepaar Gernot und Renate Falkner hat im Verlag Karl Alber jüngst eine biophilosophische Publikation vorgelegt, welche den Organismus-Begriff ins Zentrum stellt, indem sie auf inspirierende Art und Weise Forschungsergebnisse ihrer langjährigen Arbeit im Labor mit den Überlegungen philosophischer Denker wie Hegel, Whitehead, Dewey, Cassirer und Bergson verbinden: *Die Selbstgestaltung der Lebewesen in Erfahrungsakten. Eine prozessbiologisch-ökologische Theorie der Organismen* lautet der Titel der 252 Seiten umfassenden Arbeit, die Überlegungen aus dem Bereich der Pflanzenphysiologie, der mikrobiellen Ökologie, der Evolutionstheorie, Taxonomie, Verhaltensforschung, irreversiblen Thermodynamik, Geschichtsphilosophie und Philosophie der Biologie in beeindruckender Weise verknüpft. Seit den 1970er Jahren untersuchten Gernot Falkner und Renate Falkner an den Instituten für Molekularbiologie und Limnologie der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften die physiologische Anpassung von Algen und Bakterien an Milieuänderungen. Im Jahr 1996 wurde Gernot Falkner von der Französischen Akademie der Wissenschaften mit einem *Prix Montyon* ausgezeichnet. Das Autoren-Team hat gemeinsam „die energetischen Grundlagen der physiologischen Anpassung mit Hilfe der irreversiblen Thermodynamik studiert. [Sie] fanden,