

BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX'S REGIONS OF CONSIDERATION

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Abstract Bernard of Clairvaux's *Treatise on Consideration* – a series of letters addressed to Pope Eugen III – has long fascinated its readers. Although originally intended as an epistolary monologue addressed to the Pontiff, it became one of Bernard's best-known titles, widely circulated and appreciated by much more readers than intended. Over time, it has been seen as a book on monastic discipline and way of life, a philosophy essay on self-knowledge, and even a political instrument of persuasion. The paper offers a contemporary interpretation of the *Treatise of Consideration*, from a particular standpoint: one situated at the crossroads of the problem of being approached through phenomenological method, philosophical counseling, and existential therapy. The central thesis is that, among other insights, Bernard of Clairvaux articulates at least two theories of the regionalization of being.

Keywords Medieval philosophy, contemporary metaphysics, regions of being, philosophical counseling, practical philosophy.

Goals, Methods, and Structure of the Paper

This study intends to offer an interpretation of Bernard of Clairvaux's *Treatise on Consideration* from the standpoint of practical metaphysics, arguing that, from said perspective, the named treatise contains a theory of multifold regionalization of being, articulated through a unique tool called "consideration." It is intended to be applied (not just thought) in a practical context of personal discipline and leadership.

To achieve this aim, the paper is structured into two main parts. It starts with a description of the dominant tendencies in contemporary philosophy that shape the study's theoretical background. The first objective is to clarify the meaning of the apparently paradoxical concept 'practical metaphysics' by using a genealogical method, briefly surveying the specific characteristics of contemporary metaphysics. This is followed by an explanation of the concept of regionalization of being, referencing its Husserlian origin and offering several contemporary examples.

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In the second part, attention shifts to Bernard of Clairvaux's *Treatise*. First, it will be argued that the text belongs to the genre of practical philosophy; second, the theory of regionalization of being, as it is conceived in the text, will be elucidated.

The Emergence of Practical Metaphysics in Contemporary Philosophy

Without dwelling too much on the convoluted destiny of metaphysics¹ – despite various contemporary claims² to the contrary, this paper proceeds from the premise that metaphysics has not “died.” On the contrary, it still remains a matter of great interest, not only within the history of philosophy, but also for philosophy as such.

Referred to by different names in different contexts, the “question of being” – both general and special – has been a constant concern of thinkers from the dawn of philosophy itself. Since then, it never ceased to ask for attention and reflection, and, speaking of contemporary philosophy, it has only thrived since the contributions of Heidegger, even though his name is often associated with a stance critical of metaphysics.

One of the key turning points in the history of the understanding of the problem of being is, quite unsurprisingly, Husserl's inauguration of phenomenology. Among the many contributions of Husserl's thought, this paper wants to underline the fact that his writings and phenomenology itself, still unstable in its early definition, became the foundational basis for the emergence of Heidegger's philosophy of being, existentialism, and existential therapy. The last member of this list may seem unexpected; however, it is not without justification, for it marked a shift in the perception of the philosophy of being, or simply put, metaphysics. This connection will be further developed in the discussion that follows.

Existential therapy should be regarded as a legitimate development within contemporary metaphysical thought, as it constitutes a direct intellectual descendant of phenomenology's Husserlian origins. One of the main expectations placed upon phenomenology was that it would represent a new beginning for philosophy, as a more rigorous and methodologically sound practice. As such, it was envisioned as a method applicable both within and beyond the realm of philosophy.³ “Within philosophy” meant the proliferation of phenomenological philosophy not only inside the so-called “walls of academia,” that is,

¹ Florin Cherman, “Destinul tragic al unei științe: istoria metafizicii de la Aristotel la Kant” (The Tragic Fate of a Science: The History of Metaphysics from Aristotle to Kant), *PHILOHISTORISS*, VIII, No. 12 (2021): 211 – 227.

² See for example, Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (Routledge, 1974); or Rudolf Carnap, “The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language,” in *Logical positivism*, ed. Alfred Jules Ayer (The Free Press, 1959), 60-81; or Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Metaphysics: From Parmenides to Levinas*, trans. Lukas Soderstrom (Columbia University Press, 2004).

³ “Phenomenology is supposed to be neither more nor less than a faithful description of that which appears (be it subjective acts or worldly objects), and should, as a consequence, avoid metaphysical and scientific postulates or speculations (Hua 19/27-28).” See Dan Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology* (Stanford UP, 2003), 13 – 14.

Philosophy departments, but also throughout the broader field of “Arts and Humanities.” ‘Beyond’ philosophy would mean the diverse applications of phenomenology in fields such as medicine, therapy, and psychology.⁴

In the wake of various applications of phenomenology, the problem of being (whatever is called: ontology, or metaphysics) has undergone a significant transformation. No longer confined to a purely speculative and theoretical problem of maximal abstraction, as Aristotle and the Scholastics conceived it, it has become a more practical concern, with deeply individual relevance, as, for example, existential therapists such as Rollo May or Irvin Yalom argued for. Thus, it is not absurd to speak of metaphysics as a practical science.

Along with the complication of metaphysics’ status, stemming from its position between the theoretical and the practical, new problems have emerged within its scope of interest. Simultaneously, old problems have received renewed and actualized relevance. Similarly, a revision and actualization of the vocabulary of being has been required. Thus, in conjunction with the freedom claimed by continental philosophers, influenced by Husserl’s phenomenology, in their use and creation of language, the vocabulary of being has been enriched with new concepts and/ or new meanings to address the new topics. In line with these tendencies, Aristotle’s principle of the multiplicity of being’s meanings has been reinterpreted. Aristotle differentiated the meanings of the term “being” based on the various usages of the word – hence the table of categories. Analytic metaphysics speaks about the same variety of meanings as a problem of semantics. Some other thinkers, whom the following part of the paper will address, have viewed the multiplicity of the meanings of being as the multiplicity of the ways and modes of ‘to be’ in relation to the singular being that is human. Consequently, contemporary philosophers now speak of the “ontological difference,” “modes of being,” and “regions of being.”

The concept of regions of being

Regionalization is defined as the process of dividing a totality into smaller parts.⁵ In the following, several distinct types of the regionalization of being will be presented. This, however, cannot proceed without first addressing the origin of this concept in Husserl’s writings.

According to the research presented in *Transcendental Idealism and Metaphysics*, by Daniele De Santis⁶ Husserl articulates his understanding of the term “region” in *Ideas I*, within a

⁴ Stating these, a need to address a possible objection is keenly perceived. This paper seeks to contribute to understating of the history of thought alone, having neither courage nor interest in stating any claim regarding the efficiency of phenomenology in the above-mentioned domains. What needs to be underlined, for the sake of this paper’s argumentation is just the fact that the concept of phenomenology is of such amplitude, and of such cultural importance, that it went beyond the limits of theoretical philosophy, transcending both “theoretical” and “philosophy.”

