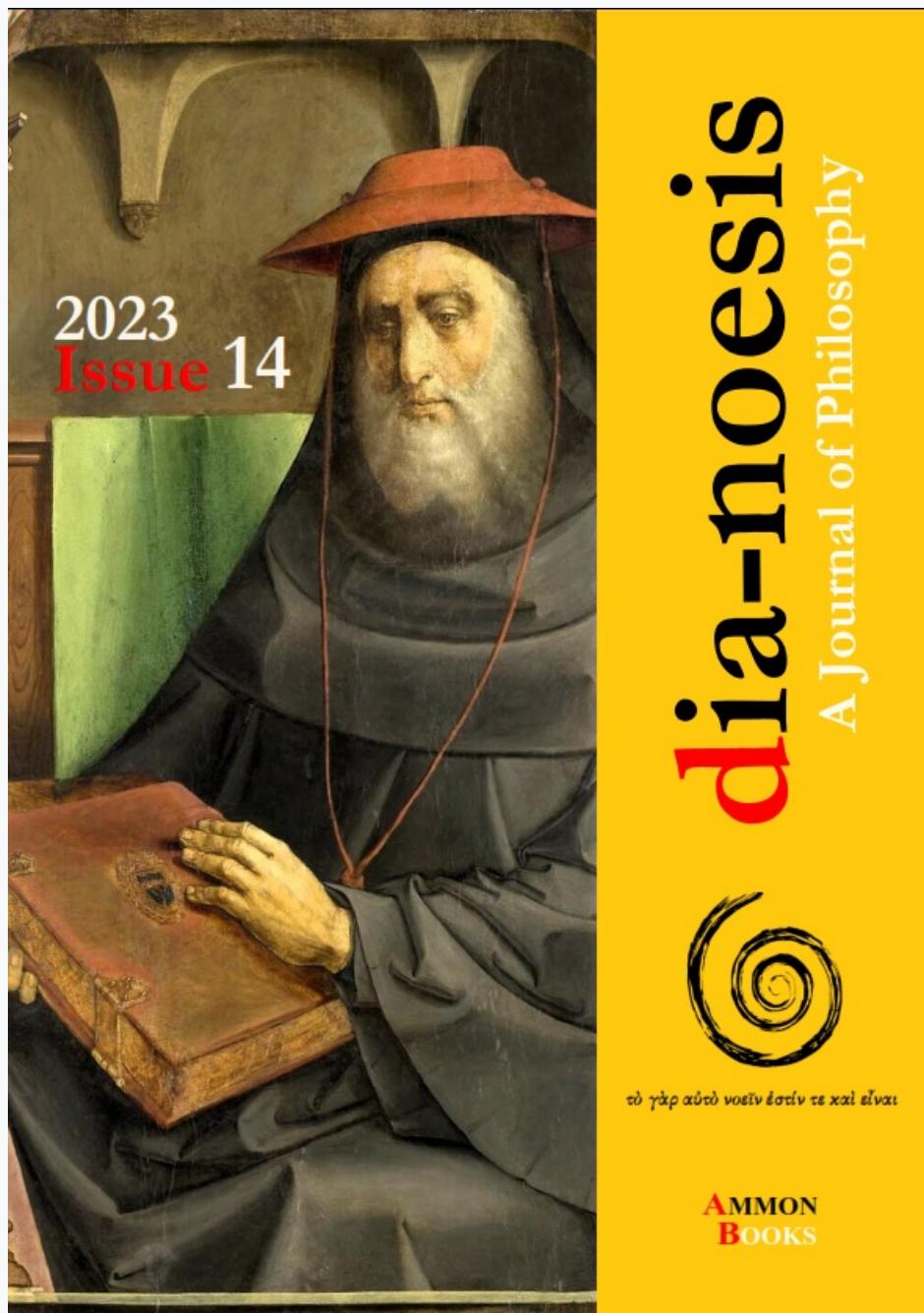
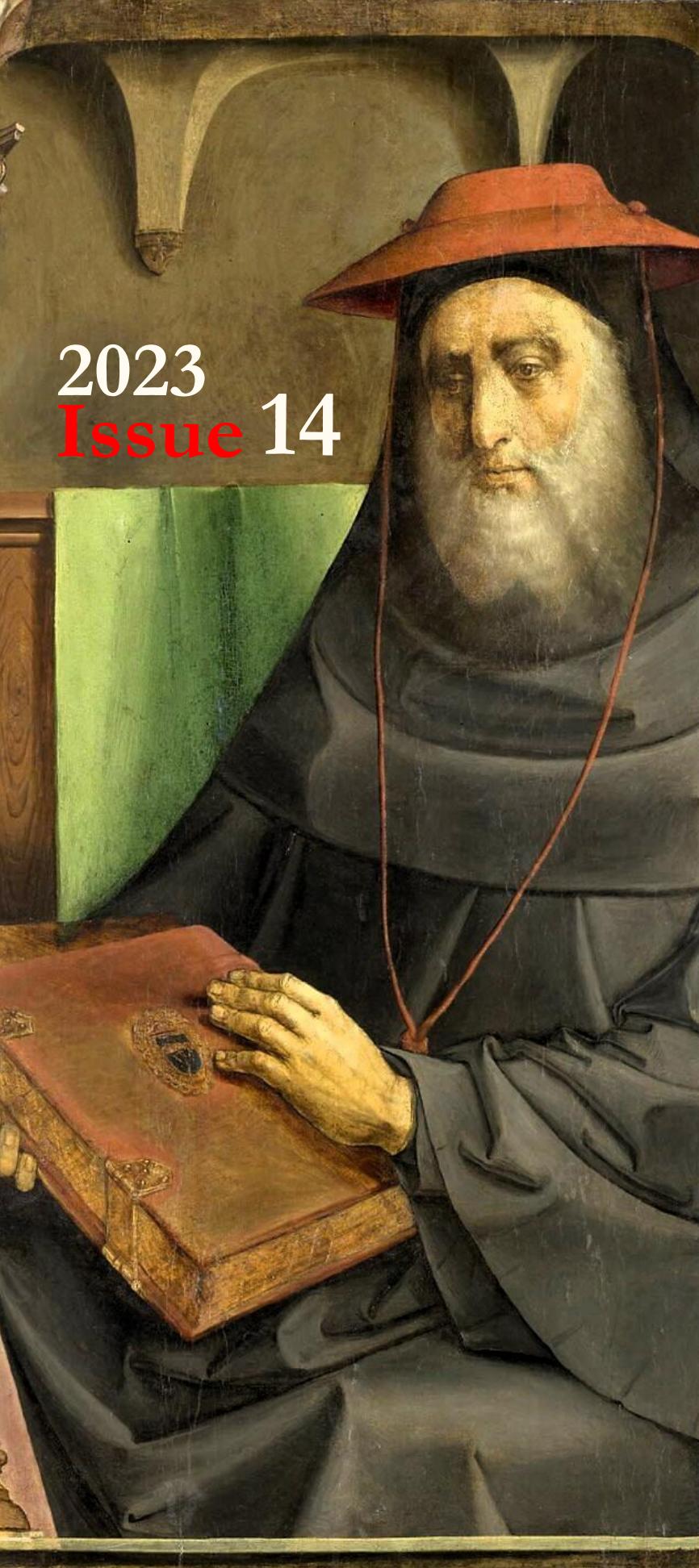


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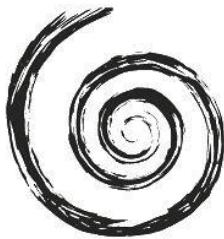
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The Byzantine World
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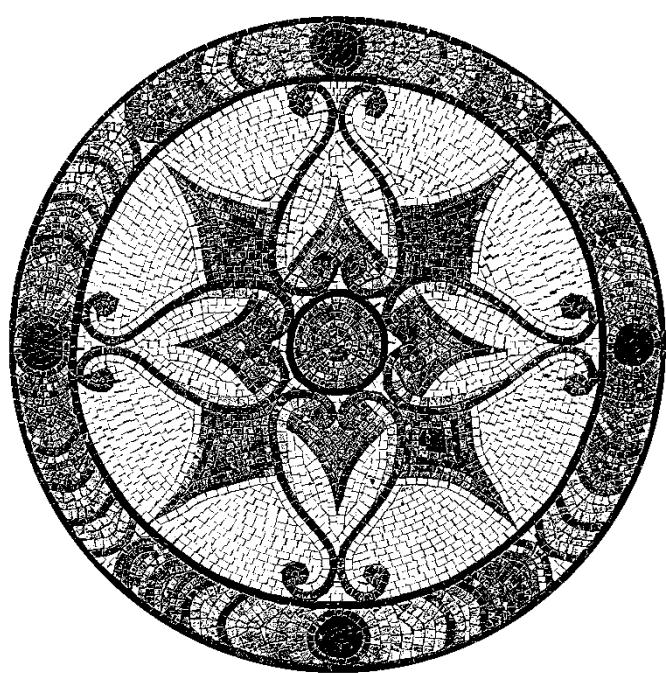
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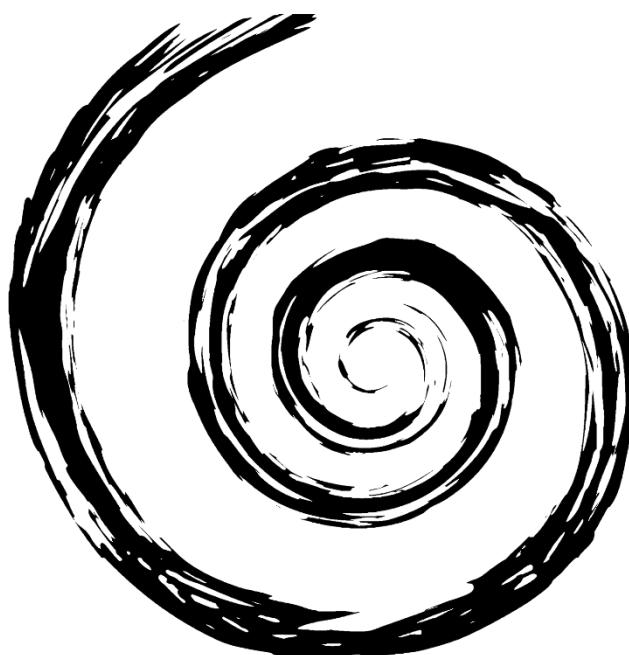
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THEOPOLITICAL FIGURES

Scripture, Prophecy, Oath,
Charisma, Hospitality

Montserrat Herrero



Edinburgh Studies in Comparative Political Theory & Intellectual History

**Georges Pletho Gemistus:
Reforming Byzantium
at the edge of the cliff**
*A short introduction to Pletho's
political thinking*

Panagiotis Christias,
Asssoc. Professor, University of Cyprus
christias.panagiotis@ucy.ac.cy

Abstract

Pletho's turn to the ancient Gods and Plato signifies actually a turn to the future of the national State. A well-defended country is a well-organized one. In order to be well-organized, the government and administration should be founded on the general national interest, for only national ideology brings the necessary stability and moral force to the long battle for Greek national survival. No wonder that scholars such as Sathas and Zakythinos consider him to be the first of the moderns, putting in the centre of his universe his mystical ideal of στρατιώται (soldiers).

Keywords: Pletho Gemistus, political thinking, religion, political strategy, state, constitution, political problem, government.

It is no secret to anyone that Georgius Gemistus (1355-1452) translated his name into ancient Greek as Πλήθων (stuffed), which the Dorian accent would render as Πλάθων, that of his

master, Plato. In the late Byzantine era, Pletho considered that a Greek entity, should it continue to exist, should abandon the glory of the Christian Empire of Constantinople and transform itself on the model of the ancient Greek city. This city, Pletho thought, should be placed in the Peloponnesus at Mistra, overlooking ancient Sparta, as the new capital and centre of the revived Greek entity. He wrote several letters to the sovereigns of his time, encouraging them to move in this direction. Furthermore, these *κάτοπτρα ἡγεμόνος* (*specula principi*) were bolstered by an appropriate pagan theology, articulated in Pletho's *Laws* -the last and most important work of this mediaeval sage, after his death, burned as heretical by order of the Orthodox Patriarch Gennadius. Was this scheme a return to the ancient world or an impulse toward a new modern and unsuspected world? The radicalism of Pletho's new/ancient thought is discoverable in this enigma. First of all, let us try to discern whether Pletho decided in favour of the ancient city's political form in response to his platonic readings or to the political, historical and social events of his time.

In a very original work, Tonia Kioussopoulou¹ defends the idea that in the last century of Constantinople's existence, from the Reconquest (1261) of Constantinople from the Latins to the reign of Constantinos Palaiologos, the Empire was a city governed and organized on the Italian city political model. According to Kioussopoulou, the economic and political administration of the State corresponded to those of cities such as Venice and Genoa rather than to the old imperial administration and its political pretensions. Studying the official archives of the time, Kioussopoulou persuades any well-intentioned researcher along the lines of two arguments. First, the Empire was, by its geographical condition, a city; the state was constituted by the city of Constantinople. Second, political power was not in the hands of the Emperor alone but was shared with the upcoming merchant class (necessary to administrative reality) and even the *demos*, 'the people'

¹ Τόνια Κιουσοπούλου, *Βασιλεύς ή Οικονόμος. Πολιτική εξουσία και ιδεολογία πριν την Άλωση* Πόλις Historia, Αθήνα, 2007.

(necessary to counterbalance the merchant class). At this same time, the symbolic union of the Church and the Throne had given way to hostility against Orthodox institutions, mostly due to attempts by the last emperors to unite with the Catholic Church. In other words, in its last century, the Divine Empire had become secularised and republican, resembling Venice and Florence. If Kioussopoulou's analysis is valid, and we believe it to be, then Pletho in his opening towards the city political model, was not a platonic dreamer but a sharp observer of his time and an incisive realist.

In such a reality, why harken to Plato's writings and ideals? Pletho recommends, as would have Plato, to abandon Constantinople, a naval power, and re-establish as a land power in the centre of the Peloponnesus, in ancient Sparta, then called Lacedæmon. According to Pletho, the sea and commercial activities endanger the moral health of the citizens who live and act according to merchant class ideals: profit, political disengagement, luxury, and corruption. Foreign trade and luxury were considered, by both Plato and Pletho, the two plagues of every political regime. A merchant works in his private interest, he has no home and land to protect but rather lives at sea, his ship now on one now on another wave. Ideals of the soldier-citizen and the noble landowner, on the contrary, are patriotic; their lives and prosperity depend on their country's freedom. The choice between Athens and Sparta, that is to say, Constantinople or Mistra, posed no difficult decision for Pletho to make, for he had further reason to defend his views.

The military situation of The Empire was devastating: geographically constricted, with no army of its own, merely a bunch of mercenaries in the pay of the rich commercial families and Venetian and Genoa interests to defend it, total absence of patriotism, and without the national political conscience through which the people might rally to forfend the disastrous outcome that threatened. This point deserves an additional explanation. François Masai, in his by-now classical work,

*Pletho and Mistra Platonism*², claims that the sage did not have to seek in ancient glories to rediscover the political virtue of the citizen-soldier. The enemy incarnated the image of this virtue. The Ottoman Turks were the new national patriotic force of the region. The Turkish people's obedience to ancient values –to fight for the glory of the sultan and nation- was all the example that the Byzantines had to heed. Against this moral and military force, Constantinople, defended by strangers, and worse, defended by those who would profit from its loss, the Venetian and Genoa merchant States, had little hope of survival. On the other hand, should the capital of the Greek State be moved to the centre of an arid mountainous region of classical Greece, a virtuous sovereign could, in time, reform the habits and values of his people while defending them from the enemy. The idea of fortifying the Corinthian Isthmus, a brilliant one given the circumstances, could offer the necessary time for reform. The change of capital referred to another of Plato's arguments. While the Turks were eager to take Constantinople -the treasure chest of all invaders' dreams- they would be reluctant to undertake a difficult military campaign against a well-defended and poor mountainous fortress such as Mistra. If only the national and political rebirth of the Greeks could take place in time. This desired rebirth was also the reason Pletho turned to pagan divinities, an abomination for 'Roman' Christians such as the Byzantines. Pletho was the first to reclaim Greek nationality for the emperor's subjects in the name of Greek *paideia* and Greek language (*On the Peloponnesian Things, in principle*). National identity and the land of Lacedæmon are the foundations of the Plethonian reform of the State.

Amidst the entrenched theological and political polarities of that time, pitting those who were favourable to the Union with the Pope and the Roman Church and those who strongly opposed this strategy -reductively put as emperor vs. patriarch- Pletho sought a third solution: an independent

² François Masai, *Pléthon et le platonisme de Mistra*, Les Belles lettres, Les classiques de l'humanisme, Paris, 1956.

secular Greek State; he saw what every astute observer understood. The Orthodox Church, particularly in its Hesychasm, inspired by St. Gregory Palamas, perceived its future ruler as Pope, or Turks. Its deepest interest did not include the state. Hesychasm's vision envisions the pure Christian community living under whatever is the ruler of the moment. Indeed, the Orthodox Church remained relatively free under Ottoman occupation. However, an alliance with the Pope would turn Greeks into a toy of Papal politics, notably those involving the Italian states. The political alternatives, Turks or Latins, offered no future for the nation. It became clear to Pletho that now, only a small and poor state, well administered, politically, ideologically, and economically reformed, could save the Greek Nation. However, as long as Byzantines remained Christians such a reform was impossible. To express it as would Machiavelli, he who seeks salvation in heaven neglects the glory of his country and State. Pletho proclaims laurels and glory upon Manuel Palaiologos, who freed the Peloponnesus from the Italians and restored it to Greeks "to use and to be safe" (*On the Peloponnesian Things, in principle*). His reform proposals address a great secular Prince, who will require a new religion and a new political strategy. Pagan gods were the gods of the city; Zeus, in his stoic conception of himself, was philosophical enough to avoid idolatry and strong enough to endure the political pressure and exigencies of the times. This is the spirit of Pletho's *Laws*, an attempt to reform religion for the sake of the State. As Thomas Hobbes argues, the political problem of the modern is that two rulers, the State and Church, contend: that there can be only one, the State. Pletho thought the same. He discovered, in the Neoplatonic cult, a religion dependent on the State and fortifying the morality of citizenship.

Let us now examine the spirit of Pletho's proposed economic, military and political reforms as they are expressed in his letters to the Mistra Sovereigns. As we have just seen, the principle of them all is the formation of a Greek national identity and a government devoted to the nation and the common good.

It was not common in this period to deeply consider the economic reform of states. Wealth and prosperity were to be found in the sea and commerce, outside the State, that is. Pletho pointed out that a country need not be luxurious to be rich. The soul of the (Platonic) stoic sage is autarchic; so should be the state. In its self-sufficiency, it is richer than the wealthier and most luxurious city. Self-sufficiency is the wealth of states. This is Plato's ideal in his *Laws* and the principle of the Spartan Constitution. But to achieve autarchy, one must look for internal wealth, which is the regime, the political and economic administration of the goods that the country's soil provides. We will make three observations as to the modernity of Pletho's economic proposals.

The first one reflects on the fundamentals of land ownership. In late Byzantine times, land was given to high officials and nobles, who did not always cultivate their estates. This Pletho was deemed inadmissible.

To claim land, you must render it useful to the community. In other words, Pletho argues as did John Locke in defending liberalism and private property. If you take one fruit from a tree, you take it for yourself. There is no public benefit in this act. On the other hand, if you take a parcel of land and cultivate it, the fruits will enter the country's economy and serve the general interest. In Pletho's time, Peloponnesian lands belonged to noble absentee owners, with no ensuing public benefit. He proposed, in opposition to the landed aristocracy, to redistribute land, thus making agriculture the pillar of the future state's economy. He conceived a consecrated relationship between the land and those who worked it, the cultivators or *αὐτούργοι*, those who nourish their fellowmen.

The second observation refers to state fiscal policy. The policy of the empire was to collect numerous small or big taxes at arbitrary times of the year. Pletho argued that taxes should be collected annually, following the harvest –the opportune time. Pletho espoused taxation in proportion to wealth, what is now called graduated taxation. He also argues that taxes should be in kind, not money, which he knew was often counterfeited, an increasing problem, which devalued real tax

receipts. The German early twentieth-century philosopher Georg Simmel, in his *Philosophy of Money*, proved that money's value is relative to expectations of purchases. He also argues money ill-spent becomes counterproductive and harms rather than profits. This was exactly Pletho's *arrière-pensée* in obliging the State to tax in kind. This would stabilize the real value of tax receipts and put the administration on a predictable footing. Christos Baloglou, who studied Pletho's tax reform, found that Pletho's propositions incarnate the later Physiocrat program. In the fifth book of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, argues Baloglou, we find the physiocrats' four principles of tax collection: a taxpayer contributes according to his wealth (principle of equality), taxes are set by law, and not arbitrarily changed (principle of certainty), taxes are collected at a suitable time, realistic for the payer (principle of usefulness), tax revenue is spent with utmost economy; the State does not indulge in ad hoc taxation (principle of responsibility).

The third observation has to do with the economic and social principle of State administration: utilitarianism. All acts on behalf of the State must derive from the public utility: distribution of lands, tax collection, and even criminal law. In the last part of his treaty *On the Peloponnesian Things*, Pletho states that killing or mutilating criminal prisoners is a barbaric and useless act. He proposes to let them be useful to the community by repairing the Isthmus of Corinth walls in times of war. In this way, criminals should pay in benefit to the city for the harm that they caused to society.

These propositions show to what extent Pletho's economic open-minded program was revolutionary and modern. We have yet to consider Pletho's military and political program.

Concerning national ideology, Pletho developed a theory of the national army. The same arguments that served Machiavelli served Pletho. Only a national army can be trusted. Only citizens can value their lives less than the common interest and only citizens and landowners risk death to preserve their property and the state. So Pletho explicitly requires his 'cultivators' to choose between military service and

paying tax. In this way the principle of utility is intact. Who does not fight, feeds those who do. The unity of the city is thus preserved. But the supreme unity is preserved in the person of the sovereign and the institution of common laws.

As we have already pointed out, the regime that best suits Pletho is a constitutional monarchy, in the form, we may add, that the English People by stages, evolved. This political option assembles three essential elements: clear and immediate decision-making, sage procedures of decision-making, and constitutional security for the people. We will briefly comment on these three points.

Pletho's ideal of the State focuses on three institutions: the Monarch, the Council of Sages (a kind of senate), and the Constitution (*Nόμοι*). As Jean Bodin puts it, a sovereign ruler must be the sole authority in decision-taking if the State is to avoid conflict. No one is allowed to overthrow his decision but he is not the only one to make it. Decision-making and decision-taking are two different procedures. Sovereignty is not threatened where the emperor *must* consult. Albeit that he must consult the senate, the decision is 'taken' by him as sovereign and stands only by his authority. In this sense, we can define distinctive roles for the sovereign (the supreme authority) and the (consultative) council. On the other hand, the council's main work is law-making. Thus, its role is essential as the laws are supposed to assure security and liberty for all citizens. Needless to say, that the laws are supreme in authority, and apply also to the Sovereign. While Pletho did not explicitly distinguish the powers in terms of 'checks and balances' as did later theorists, he did assign a distinct function to each state organ. He was a judge in Lacedaemon, appointed by the emperors.

To end this brief and synthesizing introduction, a résumé of the essence of Pletho's political program is in order. *A well-defended country is a well-organized one.* To be well-organized, the government and administration should be founded on the general national interest, for only national ideology brings the necessary stability and moral force to the long battle for Greek national survival. No wonder that

scholars such as Sathas and Zakythinos consider him to be the first of the moderns, putting in the centre of his universe his mystical ideal of *στρατιῶται* (soldiers). Pletho travelled to Italy; he participated in the debates of the Firenze-Ferrara attempts at the Union of Roman Catholic and Byzantine Orthodox Churches. His ideas travelled with him. He was the main spiritual force behind the foundation of the Platonic Academy in Florence by Cosmo dei Medici. Dozens of early Renaissance scholars attended his courses and debated ideas with him. His students left Byzantium after the inevitable loss of Constantinople, which, luckily, he did not live to witness; they occupied high-ranking positions –for example, Cardinal Bessarion and Ambassador Ianus Laskaris, who taught Greek to Guillaume Budé and persuaded François Ier to create the *College des trois langues*, future *Collège de France*. They edited the great classical texts; for example, Chalcokondylis in Venice edited, and published for the first time, Homer. But it will be very difficult to appreciate the exact extent of his influence in the recent Western world.

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Neoplatonic and Gnostic Resonances in the *Martyrdom of Cyprian* of Athenais Eudocia

Markos Dendrinos,

*Professor of Informatics and History & Philosophy of
Science, Department of Archival, Library and Information
Studies, University of West Attica*
mdendr@gmail.com

Anna Griva,

*PhD, Faculty of Italian Language and Literature,
University of Athens*
annagriva@hotmail.com

Abstract:

Aelia Eudocia Augusta (formerly Athenais), wife of the emperor Theodosius II, lives at the borderline between the ancient and the Christian world and writes one of the most distinctive poetic texts of Byzantine literature. In the *Martyrdom of Cyprian*, written in Homeric language, the Saint's past, when he was a magician and initiated into a multitude of Greek mysteries, is presented in an original and remarkable way. Within this text, the resonance of philosophical ideas originating from Neoplatonism and Gnosticism is of particular interest. This article attempts to highlight these resonances in order to open a research dialogue regarding the complex network of ideas and the coexistence of different worldviews in early Byzantium.

