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## The question of values and the concept of the “person” in the Byzantine thought of the Palaeologan Renaissance

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### **Abstract**

In this article we focus on the third chapter of George Pachymeres’ *Paraphrasis of Dionysius the Areopagite’s De divinis nominibus*, emphasizing the second and third paragraphs. The aim is to highlight the concept of “person” and “personality” in the context of the theological atmosphere of Eastern Christianity and, specifically, of the Dionysian tradition. Taking into account what the Byzantine thinker elaborates on Hierotheus, we shed light on the way whereby the question of values in human beings as “persons” who decide to follow a certain example is defined. This question derives from the degree of participation in the divine mystery and revelations. In any case, it is not a matter of class distinction but of different degrees of understanding divine reality, which is shaped by how divine gifts are assimilated by human “persons”.

**Keywords:** Hierotheus, person, George Pachymeres, *Paraphrasis, De divinis nominibus*

## Introduction

George Pachymeres (1242-1310), one of the most important representatives of the Palaeologan Renaissance, belongs to what we define as the Dionysian tradition. He is one of the main Byzantine philosophers, thinkers, and scholars who, through extensive commentaries, have brought out and integrated into their work the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite, first mentioned by Severus at the end of 532 AD. Pachymeres possesses the necessary cognitive prerequisites for a fruitful engagement of philosophical conceptualization and methodology with Christian issues.<sup>1</sup> Contextually speaking, the age in which he lived and wrote ascribed to his intellectual works a new style; he managed to introduce into his philosophy valid proposals of methodological models. He represents the theoretical development that had preceded and followed Photius. Finally, he delivers an extremely multi-dimensional work founded on the principles of rationality and formal logic.

His *Paraphrasis* of *De divinis nominibus* of Dionysius the Areopagite is a genuine product of the period of Byzantine humanism, in the context of which the thinker made use of the Platonic, Aristotelian, and Neoplatonic traditions. In the third chapter of his *Paraphrasis*, Pachymeres, by raising the question of prayer in relation to man's attempt to approach God, demonstrates that knowledge of the divine is not of cosmic order; that is, it is not subject to theoretical autonomy and the self-sufficiency of scientific subjectivism. In his text, there exists an extreme whole of principles, which highlight factors of established cognitive behavior. Herein, Pachymeres

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<sup>1</sup> Regarding the personality and work of his, cf. B. N. Tatakis, *The Byzantine Philosophy*, transl. in Greek E. Kalpourtzi, *Εταιρεία Σπουδών Νεοελληνικού Πολιτισμού και Γενικής Παιδείας*: Athens 1977, 223-224. Ch. Ath. Terezis-L. Chr. Petridou, *Philosophical and Theological questions in late Byzantium*, St. Sebastian Press: California 2020, 9-13. Other personalities included in the Dionysian tradition are Leontius of Byzantium, Maximus the Confessor, John Damascene, Theodore the Studite and Gregory Palamas. This tradition is not limited to the East, but also includes Western thinkers such as Scotus Eriugena, Thomas Aquinas and Albert the Great.

attempts to avoid the construction of secularized theological schemas, which subordinate the divine to the terms of the effect. He considers Hierotheus a particularly influential personality. This is a person to whom the Dionysian works dedicate a part of their elaboration, glorifying his spiritual superiority. It is this tradition that uses Hierotheus as an example of human cognitive inadequacy in divine matters. It is no coincidence, therefore, that Pachymeres insists on Hierotheus, even eight centuries after the composition of the *De divinis nominibus*, as a typical example of a “person” who owns certain values. Through Hierotheus and what is said about him, we will therefore follow how Pachymeres outlines the properties and qualities of the “person” who follows the pattern of Christ’s thoughts and actions.

It is worth mentioning that Hierotheus was one of the presbyters, who in the early church were considered to occupy a position between the Apostles and the Bishops. An extremely respectable citizen in the city of Athens, he was a member of the Council of the Senate of the Supreme Court, with a profound theological and philosophical knowledge (he had studied at the Platonic Academy). Afterwards, he became a consecrated Bishop. He wrote numerous hymns and theological treatises. In addition, he was distinguished for his oral teaching. According to the Dionysian tradition, Hierotheus was present in Jerusalem at the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.<sup>2</sup> In this article, we will attempt to discuss the relevant line of reasoning of George Pachymeres (cf. *Paraphrasis of De divinis nominibus*, P.G.3, 688 D-692 D). We will also highlight how Hierotheus is depicted. In other words, we will explain how the Byzantine thinker approaches the hierarch and, simultaneously, on how the question of values in a person is generally defined in the Byzantine Renaissance<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. *De divinis nominibus*, P.G.3, 681 C-D and *Paraphrasis...*, P.G.3, 689 C-D.

