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# SOPHROSYNE, NOT SOPHISTRY

An investigation into Plato's dialogues on the virtue of *sophrosyne* and its application by Saint Augustine and Raphael.

Pierre Beaudry, 8/28/2020

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## FOREWORD

In my previous report, I investigated the significance of the Greek concept of *sophrosyne* that Plato developed in the *Charmides* and I came to the conclusion that such a forgotten concept relates to the most important quality of the human soul, which is necessary to be recovered today, in order to save civilization against the oligarchical *hubris* of our time. Most translators have subverted the political dimension of this virtue in Plato's dialogues and, as a result, have let *sophistry* take over *sophrosyne*'s true significance.

In this second report, I would like to emphasize the moral and epistemological dimension of *sophrosyne*, not only with Socrates and Plato, but also with Saint Paul and Saint Augustine. The difference between *sophistry* and reality is difficult to decipher because it is always easier to lie than to tell the truth; and for the same reason, it is always easier to find ways to deceive people through *sophistry* than to discover ways to improve their minds through *sophrosyne*.

The opposition between *sophrosyne* and *sophistry* is sometimes perceived as the difference between folly and wisdom, or between hubris and humility, but in all cases, the antithesis between the two is always a difference between injustice and justice, such that it sometimes causes curious inversions in the mind of the investigator who may not be looking for the truth. Socrates often stated in various Platonic dialogues: "Of the two, inflicting and suffering wrong, we say it is a greater evil to inflict it, a lesser to suffer it."(Gorgias, (507d).

With this idea of justice and *sophrosyne* in mind, we must go further into establishing a mental ordering which is not only appropriate to a nation's citizen, but also to a world citizen, and even more so, to a future extraterrestrial citizen.

### **SOPHROSYNE AND THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR<sup>1</sup>**

When Sparta won the Peloponnesian War in 404 B.C., Athens was forced to abandon its democracy and replace its government with the tyrannical rule of the Sparta-allied oligarchy of the group of Thirty. Thus began, for Europe and the rest of the world, a 2,424 year period of oligarchism and sophistry which has now reached its climax, today, with the 2020 Presidential Election in the United States.

This is not an approximation; this is a precise historical correlation. In his essay on *The Legislation of Lycurgus and Solon*, Schiller came to the conclusion that Sparta was not a happy state. According to Schiller, the reason for Sparta's unhappiness was the following:

“The Spartan Book of Laws itself preached the dangerous principle, that people be considered as means, not as ends – the foundations of natural law and morality were thereby torn asunder, by law. Morality was utterly sacrificed to obtain something, which can only be valuable as a means to this morality.

“Can anything be more contradictory, and can any contradiction have more grievous consequences than this? Not enough that Lycurgus founded his state on the ruin of morality; in an entirely different way, too, he worked against the highest purpose of humanity, in that, through his well thought-

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<sup>1</sup> What caused the collapse of the original Geek civilization was the takeover of Athens by the oligarchical outlook of Sparta. The means of achieving that end was the Peloponnesian War (431-404), which was the long war between Sparta and Athens fought over who would have control of the state, an oligarchy or a democratically elected people? On this important subject, Schiller made the following remark about Lycurgus' Sparta: “Everything may be sacrificed for the best of the state, but not that which serves the state itself only as an instrument. The state itself is never the purpose, it is important only as the condition under which the purpose of mankind may be fulfilled, and this purpose of mankind is none other than the development of all the powers of people, i.e., progress. If the constitution of a state hinders the progress of the mind, it is contemptible and harmful, however well thought-out it may otherwise be, and however accomplished a work of its kind.” *Lycurgus and Solon*, in *Friedrich Schiller, Poet of Freedom, Volume II*, Schiller Institute, Washington D.C., 1988., p. 283.

out system of state, he held the minds of the Spartans fast at the level where he had found them, and hemmed in all progress for eternity.

“All industry was banned, all science neglected, all trade with foreign peoples forbidden, everything foreign was excluded. All channels were thereby closed, through which his nation might have obtained more enlightened ideas, for the Spartan state was intended to revolve solely around itself, in perpetual uniformity, in a sad egoism.”<sup>2</sup>

It is this very contradiction which Lyndon LaRouche warned against during his presentation before the Italian Senate Defense Committee in July of 2007, when he identified that the recent American Wars and the Peloponnesian War had the same cause:

“Remember, look, you’ve got a situation in which the United States was plunged into two successive long wars, one from 1964 to 1972, and now the more recent wars. These are long wars. They are Peloponnesian wars, which have the same kind of cause as the original Peloponnesian War. They’re caused by a certain kind of stupidity in the population, the leading circles of the population, called Sophistry, which means a society which has no principle, and has given up the idea of principle for the sake of popular opinion and expediency, or what is called Sophistry, is no longer capable of judging how to deal with the situation. [...]