Keywords: Aelia Eudocia Augusta, Cyprian, Martyrdom of Cyprian, Byzantine literature, Neoplatonism, Gnosticism

1. Introduction

Eudocia (401-460) can be considered the first poetess of the Byzantine world at the dawn of the Middle Ages. She was an Athenian raised as a pagan by a father who directed a school of rhetoric, but she ended up becoming empress at the side of Theodosius II when she converted to Christianity, as her position required. She was an educated woman whose work had almost been forgotten and only in the last three centuries came to light through a few dedicated scholars.

Contemporary sources about Eudocia's life are scarce. On the contrary, later sources give a multitude of biographical details, often based on fiction and folk legends, and in some cases, they can hardly be considered reliable¹. Eudocia was born around 401 in Athens to a wealthy family named Athenais. Her father, Leontios, being a famous orator, provided her with a rich education based on classical texts and instilled in her a passion for Greek culture, which she maintained throughout her life. At a very young age, after her father's death, Athenais went to the imperial court to assert her rights to the paternal estate against her brothers. It is said that she was met there by Pulcheria, sister of Theodosius II, who was immediately fascinated by her gifts: her intelligence, her education and her beauty. There the threads of history and myth begin to further intertwine . Pulcheria considered Eudocia to be a suitable bride for her brother; thus, Athenais, after being baptized a Christian, married Theodosius in 421. She bore three children, of whom only one, Eudoxia, reached adulthood.

Eudocia was a dynamic empress who played an active role in the affairs of the empire. We should not fail to mention the central role she played in the organization of Pandidactirion (425), an institution that is characterized as the first university

¹ From the Byzantine chroniclers Malalas (c. 491-578), Socrates Scholasticus (380-440) and Evagrius (536-594) we get important information, as well as from the *Paschal Chronicle* (a chronicle of an unknown author that records the events beginning from the creation of the world until AD 630).

of the Byzantine state. Her dynamism in the exercise of authority did not take long to bring her into conflict with Pulcheria, while for reasons that to this day remain rather unclear, she fell into general disfavor and became the victim of various accusations: for example, it was rumored that she entered into a relationship with the highest official of the state Paulinus (magister officiorum), a fact that some chroniclers claimed ultimately led to her "fall".

When her daughter Eudoxia married the Western Emperor Valentinian III in 437, she made a long journey from Constantinople to Jerusalem, returning to the capital in 439. During her journey, she passed through her beloved Antioch and there she declared her real belief, that she belongs to that world that Antioch continues to represent as a center of Greek education and pagan philosophy: "*Ὑμετέρης γενεῆς τε καὶ αἴματος εὑχομαι εῖναι*". In a few words, she said that she belonged to a world that was slowly fading away under the violent attacks of the single truth of Christianity. Eudocia's second trip to Jerusalem in 443 marked her definitive leave from the palace. Eudocia remained there until her death. The real reasons for this strange "exile" are historically unconfirmed.

Eudocia until the end of her life was a free spirit. She sought a policy to mitigate the aggressive attitude of the state towards the pagans, to the point where she was characterized by historians as *longa manus* of the pagans in the palace (could this be the reason for her "exile"?)². She had the same attitude towards Jews. In addition, Eudocia became involved in the disputes between the different positions on the nature of Christ by siding with the Nestorians³, while Pulcheria aligned herself with Cyril of Alexandria⁴, whose positions finally prevailed at the Council of Ephesus in 431 with the condemnation of Nestorius. Afterwards, Eudocia aligns herself with the Monophysites, in opposition to Pulcheria, again on the side of the "losers", since the Council of Chalcedon condemned

² Bevegni C., 2006: 16 ff.

³ Gierlach-Walker L. L., 2017: 84-103.

⁴ This is the well-known bishop of Alexandria, under whose tolerance or instigation the massacre of Hypatia was carried out.

Monophysitism in 451. It was not until 455 that Eudocia seemed to give in to the doctrine consolidated by the two Synods concerning the dual nature of Christ. We should not find it strange that the poetess took the position that supports the one nature of Christ (either the human or the divine), since the Greek education and the philosophical roots of Athenais are in accordance with the existence of a man who becomes a god - this also is found in the mysteries with the "deification" of the great initiates - or the descent of a divine entity to earth, as noted in the Homeric epics and ancient mythology.

Athenais-Eudocia is a gifted poetess, whom Photius praises in his *Bibliotheca*⁵. She uses the Homeric dialect and the dactylic hexameter. Eudocia is not the only one who, in late antiquity, wrote in Homeric verse and dialect; among others, the case of Nonnus is typical. He wrote the *Paraphrase of John* in dactylic hexameter, while he also wrote the *Dionysiaca* in a complicated dialect, which has been described as more difficult than the language of Homer. These demanding choices of several scholars function as a sign of intellectual continuation or as a credential for superior knowledge and refined talent. The most important works of Eudocia that have reached us are the *Martyrdom of Cyprian* and the *Homerozentones* (episodes from the life of Christ in a "Homeric style").

Cyprian of Antioch is a figure between history and legend. We know him mainly as a Saint whose prayers are recited in exorcisms, while stories have been woven around his name that touches on a recurring pattern found in the lives of Saints: he is a man devoted to magical practices, who, however, realising the weakness of his methods, eventually converted to Christianity, becoming a bishop and then a martyr for his new faith.

In her poem, Eudocia, following some elements that are also found in the hagiographies of Cyprian⁶, portrays his life with new expressive power and original imagery, emphasising his knowledge during his apprenticeship as a magician. Cyprian

⁵ Photius, among his various works he mentions, refers only two female writers, Eudocia and the historian Pamphile in the 1st century AD.

⁶ See the texts of the first christian centuries: *Confessio Cypriani*, *Conversio Cypriani*, *Passio Cypriani*. See also Bailey R., 2009.

of Eudocia is a magician who runs through every center of wisdom and pagan mystery, a passionate observer of nature, an interlocutor of demons, and a Faustian archetype at a very early time. It is noteworthy that in Book II, where Cyprian looks back on his life, there are constant references to his passion for knowledge: *I learned, I met*, he repeats as he unravels the thread of his life, while in verse 10 of the same book, we are impressed by the purity of his confession: *no one wanted to know as much as I, nor had so much passion*. Eudocia seems to be interested in saving the unknown cults through which the magician passes, perhaps because she knows that this world of ancient mysteries, divination and magical practices, of many and rare gods is slowly fading away under the religious repression. Justa, who as a Christian is renamed Justine (also recorded as Justina), becomes the motivation that leads the magician to question the power of demons and to search for a new, more effective power: it is striking that Cyprian's conversion is not presented as the result of a moral change, but as a realisation that the cross can give greater power than demonic elements. Justine does not give in to Aglaidas and to the seduction tricks that Cyprian uses. Thus, Cyprian begins to believe that Christ can offer better and stronger "spells".

The variety of demons and monstrous beings described in a special, bold poetic imagination is also impressive, as is the variety of their horrible actions, which brings to mind Dante's *Hell*, the dark world of Gothic literature, but also the long tradition of hierarchies of demons that have been cultivated in many peoples (we can refer indicatively to the imaginative demonologies of the Mesopotamians and the Persians), so that a comparative study of these sources with the work of Eudocia would be interesting.

It is worth pointing out that Cyprian and Justine turn into a unique couple according to the traditions, which brings to mind the apocryphal *Acts*, where the couple of Paul and Thecla are the protagonists⁷. A very interesting element is the

⁷ After all, Eudocia mentions Thecla in v. 113 of Book I, likening her to Justine.

erotic context that Eudocia uses, both when she describes Justine's struggle to resist sexual desires provoked to her by magical practices, and when Cyprian himself is shown to be shaken by a desire similar to that of Aglaidas. The existence of the original erotic phraseology that conveys Justine's struggle to resist her sexual instincts but also illustrates her devotion to Christ cannot help but bring to mind the texts of the later medieval female mystics of the West, such as Teresa of Avila and Catherine of Siena⁸. Thus, Eudocia emerges as a pioneering, subversive poetic voice that can also be read from the perspective of gender studies in the history of literature. As an example, we will mention verbal motifs that are scattered throughout the poem and concern the recording of this extraordinary eroticism: Justine experiences a burning desire for Christ, she is consumed by her passion for him, she marries him, she does a full-body sign of the cross, filling herself with what she desires, she puts the torch of desire for Christ inside her, she calls on Christ to penetrate her body, while sometimes under the influence of magic, she feels a burning sickness inside her (the awakening of eroticism) , which she struggles to resist by remaining the bride of Christ.

Unfortunately, Eudocia's *Martyrdom of Cyprian* has not survived in its entirety. It included the entire course of Cyprian's life in three books, but today only 900 verses of the whole work are available: the first book (421 verses) and the first 479 verses of the second book. We owe the surviving text to a single manuscript and a great publishing adventure. Around 1760, Angelo Maria Bandini, Regius Praefectus of the Laurentian Library, accidentally discovered in the manuscript Laurenziano Greco VII, 10 (11th century) the work of Eudocia, which by mistake had been placed inside the paraphrase of the Gospel of St. John by Nonnus of Panopolis. Thus, verses 100-421 of the first book and verses 1-479 of the second book come to light. Bandini published these verses twice (in 1761 and 1764) together with a Latin translation, but without a critical note⁹. The 1761 edition was followed by Migne in 1860

⁸ On the erotic context in texts of the medieval female mystics you can see also: Petroff E. A., 1994. Bell, R. M., 2002. Dufrasne D., 2009.

⁹ Bandini A. M., 1761 καὶ Bandini A. M., 1764.

in *Patrologia Graeca*. In 1897, Arthur Ludwig made another edition, applying a scientific method for the first time¹⁰.

One century later, the first part of the text (verses 1-99 of the first book) came to light through a new edition by the main contemporary researcher of Eudocia's work, Claudio Bevegni. He discovered the 99 lost verses in a manuscript now kept in the Leiden Library (Leidensis BPG 95) and published them for the first time in 1982. The verses had been lost due to the Dutch philologist Philippus Rulaeus, who, after his visit to Florence in 1674, had torn this particular part of the text from the codex to which it belonged and had transferred it with other codices and manuscripts to the Netherlands. Bevegni translated the surviving text in 2006¹¹.

In 1982 Enrica Salvaneschi translated the poem according to Ludwig's edition¹², while in 1979 a German translation of the first book by Helene Homeyer preceded it. A very recent bibliography should refer to the edition done by Brian Sowers (Center for Hellenic Studies)¹³. These were some of the main publishing and translation milestones of the *Martyrdom of Cyprian* over the centuries¹⁴. We, after seven years of intensive study and translation work, have completed the first translation of this masterpiece into modern Greek. This linguistically impervious poem echoes not only an era but also the spirit of a poet who deserves to be known to a wider audience¹⁵.

¹⁰ Ludwich A., 1897.

¹¹ Bevegni C., 2006.

¹² Bevegni C., 1982: 249-262.

¹³ Sowers B. P., 2020.

¹⁴ For an analytical bibliography about Eudocia and her work, see:
<https://sites.google.com/site/hellenisticbibliography/empire/eudocia>

¹⁵ The translation of *Martyrdom of Cyprian* into modern Greek and analytical commentary will be soon published.

2. Philosophical influences on the *Martyrdom of Cyprian*: The Worlds of Demons and the Nature of Evil in the Neoplatonists and Gnostics

In the work of Eudocia *Martyrdom of Cyprian*, the dualist Christian perception is presented. This perception concerns the constant conflict between the forces of good, that is, God, Christ, and the angels, and the forces of evil, that is, various classes of demons and monsters, who oppose the work of God. In other words, the ontological forces of the Universe are not integrated into a single plan, as was presented until then in Greek ontologies, where the origin is clearly one and everything emanates from it, even the entities that seem to serve opposing purposes. In the Christian understanding, there is an absolute rupture between good and evil, definitively separating the order of angels from the order of demons.

To understand how this transition from the unified Greek World to the radically divided Christian Universe was made, we will briefly describe the Neoplatonic and Gnostic concepts during the first Christian centuries. As we shall see, although Neoplatonism studies the problem of evil and proposes solutions for the salvation of man, it maintains the unity of being. On the other hand, Gnosticism, an inheritor of the dualistic concepts of the East, speaks of two worlds radically separated. In this view, some people, predestined for eternity, can escape from the suffocating darkness of this world and taste the true light.

2.1. Neoplatonic Influences on the *Martyrdom of Cyprian*

In the context of the Neoplatonic school, pure philosophy was cultivated along with theurgy, namely the magical invocations of gods, angels, and demons aimed at achieving specific goals. Such a context is not too far from the early life of Cyprian, who invoked various types of demons.

We will focus on two important representative Neoplatonists, who have been particularly concerned with the

problem of evil and the ontological hierarchies of angels and demons, Iamblichus (245-325 AD) and Proclus (412-485 AD). The second clearly builds on and expands the work of the first. It is reasonable to assume that Eudocia, a scholar of that period, had access to (and knowledge about) the texts of Iamblichus and possibly towards the end of her life, also of Proclus, who assumed leadership of the Platonic School in 437, after the death of Syrianus.

In the work *On the Egyptian Mysteries*¹⁶ Iamblichus provides us valuable information about gods, archangels, angels, demons, heroes, lords and souls. Proclus also gives a very detailed account of the nature and function of angels and demons, in *Platonic Theology*¹⁷, clearly influenced by the ideas of Iamblichus, as conveyed to him through Plutarch of Athens and Syrianus.

The Christian dualistic conception brought about an absolute rupture between good and evil, definitively separating the order of angels from the order of demons. But Proclus studies in a moderate and rational way the question of the existence of evil in his treatise *On the existence of evil*. Investigating whether evil has access to the ontological classes of angels, demons, and heroes, Proclus makes some important remarks about the nature of these beings, which are far from the corresponding Christian concepts of the time. Angels are the messengers of the gods who reveal their will as they communicate with their minds. Their nature is benevolent, as they are radiations of the divine good; they possess a pure good and do not accept evil. Demons arose from the power and fertility of the gods and they constitute an order which follows the order of angels. They occupy the middle position in the order of dynamic entities, while the heroes occupy the third position. In addition to demons, in essence, there are also the perfected human souls, which have ended up demons. Proclus wonders whether demons have anything to do with evil. Some speak of wicked and evil demons who lead souls to the place of punishment under the earth, those souls that come from, and are destined to reach heaven. But

¹⁶ Iamblichus, *On the Egyptian Mysteries*, 2.7-2.10.

¹⁷ Proclus, *Platonic Theology*, 7.1-7.2.

are they evil, or are they like teachers and pedagogues, who some people call wicked, while they simply take it upon themselves to correct mistakes and not allow students who make mistakes to get a higher position than they deserve? Proclus goes on to say that we similarly consider evil those who stand in front of the shrines and keep out the impure, forbidding them from participating in the sacraments held within. If, therefore, some of the demons that exist in the World lead souls upward, and others guard souls that cannot yet ascend, it is not right to consider either of them evil. For there must also exist those who keep by force in the earthly realm whoever is impure and unworthy yet to ascend to heaven. Based on this, it is not correct to consider demons as evil, since they act according to their nature, which is in no way evil.

Finally, Proclus in his commentaries on *Alcibiades* refers to the many and various types of demons in Diotima's speech in *Symposion*. Each god, he asserts, presides over a class of demons and then over the individual souls. Some souls have been scattered to the sun, some to the moon, and some to the other planets (gods). An order of demons is tasked with bringing souls into contact with their familiar rulers. A second class of demons supervise the upward and downward courses of souls.

Using the same Neoplatonic terminology, an almost contemporary of Eudocia, Synesius (d. 415), the most famous student of the philosopher Hypatia, develops his hymns. Synesius adored his teacher, as is evident from his letters to her, but also his partners in her school. He calls her teacher of the *orgies of philosophy* and constantly alludes to the high quality of the lessons he received, which, however, was not allowed to be openly disclosed. Hypatia, a high-level mathematician and astronomer, also taught philosophy both publicly and privately. The core of her philosophical structure seems to have been Neoplatonic, probably following the system of Plutarch of Athens, which contained, in addition to the theoretical part, a theurgical-ritual part. The only way to get a taste of Hypatia's system is to study the hymns of Synesius. Indeed, in his hymns, we recognize a lot of the above-

mentioned elements of Iamblichus's ontology which pass through Plutarch and Syrianus to Proclus¹⁸. So Synesius describes angels, demons and heroes, following the model of Iamblichus. For example in Hymn III he mentions, in addition to angels and heroes, the demons of matter and beasts, such as the winged serpent and soul-eating dogs (*κύνες* or *σκύλακες*)¹⁹.

2.2. Gnostic Influences on the *Martyrdom of Cyprian*

Dualist thought has its roots in Iranian Zoroastrianism; it shaped decisively the currents of Manichaeism, Mazdaism, and mainly Gnosticism. In all these currents, evil has acquired an ontological existence; it is presented as a powerful opponent of the god who has now assumed the role of the defender of good. In primitive Zoroastrianism, the dominant figure was Ahura Mazda, the lord of wisdom, the supreme god, and the references to good and evil are still abstract, such as good intention (Vohu Manah) and evil intention (Aka Manah). From Ahura Mazda seven heavenly powers, the so-called Amesha Spenta, are born. Ahriman or Angra Mainyu is the destructive spirit as opposed to the creative spirit (Spenta Mainyu). Early Zoroastrianism (as reflected in the Avesta texts) was a monistic system, with no direct confrontation between Ahura Mazda and Ahriman. Later, in the texts of the Middle Persian Period, a new system of two poles of good and evil as primary forces appears.

Manichaeism is the par excellence dualistic system of the time, where there are two incompatible worlds: the world of spirit, good, and light, and the world of matter, evil, and darkness. The world of light originated and is ruled by the Great Living God (Hayyi Rabbi), Lord of Light, Lord of Greatness, Great Mind, or First Life (Haiyi Qadmaiyi). The world of light has originated and is ruled by the Great Living God (Hayyi Rabbi) or Lord of Light or Lord of Greatness or

¹⁸ See extensive description and analysis of Synesius' hymns and the Platonic elements that permeate them at: Δενδρινός Μ., 2021.

¹⁹ Δενδρινός Μ., 2021: 74-80.

Great Mind or First Life (Haiyi Qadmaiyi). After successive emanations, the Fourth Life (Ptahil) appears, which is also the creator of the material world. Apart from these emanations, Ptahil is surrounded by a multitude of angels or guardians, with Manda d-Hayyi dominant among them, who is his envoy on Earth. The world of darkness is ruled by the Lord of Darkness and emerges from the dark waters of chaos. The struggle between good and evil, light and darkness, leads to the creation of the world of matter by the creator Ptahil and the assistance of the evil female spirit Ruha, the seven planets and the twelve constellations. The first man, Adam was also made by them but his soul essence was taken from the World of Light. This essence of light within Adam constitutes the immortal soul or mind of man, which must be saved from the darkness and evil of matter through the power of light.

In the same context, Jews dream of a kingdom to which God the Father Creator Jehovah leads them to be elected people. This is accomplished by his prophets, who envisage the coming of Messiah in the later days. This vision is moved by the hope and the goal of an ideal earthly society. God is interested in man; he interacts with people; and he talks and fights with them, as shown by Jacob's fight with the angel. There is no evil creator that people must overcome to reach the true God. In addition, there is no evil as an adversary to Jehovah; on the contrary, Sathaniel sits at the table of God's angelic advisors, as is described in the case of Job.

In the last pre-Christian years, however, the need for the redemption of the Jewish people was imperatively expressed in various Jewish sects, as recorded in detail in various apocryphal texts of apocalyptic eschatology, such as the *Book of Enoch*, the *Book of Daniel*, and various Revelations, leading to the dominant later text, the *Apocalypse* of John. In resonance with them, we might include the prophetic words of Jesus about the coming end, as described in the last chapters of the Gospels just before the divine drama. In these texts, the battle between the forces of good and evil is described with great intensity, a battle that the biblical Jesus clearly supported, a fact that places him more in late Jewish dualistic eschatology than in the official Mosaic monistic Jewish tradition, where evil

is included in the divine order. Both Gnostic and Christian dogma eventually prevailed, based on the strongly dualistic worldview and sayings of Jesus.

The main features of Gnosticism are [1] that the divine unfolds into a hierarchy of entities, called *lords* or *aeons*, and [2] that the distinction between a supreme god who is the real god, the god of light and good, and a lower god who is the creator of the material world and who, either by intention to differentiate himself from the higher principle or by mistake, brought evil, imperfection, pain, and death in the world. This is the theory of cosmic error through which they explain the existence of evil in a more reasonable way since it was difficult to reconcile it with the idea of an all-powerful and all-good god.

The polemics of the fathers of the early Church and especially Irenaeus of Lyons (around 180), Hippolytus of Rome (around 230) and Epiphanius of Cyprus (around 375) against the Gnostics prove the power and spread of their ideas as well as the dissemination of the texts of great Gnostics of the time, such as Basilides, Valentinus and Marcion. As we saw, the key feature of gnostic ontology is the complex hierarchies of beings, the *aeons*, some of which either carelessly or intentionally attempt to make their own creation, without the consent of the higher god. This act automatically transforms these entities and their hierarchies from an angelic to a demonic state, taking on the responsibility of creating the material world. Thus, this world bears a seal of evil and darkness, similar to its creator. Some people have within them the spark of the supreme god and can, through knowledge, attain salvation, escaping the deadly effects of this world. These hierarchies are similar to the demonic orders presented in the Gospels, but also in the lives of Saints, as in the *Martyrdom of Cyprian*, where Eudocia presents a series of such creatures with great intensity and inventiveness.

However, it was not only the Gnostics who were dangerous for the orthodoxy of Christianity, which was determined in detail by various Ecumenical Synods. Another important issue was the human or divine nature of Jesus Christ. As we have already seen, Gnosticism tended towards docetism, supporting

that the bodily presence of Jesus Christ was only apparent, since he was an eternal being appearing in a human body, which did not actually experience human emotions, such as pain and abandonment. In contrast, Nestorius argued that Christ was a normal man who managed to become deified by his own powers, a position that reappears in the theological literature of the 18th and 19th centuries, where there is an attempt to strip the life of Jesus of its miraculous elements, a tendency compatible with the deistic worldview of the Enlightenment²⁰. In this context, Nestorius refused the term *Theotokos* and introduced the term Christotokos for Mary, the mother of Jesus. This position was condemned at the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431. Next, the divine nature of Jesus Christ began to be emphasized more, leading Eutyches to speak of a nature, the divine nature, which absorbed the human one. In addition, this monophysite position was condemned at the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451. The Church was struggling to balance both natures in one and the same person, something extremely difficult to understand for common sense, leading populous churches, such as the Coptic and the Armenian, to be cut off from Orthodoxy. It should also be noted that the core of the great so-called heresies of Christendom, including Arianism, Nestorianism, and Monophysitism, is philosophically more reasonable than the eventually dominant Christian thesis. In this frame, the philosophical approach of Eudocia towards the Nestorian doctrine of human nature or towards the Monophysite doctrine of the divine nature could be explained due to her pagan philosophical education in Athens.

²⁰ Already at the end of the 17th century John Toland with his work *Christianity not mysterious* (1696) and Ernest Renan in the 19th century highlight a Jesus free from the miraculous dimension. This tendency is also noticeable in the liberal deists of the 18th and 19th centuries, such as Thomas Jefferson, President of USA, who wrote a personal Bible, without any reference to miraculous acts.

3. Conclusions

Eudocia is a person on the border between the ancient and Christian worlds, a philosopher's daughter who became the leader of the Christian empire. She was the object of admiration for the Gentiles of Antioch, whom she called "her own breed". At the same time, she witnessed the entire fabric of the ancient world, which formed the civilization of her youth, collapsing. She tried almost in vain to save it as much as possible, through the establishment of a university that recruited Greek teachers. Had she really embraced the ideology of Christianity? Her conversion to Christianity is not unreasonable; during this period, some scholars, such as Numenius in the past and Nemesius in her time, dared to formulate interesting comparative systems. Our opinion is that she maintained a critical attitude towards things that probably seemed absurd to her, such as the fusion of human and divine nature, which she accepted very late, a few years before her death. We cannot be sure that this change in her attitude reflects a deep personal need, and that it was not simply done for reasons of diplomacy regarding the ideological conflicts that were still raging in the eastern territories of the empire at that time. Similarly, a few years ago, Synesius proclaimed the bishop of Cyrene, without accepting the basic doctrines of Christianity, such as the birth of the soul together with the body or the bodily resurrection of the dead, as he confides in a letter to his brother Euoptius. What is certain is that she was intensely attracted to ancient Greek literature, as can be deduced from the language of the *Martyrdom of Cyprian*, which was written in Homeric Greek with many lexicalizations, making it one of the most difficult texts ever written in ancient times.

There is no evidence regarding the acceptance she had from the Christian scholars, either as a personality or concerning this specific work. Also, not to be overlooked is her peculiar removal from the capital, which is a reasonable indication that she was largely unwanted for political or ideological reasons. The difficulty of the text certainly discouraged many from studying it and disseminating it as a model of recording and writing the lives of Saints. Remarkably, only one copy survived,

and in this copy, both the beginning and the end were missing until the former was fortunately restored by Claudio Bevegni. Why was it not copied in sufficient numbers? Was this a deliberate choice and if so what made the prospective copiers so wary? We must focus on the atmosphere that the text radiates. It does not look like a virtuous text aimed at conversion. Rather, it is a text that shows the phases of the life of a man who has travelled through and been initiated into all the then-surviving mysteries of the ancient world and became a knowledgeable and skilled operator of occult powers through the invocations of various entities, such as those we can see that dominate in the Neoplatonic and Gnostic systems of her time. Above all, it is a text that does not focus much on the moral superiority of Christianity over previous religions, but on the possibility that one can acquire greater powers through the sign of the Cross, thus becoming more effective in magician duels that aim to achieve specific results. What was Cyprian for Eudocia? A magician who ended up becoming a Christian because he found there the highest and most effective techniques possible for manipulating occult forces. Such a figure of a Saint was not the best possible example of a religion that wanted to move away from the occult searches of magic and towards a new ideal based simply on moral life, the strict application of ascetic rules in the everyday life of man and the endless waiting for the divine grace far from all human initiatives and techniques.