<sup>3</sup> Considering the concept of “person” in Eastern Christianity, cf. Ch. Terezis, *Σπουδή στον Γρηγόριο Νύσσης: Θεολογικές και Ανθρωπολογικές θεμελιώσεις της έννοιας «πρόσωπον»*, Ennoia: Athens 2013. Cf. also, Ch. Yiannaras, *Το πρόσωπο και ο έρωας*, Ikaros: Athens 2017.

## 1. The divine inspiration and spiritual superiority of Hierotheus

In the second paragraph of the third chapter,<sup>4</sup> Pachymeres interrupts the discussion of the divine names –and, in particular, of the Good, which he elaborates on in the previous paragraph<sup>5</sup>–, to investigate all the things related to the pious and theological writings of Hierotheus, who regarding his spiritual value is placed immediately after Paul. This change in direction has a deeper meaning. It is necessary to clarify how the supreme divine states, which come from a personal God, are assimilated by human “persons”, which preserve their special identity. Thus, the texture of the immanent, which has theoretical foundations and performances, comes up for consideration. As Pachymeres admits, while this leading teacher delivered the *Θεολογικαὶ στοιχειώσεις*, the subsequent theologians did not content themselves with this treatise but proceeded to others, among which is the present one<sup>6</sup>. This was a later activity of Hierotheus’ works, which arose from the need to clarify certain questions concerning divine reality. This means that the theologians after Hierotheus relied on his teachings, which included all the theological questions but did

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 688 D-692 A.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 688 A-D.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 688 D: «Καὶ τοῦτο δ’ ἴσως ἀπολογοῦμεν, ὅτι τοῦ κλεινοῦ Ἱεροθέου τὰς θεολογικὰς στοιχειώσεις συναγάγοντος, ἡμεῖς δὲ συνεγραψάμεθα ἄλλας τε πραγματείας, καὶ ταύτην τὴν θεολογίαν, ὡς οὐχ ἱκανῶν ἐκείνων ὄντων». As Pachymeres himself admits in this sentence, Hierotheus was a great personality with a thorough knowledge on theological issues. What he delivered to the next generations was so great that no one ever felt capable of commenting anything on them. This was both due to their piety and recognition to the greatness of Hierotheus. The second thing that arises through his own sentence is that there is a whole tradition of theologians, among which Pachymeres places also himself, after Hierotheus, who attempted to discuss theological questions, but they did not feel as equals to Hierotheus. With the term “subsequent theologians” we mean those men who come after Hierotheus until Pachymeres. So, Pachymeres, since he was a polymath person, was aware of the previous tradition, both the theological and the philosophical one and attempts to explain in a more detailed matter the theological issues which had already been discussed.

not enter into details. This is the reason some theological questions, even though Hierotheus had addressed them, required more explanations. Such questions gave the opportunity to the subsequent theologians to write their works utilizing methods of analysis, interpretation, and philosophical concepts that could develop important questions. Besides, among the relevant tradition that is born out of Hierotheus's teaching is the Dionysian tradition, in which Pachymeres is also placed. For instance, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite needed to compose *De divinis nominibus* to provide answers to some questions that were the heart of the appearance of some heresies. But, Pseudo-Dionysius, according to what Pachymeres says, did not add anything new compared to Hierotheus' teachings. He only offered a detailed analysis, striving to offer solutions to the spread of heresies, which had already appeared in Ionia.<sup>7</sup> So, if Hierotheus had gone through theological questions in even greater detail, there would not be a well-founded impression that they should be discussed more scientifically<sup>8</sup>. However, this erroneous view is criticized by Pachymeres; it has led to the repetition of what has already been said, thus doing violence to the spirituality of Hierotheus, who taught in an experienced and scientific manner, formulating brief but crucial teachings.<sup>9</sup> It is important to note

