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# *PER LUMINA VERA AD VERUM LUMEN:* THE ANAGOGICAL INTENTION OF ABBOT SUGER

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The role of mystical theology on the development of Gothic architecture has been a topic of much debate over the twentieth century, specifically on the question of what influence (if any) the 5<sup>th</sup> century theologian Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite exerted on the intentions of Abbot Suger in the building of St.-Denis. With due respect to all parties involved in the debate, this paper will examine the notion of anagogy both generally and specifically in the thought of Dionysius, as well as the theological consideration of light as a manifestation of Divine Beauty to offer a hermeneutical key to understanding Suger's intentions as expressed in his various writings and most centrally in the inscription on the Great Doors at St.-Denis.

Key words: Abbot Suger, Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, Gothic Architecture, Anagogy, Theological Aesthetics

The role of mystical theology on the development of Gothic architecture has been a topic of much debate over the twentieth century. Centered on the person of Abbot Suger who in the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century promoted what is generally considered the first Gothic church in the rebuilding of St.-Denis, the question of theological influences and theological intention has developed into two clear camps: those who, following von Simson and Panofsky, see a strong connection between the architectural intentions of Suger and the mystical theology of St. Dionysius (the "pseudo Areopagite"); and those who, following their critics such as Radding and Clarke, Crossly and Kidson, Rudolf, Grant and others, downplay if not outrightly discard the connection.

Von Simson's claim is thus:

"... it can, I think, for once be shown how the artistic design [of St-Denis] was inspired by a defi-

nite metaphysical system [that of Dionysius], how and in what manner an intellectual experience impinged upon the creative process within the artist's mind. What renders this interpretation possible is the fact that we know for certain the author who had most influence upon Suger's thought, and in whose work the abbot found the source for his own philosophy of art."<sup>1</sup>

Panofsky's understanding of the relationship is a bit peculiar, that Suger adopted Dionysian mystical theology more as a validation of his own inclinations toward the material beauty, perhaps to defend himself against the attacks of St. Bernard:

"One can imagine the blissful enthusiasm with which Suger must have absorbed these neo-Platon-

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<sup>1</sup> O. Von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral: Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order*, Princeton 1988<sup>3</sup>, 102.

ic doctrines. In accepting what he took for the *ipse dixit* of Saint Denis, he not only did homage to the Patron Saint of his Abbey but also found the most authoritative confirmation of his own innate belief and propensities. Saint Denis seemed to sanction Suger's conviction [...] Saint Denis himself seemed to justify Suger's partiality to images and his insatiable passion for everything lustrously beautiful, for gold and enamel, for crystal and mosaic, for pearls and precious stones of all descriptions..."<sup>2</sup>

Panofsky is rather more pragmatic than von Simson in his reading of Suger and the question of Dionysian influences, but nevertheless seems to allow that Suger was indeed working in a tradition of anagogical contemplation that came down to him from Hugh of St. Victor, John Scotus Eriugena, and Maximus the Confessor back to Dionysius.<sup>3</sup>

On the other side are a host of architectural historians who call into doubt the Dionysian influences on Suger, and by extension the Gothic enterprise, generally preferring a more Augustinian approach. Radding and Clark give a sort of half-hearted nod to the possibility that Suger was influenced by Dionysius:

"Suger may have asked the builder to maximize the amount of light that entered the building, perhaps even out of respect for the theology attributed to Denis that stressed light as the link between the material and the celestial worlds."<sup>4</sup>

Both Grant and Rudolf are dismissive of Suger's intimacy with the *Corpus areopagiticum*. Indeed, Rudolf suggests that, "Suger was apparently uncomfortable enough with his own overt discussion of Pseudo-Dionysian mystical theology in *De Consecratione* to avoid it in the later *De Administratione*."<sup>5</sup> In Rudolf's reading of Suger's

intention, any appeal to Dionysius is, following Panofsky, a defense against charges of the overt materialism of his project, especially against the earlier charges of St. Bernard. In this political and apologetic reading of Suger, Rudolf reads what "amounts to no less than an attempted justification of the entire program." Rudolf thinks that,

"a close reading [of *De Consecratione*] reveals that it is not the brightness of Pseudo-Dionysian light mysticism that operates in the illuminating experience which is described, but rather the traditional spiritual brightness of the events depicted in the different 'lights' or scenes on the door – particularly the assumption of material existence on the part of Christ."<sup>6</sup>

In a similar vein, Grant thinks that "Panofsky was quite right to point to Suger's use of the Pseudo-Dionysius, but that he made too much of it." Her reading of the door inscription, in what she calls "a straightforward case," is that it is a rehash of "the old chestnut about the quality of the workmanship surpassing the material"<sup>7</sup> and relegates the message to "the elaborate play of words denoting light."<sup>8</sup> Grant peculiarly sees Suger as an uncomplicated thinker more concerned with church politics, only "making superficial play with problems which exercised his contemporaries profoundly," and that "he seems to have realized that disquisitions on the great mysteries were best left to his contemporaries."<sup>9</sup>

Two writers of note have addressed the question from the side of historiography. Crossley does not directly speak to the question of Suger and Dionysius, but does call into question the respective projects of von Simson and Panofsky in attempting to locate Suger within a Dionysian tradition.<sup>10</sup> Kid-

<sup>2</sup> E. Panofsky, *Abbot Suger: On the Abbey Church of St.-Denis and its Art Treasures*, Princeton University Press 1979<sup>2</sup>, 24–35.

<sup>3</sup> This lineage, and the various interpretations of Dionysius, is a study beyond the scope of this paper. Cf. J. LeClercq, *Influence and noninfluence of Dionysius in the West Middle Ages*. In: *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (translated by C. Luibheid), New York 1987, 25–32.

<sup>4</sup> C. M. Radding–W. W. Clark, *Medieval Architecture Medieval Learning: Builders and Masters in the Age of Romanesque and Gothic*, New Haven–Yale 1992, 67.

<sup>5</sup> Panofsky gives the earliest date of *De Consecr.* as 1144, perhaps as late as 1146–47, and of *De Admin.* as begun in 1144–45 and finished in 1148–49. It seems improbable that as a mature thinker in his mid 60s, Suger should be so con-

cerned in the span of a few years to eschew his spiritual and theological foundations. Rudolf's assertion is all the more puzzling given that the overtly analogical text of doors is recorded in the later *De Admin.*, 142.

<sup>6</sup> C. Rudolf, *Artistic Change at St.-Denis: Abbot Suger's Program and the Early Twelfth Century Controversy Over Art*, Princeton 1988, 52.

