

Aristotelian Modalities of Knowing: *mathetic vs. cathartic*

1. Synesios *Dio* 8.1–6 Terzaghi

Ἐγὼ δὲ βουλοίμην μὲν ἂν εἶναι τῆς φύσεως ἡμῶν, ἀεὶ **πρὸς θεωρίαν** ἀνατετάσθαι· ἀμηχάνου δὲ ὄντος τε καὶ πεφηνότος ... λείπεται δὴ τι τῶν ἐν μέσῳ ζητεῖν. τί δ' ἂν εἴη πρὸ **τῆς ἐν λόγοις τε καὶ περὶ λόγους διατριβῆς**; ... ταύτη δὴ πάλιν τὸν Ἑλληνα τοῦ βαρβάρου πρῶτον ἄγω, καὶ σοφώτερον τίθημι, ὅτι κατιένοι δεήσαν, ὁ μὲν ἐν γειτόνων ἔσθη τὴν πρῶτην· εἰς ἐπιστήμην γὰρ ἔσθη, ἐπιστήμη δὲ νοῦ διέξοδος· **κᾶτα** εἰς λόγον ἦλθεν ἄλλον ἀπ' ἄλλου, δι' ὧν καὶ προήλθε ... ἀλλὰ τοι πάντα ταῦτα κοσμεῖ τὸ ὄμμα ἐκείνο, καὶ ἀφαιρεῖ τὴν λήμην, καὶ διεγείρει κατὰ βραχὺ προσεθίζοντα τοῖς ὁράμασιν, ὥστε θαρσῆσαι ποτε καὶ **προσβύτερον θέαμα**, καὶ μὴ ταχὺ σκαρδαμύξαι πρὸς ἦλιον ἀτενίσαντα. ... οἱ δὲ τὴν ἐτέραν ὁδὸν τὴν ἀξιουμένην ἀδαμαντίνην εἶναι βαδίσαντες· ὑποκείσθω δέ, ὅπερ ἔστιν, ἐνίους αὐτῶν τυγχάνειν τοῦ τέλους· **ἀλλ'** ἔμοιγε οὐδὲ ὁδὸν δοκοῦσι βεβαδικέναι. πῶς γὰρ, ἐν ἧ μηδεμία φαίνεται κατὰ βραχὺ πρόοδος, μηδὲ πρῶτον καὶ δεύτερον, μηδὲ τάξις; ἀλλ' ἔοικε γὰρ τὸ κατ' αὐτοὺς πρᾶγμα βακχεῖα καὶ ἄλματι μανικῶ δὴ τι καὶ θεοφορήτω, καὶ τὸ μὴ δραμόντας εἰς τὸν ἔσχατον ἦκειν, καὶ μὴ κατὰ λόγον ἐνεργήσαντας εἰς τὸ ἐπέκεινα λόγον γενέσθαι. οὐδὲ γὰρ ἔστιν οἷον ἐπιστασία τῆς γνώσεως, ἢ διέξοδος νοῦ, **τὸ χοῦμα ἱερόν**, οὐδὲ οἷον ἄλλο ἐν ἄλλῳ· ἀλλ', ὡς μικρῶ μείζον εἰκάσαι, **καθάπερ Ἀριστοτέλης ἀξιοῖ τοὺς τελουμένους οὐ μαθεῖν τί δεῖν, ἀλλὰ παθεῖν καὶ διατεθῆναι, δηλονότι γενομένους ἐπιτηδείους**· καὶ ἡ ἐπιτηδειότης δὲ **ἄλογος**· εἰ δὲ μὴδὲ λόγος αὐτὴν παρασκευάζοι, πολὺ μᾶλλον.