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 608 A, where we read: « Τὸ παρὸν βιβλίον ὁ μέγας συντίθησι Διονύσιος πρὸς τὸν ἐν ἀγίοις Τιμόθεον, τὸ τοῦ μεγάλου Παύλου μαθητὴν, Ἐφέσου ἐπίσκοπον παρ' ἐκείνου καταστάνατα. Ὅς, ἐπειδὴ τότε αἱ τῶν ἐν Ἰωνίᾳ φιλοσόφων αἰρέσεις ἤκμαζον, καὶ πολλὰ εἶχε τὰς διαλεκτικὰς ἐπηρείας παρ' ἐκείνων ὁ ἅγιος, γινώσκων τὸν μέγαν Διονύσιον σοφὸν καὶ τὴν ἔξω σοφίαν, σοφὸν καὶ τὴν θεῖαν καὶ ἱερὰν, τῷ μεγάλῳ Παύλῳ κατὰ ταύτην μαθητεύσαντα, καὶ πολλὰ ἐσχολακώτα ταῖς θεαῖς Γραφαῖς, ἀξιοὶ παρ' αὐτοῦ διδασχθῆναι τὰ ὑποτεταγμένα· ὃ δὴ καὶ γίνεται».

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 689 A: «Καὶ γὰρ εἵπερ ἐκεῖνος περὶ τούτων λεπτομερεστερώς ἠξίωσε διελθεῖν, οὐκ ἂν ἡμεῖς εἰς τοσοῦτον ἢ μανίας ἢ σκαιότητος ἐληλύθαμεν, ὡς οἰηθῆναι ἐπιβαλεῖν τοῖς θεοῖς ἐπιστημονικώτερον, ὥστε δις τὰ αὐτὰ λέγειν».

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 689 A, where Pachymeres notes in these exact words, including also himself: «...ὥστε δις τὰ αὐτὰ λέγειν, καὶ ἀδικεῖν φίλον ἅμα καὶ διδάσκαλον καὶ ἡμᾶς τέως, τοὺς μετὰ τὸν Παῦλον μαθητευθέντας αὐτῷ, ὑφαρπάζειν τὰ ἐκείνου καὶ ὡς ἴδια γράφειν». In this passage, one should pay attention to the words «δις τὰ αὐτὰ λέγειν» which means a clear repetition of what Hierotheus had already taught, as

that from an ecclesiastical point of view, Hierotheus motivated other teachers to develop the intellectual power that he had already possessed as a “person” who had assimilated the divine gifts in order to illuminate the souls of those who were new to the Christian religion<sup>10</sup>. However, similar advice (to interpret things aiming at divine illumination) holds in every era. A person who attempts to understand the divine matters needs a teacher as well as divine illumination to avoid mistakes and misinterpretations.

Going even further, Pachymeres stresses that Hierotheus is recognized as a teacher of perfect thoughts, which only the perfect are capable of comprehending<sup>11</sup>. So, the notion of perfection here relates exclusively to the degree of understanding and interpretation that an enlightened theologian can attain, ending up experiencing theological revelations. The view is typically expressed in metaphorical terms: «στερεά τροφή» (solid food) is for the perfect so that perfection is required for one to be able to receive it or, rather, to give it to others<sup>12</sup>. So, we could say that Hierotheus is a “person” who is quite close to the divine issues and has a special communication with God. Respect for the “person” of Hierotheus is further strengthened by the fact that Hierotheus’