“Now, today you’re in a situation, in which there is an attempt to destroy this legacy of modern European civilization, a legacy established beginning with the Council of Florence. The legacy of the modern nation-state based on the political equality of the human individual, and the responsibility of the state to promote the development of the individual, and to promote the improvement of the political powers and physical powers of the individual.

“Since Roosevelt died, this has been underway. It was not too obvious at first, but when Truman came in, there was a sudden change. The change

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<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *Op. Cit.*, p. 285.

was typified by two things which were conspicuous at the time. Roosevelt had been committed to the elimination of all forms of colonialism, immediately, at the end of the war. He'd also been committed to the use of the military power we had developed, to convert it back into a civilian capability, and to use a significant part of that civilian economic power, to assist freed nations, as well as rebuilding Europe, but assisting freed nations, which had been colonized nations, to give them the development which would make them truly independent nations.

“That policy was abandoned. And our rate of development in the postwar period slowed down as a result. But nonetheless, we maintained that system, with the damage done to it in that fashion, until the assassination of John F. Kennedy. And John F. Kennedy's assassination allowed a different policy to be introduced. John Kennedy's assassination allowed certain forces in Europe and the United States, to proceed with what President Eisenhower had warned against, in leaving office: that a so-called military-industrial complex took, actually, political control of the destiny of the United States and pretty much of Europe and the other parts of the world.

“Now, they did the same thing to us that was done in the Peloponnesian War to the Greeks. The Greeks were induced to engage, through Sophistry, in a prolonged war which destroyed Greece, which has not come back to the present day. Athens has never recovered from the long war it fought in the Peloponnesian War. The history of civilization, since that time, especially European civilization, has been that long wars have ruined us repeatedly.

“As contrasted, for example, with the case of Louis XI, who was attacked by everyone on every side. He bribed even some of his persecutors to make peace with him, and he made a profit on peace, by avoiding war,

because he used the occasion of freedom from war, to develop the French population, which is where modern France as a significant power emerged.”<sup>3</sup>

LaRouche warned in 2007 that the purpose of these long wars is to destroy the level of civilization that the population of a nation has reached at a certain point in the process of its development, by destroying the morals and the cognitive principles underlying its progress, and thereby allowing people to be sacrificed at the altar of *oligarchical sophistry*. Americans have to get back to these principles in the upcoming 2020 Presidential Election.

The reason why *oligarchical sophistry* has been historically opposed to *sophrosyne* is because oligarchism rejects the sovereignty of the individual human being as created in the image of God. As LaRouche demonstrated throughout all of his writings, it is the ability for the individual human being to “hammer his own personality” (*sophrosyne*) which consolidates for him this God-given sovereignty. LaRouche wrote:

“Although the development of the creative mental powers of the human individual occurs within a social process, the creative processes by means of which each individual may generate, transmit, or assimilate practically valid discoveries, are processes of concept-generation which are, demonstrably, wholly internal to each individual person. Therefore, those creative powers of the individual are sovereign powers of each individual in which that divine spark of potential for creative reasoning is developed. It is not only the existence of the creative powers which defines man as in the image of the Creator; it is the fact that this creative power is in each instance a sovereign capability of the person, a sovereign essence of that individual, which defines the human individual as individually in the living image of the Creator or, in Latin, *imago viva Dei*.”<sup>4</sup>

As I will demonstrate below, this conception is entirely Platonic in character and is explicitly woven throughout Plato’s *Timaeus*. It would be wrong, however,

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<sup>3</sup> Lyndon LaRouche, [LAROUCHE TO ITALIAN SENATE DEFENSE COMMITTEE: STRATEGY TO DEFEND THE NATION STATE](#), EIR, originally published in Vol. 34, No. 28, July 20, 2007, pp. 42-53. Republished in EIR, August 7, 2020, p. 42 and 36.

<sup>4</sup> Lyndon LaRouche, [The Science of Christian Economy](#), EIR, Vol. 18, No. 22, June 7, 1991, p. 14.

to think that the *oligarchical sophistry* which has destroyed the idea of the image of God in our society exists only in our Churches, political circles, and parties. *Sophistry* has taken over our education system, as well as our judicial system, our scientific and business communities, and our official media of information to such a degree that people don't even know how to get out of the danger they are in. They are willing to react to the danger by going out in the streets, but they are not willing to think about a solution, until a major crisis wakes them up and forces them, under capable leadership, to replace the world *sophistry* system. The crucial weapon to win this fight against such deeply rooted *sophistry* is *sophrosyne* – an idea which is not even known to the great majority of the general public.