<sup>7</sup> The reference to Ovid's *materiam superbat opus* from *Metamorphoses*, 2: 5 in Suger's *De Admin.* 33.

<sup>8</sup> L. Grant, *Abbot Suger of St.-Denis: Church and State in Early Twelfth Century France*, London 1998, 270.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 22–23.

<sup>10</sup> P. Crossley, *Medieval Architecture and Meaning: The Limits of Iconography*. Burlington Magazine 103–1019 (1988), 116–121.

son is much more direct and dismissive of Suger as an intellectual, a theologian, or a mystic:<sup>11</sup>

“There is not the slightest shred of evidence to suggest that Suger ever made the sort of systematic study of the Pseudo-Dionysius that would put him into such distinguished company, or even that he had any sympathy with or real understanding of the neo-Platonic strand in Christian theology...”<sup>12</sup>

He unashamedly glories in things that gleam and shine. He would like to think that there is nothing reprehensible about this, that it is compatible with his religious vocation. But that is all. It was here, behind the exuberant prose, that Panofsky thought he could detect the Pseudo-Dionysiac symptoms he was looking for. But unless one is convinced beforehand that Suger was a committed initiate, one will search his words in vain for the proof. It simply is not there. Without the Pseudo-Dionysius Suger loses much of his art historical glamour. He ceases to be the commanding intellectual and reverts to a more conventional style of patronage.<sup>13</sup>

The conclusions to be drawn are as follows. Suger was not in any serious sense a follower of the Pseudo-Dionysius. He was an orthodox churchman in a position of great power, and his primary aim as a patron was to do honour to the saints of his abbey. [...] As for the Pseudo-Dionysius, if he had anything to do with twelfth-century religious art, it was through the exegetical movement associated (among others) with the canons of St.-Victor, rather than St. Denis. This might provide the starting point for a further enquiry into Suger’s alleged role as one of the great innovators of medieval iconography.”<sup>14</sup>

In short, Kidson is calling the whole project into question based on his reading of Suger and finding him incapable of producing a metaphysical architecture, especially one based on the mystical theology of Dionysius. This sentiment is echoed by Grant, who judges the Dionysian influence of the inscription of the doors at St.-Denis to be “partial, limited and unsurprising.”<sup>15</sup>

I am not certain that either the von Simson-Panofsky approach, or the critics of that approach,

<sup>11</sup> P. Kidson, *Panofsky, Suger and St.-Denis*, JWCI 50 (1987), 1–17.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>15</sup> L. Grant, *op. cit.*, 24.



Fig. 1. St.-Denis, Exterior (© Steven J. Schloeder 2010)

do sufficient justice to the sacramental world view that a 12<sup>th</sup> century monk and abbot, indeed any pre-Enlightenment churchman, would have held. A life cultivated in liturgy, sacred readings, theology, ascetical practices, and regular prayer would have found consonance with a Dionysian intuition much more readily than we have today. The purpose of this present paper is to give some theological insight into the question of anagogy, working from the presumption that such an intuition which seems to be part of the warp and woof of the medieval and late classical Christian mind might be more opaque to those who would try to understand thinkers such as Suger.

## Anagogy

Throughout the late Patristic period into the middle ages, the common and unwavering intention of church builders is the expression of the celestial glory, which would enrapture the souls of the believers. We see this from the earliest recordings of

the intentions of church builders, such as Eusebius' oration on the dedication of the cathedral at Tyre.<sup>16</sup> As Paulus Silentarius was to write in his ode on the dedication of Hagia Sophia:

“But if he bring his foot across this threshold / never more would he withdraw it; / Fain, with wandering moist eyes, and ever turning head, to stay / Since all satiety is driven away.”<sup>17</sup>

The enrapturing sense of Paul's description of Hagia Sophia, the sense of the visitor's participation in something numinous, existentially satisfying, and divinely beautiful, is one of the earliest instances of what can be considered a phenomenology of anagogical intention. In Eusebius' earlier descriptions of the Cathedral of Tyre there is a sort of analytical language of correspondences drawn between the ecclesiological and the architectural. However, in Paulus the anagogical movement is an interior and emotional sense, a movement of the soul toward the divine through the engagement of the material object. How can this be accounted for?

The anagogical relationship between the spiritual and material orders is first drawn by Jesus in regards to his very person: “He who has seen me has seen the Father!” (John 14:9) and “I and the Father are one!” (John 10:30). Throughout scripture the idea that Christ is the image (*eikon*) of God is further elaborated in a privileged way (2 Cor 4:4, Col 1:15). Rom 1:20 suggests that all knowledge of God begins with consideration of the material order: “For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

With its scriptural authority thus established (at least conceptually if only later named), the *mos anagogicus*, or the “upward leading way”, has a thread in Christian thought that develops tentatively in the first several Christian centuries and which becomes more defined in the 5<sup>th</sup> century as the thinking of the neo-Platonist Proclus informed Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite.<sup>18</sup> In the early second century

we first see the use of *anagoge* in the writings of Ignatius of Antioch (d. 108), writing on the upward path of the Christian in the language of architecture, who calls the Christians:

“stones of the temple of the Father, prepared for the building of God the Father, and drawn up on high by the instrument of Jesus Christ, which is the cross, making use of the Holy Spirit as a rope, while your faith was the means by which you ascended, and your love the way which led up to God.”<sup>19</sup>



Fig. 2. St. Denis, Main Doors (© Steven J. Schloeder 2010)

Toward the middle half of the second century we see intimations of an anagogic interpretation in salvation history in the *Pascha* of Melito of Sardis (c. 168), in which he draws a sculptor's analogy between the “models” of the Old Testament and their realization in the fullness of Christ. Melito contrasts

<sup>16</sup> Eusebius, *The History of the Church*. 10.4 sq.

<sup>17</sup> Paulus Silentarius, *Ode*.

<sup>18</sup> Proclus' *Elements of Theology* is a systematic working out of Plato's answer to the Parmenidian problem of the One and Many. Proclus' influence on Dionysius and his epigones was well established by H. Koch, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in seinen Beziehungen zum Neuplatonismus und*

*Mysterienwesen*. Mainz 1900. Cf. E. R. Dodds, *Proclus: The Elements Theology*, Oxford 1963<sup>2</sup>, xxvii–xxix, and H-D. Saffrey, *New Objective Links between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus*, in: *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought* (ed. D. J. O'Meara), New York 1982.