I, for one, wish it were in our nature always to stretch forth **towards contemplation**, but since this is manifestly inconceivable ... there remains, then, to seek something in between. What could be preferable to **spending time in and around logos**? ... In this way, again, I put the Greek ahead of the non-Greek and deem him wiser because, it being necessary to descend, he has taken his stand at first in the vicinity [of contemplation], for he has taken his stand on knowledge. Knowledge is the pathway of the intellect. Therefore he goes from one *logos* to another and by these means he advances... Yet all these prepare that eye [of the soul], remove the rheum, and thoroughly arouse it, accustoming it gradually to visible objects so that someday it will also dare **a more important spectacle** and not blink soon, once it has trained its gaze at the sun... Some tread the other path, the one deemed of adamant. Let us assume, which is [true], that some of them reach their goal: to me at least they do not seem to have walked a road. For how [can that be a road] where no gradual progress is apparent, neither a first and a second [step] nor an order? Their action seems a Bacchic rite, some inspired leap, divinely borne, and a reaching the end without first running, to go beyond *logos* without first operating under its guidance. For the experience of the sacred is neither a prevalence of knowing nor a pathway of the intellect, nor this in that and that in the other, but, to compare the greater to the small, [it is] according as **Aristotle expected those who are being initiated not to learn what [he said] is needful but to experience and be brought into a disposition, evidently once grown fit** [for it]. And the fitness **does not involve logos**. But this is all the more so if [as in the present case] *logos* has not even provided for it.

2. Psellos *Opusc.* 30 (*Theologica* I.122 Gautier)

εἰς δύο γὰρ ταῦτα πᾶσα γραφή διήρηται, ... εἰς τε **τὸ διδασκτικὸν καὶ τὸ τελεστικόν**. τὸ μὲν οὖν πρῶτον ἀκοῇ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις παραγίνεται, τὸ δὲ δεύτερον, **αὐτοῦ παθόντος τοῦ νοῦ τὴν ἔλλαμψιν, ὃ δὴ καὶ μυστηριώδεις Ἀριστοτέλης ὠνόμασε καὶ ἔοικος ταῖς Ἐλευσινίαις**. ἐν ἐκείναις γὰρ **τυπούμενος ὁ τελούμενος τὰς θεωρίας ἦν, ἀλλ' οὐ διδασκόμενος**. ὅστις μὲν οὖν **διὰ τοῦ αὐτοκινήτου** τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀθανασίαν ἐδέξατο, οὗτος **διδασκαλικὴν ἔσχε τὴν μάθησιν, ἀλλ' οὐ τελεστικὴν**· εἰ δὲ τις αὐτοπτῆσας τῷ νῷ εἶδεν αὐτὴν τὴν ψυχὴν, ἢ καὶ μὴ θεασάμενος ἀμέσως τῷ νῷ τὴν ἀθανασίαν ταύτης ἐδέξατο, **οὗτος πεπονθὼς ἐστί καὶ τελούμενος**, οὐχ ὅτι καὶ μανθάνων οὐ πέπονθε (**πάθος γὰρ καὶ ἡ μάθησις**), ἀλλ' ὅτι ἐκείσε μὲν καὶ πεποιήκε τι συνεισαγαγῶν τῇ σπουδῇ καὶ ξυντείνας τὸν νοῦν, ἐνταῦθα δὲ ἄρρητος ἡ θέα...

For into these two [elements] is every writing divided...: into **the didactic** and **the telestic** [element]. The first, then, comes to men by the hearing; the second, **when the intellect itself has experienced illumination**, what Aristotle also called 'like-the-mysteries' and similar to the Eleusinian [festivals]. For in those [festivals] **the one who was being initiated into the *theōriai* was impressed and not instructed**. Anyone, then, who has accepted the immortality of the soul **through a personal process** [of thought?], **has got his learning as didactic not telestic**. But if through autopsy with his intellect he has seen the soul itself, or immediately with his intellect has accepted the immortality of the soul, even without gazing [at it], then **he has had an experience and has been initiated**; not because he does not also experience while learning (**for learning is an experience**), but because in the former case he has also done something, bringing it forth with effort and stretching his intellect, whereas in the latter case the sight is ineffable...