Therefore, Cyprian is the model of the magician, even the good magician who has placed himself at the service of God for the benefit of the people, and manifests a kind of primary empiricism, whereby invoking specific forces he brings about corresponding results. Indeed, as described in verses I.329-335, Cyprian accepts only that power, which is effective at the critical moment of a confrontation, the power of Christ, which Justine invokes and uses, overcoming the forces of demons. Thus, it is not a question of blind faith in something but the empirical confirmation of an opinion about the effectiveness of a magical invocation. This magical empiricism reappears centuries later during the Renaissance, where magic is considered by Agrippa von Nettesheim and Jan Baptist van

Helmont as one of the sciences to be studied. Weapon salve, namely applying ointment on the weapon that caused a wound to heal the wounded person, is acceptable as long as its repeated successful application makes it a scientific practice based on repeated experiments. Thus, Cyprian emerges through the work of Eudocia as the perfect model of the human experimenter who dares to face the divine and demonic forces even at the risk of his own life. It is a Faust before Faust that the descriptions of the deformed and strange demons perhaps surpass the originality of the landmark work of the great German thinker.



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Christianity and Rationalism: Maximus the Confessor vs. Descartes

Antonis D. Papaoikonomou,
PhD, Lecturer, School of Political Sciences,
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki
papaoiko@sch.gr

Abstract

Maximus the Confessor and René Descartes were influential thinkers in their respective historical and philosophical contexts, but their philosophical orientations and concerns were distinct. Maximus was primarily a Christian theologian who integrated faith and reason within a theological framework, while Descartes was a key figure in the development of modern philosophy, emphasizing individual reason and scepticism as foundational elements of his philosophical system. This paper aims to present some aspects of their philosophy and try to find common ground in their thought.

Keywords: Rene Descartes, Maximus the Confessor, Faith, Rationality.

Introduction

In Byzantium, we find united the three main elements of European culture: Hellenism, Roman law and Christianity. Byzantine society is a direct extension of ancient society. The barbarian raids that ravaged the western part of the Empire in the 5th century did not penetrate the eastern part until the 15th century. Byzantine philosophy is an inseparable continuation of the period that precedes it. It is a whole that includes the Christian dimension together with the dimension of Greek thought, Greek speech and the Greek soul. Byzantine thought draws themes from the first post-Christian centuries from Hellenism and Christianity (Aramatzis, 2012). A question remains in Byzantine philosophy: How its autonomous expression can be understood by the theology of Byzantine philosophy? This question sprung from the very history of rationality. After a thousand years of irrationality, rational thought returns with Descartes, the revision of the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle and Kant (Mpegezos, 2012).

The Byzantine Empire emerged as the successive form of the Roman Empire, as a Christian kingdom and as the cradle of Hellenism. European rationalism as a source of enlightenment colors the approach to elements of Christian philosophy. At the beginning of the 19th century, we see the Greek preoccupation with metaphysical concerns that fit into the climate of Western European rationalism (Terezis, 1993). According to Marcos Venieris (1815-1897), intellectual of the free Greek state, the Byzantine state is the continuation of the ancient Greek request for a philosophical organization of the state as a universal state. Byzantium succeeded where Rome failed. For Sokolis (1872-1920), Byzantium offers humanity the model of the imperial idea based on Greek culture while continuing in a way the effort of Alexander the Great and reaching its completion with Christianity (Terezis, 1993). In Byzantium, one easily recognizes its universal character due to the prevalence of Greek literature in education. Patriarch Photios was a distinguished intellectual of the 9th century; he helped the Slavs of the Balkan peninsula by sending Cyril and

Methodios to teach them religion and writing. Michael Psellos was an important encyclopedist throughout the thousand-year history of Byzantium. Many of the Church Fathers were students of the sophists and rhetoricians (Britannica, 2005).

Maximus the Confessor, also known as Maximus the Theologian, was a prominent figure in the early Christian Church, and his theological contributions had a significant impact on Byzantine Christianity. He came from an aristocratic family and received an excellent education in philosophy and theology. Maximus was a civil servant before embracing the monastic life. He moved to the monastic community of Chrysopolis, near Constantinople, and eventually became a monk. This marked a significant turning point in his life (Allen & Bronwen, 2015). Maximus was involved in several theological controversies of his time, particularly the Monothelite controversy. Monothelitism was a heretical belief that Jesus Christ had only one divine will and was a divisive issue in the Byzantine Church. Maximus vehemently opposed Monothelitism and defended the orthodox position that Jesus had both a divine will and a human will, perfectly united in his person. His theological writings, especially his contributions to Christology, have had a lasting influence on Eastern Orthodox theology. Maximus emphasized the importance of Christ's humanity in the process of salvation (Berthold, 1997).

On the other hand, René Descartes (1596-1650) was a French philosopher, mathematician, and scientist of the Enlightenment period. He is often referred to as the "Father of Modern Philosophy" and is famous for his methodical doubt and emphasis on individual reason and rationalism. He is known for his method of doubt and the famous phrase "I think, therefore I am" (*Cogito, ergo sum*). He aimed to establish a foundation of certain knowledge through his reasoning abilities, independently of faith or theological considerations.

The purpose of the research is to compare selected works of Maximus the Confessor and Descartes about the "divine". In particular, references to Maximus the Confessor and, more importantly, the 4th part of the *Discourse on Method* will be studied. We will also focus on Descartes' method about the divine, but also the relationship between God and Man. Of

utmost significance is the contribution of the secondary literature regarding the work, the similarities and differences in the perception of "divine" between Descartes and Maximus. In short, this study will address the following questions: What are the main differences between Maximus' and Descartes' approaches to the notion of "divine" and divinity? What is the specific purpose of focusing on the nature and essence of God in the works of these authors? The present study will shed light on the way different philosophical traditions, and political, social and cultural contexts shape different perceptions regarding God and nature. In other words, the concept of the divine in patristic theology (including Maximus the Confessor) and also in modern European philosophy (Descartes) will be juxtaposed. We will also include the evolution of the perception of truth in our research objectives, not only concerning human nature but also about God's relationship with Creation.

Maximus the Confessor

Concerning the nature of God, Maximus the Confessor argued that God possesses distinguished features in terms of his essence, which do not belong to the sphere of human intellect. This happens because man understands or rather comprehends only what is subject to the criteria of the material world. God, however, is posited as infinite and transcendent of any spatio-temporal determinations (Louth, 1996). According to Maximus, divine goodness and mercy are also evident from the fact that the Christian God does not remove the free will of his creations, as his corresponding intervention in the existing world is not carried out in a strictly controlled way. Human beings remain as creations "in the image of God", free to regulate their own lives (Louth, 1996).

In addition, Maximus argued that (A) between the divine and the human, a relationship of interdependence is formed or can be formed. Moreover, the quality of this *methexis* ($\muέθεξις$) is defined by the qualitative predicates of the higher, divine being, and, as such, is defined accordingly; (B) well-

being (*εὖ εἶναι*) constitutes an undiminished characteristic of God; (C) well-being (*εὖ εἶναι*) defines both the essence and the energy of God, even as it is impressed on the products of the divine creative power (Mpegzos, 2012. Louth, 1996).

Maximus' perspective on rationality was marked by a deep integration of faith and reason. He believed that human reason, when properly guided by faith and following the teachings of Christ, could lead to a deeper understanding of the divine and the ultimate purpose of human existence. His theological writings and philosophical insights continue to influence Eastern Orthodox theology and spirituality (Jankowiak & Booth, 2015). It should be noted that Maximus was not only a theologically knowledgeable thinker but also a systematic analyst of mathematics, astronomy and Aristotelian philosophy. He stood against the sects, even using their conceptual "tools". Of course, his choice did not distance him from his spiritual work, which was to save the Orthodox faith. To this end it is stated that Maximus the Confessor established an orthodox type of personalism, focusing strictly on the concept of "person", both in his anthropological and triadological views (Louth, 1996).

In relation to the "divine", the existence of any objective state in the space of "becoming" confirms the existence of God. However, Maximus with reasoning, which is consistent with Cartesian reflections, have noted that the existence of God-Creator is also confirmed by the fact that the Creator Himself "instils" his wisdom into the interior of beings so that any essential kind of differences between them not to constitute an antithetical but a unifying element of their coexistence.

Descartes

With the third and last argument of Descartes in favour of the existence of God, which is called "ontological", the difficulty of the French intellectual or rather of the philosophical logic to cover more complex issues of Metaphysics or Ontology is apparent at first glance. In the 4th part of the *Discourse on Method* on Method, Descartes deals with the evidence for the

existence of God and the soul and lays the foundations of his Metaphysics. This part consists of eight paragraphs (36-43) and reads like a very brief summary of the first three Meditations, although the geometrical proof of God's existence is found in the 5th *Meditation*. In this part, a series of arguments are presented, designed to throw out his present beliefs, to replace them with certainties. In this regard, he does not attempt to question his beliefs but to question the principles on which they are founded (Davis & Hersh, 1986).

In paragraph 36 Descartes states the first principle of his metaphysics. It begins from the simple to arrive at the complex, from the effects to find the causes and from the consequences to locate the foundations. He expounds first on the method and then the metaphysics. All his metaphysics is based on the exercise of thinking from the simple to the complex, from the easy to the difficult. He begins by rejecting anything that would give him the slightest doubt. The first move is to recognize as false all knowledge that could give rise to the slightest doubt, not just obvious lies. He refers to earlier as well as contemporary thinkers and modifies their approaches to explain a truth he believes to be indisputable. He calls everything into question, attempting to examine the world through a new perspective, free from prejudices and pre-existing concepts.

I decided after that to look for other truths; I called to mind the object of study of geometers, which I conceived of as a continuous body or a space indefinitely extended in length, breadth, and height or depth, divisible into different parts which could have various figures and sizes, and be moved or transposed in all sorts of ways, for geometers posit all that to be their object.... I noted also that there was absolutely nothing in them which made me certain of the existence of their object... yet for all that, I saw nothing in this which made me certain that a single triangle existed in the world. Whereas going back to the idea I had had of a perfect being, I found that existence was part of that idea, in the same way, or even more incontrovertibly so, that it is intrinsic to the idea of a triangle that its three angles equal two right angles, or to that of a sphere that all its parts are equidistant from its center;

and that, in consequence, it is at least as certain as any geometric proof that God, who is that perfect being, is or exists (Descartes, 2006, p. 31).

The method of doubt is a decision for Descartes, so long as he wants to assume that there is no image. This is a willful endeavour that requires practice. It is assumed that doubt is not spontaneous towards knowledge. Intellect alone does not lead to truth, the will does. Thus, the Cartesian attitude is as follows: he considers the sensory areas that appear before the subject to be unreal. He perceives this as a role since he plays the reasoning. Doubt will lead the intellect to the exit and negate scepticism.

In the same paragraph, Descartes talks about the evidential fallacy. He refers to mathematics as the foundation of truth but assumes that every proof involves an error that we do not see. In paragraph 32 he uses the example of geometry. While the world attaches certainty to the proofs of mathematics, for itself there is nothing to assure him of the existence of their object. Geometric size is what we perceive clearly from the external world. Thus, he uses the example of the triangle, the existence of which he has no certainty. Therefore, mathematics cannot be a foundation of truth, considering that there are errors in mathematical proofs. In this sense, mathematics cannot be trusted.

And because there are men who make mistakes in reasoning, even about the simplest elements of geometry, and commit logical fallacies, I judged that I was as prone to error as anyone else, and I rejected as false all the reasoning I had hitherto accepted as valid proof (Descartes, 2006, p. 28) ... *I ran through some of their simpler proofs, and observed that the great certainty which everyone attributes to them is based only on the fact that they are conceived of as incontrovertible, following the rule that I have just given. I noted also that there was absolutely nothing in them which made me certain of the existence of their object...* (Descartes, 2006, p. 31).

For Descartes, mathematics has been an explanatory model whereby we obtain knowledge, in contrast to the senses and imagination, which are inferior cognitive powers we cannot trust with the same certainty. For him, mathematics is the

science of order and measure. Everything is quantified, qualities are removed and everything is presented in evidentiary order. Descartes generalizes what Galileo first realized with the fall of bodies, and speaks of the so-called mathematization of nature. In short, nature exists only in the quantitative; it is indifferent to the qualitative advocated by Aristotelian science. He claims that all sciences can (and should) draw from mathematics a model that could lead to the truth of the natural world and man. In the *Rules for the Guidance of the Spirit (Regulae ad directionem ingenii)* he introduces the term "mathesis universalis" (universal mathematics), but this term is abandoned in all his metaphysical texts. Herein, this *mathesis universalis* is challenged. In the works of Descartes, there is development as the Canons (which he never published) lack the concept of the metaphysical. Through the development that exists between the writing of the Canons and the writing of Descartes' Logo, he does not question mathematical science but its ability to establish itself (Blom, 1978). Descartes realizes that something is missing to make mathematics immune to sceptics. Thus, he resorts to Philosophy and Metaphysics. It goes from the scientific to the philosophical-metaphysical level. He becomes aware that mathematics is not enough in itself. The symbols of mathematics are valid whether they correspond to something or not since even if the world did not exist the symbols would be valid. Therefore, Descartes turned against empiricism and mathematical rationalism (Cunning, 2014).

In paragraph 36 Descartes also contrasts the obvious against the dream. He uses the example of dreams which create the impression that they are real and therefore perception is a result of them. But because dreams are experiences that resemble reality, there is no criterion of distinction. So, he decides to think that everything that is happening is a dream.

For after all, whether we are awake or asleep, we ought never to let ourselves be convinced except on the evidence of our reason. And it is to be noted that I say 'our reason', and not 'our imagination' or 'our senses' (Descartes, 2006, p. 34).

However, in paragraph 43 he states the following: *Our processes of reasoning are never so clear or so complete while*

we are asleep as when we are awake (even though our imaginings in sleep are sometimes just as vivid and distinct); so reason tells us also that as our thoughts cannot all be true because we are not wholly perfect, what truth there is in them must infallibly be found in those we have while awake rather than in those we have in our dreams (Descartes, 2006, p. 34).

Perhaps Descartes' most important contribution to philosophy is his revolutionary conception of what the human mind is about. According to Aristotelian philosophy, only reason and understanding are mental properties; the senses, the imagination and the will are not simply mental properties, since they connect the mind to the objects that exist in the world (Granger, 1893). Descartes overturns this notion, counter-proposing that our sensory experience, imagination, and will are all part of the mind; they are not connected to the world. In other words, Descartes argues that our sensory experience does not lead to a complete knowledge of what exists in the world.

But to doubt means to think, and to think means to exist. These two for Descartes are one. "I think, therefore I am" is the principle of his metaphysics.

And having observed that there was nothing in this proposition, I am thinking therefore I exist, which makes me sure that I am telling the truth, except that I can see very clearly that, to think, one has to exist, I concluded that I could take it to be a general rule that things we conceive of very clearly and distinctly are all true, but that there is some difficulty in being able to identify those which we conceive of distinctly (Descartes, 2006, p. 29).

"I think therefore I exist" is the way out for Descartes. He acclaimed this assertion as an unquestionable truth. However, in the 5th part of the *Word* he is aware that there are creatures that exist but are incapable of thinking because they are not conscious of their existence. After affirming his existence, Descartes (par. 37) examines what he is, and perceives his existence only because he can think. Therefore, thought is the soul *per se*, which exists independently of all matter and is therefore separate from the body. Descartes is against the body which is the carrier of the thought.

thereby concluded that I was a substance whose whole essence or nature resides only in thinking, and which, to exist, has no need of place and is not dependent on any material thing. Accordingly, this 'I', that is to say, the Soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body and is even easier to know than the body; and would not stop being everything it is, even if the body were not to exist* (Descartes, 2006, p. 29).

Descartes tries to extract philosophy from the body. One must forget the existence of the body to know the truth. The senses as a source of knowledge are untrue. He considers that images have an external source and that their condition is corporeality. Knowledge is detached from the tyranny of the body as imposed by Aristotelian philosophy, based on sensory experience and evidential reasoning. He aims to rid himself of the philosophical prejudices of the previous two thousand years and start afresh. Thus, he laid the groundwork for the next four hundred years of philosophy to follow.

Descartes examines the criterion of truth (par. 38). To be true, the things we perceive must be distinct and clear.

- ... After this, I came to think in general about what is required for a proposition to be true and certain; for since I had just found one such proposition, I thought that I ought also to know in what this certainty consists. And having observed that there was nothing in this proposition, I am thinking therefore I exist, which makes me sure that I am telling the truth, except that I can see very clearly that, in order to think, one has to exist, I concluded that I could take it to be a general rule that things we conceive of very clearly and distinctly are all true, but that there is some difficulty in being able to identify those which we conceive of distinctly (Descartes, 2006, p. 29).

Then (par. 39) Descartes talks about the existence of God. He makes the separation between doubt, which he considers imperfect, and knowledge, which he recognizes as more perfect. As an imperfect being the doubter, himself is an imperfect being, but he has within him the idea of the perfect. He states that doubting—and thus not being perfect himself—forces him to seek the source from which he learned to think

that something is more perfect than himself. He concludes that this source comes from a nature more perfect than himself, for it is a clear contradiction that he should conceive an idea from nothing, just as something perfect should depend on something imperfect. Since it is evident that "something" cannot come from "nothing," and one cannot obtain "something" from him/herself, this idea which contains in itself all imperfections, must have been placed there by a nature more perfect than human nature itself. Descartes considers this nature to be God. Furthermore, he believes that none of the ideas that denote imperfection can exist in God.

Descartes' argument for the existence of God is known as the ontological argument and focuses on the definition and nature of existence. Existence is considered a necessary consequence of his perfect nature. God is perfect; thus, God cannot be characterized by two natures, mental and physical.

...but because I had already recognized in my case that the nature since he of the intellect is distinct from the nature of the body, and considering that all composition is evidence of dependence, and that dependence is manifestly a defect, I concluded that it could not be one of God's perfections to be composed of these two natures, and that, as a consequence, He was not so composed; but that, if there were in the world any bodies or other intelligence or other natures which were not wholly perfect, their being must depend on His power, in such a way that they could not continue to subsist for a single moment without Him (Descartes, 2006, p. 31).

Although there are ideas concerning aesthetic and corporeal things, Descartes recognizes mental nature as distinct from corporeal nature, whose composition asserts dependence. God is not made up of two natures; that is, God has no physical nature but only a mental one. Since God is a perfect being from whom all things derive, the things which we clearly perceive (as he states in paragraph 38), are certain to be true, for the reason that God exists.

Descartes concludes that the reason people have difficulty believing that God exists is because they rely on the evidence of senses as well as of their imagination (which still derives from the senses). Sense impression and imagination can

deceive them, just as dreams do. Nevertheless, if human beings accept the existence of God, they can believe all that they perceive clearly and distinctly through their reason. God, who is true and perfect, would not have supplied them with the ability to reason if they were not in the capacity to use it to discover the truth. In this way, Descartes concludes that he discovered a method to distinguish truth from falsehood.

This is clear enough from the fact that even scholastic philosophers hold as a maxim that there is nothing in the intellect which has not previously been in the senses, in which, however, it is certain that the ideas of God and the soul have never been. It seems to me that people who wish to use their imagination to understand these ideas are doing the same as if, to hear sounds or smell smells, they tried to use their eyes. Except there is this further difference, that the sense of sight no more confirms to us the reality of things than that of smell or hearing, whereas neither our imagination nor our senses could ever confirm the existence of anything if our intellect did not play its part (Descartes, 2006, p. 37).

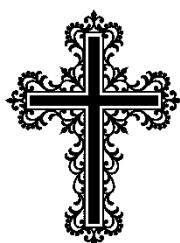
Descartes joins the group of philosophers who do not deny the power of knowledge. Although his mood includes a mood of intense scepticism, Descartes' scepticism is methodological: he uses rational arguments to arrive at certain knowledge.

Descartes' *Discourse on the Method* is a turning point in European thought and marks the transition from medieval and Renaissance to modern thought. At a time when the Church defines the course and limits of human thought, Descartes shakes the foundations of philosophy and supports philosophical thought on new and stable ground, freeing it from medieval prejudices. This is the basic innovation of Cartesian thought which prepared the way for the Age of Enlightenment.

Epilogue

It is, therefore, obvious that Maximus does not attempt to connect theology and science, as Descartes does. Science to "frame" to a satisfactory degree the truth of existence, and to

partially sympathize with the poems of theology, must follow a certain methodological way. Maximus believed in the harmony of faith and reason. He did not see faith and reason as conflicting but rather as complementary aspects of human existence. He argued that reason, when properly oriented, could lead individuals to a deeper understanding of their faith. On the other hand, Descartes' approach was characterized by methodical doubt, mathematical reasoning, and the development of a systematic method for acquiring knowledge through reason, which laid the groundwork for modern science and philosophy. Maximus the Confessor emphasized the harmony of faith and reason. He believed that human reason could be guided by faith to gain a deeper understanding of theological truths. His work was deeply rooted in Christian theology and the relationship between faith and rationality within that context. Descartes, on the other hand, is known for his method of doubt and the famous phrase "I think, therefore I am" (*Cogito, ergo sum*). He aimed to establish a foundation of certain knowledge through his reasoning abilities, independently of faith or theological considerations. So, even if the two thinkers agree on the relation that is decisive for the sentient subjects, Maximus directly and Descartes indirectly prioritize theology over science, with the difference that this priority for the Christian author lies in the mystagogic character of theology, while for the French thinker it simply constitutes - a basic and otherwise fundamental - axiom of Logic.



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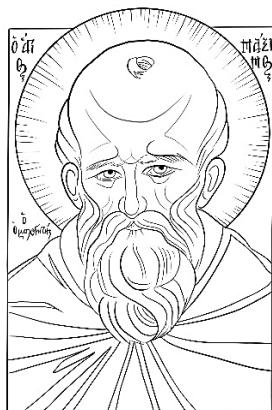
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The question of values and the concept of the “person” in the Byzantine thought of the Palaeologan Renaissance

Lydia Chr. Petridou,

Ph.D., Academic Staff in Hellenic Open University

petridou.lydia@ac.eap.gr

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.¹ 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

¹ 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.² 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 Renaissance³.

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

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

1. The divine inspiration and spiritual superiority of Hierotheus

In the second paragraph of the third chapter,⁴ Pachymeres interrupts the discussion of the divine names –and, in particular, of the Good, which he elaborates on in the previous paragraph⁵–, 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 one⁶. 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

⁴ Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 688 D-692 A.

⁵ Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 688 A-D.

⁶ Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 688 D: «Καὶ τοῦτο δ' ἵσως ἀπολογοῦμεν, ὅτι τοῦ κλεινοῦ Ἱερόθεου τὰς θεολογικὰς στοιχειώσεις συναγάγοντος, ἡμεῖς δὲ συνεγραφάμεθα ἄλλας τε πραγματείας, καὶ ταύτην τὴν θεολογίαν, ὡς οὐχ ἰκανῶν 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.⁷ 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 scientifically⁸. 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.⁹ It is important to note

⁷ 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’ ἔκεινου καταστάντα. “Ος, ἐπειδὴ τότε αἱ τῶν ἐν Ἰωνίᾳ φιλοσόφων αἱρέσεις ἡκμαζον, καὶ πολλὰς εἰχε τὰς διαλεκτικὰς ἐπηρείας παρ’ ἔκεινων ὁ ἄγιος, γινώσκων τὸν μέγαν Διονύσιον σοφὸν καὶ τὴν ἔξω σοφίαν, σοφὸν καὶ τὴν θείαν καὶ ἱερὸν, τῷ μεγάλῳ Παύλῳ κατὰ ταύτην μαθητεύσαντα, καὶ πολλὰ ἐσχολακότα ταῖς θείαις Γραφαῖς, ἀξιοὶ παρ’ αὐτοῦ διδαχθῆναι τὰ ὑποτεταγμένα: ὁ δὴ καὶ γίνεται».

⁸ Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 689 A: «Καὶ γὰρ εἴπερ ἔκεινος περὶ τούτων λεπτομερεστέρως ἡξίωσε διελθεῖν, οὐκ ἀν ἡμεῖς εἰς τοσοῦτον ἡ μανίας ἡ σκαιότητος ἐληλύθαμεν, ὡς οἰηθῆναι ἐπιβαλεῖν τοῖς θείοις ἐπιστημονικώτερον, ὥστε δις τὰ αὐτὰ λέγειν».

⁹ Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 689 A, where Pachymeres notes in these exact words, including also himself: «...ῶστε δις τὰ αὐτὰ λέγειν, καὶ ἀδικεῖν φίλον ἄμα καὶ διδάσκαλον· καὶ ἡμᾶς τέως, τους μετὰ τὸν Παῦλον μαθητευθέντας αὐτῷ, ὑφαρπάζειν τὰ ἔκεινου 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 religion¹⁰. 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 comprehending¹¹. 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 others¹². 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’

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

¹⁰ Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 689 A: «Ἄλλ’ ἐπειδὴ πρεσβυτικῶς καὶ ἐπιστημονικῶς εἶπεν ἐκεῖνος, καὶ συντόμους καὶ κεφαλαιώδεις τὰς διδασκαλίας πεποίηκεν, ἐγκελευόμενος καθ’ ἔκαστον καὶ ἡμῖν, καὶ τοῖς ἑτέροις τῶν νεοτελῶν ψυχῶν διδασκάλοις, καθ’ ὅσον ἔνι ἀναπτύξαι καὶ διακρῖναι 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.