What happened to Athens during ancient times and what is happening to the United States, today, is that both politics and justice have been taken over by *sophistry*. It had become popular to lie systematically. When Thucydides described the moral breakdown of Athenian society, he had to admit that the takeover of politics and justice by lying *sophistry* was too much even for him to accept. As he said:

“To fit in with the change of events, words, too, had to change their usual meanings. What used to be described as a thoughtless act of aggression was now regarded as the courage one would expect to find in a party member; to think of the future and wait was merely another way of saying one was a coward; any idea of moderation (*sophrosyne*) was just an attempt to disguise one's unmanly character; ability to understand a question from all sides meant that someone was totally unfitted for action (III, 82).”<sup>5</sup>

## SOPHROSYNE AND JUSTICE

“A life without examination is not worth living.”

Socrates, *Apology*, (38a)

Of course it is pure sophistry to say that Socrates was “corrupting the youth.” Every educated person knows that. But, what did the Athenian people do

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<sup>5</sup> Thucydides, *HISTORY OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR*, Penguin Classics, 1972, p. 9-10.

about it? Why didn't they act on the false underlying motive behind that accusation? Very few aside from Plato and Xenophon acted appropriately. In fact, the purpose of putting Socrates to death was to flaunt a glaring injustice and show that if you have an oligarchical system, you can get away with murder. An oligarchy creates fear in the population by setting an example for all of future history; that is, establish the proof that such a death would also befall anyone who defied the power of the *sophistry* of the oligarchy. In fact the execution of Socrates is the proof that *sophistry* has worked for the last 2,420 years, but it also proves that *sophrosyne* is the proper oligarchical axiom buster that citizens need to wield today.

The Romans made justice blind because she was deliberately made incapable of seeing the difference between the evil of doing something wrong to someone and the greatest evil of all, which is doing something wrong to someone unjustly. An oligarchical justice can only judge the value of what appears to be a just wrong, not an unjust wrong. Only *sophrosyne* can see the injustice in an unjust wrong. That is the underlying assumption of the whole argument of Socrates before and during his trial. It is in that sense that *sophrosyne* has always been the greatest ally of *justice*, because, whenever *sophrosyne* is present, *justice* is no longer blind. On that account, Socrates raised the issue of a republican form of justice. And that is the reason why Socrates asked the question: "Can a wicked man be happy?" (*Gorgias*, 472d2.)

The moral foundation of the concept of *sophrosyne* can be found principally in Plato's *Apology*, (30cde.), *Gorgias*, (469a-476a and 507d-509c), *Republic*, (361a), and *Laws*, (716cds). The question is: What is the human quality that makes the true difference between justice and injustice? Socrates himself reported that the reason he was put to death was because he was a "stinging fly" which kept nagging "a large thoroughbred horse" (*Apology*, 30cde). But the more profound reason was because he could not stop doing what God had sent him out to do, which was to demonstrate to all that "life without examination is not worth living." As he said:

"Perhaps someone may say, 'but surely, Socrates, after you have left us, you can spend the rest of your life in quietly minding your own

business.’ This is the hardest thing of all to make some of you understand. If I say that this would be disobedience to God, and that is why I cannot ‘mind my own business’, you will not believe that I am serious. If on the other hand I tell you that to let no day pass without discussing goodness and all the other subjects about which you hear me talking and examining both myself and others is really the very best thing that a man can do, and that life without this sort of examination is not worth living, you will be even less inclined to believe me. Nevertheless, that is the way it is, gentlemen, as I maintain, though it is not easy to convince you of it.”<sup>6</sup>

The unjust treatment of Socrates was one of the most crucial events that both Plato and Xenophon identified during the fourth century B.C. and which bears upon the nature of the *sophrosyne* characteristic of Socrates. Under the influence of Socrates and Plato, the purpose of the moral aspect of the concept of *sophrosyne* was politically centered on educating the citizen of a republic; that is to say, educating a law abiding citizen (*Sophon polites*) “who despises oligarchical justice.”<sup>7</sup>

Most scholars have neglected this function of *sophrosyne* and have made the semasiological mistake of looking for the variable meanings of *sophrosyne* instead of investigating the cosmological, epistemological, political, and moral significance of that virtue. The point is not to look for the meaning of words, but for the significance that moral or immoral actions have on the progress of human language, society, and civilization.

In *Gorgias* 469c2, Socrates argues that if one had the choice, “one should rather suffer than to do wrong.” But, the Sicilian teacher of oratory, Polus, cannot agree with him. Then, Socrates proceeds to demonstrate that a wicked man, such as the murderous King of Macedonia, Archelaus, can only be happy by *sophistry* and through presenting false witnesses of people who are willing to corroborate that fact. This is a fallacy of judgment, because the assumption is that “if the evildoer is not punished, he will be happy.” (*Gorgias* 472e1.) Socrates argues that this is

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<sup>6</sup> Plato, *Socrates' Defense (Apology)*, translated by Hugh Tredennick, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1972, 37e-38a. Trans. by Hugh Tredennick.