3. Aristotle *DA* 417b2–14

οὐκ ἔστι δ' ἀπλοῦν οὐδὲ τὸ πάσχειν, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν φθορά τις ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐναντίου, τὸ δὲ σωτηρία μᾶλλον ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐντελεχείᾳ ὄντος τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος καὶ ὁμοίου οὕτως ὡς δύναμις ἔχει πρὸς ἐντελέχειαν· θεωροῦν γὰρ γίνεται τὸ ἔχον τὴν ἐπιστήμην, ὅπερ ἢ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀλλοιοῦσθαι (εἰς αὐτὸ γὰρ ἢ ἐπίδοσις καὶ εἰς ἐντελέχειαν) ἢ ἕτερον γένος ἀλλοιώσεως, διὸ οὐ καλῶς ἔχει λέγειν τὸ φρονοῦν, ὅταν φρονη, ἀλλοιοῦσθαι, ὡσπερ οὐδὲ τὸν οἰκοδόμον ὅταν οἰκοδομή. τὸ μὲν οὖν εἰς ἐντελέχειαν ἄγειν ἐκ δυνάμει ὄντος [κατὰ] τὸ νοοῦν καὶ φρονοῦν οὐ διδασκαλίαν ἀλλ' ἐτέραν ἐπωνυμίαν ἔχειν δίκαιον· τὸ δ' ἐκ δυνάμει ὄντος μανθάνον καὶ λαμβάνον ἐπιστήμην ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐντελεχείᾳ ὄντος καὶ διδασκαλικοῦ ἦτοι οὐδὲ πάσχειν φατέον, [ὡσπερ εἴρηται.] ἢ δύο τρόπους εἶναι ἀλλοιώσεως, τὴν τε ἐπὶ τὰς στερητικὰς διαθέσεις μεταβολὴν καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ τὰς ἕξεις καὶ τὴν φύσιν

Neither is *paskhein* univocal, but sometimes it is a ceasing-to-be under the power of its opposite, **sometimes rather a confirmation in actual being of what exists potentially** and is as similar [to it] as potentiality can be to actuality. **For what has knowledge comes into [actual] being in the act of contemplating**, which either constitutes no qualitative change (for its development is towards itself and its actualization) or it is a different sort of qualitative change. Therefore it is not right to say that what is thinking is experiencing a qualitative change any more than the builder does when he is building. **It is proper, then, that the intellecting and thinking leading from potential existence to actuality should not be called 'instruction' but have another name**; while what learns starting from potential being and gains knowledge through what is actual and instructive either not be called *paskhein*, or that we speak of two kinds of qualitative change, one a change to privative conditions, another to [positive] states and [one's proper] nature.

4. Plutarch *Isis and Osiris* §77 382d2–e2

ἐν χρήσει γὰρ τὰ αἰσθητὰ καὶ πρόχειρα ὄντα πολλὰς ἀναπτύξεις καὶ θέας αὐτῶν ἄλλοτ' ἄλλως ἀμειβομένων δίδωσιν· ἢ δὲ τοῦ νοητοῦ καὶ εἰλικρινοῦς καὶ ἀπλοῦ νόησις ὡσπερ ἀστραπή διαλάμψασα τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπαξ ποτὲ θιγεῖν καὶ προσιδεῖν παρέσχε. διὸ καὶ Πλάτων καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης ἐποπτικὸν τοῦτο τὸ μέρος τῆς φιλοσοφίας καλοῦσιν, καθ' ὅσον οἱ τὰ δοξαστὰ καὶ μκτὰ καὶ παντοδαπὰ ταῦτα παραμειψάμενοι τῷ λόγῳ πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον ἐκείνο καὶ ἀπλοῦν καὶ ἄυλον ἐξάλλονται καὶ θιγόντες ἀληθῶς [Pohlenz: codd. ἄλλως] τῆς περὶ αὐτὸ καθαροῦς ἀληθείας οἷον ἐν τελετῇ [Reiske: codd. ἐντηλῇ] τέλος ἔχειν φιλοσοφίας νομίζουσι.

For, in our handling of them, the objects of perception, being also ready at hand, offer many unfoldings and views of themselves as they change in various ways at various times. **But the intellection of what is intelligible**, [being] both pure and simple, having at length flashed through the soul like lightning allows for apprehension and inspection once for all. Therefore both Plato and Aristotle call this aspect of philosophy 'epoptic', insofar as those who **through reasoning** have gone beyond these confused and multifarious conjectural matters leap forth toward that simple and immaterial beginning and consider that in having truly apprehended the pure truth about it, as it were, through [a mysteric] rite, they have in their possession the consummation of philosophy.