¹¹ Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 689 B: «Ταύτη τοι καὶ ἡμεῖς τὸν μέν ἄγιον 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.

¹² Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 689 B: «Οπόσον δὲ ἔχει ἐκεῖνος τὸ τέλειον, ἐν ᾧ ἔστι ἄντα τοιαύτης στερεάν τροφὴν, ὅπου γε καὶ ἡμεῖς λεγόμεθα τέλειοι, ὡς τῆς τοιαύτης στερεᾶς τροφῆς μεταλαμβάνειν ἡξιωμένοι;»

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 them¹³. 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 men¹⁴. It is also mentioned that the leaders after Hierotheus followed his teaching, without adding anything else to his interpretation¹⁵. 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

¹³ Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 689 B: «Ορθῶς οὖν εἴπομεν τὸ, τὴν μὲν αὐτοπτικὴν καὶ ἀνεπικάλυπτον, καὶ ἐμφανεστέραν κατανόησιν, καὶ τὴν κεφαλαιώδη διδασκαλίαν, πρεσβυτικῆς δεῖσθαι δυνάμεως».

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

¹⁵ Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 689 B-C: «Ἐπιτετήρηται γοῦν ἡμῖν, ὡστε ὅσα δὴ σαφῶς παρὰ τοῦ θείου Ἱεροθέου διηγηρίνηται, μηδόλως ἐγκεχειρηκέναι καὶ οἶον φαίνεσθαι ταῦτολογεῖν».

them communicates with other human beings and God in a different way¹⁶.

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 thearchical 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 inspired¹⁷. 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 elements¹⁸. 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.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 689 C-D: «Ἐπεὶ καὶ παρ’ αὐτοῖς τοῖς θεολήπτοις πατράσιν (ὅτε συμπαρῆμεν ἐκείνοις καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς κοιμήσεως τῆς παναγίας Δεσποινῆς ἡμῶν θεοτόκου), ἐδόκει δὲ κατὰ τὴν θείαν ὑμνῆσαι τοὺς ἱεράρχας ὡς ἔκαστος εἰχε δυνάμως τὴν ἀπειροδύναμον ἀγαθότητα τῆς θεαρχικῆς ἀσθενίας, τῆς ἐκουσίου δηλονότι τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀχρι σαρκὸς χωρὶς ἀμαρτίας συγκαταβάσεως, πάντως ἐκράτει τῶν ἱερομυστῶν ὁ μέγας Ιερόθεος, ὅλος δὲ ὡς ὁσπερ ἔκδημος ἐκ τοῦ σώματος, ὅλος ἐξιστάμενος ἐαυτοῦ ἐν τοῖς ὅμνοις, καὶ πάσχων τὴν πρὸς τὰ ὄμνούμενα κοινωνίαν, παρὰ πάντων καὶ τῶν γνωρίμων καὶ τῶν μὴ γνωρίμων θεόληπτος ἐκρίνετο».

¹⁸ 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 testimonies¹⁹. 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 eyes²⁰. 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 *γνῶθι 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

¹⁹ Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 692 A-B: «Καὶ ἵνα σοι παραλείψωμεν τὰ πολλὰ ως ἄφρητα τοῖς πολλοῖς, καὶ σοι ἐγνωσμένα, ἡ γοῦν ἐγνωσμένα, ὅτι εἰσὶν ἄφρητα καὶ μυστικά· ἡ ὅτι σοι ἐγνωσμένα, ως ὅντι ὑπὲρ τοὺς πολλοὺς, καὶ θείω».

²⁰ Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 692 B: «ὑπερεῖχε τοὺς πολλοὺς τῶν ἱερῶν διδασκάλων κατὰ πολλοὺς τρόπους, οἵς ἂν σεμνύνοιτο ὁ θεῖος διδασκαλος, ὅστε οὐκ ἀν 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 métaphore vive*, Édition du Seuil: Paris 1975.

divine men, such as Hierotheus, in disposition and science²¹. 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 them²². 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 direction²³. On the other hand, this knowledge and

²¹ Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 692 B: «Ἡμεῖς γὰρ κατὰ τό· Γνῶθι σαντόν. ἔαυτῶν αἰσθανόμεθα, ὡς οὔτε νοῆσαι ἵκανως τὰ θεῖα χωροῦμεν, οὔτε εἰπεῖν. Πόρρω δέ ἐσμεν τῆς ἔξεως καὶ ἐπιστήμης τῶν ἱερῶν ἀνδρῶν».

²² Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 692 B-C: «πολλὴν γὰρ ἀν εὐλάβειαν εῖχομεν καὶ εἰς τὸ μηδόλως ἀκούειν ἢ λέγειν περὶ τῶν θείων, μὴ ὅτι γε ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀγνοούμενοις, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀκριβῶς γνωσκομένοις, εἰ μὴ κατὰ νοῦν εῖχομεν».

²³ Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 692 C: «Καὶ εἰς τοῦτο ἡμᾶς ἔπεισαν, ὅτι καλόν ἐστι δηλαδῆ τὸ μεταδιδόναι καὶ ἐτέροις τῆς ἐνδεχομένης γνώσεως, αἱ φυσικαὶ ἔφεσεις τῶν θείων ἀγγέλων ἐφετικῶς ἀεί 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 «ὑψηλοτέρα σου μὴ ζήτει, καὶ βαθύτερά σου μὴ ἐρεύνα»²⁴. These sentences suggest a clear boundary. Correspondingly, the divinely inspired texts motivate the transmission of the doctrines according to the apostolic saying «Ἄλλοι ἡκουσας παρ’ ἔμοι, ταῦτα παράθου πιστοῖς ἀνθρώποις»²⁵. 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 helpless²⁶. 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

²⁴ Cf. *Sir*, 3.21.

²⁵ Cf. *2 Tim*, 2.2.

²⁶ Cf. *Paraphrasis...*, 692 C-D: «Ταῖς τοιαύταις πειθόμενοι παραίνεσεσι, πρὸς τὴν ἐφικτὴν τῶν θείων εὔρεσιν μὴ ἀποδειλιάσαντες, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἔτι δυναμένους εἰς τὰ κρείττονα καὶ ὑψηλότερα τῆς ἡμετέρας ἔξεως καὶ δυνάμεως ἀναδραμεῖν, ἀβοηθήτους οὐ φέροντες καταλιπεῖν ὡς τυχὸν, ἐκ ταύτης δὴ τῆς ἡμετέρας χαμερποῦς διδασκαλίας ἀναχθήσθαι μελλόντων τινῶν εἰς ὑψηλοτέραν γνῶσιν».

nothing new can be added to what already exists²⁷. 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

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

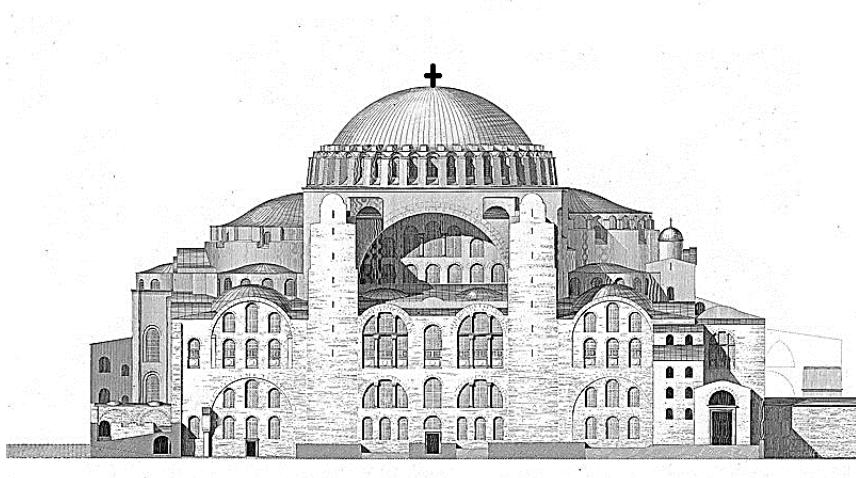
earns due to his “personal” struggle to approach God. In this case, the question of the values of the “person” is related to the question of proximity to divine matters, which in great divine personalities come through ecstasy. That is to say, certain “persons”, like Hierotheus, turn their ecstatic experience 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.



Aspects of the presence of the Aristotelian Logic in Western Christianity and Eastern Christianity. The “middle places” according to Boethius and Holobolus

Christos Terezis,

Professor, University of Patras

terezis@upatras.gr

Abstract

In this article, we discuss a particular aspect of the presence of the Aristotelian Logic –mainly based on the treatise *Topics*– in the Christianity of the West as well as in the Christianity of the East, with Boethius and Manuel Holobolus as representatives. As a reference text, we have Boethius’ treatise *De topicis differentiis*, which was translated into Greek, with certain adaptations and individual comments, by Manuel Holobolus. We approach a concise passage from the Byzantine scholar’s translation, which refers to “middle places”, that is to say, to those which arise neither from the meaning of names *per se* nor from external factors alone, but from their encounter with each other under particular circumstances. We investigate how “middle places” are distinguished into three categories –a) by *πτώσις* (case), b) by *συστοιχία* (co-ordination), and c) by *διαίρεσις* (division)– and how arguments are structured on the basis of their use. They appear as modalities of nouns, mainly through adjectives and adverbs within prepositional phrases, which do not refer to semantic singulars but to a structure of various kinds of relations between situations and between persons, with evaluative schemes sometimes present. We pay particular attention to how an actual case highlights both morphological and semantic

variations so that it is not just a grammatical scheme but also one of philosophical interest. We indicate how through the “middle places” formal Logic is brought into relevance with Ontology, or nominal reflections with pragmatological data, in the perspective of what can be called conceptual realism, which refers to how a meaning adapts to the external conditions it is asked to describe and is transformed accordingly. Finally, we conclude that through Boethius’ original text and Holobolus’s translation, the Aristotelian formal Logic is utilized by the theological and philosophical atmosphere of Christianity, both in the West and in the East, even though there is a gap of about eight centuries between the two thinkers.

Keywords: Boethius, Holobolus, Logic, “middle spaces”, grammatical case, adverb, argument

Introduction

On the one hand, the present study belongs to the systematic philosophical branch of formal Logic and, on the other hand, to the History of Philosophy, since it traces how a detail of the above branch is renewed or updated in later periods than the one in which it first appeared. Thus, its content is also approached in the so-called historical evolutionary light. More specifically, our research draws its motivation from a well-written section of Aristotle’s famous treatise *Topics*, from how it is received by Boethius, a leading thinker of Western Christianity, and (more importantly) from how it is inscribed in a translational perspective by an important representative of Eastern Christianity, Manuel Holobolus. The *Topics* owe their fame to how they deal with the foundation of reasoning, argument and proof, but especially for their treatment of “endoxa” and “places”, concepts which have particularly appealed to later scholars, and not only those of the Aristotelian tradition. But certainly, what is said about «ὅρον» (definition), «ἰδιον» (idiom), «γένος» (genus) «συμβεβηκός» (accident) in the course of their development should not be overlooked.¹ Boethius, who is regarded as the “father of

¹ The *Topics* constitute a treatise which also specifies the ways of understanding the differences between terms and propositional schemes, while their contribution to the formation of categories is also noteworthy.

Scholastic Philosophy”, attempted to translate the treatise in question into Latin –as well as the rest of the *Organon*– in the form of what is known as a translation commentary. So, he compiled a systematic treatise *De topicis differentiis* –composed of four books, each containing several chapters–, which is the so-called authorial archetype of the West for what is characterized as Dialectical Topics, and gradually becomes a textbook for high-level philosophical studies. This study aroused the intense interest of the Byzantine intellectuals and was translated into Greek.² Its leading translator –and actually with a critical style and comments– was Holobolus, who, by his choice, made the philosophical quality of this text more widely known in a different cultural context. A translation, however, is not merely an attempt to transfer a text to another tradition, but also reflects the research interests of a scholar and the surrounding atmosphere of the historical period in which he or she is active.³

The research objective of our study will concentrate, as far as its grammatical reference is concerned, on the translation of Holobolus, and on his introductory remarks on “middle places”, with “places” generally being understood as argument foundations, which exhibit a wide range of specializations, since arguments as propositional forms vary.⁴ It should be

For a systematic approach, we refer to the edition published by “Les Belles Lettres”, Paris 1967, with an introduction, French translation and commentary by M. J. Brunschwig.

² Boethius’ treatise *De topicis differentiis* has been published by the Academy of Athens in collaboration with the publishing houses “J. Vrin” and “Ousia” in 1990, with an introduction and a critical edition by Dimitrios Z. Nikitas, in the series “Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi”, vol. 5.

³ The translation by Manuel Holobolus has been published in the same volume together with the translation by Prochoros Kydones. It should be noted that the research project of Dimitrios Z. Nikitas is of immense importance, both for its history and for its systematic approach. Apart from the great grammatical edition, his work is also characterized for its critical argumentation, which sheds light on particular aspects concerning the philosophical encounters of Eastern Christianity with Western Christianity.

⁴ Cf. A. M. Severini Boetii, *De topicis differentiis*, II, 4, pp. 28-29 of the above. Manouel Holobolus, *Βοητίου, περὶ τόπων διαλεκτικῶν*, II, 4, p. 115, of the above, where we read the following: «Πάντας τοίνυν τοὺς τόπους, ἥγουν τὰς τῶν μεγίστων προτάσεων διαφοράς, ἥπερ αὐτῶν ἀγεσθαι τῶν

noted that this Byzantine thinker is a great Aristotelian, with the consequence that in his translation and especially in his commentaries he accurately traces the Aristotelian imprints of Boethius. However, our main aim will be to bring out, mainly through analytical penetrations and synthetic extensions, certain theoretical propositions concerning how Ontology is connected to formal Logic as well as what role the “middle places” play in this connection to lead to a holistic system of Knowledge. In other words, what possibilities does a well-constructed text provide for us to approach (in a way that is accurate, as far as possible, accurate) an external reality and its conceptual expressions? We believe that, in terms of the development of the history of ideas, such a study can shed light on aspects of the research interests that occupied the academic community in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Byzantium. It should be noted, moreover, that both the Latin text and its Byzantine reproduction lack the scope of the Aristotelian one in terms of the analytical treatment of the terms since an extensive part of their structure has to do with the references to the intermediate tradition, such as, for example, to Themistius, Cicero and Marcus Tullius, while references to other treatises of Aristotle, especially to the *Organon*, are also evident. However, both are emblematic texts, in the sense that they refer to most of the points of a treatise that decisively found the branch of formal Logic and also taught people how they need to or have the capacity to think accurately, to communicate at a high level with one another, to discourse with external reality, and finally to lead to systematic categorizations in most branches of science.

δρων ὀνάγκη ἐστὶ τῶν ἐν τῷ προβλήματι κειμένων, ἥγουν τοῦ κατηγορουμένου τε καὶ ὑποκειμένου, ἢ ἔξωθεν λαμβάνεσθαι ἢ τούτων μέσον, αἱ καὶ ἐν αμφοτέροις στρέφονται» (115.22-26). Regarding the general content of the places, we refer to the following passage: : «Τόπος γοῦν ἐστιν, ὡς τῷ Μάρκῳ Τουλλίῳ δοκεῖ, ἐπιχειρήματος ἔδρα. Τοῦ γὰρ ἐπιχειρήματος ἔδρα ποτέ μέν ἡ μεγίστη πρότασις νοεῖσθαι πέφυκε, ποτὲ δὲ ἡ τῆς μεγίστης προτάσεων διαφορά» (112.27-30).

1. General prolegomena

First, it is pointed out that the middle places arise either from the case or from the array or from the division, that is, a variety of situations-functions-relevancies-methods that are inscribed in the terms of modal causality and highlight through theoretical expressions a highly dynamocratic system of relations, distinctions, and evolutions, inferior to their source with regard to the intrinsic nature of their manifestation. Within this system, the precise clarifications of the factual data depend on the particular presence of the factors constituting or defining them, which can also be described as topical variables. And this threefold specificity is due to the fact that the world of becoming is not one-dimensional and formally reproducible and, therefore, will not be captured in a univocal way either by tautological judgments or by formally repeated reductions. It is a dynamocratic external reality which is one of the capital causes that form what is defined as grammatical-syntactic structuralism.

2. The middle places coming from the cases

In particular, as regards the first case, it is stated that «πτωσίς ἔστιν ἡ τινὸς ὄνόματος κυριωτάτη κλίσις εἰς ἐπίρρημα», just as, for example, in the case in which «δικαιώς» arises as a deviation from «δικαιοσύνη».⁵ It needs to be made clear at the outset that the term «κυριωτάτη» refers to the fact that it is not a transfer to another meaning or significance, nor does it refer to external interference in terms of predicates and judgments. The development in predicates, which also includes hierarchy in terms of conceptual intensity, is of an internal order but is also determined by the scope of integration in each case. A case, then, is the signifying alteration, so to speak, in which a particular mode –or modality– of expression emerges from a general concept, which characterizes a specific action, which, due to its constitutional

⁵ Βοέτιου, περὶ τόπων διαλεκτικών (124.2-5). Cf. Aristotle, *Topics*, 106b29-107a2.

position, will be inscribed –together with its expressive form, of course– in two fields. The first field refers to its topicality, which is clearly specific and unique in terms of the protagonists who shape it and the moment in which it is performed. The second field refers to its reduction to more general signifying regularities, that is, to a natural integrity from which strict justifications and meanings are derived, irrespective of situational adaptations. So, the concept of «δικαιοσύνη» does not essentially change by «δικαίως», but it is inscribed in a particular propositional schema, within which it functions relationally or exegetically or partly definitely. Therefore, the case denotes the transformation of a noun into its feasible modes of linguistic or grammatical utterance, into special fields of situations-relations-reciprocities, compared to the general situation represented by the noun in question as definite and abstract. It is the point at which the literal meaning meets the external conditions, a dialectic which contributes to the formation of the middle places.

In our view, we are in a position to extend and argue modestly that this generality could be characterized as transcendental, as an integral condition of possibility for any particular presence of justice –or any other concept– within the world of becoming, but in such a way that, despite the relativism introduced, its very conceptional identity is not altered. Of course, here the (not easy to deal with) question will be raised –which philosophically refers to the dispute between Platonism and Aristotelianism– regarding whether the abstract refers to a condition that cannot be tangibly proven, and actually at the moment when it has to be clarified whether it has ontological content, an a priori state of existence and presence.⁶ However, it is worth noting that the transcendental

⁶ It is a subject which has been extensively discussed by the Hellenistic, Neoplatonic and Neo-Aristotelian philosophical tradition that follows, as well as by contemporary research. We shall refer to the great study of L. Robin, *La Théorie platonicienne des Idées et des Nombres d'après Aristote: Étude Histoire et Critique*, Heidelsheim 1998, originally written in 1906. It is a work which was a milestone in the Platonism-Aristotelianism relations-differences during the first period of their emergence, and which also highlighted the starting points of the constitution of Mathematics during that period, which –remarkably– included a famous personality,

raises further concerns as to how the abstract is constituted or defined, since, for instance, it is not easily accessible whether it constitutes an *a priori* analytic or synthetic judgment. The relevant reasoning process could unfold as follows: the abstract would constitute a formal formulation, which would represent a peculiar conceptual realism, i.e. the immanent presence of an inner logical form, under its active or practical manifestation, in a number of specialized behaviours or attitudes of life. Subsequently, the abstract concept will emerge from the synthetic –and certainly comparative in terms of one of their characteristics– reading of the specialized ones. However, under the conditions negotiated here, it will be a concept which will coincide with –or refer directly to– the existent, with the consequence that it is impossible for nominalism to claim the most decisive powers if it is not proved that existence is an initial state and not a posterior state. Moreover, one could not rule out an exclusively mental construction, strictly theoretical in content, but also complex in its constitution, since it would have, as a main basis, or even exclusive, the particular.

However, it cannot be ignored that the noun is the dominant factor in the construction of a sentence, while the adverbial type of noun is a peripheral one, determined by the circumstances of each case, which vary from one to another, based mainly on the intentions, choices and modes of action of the protagonists or the necessities to which they are subject. So, here the adverb will depend on the noun of the sentence as well as on the verb, which reflects its constitutional position as a particular presence (of the noun). Thus, we would note that, in general, the adverb does not bring out a realism of the name, but a name that reflects a realistic view of reality, as a dynamocratic becoming articulated in various or infinite ways. However, the same cannot be argued for the noun, which can stand on its own, and not just in a simple sentence. So, as far as «δικαιοσύνη» is concerned: a) as a noun has a dominant

Eudoxus, who had a crucial influence on Euclid. It would not be an exaggeration if we said that with his impressive synthetic use of the sources and the excellent categorization of them –as well as with his emblematic articulations of interdisciplinarity–the above-mentioned researcher sealed the relevant scientific course up to modern times.

position wherever it is used; b) as an adverb –«δικαίως»— has a secondary or complementary position. Therefore, «δικαίως» is a middle place, inasmuch as it is determined both by the original name and by external circumstances.

3. The middle places as coming from co-ordinates

The second version of the middle places is expressed as follows: «Συνεζευγμένα δὲ λέγονται ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτοῦ διαφόρῳ τρόπῳ παραχθέντα ἔχυθησαν». In this case as well, what is being discussed is placed in almost the same categorical axis as the previous ones, since the term «συνεζευγμένα» or «σύστοιχα» (co-ordinates) refers to those which have arisen or have been produced in some way, in a way that is particularly determined by the area of their respective emergence or use, from a common conceptual principle. But the difference is that it is not a derivative adverb. Here too, of course, external conditions play a capital role in the changes of the predicates.⁷ For example, «δικαιοσύνη» gave rise to «δίκαιον» and «δικαίως», one-word expressive forms, which do not alter the common conceptual basis but differentiate the semantic, syllogistic or applicative basis, with their affirmations or negations adapted to what has been done. In fact, the function of each of the cognates can be directed to the formulation of particular categorical predicates in relation to any noun in any sentence by the constitution and characterization of a unique argumentative or syllogistic mode of propositional development. So, all these, in their epistemically defined *per se* condition, together with justice

⁷ Note that in his comments, Holobolus criticizes Boethius' use of the relational adjective «συνεζευγμένα» and argues that Aristotle uses «σύστοιχα», a term which more accurately describes the emanation or multiplication of words of the same route from a common source. On the other hand, the former term refers to a process of meeting presumably a posteriori, which is not justified by the context here. Furthermore, the Byzantine thinker clarifies that in his references here Boethius has as his basis the passage 114a27-b2 of the *Topics*, where he specifies with further examples the «σύστοιχα», as with those derived from «ανδρείαν» and «υγείαν».

itself as «συνεζευγμένα» or «σύστοιχα», are collectively characterized as jointed in terms of their starting signifying source, since they provide, each in its way, the conditions for direct, topical and explicitly or declaratively expressed arguments of a common range of bases and perspectives, that is, of adaptations to what is happening in the external environment. Those referring to virtuous situations such as justice will also move on to the evaluative scale, based on the quality which is reflected both in their articulation as a structural internal order in a propositional scheme and in their descriptive response to the external data to which they refer and which will obviously have a cathartic and changeable content. At the same time, by having a common conceptual source, they will also have the conditions to lead to the formulation of abstract categorical structures, that is, broader theoretical directions. The fact that they even move with an evaluative determination due to their content, articulated under the intensity that they possess in a propositional scheme, contributes to the formulation of synthetic judgments, with a priori justifications and a posteriori expressions, under foundational and permanently validating places respectively.⁸

Therefore, extending our syllogism, here as well that the initial form of a concept, which is expressed by the abstract noun, is the source of a dynamocratic subsequent articulation of it, or has the requirements to be articulated in multiple ways because external conditions constitute challenges for expressive transformations, which take on the responsibility of responding, as far as possible, to the objective, or even realistic considerations. However, since it is clear that the situations of daily life are multiple, changeable and unpredictable, it is necessary to seek the linguistic terms that will describe them with the proper precision to ensure objective measures for the path to truthfulness, which each time constitutes a perspective

⁸ This is a detail which is found in the above passage of the *Topics*, where Aristotle includes in the evaluative category of that which deserves to be praised the «δικαιοσύνη», the «δίκαιος», the «δίκαιον» and the «δίκαιως», with the additional aim of showing that any predicate is attributed to the noun is also attributed to its etymological derivatives, with similar adaptations within the various prepositional schemes.

of –investigative, analytical and explanatory– targeting. It is a more general condition that reveals not only the intellectual and linguistic capacities of man but also the cultural ones, which are linked to the analytical descriptions and synthetic judgments as they are perceived. Therefore, although two derivatives may have a common semantic source, yet depending on their grammatical type of utterance, they highlight a special conceptual presence and intensity, as well as different worlds of contexts, thus proving the pervasive relativism of becoming. That is, a concept is incorporated into a propositional scheme to describe a strictly particular pragmatological field, which will largely operate in terms of kairos and, therefore, can be of limited duration. However, the degree to which its intentional tendency and relational presences or references are revealed depends on or, more correctly, is specified by the grammatical form in which it is uttered at any given time, which also determines the particular syntactic position in a sentence as a general integral syntactic structure. It is generally understood that the same is true for all concepts included in the articulation of any propositional form in which, in the dominant idiomatic statement or marking, the dominant meets the subordinate terms. It should be noted, however, that as a whole, the terms are necessary for the full structure of the meaning, for its study in terms of its topicality, and for its inclusion, sometimes in axiological ways as well, in a broad system of semantics.