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well as to the last phrase «ὡς ἴδια γράφειν», which means that nothing new was added to Hierotheus teachings by the theologians who came after him.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 689 A: «Ἄλλ’ ἐπειδὴ πρεσβυτικῶς καὶ ἐπιστημονικῶς εἶπεν ἐκεῖνος, καὶ συντόμους καὶ κεφαλαιώδεις τὰς διδασκαλίας πεποίηκεν, ἐγκελευόμενος καθ’ ἕκαστον καὶ ἡμῖν, καὶ τοῖς ἑτέροις τῶν νεοτελῶν ψυχῶν διδασκάλοις, καθ’ ὅσον ἐνὶ ἀναπτύξαι καὶ διακρίναι τὰς συνοπτικὰς καὶ δι’ ὀλίγον ἐκφράσεις τῆς ἐνιαίας ἐκείνου καὶ νοερωτάτης δυνάμεως». Special attention we need to pay in the term «νεοτελῶν ψυχῶν», for these are new in Christian teaching that need to be illuminated by learning the Christian doctrine and generally the Christian message.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 689 B: «Ταύτη τοι καὶ ἡμεῖς τὸν μὲν ἅγιον Ἱερόθεον, ὡς τελείων διανοιῶν διδάσκαλον, τοῖς τελείοις ἀφορίζομεν». Considering the concept of «διδάσκαλος» and how it is used and refers to Hierotheus, cf. R. Roques, *L’univers dionysien. Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys*, Montaigne: Aubier 1954, 119.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 689 B: «Ὅπόσον δὲ ἔχει ἐκεῖνος τὸ τέλειον, ἐν ᾧ ἐστιᾶν ἑτέρους τὴν στερεὰν τροφήν, ὅπου γε καὶ ἡμεῖς λεγόμεθα τέλειοι, ὡς τῆς τοιαύτης στερεᾶς τροφῆς μεταλαμβάνειν ἤξιωμένοι;»

teachings were considered the most important after the teachings of the Apostles. So, the spiritual hierarchy in which Hierotheus is placed as a spiritual teacher is quite high, since he is the successor of a tradition that Jesus Christ established.

From this, it becomes clear that human beings must have a presbyterial power for an evidential, unconcealed and unexpressed understanding of issues, which ontologically transcend them<sup>13</sup>. This presbyterial power needs to combine theoretical and practical virtues when it comes to theological issues and religious worship. As an aside, it should be noted that the rank of a presbyter has a special place in the early Church, located among the apostles and their successor bishops. These individuals were chosen because of the qualities they displayed and which they had the proper realism to apply on a case-by-case basis. In other words, they were also characterized by the qualification of *kairos*. Concerning the aforementioned adjectives of the understanding of the historical and systematic presences, it is argued that the full viewing and integration into established theoretical schemes of spiritual scholars is realized only through the evidential contemplation of the divine revelations, i.e. through experience, which of course can also be described with elements of insight, as post-sensory reductions. Similarly, the explanation and learning, which constitute the next stage after the reception and formulation, are, according to Pachymeres, largely appropriate for the lower holy men<sup>14</sup>. It is also mentioned that the leaders after Hierotheus followed his teaching, without adding anything else to his interpretation<sup>15</sup>. Their sole theoretical aim was simply to formulate in more detail what had already been expressed and formed a tradition. Gnoseologically speaking, it is interesting that all human beings do not have the same theoretical capabilities. So each one of

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 689 B: «Ὁρθῶς οὖν εἶπομεν τὸ, τὴν μὲν αὐτοπτικὴν καὶ ἀνεπικάλυπτον, καὶ ἐμφανεστέραν κατανόησιν, καὶ τὴν κεφαλαιώδη διδασκαλίαν, πρεσβυτικῆς δεῖσθαι δυνάμεως».

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 689 B: «τὴν δὲ διασάφησιν καὶ ἐκμάθησιν ἀρμόζειν τοῖς ὑφειμένοις ἡμῖν».

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 689 B-C: «Ἐπιτετήρηται γοῦν ἡμῖν, ὥστε ὅσα δὴ σαφῶς παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ Ἱεροθέου διηυκρίνηται, μηδὲ ὅπως ἐγχεχειρηκέναι καὶ οἷον φαίνεσθαι ταυτολογεῖν».



them communicates with other human beings and God in a different way<sup>16</sup>.

Finally, the Byzantine thinker, since he attempts to emphasize the divine inspiration and the spiritual superiority of Hierotheus, that is, as a “person” with a recognized value, discusses the events during the gathering of the divine fathers at the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. In this way, he enters the history of the New Testament era. Therefore, on that day the hierarchs felt that their supreme duty was to praise the divine infinite goodness of the thearchic weakness, that is, the volitional agreement of God to receive a body without receiving the sin. This is incarnation. At this point, the great Hierotheus appeared as superior to all the holy men –that is, the men who initiate in sacred things–, for he placed himself outside his body and participated in the events through experience. So all those who were present –whether they knew him or not, or, more correctly, whether they were aware of his power or not– confirmed that he was divinely inspired<sup>17</sup>. Under these circumstances, it is clear that rationality cannot impose a one-dimensional function, for it is related and sometimes it is covered by intuitive-mystical elements<sup>18</sup>. And when it comes to these mystical elements, it arises the function of ecstasy. Through this narration, Pachymeres insists on this ecstasy, which he considers an existential matter which relies on the degree to which a human being is activated to communicate with God.