<sup>7</sup> Helen North, [\*Sophrosyne, Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature\*](#), Sophron Editor, 2019. p. 142.



impossible simply because “it is worse to do than to suffer a wrong and worse to escape than to suffer punishment.” (*Gorgias* 474b3.) Polus is incapable of seeing the truth of this fact and is pushed to the last resort of asking Socrates the decisive question: “Why would you rather suffer than do wrong?” (*Gorgias* 474b6.)

This is precisely the point Socrates wanted Polus to get to, because, unless you investigate the matter yourself, you cannot get at the truth of it. And through a typical Socratic dialectical process, Polus is made to discover that “to inflict wrong is worse than to suffer it through an excess of evil.” (*Gorgias* 475c13.) The same result is achieved when Socrates demonstrates that when one is guilty, “it is the greatest of evil to escape punishment.” (*Gorgias* 476a4.) The point that Socrates keeps making is that all these matters of discussions can only be resolved through investigating the differences between good and evil dispositions.

Finally, Socrates comes back to the question of *sophrosyne* and states: “I assert then that, if the temperate (*sophrosyne*) soul is good, then the soul in the opposite condition to the temperate is evil, and this, we saw, was the foolish and undisciplined.” (*Gorgias* 507a4-6.) However, the next step is the important one to reckon with: the reason why the *sophrosyne* soul is good is because the purpose of man is the pursuit of happiness. Socrates said:

“This then is the position I take, and I affirm it to be true, and if it is true, then the man *who wishes to be happy* (emphasis added) must, it seems pursue and practice temperance, and each of us must flee from indiscipline with all the speed in his power and contrive, preferably to have no need of being disciplined, but if he or any of his friends, whether individual or city, has need of it, then he must suffer punishment and be disciplined, *if he is to be happy* [emphasis added]. This I consider to be the mark to which a man should look throughout his life, and all his own endeavors and those of his city he should devote to the single purpose of so acting that justice and temperance shall dwell in *him who is truly blessed* [emphasis added].”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Plato, *Gorgias*, (507cde.) Translated by W. D. Woodhead.

To this day, the matter is still the unresolved matter of deciding which is more shameful “to do or to suffer wrong.” But, since Plato identified Socrates’ interlocutor, Callicles, as a student of the sophist Gorgias, it became clear that such a pragmatist was incapable of understanding the profound unity between *sophrosyne* and justice. Therefore, Socrates issues this final warning against him:

“Wise men, Callicles, say that the heavens and the earth, gods and men, are bound together by fellowship, and order and temperance and justice, and for this reason they call the sum of things the ‘ordered’ universe, my friend, not the world of disorder and riot. But it seems to me that you pay no attention to these things in spite of your wisdom, but you are unaware that geometric equality is of great importance among gods and men alike, and you think we should practice overreaching others, for you neglect geometry. Well, either we must refute this argument and prove that happiness does not come to the happy through the possession of justice and temperance, nor does misery come through the possession of wickedness, or, if my argument is true, we must consider the consequences.”<sup>9</sup>

In point of fact, Callicles doesn’t see any need for justice and *sophrosyne* to govern the city-state; he believes that all that leaders need is intelligence and courage.

The current form of Anglo-American oligarchical justice is as corrupt as that former Athenian oligarchical justice that Socrates had to suffer under during his time, maybe worse.<sup>10</sup>

## THE DUAL EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND ASTRONOMICAL CONNOTATION OF SOPHROSYNE IN PLATO

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<sup>9</sup> Plato, *Gorgias*, (508ab.) Translated by. W. D. Woodhead.

<sup>10</sup>For a thorough example of *sophistry*, see Glaucon’s speech in Plato, *The Republic*, (360e-361d.) translated by Paul Shorey.

Plato takes *sophrosyne* a step further by extending the development of the idea of *sophrosyne* to the domains of epistemology and astronomy, because the concept naturally relates to the incommensurability of becoming God-like in the



unity of the microcosm and the macrocosm; that is, in such a manner that reason brings order to the universe as a whole through the creative process of being in the image of God.

However, this may not be the choice that every man makes; and the result shall be such that each individual will receive mortality or immortality depending on what direction his soul will take, as Raphael has indicated in the difference between Plato and Aristotle in his *The School of Athens*. This is how Plato stated the matter at the end of the *Timaeus*:

Raphael, *The School of Athens*, detail.

“When a man is always occupied with the cravings of desire and ambition, and is eagerly striving to satisfy them, all his thoughts must be mortal, and, as far as it is possible altogether to become such, everything in him becomes mortal because he has cherished his mortal part. But he who has been earnest in the love of knowledge and of true wisdom, and has exercised his intellect more than any other part of him, must have thoughts immortal and divine, if he attain truth and in so far as human nature is capable of sharing in immortality, he must altogether be immortal, and since he is ever cherishing the divine power and has the divinity within him in perfect order, he will be singularly happy. Now there is only one way of taking care of things and this is to give to each the food and motion which are natural to it.