4. The formation and function of the argument

The following descriptions refer to arguments that are inscribed in a categorical perspective. So, it is mentioned that the arguments which follow for validation are formed in a similar way to those mentioned above during their operation within propositional schemes of synthetic content. The particular –but also with clear potential for generalization– example used for the way they are formed is of the following form: «εἰ τοῦτο, ὃ δίκαιώς ἐστίν, ἀγαθῶς ἐστίν, καὶ ὃ δίκαιον ἐστιν ἀγαθόν ἐστι· καὶ εἰ ὁ δίκαιος ἀγαθός ἐστι, καὶ ἡ

δικαιοσύνη ἀγαθόν ἔστι».⁹ That is, the argument has the characteristics of an integral syllogism with direct implications, moving both according to abstract concepts and their bearers, that is, according to their personification. In particular, it is pointed out that the above are inferred in categorical reciprocities according to similarities –or common etymological roots– that a name highlights, with its internal dynamics of adaptation. That is to say, the «δίκαιον» and the «δικαίως» emerge from «δικαιοσύνη» but now these are inscribed in the realm of propositional schemes, simple but clearly belonging to synthetic judgments. This internal relevance certainly leads to an expressive organogram with extensive agreements, in a way that could be argued to have self-evident foundations, specialized analogously to the operationalization of the relations, either as objectively feasible or as feasible according to the judgment of the thinking subjects. And in this part we would mention that the argument constitutes a logical process which reflects, on a syntactic-grammatical scale, the actual relations of the external objects or situations. Moreover, it follows that under a general reading by implication that whatever relation exists between nouns and is reflected in terms of reciprocal categorical attributions also exists in the grammatical forms that derive from them as somehow their internal linguistic differentiations, so to speak.

However, the course of the constitution of an argument needs special attention in order to clarify the conceptual –and undoubtedly etymological– emanations. So, the sequence of syntactic-grammatical articulations is as follows: a) mutual categorical reduction between adverbs; b) mutual categorical reduction between adjectives; c) mutual categorical reduction

⁹ *Boetίou, περὶ τόπων διαλεκτικῶν*, 124.8-12. We should note that on the whole the development between the cognate words is characterized as «όμοίωσις» –and in Boethius we find it as “similitudis” in relation to the original name from which they come. Perhaps it would be more correct to use the term “similitudis”, which denotes the emanation from an original source, while «όμοίωσις» refers to the equalization which certain derivatives achieve with their common conceptual source. It is, to a great degree, a distinction between the a priori descending and the a posteriori ascending.

between persons possessing the former particulars, which are mainly indicated by adjectives; d) mutual categorical reduction between abstract concepts. By the above sequence of parallelisms or attributions, we mean that a term-to-term correspondence is brought out, which operates on the basis that if two nouns –and certainly any of their derivatives– are identical, any modification of one brings about a corresponding modification of the other. This transformative synchronicity is carried out, so to speak, by automatisms, in order to preserve syntactic-grammatical relations but also to accurately reflect the pragmatological ones, which, obviously as subject to becoming, are by definition changeable. Thus, the question is inscribed in terms of its generality in the renewed dialectics that develop between the pragmatological and the logical, as well as within each in particular, which are not unidimensional and univocal despite the fact that at a particular moment, they constitute or reflect a tautological situation regarding its existential tone. In addition , we should not exclude the adverbial attribution of a noun to that with which it is in a topical tautological relation, with respect to a pragmatological and logical field. But will this relationship be maintained in continuation? The answer depends on the texture of the factors involved as well as on other external conditions.

In this context, the places described are called mixed or middle places, in the sense that, if the reasoning is directed, for example, to the question of «δικαιοσύνη», the arguments arise either from the case of those places or from their «σύστοιχα», i.e. from those which are topically related to them. Therefore, they do not seem to be attracted to their mode of articulation either by the main and appended expression –for then it would be inflexibility– or by what lies outside of them, but by their case , which is produced by their manifestation on the basis of a short alternation of them. That is, even with an infinitesimal one. It is reasonable, then, the fact that these places are inscribed between the things –which are related to the integral significance of places– and those outside their substance, under any topical encounter between them.¹⁰ However, the intermediate here does not refer to a mixture, but to a

¹⁰ Cf. *Βοετίου, περὶ τόπων διαλεκτικῶν*, 124.12-18.

statement of identities and differences (or perhaps even heterogeneities). That is, if a mode occurs as a source of encounter, it is necessary to bring middle places to the forefront as speculative intermediates for revealing communications, which can be described as mixed. This possibility moves in the sense that they capture in their communication the different situations between themselves in terms of their source of origin. Each of them, in fact, reveals deviations from its source, which is characterized by its absolute, in fact in its own terms, identity. It is clear that, if the differentiations or alternations –both the pragmatological and linguistic ones– did not arise, there would be no need for the middle places, which are undoubtedly not introduced into propositional schemes as subject to the necessities of world-theoretical schemes. Their mission is defined in describing in detail and explaining, or possibly signifying, evaluating, interpreting, and encouraging, since they are expressively inserted into a pulsating becoming. Thus, the previous argument could also be articulated in reverse, but with pragmatological additions, that is, those that make inevitable the cases and alternations that represent the dialectics of nature and history, as well as the approaches by man.

Next, it is pointed out that «ἔπεται ὁ τόπος ἀπὸ διαιρέσεων», which is examined in the following distinct dual role: «πᾶσα διαίρεσις ἢ ἀποφάσει γίνεται ἢ μερισμῷ». More precisely: on the one hand, every division is made by means of negation, as if an analyst has the prerequisites to formulate, for example, this logical-pragmatological schematization from the following two opposing perspectives: «πᾶν ζῶον ἢ ἔχει πόδας ἢ οὐκ ἔχει». This is an expression which does not pass through an intermediate state between the two extremes, the affirmative and the apophasic, a detail that requires attention in terms of the function of the middle places. On the other hand, as far as the separation is concerned, the division can be expressed in the following way: «πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ἢ ὑγιὴς ἐστιν ἢ νοσῶν», where the contrast between the predicates is

maintained, but it is expressed in an affirmative mode.¹¹ Commenting on this, we would point out that the division is based (first and foremost) on the possibility of attributing a negative –in the sense of not possessing– characteristic of a noun or a pragmatological structure. Of course, in each case, it must be made clear if negation is intertwined with deprivation and of what kind, which implies that relativism is inevitable, or that this particular negation removes any pragmatological basis. On the other hand, there is also the opposite case: it is understood that the opposite of the negative can also be attributed, which, in fact, on the basis of the two examples given, is congenial under the pragmatological premises that can be ascertained in a particular case, to the noun, that is, to what objectively determines the constitutional articulations in the grammatical axis. Here, the division refers fundamentally to the distinction of possibilities or to some ontologically feasible formations-states, which are not only opposed to each other. They are also opposed to the modes of being or to the organismicity which they reveal.

The second case of division is the meristic one, according to the processes in which we separate the possible states which could occur in a being and which are permanently attributed categorically with a positive expressive sign but which are opposed to each other and, therefore, not coincidental at the same time in the same being, or in the same wider substantive field in a strictly concrete spacetime, which constitutes an individual topical identity. Here, a division emerges that has clearly pragmatological characteristics, which do not absolutely and exclusively determine a noun, but move in the region of possibility, which can arise from a variety of circumstances and, therefore, can be reflected in expressive cases. Generalizing, however, we could discuss the dialectics of nature, on the possibility of the existence of opposites, in the form of succession, of course, and not synchronicity, under the synthetic scheme that causes the observation of a subject on the basis of its idiosyncratic presence, which is characterized

¹¹ Βοετίου, περὶ τόπων διαλεκτικῶν, 124.18-22. The «ἀπόφασις» refers not so much to a denial but to the impossibility of attributing a predicate due to certain pragmatological necessities.

by its findings and by the historicity of its formation, which however is not typically linear. However, this presence could be generalized by the abstractive method on the proven representations and in their co-examination with other presences. In comparison, however, with «*απόφασιν*» it is clearly more comprehensible, since it refers to data which are, as a whole, subject to sensory experience.

Subsequently, the following sentence is formulated by means of specific reductions: «Γίνεται δὲ πᾶσα διαιρεσις ἢ ἀπὸ γένους εἰς εἴδη ἢ ὅλου εἰς μέρη ἢ φωνῆς εἰς οἰκεῖα σημαινόμενα ἢ συμβεβηκότος εἰς ούσιαν ἢ συμβεβηκότων εἰς συμβεβηκότα».¹² The latter specification probably refers to the division of general accidents into individual ones, or their successive occurrence in a subject, with similarities that fit with it, which could also lead to their categorization as determinations. Thus, regarding the ways in which the division is carried out, the following are mentioned: A) The transition from genus to species, with its process constituting a general categorical determination in the individual second, which will either appear simultaneously or successively, on the basis of either natural evolution, divine design, or divine plan, which directs evolution. B) From the whole to the parts of which it is composed or with which it manifests itself in terms of the organismicity proper to it, while also on the coexistence of the whole of them depends on its maintenance in existence or at least on its functional presence. C) From a verbal reference to those semantic elements, operating of course by references of a clearly non- neutral order, which are connected with it. This is an extension that reflects the potentialities of linguistic utterances, which are not, however, understood, here too, as merely expressive forms which would only aim at understanding, but also as responding to modes of existence of external reality. D) From the accident to the essence to which it is added, with the division clearly referring to a democratic opening, to its multiple and multimodal

¹² *Βοετίου, περὶ τόπων διαλεκτικῶν*, 124.22-25. In other words, descending developments and ascents are included here, obviously determined each time by the way in which the specific pragmatological data are examined.

presence according to the conditions or to the organismic absorptions each time, which form a new manifestation of the general ontic field, added to its infinite variety. E) From the essence to the accidents that are added to its substance or by which it reveals itself, a relation which refers to the open character of its presence, with what it contains, or what happens to it reflecting individual states of its structure or its inner richness. F) From accidents to accidents, a situation that will mainly be observed either under the type of succession or under the type of addition, with possibly both together or with variations accompanying and having the conditions apparently to be included in the structure of a categorical logical scheme, in all probability also renewable or open, provided that the evolutionary mode of operation of the becoming is taken into account.

Epilogue

According to what we have examined, we believe that we can come to the following three conclusions, one concerning the historical and two concerning the systematic branch of Philosophy, in a cultural environment –that of Christianity– where the theological tone is pervasive.

I] The translation of Boethius' treatise *De topicis differentiis* by Manuel Holobolus highlights a tendency in the intellectual atmosphere of the late Byzantine world. This point takes on further meaning, since the treatment of topics of formal Logic is not merely inscribed in a perspective of theoretical philosophical performance, but also in the way of presenting properly and accurately its relationship to the external reality. That is, it is a matter of responsibility, since the strictly structured reason attempts to remove surface approaches and to bring out the conditions which constitute situations, processes, communi-cations, valuations, interpretations, etc. As such, it penetrates the inner depths of daily life and explains it in terms of its actual facts. Thus, it is a theoretical work, which refers to broader cultural contexts.

II] Regardless of the variety of their versions, the middle places are founded expressively by what is defined as a case, which constitutes or forms both a morphological and a semantic category; the former referring to the competence of grammar and the latter to that of philosophy, without, however, this distinction being of absolute order and without excluding the inclusion of the former in the structural articulation of the latter as a subsystem of it. Either way, however, the case captures a leading intellectual attempt, which aims at projecting objectivity with regard to the descriptions performed. In fact, the flexibility that it presents with regard to its specializations also highlights the exodus from the strictly nominal or even authentically essential relationship between the subject, the predicate, and the emergence of those feasible relations that reflect particular pragmatological and theoretical contexts; that is, the case reveals the dialectical possibilities of the names in their encounter with those of things, from the perspective of an external environment with endless changes, both historical and physical.

III] The middle places are one of the “super weapons” of argumentation, since they also refer to how methods –or constitutional structures within a propositional scheme– must be chosen and operated to provide the springboards to validate or refute a position. In their structure, they apply to both individual and universal scales of meaning and constitute wholes of meaning and signification of comparable intensity. In order for all these to take place, however, not only the artful functions of the human mind are required, but also their response to what philosophically belongs to the branch of Ontology –which includes being, becoming, and the representation of things. However, they must reflect on something similar in their reference to historical events. Thus, by using adverbs and adjectives, we can refer to the investigation of the categorical scale, which is not excluded from being polyvalent, even in a short sentence.

Our study was concise and followed the perspective of showing the interests of Western and Eastern Christianity, at least on a microcosmic scale. Boethius’ treatise has been shown by research and by its historical renewal to be of great

philosophical importance, with the translation of Holobolus confirming it. Of course, both texts show how Christian thought has received Aristotelianism, which has fed it crucially, at least at the level of conceptual formulations, and in theologically oriented treatises. To confirm this, the writings of Leontius of Byzantium, John of Damascus and Thomas Aquinas should not be ignored as some leading examples.



The fascination of the West and the ambivalence of the Byzantines towards it through the case of Demetrios Kydones

Ioanna Tripoula,
PhD, University of Athens
joantrip@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper focuses on the case of the politician and scholar Demetrios Kydones as typical of the fascination that the West exerted on the Byzantines, but also of the ambivalence towards it. First, there is a brief overview of the events of his life, which encouraged his contact with the Latins. A more detailed reference was made to his translation, writing, and teaching. In our view, his provocative positions were the reason he had not received the recognition he deserved to this day. His most important value lies in the fact that, in an age of hostility, he sought to bring Byzantium closer to the West by presenting logical and valid arguments beyond petty political pursuits and prejudices.

Keywords: Demetrios Kydones, unification of the Churches, *Apology*, anti- Hesychasts, anti-Palamist, Latins

Introduction

Demetrios Kydones (c. 1324-c. 1397/98) was one of the most important Byzantine scholars, with remarkable authorial and translation production. His family's close relations with the imperial court largely determined his "political" career as well as his personal development. However, his personal value was the reason he managed to emerge as one of the most important figures in the political and intellectual life of the late Byzantine years¹. In the history of philosophy, he does not seem to have found the recognition that he deserves. An overall view of his work allows us (A) to detect elements from Western culture (which fascinated the Byzantines), and (B) to understand how he conceived the possibility of opening up pathways for communication and dialogue between these two different worlds (Byzantium and the West).

The mediator (*toīs prágmasi mesázon*)

The close and long-term relations of the family of Demetrios Kydones with the Court was the reason why, after the death of his father, he turned to Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos,² asking for protection and financial support for his family. Pursuing a career at the Palace was possible thanks to his previous humanitarian studies and knowledge in other scientific fields.³ One reason he quickly rose through the court

¹ Rigo, 2011, 245.

² He formally ascended the throne in 1347 as co-emperor of John V. Essentially, however, he had been on the throne as early as 1341, as the previous emperor, Andronikos III, had not formally nominated his minor son, John V as heir, and thus there was a political vacuum. In 1347 it was decided that the (still minor) John V Paleologos would be the first Emperor and John VI Kantakouzenos would be the co-emperor. Although this decision formally ended the civil strife, it actually ended when the latter abdicated in 1354 and was ordained a monk.

³ He also had considerable mathematical knowledge: characteristically, he wrote commentaries on the work of ancient Greek mathematicians, as can be seen from his correspondence. See Hunger, 1994, 60-61.

hierarchy was his training in rhetoric, his familiarity with classic texts, and his compliance with the rules of drafting documents (such as the principle of *variatio*, e.g., in grammatical choices, stylistic and stylistic formation).⁴ His ingenuity, erudition, and personal perspective convinced the emperor to accept him in his court. Thus, he became a "mediator" (representative of the court).⁵

The civil war (1341-1347) between Ioannis Kantakouzenos and the former Empress, Anne of Savoy, which followed the death of Andronikos III, contributed to the loss of revenue and territories on behalf of the Byzantine Empire. Economic exhaustion led to widespread political unrest. During this period, Kydones served his benefactor steadily and faithfully. This implies, on the one hand, that he strengthened his position next to the Emperor; on the other, he quickly became a target of his rivalries. The supporters of Anna and of minor John V, the so-called Zealots, took over Thessaloniki and turned openly against the authority of Kantakouzenos, the nobles and all his supporters (1345).⁶ Kydones, an ardent Kantakouzenos supporter, was expelled from Constantinople and fled in Veroia, which was ruled by Kantakouzenos' son, Manuel, and afterwards in Thrace (1346). He attempted to avoid conflict and, simultaneously, to prevent standoff, which incurred royal displeasure. Nonetheless, with Kantakouzenos' rise to power (1356), Kydones regained his previous position.

Kydones continued serving as a mediator even when John V Paleologos (reigned 1354-1391) ascended the throne. Despite efforts made by the latter to resist the ever-increasing threat from the East, Byzantine resistance was constantly retreating. On the face of it, Kydones withdrew from the Court (c. 1383). In less than a decade, the throne was taken over by his former student and close friend Manuel II Palaiologos (r. 1391-1425),

⁴ Hunger, 1997, 375.

⁵ This title is rather vague as to its exact scope of authority, but it seems to have implied a mediating role between the emperor and his subjects, something similar to the current position of a Prime Minister. Kydones himself through his work seems to avoid any reference to his title or duties.

⁶ Kydones wrote a lament for those who lost their lives in this encounter: *Demetri Cydoni Monodia Occisorum Thessalonicae*, in P.G., CIX, cols.639-652. See in the present below.

who restored Kydones in his position. Nonetheless, his service under the influence of Palaiologos (who supported the union of the Churches in order to repel the Ottoman threat), and his overall positive attitude towards the West, made an easy target of public discontent; he was accused of Catholicism. Moreover, within a climate of increasing hostility toward Latin Catholicism, Kydones was forced to resign (1396). He retired permanently to the island of Crete.

The contacts with the Western world

Thus, Kydones acted as a mediator not only between the Emperor and his followers, but also between the Byzantine state and the Western world. Indeed, he himself was one of the scholars who remained consistently open and positive towards the West. This did not arise from necessity, like that of John Palaiologos, or from blind submission to political authority, but from deeper and more substantial motives.

Kydones' first contact with Western civilization was when he first moved to Constantinople in 1340. There he began studying Latin by Latin priests, specifically by Dominican monks of the monastery of *Panagia tou Peran*. It is assumed that Ioannis Kantakouzinos maintained contacts with this monastery. During his presence at the Court he was surrounded by multitudes of Western mercenaries, ambassadors and merchants. In this context, he was looking for means of direct communication, without relying on interpreters, who (as he claimed) often make mistakes and do not convey the content of a discussion accurately.

Certainly, his motivation is not exclusively derived from his erudition and desire to serve his duties properly. We could consider the possibility that (to a great extent) in this decision he was prompted, or at least encouraged, by the Emperor himself, since at that time he was communicating with the Pope, identifying possible avenues of unification. Kydones remained an ardent supporter of the Union, notwithstanding the majority of the Byzantine clergy and people had already

expressed intense opposition for such a prospect.⁷ Before convening an ecumenical council, the Emperor demanded to be consulted and represented by someone who could trust; he preferred a reliable official who could participate in direct discussions with the Westerners, and who had knowledge of their positions as well as of their differences with the Orthodox Church, and who could encounter the rhetorical techniques they used. Thus, any additional knowledge of the views of Latins Westerners in general would be of utmost importance for the Emperor.

Kydones' apprenticeship at the Monastery of Peran went beyond some lessons in Latin. It was also extended to a deeper understanding of Western theology. Thus, a few years later, in 1354, he traveled to Italy to study the writings of the most important medieval theologians. These journeys will repeat and expand: overall, he visited Italy three times in the years 1369-71, 1389-91 and 1396-7. In the first of these three trips, he is believed to have received an invitation from the Pope himself to join his court (1369), but rejected it. The Pope expressed his respect for Kydones by honorably offering him the *officium* of being a member of the Roman Catholic clergy. Moreover, in 1391, he also received Venetian citizenship after a series of trips to the city. From the above, it is obvious that his contact with the West were direct, regular, and based on a mutual and sincere appreciation between him and the representatives of Western Christianity and the Western world in general⁸.

⁷ Ostrogorsky, 1978, 359.

⁸ For a brief overview of Kydonis' life and his first contacts with the West, see Hinterberger M., «Apó to orthódoxo Vizántio stin katholikí Dísi. Tésseris diaphoretikí drómi»: in: *To Vizántio Kai I Aparkhés Tis Evrópis*, Ethnikó Ídrima Erevnón, Athens, 2004, 20-23 and also Kianka, Fr., “The Apology of Demetrius Cydones: A Fourteenth-Century Autobiographical Source”, *Byzantine Studies / Etudes Byzantines*, Vol. 7:1, 1980, 57-60 · Kóltsiou, A., *Dimítriou Kidóni metáphrasi tou psevdavoustíniou Soliloqia*, Akadimía Athinón. Kénon Erévnis tis Ellinikís kai Latinikís Grammatías, Athens, 2005, 4-7.

His translation, writing and teaching contribution

In the history of philosophy Kydones is mainly known as the first who understood the task to translate the works of Thomas Aquinas into Greek. This project was essentially offered to him while being taught Latin, since the Dominican monks – with the intention not only to improve his Latin by studying a well-written text, but also to drive him into a more direct contact with the works and the thought of great theologians of the West – suggested him to study and translate Aquinas' *Summa contra gentiles* (or *Liber de veritate catholicae fidei contra errores infidelium*)⁹. Written between the years 1259 – 1265, this work presents in four books the basic axioms of Catholic doctrine: the indisputability of monotheism, the attributes of the divine, the creation of the natural world and of human beings, the relationship of creations with their creator *et al.* Through this first translation attempt, Kydones immerses himself not only in Aquinas's language, but also in his way of elaborating, developing and proving his positions. He presented his translation in 1354 under the title of *Katá Ellénōn bibliou* (*Κατά Ελλήνων βιβλίου*) and with the approval of the emperor, he expanded his translation activity to Aquinas's other works, some of them of smaller importance, some of them of greater, such as the *Summa Theologiae*¹⁰.

In addition, he also translated the following treatises of one of the most important theologians of Latin patrology, Saint Augustine of Hippo (5th century): the *Epistolae*, the *Contra Julianum*, the *Tractatus in Ioannis Euangelium*, the *Sententiae*,

⁹ Nicol, 2005, 404 · As he himself characterizes this work in the First Apology, 362.5-6: «τό βιβλίον τῶν ἐκείνου τό τελεώτατον καί τῆς σοφίας τόν ἀνδρός οἰον ἄνθος» ("τό biblón tōn ekeínu tó teleó̄taton kaí tēs sophías tón andrós oīon ánthos"). Later, however, in *Epistle* n.333 (37 - 45) he reflects on his translation, stating that he was not satisfied with the result because, when he proceeded with it, he did not yet have sufficient knowledge of Latin and, in addition, he did not have access to good manuscripts.

¹⁰ Kóltsiou, 2005, 29-30.

the *De fide ad Petrum* and the *Soliloquia animae ad deum*¹¹. Some of these have been confirmed by modern research to be genuine works of Augustine. The *Contra Julianum* was translated into Greek under the title *Ho autós Aúgoustínos en tō̄ prós Ioulianón epískopon prótō̄ bibliō̄* ('Ο αὐτός Αύγουστινος ἐν τῷ πρὸς Ιουλιανόν ἐπίσκοπον πρώτῳ βιβλίῳ'); it includes five short passages from a work addressed to Julian, the bishop of Aeclanum, located in central Italy. However, the passages Kydones selected do not seem to correspond to those we identify in versions of the original work. This leads us to the following conclusion: perhaps, he had in hand a text that has not survived.

The last three of the aforementioned works are today considered pseudo-Augustinian. The *Sententiae or Liber sententiarum ex operibus S. Augustini delibatarum*, a didactic anthology of opinions is attributed to Augustine. However, it has been written by Prospero of Aquitaine (modern France). It is translated under the title *Toū makaríou Augoustínō epískópou Hippónos kephálāia ek tō̄n autoū lógōn parekbléthénta, ermēneuthénta dé ek toū latinikoū par' emoū Démētríou* (Τοῦ μακαρίου Αὐγουστίνου ἐπισκόπου Ἱππώνος κεφάλαια ἐκ τῶν αὐτοῦ λόγων παρεκβληθέντα, ἐρμηνευθέντα δέ ἐκ τοῦ λατινικού παρ' ἐμοῦ Δημητρίου). Likewise, the *De fide ad Petrum*, a compendium of the theology of the patristic times written by Bishop Roispis Fulgentius (c. 523 - 532) is translated as ως *Toū autoū makaríou prós Pétron peri písteō̄s* (Τοῦ αὐτοῦ μακαρίου πρός Πέτρον περὶ πίστεως). Finally, the work *Soliloquia animae ad deum* was another pseudo-Augustinian text, written in the late 12th and early 13th centuries, which Kydones translates by referring to it as *Loyi* (Λόγοι) or *Monóloyi* (Μονόλογοι)¹².

Kydones found Augustine's works useful for his attempts to dispute the defenders of Palamas.¹³ The latter considered that there is nothing uncreated between God and creation. For

¹¹ As above, 21-32.

¹² For a detailed presentation of the work, see A. Koltsiou, *Dimítriō Kidóni metáphrasi tou psevdavgoustíniou Soliloquia*, *Akadimía Athinón. Kéntron Erévnis tis Ellinikís kai Latinikís Grammatías*, Athens, 2005.

¹³ Polémis, 2014, 256-258.

Augustine, «[p]άσα οὐσία ἡ μή Θεός οὐσα κτίσμα ἐστίν, καὶ ἡ μή κτίσμα οὐσα Θεός ἐστίν» («[π]ᾶσα γὰρ οὐσία ἡ μή Θεός οὐσα κτίσμα ἐστί, καὶ ἡ κτίσμα μή οὐσα Θεός ἐστι», *De Trinitate A'*, VI 9, 17-18); that is, the anti-Palamics, drawing on Thomas Aquinas and Augustine, equated divine knowledge or intellect with the essence of God. With the exception of Augustine, Kydones was not attracted by the theology of most early Christian Fathers. For this reason he did not translate their works into Greek, apart from the *Symbolum fidei de Trinitate* of Saint Hilary Pictavius / Hilary of Poitiers (c. 310 – 367). For Kydones', the concise nature of the work and its clear focus on the subject of the trinity seen from the prism of the Catholic Church, as well as the personality of the author (who had good knowledge not only of Latin, but also of Greek), could advance dialogue and communication between of Eastern and Western Christians.