<sup>16</sup> Concerning gnoseology and the way it works in the context of the Dionysian tradition, cf. Ch. Terezis, *Η θεολογική γνωσιολογία της ορθόδοξης Ανατολής*, Grigoris: Athens 1993.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 689 C-D: «Ἐπεὶ καὶ παρ’ αὐτοῖς τοῖς θεολήπτοις πατράσιν (ὅτε συμπαρήμεν ἐκείνοις καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς κοιμήσεως τῆς παναγίας Δεσποίνης ἡμῶν θεοτόκου), ἐδόκει δὲ κατὰ τὴν θείαν ὑμνησαι τοῦς ἱεράρχας ὡς ἕκαστος εἶχε δυνάμως τὴν ἀπειροδύναμον ἀγαθότητα τῆς θεαρχικῆς ἀσθενίας, τῆς ἐκουσίου δηλονότι τοῦ Θεοῦ ἄχρι σαρκὸς χωρὶς ἀμαρτίας συγκαταβάσεως, πάντως ἐκράτει τῶν ἱερομυστῶν ὁ μέγας Ἱερόθεος, ὅλος ὢν ὥσπερ ἔκδημος ἐκ τοῦ σώματος, ὅλος ἐξιστάμενος ἑαυτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ὕμνοις, καὶ πάσχων τὴν πρὸς τὰ ὑμνούμενα κοινωνίαν, παρὰ πάντων καὶ τῶν γνωρίμων καὶ τῶν μὴ γνωρίμων θεόληπτος ἐκρίνετο».

<sup>18</sup> On the mystical theology, cf. Vl. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, James Clarke and Co., Ltd: Cambridge 2005.

## 2. The realization through Hierotheus of man's cognitive deficiency about the formulation of words concerning the divine

At this point, Pachymeres thinks it is necessary not to discuss the details of what took place secretly during the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, because either they are known or, for the majority of people, they have remained secret. Besides, there are not many relevant written testimonies<sup>19</sup>. He wishes, instead, to emphasize the description of the theological superiority of Hierotheus over other sacred teachers, which is differentiated and presents an excellent performance in several points. The occasion of its prominence was a speech to crowds, to orient them towards godliness. To further emphasize the excessive degree of Hierotheus' knowledge of the divine things about the others, Pachymeres compares him to a sun whose brilliance would be impossible to sense by a human being with a direct movement of his eyes<sup>20</sup>. Thus, from the outset, he describes Hierotheus as a God-bearing quality that could be associated with leading conquests for Theoretical and Practical reasons.

As Pachymeres explained, this fact led the others to a degree of self-knowledge and understanding of their capabilities, according to the Delphic command of *γνώθι σαυτόν*, since they could become aware of their cognitive deficiency, regarding the understanding and formulation of the divine things. This cognitive inadequacy means that theologians are inferior to

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 692 A-B: «Καὶ ἵνα σοι παραλείψωμεν τὰ πολλὰ ὡς ἄρρήτα τοῖς πολλοῖς, καὶ σοι ἐγνωσμένα, ἢ γοῦν ἐγνωσμένα, ὅτι εἰσὶν ἄρρήτα καὶ μυστικά· ἢ ὅτι σοι ἐγνωσμένα, ὡς ὄντι ὑπὲρ τοὺς πολλοὺς, καὶ θεῖω».

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 692 B: «ὑπερεῖχε τοὺς πολλοὺς τῶν ἱερῶν διδασκάλων κατὰ πολλοὺς τρόπους, οἷς ἂν σεμνύνοιτο ὁ θεῖος διδάσκαλος, ὥστε οὐκ ἂν ποτε πρὸς τοιοῦτον ἥλιον ἀντωπεῖν ἐνεχειρήσαμεν». In this passage, we see the method of analogy, which Pachymeres uses quite often. On an extensive elaboration of the method of analogy, cf. P. Ricoeur, *La métaphor vive*, Édition du Seuil: Paris 1975.

divine men, such as Hierotheus, in disposition and science<sup>21</sup>. Hierotheus' great quality was insight, which was immediate and was acquired after a long attempt to liberate his selfhood. So, he is a "person" who would have used the divine gifts to the utmost extent.