⁵ According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “regionalize” is a transitive verb, meaning: “to divide into regions or administrative districts: arrange regionally.”

See: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/regionalization>

⁶ See Daniele de Santis, *Transcendental Idealism and Metaphysics, Volume 2* (Springer, 2023), 73 – 116.

more theoretical context, namely, discussing such topics as the types of sciences, categories, genera and species, concept of essence, substance, and individual. One of the few definitions of “region” is presented in §9: “Region and Regional Eidetics,” which reads:

Any concrete empirical objectivity finds its place within a highest material genus, a “region,” of empirical objects. To the pure regional essence, then, therefore corresponds a regional eidetic science or, as we can also say, a regional ontology. In this connection we assume that the regional essence, or the different genera composing it, are the basis for such abundant and highly ramified cognitions that, with respect to their systematic explication, it is indeed worth speaking of a science or of a whole complex of ontological disciplines corresponding to the single generic components or the region.⁷

Comparing this definition with other principles of Husserl’s philosophy, Daniele De Santis concluded that “[r]egion does not designate a genus, let alone a highest or supreme genus. Rather, region is the unity of all the ‘supreme genera’ (...).”⁸ Thus, Husserl’s employment of terms is quite inconsistent.

Given the high level of theoretical abstraction in this discussion, two examples will be cited. It should be emphasized that it is far beyond the scope of this paper to explain the Husserlian concept of “region,” rather, the main interest is to underline its ambiguity, so that it can also be called – “une ambiguïté destinale.”⁹ The first, the “paradigmatic example is the ontology of nature, the eidetic science of ‘nature in general’,”¹⁰ according to which “nature” would be a “region.” The great disadvantage of this example is that it requires a very extended clarification of the concept of ‘nature’. Another example might be deemed too wordy, but it has the advantage of being much clearer:

Now, if we were to take at face value the definition of region offered by the passage above (= the regional essence or region is a *supreme genus*), then for example *sensible quality* should be deemed a region. If, for example, we take grass green as an eidetic singularity (universal of the lowest level) and green as the corresponding subspecies, color would be the species, visual quality the genus and, finally, sensible quality would stand out as the highest genus or “region.” As a consequence, the so-called “regional ontology” would be the eidetic science of sensible quality in general, whereas the various genus or generic components (*visual quality, tactile quality, auditory quality and so on and so forth*) would represent the subject-matter of the many regional disciplines.¹¹

⁷ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas*, transl. by F. Kersten (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983), 18.

⁸ Daniele de Santis, *Transcendental Idealism and Metaphysics, Volume 2* (Springer, 2023), 79.

⁹ For the source of this idea, see Allain de Libera, *La Querelle des universaux De Platon à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Edition du Seuil, 1996), 32. The main idea is the inconsistent or even contradictory character of theses found in Aristotelian corpus with reference to the problem of the ontological status of universal concepts.

¹⁰ Daniele de Santis, *Transcendental Idealism and Metaphysics, Volume 2* (Springer, 2023), 77

¹¹ Ibid., 77

This, however, according to De Santis, “cannot be Husserl’s own opinion on the matter,”¹² but this does not represent a problem for the present paper, since what is needed here is to outline the possible interpretations that could be picked out from Husserl’s text and used by other philosophers in their own theoretical constructions. What is a region, then? – a highest category, that is, a category of some categories of identifiable somethings.

To understand the following concepts of regionalization of being, it is necessary to add to this “dry” theoretical context, the “existential” practical applicability of metaphysical problems. It is neither novel nor unusual in contemporary philosophy to view traditional problems associated with the concept of being – typically regarded as the most abstract and theoretical – through more humanly relevant lenses. As Costica Bradatan stresses:

One of the more difficult questions of traditional metaphysics is the so-called question of being, which asks, “Why is there something rather than nothing?” Translated into existentialist language, the interrogation takes on a more personal form: “Why should I exist rather than not?” The question is overwhelming for at least two reasons. First, because it is so oppressively personal: there is only one person in the world who can ask this question, and that’s me. If I fail to ask it, the question will remain forever unasked, which may be worse than remaining unanswered. Second, because it is ultimately unanswerable. Certainly, I can toy with it and try to formulate something. Philosophy and literature, religion and science may give me some convenient, ready-made answers. Yet I remain painfully aware that, in the final analysis, the question “Why should I exist rather than not?” cannot be firmly decided one way or the other. Ivan Karamazov—one of the sharpest philosophers never to have existed—would call it a “cursed question.”¹³

In fact, not only is it, as it has been qualified in cited lines, one of the most difficult questions of traditions metaphysics, but Martin Heidegger goes even further, writing these: “Chapter One: The Fundamental Question of Metaphysics.”¹⁴ – “Why are there beings at all instead of nothing? That is the question. Presumably it is no arbitrary question. (...) – this is obviously the first of all questions.”¹⁵

To gain a clearer understanding of the idea of practical metaphysics and ‘regions of being’, several examples will be offered. The secondary aim of this section is to offer a context within which the treatise of Bernard of Clairvaux will be interpreted.

Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time* begins with an understanding of the human being in terms of presence, thus coining the term that means “there-being” – Dasein. As a being that is always already present, the human, Dasein, is a being-in-the-world.¹⁶ This implies, according to Heidegger, a highly complex structure of the human being. In fact, only to the explication of

¹² Ibid., 77.

¹³ Costica Bradatan, *In praise of failure: four lessons in humility* (Harvard University Press, 2023), 23.

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (Yale University Press, 2000), 1.

¹⁵ Ibid., 1.

¹⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, transl. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Blackwell 2001) 79.

this structure the whole *Being and Time* is dedicated.¹⁷ The science of the structure of human being as being-in-the-world is called the analytic of Dasein.