When it comes to early Middle Ages texts, Kydones expressed interest in the *Homilies* of Pope Gregory I (540 - 604), also known as Saint Gregory the Great, or, to the Eastern Church, as Saint Gregory the Dialogue.¹⁴ More specifically, he received this cognomen from the four-volume *Book of Dialogues* (*Liber Dialogorum*, c. 593-594), which contains references to lives, miracles and prophecies of important saints, well known to the common people of the Catholic Church. Kydones' interest for Saint Gregory could be attributed to the latter's emphasis on maintaining a unifying attitude between the two Churches, accepting at the same time the conclusions of the Fifth Ecumenical Synod, which took place in Constantinople in 553, insisting on adhering to the decisions of the previous Synod (451), which had given the primacy among the Churches in Constantinople to the Confession of Faith. Therefore, in the eyes of Kydones, the Pope was a great theologian and person; he was a great leader of the Catholic Church; he should be considered a man of the spirit, and, simultaneously, an inspirational figure for the Byzantines.

Among other important personalities of the West, Kydones showed interest in the work of Anselm of Canterbury (1033 - 1109), who had already been recognised as one of the founders

¹⁴ Kydones translated the 26th speech from this work.

of Scholasticism. He translated his following works: *De processione Spiritus Sancti* (1102), and *Epistola de sacrificio azymi et fermentati* (1106–7). In the former, Anselm argued about the emanation of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, as developed in debates that took place during the Council of Bari (1098). This was an effort made by Western and Eastern Christians together, striving to end the Schism of 1054. In this particular work the arguments articulated by the Catholic church in favor of the *filioque* are discussed.¹⁵ Likewise, the epistle *De azymo et fermentato epistula ad Walerannum Newenburgensi episcopum*, refers to one of the main differences between the two Churches: the type of bread used in the Holy Eucharist. As opposed to the Orthodox, who use leavened bread, the Catholics chose unleavened bread, considering that in the Last Supper this was the choice of Jesus and his pupils. Thus, we could assume that Kydones presented to the Byzantines the *rationale* behind the two main differences between the Eastern and Western Church; he attempted to highlight viewpoints that contributed to this polarization. Kydones sought to attenuate divides, restorating dialogue, which (in his mind) would significantly contribute to the much-desired unity of the Christian world.

Much closer to Kydones' era was Petrus Pictaviensis of Poitiers (Pierre de Poitiers, 1130?–1205). From him he translated the *Genealogia Christi ab Adam*. This work presents Bible characters, from Adam to Christ, through genealogical tables. Posterior to Petrus was Riccoldo da Monte di Croce / Riccoldo Pennini da Montecroce (c. 1243–1320), a Dominican monk who was an apologist and served as a missionary in Eastern countries. In the East, Montecroce came into contact with the Christian communities of the Maronites, Nestorians, Monothelites and Jacobites and focused on their differences. Especially during his stay in Baghdad, he had studied the Qur'an closely; when he returned to Florence (1300–1301) Montecroce wrote the treatise *Improbatio Alcorani*¹⁶. This is

¹⁵ Kóltsiou, 2005, 30.

¹⁶ For more, see "RICCOLDO da Montecroce" in: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana fondata da Giovanni Treccani S.p.A.

the work that attracted Kydones' interest and made it popular through his translation. Although it is certainly a polemic against Islam, at the same time it provides arguments that challenge prejudices shared by Christians against muslims. Montecroce urges his readers to recognise the profound influences of Christianity on the foundations of the new religion. In the person of Montecroce Kydones saw a Christian brother, saddened by the divisions and hostilities between Christians. Like Montecroce, Kydones realised that individuals who strive to understand in depth the differences between Christians, or even between Christianity and other religions, must seek sincere acquaintance and dialogue between the opposite ends.

The last text Kydones translated into Greek was Bernardus Guidonis' (+1331) hagiological work on Thomas Aquinas *Legenda S. Thomae de Aquino, de orto, vita et obito ac gestis eius*. Bernardus Guidonis, or Bernard Gui, or Bernard Guion (c. 1261-1331), was a reputable and prolific theologian of the Catholic Church. Additionally, he was also Inquisitor (1307 – 1323) and bishop in Langtok (present-day Lodève). Obviously, this work interested Kydones in the wider context of the intention of familiarizing the Byzantine world with the spirit of Thomism.

Kydones' efforts demonstrate a steadfast will to remove obstacles created by the use of a certain discourse within the Christian world.¹⁷ In his view, the incomplete knowledge of Latin, and the lack of knowledge about the history and culture of the Western world in general on behalf of the Byzantines had erected walls that could be demolished only through open dialogue with the West. The Great Schism and the spread of heresies contributed to the weakening of Christianity; conversely strengthened its opponents. The end of the division between East and West and a re-approach was an urgent need; it should be based on an objective examination of the positions and their content, constituting irrelevant the discourse upon which this split was justified. While his views remained largely

https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/riccoldo-da-montecroce_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/

¹⁷ *Apologia* I, 382, 15-17.

popular, and (for this reason) Kydones' vision was not come to fruition, it should be made clear that with his translated works he managed to become an important transporter of Western theological thought (as well as of Scholasticism) in late Byzantium.¹⁸

Kydones was not merely a translator of Latin texts; he also produced a good deal of treteases. He is mainly known for his *Apology* (*Apologia pro vita sua*, 1360), his collection of *Epistles*, and his *Exhortations*. The former is his own public apology regarding his conversion to Catholicism.¹⁹ It begins with references to his youth, and to the education he received; he also mentions the first years in his service as a mediator. He sheds light on the reasons that brought him closer with Latin, as well as with Western culture; he recalls the days he began working for the Emperor, where he had to deal with emissaries of other states. This was the moment he realised that he should learn the official - international language of his time (the Latin language); he could not entirely rely on translators and he could also participate more easily in official governmental missions. Then, it became clear what a great contribution would be for the state if Byzantine officers had acquired profound knowledge concerning the way of thinking and the beliefs of the Latins. They could act as mediators on a cultural and religious basis, opening up pathways for dialogue and communication between the two opposite ends. Byzantines and Latins, he believed, should not be regarded as enemies; both were members of the same society and the same Church from the very beginning²⁰.

Kydones believed that (to a large extent) discord was the consequence of linguistic misinterpretations and stereotypes

¹⁸ Koltziou, 2005, 15.

¹⁹ The one he wrote in 1357, was the first Apology, which referred to his positive attitude towards the West and the Latin Church. As evidenced by the use of the third person possessive pronoun, the title was not given by the author himself, but by the scholars of the work, who had to briefly refer to the specific work. The second apology was written about a decade later (1371) and unlike the first, it is not of a public nature, but addressed to a friend, see Rigo, 2011, 247-260.

²⁰ Rigo, 2011, 255-260.

reproduced through propaganda.²¹ Just as the term *Greek* was used to refer to the pagans, likewise the term *Latin* was a connotation to heretic Christians, who sometimes were despised even more than the Muslims. Thus he argues in favor of redefining the terminology used on behalf of the Byzantines while addressing the Latins; he describes the various attacks he himself had received from Byzantines, accusations of “treason”, of allying with the West. On the other hand, he clearly depicts himself as a Byzantine patriot, declaring his profound faith in God. In conclusion, his *Apology* is a justification of the choices Kydones made; he eloquently explains the reasons he succeeded in becoming a mediator between two rival worlds²².

As an official of the Court and a person with contacts from the world of politics and intellect, Kydones had in his possession a collection of 450 Letters,²³ which he wrote - and revised - several times before sending them to recipients (mostly to important persons of his time; that is, to members of the Paleologian family, such as Manuel, Heleni,²⁴ Ioannis, Theodorus or Andronikos, as well as to other important scholars, such as Theodoros Metochitis and Ioannis Laskaris Kaloferos). These letters certainly constitute a valuable source of information concerning the history of Byzantium,²⁵ especially its relationship with the West. Ioannis Laskaris Kaloferos was one of those with whom Kydones was corresponding frequently.²⁶ In one of his letters Kydones describes his thoughts from his visit to Venice. Whenever he refers to Venice or of Rome, he talks with admiration for the architectural grandiosity of the city, the abundance of goods found in the market, the people's love for arts, but also the

²¹ *Apology* I, 365, 84-85.

²² Hunger, 1991, 262-263 · Kianka, 1980, 61-71.

²³ For Kydonis' correspondence, see Hatlie, P. “Life and artistry in the ‘publication’ of Demetrios Kydones letter collection”, in: *Greek roman and byzantine studies*, 37(1) 1996, 75-102.

²⁴ Kóltsiou – Nikítá, 2012, 176-179.

²⁵ For example, letter n. 88 constitutes a unique source for the Black Death in Constantinople, see Nicol, 2005, 343.

²⁶ Letters n. 167, 190, 223, 269, 325, 331, 345, 359, 371, 418 and 436 are addressed to him.

political and judicial system, which provides citizens with liberties and rights, but at the same time preserves the order and inspires a sense of safety. Kydones had to visit Italy for business purposes. He could not afford the luxury of time to come into contact with the educational and intellectual culture of the Italians. In letter n.328 addressed to Radinos, he likens his role to that of a merchant, who cannot acquire certain goods in his native land, and (for this reason) he is forced to look abroad.

Other letters are more philosophical. For example, in one of those addressed to Manuel Palaiologos (n.302), one of his closest friends,²⁷ he refers to the Epicurean philosophy and specifically to the way of dealing with pleasures and enjoyments. Herein, he endorses a worldview profoundly engraved within the Byzantine mindset; rejection of carnal pleasures. Instead, he praised spiritual pleasures. In his mind, renunciation of material pleasures is a necessary precondition for the enjoyment of real freedom.

Letters with a similar content prove the philosophical strength of Kydones. In fact, Kydones wrote philosophical essays, such as *De contemnenda morte* (*On the contempt of death*), or *Lógos hópōs álogen tò toū thanátou déos apodeiknúōn* (*Λόγος ὅπως ἄλογον τὸ τοῦ θανάτου δέος ἀποδεικνύων*). Death was one of his major concerns. Kydones examined this phenomenon by acknowledging perspectives beyond those offered by established religions. In his view, death does not mark the end of existence, nor does it lead to the punishment of the soul, so long as the soul itself is of divine origin and immortal nature. The essence of the soul is cognition (*noesis*). In this respect, death cannot cause the annihilation of existence. This position reveals the strong Platonic foundations of his ontological approach.

²⁷ Letters n. 132, 136, 141, 192, 203, 212, 214, 218, 220, 231, 236, 137, 238, 239, 243, 244, 247, 249, 250, 253, 258, 259, 262, 271, 276, 277, 282, 283, 284, 294, 299, 302, 304, 306, 308, 309, 312, 315, 318, 320, 326, 327, 342, 348, 363, 365, 367, 368, 370, 372, 373, 374, 379, 380, 381, 383, 388, 391, 392, 393, 395, 396, 397, 398, 401, 410, 424, 429, 430, 431, 432 and 434 are addressed to him.

The most important of his theological works is perhaps the *Perí tēs ekklesiastikēs ton Ἅγιου Πνεύματος* (Περὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ Ἅγιου Πνεύματος). In this treatise Kydones focuses on one of the most central issues that divided the Latin and Orthodox Churches.²⁸ Other theological issues are also developed in his *Discourses*. Moreover, in his *Advisory Speeches*, Kydones exhorts the Byzantines to join forces with the other Christians (especially the Latins) against the Ottoman onslaught.²⁹ In his thought, the Latins were the ideal allies; they shared with the Byzantines a common (*Roman*) origin, a common religion, a common political and military organization and other positive virtues, such as responsibility and wealth.³⁰ Another important work of Kydones is his six public speeches *Logoi* (Λόγοι).³¹ Two of them are concerned with politics, and refer to John VI Kantakouzenos and John V Paleologos; one is philosophical and theological at the same time; it defends Aquinas' positions and criticizes Nilos Kavasilas. In the *Oratio pro subsidio Latinorum* (1366) he highlights the similarities between Byzantines and Westerners. Herein Kydones emphasises their common (*Roman*) origin³². In addition, he wrote four prologues to the Chrysobula of John V Paleologus, and a *Monodía epí tois en Thessaloníkē pesouísin* (Μονωδία ἐπί τοῖς ἐν Θεσσαλονίκη πεσουόσι)³³, which describes the occupation of Thessaloniki by the Zealots.

Apart from his translations and original works, we should not avoid mentioning his teaching activities. In particular, at the beginning of the last decade of the fourteenth century, during his stay in Venice, Kydones offered courses in Greek language, culture and philosophy to Venetian and Florentine

²⁸ Niárhos, 2007, 20.

²⁹ The Latins were, in his opinion, the ideal allies, not only because they had common religion, but also because they were sharing with the Byzantines a common cultural background and status, in contrast to other Christians, such as the Hungarians, whom he considered as savage people and the alliance with which as a movement of despair, Nicol, 2005, 414-415.

³⁰ Rigo, 2011, 254.

³¹ Ostrogorsky, 1978, 321 · Nicol, 2005, 329.

³² Rigo, 2011, 253.

³³ PG 109, 639-652.

students, contributing to a mutual ideological and cultural osmosis. Thus, he became an important contributor to the Italian Renaissance.

In the works of Demetrios Kydones certain viewpoints are constantly reappeared. The main ones call into question perceptions of cultural superiority shared by the Byzantines against the Westerners, considered “barbarians”. Although he acknowledges the Byzantines as descendants of the ancient Greeks, he rejects the perspective that they are the sole or exclusive inheritors of the ancient Greek philosophical legacy. On the contrary, their appreciation of that legacy is rather superficial and limited to the study of Plato and Aristotle – with emphasis mainly on the former, whose work was associated with the Hesychasts’ dominant tendency, which advocates rejection of rationalism. Kydones admires especially the way in which the Latins assimilated Aristotelianism and highlighted the value of reason and dialectic, with the clear formulation of positions and the safe transition from premises to conclusions, so that they could cope to a greater extent with logical contradiction. Moreover, he considers the progress they made in both intellectual and technological culture to be remarkable. For Kydones, the Byzantine intellectuals, especially, Byzantine philosophy and, in particular, Aristotelianism had to be revised in order to be renewed; the Byzantines, he assumed, had not sufficiently assimilated the content, the spirit and the methods of the great philosophers of antiquity. On the contrary, humanist education was more developed in the West (especially in the works of Aquinas, Augustine and other Westerners) than in the East.³⁴ The desired renewal, therefore, could be achieved through a dialogue of the Byzantines with Western philosophers, which requires abandonment of stereotypes regarding the philosophical, ideological and cultural superiority of the Byzantines themselves.

To recapitulate: we could argue that Kydones’ contributed to the spread of humanism (through his translations, individual works of philosophy and teaching activities) more

³⁴ Hunger, 1991, 67-68· Niárhos, 2007, 121.

than politicians, theologians, and philologists.³⁵ His words and his deeds in general constituted a challenge to the ideological and philosophical firmament of the Byzantines, as he shook - and indeed from within - their most common beliefs. His challenging personality, ideas and work, and his appreciation of the West have apparently been the main reasons for not receiving till nowadays the recognition he deserves.³⁶ It was his life's purpose to bring Byzantium in a spiritual dialogue with the West, striving to eliminate religious polarization between the Latin and the Orthodox Church, avoiding threats from the East. Essentially, according to him, the dissociation was due to nothing but ignorance and prejudice; philosophical engagement, however, leads exclusively in the direction of mutual respect of opinions and the joint search for Truth.

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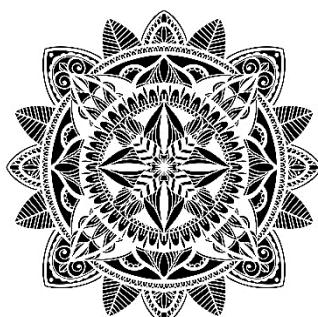
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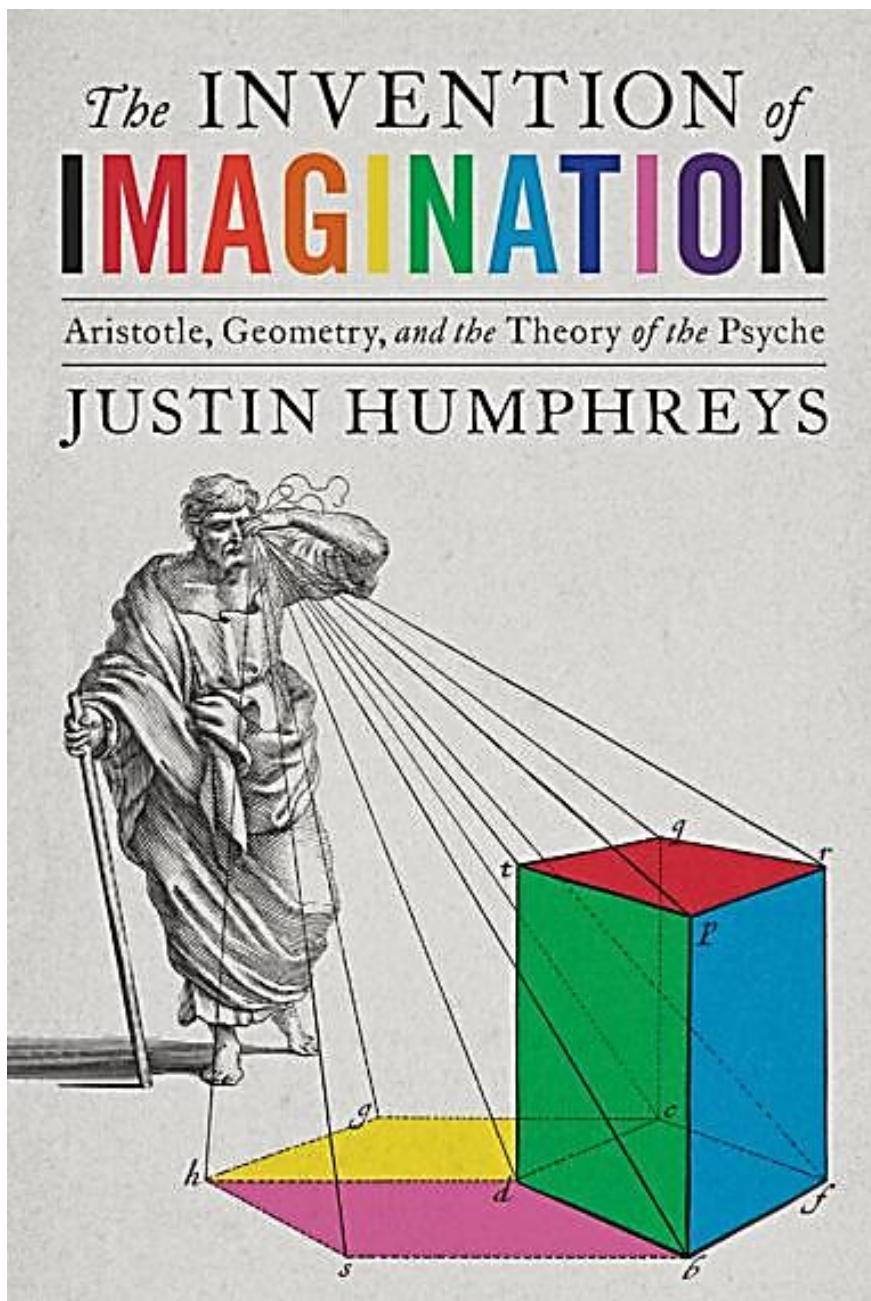
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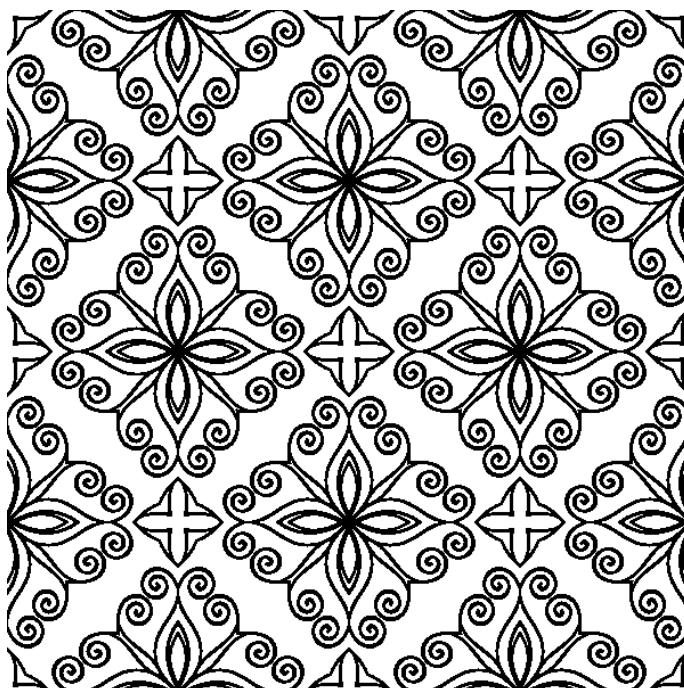
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Philosophical Notes





Parallels between Maximus the Confessor and Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900)

Paraskevi Zacharia,
PhD Candidate of Philosophy:
Faculty of Philosophy,
Theology and Religious Studies (Radboud
University – Nijmegen
paraskevi.zacharia@ru.nl

Abstract

The philosophical thought of Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900) does not appear to significantly abstain from the wholeness of humanity and the deification of human being that Maximus synthesises. In Maximus' writings Christology is strongly bounded to love, under the soteriological meaning of Christ's Incarnation. In Soloviev's philosophical thought love plays the role of the cosmic power which, by transcending the historical process, leads the humanity to the deification. This paper aims at the exegesis of the three-fold nature of love (love for one's brothers, and self-love) in Maximus' works, while discussing the points of convergence with Soloviev's ontology of love in *Smysl lyubvi* (The Meaning of Love) (1892-1894).

Keywords: love; self-love; apatheia; syzygy; deification

Introduction

According to Church Fathers, divine (or philosophical in the case of Neoplatonism) love is a reductive power, which is activated only when the soul is totally pure, dispossessed of evil and passions. This kind of love, according to Neoplatonists, makes sense only between distinguishable beings; it makes sense only when it galvanises the soul to approach the Good. In this state, the soul is finally complete and in full ecstasy. Indeed, various metaphors and symbols, often expressing forms of communication between man and God, were merged at the crossroads between Neoplatonism and Christianity. For instance, the neoplatonic understanding of light symbolised not only gnosis but also the source of beings. At the final stage of the soul's ascension, when the soul itself is purified and full of light, it becomes light itself — or even god. This neoplatonic understanding of the soul's catharsis matches the Christian understanding of how God's grace works in terms of preparing human beings to accept the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, according to Christian doctrine, salvation is not merely a personal matter, because it is bound up with an individual's mutual—and lively—relationship with Christ, which bears comparison with the platonic philosopher's various efforts to ascend from the cave and save his prisoners.

But even though Neoplatonism and Christianity shared similar schemas, the differences between the two approaches were nonetheless striking. For instance, the former adopted the position that the One creates the world as a consequence of its emanating fullness, whereas the latter ascribes the act of creation as being attributable to God's love. Moreover, Christian doctrine, as opposed to Neoplatonism, does not understand creation as a process of emanation. This is because the free will given by God to humans is ultimately what moves them to return to His harmony. Even so, the Christian theologians appear to have developed the original neoplatonic schemes into several Christian concepts. For instance, Christian doctrine understands that the Christian God created man “in Our image after Our likeness” [κατ’εικόνα καὶ καθ’όμοιωσιν],¹

¹ Genesis 1:26.

giving human beings an opportunity to be like God, whereas Plato and his successors believed that the soul's reduction to good involved a kind of return because the soul's earlier existence in the world of ideas preceded its incorporation. In this respect, then, the soul's return can be considered the actualisation of its real nature.

These various similarities and differences between the two approaches led me to the figure of Maximus the Confessor (580–662), one of the Fathers of the Eastern Church, who not only combined philosophical (especially neoplatonic) principles with theological ones but, as a consequence, has since been considered a theologian connecting the East with the West using his work. In this paper I use extracts, which are related to love, from Maximus' *The Four Hundred Chapters on Love* [*Τετρακόσια Κεφάλαια Περί Ἀγάπης*]², the *Ambigua to John* [*Πρός Ιωάννην*]³, *Letter 2: On Love* [*Επιστολή 2: Περί ἀγάπης*], *The Ascetic Life* [*Λόγος Ασκητικός*], *Ad Thalassium* [*Προς Θαλάσσιον τον ὁσιώτατον πρεσβύτερον καὶ ἥγούμενον Περί Διαφόρων ἀπόρων τῆς θείας Γραφῆς*], and *Mystagogy* [*Μυσταγωγία*].

These extracts appear to be sufficient points of philosophical contact between the understandings of Maximus and the Russian philosopher, Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900). Indeed, despite the chronological, as well as the cultural, gaps between them, and despite the extent of the social changes that occurred during the intervening period, there are several parallels that are worth examining. The first part of the paper aims at the presentation of the aspects of love (love for God, the love for one's brothers, and self-love [*φιλαυτία*]) as they are elaborated

² All the references to *The Four Hundred Chapters on Love* are from: *Maximus Confessor - Selected Writings*, trans. George C. Berthold (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1985).