<sup>19</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, *Ephesians*, 9.

the Old Testament model as “worthless” with the New Testament fulfillment as “precious” and “marvelous.” The “small and perishable sketch”, which is analogously the material world, is but “a preliminary sketch... of the future thing”, which is the perfected spiritual reality. Out of these base materials such as “wax or clay or wood” comes perfection that is “taller in height, stronger in power, beautiful in form, and rich in its construction.” Given the symphonic presentation in Revelation 21, describing the descent of the Heavenly Jerusalem and the temple imagery of the Church, Melito explicitly draws these figures together to show how the earthly temple and the terrestrial Jerusalem are but anticipations (and therefore to be eventually discarded when superseded as worthless) of their heavenly fulfillment in Christ:

“The temple below was precious, but it is worthless now because of the Christ above.

The Jerusalem below was precious, but it is worthless now because of the Jerusalem above.”

While these passages lack the language of “luminance” and “radiance” that we will see later developed in Dionysius, Melito’s use of precious and marvelous language can be seen to perform the same function to indicate the proper response of awe before the glory of the heavenly realities.<sup>20</sup> The mechanism of anagogy, and its necessity for participation in the things of God, can be seen in numerous writings of the Fathers, such as in this passage from Gregory of Nazianzus (324–389):

“For in that Mount itself God is seen by men; on the one hand through His own descent from His lofty abode, on the other through His drawing us up from our abasement on earth, that the Incomprehensible may be in some degree, and as far as is safe, comprehended by a mortal nature. For in no other way is it possible for the denseness of a material body and an imprisoned mind to come into consciousness of God, except by His assistance.”<sup>21</sup>

We note in this passage the tension between the cataphatic, revelatory elements (e.g., “through his own descent”) and the apophatic incomprehensibility of God that always requires balance in anagogic contemplation. Gregory uses the trope of Mount Sinai and what God revealed to Moses as the basis for

<sup>20</sup> Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha*.

<sup>21</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes*, 45.11.

understanding the need of divine assistance in the anagogic method, but in the Fathers anagogy has the much more general application that anagogy is, in fact, a *process* that leads us from the material, through the material, toward the spiritual.

Even in Augustine we see intimation of anagogic necessity. Augustine considers spiritual illumination as necessary to take us from the “miserable servitude of the spirit,” wherein we remain trapped at the level of the sign, without which “one is not able to raise the eye of the mind above things that are corporal and created to drink in eternal lights.”<sup>22</sup> Though phrased in the negative (*non posse*), the sense of this passage is certainly anagogic: the human condition of “taking signs for things” (*signa pro rebus accipere*) is a limitation to be overcome so that through the corporal thing (*supra creaturam corpoream*) we can come to participate in the eternal illumination (*aeternum lumen leuare*).<sup>23</sup>

## The Anagogic Theology of Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite

The clearest, most forceful, and most influential systematic presentation of anagogic contemplation is found in the writings of a mysterious 5<sup>th</sup> century theologian from Syria named Dionysius. While not ever explicitly claiming to be *the* convert of Paul on the Areopagus (Acts 17:34), Dionysius gives a number of indications leading the reader toward that understanding. He writes as if he received his doctrine directly from St. Paul,<sup>24</sup> and is writing to Timothy, Gaius, Sosipater, Titus, Polycarp, and St. John, all first century characters.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, he claims both to have witnessed the eclipse that occurred at the Crucifixion,<sup>26</sup> and to have met with James and Peter at what seems to be the Dormition of the Virgin: “we and he and many of our holy

<sup>22</sup> Augustine, *De Doct. Christ.*, 3.4.9.

<sup>23</sup> Latin text as found in *Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina, vol. 32, p. 83.

<sup>24</sup> Dionysius, *Divine Names* (=DN), 3.2, 7.1.

<sup>25</sup> Dionysius, DN 1.1; *Celestial Hierarchy* (=CH), 1.1; *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (=EH), 1.1; Ep. 1 and 2: Gaius was Paul’s disciple and the recipient of John’s third epistle (Acts 19: 29; Rom 16: 23, I John 1: 1); Ep. 6: Sosipater was Paul’s companion in Rom 16: 21; Ep. 7: Polycarp was John’s disciple martyred in 155; Ep. 9; Ep. 10.

<sup>26</sup> Dionysius, Ep. 7.2.

brothers met together for a vision of the mortal body, that source of life, which bore God.”<sup>27</sup> He seems to perpetrate these fictions to indicate the authority and conformance of his teachings with received tradition.

The writings of Dionysius came to prominence in the West in the early 9<sup>th</sup> century, as a gift from the Byzantine Emperor Michael II to King Louis the Pious. While they were already known in the West – Pope Paul I had given Pepin the Short a copy of the *Corpus areopagiticum* as a gift<sup>28</sup> – the Abbot Hilduin of St.-Denis, Louis’ influential arch-chaplain, rushed to the work and translated them into Latin. Hilduin also wrote a biography of the saint, *Incipit passio sancto Dionysii*,<sup>29</sup> in which he conflated the “three Dennises”: the Areopagite who came to faith under Paul<sup>30</sup> and who later was the first bishop of Athens;<sup>31</sup> Saint Denis of Paris, who was the first bishop of Paris and the founding abbot of St.-Denis; and the mysterious author of the *corpus areopagiticum*.

Dionysius became a well established part of the medieval western canon: among the translators and commentators of the corpus are John Scotus Eriugena, Richard and Hugh of St.-Victor, Peter Lombard, Alexander of Hales, Robert Grosseteste, and Vincent of Beauvais. The *Corpus areopagiticum* “belonged to a serious monk’s spiritual diet,” and so it is not surprising that the Benedictines Suger and Abelard, the Augustinians of St.-Victor, Franciscans such as Alexander of Hales and St. Bonaventure, and numerous Dominicans such as St. Albert the Great, St. Thomas Aquinas, Jacob de Voragine, Meister Eckhardt, John Tauler, and Henry Suso, all found intense interest in these writings.

Both Dionysius’ fiction and Hilduin’s conflation began to crumble in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when Peter Abelard (by then an emasculated monk at St.-Denis) noted that Bede asserted that Dionysius was the Bishop of Corinth, and not of Athens. Abelard did not so much call into question the author or authority of the Areopagite, but the accuracy of Hilduin’s research. However, as Abelard recounts:

<sup>27</sup> Dionysius, DN, 3.2.

<sup>28</sup> O. Von Simson, *op. cit.*, 104.