One of the main constituents of Dasein's being is care.¹⁸ It determines the Dasein as an inhabitant of a world imbued with meaningful things and relations. Dasein's world is not colorless, as Wittgenstein argued;¹⁹ rather, all entities Dasein encounters are ready-to-hand. It is only when these entities are broken, falling outside the horizon of care that they become simple present, nude in their useless and raw being.²⁰ Further, Dasein is not the only inhabitant of the world. As a being-in-the-world, Dasein is "thrown" into a world already populated with entities and other beings. For such encounters to occur, Dasein must be characterised by openness—an existential structure that enables it to encounter not only things (whether useful or not), but also other beings like itself. Thus, Heidegger describes Dasein in terms of "being-with" (Mitsein), emphasizing the shared nature of existence and the fundamental structure of Being-with-others.²¹

Does this mean that Dasein finds itself inhabiting different regions of being? Or is Dasein itself a region of being which has its own structure? According to De Santis, Heidegger would reject the second, for in *Being and Time* Heidegger invests a great amount of energy in dismissing every possible attempt at understanding the concept of Dasein as a "region" or, to put it better, as a highest category (...).²² On the other hand, the author acknowledges that "what is *vorhanden* seems to circumscribe a region, that is to say, what Heidegger refers to in passing as 'the region of being of what is present.' (...) If this were the case, in fact, given the opposition between *Vorhandenheit* and *Zuhandenheit* that sustains the entire edifice of Being and Time, also the *Zuhandenheit* would have to be assumed as designating a certain region of the entities alongside others."²³ The main issue is evidently the concept of "region," which, according to the same exegesis, when used by Heidegger with reference to aforementioned concepts is written "in inverted comas," designating the improper use of the term.

Because the aim of this section is to illustrate the concept of "regionalization of being," the discussion about Heidegger's concept of regions will stop here, underlining the interpretative possibility that the totality of entities encountered by Dasein, and, in fact, the entire existence of Dasein's being-in-the-world, can be divided in "regions." According to the *Introduction to the History of Psychology*,²⁴ two aspects seems to have shaped the evolution of

¹⁷ Ibid., 36 – 38.

¹⁸ See Chapter VI: Care as the Being of Dasein from Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Blackwell 2001).

¹⁹ See sentence "2.023 In a manner of speaking, objects are colourless". Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (Routledge, 1974), 8.

²⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Blackwell 2001), 103.

²¹ Ibid., 153 – 154.

²² Daniele de Santis, *Transcendental Idealism and Metaphysics, Volume 2* (Springer, 2023), 4.

²³ Ibid., 5.

²⁴ B.R. Hergenhahn, Tracy B. Henley, *An introduction to the History of Psychology*, 4th edition (Wadsworth, 2000), 505 – 514.

the problem of being towards its practical application: the ambiguity of the concept of “region,” which led to its replacement with the term “mode;” and the distinction between Dasein and all the “spheres” it finds itself in. Before speaking about Heidegger’s influence on existential psychology and especially on Ludwig Binswanger and Rollo May, one needs to see, even briefly, the context.

As noted in the aforementioned *Introduction to the History...*, the second part of the 20th century, characterised by many political and social problems, saw the emergence of the so-called Third-Force, or Humanistic, Psychology. The context was this: Gestalt psychology and functionalism merged in one theory; behaviorism and psychoanalysis remained relevant, however: “[n]eeded was a new view of psychology, one that emphasized neither the mind nor the body but the human spirit.”²⁵ – hence, the third: because of the triad: mind, body, and spirit, understood here as emotional makeup.

The *Introduction to the History of Psychology* confirms what was underlined above, namely the impact of phenomenology and existentialism on psychology, as these two are listed as “antecedents of third-force psychology,” where “Heidegger’s work is generally considered the bridge between existential philosophy and existential psychology.”²⁶ Regarding Ludwig Binswanger, “[u]nder the influence of Heidegger, Binswanger, applied phenomenology to psychiatry, and later he became an existential analyst. (...) called his approach to psychotherapy Daseinanalysis.”²⁷

Before diving into the modes of being that existential psychotherapy discusses, there is another influential figure who is rarely brought to the spotlight. Martin Buber is the author of a marvelous book, *I and Thou*, whose relevance for the present paper lies in the fact that it speaks of a similar idea, that human beings always find themselves in an already-existing world full of other beings to interact with, both similar and different from themselves. Without explicitly proposing a work of practical metaphysics, or even mentioning that his contribution could or should be regarded as a piece of existential philosophy, ontology, or metaphysics, *I and Thou* is nevertheless a perfect example of applied metaphysics, for it offers another view of the regions of human’s being in the world.

Firstly, by the syntagm “applied,” “practical” or “relevant” metaphysics is meant a type of metaphysics opposed to purely theoretical. In Buber’s words: “[f]or I speak of nothing else but the real man, of you and of me, of our life and of our world—not of an I, or a state of being, in itself alone.”²⁸ This “I” on every human being is never an “I” of an actor without a scene or setting. In the author’s own words, “[t]here is no I taken in itself,”²⁹ but only an I that is within the world. The regionalization of human’s being in the world, in Buber’s view, is twofold, and the central insight is that: “The life of human beings is not passed in the sphere of transitive

²⁵ Ibid., 505.

²⁶ Ibid., 508. For the characterization of phenomenology and existentialism as antecedents of existential psychology see *ibid.*, 506 – 508.

²⁷ Ibid., 510.

²⁸ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (Bloomsbury, 2018), 10.

²⁹ Ibid., 3.

verbs alone.”³⁰ There is something more to human being than the totality of actions directed toward objects available to experience. The world of the human being transcends the scheme “Subject – action – object,” for there are other entities worthy of the title of “Subject.” Thus, calling “an object of general experience”³¹ an It, M. Buber proclaims: “To man the world is twofold, in accordance with his twofold attitude.”³² The human being’s world is, thus, formed by an attitude, which itself is grounded in the “twofold nature of the primary words.”³³ There are not to be confused with ordinary words; rather, they are “being spoken from the being”³⁴ – and not in any way, but from the entirety of said being. These words “being spoken they bring about existence”³⁵ of the worlds. There are two such “primary words:”³⁶ I – It, and I – Thou. Each gives existence to two worlds in which human being finds itself, respectively: the World of Experience, in which different objects are experienced by means of above said actions, expressed in language through transitive verbs; and the World of Relation. What is “related to,” according to Buber, cannot be “experienced.”³⁷ Moreover, the essence of relation is mutuality.³⁸ Lastly, the World of Relation, itself comprises three “spheres:” the first – the relation with nature; second, the relation with men; last, relation with spiritual beings.³⁹

The mention of M. Buber’s theory was motivated not only by the general aim of this section – to provide the most illustrative examples of “regionalization” – but also by terminological needs. Further on, a similar idea of “world” will be encountered.

If a book on the history of psychology can be considered a source of common knowledge on the subject, then it is safe to say that Ludwig Binswanger is commonly known for his theory of “three different modes of existence to which individuals give meaning through their consciousness. They are the Umwelt (the “around world”), the world of things and events; the Mitwelt (the “with world”), interactions with other humans; and the Eigenwelt (the “own world”), a person’s private, inner, subjective experience. To understand a person fully, one must understand all three of his or her modes of existence.”⁴⁰

In *The Discovery of Being*, Rollo May refers to these as “three modes of world – that is, three simultaneous aspects of world – which characterize the existence of each one of us as

³⁰ Ibid., 4.