Finally, Pachymeres draws the following conclusion: one could say that theologians should not hear and discuss anything that has to do with the divine, not only if those who listen to them do not know these things but also when they do know them<sup>22</sup>. However, this preoccupation finally takes place because of the realization that it is not fair to neglect the possible divine knowledge that man could attain because he participated in the divine grace. After all, man is asked as a "person" to make use of the talents that have been granted to him. Extending, we would emphasize that man should not be led, on the one hand, to theoretical autonomies –that is, he should not make theories on his own, but in the case of Theology he has to rely on the divine texts– and, on the other, to the self-sufficiency of his scientific subjectivism. After all, knowledge of the divine is not of a cosmic order. And this conclusion is grounded in the fact that the divine mystery is by nature inconceivable. Moreover, it is emphasized that it is aesthetically remarkable to share the divine mysteries with others to feel that they are part of them. The natural predispositions of the divine angels –who, on the one hand, are in constant communication with the divine theory which is appropriate to their ontological status and, on the other hand, assure the benefit of the transmission of this knowledge– lead in this direction<sup>23</sup>. On the other hand, this knowledge and

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 692 B: «Ἡμεῖς γὰρ κατὰ τό· Γνωθὶ σαυτόν, ἑαυτῶν αἰσθανόμεθα, ὡς οὔτε νοῆσαι ἱκανῶς τὰ θεῖα χωροῦμεν, οὔτε εἰπεῖν. Πόρῳ δέ ἐσμεν τῆς ἕξεως καὶ ἐπιστήμης τῶν ἱερῶν ἀνδρῶν».

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 692 B-C: «πολλὴν γὰρ ἂν εὐλάβειαν εἶχομεν καὶ εἰς τὸ μηδὲν ἀκούειν ἢ λέγειν περὶ τῶν θεῶν, μὴ ὅτι γε ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀγνοουμένοις, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀκριβῶς γινωσκομένοις, εἰ μὴ κατὰ νοῦν εἶχομεν».

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 692 C: «Καὶ εἰς τοῦτο ἡμᾶς ἔπεισαν, ὅτι καλὸν ἐστὶ δηλαδὴ τὸ μεταδιδόναι καὶ ἑτέροις τῆς ἐνδεχομένης γνώσεως, αἱ φυσικαῖ ἐφέσεις τῶν θεῶν ἀγγέλων ἐφετικῶς αἰεὶ γλιχόμεναι τῆς προσηκούσης θείας θεωρίας».

the way in which it should be approached are also presented in the divine Scriptures, which also follow a certain order regarding their books. This order suggested in the divine Scriptures prevents curiosity, and meddlesomeness –or conceptual technicity– about that which exceeds human capacities. For instance, in the Old Testament we read «ὕψηλότερά σου μὴ ζήτηι, καὶ βαθυτέρα σου μὴ ἐρεύνα»<sup>24</sup>. These sentences suggest a clear boundary. Correspondingly, the divinely inspired texts motivate the transmission of the doctrines according to the apostolic saying «ἃ ἤκουσας παρ’ ἐμοῦ, ταῦτα παράθου πιστοῖς ἀνθρώποις»<sup>25</sup>. Given that this has been said by Apostle Paul, who follows Jesus Christ’s teaching and example of life, it becomes clear that the Christological direction in both Theoretical and Practical reason, through mediations of course, is explicit. And as the context of the Christian teaching is emphasized –and affects the specific content of the names– an independent anthropological attempt is not suggested here as well. So, the man who has been proven that is appropriate, functions as the middle between God and human beings, utilizing precisely the qualities he had received from God.