<sup>29</sup> The Eastern Church has long and continues to reverence St. Dionysius.

<sup>30</sup> Acts 17:34

<sup>31</sup> Per Eusebius, *History*, 3.4.

“One of the monks went so far as to ask me brazenly which of the two, Bede or Hilduin, I considered the better authority on this point. I replied that the authority of Bede, whose writings are held in high esteem by the whole Latin Church, appeared to me the better. Thereupon in a great rage they began to cry out that at last I had openly proved the hatred I had always felt for our monastery, and that I was seeking to disgrace it in the eyes of the whole kingdom, robbing it of the honour in which it had particularly gloried, by thus denying that the Areopagite was their patron saint. To this I answered that I had never denied the fact, and that I did not much care whether their patron was the Areopagite or some one else, provided only he had received his crown from God. Thereupon they ran to the abbot and told him of the misdemeanour with which they charged me.”<sup>32</sup>

It would still take another 300 years before the fiction was exposed by Lorenzo Valla, who first raised doubts as to the authenticity of Dionysius’ claim.<sup>33</sup> Throughout the Renaissance and Reformation, scholars on both sides of the ecclesiastical split supported and detracted the claims, and regardless found the writings important for study and consideration. Erasmus, Luther, Calvin, Pico della Mirandola, Marsilio Ficino, Cajetan, Baronius, and St. Robert Bellarmine all weighed in on the claims, either for or against. The matter was not put to rest until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the independent researches of Hugo Koch and of Joseph Stiglmayr.<sup>34</sup> Regardless of this fiction, though undoubtedly helped by it for a millennium, the teachings of Dionysius have had massive influence on later theologians well past the exposure of the deception.

The Dionysian system is an attempt to reconcile the great question of how we as finite beings can know God who is infinite and ineffable:

“In the scriptures the Deity has benevolently taught us that understanding and direct contempla-

<sup>32</sup> Peter Abelard, *Historia Calamitatum*, 10.

<sup>33</sup> The same Valla who exposed the *Decretals of Isidore*, including the *Donation of Constantine*.

<sup>34</sup> H. Koch, *Der pseudepigraphische Charakter der dionysischen Schriften*, in: *Theologische Quartalschrift*, Tübingen 1895, 353–420; id., *Proklus, als Quelle des Pseudo-Dionysius, Areop.*, in: *Der Lehrer vom Bosen in Philologus* (1895), 438–454. Also J. Stiglmayr, *Die Lehrer von den Sakramenten und der Kirche nach Pseudo-Dionysius*, in: *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* (Innsbruck, 1898), 246–303; and *Die Eschatologie des Pseudo-Dionysius*, *ibid.*, 1–21.



Fig. 3. St. Denis. Tympanum (© Steven J. Schloeder 2010)

tion of itself is inaccessible to beings, since it actually surpasses being. Many scripture writers will tell you that the divinity is not only invisible and incomprehensible, but also ‘unsearchable and inscrutable’ since there is not a trace for anyone who would reach through into the hidden depths of this infinity. And yet, on the other hand, the Good is not absolutely incommunicable to everything. By itself it generously reveals a firm, transcendent beam, granting enlightenment proportionate to each being, and thereby draws sacred minds upward to its permitted contemplation, to participation and to the state of becoming like it.”<sup>35</sup>

We see in the passage the necessity of divine action both to reveal (*kataphasis*) and to draw us upward (*anagoge*). The touchstone of all revelation is scripture, and so Dionysius cautions that “we must not dare to resort to words or conceptions concerning that hidden divinity which transcends being, apart from what the sacred scriptures have divinely revealed.”<sup>36</sup> Understanding the human condition, Dionysius sees that “it is quite impossible that we humans should, in any immaterial way, rise up to imitate and to contemplate the heavenly hierarchies

<sup>35</sup> Dionysius, DN, 1.2.

<sup>36</sup> Dionysius, DN, 1.1.

without the aid of those material means capable of guiding us as our nature requires.”<sup>37</sup> Because of our materiality, and because of the sense based nature of our knowledge, “the truth we have to understand is that we use letters, syllables, phrases, written terms and words” in order to know and communicate; in other words we can only know and communicate through mediating symbols and analogies – both the things of this earth and all the more the things of God.<sup>38</sup> As he explains, while still in our material and mortal bodies, it is necessary that “we use whatever appropriate symbols we can for the things of God. With these analogies we are raised upward toward the truth of the mind’s vision, a truth which is simple and

one.”<sup>39</sup> Therefore, in providence and in concession to the limited human state, “the Transcendent is clothed in terms of being, with shape and form of things which have neither, and numerous symbols are employed to convey the varied attributes of what is an imageless and supra-natural simplicity.”<sup>40</sup>

If scripture first adumbrated anagogy as a valid and ordained way of knowing God through the contemplation of the material order, Dionysius brought it to its most forceful and mystical expression. Maximus the Confessor, for instance, considers Dionysius’ treatment of anagogy in *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* so thorough and elevated that he assures his reader his own *Mystagogia* “will not repeat these same things nor will it proceed in the same manner.” Indeed, if the reader cannot grasp Dionysius’ treatment of the divine symbols, “it would be foolhardy and presumptuous” for Maximus to try further to explain. Such was the authority of Dionysius that we already saw above the venerable list of theologians and commentators from St. Max-

<sup>37</sup> Dionysius, CH, 1.3.

<sup>38</sup> Dionysius, DN, 4.11.

<sup>39</sup> Dionysius, DN, 1.4.

<sup>40</sup> Dionysius, DN, 1.4.



imus the Confessor to St. Robert Bellarmine who would build on the *corpus Areopagiticum* to consider problems of symbolic contemplation, ascetical practice, the order of nature, ecclesiology, and liturgy. Throughout the late classical and Middle Ages the pressing questions were of the relationship between the material and spiritual spheres, of how God so ordained the cosmological order, and how the human person was to employ the order of creation in one's pursuit of God. In the sophisticated and elegant language of St. Maximus the Confessor there is an ultimate unity between the spiritual and material:

“The universe too is one, not split between its visible and invisible parts; on the contrary, by the force of their reference to its own unity and indivisibility, it circumscribes their difference in character. It shows itself to be the same, in visible and invisible mutually joined without confusion with each other. Each is wholly fixed in the whole of the other. As parts of the whole, both make up the world, and as parts in whole, both are completed and fulfilled in a single form.”<sup>41</sup>

The perception of these two parts as one reality is through the ascetical practice of the *mos anagogicus*, which gives us the “eyes to see”:

“For the whole spiritual world seems mystically imprinted on the whole sensible world in symbolic forms...and conversely the whole sensible world is spiritually explained in the mind in the principles which it contains. [...] Indeed, the symbolic contemplation of intelligible things through the visible is a spiritual understanding and insight of visible things through the invisible. For it is necessary that things which manifest each other bear a mutual reflection in an altogether true and clear manner and keep their relationship intact.”<sup>42</sup>

## Light in the Middle Ages

As we have noted, Erwin Panofsky and Otto von Simson have both drawn out the influences of Dionysius in the architectural expressions of the Middle Ages. Both particularly note the quality of light first as a metaphysical principle, next as an epistemological trope, and then as an architec-

tural expression: “where the divine Logos is conceived as the true Light that shineth in darkness, by which all things were made, and the enlighteneth every man than cometh into this world.”<sup>43</sup> Following Plato's teaching in the *Timaeus*, in which Plato sees light as naturally diffusive – “in such a way that a point of light will produce instantaneously a sphere of light ... unless some opaque object stands in the way” – light becomes a significant metaphor of spiritual illumination. Light, for Dionysius, is the clearest analogy that can be drawn between the undifferentiated unity of the Godhead and the participation of differentiated things in their individual being. Hence, it is a metaphysical principle that:

“In a house the light from all the lamps is completely interpenetrating, yet each is clearly distinct. There is a distinction in unity and there is a unity in distinction. When there are many lamps in a house there is nevertheless a single undifferentiated light and from all of them comes the one undivided brightness. I do not think that anyone would mark off the light of one lamp from another in the atmosphere which contains them all, nor could one light be seen separately from all the others since all of them are completely mingled while being at the same time quite distinctive. Indeed if someone were to carry one of the lamps out of the house its own particular light would leave without diminishing the light of the other lamps or supplementing their brightness.”<sup>44</sup>

We must note that for Dionysius the analogy is drawn to illustrate the extent to which God, the source of all being, pervades the universe. The analogy of light, as a participation of differentiation in unity representing the participation of being in supra-Being, is but one of many illustrations. Dionysius uses other images as well, predicated on the Names of God, such as goodness, power, wisdom, and truth. In these examples there is a general sense brought to the medieval imagination that all things participated in being as symbolic presentations of heavenly realities – as Eriugena suggests, all creation is a “theophany” revealing God.

However, the specific use of light imagery brought to the medieval imagination the insight that physical beauty was a participation in the divine Beauty. In the medieval understanding of beauty – more appropriately a “theology of beauty” rather

<sup>41</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogia*, 2.

<sup>42</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogia*, 2.

<sup>43</sup> O. Von Simson, *op. cit.*, 52.

<sup>44</sup> Dionysius, DN, 2.4.



Fig. 4. St.-Denis, Inscription (© Steven J. Schloeder 2010)

than what today we would call “aesthetics” – one of the three necessary and sufficient causes of beauty was *claritas* or *radiance*. Though only later codified by St. Thomas into this tri-partite system (along with *proportio* and *integritas*), the early definitions of beauty often invoked the quality of light. Light is even understood as participating in the other values of proportion and integrity, such as Robert Grosseteste’s “light is beautiful in itself, for its nature is simple and all things are like it. Wherefore it is integrated in the highest degree and most harmoniously proportioned and equal to itself: for beauty is a harmony of proportions.”<sup>45</sup> Light, in fact, is a recurring theme in Scholastic writings on divine beauty, and their language is rich with allusion: *lux pulchrificat, quia sine luce omnia sunt turpia* (“Light beautifies, because without light all things are ugly.”),<sup>46</sup> or *claritas est de ratione pulchritudinis* (“Clarity is the order of beauty”),<sup>47</sup> or *Pulchritudo [...] consistit [...] in resplendentia formae* (“Beauty... consists... in the resplendence of form”).<sup>48</sup>

## Rereading Suger’s Inscription in the Light of Dionysius

Because of the natural and theological correspondence between physical light and spiritual illumination, light is a central theme in the minds of the medieval theologians. It is therefore reasonable that such concerns found physical expression in the architecture and art forms of the Middle Ages, especially through the monasteries where the conver-

gence of theological development and architectural patronage is most apparent. No better example of this happy convergence can be found than in the writings and architectural intentions of Suger, the abbot who commenced the rebuilding of the monastic church of St.-Denis in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. While as we have noted, the exact degree of Dionysian influence on Suger is a matter of debate among scholars,<sup>49</sup> the debate to date does not seem to have accounted adequately for the true significance of anagogy that seems to be underlining the matters under discussion.

In the project of the design and furnishing of the new abbey church, Suger seems adamant and intent that the building should be a vehicle constantly “urging us onward from material things to the immaterial.”<sup>50</sup> It was through the careful design, wherein the architecture and theology combined to produce the great effect, that the building “would shine with the wonderful and uninterrupted light of the most luminous windows, pervading the interior beauty”<sup>51</sup> The famed bronze doors at the entrance summon the visitor to enter not only into the building, but into this contemplative mode of anagogy:

<sup>45</sup> Robert Grosseteste, *Comment. In Hexaemeron*.

<sup>46</sup> St. Thomas, *Comment. in Psalm.*, Ps 25: 5.

<sup>47</sup> St. Thomas, *Comment. in lib. de Divin. Nomin.*, lect. 6.

<sup>48</sup> Albertus Magnus, *De Pulchro et Bono*.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. D. Coulter’s excellent *Pseudo-Dionysius in the Twelfth Century Latin West*, on the ORB Online Encyclopedia, at <http://www.the-orb.net/encyclp/culture/philos/coulter.html>, accessed 24 April 2010. For other views, cf. L. Grodecki, *Les Vitraux allegoriques de Saint-Denis*, in: *Art de France I* (1961), 19–46; C. Rudolf, *Artistic Change at St.-Denis: Abbot Suger’s Program and the Early Twelfth Century Controversy Over Art*, Princeton 1988; L. Grant, *op. cit.*, 22–24, 270–271.

<sup>50</sup> “de materialibus ad immaterialia excitans” in Suger, *De Admin.*, 34.

<sup>51</sup> “quo tota clarissimarum vitrearum luce mirabilis et continua interiore perlustrante pulchritudinem enteret” in Suger, *De Admin.*, 4.