³¹ Ibid., 9.

³² Ibid., 3.

³³ Ibid., 3.

³⁴ Ibid., 3.

³⁵ Ibid., 3.

³⁶ Ibid., 3.

³⁷ Ibid., 7. This is one of the characteristics of the worlds, although, in the next sections this thesis will be modified.

³⁸ Ibid., 6.

³⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁰ B.R. Hergenhahn, Tracy B. Henley, *An introduction to the History of Psychology*, 4th edition (Wadsworth, 2000), 510.

being in the world.”⁴¹ As a philosopher, May shapes the concepts, and not merely reports them (as does the *Introduction to History...*), thus, the author finds contemporary accessible correspondents to each metaphysical-existential concept. “Umwelt” stands for the environment; Mitwelt, “the world of one’s fellow men,” to society; Eigenwelt – one’s “relationship to oneself.”⁴² A legitimate doubt may raise regarding the usefulness of employing such complex metaphysical terms instead of simpler ones. The advantage of the former lies in their contribution to an integrative understanding, in which there is no opposition between human being and the world, or nature. This renders obsolete questions as: “are humans a part of nature, or is nature a part of human?”, “what is the relation between humanity and ecological environment?”. Instead, all are seen as interrelated regions within a greater whole. In the author’s words: “[i]t should be clear that these three modes of world are always interrelated and always condition each other. (...) The human being lives in Umwelt, Mitwelt, and Eigenwelt simultaneously. They are by no means three different worlds but three simultaneous modes of being in the world.”⁴³ This is one of the reasons that determined the preference, throughout this paper, of the term “region,” instead of “modes of being” or “modes of the world.” Besides the terminological issues, the syntagm “modes of the world/being” risks confusion, as it overlaps with already established terminology in some fields of philosophy, as e.g., in modal logic, one speaks about the modalities of necessity and contingency. Likewise, within contemporary metaphysics of a phenomenological flavor. The term “modes of being” was coined by Roman Ingarden in his influential work *Time and Modes of Being*, where he states: “the investigations to which I shall devote this book, I shall be engaged exclusively with the *controversy over the existence of the real world* that is given to us in direct experience, and which encompasses material objects as well as psychophysical individuals. This controversy has the role of the central problem of modern philosophy.”⁴⁴ Ingarden employs a Husserlian understanding of “regions” determining that “[a]t least two regions of individual objects should be distinguished: (a) the domain of ‘pure consciousness’ and (b) the realm of ‘the real world.’”⁴⁵ On the other hand, author states the intention to “contrast modes of being with moments of existence. The “reality” (realness, real existence) of something, the ideal existence of something, the possibility of something: these are some of the modes of existence.”⁴⁶ The other term of the contrast, moments of existence, or “existential moments appear only within the compass of individual modes of being. Many different existential moments can be distinguished intuitively in each mode of being of something.”⁴⁷ Following these considerations, it is quite unhandy to use the

⁴¹ Rollo May, *The Discovery of being. Writings in Existential Psychology* (W. W. Norton and Company, 1983) 126.

⁴² Ibid. 126

⁴³ Ibid. 129

⁴⁴ Roman Ingarden, *Time and Modes of Being*, trans. Helen R. Michejda (Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1964), 7.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 32 – 33.

⁴⁷ Roman Ingarden, *Time and Modes of Being*, trans. Helen R. Michejda (Charles C. Thomas Publisher, 1964), 42. Such moments are given in dyads: autonomy-heteronomy; originality-derivation; separateness-inseparateness, etc. See *ibid.*, 42.

term “modes of world” or “modes of being.” Thus, having in mind all the difficulties associated with the term “region” as well, the choice falls on the latter, and will be used in the following interpretation of Bernard of Clairvaux's *Treatise of Consideration*. In conclusion of this part, one idea shall be reiterated, that all the foregoing offers the philosophical context, the general proximity within which the *Treatise on Consideration* can be read.

The *Treatise On Consideration* within medieval practical philosophy

The previous chapters made clear that one of the defining features of contemporary philosophy is to regard the problem of being in its practical and humanly relevant context. It is equally important not to mistake this for an assertion that the idea itself originated in said times. The fact that a particular theme becomes more evident in one epoch does not imply that said theme emerged in it. Ideas have a long and convoluted life: they transform, become; often they have iterations: both past and future; ideas are rarely monads, often they have precursors and conditions of possibility. It is a historian of ideas' work to bring these to light.

Because the term ‘medieval’ so often sounds vaguely like an insult,⁴⁸ or, as Allain de Libera observes with sadness, is commonly perceived as more ancient than antiquity itself⁴⁹ there is a particular value in offering contemporary interpretations of medieval works. This is so even when one is fully aware of the historian of the ideas' cardinal sin: the anachronism. Nevertheless, although the act condemns the doer, the end may justify him, as it is quite famously said.⁵⁰ The aim of this section is twofold: a general one - to restore the often-overlooked philosophical relevance of the medieval world of thought; and special – to offer a philosophical interpretation of a work composed outside the traditional boundaries of philosophy.

This endeavor is not undertaken in isolation. In his 2018 paper “*Sit Finis Libri, Sed Non Finis Quaerendi. Preliminary Clarifications on Bernard of Clairvaux, On Consideration*”⁵¹ Alexander Baumgarten already highlighted the text's philosophical relevance – both indirectly, by referencing the two traditional interpretations, and directly by proposing an original one, according to which “consideration” functions as a political decision-making tool, placing the treatise in proximity to Giorgio Agamben's theory of states of exception.

The argument that *On Consideration* belongs to the realm of practical metaphysics proceeds in two steps: first, by establishing that it falls within the domain of practical philosophy; and second, by demonstrating how its theory of consideration implies a theory of the regionalization of being.

⁴⁸ Peter Adamson, *Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford UP, 2019), 3.

⁴⁹ Allain de Libera, *Penser au Moyen Age* (Editions du Seuil, 1991), 64.

⁵⁰ Niccolo Machiavelli, *Discourses of Livy*, transl. by Ninian Hill Thomson (Dover Publications, 2007), 55.

⁵¹ Alexander Baumgarten, “*Sit Finis Libri, Sed Non Finis Quaerendi. Preliminary Clarifications On Bernard Of Clairvaux, On Consideration*,” *Philobiblion* 23, no. 2 (2018): 257 – 277, <https://doi.org/10.26424/philobib.2018.23.2.08>.