“And the motions which have some affinity with the divine principle in us are the thought of the universe as a whole and its circular revolutions. It is those motions that everyone should follow: revolutions relating to becoming which take place inside of our heads and which were corrupted at our birth; we must restore them by the knowledge of the harmony and the revolutions of the universe in such a way that he who contemplates them should become similar to the object of his contemplation, in conformity with its original nature and, having become similar to it, he may attain in the present and in the future, the perfect realization of the life that God has provided for human beings.”<sup>11</sup>

This statement is almost Christian in its measured intent and scope; it is already preparing the terrain for Cusa, Kepler, Leibniz, and LaRouche. However, this view implies two things: one is that mankind has to grow up to become a planetary as well as an interplanetary being; second, that mankind must reach the level of maturity required today in order to master the universe as a whole tomorrow. How can this be achieved?

According to Plato, God created the universe as a self-similar process of composition between the two extremes of macrocosm and microcosm such that change and progress are the result of the process of ordering a peaceful coexistence between the chaos of blind physical Necessity and the power of human Reason. The good is the highest form of harmony of proportion between Necessity and Reason, while evil is the result of the inadequate relationship between the two extremes. How can this riddle be solved between immortal Reason and mortal Necessity?

In *Laws*, Plato goes further by equating the virtue of *sophrosyne* with the loving power of God, and making of *sophrosyne* an essential part of the human being who is created proportionately in the image of God. Plato cannot be more explicit when he has the Athenian state:

“What conduct is dear to God and which gives Him a following?  
There is only one, and it is summed up in one ancient rule, the rule that the

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<sup>11</sup> Plato, *Timaeus*, (90d). Translated by Benjamin Jowett.

‘like’ – when it is a thing of proportional measure – ‘loves its resemblance.’ For beings who are beyond measure are not measured among themselves nor among those who have measure. Therefore, for us, it is God who is the measure of everything in the supreme degree and much more so than man, as some would have you believe. Therefore, he who would be loving to Him would have to be like Him as much as possible and with all his might; and in accordance with this principle, he among us who is *sophrone* is dear to God, because he is like Him, but he who is unjust and who is not *sophron*, is different and is not like Him, and the same rule holds for everything else.”<sup>12</sup>

Plato assigns to *sophrosyne* the role of connecting man as being in the Image of God, as the Christians will later develop with the idea of creativity. Professor Cornford had a powerful insight on this relationship of extremes which he expressed in the Epilogue to his book on *Plato's Cosmology*. He suggests that Plato might have had Aeschylus' *Eumenides* in mind when he wrote his *Timaeus*. Cornford wrote:

“Plato's trilogy, had it been finished, would have stood out as his masterpiece, throwing even the *Republic* into the shade. Aeschylus' masterpiece was finished; and the *Oresteia* still holds the supreme place in tragedy. The philosophic poet and the poet philosopher are both consciously concerned with the enthronement of wisdom and justice in human society. For each there lies, beyond and beneath this problem, the antithesis of cosmos and chaos, alike in the constitution of the world and within the confines of the individual soul. On all these planes they see a conflict of powers, whose unreconciled opposition entails disaster. Apollo and the Furies between them can only tear the soul of Orestes in pieces. The city of uncompromised ideals, the prehistoric Athens of Critias' legend, in the death-grapple with the lawless violence of Atlantis, goes down in a general destruction of mankind. The unwritten *Hermocrates*, we conjectured, would have described the rebirth of civilized society and the institution of a State in which the ideal would condescend to compromise with the given facts of man's nature. So humanity might find peace at the last. And the way to

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<sup>12</sup> Plato *Laws*, (716cd) (my translation) This is the only dialogue where Socrates is absent.

peace, for Plato as for Aeschylus, lies through reconciliation of the rational and the irrational, of Zeus and Fate, of Reason and Necessity, not by force but by persuasion.”<sup>13</sup>

Plato's unfinished trilogy (*Timaeus*, *Critias*, and *Hermocrates*) might have held the key to the Augustinian application of *sophrosyne* in *The City of God*. As I will try to demonstrate next, just as one can witness a decrease in the moral significance of *sophrosyne* in Greek society after the deaths of Socrates and Plato, one can only hope to find a significant increase in the moral significance of the same virtue during the early Christian period and especially with Saint Augustine.