*Portarum quisquis attollere quæris honorem / Aurum nec sumptus, operis mirare laborem / Nobile claret opus, sed opus quod nobile claret / Clarificavit mentes, ut eant per lumina vera / Ad verum lumen, ubi Christus janua vera. / Quale sit intus in his determinat aurea porta: / Mens hebes ad verum per materialia surgit / Et demersa prius hac visa luce resurgit.*

Panofsky gives the following translation:

Whoever thou art, if thou seekest to extol the glory of these doors, Marvel not at the gold and the expense but at the craftsmanship of the work. Bright is the noble work; but, being nobly bright, the work should brighten the mind, so that they may travel, through the true lights, to the True Light where Christ is the true door. In what manner it be inherent in this world the golden door defines: The dull mind rises to truth through that which is material and, in seeing this light, is resurrected from its former submersion.

Panofsky considers this inscription to be “a condensed statement of the whole theory of ‘anagogical’ illumination,” and gives a schematic reading of the text, that the physical ‘brightness’ of the work of art will ‘brighten’ the minds of the beholders by a spiritual illumination. Panofsky focuses on the materiality of the doors, arguing that the soul is “incapable of attaining to truth without the aid of that which is material.” The doors, with their resplendent relief panels showing scenes of the Passion and Resurrection are for Panofsky “the ‘true,’ though merely perceptible ‘lights’ (*lumina vera*)” through which the soul is guided “to the True Light (*verum lumen*) which is Christ.” By this mechanism, the soul is thus “‘raised,’ or rather ‘resurrected’ (*surgit, resurgit*), from terrestrial bondage even as Christ is seen rising in the ‘*Resurrectio vel Ascensio*’ depicted on the doors.”<sup>52</sup>

The lintel inscription is indeed complex and ambiguous, with some difficult and problematic Latin constructions such as *clarificavit, per lumina vera ad verum lumen, Quale sit intus in his*, and *demersa prius*. There are a number of recursive phrases that cannot be dismissed as redundancies: namely, the doubled *nobile claret opus*, the ambiguous *per lumina vera ad verum lumen*, the connection between *Christus janua vera* and *aurea porta*, and the troublesome *surgit ... resurgit*.

<sup>52</sup> E. Panofsky, *op. cit.*, 23–24.

In Panofsky’s noble if florid attempt to make clear and unambiguous sense of the inscription he treats the passage, and understandably so, as if it primarily concerned the doors that the viewer was beholding. Thus he writes of “the glory of these doors,” “the craftsmanship of the work”; “the noble work,” and “the manner [...] the golden door defines.” Rudolf follows Panofsky in this encounter with the figure of the doors, which for Rudolf in his reading of Suger’s project at St.-Denis as an elaborate defense against Bernard’s polemics, sees the *Aurum nec sumptus, operis mirare laborem* as “a denial of materialism, counting heavily on the claim of craftsmanship over material.” In his bracketed gloss in the translation, Rudolf suggests “The golden door indicates in what way it [the true light, i.e., the divine] may be within these things [the lesser true lights, i.e., the artworks].” Rudolf, it should be noted, is positing a bifurcation between the Augustinian and Dionysian and is disclaiming a significant Dionysian influence on Suger, and so he treats the shiny doors as an Augustine *signum*, com-



Fig. 5. St. Denis, Interior (© Steven J. Schloeder 2010)

monly perceived as a modernly conceived symbol of spiritual illumination, of “the traditional spiritual brightness of the events depicted in the different ‘lights’ or scenes on the door.”

I do not deny that the inscription can be read with some measure of internal coherency as speaking chiefly of the doors – after all, that is what Suger was ostensibly describing. The common medieval sensibility appears to have been profoundly and uncritically drawn to material presentation – Durandus notes that the rare ostrich eggs and other objects of wonder and admiration were displayed in churches to draw people into churches “and have their minds the more affected.”<sup>53</sup> We can thus assume that on a *prima facie* level, the great and shiny bronze doors did just that. However, these recent commentators on the door inscription seem to be unaware of Augustine’s concern that, “at the outset you must be very careful lest you take figurative expressions literally.” This oversight is all the more ironic for Rudolf, who denies the Dionysian symbol in favor of the Augustinian sign, in that in this same passage Augustine makes a strongly anagogical claim: “There is a miserable servitude of the spirit in this habit of taking signs for things, so that one is not able to raise the eye of the mind above things that are corporeal and created to drink in the eternal light.”<sup>54</sup>

If one considers that Suger’s chief concern is the doors, then it seems one is in danger of taking the figurative too literally, and short-circuit the anagogical process that Suger intends not merely for the doors, nor even the church and all its furnishings, but for the human soul seeking spiritual illumination. I will suggest an alternative reading, that argues for an even more Dionysian understanding of anagogy that is fully compatible with the Augustinian admonition “to raise the eye of the mind above things that are corporal...[toward] the eternal light.” Rather than thinking the inscription is a simple description of the doors as a symbol of Christ and an exhortation to seek Christ, I will propose that the inscription is a text that refers more directly to the anagogical process whereby the contemplative and faithful soul will find the illumination sought. The doors are really, in Augustine’s language, a trope for explaining the true engagement in Christ to which these doors can only allude. In other words,

<sup>53</sup> Durandus, *De Rationale*, 3.42.

<sup>54</sup> Augustine, *De Doct. Christ.*

the problem is not that Panofsky made too much of Dionysius, but that he failed to make enough of the real message of the doors.

I would suggest the following considerations in correctly interpreting this enigmatic inscription:

*Portarum quisquis attollere quæris honorem:*

“If one wants to honor the work of these doors...” We must first ask, what would have been the real meaning and work of these doors in the mind of Suger, but providing an entrance into the life of grace? The door is a portal from one place to another; *a fortiori*, a church door is a passage from the *pro-fanum* to the sacred.

*Aurum nec sumptus, operis mirare laborem.:*

This is a problematic passage. How can Suger be telling us to not be astonished by the gold or expense, but at the craftsmanship *of doors*? Why should the art of the doormaker or sculptor be so significant? He mentions in *de Administratione* that bronze casters and sculptors were selected for the work, and that they dedicated great expense to adorning this noble entry. However it seems the focus of the passage regarding the doors is the *opus Christi*: the passion, resurrection and ascension of the Savior. Would this not be the great work to be marveled at? The *opus* is not the door, much less the craftsmanship in making the door, but rather very work of the soul engaged in the search for illumination in Christ, moving toward Christ through anagogic contemplation.

*Nobile claret opus, sed opus quod nobile claret Clarificet mentes:*

“The noble work shines, but the work which nobly shines made minds shine. This passage thus confirms the reading of the *opus labor* as not the door but the process.