Pierre Hadot famously said that in Ancient Greece, philosophy was not merely a theoretical exercise, but a complex “way of life.”⁵² Since then, many works have deepened this idea, offering different perspectives. Martha Nussbaum’s *Therapy of Desire*, for instance, argues for a better definition of philosophy, proposing the idea of ‘therapeutical argumentation,’⁵³ while Lou Marinoff’s *Plato, Not Prozac!: Applying Eternal Wisdom to Everyday Problems* laid the groundwork for philosophical counseling, showing how ancient wisdom can be applied to modern existential issues.

Medieval philosophy, although it is not often emphasized, is no stranger to this understanding of philosophy as a way of life. While a comprehensive history of this approach in the medieval period has yet to be written, there are numerous supporting examples. One of the definitions of philosophy cited by Cassiodorus in his *Institutions* reads: “philosophia est meditatio mortis”⁵⁴ – philosophy is a meditation on death. The most probable source of this definition is Plato’s *Phaedo*, in which Socrates uses philosophy to calm his disciples as he prepares for his own death. Another influential work is Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*. In it, Philosophy visits Boethius in prison and consoles him, much like a philosophical counselor or existential therapist would do, similarly to what Lou Marinoff and Irwin Yalom describe: several sessions of conversational therapy, to ease the fear of death, through a method not much different than CBT, working with opinions about things, rather than with things themselves, that are out of human’s reach. Similar to Plato’s *Phaedo* is the medieval, Neo-Platonic work, known in Arab, Hebrew and Latin languages – *The Book of the Apple*. It also addresses the problem of the fear of death, and has an astonishingly beautiful staging: The prince of philosophers, Aristotle, in his death bed, unbothered, calmly waits for his final hour, while explaining to his students why isn’t he afraid of the moment and why neither should they, and – most beautiful – does all of this while being maintained alive and in high spirits by the smell of an apple. The end is apothecic: with the last words of consolation, done with his discourse, the apple drops down onto the ground from the still warm, but lifeless, hand of the prince of the philosophers. The treaty *On Consideration* is not a stranger to this list.

What is known to us as a “treatise” is, in fact, a series of letters that took the form of five books, addressed by Bernard of Clairvaux to Pope Eugenius III. Unlike the works cited earlier, it is not about preparing for death, but rather about how to live and how to carry the burden of significant responsibility and decision-making.⁵⁵

⁵² For this idea and its iteration throughout ancient Greek philosophy see Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy*, transl. by Michael Chase (Harvard UP, 2002), especially Part II, 55 – 233.

⁵³ For this idea, see Martha Nussbaum, *The therapy of Desire* (Princeton UP, 1994), 13 – 47. The main idea is that her definition integrates both directions of ancient philosophy: that as a way of life (hence therapy) and that of the search for the truth (hence rational arguments).

⁵⁴ Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* (ed. R. A. B. Mynors), see bilingual edition Cassiodorus, *Instituțiile*, transl. by Vichi Eugenia Ciocani (Iași: Polirom, 2015), 208.

⁵⁵ Accepting the interpretation given by Alexander Baumgarten, cited above one of the main aims of the *Treaty on Consideration* is the persuasion towards the initiating of the IIIrd Crusade.

Bernard of Clairvaux's treatise is, it will be argued in the next lines, a work of practical philosophy and, more specifically, it can be read as an early example of philosophical counseling. This claim will be supported by demonstrating the similarities between Bernard's method of therapeutic argumentation and that of Philosophy, Boethius' character (or alter ego) from the mentioned book. However, since a comparison requires a shared reference point—a *tertium comparationis*, as the Third Man argument reminds us—this parallel is grounded in their common resemblance to the method proposed by Lou Marinoff in his model of philosophical counseling.

Marinoff's method is known as "PEACE" – an acronym, where each letter stands for a step in the counseling process. 'Problem' – that is, identification of the troublesome situation. Next step, 'Emotion' – i.e., "take stock of the emotions provoked by the problem. This is an internal accounting. You must experience emotions genuinely and channel them constructively." After, 'Analysis' – "you enumerate and evaluate your options for solving the problem." 'Contemplation' stands for taking a step back and contemplating the entire situation.⁵⁶ The last step – 'Equilibrium' – is the state experienced by the one counseled, as such, in the case at hand, inaccessible. It can only be guessed, more or less rigorously, whether both treatises worked, since they have been deemed worthy of constant copying and transmitting from the time they were brought to light, to modern contemporary editions. Boethius has died, sentenced by the King Theodoric. While this is known for a fact, it is impossible to know how peaceful or not the tragic event has occurred. Neither could the results of the *Books on Consideration*. The Third Crusade did occur, but who could tell if the persuasion from said treatise influenced the decision? Except for this step, the others can be very well identified.

The identification of the problem and the analysis of emotions – naturally intertwined – occur in the first books of both *On Consideration* and *The Consolation of Philosophy*. In each case, the protagonists (for lack of a better term – 'the sufferers'), Boethius and Eugenius, are portrayed in a deplorable state. Their condition is recognized, diagnosed, and interpreted by their respective counselors: Philosophy and Bernard, as one can read in the following passages. Philosophy asks who "hath permitted these tragical harlots to have access to this sick man, which will not only not comfort his grief with wholesome remedies, but also nourish them with sugared poison?"⁵⁷ Likewise, Bernard: "thy occupations, because it is especially with regard to them that I condole with thee. I say I condole with thee, but that is only true on condition that thou art grieving for thyself."⁵⁸

A significant difference lies in the literary genre of the works. In Boethius' case, the reader is directly privy to his lamentations that conform Philosophy's diagnosis: "I had uttered these speeches with continued grief (...)."⁵⁹ However, even before hearing Boethius lament about his own suffering, Philosophy concludes: "he is in a lethargy, the common disease of deceived

⁵⁶The method is described in Lou Marinoff, *Plato no Prozac: Applying Philosophy to Everyday Problems* (Harper Collins Publishers, 2012), in Part III. E-book.

⁵⁷ Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand (Harvard UP, 1968), 133.

⁵⁸ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Treatise of Consideration*, transl. by Anonymous (Browne and Nolan Limited), 3.