### **CHRISTIAN SOPHROSYNE: AN AXIOMATIC CHANGE WITH ST. PAUL AND ST. AUGUSTINE**

In his *Epistles* and in the *Acts of the Apostles*, St. Paul gives a prominent place to the notion of *sophrosyne*, a place of the first order which conforms with the Socratic and Platonic use of the concept, but with the additional unique and higher connotation of Christian humility and chastity required to qualify for the Catholic priesthood.

For example, in his *Epistle to the Romans* (12,3), Paul considers *sophrosyne* as a gift from God for the general welfare of the people almost as in the preamble of the American Constitution calling on its citizens to focus on the “Pursuit of Happiness.” Paul writes: “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment (*phronein eis to sophronein*) in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.” It becomes clear from that Pauline vantage point that *sophrosyne* is the opposite of hedonism and its purpose is happiness.

According to Professor Helen North, Paul remained very close to the original ancient Greek meanings of the term *sophrosyne*, but he added a very distinct and clear Christian connotation. She wrote: “Paul recognizes three aspects of *sophrosyne*, which may be defined in terms of antitheses: it is opposed to

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<sup>13</sup> Francis MacDonald Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology, The Timaeus of Plato*, Hacker Publishing Company, Indianapolis/Cambridge, 1935, pp. 363-364.

madness (*mania*), to pride (*hyperphronein*), and to the tyranny of the appetites (*epithymia*); the third interpretation is by far the most common.”<sup>14</sup>

St Paul's most common use of the term is to signify self-control over the sensual appetites, but in his *Epistle II Timothy* (1:7), he goes a step further into the sublime by admonishing his followers to prepare themselves for an axiomatic transformation through martyrdom: “For the Spirit of God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power (*dynamis*), love (*agape*), and self-discipline (*sophronismos*).” This level of self-discipline is more than what is expected from any ordinary Christian and recalls Socrates' own self-discipline in facing an unjust death.

In the *City of God*, St. Augustine translates the term *sophrosyne* by the Latin term *temperantia* to signify the measure of an axiomatic change inside the Christian personality; that is, such as a dynamic measure which may be linked to a transfinite measure that changes the earthly vibrations of the soul into a celestial state. In his book *On Order (De Ordine)*, for example, Augustine relates to three stages of purification of the human soul in its ascent to God: the “purgative,” the “illuminative,” and the “unitive.” For Augustine, all three steps of perfection are measured by *sophrosyne* which is the actual virtue turning (*convertere*) the soul toward God.

During this early period (387-388 A.D.), Augustine associated the concept of *temperantia (sophrosyne)* to the purification of the soul similar to a triple transformation that takes place in the mind when it makes a discovery of principle; as, for instance, in the slave boy's discovery of doubling the square in Plato's *Meno* dialogue.

What Augustine attributes to the soul's ordering process of conversion reflects the three-step function of the creative process which includes, as I have many times described in other locations, perplexity, discovery, and joy (laughter).<sup>15</sup> In other words, a discovery of principle is similar to converting to Christianity. For Augustine, it is *temperantia* which causes old ideas to be replaced by new ones,

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<sup>14</sup> Helen North, Op. Cit., p. 371.

<sup>15</sup> See my [LANTERNLAND](#).

which causes the soul to be born again into a higher dimensionality. Helen North identified beautifully the transformation as follows:

“Each of the cardinal virtues has a part in *conversio*, but as Augustine describes it, *temperantia* is the one that effects the actual turning. *Prudentia* decides what is worthy to be loved, *justicia* recognizes the need to establish a hierarchy of objects to be loved and to give each its due, *fortitudo* resists all pains and terrors in clinging to the decision made by these two virtues, but *temperantia* has the crucial task of fighting the *cupiditates* and carrying out the *conversio amoris*, putting off the old man and being renewed in God (*De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*, I: 19,35, P.L. 32. 1326).”<sup>16</sup>



## SOPHROSYNE WAVICLES AND RAPHAEL'S 'TRANSFIGURATION'

Nicholas of Cusa's doctrine of *coincidence of opposites* is a form of Platonic dialectic of the One and the Many, as Plato developed in his *Parmenides* dialogue. This method is not merely used to provide limits to deductive reasoning but also to

<sup>16</sup> Helen North Op. Cit., p. 437-38.



give rise to a higher transfinite form of knowledge which Cusa called *intellectus*, which both Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael applied constructively into the domain of artistic composition. The epistemological basis for Cusa's hypothesis is to show how the human mind is capable of attaining a higher unity of synthesis, but which can only be attained through the coincidence of two opposites, which under normal circumstances could never be reconciled. Cusa developed such a paradox in his conception of the infinite sphere of God, whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. Cusa wrote: "As a center, the Maximum precedes all width, length, and depth; it is the End and the Middle of all of these; for in an infinite sphere the center, the diameter, and the circumference are the same thing."<sup>17</sup>