*ut eant per lumina vera Ad verum lumen:*

“That they may go through these truly shining lights to the true light.” Christ’s claim was “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). The soul engaged in the *opus clarificet* is moving across the threshold into the domain of Christ. Moving through the *lumina vera* – which can refer either to (or simultaneously between) a “real opening” as the door, the medallions (per Panofsky and Rudolf), the corporal lights that illuminate the building, the “true eyes”

of the believer,<sup>55</sup> as well as windows or other things that illuminate – toward the source of all light.

*ubi Christus janua vera. Quale sit intus in his determinat aurea porta*

“Where Christ is the true door [that is, to the Kingdom of God] the manner in which this happens [the *eant ... ad verum lumen*] is inside the Golden Door [that is, inside Christ].” In other words, the doors can only bring one to the threshold. In order for the souls to go through the portal to Christ, Christ himself determines that mode of operation. What is this operation?

*Mens hebes ad verum per materialia surgit, Et demersa prius hac visa luce resurgit.*

“The dull mind rises toward the truth through material things.” We see in this passage a double rising: the first toward the truth, the second from a prior state of submersion. What is the “prior state of submersion” from which the mind resurrects? If this first state includes the first condition, that of the unenlightened soul being attracted toward the truth through material things while not yet attaining it, then the “re-rising” from seeing the light takes on a specially Christic implication related to the *aurea porta determinat*.

I would suggest that Suger is bidding the pilgrim who comes to the threshold of his basilica and so, in a very loose translation, is asking: “So in order to truly honor these doors, do not focus on the material brilliance of these noble doors, but attend to the truly noble and resplendent Work, which is the illumination of your souls. Pass through these shiny doors to the source of Light. Christ is the True and Golden Door, who will form you inside. Your minds are attracted to reality by material things, and from this base material state, will be resurrected in seeing the Light.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> This, despite Panofsky’s claim that that “To interpret the lumina ... as ‘eyes’ ...is improbable in view of the context which implies a rise to the immaterial through material objects of the senses rather than through the organs of the body.” Yet, surely Suger would have known of Augustine’s above-mentioned passage in which he refers to the “eye of the mind” that is “created to drink in eternal light”? Cf. E. Panofsky, *op. cit.*, commentary footnote 46, 27–48, 4, p. 165.

<sup>56</sup> I realize that the various voices and cases do not perfectly agree in my translation, which is intended to give them

I have spent some time on this question, since it seems important for understanding what is at stake in the understanding the anagogic approach to material reality common to both the Augustinian and Dionysian influences in medieval thought. All of the recursivity, ambiguity, polyvalency, and jarring implications of this text might seem foreign and uncongenial to the modern sensibilities of most readers, and yet it is entirely consistent with theological implications of both Augustinian and Dionysian thought. I cannot claim this to be *the* reading of this important and oft-commented upon inscription, but it does raise a certain challenge to the recent dismissals of Suger’s theological acumen and Dionysian influence. One need not claim Suger to be either a mystic (although he does give an intimation of his own mystical experience), or a theologian (although he appears to be more capable than several modern commentators credit him), to find additional richness and understanding in his work that can help the modern reader come to understand better what was at stake for the medieval anagogical sensibility.

Only with such an appreciation can the words of Suger be taken at face value when he writes of his spiritual and emotional engagement through material things:

“Thus, when – out of my delight in the beauty of the house of God – the loveliness of the many-colored gems has called me away from external cares, and worthy meditation has induced me to reflect, transferring that which is material to that which is immaterial, on the diversity of the sacred virtues: then it seems to me that I see myself dwelling, as it were, in some strange region of the universe which neither exists entirely in the slime of the earth nor entirely in the purity of Heaven; and that, by the grace of God, I can be transported from this inferior to that higher world in an anagogical manner.”<sup>57</sup>

For beyond Suger’s interest in light and beauty calling us into the contemplation of the Divine Beauty, his careful program of architectural symbolism also seeks to unite the earthly building with the heavenly archetype. The medieval mind, as Eco notes, was fascinated with universal allegory: “per-

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modern reader an understanding of the anagogic sensibility, not a Latin lesson.

<sup>57</sup> Suger, *De Admin.*, 33.

ceiving the world as a divine work of art, of such a kind that everything in it possesses moral, allegorical, and anagogical meanings in addition to its literal meaning.”<sup>58</sup> This is another aspect of Dionysian thought, channeled through Eriugena who saw the world as a great “theophany” in which “there is nothing among visible and corporeal things which does not signify something incorporeal and intelligible.”<sup>59</sup> The discovery and expression of correspondences between the spiritual and material, which intrigued the medieval mind, gave rise to numerous Bestiaries, Lapidaries, and Florida, all *specula* or “mirrors” that drew comparisons between the two realms. As Huizinga comments, “Symbolism was very nearly the life’s breath of medieval thought. The habit of seeing all things in their meaningful interrelationships and their relationship to the eternal both muted the boundaries between things and kept the world of thought alive with radiant, glowing color.”<sup>60</sup> For the medievals, this was not merely a matter of drawing casual correspondences between diverse things, but rather worked most profoundly when “the qualities shared by the symbol and the qualities shared by the thing symbolized are regarded as being truly essential.”<sup>61</sup>

With this in mind, we can begin to sense the excitement in the words of Suger, who could thereby draw the obvious connection between his own project and that of the great temple builder, Solomon, since the true Author and supplier of Providence in both buildings was the Lord.<sup>62</sup> He drew a similar parallel between his own *nova camera*, which he credits to the true builder Dionysius, to the *camera cæli*, and thereby asks that true architect to help him enter into this earthly building’s heavenly

<sup>58</sup> U. Eco, *Art and beauty in the Middle Ages*, New Haven–Yale University Press 1986, 56.

<sup>59</sup> J. Scotus Eriugena. *On the Division of Nature*, 5.3.