⁵⁹ Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, 159.

minds; he hath a little forgot himself, but he will easily remember himself again, if he be brought to know us first.”⁶⁰ After the lengthy Boethius’ story, to which the IVth part of the Ist Book is dedicated, Philosophy reaffirms the situation:

When I first saw thee sad and weeping, I forthwith knew thee to be in misery and banishment. But I had not known how far off thou wert banished, if thy speech had not bewrayed it. O how far art thou gone from thy country, not being driven away, but wandering of thine own accord!⁶¹

The root cause is then precisely diagnosed,

Thou hast forgotten what thou art. Wherefore I have fully found out both the manner of thy disease and the means of thy recovery; for the confusion which thou art in, by the forgetfulness of thyself, is the cause why thou art so much grieved at thy exile and the loss of thy goods. And because thou art ignorant what is the end of things, thou thinkest that lewd and wicked men be powerful and happy; likewise, because thou hast forgotten by what means the world is governed, thou imaginest that these alternations of fortune do fall out without any guide, sufficient causes not only of sickness, but also of death itself.⁶²

By contrast, Bernard’s work is preventative. Nothing bad had yet happened to Eugenius, but the danger is too close for Bernard to stay still: “Here, then, here is the reason why I have always feared for thee and do still fear: lest, postponing the application of a remedy, and unable meanwhile to endure the pain, thou shouldst at last grow reckless and abandon thyself irrevocably to evil.”⁶³ The high office that Eugenius occupies is the main concern of Bernard. The words of wisdom that say ‘with great power comes great responsibility’ were not unknown in the Middle Ages, so years before Bernard, another medieval thinker, refusing a high office, Peter Damian, stated as clearly as it is possible: “errs! - repeats the author - errs the one who thinks that one can simultaneously be a monk and serve the Curia!”⁶⁴ With great urgency, Bernard concludes the diagnosis of his sufferer:

Whither is that, dost thou inquire? To hardness of heart. Ask me not what this means. For if thou art without fear for thyself, it is something which is already thine. It is only the heart which is hardened that abhors not itself, as not sensible of its evil.⁶⁵

The core danger for Eugenius, then, is the hardening of the heart—a spiritual numbness that leads to apathy, detachment, and ultimately a failure to act justly or wisely. Like Boethius, Eugenius appears estranged from both himself and his world. Bernard ask his sufferer:

⁶⁰ Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, 137.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 167.

⁶³ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Treatise of Consideration*, 6.

⁶⁴ Petrus Damianus, *Disputatio super quaestione qua quaeritur (...)* (Polirom, 2014), 54.

⁶⁵ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Treatise of Consideration*, 6.

For tell me, if thou canst, when or where art thou ever free, ever secure, ever thine own? No, uproar and tumult are thy constant attendants: go whither thou wilt, thou canst not escape from the oppressive yoke of thy thralldom.⁶⁶

And even more pointedly: “But art thou a stranger? To whom art thou not a stranger if a stranger to thyself?”⁶⁷

With the first two PEACE steps, Problem and Emotions, now addressed, both treatises move into the active and lengthy middle phase of counseling: Analysis and Contemplation. In Boethius’ case, this therapeutic dialogue spans four books. Philosophy methodically addresses Boethius’ flawed opinions on gods, happiness, and glory (Book II); happiness and divine goodness (Book III), nature of evil, providence and fate (Book IV), and lastly free agency and divine foreknowledge (Book V). This deep philosophical reorientation is the method by which Boethius’ soul is to be healed.

In Bernard’s counsel to Eugenius, unfolded across four books, the tool of consideration is both proposed and applied. From the start, Bernard urges his sufferer: “Remember therefore, I do not say always, I do not even say often, but at least from time to time, to restore thyself to thyself.”⁶⁸ Said “restoration” is not mere rhetoric. It leads to the introduction of a new theoretical and disciplinary instrument, for he continues: “But *because the days are evil*, let it suffice to have admonished thee not to give thyself up completely or uninterruptedly to action but to reserve for consideration something of thyself, of thy heart, and of thy time.”⁶⁹ This tool, at once practical (active) and contemplative, is defined as “an intense exercise of thought in inquiry, or as an intense application of the mind to the investigation of truth.”⁷⁰ This intensity is precisely what distinguishes the consideration from the contemplation, despite their affinity. Another difference lies in the all-encompassing scope: the correct application of consideration entails application to the totality of reality, which is achievable only through a structuring principle—namely, regionalization. Thus, the theory of consideration is inseparable from a theory of regionalization.

In conclusion, Bernard of Clairvaux’s *On Consideration* has served, and can still serve, as a work on leadership and personal governance, offering guidance to those in positions of great responsibility so that they might not lose themselves in the demands of their office. Having now outlined the practical dimension of the treatise, it remains to elaborate its metaphysical component: the mechanism of regionalization that underpins and enables the function of consideration.

⁶⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Treatise of Consideration*, 10.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 14 – 15.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

Regions of being after close consideration and truth

The text reads:

Now, with respect to the matter of consideration, there are four objects which, as I think, ought particularly to engage thy attention, and in the order in which they are here set down: thou thyself, things beneath thee, things about thee, things above thee. Let thy consideration begin with thyself, for if thine own self be neglected, attention to other things can be of little avail. *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?*⁷¹

Upon a closer, reductionist reading, one might say that this is nothing more than a sophisticated way of advising: *you ought to consider everything*. Yet such advice would immediately be deemed as impossible and dismissed before the counselor could even finish the sentence. To render this virtually impossible task seem more possible, Bernard frames it with three key qualifications: first – a durational clause: “not completely,” nor “uninterruptedly;” second – teleological clause: consideration is to be practices to regain oneself; and thirdly – the principle of divisibility clause, same old ‘*divide et impera*’, – the regionalization. Everything that is to be considered is thus divided in four directional domains, which, using the metaphysical-existential language developed in the first part of the paper, may be described as “worlds:” the world of the self; the world of things subordinated; the world of horizontal proximity; and the supranatural world.

It is no surprise, then, that looking at Bernard of Clairvaux’s schema of consideration, one may see the antecedent of the theories of regionalization that have been proposed, as examples, above. One can readily identify the *Eigenwelt*; then, the *Umwelt*, the “around-world,” which might seem to correspond with Latin expression the author uses – “*circa te*;” then, there is a world of thing subordinated to which no direct equivalent can easily be found; and lastly, the “above-world,” which resonates with the “third sphere” of the World of Relation, the I – Thou Word, of Martin Buber. Having thus established the possibility of several similarities, what now remains is to articulate the specific differences.

The concept of *Eigenwelt* that Bernard of Clairvaux employs is composed of three spheres:

The consideration of thyself may be divided into three points. Thou mayest consider what thou art, who thou art, and what kind thou art: what thou art by nature, who thou art in rank and dignity, what kind thou art in character and disposition.⁷²

This framework helps the sufferer recognize something well understood in contemporary psychology: identity is not the same as identification. Only by understanding this distinction can

⁷¹ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Treatise of Consideration*, 40. Note that the translation is a little misleading since the word ‘object’ does not appear in Latin original: *Iam quod ad considerationis attinet fructum, quatuor, ut occurrunt, tibi considerata reor: te, quae sub te, quae circa te, quae supra te sunt. A te tua consideratio inchoet, ne frustra extendaris in alia, te neglecto. Quid tibi prodest si universum mundum lucreris, te unum perdens?*” (See Bernard de Clairvaux, *De Consideratione libri quinque*, 122).