³ All the references to the *Ambigua* are from: Maximos the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, ed. and trans. Nicholas Constas, 2 vols. (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014). For the rest of Maximus' works, the references are from Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* (PG), volumes 90–91. If translations are used, the details are given in the footnotes.

mainly in *The Four Hundred Chapters on Love*,⁴ while the second part on the role of *apatheia* [ἀπάθεια] for these aspects of love. Then, I touch upon the concept of deification in Maximus' teaching and how it is connected to *apatheia*. The fourth part provides some general information about the history of Maximus' works in Russia both before and after Soloviev. Based on this information, I attempt to discuss the parallels between Soloviev's ontology of love as elaborated in his work *Smysl lyubvi (The Meaning of Love)* (1892-1894) in comparison to *agapē* in Maximus' theology (fifth part of the paper).

1. Aspects of Maximian love

There are several definitions of love in Maximus' work. Love is “a good willingness of the soul, which makes her prefer none of the beings more than the knowledge of God” and elsewhere he speaks of love as the most generic of the virtues,⁵ which is distributed among the six types of sufferers.⁶ At the end of *The Four Centuries on Love* [Τετρακόσια Κεφάλαια Περὶ Ἀγάπης] he says: “Many people have said much about love, but only in seeking it among Christ's

⁴ *Letter 2: On Love*, one of the earliest surviving works of Maximus, and a second source of the Maximian understanding of love, provides even more thorough insights into the subject of love. This Letter, together with Letter 3, were addressed by Maximus to John the Cubicularius, a courtier in Constantinople, most probably when Maximus held the title of *Protoasecretis* (the first of the emperor's personal secretaries) in the imperial court. In *The Ascetic Life*, meanwhile, the subject is presented and analysed by Maximus in relation to the Lord's life and passions. In particular, he approaches love when he refers to the true nature of the spiritual life: how it is possible to reach God through knowledge, how it is possible to truly live in accordance with nature as God intended us to, and, most importantly, how it is possible to live a mystic life. In *The Ascetic Life*, Maximus discusses the core of ascetical theology — how it is possible to come to know God through our experience. Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 33, 81.

⁵ In *Question 40*, in *Ad Thalassium*, Maximus presents love as virtue, Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium*, PG 91.

⁶ In Matthew 25 the sufferers are: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned.

disciples will you find it, for only they have the true love, the Teacher of love [...] the one who possesses love possesses God Himself since God is love.”⁷ Taking this definition of love as the basis of his theology, it seems that the matter of love in his work begins with the natural desire of man towards God. This desire is the mainspring of ascetic and mystical life, of which all people can become shareholders.⁸ Man as an intellectual creature desires God, and when he reaches himself in his fall, this desire destroys all forms of self-love [φιλαυτία] by opening the way to *agapē* [ἀγάπη]. Through this love, human beings can consolidate their faith in this world,⁹ and through the imitation of the divine and fulfilling love.

More importantly, for Maximus love is affinity, which unifies the divided parts of the human soul (by ensuring its stability). This unity comes through prayer (which, in turn, presupposes the absolute and complete purifying and emptiness of the mind).¹⁰ In this regard, separating the mind from earthly pleasures, in conjunction with true prayer, leads the mind itself to the fulfilment of its natural energy, namely to deification (ascendance to God).¹¹ Here Maximus, by using the example of saints, speaks of the *eros* of divine love, which

⁷ Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Centuries on Love* (4:100)

⁸ However, this desire can easily fall upon selfishness, that is why Maximus in the first part of *The Ascetic Life* marks the inner struggle of man with the devil.

⁹ It is quite impressive how Maximus relates love to faith, which is identified with genuine affection and clear conscience: “ Love and genuine affection—that is, faith and a clear conscience—are clearly the result of a hidden impulse of the heart; for the heart is fully able to generate without using external matter”, Maximus the Confessor, *Fourth Century of Various Texts* II.61.

¹⁰ Maximus keeps the Platonic passionate states of the soul (‘desire’ [έπιθυμία] and ‘anger’ [θυμός] in *Phaedrus*) by attributing to them a transformative character. Thus, ‘desire’ could be transformed into ‘divine eros’, while ‘anger’ could be extended to the state of ‘wise ecstasy’, Question 40, *Ad Thalassium*, 55.

¹¹ Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium (introduction)*, PG 91. The connection between *apatheia* and prayer was indicated prior to Maximus by Evagrius: “Blessed is the soul, who at the time of prayer has achieved perfect insensibility.”

lifts the mind up and at the same time approaches God, by losing the sense of everything created and earthly.¹²

This unifying character of love is juxtaposed with the multiplicity of self-love [φιλαυτία], which (according to Maximus) is twofold: it has a positive and a negative aspect.¹³ In the former, the object of love is the knowledge of the Creator (i.e., the true love of God), a kind of spiritual love, through which man cultivates a beautiful soul for himself and worships God, while in the latter the evil aspect of self-love is attached to the affections of the body as well as to earthly objects.¹⁴ The direction of the human desire towards God ensures the reversion to him/herself (a positive aspect of self-love). Should one apply this aspect of self-love to humanity as a whole, he/she will arrive at the position to realise the eternal destination of humankind.

In this part, I examine these three aspects of Maximian love: love for God, love for our brothers, and self-love. Before stressing the main parts of his analysis on love, it should be clarified that Maximus was one of the main representatives of Orthodox Christian mysticism, originally founded in the New Testament and then developed until the 14th century, when it was fully clarified by Gregory Palamas (1296-1359). *Ascesis* [ἀσκησις] was the main characteristic of the Orthodox monastic tradition which Maximus followed in his life; it consisted the

¹² Ibid., Question 10, PG 91. Moreover, Maximus in *The Four Centuries on Love* (PG 90, 1060D) says that the ultimate aim of commandments given by Christ is to guide us to love Him and the neighbour. Christos Giannaras pointed out that the commandments in Scripture aim to love and to the transcendence of egocentric nature in human beings, Christos Giannaras, *The rational and the irrational: the linguistic limits of realism and metaphysics* [Το ρητό και το ἀρρητό: τα γλωσσικά όρια ρεαλισμού και μεταφυσικής] (Athens: Ikaros, 1999), 214.

¹³ For self-love's psychological interpretation as a mode of narcissistic love in Maximus' theology, see G.C. Tympas, *Carl Jung and Maximus the Confessor: On Psychic Development* (London: Routledge, 2014), 99-100.

¹⁴ “And having exchanged evil self-love for the good, intellectual self-love separated from carnal delights, we shall not cease rendering cult to God for this beautiful self-love seeking from God the eternal composition of the soul. This is the true cult pleasing to God: the soul's acute diligence in virtue.” Maximus the Confessor, Question 10, *Ad Thalassium*, PG 91.

basis of his spiritual writings.¹⁵ The Holy Fathers, both in their ascetic teachings as well as in their associated theology, refer to the spiritual completion of the monk, which they nevertheless regard as the model of completion of every believer.¹⁶ The stages of the upward course are the practice and the theory that contributed to the formation of two tendencies in the context of monasticism, theoretical and practical. I refer below to these parts of spiritual life when I will examine the relationship between love and *apatheia*. In addition, it should be noted that Maximus seems to adopt a pairing and complementarity of these two tendencies in order to show that these two paths lead man to perfection.

In Maximus' *The Four Centuries on Love*, love itself is approached either directly by means of aphorisms or indirectly by numbers associated with specific centuries (for example, the number “four” refers to the four Gospels, where the command of love is contained). These ‘centuries’, which as a number symbolised perfection,¹⁷ are preoccupied with more topics than just love. However, as Maximus explained in the *Preface to Elpidius*, love is “a discourse on love [...] not the fruit of my own meditation, [rather] I went through the writings of the holy Fathers and selected from them [...] summarising many things in a few words.”¹⁸ Nonetheless, for Maximus, this selection was not abstract, not even random. It was based on a kind of trinity that the Christian philosophy examines and analyses: the commandments, the dogmas, and the faith.¹⁹ The second source about Maximian love, *Letter 2: On Love*, one of his earliest surviving works, provides an even more thorough

¹⁵ Lars Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St Maximus the Confessor* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 21-23.

¹⁶ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Acts* 11, PG 60, 97, and *Homilies on First Corinthians*, 6, 4, PG 61, 52-53; Basil the Great, *Ascetica* 18, 1-2, PG 31, 1381-1384); George Florovsky, *Byzantine Ascetic and Spiritual Fathers* [*Οἱ Βυζαντινοί Ασκητικοί καὶ Πνευματικοί Πατέρες*], trans. P.Pallis (Thessaloniki: Pournara, 1992), 11-17.

¹⁷ The way of writing in ‘centuries’ seemed familiar to Maximus, since Evagrius Ponticus, Diadochus of Photikê (400-500 A.D.), and John of Karpathos (unknown – 650 A.D.) composed ‘centuries’, Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 20.

¹⁸ Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Centuries on Love*, PG 90, 960 A.

¹⁹ Ibid., PG 90, 1057 C.

insight on the important subject of love.²⁰ As for *The Ascetic Life*, the subject of love is presented and analysed by Maximus based on Lord's life and passions. In particular, he speaks of love when he refers to the true nature of the spiritual life: how could we reach God through knowledge? How could we truly live in accordance with nature as God has intended for us? More importantly, how could we live a mystic life?²¹ All these teachings were based on what he had learnt from the Elders (*gerontes* in Greek), i.e. the spiritual fathers.²²

The most salient aspect of love in Maximus is the commandment of love which justifies it as the whole purpose of the Savior's commandments.²³ Through His command of love, He gives us the opportunity to free ourselves from passions and sins and therefore truly love God and our brothers. Thus, Maximus highlights the relational basis of love:²⁴ relation to God, to others, and indeed to ourselves. This aspect of love has the capacity to constitute men and women holy angels on earth.²⁵ The most important that comes from God's commandment of love is the calling of becoming a loving person on the inside, regardless of others' disposition of love. This unconditional giving to the other (and also to God) is quite obvious when Maximus says: "Even if in temptation

²⁰ This Letter together with Letter 3 were addressed by Maximus to John the Cubicularius, a courtier in Constantinople, most probably when Maximus was holding the title of *protoasecretis* (the first of the personal secretaries of the emperor) in the imperial court, Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 81.

²¹ In *The Ascetic Life* Maximus speaks of the core of the ascetical theology, of how to come to know God through our experience, *ibid.*, 33.

²² *Ibid.*, 22.

²³ "The whole purpose of the Savior's commandments is to free the mind from incontinence and hate and bring it to love of Him and of one's neighbour," Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Centuries on Love*, PG 90, 1060 B-1061 A.

²⁴ Maximus the Confessor, *Epistle 2*, PG 91, 401 D.

²⁵ "The unutterable peace of the holy angels is attained by these two dispositions: love for God and love for one another [which] holds true for all the saints...", Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Centuries on Love*, PG 90, 1056 B.

your brother should insist on speaking ill of you, you should not be swept away from your charitable disposition.”²⁶

Thus, the disposition of love is directed toward two objects: God and our brothers. Love for God is a divine type of love. The wholeness of our existence should be directed to divine love in order to become a part of it. Once more in his theology, Maximus connects love for God with knowledge of Him: “The one who loves God prefers knowledge of Him to all things made by Him and is constantly devoted to it by desire.”²⁷ This kind of preference derives from the theological term *αὐτεξουσίον* (the self-determining power), which gives man the right to choose to “being attached to the Lord and become one spirit and of being attached to the prostitute and become one body.”²⁸ Thus, the freedom of men and women to choose the object of their love (God, earthly things, *et al.*) predetermines the gradation of their participation in divine love, and therefore their modes of living.²⁹ When human beings become exponents of this blessed passion of holy love, their actions will naturally directed to please God, through “love, temperance, contemplation, and prayer.”³⁰ As an object of our preference, God becomes a revelation to us through our acts, deeds, preferences, and thoughts.

²⁶ Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Centuries on Love*, PG 90, 1053 C; “If you harbour resentment against anybody, pray for him and you will prevent the passion from being aroused; for by means of prayer you will separate your grief from the thought of the wrong he has done you. When you have become loving and

compassionate towards him, you will wipe the passion completely from your soul. If somebody regards you with resentment, be pleasant to him, be humble and agreeable in his company, and you will deliver him from his passion, PG 90, 1044 D.

²⁷ Ibid., PG 90, 961 C.

²⁸ Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, PG 91, 1092 D and Dionysius the Areopagite, *Scholia*, PG 4, 308A. Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-c.395) considers *αὐτεξουσίον* as the supreme good that has been given to man, *On the Making of Man* [*Περί κατασκευῆς ἀνθρώπου*], PG 44, 125-256.

²⁹ This way of living is equivalent to an angelic form of life on earth: “[...] leads an angelic life on earth, fasting and being watchful and singing psalms and praying and always thinking good of everyone”, Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Centuries on Love*, PG 90, 968 D.

³⁰ Ibid., PG 90, 13 D.

Concerning the second object of love, i.e., the love for our brothers or “the whole-hearted benevolence to the neighbor”, in terms borrowed by Maximus, it seems that it falls within the commandments of the Lord (the command “Love each other” means that we must first love God), and at the same time, it is connected with the perfect nature of God.³¹ God is good and without passions; therefore, God loves all people alike.³² By transferring our love to the neighbour, that is, by changing or adapting our mood according to our neighbour’s mood, we do not substantiate the existence of perfect love. Maximus conveys here the equal distribution of love between human persons. And because human nature is one and common for all human beings, therefore love must be equally the same to all fellow human beings.³³

This equality in love that is highlighted by Maximus in *The Four Centuries on Love*, is even more extended when he speaks of the divine will that leads all human beings to the truth and (consequently) to their salvation. This love can be expressed in many different ways through which both good and evil can be loved equally. What should also be pointed out is that the peace which derives from the achievement of *apatheia* [*ἀπάθεια*] is considered necessary for this kind of love (as I will further explain later on). However, only love itself can lead to the imitation of divine love.³⁴ For Maximus,

³¹ “Love for one another makes firm the love for God,” Maximus the Confessor, *The Ascetic Life*, PG 90, 917 A.

³² “[We do] not divisively [assign] one form of love to God and another to human beings, for it is one and the same and universal: owed to God and attaching human beings to each other”, Maximus the Confessor, *Letter 2: On Love*, PG 91, 401 D.

³³ “Blessed is the man who has learned to love all men equally”, and elsewhere “Perfect love does not split up the one nature of men on the basis of their various dispositions but ever looking steadfastly at it loves all men equally [...] It ever manifests the fruits of love equally for all men [...]”, Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Centuries on Love*, PG 90, 964 D, 976 B.

³⁴ For Maximus, the root in the connection between *apatheia* and love for the neighbour is freedom . The detachment from earthly desires and the unconditional love for the neighbour liberates us from any kind of passion (“Ο τοῖς τοῦ κόσμου πράγμασι γνησίως ἀποταξάμενος καὶ τῷ πλησίον διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης ἀνυποκρίτως δουλεύων παντὸς πάθους ταχέως

the love for the neighbour is perfect not only because it is an imitation of God's love, but also because it contains the dynamic of loving our enemies.³⁵ In *The Ascetic Life*, he calls us to live an ascetic, truly Christian, spiritual life which will be based on love. To the question of how it would be possible to love our enemies, he explains in the same work) that so long as it is a commandment, it could be performed by men and women. Everyone is free to follow or reject this commandment.

The 'fallen' state of love for the neighbour creates the passion of self-love [φιλαυτία] which keeps man away from loving God and his brothers. It is noteworthy here that Maximus speaks neither of selfishness nor hypocrisy, nor of arrogance or conceit, but of the catastrophic aspect of our ego which can move us away from heaven. In fact, love is just the beginning of passions; it is something that begins from the intellect as thought, desire or opinion and creates the corresponding passions. Every passion and every man who falls in it are the outcome of the one who created the man's fall, i.e., the devil. As long as human intellect attempts to approach the love of God, Satan intervenes, to control us internally, elevating earthly desires.³⁶

This catastrophic aspect of love, *philautia*, keeps the mind attached to material life, unable to know God and, thus, to reach *theosis*. This "mother of the passions", as he calls self-love,³⁷ which contains all the other passions, is the irrational love for the body.³⁸ However, Maximus in his theology does not separate the body from the soul, as this separation would have nothing to do with the meaning of self-love since it seems

ἐλευθεροῦται.''), *ibid.*, PG 90, 965C. Moreover, he connects *apatheia* not only with love but also with prayer. The undistracted prayer is the first step to be within the realm of apathy (*ibid.*, 1013 B, 984 B).

³⁵ "Why did the Lord command [this; i.e. to love your enemies]? So that He might free you from hate, sadness, anger, and grudges, and might grant you the greatest possession of all, perfect love, which is impossible to possess except by the one who loves all men equally in imitation of God," Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Centuries on Love*, PG 90, 973 A.

³⁶ Archimandrite Emilianos Simonpetritis, *About Love: Interpretation on Saint Maximus* [Περί Αγάπης: Ερμηνεία στον Άγιο Μάξιμο] (Athens: Indiktos, 2015), 102.

³⁷ Maximus the Confessor, *Letter 2: On Love*, PG 91, 397 D.

³⁸ Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Centuries on Love*, PG 90, 985 C.

to be more a result of the soul itself, rather than a bodily fruit. Maybe this explains the fact that Maximus does not suggest a virtue as a counterpoint for self-love. The only antidote, he claims, is the power of love and self-mastery.³⁹

Taking into consideration all the above aspects of love (as a commandment, our disposition of love, love for God and for the others), we arrive at the following conclusion: Maximus connects love itself with our ascension to God; that is, to deification.⁴⁰ Love unites us with God and makes us gods through participation in His divine love, through purification from passions and desires for earthly objects. Then, the more we ascend to God, the more we love Him and others. This requires a deifying power of love, which lies in the mystery of love and its glorified manifestation.⁴¹

2. The relationship between Maximian love and *apatheia* [ἀπάθεια]

As it has been already mentioned, Christianity and, more particularly, early Christianity, shared several Neoplatonic concepts. Maximus followed the same way with his predecessors; he borrowed Greek ideas to make passages from the Scripture more comprehensible to the believers of the new faith.⁴² One of the Ancient Greek ideas that he incorporated into his theology was the notion of ‘*apatheia*’ [ἀπάθεια]. Etymologically speaking, ‘*apatheia*’ derives from the prefix *a-* (which implies ‘without’) and the noun *pathos* [πάθος] which

³⁹ Ibid., PG 90, 1029 B, and in *Letter 2: On Love*, PG 91, 396 B.

⁴⁰ The eschatological approach of love by Maximus is quite obvious in this extract: “Love is [...] in a definition: the inward universal relationship to the first good connected with the universal purpose of our natural kind [...] there is nothing that can make the human being who loves God ascend any higher”, Maximus the Confessor, *Letter 2: On Love*, PG 91, 401 C.

⁴¹ “The mystery of love [is that] out of human beings [it] makes us gods”, ibid., PG 91, 393 B.

⁴² The process of the entry of philosophical ideas into the Christian discourse are described by Andrew J. Summerson as ‘exegetical discernment’. Andrew J. Summerson, *Divine Scripture and Human Emotion in Maximus the Confessor: Exegesis of the Human Heart* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 17.

means ‘passion’.⁴³ This notion has preoccupied the mind of several Stoic thinkers, for whom the word ‘apatheia’ had not much to do with the ‘absence of passion’; instead, it referred to the interstice between ‘*empathēia*’ [έμπάθεια] and ‘*eupatheia*’ [εύπάθεια].⁴⁴ It is quite uncertain if Maximus’s approach to *apatheia* derives directly from the Stoics. One could assume that Maximus himself had indirectly adopted this definition by studying other Christian authors, such as Evagrius Ponticus.⁴⁵ From Evagrius, Maximus seems to get the three stages of spiritual life: *praktikē* [πρακτική], *physikē* [φυσική], and *theologia* [θεολογία]. The first stage corresponds to the ascetic struggle against passions (including desires and the so-called *logismoi*, i.e. a series of thoughts that impedes the transition to the next stage), and the second is related to the purification of the mind in order to become God (in the

⁴³ When researchers on Maximus refer to the notion of *apatheia*, quite often they convey ‘dispassion’, ‘impassibility’, ‘detachment’, ‘apathy’. In my view, the English word that best describes the meaning of the Greek word *apatheia* is ‘equanimity’ rather than ‘apathy’. While ‘apathy’ has a distinctly negative connotation, ‘equanimity’ refers to the golden mean between ‘*empathēia*’ (intense aggression) [έμπάθεια] and ‘*eupatheia*’ (intense and uncontrolled passivity) [εύπάθεια] according to the Stoics. The usual misreading of *apatheia* is that of loss of feeling or total disengagement from the world. However, for the Stoics, it seemed to be the best rational response to the world and its external circumstances that cannot be controlled. See: Michael Fournier, “Seneca on Platonic *Apatheia*,” *Classica et Mediaevalia* 60 (2009): 218.

⁴⁴ “En mettant au premier plan cette restauration de la gnose et de l’apatheia, le Confesseur est bien dans la plus authentique tradition hellénique : celle de ce «néo-platonisme» où viennent se rencontrer l’intellectualisme platonicien et les doctrines stoïciennes de la domination de l’homme sur la nature et de la maîtrise sur ses passions,” I.H.Dalmais, “La doctrine ascétique de S. Maxime le Confesseur d’après le Liber Asceticus,” *Irenikon* XXVI (Belgique, 1953): 22.

⁴⁵ It seems that Maximus in his work *Ambigua* 10 [Περί διαφόρων ἀποριῶν τῶν ἀγίων Διονυσίου καὶ Γρηγορίου προς Θωμάν τον Ἡγιασμένον] (PG 91, 277C, 1031-1418), employed verbatim quotations from Nemesius of Emesa’s *De natura hominis* (*On the Nature of Man*) where the latter discusses the Stoic perception of passions and in particular the passionate part of the soul, Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 44.

last stage).⁴⁶ In Maximus' thought, his ascetic life is echoed in the way he interprets the term *apatheia*. He employs this term using exegesis to light on the meaning of several difficult scriptural passages. *Apatheia* is a form of grace, which leads to the revelation of God.⁴⁷

In his work *Ad Thalassium* [Προς Θαλάσσιον τὸν ὄσιώτατον πρεσβύτερον καὶ ἡγούμενον Περὶ Διαφόρων ἀπόρων τῆς θείας Γραφῆς] an abbot, named Thalassius, poses several questions about passions and their origins.⁴⁸ Herein, Maximus builds his theological discourse by combining philosophical doctrines (Neoplatonism) with biblical exegesis to highlight the importance of *apatheia*.⁴⁹ By starting with the apophatic way of defining 'evil' as deficiency or failure [ἔλλειψις], he moves to the interpretation of *Genesis*, making references to Adam's failure to exercise his natural powers, as a result of the influence by the 'evil one' [τοῦ πονηροῦ], i.e., another name of Satan according to Orthodoxy.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 35-36.

⁴⁷ "Such a man will see the salvation of God, the one who is pure of heart, with this heart, through virtues and pious thoughts he will see God at the end of his struggles, for it is written, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." For, having exchanged their struggles for virtue with the grace of *apatheia*, nothing greater reveals God for those who possess this grace." Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium*, PG 90, .

⁴⁸ This theological treatise and the *Ascetic Life* were written by Maximus based on the classical tradition of *scholia*. This means that either they had a form of question-answer (*erōtapokriseis* in Greek) between the spiritual father and his disciples, a method which belonged to the tradition of monastic catechesis, or they had comments on passages from the Scriptures or from the Fathers (this was the case of *Ambigua*). A striking exception was his work *Mystagogy* which was written with the form of commentaries, Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 20-21.

⁴⁹ Maximus' exegetical method seems to create a wholistic approach of the world, where he alternates philosophical doctrines with biblical revelation, Andrew J. Summerson, *Divine Scripture and Human Emotion in Maximus the Confessor: Exegesis of the Human Heart* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 40.

⁵⁰ Elsewhere in *Ad Thalassium* Maximus gives the eschatological aspect of the natural power that each created being has. This is the movement to its proper end, i.e., God, Maximus the Confessor, PG 91.

While this deficiency of ‘evil’ appears as important for the birth of passions, Maximus praises the ignorance of God [ἀγνοια περί Θεοῦ] as the main cause of humanity’s mistaken perception of the world.⁵¹ By abandoning God’s quest for immaterial purity, and remaining attached to the sensual perception of the world, human beings divinise [την κτίσιν ἐθεοποίησεν] and love God’s creation instead of God Himself.⁵² It is quite clear here that Maximus rejects pantheism in all of its forms. Man understands, loves and worships something because of its similar form to him (with the sense that we are all creatures of the sensual world).⁵³ In this respect, humanity identifies creation with God and interprets the material world in a carnal way instead of the spiritual one that is suggested by Maximus.

According to Maximus, this misinterpretation in the relationship between creation and God leads to a chain of reactions, which finally leads to the correlation between pleasure [ἡδονή] and pain [όδονη]⁵⁴ and finally to self-love [φιλαυτία].⁵⁵ Humanity seems here to be a victim of this

⁵¹ Ibid.,

⁵² “And man’s own body, which has a natural propensity to consider creation to be God, loves creation because of its form and with all his zeal “worships the creature instead of the creator” through his dedication and concentration toward only the body,” ibid.

⁵³ This mistaken perception by man is inherited as a result of man’s fall.

⁵⁴ Aristotle first spoke about this pair in *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII, 8-15, and Book X, 1-5. Here Maximus follows the Church Fathers by considering ‘pleasure’ as something against nature [παρά φύσιν] while ‘pain’, as given by God to humans, as balanced power in order to protect them from their personal catastrophe, Nicholaos Matsoukas, *World, Man, Communion according to Maximus the Confessor* [Κόσμος, Άνθρωπος, Κοινωνία κατά τον Μάξιμο τον Ομολογητή] (Athens: Grigoris, 1980), 115-116. In particular, for Maximus ‘pleasure’ is an unfair power which separates reason from its cohesive processes, ibid., PG 90, 628D.