When a geometrical object is considered to be infinite, it must lose all of its finite characteristics and have them mingle and coincide with each other; and when that happens, there are no longer any finite boundaries to any particular discrete element, because all of the discrete elements become transformed into a single compact of wavicles, which become unified as One and Many at the same time. In that case, the minimum cannot be numbered nor can the maximum, because the One which generates numbers is not a number. As Cusa wrote:

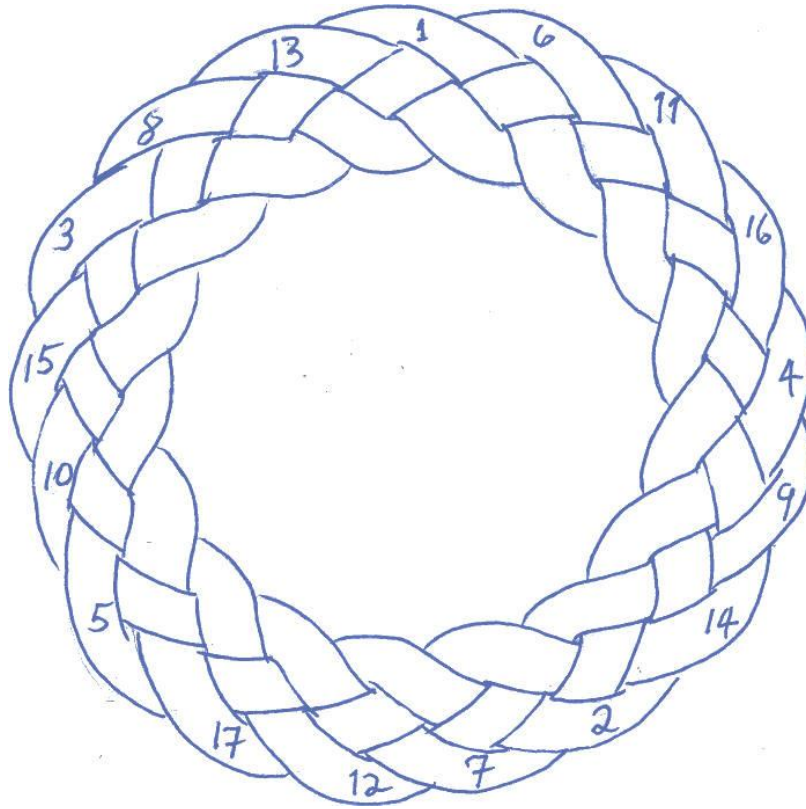
"However, Oneness cannot be number; for number, which can be comparatively greater, cannot at all be either an unqualifiedly minimum or an unqualifiedly maximum. Rather, oneness is the beginning of all number, because it is the minimum; and it is the end of all number, because it is the maximum."<sup>18</sup>

Think of this process of transformation as a jump between a discrete manifold and a transfinite manifold. Think of this process as a relationship between the One and the Many as Cusa elaborates in his *Docta Ignorantia* (1, ch.5). There are only discontinuous relations between odd and even numbers, yet, in a torus wavicle, for example, all of the whole numbers come to be continuously One by resolving their oppositions.

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<sup>17</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *De Docta Ignorantia*, Trad. Jasper Hopkins, The Arthur J. Banning Press, Minneapolis, 1990, p. 78.

<sup>18</sup> Nicholas of Cusa, *Op. Cit.*, p. 55.



Clockwise wavicle of Poloidal/Toroidal 4/17. Note how all of the 17 waves have 4 unites of action each, and all opposite reciprocals coincide with 18 at the exclusion of 9.

As in a fusion process, the geometry of biquadratic residues demonstrates how Cusa's idea of the One and the Many, or the *coincidence of opposites*, works with whole numbers. For example, the traditional biquadratic 4 mod 17 generates four biquadratic residues of 17, which can be represented geometrically in a continuous wavicle ordering of 4, 16, 13, and 1. The Oneness of this process cannot be a number, but its ordering principle, based on the torus wavicle, is capable of containing all regular integers in a form of increasing powers, which can subsume the even and the odd residues as well as the greater and the lesser numbers as far as you wish to count.

Apply the same geometrical idea to Raphael's *Transfiguration*. Examine the epistemological allegory of the transformation of the state of the lunatic child to that of the apostles and to the divine state of Christ's transfiguration, following *Matthew 17*, which Raphael applies to the creative process of artistic composition.

As I have noted in my previous report<sup>19</sup>, Raphael's *Transfiguration* was composed on a very disturbing anomaly which portrays two different and opposite subjects as one. This anomaly has long baffled critics and admirers alike for centuries: as the powers of 4 can get resolved with respect to 17, so must the apostles resolve the lunacy of the young boy with respect to Christ's transfiguration.