⁷² *Ibid.*, 4

one begin to address and change behavioral patterns. Accordingly, Eugenius shall not confuse his human being with his Pontifical office, or, indeed, both of these – with what his character is, or what his values are.

Beginning with the third book and continuing through the fifth, Bernard examines the remaining directions of consideration, giving Eugenius a clear model of its application. In the opening of the third book, text reads: “I will now propose for thy consideration the things that are beneath thee (*quae sub te sunt*).”⁷³ While the text does not offer a direct explanation of what constitutes these ‘things,’ the general theme of the chapter allows us to infer their nature. Bernard speaks of Eugenius’ high office:

thou art the heir of the apostles, and thy inheritance is the whole world (...) thou hast been charged with its administration, not endowed with it as a possession. (...) Therefore, leave to the Son the dominion and possession of the earth, and take for thyself the administration thereof.⁷⁴

To have a better understanding of these matters, the insights from the fourth book will help. Here, Bernard is more explicit:

I shall occupy myself in this with a discussion of the things which are about thee. As a matter of fact, these things also are beneath thee, yet they are closer to thee than the objects last treated of (...). I am speaking now of that *daily instance* which thou sufferest from the city, from the court, and from thine own particular church. These, I say, are what I mean by the things about thee: the clergy and people of whom thou art bishop in a more especial manner, and with the care of whom, consequently, thou art more especially charged; also those who are constantly at thy side, (...).⁷⁵

It is quite evident, a limit of “translation” is met here. Namely, that the distinction between Umwelt and Mitwelt in Bernard’s framework is much more complex. The entities “beneath” include everything under the administration and control of Eugenius’ high office. This is one of the reasons why *On Consideration* is seen as a leadership training, for it contains this major category, more general, absent in the Heidegger-Binswanger-May theory, composed of the parts of Umwelt, that is, things and events, and of the parts of Mitwelt – the human persons occupying lower ranks. Bernard’s “about thee” world seems to be purely Mitwelt, the world of the daily interactions with other human beings. The difference between the “world beneath” and “world about” can be clarified using Buber’s distinction between “I-It” and “I-Thou.” The “world beneath” resembles the I-It world, in which things, events, even persons occupying lower ranks, are subject to Eugenius’ will, whereas the “world about” is more closely aligned with the I-Thou world, in which mutual influence and reciprocity occur. In the I-Thou world, there is mutuality between Eugenius and the people around him; in the I-It world, the things beneath him are objects of his administration, not reciprocators.

⁷³ Ibid., 72

⁷⁴ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Treatise of Consideration*, 73.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 109.

Lastly, there is the “above,” the realm of the transcendent, in Bernard of Clairvaux’s own words, “the things that are above thee (...) have no need of thy action, but only invite thy contemplation.”⁷⁶ This direction of consideration is the most speculative. The distinction between contemplation and consideration becomes even thinner than before, to the point where the consideration of God’s attributes translates in four kinds of contemplation:

Observe now that to these four attributes of God, there correspond as many different kinds of contemplation. The first and loftiest contemplation is admiration of the Divine Majesty. (...) the second, which has its gaze fixed upon the judgments of God. (...) The third species of contemplation occupies itself, or rather takes its repose, in the memory of the divine benefits; (...) The fourth (...) is nothing else but a meditation on eternity (...).⁷⁷

The benefit of this consideration, and subsequent contemplations, is twofold. First is quite obvious. Apart from the political and administrative office, the Pope is first and foremost a Christian and a priest. As such his relationship with things eternal is a condition *sine qua non*. The second benefit, more specific to Bernard’s thinking, arises from the contemplation of divine judgments, which:

whilst it grievously troubles the soul by this most terrifying prospect, it extinguishes vices, implants virtues, leads the way to wisdom, preserves humility. Now humility is the true and firm foundation of all the virtues (...).⁷⁸

The consideration of the beings and Being “above” will inevitably humble the considerator, and humbling, humility, is a central concept in Bernard of Clairvaux’s philosophy and theology. The consideration of the transcendent opens the final theme of this paper: a comparison with some antecedent models of regionalization, which will be briefly discussed in the following lines, before concluding the argument.

In Bernard’s writings, the regionalization of being appears in at least two iterations. One has already been discussed, and another predates it. In Bernard’s early work, *The Steps of Humility and Pride*, he writes:

There are three degrees in the perception of truth. (...) We must look for truth in ourselves (*in nobis*); in our neighbors (*in proximis*); in itself (*in sui natura*). We look for truth in ourselves when we judge ourselves; in our neighbors when we have sympathy for their sufferings; in itself when we contemplate it with a clean heart.⁷⁹

When comparing this regionalization with previous ones, using the Eigenwelt-Mitwelt-Umwelt scheme as a reference point, some observations can be made. This investigation has found a

⁷⁶ Ibid., 145.

⁷⁷ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Treatise of Consideration*, 197 – 198.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 197.

⁷⁹ Bernard of Clairvaux, *The steps of humility and Pride*, transl. by Ambrose Conway (Gorgias Press, 2010), 34.

near-perfect antecedent to Ludwig Binswanger's theory of the three worlds in this treatise, which must open a new direction of research investigating possible influences.

The difference between the regionalization model present in the passage above and contemporary ones lies in the nature of Umwelt. In Bernard of Clairvaux's theory, Umwelt involves reflecting on the nature of truth itself, which, given that God is Truth, will later be called, in *On Consideration* - the consideration of 'above thee'. Hence, Bernard's theory from the later treatise can be seen as a more complex regionalization, a complexity arising from the practical context in which it was applied.

The opening lines of *The Steps of Humility* read: "[t]he way is humility, the goal is truth."⁸⁰ Thus, the regionalization of truth is situated within the context where the author intends "to show what we may expect to find at the top." The top, meaning the top of the steps of humility. Because Bernard notes earlier: "when truth is known it brings love," one may ask: does this mean that truth is itself just a brief stop on the path towards love? No, would be the answer, if one considers that Bernard defines the mechanism of empathy, the essence of Mitwelt in terms of love: "The merciful quickly grasp the truth in their neighbors when their heart goes out to them with a love (...)."⁸¹ Love, or *caritas*, is a central concept in Christianity and serves as a bridge between Bernard's thought and that of Augustine, who himself developed his own theory of regionalization of being. This, the second antecedent model, will now be examined.

