

THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF HESYCHAST SPIRITUALITY TODAY: INSIGHTS FROM MODERN PSYCHOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIOLOGY

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Abstract

The Hesychast spirituality (HS) is traditional for Eastern Christianity system that integrates and organizes beliefs, experiences, and practices with the aim of spiritual transformation¹. In the 20th century, due to the massive migration of the Orthodox population, Orthodox Christianity from the local context relocated to the West². In this background, established local Orthodox parishes have become not only homes for Orthodox immigrants but areas of multiple conversions to Orthodoxy, and nowadays, this process is in its climax; Typically, Orthodoxy becomes a conscious choice of educated adults from Western backgrounds, often after the long spiritual search. However, the principles of asceticism, regular prayer, active church life, eudemonic life principles, and mystical experience habitual for HS are often in opposition to the principles of individualism, rationalism, and materiality in the modern West, which creates a certain tension. Based on that discovery, I intend to demonstrate that the pricey processes that comprise one of the most complicated spiritual systems are not as contradictory to modernity as they appear. Instead, many of the HS's fundamental principles now actively resonate with common life concepts. To that end, in this article, I will define HS and describe the contemporary context in which it operates. Second, I will discuss the links between HS, positive and cognitive psychology, namely the concepts of self-transcendence, virtue development, and meaning in life. Third, I will present three actual examples of how HS is linked to current philosophy, sociology, and literature.

Keywords: Hesychasm, Christian asceticism, positive psychology, meaning in life, self-transcendence, virtues

¹ Daniel Winchester, *Assembling the Orthodox Soul: Practices of Religious Self-Formation among Converts to Eastern Orthodoxy*, Doctoral dissertation, 2013.

² B. Thorbjørnsrud, "Who is a convert? New members of the Orthodox Church in Norway", in *Temenos-Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion*, 51.1, 2015, pp. 71-93.