At the end of the third chapter, Pachymeres stresses how important is to obey these suggestions regarding how one should approach divine issues so that those who can rise to the highest levels of knowledge will not be left helpless<sup>26</sup>. Hence, they are asked to actualize what they possess as “persons” from God. This explains the reason that (according to Pachymeres) more treatises on the divine issues must be written, which would explain in a more detailed way Hierotheus’ teachings. However, Pachymeres points out that

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Sir*, 3.21.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *2 Tim*, 2.2.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 692 C-D: «Ταῖς τοιαύταις πειθόμενοι παραίνεσσει, πρὸς τὴν ἐφικτὴν τῶν θείων εὐρεσιν μὴ ἀποδειλιάσαντες, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἔτι δυναμένους εἰς τὰ κρείττονα καὶ ὑψηλότερα τῆς ἡμετέρας ἕξω καὶ δυνάμεως ἀναδραμεῖν, ἀβοηθήτους οὐ φέροντες καταλιπεῖν ὡς τυχόν, ἐκ ταύτης δὴ τῆς ἡμετέρας χαμερποῦς διδασκαλίας ἀναχθήσθαι μελλόντων τινῶν εἰς ὑψηλότεραν γνῶσιν».

nothing new can be added to what already exists<sup>27</sup>. In general, we should acknowledge that the text as a whole follows specific principles and reveals factors of cognitive behavior, which must not exceed ontological limits. If this is not respected, a secularized type of theology could be introduced, which would subordinate the uncreated to the conditions of the created. Or, else, the cognitive and religious subject would actually follow an arrogant idealism.

### Conclusions

Based on what we have examined, we find that George Pachymeres sheds light on the concept of “person” in the way in which it is signified in the Christian context of a tradition that starts from Dionysius the Areopagite. In particular, we can draw the following conclusions:

1. The degree of perfection in understanding divine matters is related to the way a “person” assimilates divine gifts and cognitively conquers the theology of transcendence through the evidential experience of the divine revelations. In this way, a spiritual order is formed which also defines the degree of proximity to the divine transcendence. This order includes those who teach but also those who are taught. Those who teach seem to be from a gnoseological point of view superior to those who are taught. So, a “person”, like Hierotheus, can enter into issues which others cannot understand or discuss. To describe this in theoretical terms, a “person” who utilizes the divine gifts can move beyond the boundaries of apophatic and affirmative theology. They are included in the realm of superlative theology.

2. Hierotheus is a “person” who acquires some specific values. His focus on God and the divine gifts that he has received from Him makes him a capable theologian who can inspire all those who hear his teachings. Moreover, his teachings do not come from an autonomous theory that he himself handles. They come as a divine illumination, which he

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 692 D: «νέον μὲν τοι καὶ ξένον οὐ τολμῶντες εἰσηγεῖσθαι καὶ διδάσκειν».

earns due to his "personal" struggle to approach God. In this case, the question of the values of the "person" is related to the question of proximity to divine matters, which in great divine personalities come through ecstasy. That is to say, certain "persons", like Hierotheus, turn their ecstatic experience into an epistemological and moral example through the way they project it to others as well as through the way they think, act and live. In this way, they broaden the existential horizons of the ecclesiastical body. They even strengthen faith in a reality which is not directly empirically comprehensible to this body.

3. These persons have assimilated the property of "the image" to the fullest extent; that is, their freedom to follow whatever path they want and activate it in such a way that they open other paths for "likeness" not only for themselves but also for other believers. Hierotheus is a "person" who has chosen to come close to God and be a teacher for others, not only in special theological issues but also regarding moral stances in life. So, here too the relevant process is accomplished cognitively and morally or generally existentially. The degree of knowledge of God is related to the degree of self-knowledge of the persons in terms of their awareness of their cognitive insufficiency and their absolute subordination to the divine.

4. Because of this power of seeing God and because of their interventions by which they offer the real meaning of situations, these "persons" are considered to hold evaluative and functional primacy among the hierarchs. Therefore, they can give fulfilling powers to the lower cognitive orders. In this way, an ecclesiastical hierarchy is formed, within which the ontological qualities which are provided by God are transformed into a functional capacity that reflects the degree to which the possibilities for reading theophanies are activated. In this sense, the ecclesiastical hierarchy is considered an institution through which these persons receive and utilize the divine gifts and serve as an example for other "persons" who had been also created according to the "image" of God and need to understand how they could accomplish the eschatological purpose of their existence, that is, the "likeness".

As an extension, we would contend that through Hierotheus and his example, Pachymeres attempts not only to praise this

particular hierarch but also to present the requirements for a “person” who is placed in the context of Eastern Christianity to come closer to the divine mystery. Undoubtedly, this divine mystery is covered by apophatism. But, the more someone realizes the qualities of “personhood” he has received and the more he utilises the free will he owns to combine theoretical and practical reason according to a particular style of thought, action and living the more he understands the divine issues.