<sup>60</sup> J. Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, Chicago University Press 1996, 249.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>62</sup> “I used to compare the least to the greatest: Solomon’s riches could not have sufficed for his Temple any more than did ours for this work, had not the same Author of the same work abundantly supplied His attendants.” (*Conferebam de minimis ad maxima, non plus Solomonianas opes templo quam nostras huic operi sufficere posse, nisi idem ejusdem operis auctor ministrantibus copiose praepararet.*) Suger, *De Consecr.*, II.

archetype.<sup>63</sup> Nor did Suger hesitate to draw a similar parallel to Mount Zion, since he was intent on building “in the likeness of things Divine,” that the new building somehow reestablished “to the joy of the whole earth mount Zion ... the city of the great King” (*exultationi universæ terræ mons Syon [...] civitas Regis Magni*).<sup>64</sup> The whole building was, for Suger, a series of correspondences between the revealed archetypes of the Temple of Solomon established on Mount Zion and the temple of the Holy Spirit established in the Church. As he writes of the precisely deliberated symbolism, and of its effect ecclesiologically, spiritually, and anagogically:

“The midst of the edifice ... was suddenly raised aloft by twelve columns representing the number of the Twelve Apostles and, secondarily, by as many columns in the side-aisles signifying the number of the Prophets, according to the Apostle who buildeth spiritually.”

In citing the passage from Ephesians 2, in which St. Paul – “the Apostle who buildeth spiritually” – develops the analogy of the Church to a great building, Suger deliberately augments the Scriptures to point out that it is in Christ, “in Whom all the building – *whether spiritual or material* – groweth unto one holy temple in the Lord.” To emphasize this relationship, and to draw parallels between the building of the Church, the building in our souls of a dwelling for God, and the building of the new abbey church, he writes;

“...we, too, are taught to be builded together for an habitation of God through the Holy Spirit by ourselves in a spiritual way, the more loftily and fitly we strive to build in a material way.”<sup>65</sup>

The evidence of Suger in the building of St-Denis is important for the unique evidence that it supplies in tracking the correspondences between medieval thought and medieval architecture. These correspondences were nothing new, and Suger was neither the first nor last word on the topic. The symbolic analogies drawn from scripture can be seen previously in Eusebius’ accounting of the

<sup>63</sup> “Great Denis... Mayest thou, who hast built a new dwelling for thyself through us, Cause us to be received in the dwelling in Heaven” (*Magne Dionysi ... Quique novam cameram per nos tibi constituisti, in camera cæli nos facias recipere*) Suger, *De Admin.*, 31.

<sup>64</sup> Suger, *De Consecr.*, 5.

<sup>65</sup> Suger, *De Consecr.*, 5.

dedication ceremony of the Cathedral at Tyre,<sup>66</sup> in contemporary accounts of Hagia Sophia,<sup>67</sup> and in the writings of many of the Eastern Fathers such as Maximus the Confessor.<sup>68</sup> However, in no other case apart from Suger does the correspondence between anagogic contemplation and architectural intention come together with such force, intent, deliberation, or articulation.

The abbey church at St.-Denis was never intended as an object for contemplation in isolation, much less as *ars gratia artis*. Suger's project being clearly anagogic was ordered toward the liturgical

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<sup>66</sup> Eusebius, *History*, 10. 3–4.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. W. R. Lethaby, *The Church of Sancta Sophia at Constantinople*, New York 1894.

<sup>68</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogia*.

celebration. No clearer evidence can we have of his intention, or of the true goal of anagogic contemplation, than in Suger's description of the consecration liturgy at the dedication of new church. Through this glorious ritual, the working of God "uniformly conjoinest the material with the immaterial, the corporeal with the spiritual, the human with the Divine..." For Suger, the end was no less than the establishment of the kingdom of God here on earth under the anagogic veil of the sacrament, that through the celebration of the Eucharistic mysteries, "By these and similar visible blessings, Thou invisibly restorest and miraculously transformest the present state into the Heavenly Kingdom."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Suger, *De Consecr.*, 7.

## PER LUMINA VERA AD VERUM LUMEN: АНАГОШКЕ ТЕЖЊЕ ОПАТА СИЖЕА

Стивен Џ. Шледер

У овом раду разматра се однос мистичне теологије светог Дионисија Псеудо Ареопажите и архитектонске визије опата Сижеа при грађењу опатије Сен Дени.

Рецепција дела опата Сижеа у позном XX веку била је претежно анахрона – чини се да су поједини историчари очекивали да је средњовековни монах делао и мислио попут неког енглеског мислиоца пост-просветитељског доба – те стога није уважавала његове сопствене речи и искуства у оквири-ма њихових законитости и као лични израз. Онај ко је живот проживео у литургији, читању светог писма, теологији, аскетској пракси и сталној молитви далеко је природније доживљавао дионисијску интуицију него ми данас. Такве претпоставке обојиле су и читање његових исказа и мисли, пре свега изражених у делима „De Consecratione“, „De

Administratione“ и знаменитом натпису на главним вратима цркве.

Ово истраживање има намеру да повуче паралеле између теологије и архитектуре, посебно контекмплативне праксе „анагогије“ која лежи у основи како источне тако и западне мистичне теологије, као и намера изражених кроз Сижеове сопствене речи и дела остварена по његовој замисли. Најпре се разматрају досадашњи ставови, потом опште питање анагогије и, коначно, питање теолошке естетике „светлости“ у средњем веку, што чини основу новог тумачења подтекста натписа на вратима цркве. Проласком кроз та врата, што и јесте била Сижеова намера, чини се да се може доћи до дубљег теолошког доживљаја црквене грађевине, онако како је то био замислио њен градитељ.

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У средини бременитој разноликим видовима дисконтинуитета, четири деценије постојања једне институције несумњиво представља повод који завређује да буде обележен. Институт за историју уметности Филозофског факултета Универзитета у Београду овом публикацијом исказује поштовање наслеђу властите традиције и угледу који је стицао дугогодишњим радом у стручној и научној јавности. Радови објављени у овом зборнику представљају важан научни допринос, испољен како у текстовима са темама из области касноантичке односно средњовековне уметности, тако и у онима у којима се разматрају питања уметничког и културног стварања новог и савременог доба. Несумњиво је да је реч о прилозима који и у погледу анализе ликовног изражавања, и са становишта идејног или идеолошког амбијента средине у којој су поједина остварења настајала, концептуално проширују начин посматрања уметничког деловања и визуелне културе.

In a milieu laden with all forms of discontinuity, four decades of existence of an institution is unquestionably a cause worthy of noting. By publishing this volume the Institute for Art History of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, honors its tradition and remains true to the esteem attained in the long years of its presence and activities in the professional and academic field. The texts published in this collection of papers represent a significant contribution to scholarly study of subjects ranging from the art and culture of Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages to those of modern and contemporary times. Each in its own right, unquestionably, enhances and broadens the conceptual scope of perceiving artistic production and visual culture – within both the framework of analysis of visual utterance and that of the world of ideas and ideologies of the ambience of its making.



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