As Alexander Baumgarten has pointed out, Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine* is one of the primary sources for Bernard's *On Consideration*. Augustine's text reads:

Those things which are objects of use are not all, however, to be loved, but those only which are either united with us in a common relation to God, (...) or are so related to us as to need the goodness of God through our instrumentality. As, then, there are four kinds of things that are to be loved, - first, that which is above us (*supra nos*); second, ourselves (*quod nos sumus*); third, that which is on a level with us (*juxta nos est*); fourth, that which is beneath us (*infra nos*), - no precepts need be given about the second and fourth of these.⁸²

The structural similarity between this fourfold theory of regionalization and Bernard's, the one from *On Consideration*, is striking, particularly in the categorization of the four directions. Without diminishing the influence between these texts, some notable differences need to be made more evident. The opening line of the cited passage recalls another theory, announced in the third chapter of Augustine's work:

There are some things, then, which are to be enjoyed, others which are to be used, others still which enjoy and use. Those things which are objects of enjoyment make us happy. Those things

⁸⁰ Ibid., 29.

⁸¹ Bernard of Clairvaux, *The steps of humility and Pride*, 34.

⁸² Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, I, XXIII, 22 E-Book: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/augustine/doctrine.html>.)

which are objects of use assist, and (so to speak) support us in our efforts after happiness, so that we can attain the things that make us happy and rest in them.⁸³

Augustine's distinction between "things to be enjoyed," "things to be used," and "things that both enjoy and use" is notably similar to Martin Buber's I-It and I-Thou distinction—the two worlds of Experience and Relation. At first glance, one might dismiss the comparison between Augustine's and Buber's theories because Augustine categorizes "entities beneath" (in the cited passage above: *infra nos*) as part of the world of Relation (in Augustine's terms: to be loved). The apparent contradiction arises if one assumes that "*infra nos*" refers to anything inferior to the human being, which apparently can hardly be a part of World of Relation, since Buber distinguishes the I-It world of objects (which one uses) from the I-Thou world of relations. Yet, Buber's statement about the communicative nature of these worlds offers clarity:

The world of It is set in the context of space and time. The world of Thou is not set in the context of either of these. The particular Thou, after the relational event has run its course, is bound to become an It. The particular It, by entering the relational event, may become a Thou.

The I-It and I-Thou worlds are not separate and fixed; they are dynamic and interconnected. What is needed is a concept that could explain the transition, thus making both theories that of Buber and that of Augustine more coherent.

This concept is "love." Love is the mechanism that facilitates this transition, allowing objects of use (I-It) to become subjects of relation (I-Thou); allowing to something "beneath us" become "lovable" and "enjoyable." The *modus operandi* of this mechanism is compellingly explained through Heidegger's concept of 'fundamental attunement.

According to Martin Heidegger, "[a]ttunements are ways of the being-there of Dasein,"⁸⁴ or "way in which Dasein is as Dasein;"⁸⁵ in other words, "in which we find ourselves disposed in such and such a way. Attunements are the "how" according to which one is in such and such a way." The attunement is in no way singular, nor static. It is within the power of Dasein to "awaken" attunements, and dispose one's own being towards being-there and being-with. Grief is one such attunement that closes off the human being and makes it inaccessible.⁸⁶ For metaphysics, another example, the suitable attunement is boredom,⁸⁷ because of its relation to time, nothingness and being. These attunements are no mere figments of Heidegger's thinking. There is a method to determine them. He states that "If we are to awaken a fundamental attunement (...) we must make sure of our situation."⁸⁸ This is why Heidegger analyses "[f]our

⁸³ Ibid..

⁸⁴ Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, transl. by William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Indiana UP, 1995), 67.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 67.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 66.

⁸⁷ This idea is fully expressed in Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, from 78 onwards.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 69.

interpretations of our contemporary situation,”⁸⁹ and concludes that boredom is the fundamental attunement on contemporaneity. Love it also, one such attunement determined by medieval “situation.”

For the medieval world of thought, especially of Augustinian heritage, human being’s situation is to never be at home, forever a traveler, forever on the road, or, simply said: “in via.” In Augustine’s words:

Suppose, then, we were wanderers⁹⁰ in a strange country, and could not live happily away from our fatherland, and that we felt wretched in our wandering, and wishing to put an end to our misery, determined to return home.⁹¹

Since God himself is the way, the truth, and the life and, accordingly, love, it is ultimately the concept of ‘love’ that guides the human being to return to the fatherland. The precise aim – the great return – necessitates a discipline of travel. Hence the division of every other entity into two categories: very few to enjoy, others to use. Thus, the fundamental attunement of the traveler is love. It opens the possibility of fourfold regionalization of beings, which was presented above in the passage from Augustine. The same concept of love, in Bernard of Clairvaux’s *Steps of humility*, is the attunement that disposes human being towards humility and the search for truth, and, so that this search could be possible, the subsequent threefold regionalization of truth. This is why Augustine’s fourfold regionalization of being is closer to the threefold regionalization of being operated in the *Steps of Humility and Pride*.

Returning, for the last time, to the *Treaty on Consideration*, the unique situation of consideration, equally theoretical and practical; intellective and disciplinary – suggests that it enjoys its own attunement: a considerative attunement, as a form of intellectual emotion, that disposes the human being towards seeing and doing, understanding and acting. It is through this attunement that Bernard’s schema of consideration becomes not just a theoretical contemplation, but a true practical metaphysics, that enables a practical tool for personal discipline and leadership.

Conclusive remarks

Bernard of Clairvaux’s *On Consideration* is much more than series of letters addressed to Pope Eugen III. As it has been argued, it is a complex philosophical work of practical metaphysics, with a complex theory of regionalization of being, that anticipates existentialist categories like *Eigenwelt*, *Mitwelt*, and *Umwelt*. By linking Bernard’s thought to both Boethius’ *Consolation* and Augustinian love, the paper has shown how consideration operates as a fundamental

⁸⁹ Ibid., 69.

⁹⁰ The use of the word “wanderer” although correct lexicographically, is wrong philosophically. Merriam-Webster states that “to wander” means “to move about without a fixed course, aim, or goal,” but Augustine’s *Viator*, has a goal: the Fatherland, The City of God.

⁹¹ Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, I, 4, E-Book <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/augustine/doctrine.html>.)

attunement, aiming toward practical philosophy, self-discipline, and leadership, with strong metaphysical premises. Thus, Bernard's treatise is not merely a medieval manual for monastic reflection, but a proto-existential cartography of being that remains strikingly relevant. Consideration, in this sense, is all of it: a spiritual discipline, philosophical method, a practical application of metaphysical insights — uniting reflection and action, self and the world.