The confusion of the spectator facing this painting is such that he cannot understand why the sublime event depicted in the upper part of the painting, the actual transfiguration of Christ, (Matthews 17,1-10) occurs at the same time as the tragic event of the curing of the lunatic boy, (Matthews, 17, 14-20) in the lower part of the fresco. What is the connection between those two opposites? If the spectator is perplexed, it is because his mind cannot experience the logical deductive coincidence between two successive events taking place in the simultaneity of eternity, as a performative moment in which the creative event of an axiomatic transformation takes place in someone's mind.

The two scenes are incapable of taking place together and at the same time, chronologically, yet they are capable of being united by a single concept of artistic composition, in the simultaneity of eternity, when the creative concept of something is being transformed into another through the *coincidence of opposites*; that is, when, as Raphael chose to do, the unity of the two scenes reside in the unique process of going from human-*sophrosyne* to divine-*sophrosyne*. This is similar to the case of a *catenary/tractrix function* where causality impregnates its potential effect before it actually produces it.

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<sup>19</sup> See my report: [RAPHAEL, THE CATENARY-TRACTRIX PRINCIPLE OF THE TRANSMUTATION](#).



Raphael, The Transfiguration (1520)

The *Transfiguration* is distinctly marked by these two levels, the unity of which the spectator has to discover the incommensurable connection in Raphael's mind of a relationship between a lower earthly manifold and a higher heavenly manifold, one finite and the other infinite. The unity of the composition is primarily indicated by the multidirectional motions of the lower scene which lacks resolution in itself, but which can only become resolved through a transformation into the unifying spheroid motion of the upper part.

If you consider the lower part of the painting as the domain of the preconscious potential and multi-dimensional dynamics of the creative human mind, and the upper part as the transfinite self-conscious domain of an actual realization of creative discoveries of principle, you will have a good idea of how Raphael thought of the transformative nature of creativity. This masterpiece is an amazing visual representation of a voice register change between a lower and a higher register, where the apostles are incapable of freeing a lunatic child from his dementia until the arrival of the Transfigured Christ comes to perform a miracle that will save him.

The beauty of Raphael's method in this last composition lies in the contrast between the light-filled upper part and the extensive use of printer's black in the lower part. The mixing of the colors in the lower part with printer's black was considered a mistake by Giorgio Vasari, but was actually made to reinforce the transfiguration process itself, as a transformation of the color scheme from dark shadows into lighter ones, thus shadowing the more or less humble conviction of the apostles and their commitment to their divine mission. This is a pure matter of self-discipline.

Raphael had the genius of rediscovering Leonardo's method of composition, that is, how to apply physical means of composition to his epistemological requirements as a principle of transformation from the shadowy finite world to the illuminated infinite domain of the divine soul. He made sure that the difference between the two domains would cause such a state of perplexity for the spectator that the latter could not stay passive before his work and would be forced to resolve the mysterious jump between the two parts by looking for the secret of the

composition in his own mind. Such is the performative function of *sophrosyne* in artistic composition. The questions which Raphael's *Transfiguration* calls on the spectator to answer are: Can you accomplish miracles? Can you accomplish the impossible? Can you eliminate the madness which has taken over this world and create a new man, a Renaissance for all of mankind, not for just a few?

## CONCLUSION

When Plato described the unhappy condition of the tyrannical political leader in *Republic, Book IX*, he also demonstrated that what his mind suffered the most from was the gradual loss of *sophrosyne*, a condition which leads the individual to a complete degenerate state of barbarism, to the point that every value he may have had disappears and cannot be rescued without *sophrosyne*. In his exceptional book on *Greeks and Barbarians*, J. A. K. Thompson had this insight about the nature of what was missing in the mind of a tyrant:

“Sophrosyne is the virtue that “saves” in this battle. Understand it so, and you must share some part of the ardour this word inspired. It means the steady control and direction of the total energy of a man. It means discipline. It means concentration. It is the angel riding the whirlwind, the charioteer driving the wild horses. There is no word for it in English, and we must coldly translate “moderation,” “temperance,” “self-restraint.” “Moderation” as a name for this strong-pulsed, triumphant thing!”<sup>20</sup>

*Sophrosyne*, in both its Greek and Christian connotations is neither a timid nor an unmanly quality of human conduct; it is rather a forceful and passionate companion of justice and a bold fighter for peace and for the development of mankind. It is patient before the turbulent forces of hubris and calm before irrational aggressiveness, but it is deliberate and proportional in law giving, provocative in artistic composition, and loving in human affairs. *Sophrosyne* is neither frugality nor austerity; however, if it must be courageous to the very end against tyranny, it must also stand firm against absolute liberty. The question is: Can we still save civilization against *oligarchical sophistry* today, at this late date?

**FIN**

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<sup>20</sup> J. A. K. Thompson, [\*Greeks and Barbarians\*](#), New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921., p. 121.