⁵⁵ “Inasmuch as he sated himself with sensual pleasure, in the same measure, he attached himself to the desire of self-love wrought by it; inasmuch as he carefully guarded his desire, in the same measure he guarded pleasure, it being the beginning and end of self-love,” ibid. For a thorough analysis of pleasure and pain in Maximus’ work, see Christoph Schönborn, “Plaisir et douleur dans l’analyse de S. Maxime, d’après les Quaestiones Ad Thalassium,” in *Maximus Confessor: Actes du Symposium*

dialectical juxtaposition between pleasure and pain, which leads to the detachment from God, and consequently to the detachment from the idea of man created according to God's own image and likeness.⁵⁶ However, the goal for humanity should remain the same: to have knowledge of the Creator, rather than of the creation.

This idea possibly derives from Maximus' thoughts on the relationships between the divine and the earthly existence of men and women. Maximus considers the unity of body and soul. This refers to a certain passage in the Book of *Genesis*, which speaks about communion in both God and human, through God's image and likeness.⁵⁷ Human being, for Maximus, as undivided being (under the view of male/female division),⁵⁸ has potentially the power to unite all the other divisions in the universe and reach to *theōsis*.⁵⁹ In *Ambigua* 41, he elaborates with more detail on the five divisions of being (uncreated and created nature, mind and senses, heaven and earth, paradise and inhabited world, male and female), and the

sur Maxime le Confesseur (Fribourg, 2-5 septembre 1980), eds. Felix Heinzer et Christoph Schönborn, *Paradosis- Etudes littérature et de théologie anciennes* (Saint-Paul Fribourg Suisse: Editions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse): 273-284.

⁵⁶ It seems that for Maximus man as 'person' is disintegrated by pleasure and pain. On the contrary, Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948) in *Essaie d'autobiographie spirituelle* claimed that the 'person' does not loose its integrity due to pleasure and pain, Nikolai Berdyaev, *Essaie d'autobiographie spirituelle* (Paris: Buchet-Chastel, 1992), 66, 78.

⁵⁷ *Genesis*, 1, 26: "God said: let us make man in our image, after our likeness"; *Genesis* 2, 7: "man became as a living being ", 1, 27: "so God created man in His own image, male and female He created them."

⁵⁸ It has been argued that Maximus' position about the double creation of the human person (transcendence of sexual difference while keeping the sexual duality) should be attributed to Gregory's of Nyssa influence, Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 27.

⁵⁹ Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* 41, PG 91, 1305 B; Panayotis Christou, "Maximos Confessor: On the Infinity of Man," in Maximus Confessor: Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur (Fribourg, 2-5 septembre 1980), eds. Felix Heinzer et Christoph Schönborn, *Paradosis- Etudes littérature et de théologie anciennes* (Saint-Paul Fribourg Suisse: Editions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse): 262.

way that man is related to each of them.⁶⁰ It should be clarified here that the division of the sexes is integrated by Maximus into the belief of the double creation: the transcendent creation (considered as the original) where there are no sexual differences, and the embracing creation where sexual division is present.⁶¹ Maximus concludes that the human being is able not only to participate in each of the extremes (uncreated and created nature, mind and senses, heaven and earth, paradise and inhabited world, male and female), but most importantly to reconcile them.⁶² However, it is only through Christ's Incarnation that man can overcome all the above divisions as Christ did: "Thus he divinely recapitulates the universe in himself, showing that the whole creation exists as one, like another human being."⁶³ In this way, Maximus places Christ in the centre of his theology to show that Himself and man are paradigms of one another.⁶⁴

This position brings Maximus back to *apatheia*, which suggests that human beings must first know the Creator and then His creations. In particular, he speaks of four types of *apatheia*: the total abstention of evil actions, the total rejection of evil thoughts, the total immobility of desire regarding passions, the total purification of the simple representation of the passions."⁶⁵ It seems that these types are gradations in the

⁶⁰ For each of these divisions Maximus suggests a different way of reconciliation. So, for the first division, only love unites uncreated and created nature, while with the perception of *logoi* the human being achieves to bring together the intelligible and the sensible. The third division is abolished through the imitation of angelic life, while paradise and *oikoumenē* [οἰκουμένη] are united through the imitation of Saints' living. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* 41, PG 91, 1305 A-D.

⁶¹ Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 70.

⁶² Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* 41, PG 91, 1305 B.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, PG 91, 1315 A.

⁶⁴ "God is humanized to man through love for mankind, so much is man able to be deified to God through love," Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* 10, PG 91, 1113 B; Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor*, eds. Gillian Clark and Andrew Louth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 65, 218.

⁶⁵ "Πρώτη γάρ ἐστιν ἀπάθεια ἡ παντελής ἀποχὴ τῶν κατ' ἐνέργειαν κακῶν, ἐν τοῖς εἰσαγομένοις θεωρουμένη, δευτέρα δὲ ἡ παντελής κατὰ διάνοιαν περὶ τὴν τῶν κακῶν συγκατάθεσιν ἀποβολὴ λογισμῶν, ἐν τοῖς

ascendance to God, a kind of virtue and habitual [χαθ'έξιν] state of the soul.⁶⁶ This means that *apatheia* for Maximus is related to *theōsis* and to love (as a pathway to *theōsis*). As he writes, “[...] becoming like God through *theōsis*, so that man might examine God's creation with God's help, without harming his freedom so that man might appropriate knowledge of these things as God does, not as man.”⁶⁷ Through this way, Maximus approaches divinization from the aspect of asceticism where God becomes an exegete for man to understand the material world.⁶⁸

According to Maximus, his ultimate virtue, i.e., *apatheia*, is related to these virtues: temperance, differentiation, faith, knowledge, and love. Focusing here on love, *apatheia* is a state of emotional redemption for human beings. We have to keep in mind that for Maximus, love is not only the core of Christianity but mainly an *ascesis*.⁶⁹ He mostly uses the Greek word *agapē* [ἀγάπη] when he speaks of love. However, quite often he employs the word *erōs* [ἔρως] as a synonym of *agapē*.⁷⁰ Both words are employed by Maximus to express the

μετὰ λόγου τὴν ἀρετὴν μετειοῦσι γινομένη, τρίτη ἡ κατ' ἐπιθυμίαν περὶ τὰ πάθη παντελής ἀκινησία ἐν τοῖς διὰ τῶν σχημάτων τοὺς λόγους νοητῶς θεωμένοις τῶν ὄρωμένων, τετάρτη ἀπάθεια ἡ καὶ αὐτῆς τῆς φιλῆς τῶν παθῶν φαντασίας παντελής κάθαρσις, ἐν τοῖς διὰ γνώσεως καὶ θεωρίας καθαρὸν καὶ διειδές ἔσοπτρον τοῦ θεοῦ ποιησαμένοις τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν συνισταμένη.” *ibid.* 55; In the *Four Centuries on Love* (PG 90, 968B), Maximus considers *apatheia* as the synthesis between ethics and anthropology: “a peaceful condition of soul according to which soul becomes stiff to any kind of evil.”

⁶⁶ Paul Blowers, “The Gentiles of the Soul: Maximus the Confessor on the Substructure and Transformation of the Human Person,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4, 1 (1996): 77.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Maximus' exegetical method provides a holistic view of the world; it alternates philosophical doctrines with biblical revelation. See: Andrew J. Summerson, *Divine Scripture and Human Emotion in Maximus the Confessor: Exegesis of the Human Heart* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 46-47.

⁶⁹ Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996), 38.

⁷⁰ It should be clarified that *eros* in Maximus' theology does not mean desire in a general sense, but Christian eros, i.e., cultivation of some kind of virtue, Andrew J. Summerson, *Divine Scripture and Human Emotion in*

impulse of the Creation toward its perfection by moving in two directions: love for God and love for man.⁷¹

Concerning the second direction, Maximus uses the Greek word *philanthropia* [φιλανθρωπία] (*love for human beings*). In the classical world, this virtue was considered a characteristic of God, transmigrated to mortals.⁷² In general, the Hellenistic perception of God's *philanthropia*, as expressed by Plato and the Stoics, lies in the providential care of God himself about the entire cosmos. This pagan perception of *philanthropia* contradicts the Christian *philanthropia*, which reached its sublime degree with Christ's Incarnation, i.e., the supreme expression of God's providence and love for humanity as a whole. While early Christian authors (such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen) spoke of this quality of God, which was incarnated in the Scripture as Divine Logos and in Christ's Incarnation, theological schools of thought in the 5th and the 6th century became more concrete by connecting God's love for humanity with His *philanthropia*.⁷³

Maximus follows in general this tendency in his work by focusing, however, on the suffering and death of Christ on the Cross, as the ultimate expression of God's *philanthropia* [φιλανθρωπία]. In *Epistle 11* he connects *philanthropia* with divine love, which was realised through the Incarnation of Christ.⁷⁴ Herein, the philosopher integrates *philanthropia* and love for the neighbour as the only way through which human beings can reach God 'in likeness'. Mutual love was initially

Maximus the Confessor: Exegesis of the Human Heart (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 110, 117.

⁷¹ "The divine as being eros and agape, is moved, while as an object of eros and agape, it moves towards itself those who are capable of receiving eros and agape. To state it clearer, it is moved with the aim of causing an inward relation of eros and agape in those who are capable of receiving this activity and moves as naturally attracting the desire of those who are moved for this reason", Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* Io 23; PG 91, 1260C.

⁷² Catherine Osborne, *Eros Unveiled* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 164-200.

⁷³ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in *Divine Names* (592A) presents the ecstatic eros of God to the humanity as the main characteristic of his divine *philanthropia*.

⁷⁴ Maximus the Confessor, *Epistle 11*, PG 91, 453 B-C.

expressed by Christ towards humanity. The same love should be expressed between human beings. More precisely, Maximus speaks of Christ's philanthropic habitude. He refers to a repetitive action [*χατά την φιλάνθρωπον ἔξιν*], which human beings must express towards their fellow neighbours.⁷⁵ This supreme virtue liberates human beings from passions, reaching the stage of *apatheia*.⁷⁶ In Maximus' work, this Christological character of *philanthropia* (which leads to *apatheia*) constitutes a divine type of love, through which Christ encourages human beings to follow his example. In addition, Christ incites the same desire (for *philanthropia*) in others, prompting men and women to follow his path. Moreover, due to God's *philanthropia*, Christ's pain on Cross and, consequently, his death, grants human beings a new life, detached from passions and his vices. This points to a perfect love, which inspires and guides human beings so that they can love each other.

What Maximus conveys here is that the mimetic attitude of human beings towards the nature of God leads them to an equal distribution of love directed towards their fellows. To the question of why love for God and simultaneous love for human beings are so salient, Maximus responds by arguing that these two loving commands, to which all laws, prophets and angels are based, give with this a supra-dimensional aspect of the concept of love. Therefore, Maximus' works suggest to all Christians a pathway towards deification, through love: just as Christ loved and died for Man, so every man should be willing even to die for his fellow man.

Concerning the relationship between love and *apatheia*, it seems that knowledge [*γνώσις*], as an extension of our intellect,

⁷⁵ For the connection between *ἔξις* (habitude) and love in Maximus, see Philipp Gabriel Renczes, *Agir de Dieu et Liberté de l'Homme: Recherches sur l'anthropologie théologique de saint Maxime le Confesseur* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2003), 311-313.

⁷⁶ “For this reason, the Logos of God, who is fully divine by nature became fully human, is composed of an intellectual soul and a passible body, just like us, only without sin. His birth from a woman within time was not preconditioned in any way by the pleasure derived from the transgression, but, in his love for mankind, he willingly appropriated the pain that is the end of human nature, the pain resulting from unrighteous pleasure.” Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium*, PG 90-91.

plays a salient role in reaching divine love. The human person who is in a state of knowledge of God does not assent to anything false, and subsequently, the evaluations upon which the *pathē* [πάθη] depend seem to be false. For Maximus knowledge has mainly a mystic meaning, i.e., it means experience which aims at the deification of human life.⁷⁷ According to this mystical perception, the main purpose of human intellect is to turn us to God, and that is its physical trait. Its non-physical characteristic, which is the root cause of evil, is the sensual knowledge and experience of things. He/she, who truly loves God, is a person whose worship is not interrupted; he/she controls his/her intellect. Human beings really love God when their intellect can entangle both body and soul within this love, which becomes ecstatic.⁷⁸

Thus, knowledge gives birth to the love of God, while human beings, through knowledge, defy the Intellect, and point to the Lord.⁷⁹ The intellect then returns to the original Intellect, to God, because it is his familiar and he is God's own. This ascent of the intellect is an outpouring of the God of man because the spirit of man is the man who ascends to God. Thus, he is invaded by himself in his everyday life, and constantly approaches God temporally and eschatologically.

Another aspect of intellect that Maximus involves in his analysis of passions is contempt [περιφρόνησις], which can heal the passions. As he says “the active contempt for visible phenomena exercised by the true Christian gnostic must extend

⁷⁷ Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 25.

⁷⁸ As Maximus says in the *Fourth Century on Love* (II, 70): “If, as St. Paul says, Christ dwells in our hearts through faith (Ephesians 3:17), and all the treasures of wisdom and spiritual knowledge are hidden in him (Colossians 2:3), then all the treasures of wisdom and spiritual knowledge are hidden in our hearts. They are revealed to the heart in proportion to our purification by means of the commandments”. For the ‘ecstatic love’ in Maximus and its correlation to Dionysius the Areopagite, see Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 42.

⁷⁹ Knowledge of God by man and disposition of love are connected in *The Four Centuries on Love* (1:1): “Love is a good disposition of the soul by which one prefers nothing to the knowledge of God”, Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Centuries on Love* (1:1), PG

even [to] his own body.”⁸⁰ ‘Contempt’ [περιφρονῶ] in ancient Greek means changing, modifying the intellect, and simultaneously going out of its former thinking.⁸¹ Although it has been argued that this is an example of “excessive spiritualization”,⁸² I think that at this point Maximus introduces a less anxious way of life by not focusing on the fear that there is a passion that needs to be dealt with. Instead, he seems to highlight the free energy of the soul, which, precisely because it is rotated within it, finds more easily any passion. Therefore, the cleansing of the human soul is not only meant in a negative way (cleansing of the passions) but also positively, that is, the pure purification of the soul. That is, the practical virtue achieved through imitation of the virtues of Christ.⁸³

From the above, it follows that knowledge of God is based on mystical theology, since mystical theology itself refers to the personal relationship between God and human, and is founded on empirical experience through which knowledge is obtained. However, this particular knowledge seems to have another quality, so long as it stems from direct supervision, while it is not the result of a reasoning process. Moreover, it seems that it is not a result of human wisdom, that is, a product of mental processing and philosophical thought, but it goes beyond mind and intellect.⁸⁴ According to Maximus, the mystical experience

⁸⁰ Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Centuries on Love*, 1.6., PG 90

⁸¹ In Aristophanes’ *Clouds* (225, 1503) [Νεφέλαι] *periphronō* [περιφρονῶ] means I examine something thoroughly. The negative connotation of contempt is found in Plato’s *Axiochus* [Ἀξίοχος] 372B.

⁸² Polycarp Sherwood, “Exposition and Use of Scripture in St Maximus as manifest in the *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*,” *OCP* 24 (1958): 207.

⁸³ “It is for this reason that the Savior says, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8): for he is hidden in the hearts of those who believe in him. They shall see him and the riches that are in him when they have purified themselves through love and self-control; and the greater their purity, the more they will See”, Maximus the Confessor, *Fourth Century on Love*, II. 72.

⁸⁴ Philip McCosker, “*Enhypostasia Mystica*: Contributions from Mystical Christology for a Tired Debate in Historical and Systematic Theology,” in *Christian Mysticism and Incarnational Theology: Between Transcendence and Immanence*, eds. Louise Nelstrop and Simon D. Podmore (U.K.: Ashgate, 2013), 69-70.

is revealed to human beings only by divine wisdom and is not a method of exploring philosophical-theological problems. This means that God with His own initiative reveals part of his infinite glory.⁸⁵

There is a theoretical and a practical mystical way, which leads man towards God's divine love. The former is consistent with monastic life; it refers to a life of reading, whereby reading means the cultivation of spiritual meanings, the human effort of knowledge and the recognition of God. Essentially, the theoretical life is a life absolutely mystical because it presupposes divine energy. The practical way concerns the Lord's "practice of commandments", namely the appropriation of divine promise.⁸⁶ On a practical level, observance of His commandments has the following moral consequence: human beings in everyday life live as God lives and expresses Himself. However, the practical way is not sufficient for Maximus, for two reasons: first, it frees the intellect only from the lack of temperance and hatred; second, reason is what incites "fear of God" and the good hope that may be necessary for the salvation of man. Nevertheless, it does not lead to divine love.

Maximus advances the theoretical way of life not only because unites intellect with God. This union is empirical knowledge, that is, an understanding of God, which is an integral part of the existence of men and women. This type of union could be traced to Maximus' theological position for the 'unconfused union' in Christ, first proclaimed by the Council of Chalcedon (451). To explain further his position, Maximus employs the metaphor of "whole and parts" in chapters one and two of his *Mystagogy*, particularly when he speaks of the cosmic unity between spirit and matter.⁸⁷ A whole, even

⁸⁵ Frederick D. Aquino, "Maximus the Confessor" in *The Spiritual Senses: Perceiving God in Western Christianity*, eds. Paul L. Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 104-120.

⁸⁶ Archimandrite Emilianos Simonpetritis, *About Love: Interpretation on Saint Maximus* [Περὶ Αγάπης: Ερμηνεία στὸν Ἅγιο Μάξιμο] (Athens: Indiktos, 2015), 68.

⁸⁷ "Once again, there is but one world and it is not divided by its parts. On the contrary, it encloses the differences of the parts arising from their natural properties by their relationship to what is one and indivisible in

though it consists of parts, is not divided by them. On the other hand, a whole encloses the differences of its parts within itself, by encircling them due to the relationship that parts bear to the whole. The parts that Maximus refers to are the spiritual and matter parts, which not only make up the whole but also constitute individually the whole in an unconfused way.

It follows that each of the parts is keeping its wholeness by filling the whole, while the whole in turn fills wholly each part. This theory between whole and parts is further advanced by Maximus at the beginning of the second chapter of his *Mystagogy*, where he connects the relationship between them with the notion of *hypostasis*.⁸⁸ It seems that Maximus prioritises the whole over the parts, as he explains not only in his *Mystagogy* (“the parts are brought forth from the whole ”)⁸⁹ but also in the *Theological and Economic Centuries*, where he speaks of God as the unity of the whole, undivided, while connected to the three hypostases.⁹⁰ However, in the realm of Trinitarian theology, as discussed in the second chapter of his *Mystagogy*, Maximus prioritises the parts over the whole; in Maximus’ thought, the parts hypostasise the whole. Without extending my analysis on God as a monad and a triad, or even on Christ as a whole, constituted from divinity and humanity,⁹¹ I will attempt to clarify that for Maximus divine nature exists with hypostatic manners in the hypostases and as hypostases.

itself. Moreover, it shows that both [the spiritual and material parts] are the same thing with it and alternately with each other in an unconfused way and that the whole of one enters into the whole of the other, and both fill the same whole as parts fill a unit and, in this way, the parts are uniformly and entirely filled as a whole”, Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogy* 2, PG 91.669B9-14.

⁸⁸ Ibid., PG 91.668C10-69A3.

⁸⁹ Ibid., PG 91.665B3.

⁹⁰ “For the divinity is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the divinity is in Father, Son and Holy Spirit,” Maximus the Confessor, *Theological and Economic Centuries*, PG 90.1125A5-7.

⁹¹ Concerning the relationship between Christ’s two different natures and hypostasis Maximus states the following: “[B]y reason of the essential communion of the parts from which he is composed, united naturally to the Father and to the Mother, he is showing preserving the difference of the parts from which he is composed,” Maximus the Confessor, *Epistle 15*, PG 91.556A1-B10.

The above relationship between whole and parts is expressed by Maximus also when he refers to the hierarchy of the Church under the three degrees of the priesthood: the deacon, the priest and the bishop.⁹² Deacons are those who “anoint the intellect”; their actual role is to assist our intellect to detach itself from worldly affairs, while the priests belong to those who acquire the knowledge of beings; the priest knows that beings spring from God; he is aware of the relationship between beings and the economy of God, i.e., the divine economy. Finally, the bishop acquires the perfect knowledge and is drowned with the holy myrrh of God’s revelation.

3. Seeking perfection in love

By following Maximus’ teachings, the perfect man sees behind the man and the woman, he sees the image of God, behind the differences between the slave and the free, the Greek and the barbarian, since they all eventually become God’s children.⁹³ Maximus begins the thirteenth chapter of *The Four Centuries on Love* with the following phrase: “The perfect [man] in love reaches the edge of *apatheia*”, because he wants to open in front of our eyes all the breadth of love, embracing the wholeness of human being. This breadth is related to the prerequisites that are needed to have love. One condition, as already mentioned, is *apatheia*.⁹⁴ No one can love unless he has not detached his intellect from earthly desires and consequently has not reached the stage of perfect *apatheia*

⁹² “He who anoints his mind for the sacred contests and drives bad thoughts from it (ὁ πρὸς τὸν ιεροὺς ἀγῶνας ἀλείφων τὸν νοῦν καὶ τὸν ἐμπαθεῖς λογισμοὺς ἀπελαύνων ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ) has the characteristics of a deacon (διακόνου λόγον ἐπέχει); of a priest, however, if he illuminates it with knowledge of beings and utterly destroys counterfeit knowledge (ὁ εἰς τὴν γνῶσιν τῶν ὄντων φωτίζων καὶ τὴν φευδώνυμον γνῶσιν ἐξαφανίζων); and of a bishop, finally, if he perfects it with the sacred myrrh of knowledge of the worshipful and Holy Trinity (ὁ τῷ ἀγίῳ μύρῳ τελειῶν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς προσκυνητῆς καὶ ἀγίας Τριάδος),” Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Centuries on Love*, 2:21, PG 90,

⁹³ Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Centuries on Love*, PG 90, 993 A.

⁹⁴ “Ἀγάπη μὲν τίκτει ἀπάθεια”, Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Centuries on Love*, PG 90, 961.

[τελεία ἀπάθεια].⁹⁵ Perfect *apatheia*, therefore, is the complete cleansing of the heart and, above all, when a man does not see any difference between what is his own and what belongs to others.

In addition, *apatheia* extends to every being and creature of God. The perfect man in love understands that all God's creatures are united to Him.⁹⁶ A human being in perfect love treats both the slave and the free man. He can also live within a state of freedom, that is *apatheia*, with the free and with the slave, with the Greek and the Jew, with the male and the female. He no longer sees all of them as separate beings, but as members of Christ, because everything and in all is Christ.⁹⁷ This does not imply that Christ is within all, but that all these are Christ since all of them find their identity and their substance only in the community of the body of Christ.⁹⁸

The perfect man, therefore, is in control of his passions by managing them through his daily practice [ἀσκησίς], and eventually by defeating them with *apatheia*. So, Maximus speaks of a new man, who reminds Adam before the Fall, and loves God because he has again become His image, regaining what he has lost.⁹⁹ Part of this deification is wisdom, which is given as a gift from the Holy Spirit to those who deserve deification and who are distinguished for characteristics that are consistent with the qualities of the deity.

It is worth mentioning that for Maximus deification presupposes the transfiguration of body and soul through the presence of the Spirit. As he says in the *First Century on Theology*: “Circumcision of the heart in the spirit signifies the utter stripping away from the senses and the intellect of their

⁹⁵ Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium*, PG 90, 628A.

⁹⁶ Archimandrite Emilianos Simonpetritis, *About Love: Interpretation on Saint Maximus* [Περὶ Αγάπης: Ερμηνεία στον Άγιο Μάξιμο] (Athens: Indiktos, 2015), 155-156.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 159.

⁹⁸ Lossky sees in this communion the “wholesome diversity of love”, Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1978), 69.

⁹⁹ Archimandrite Emilianos Simonpetritis, *About Love: Interpretation on Saint Maximus* [Περὶ Αγάπης: Ερμηνεία στον Άγιο Μάξιμο] (Athens: Indiktos, 2015), 158.

natural activities connected with sensible and intelligible things. This stripping away is accomplished by the Spirit's immediate presence, which completely transfigures body and soul and makes them more divine.”¹⁰⁰ The message he attempts to convey in this passage is that body and soul are potentially divine. Therefore, with the inspiration by the Spirit, they reach to *theōsis*. After all, transfiguration (in Orthodoxy) is the destiny of every creation, i.e., the entire universe will be transfigured with the glory of God.¹⁰¹

Maximus also introduces another aspect of the love for God. He claims that man, to love God, must also be a theologian with the sense that he needs to follow also the theoretical part of monasticism.¹⁰² With the assistance of *apatheia* and with the grace of God, man understands his unity in one nature. So, man should understand the unity of human nature and that God created them to be united with Him. As soon as man will understand and reach the unity of human nature, then he will understand the unity that lies in divinity. In this respect, love in Maximus orientates eschatologically man ‘in likeness’ [καθ’ ομοίωσιν].

Maximus completes his thought by referring to the ultimate union with God achieved through the coupling of practice with knowledge, i.e., the practical and theoretical path. Perfection and the power of man are a combination of his constant struggle through practice, unceased prayer [ἀδιάλειπτος προσευχή] and theory through the revelation of God and the penetration of the intellect into divine mysteries.¹⁰³ Maximus speaks of two types of pure prayer, both mystic: the first is engendered by the fear of God and the sign of its achievement is that the intellect prays as the God is there during the prayer.

¹⁰⁰ Maximus the Confessor, *First Century on Theology*, II. 46.

¹⁰¹ The Transfiguration of Christ in the Orthodox spiritual tradition symbolizes the transfiguration of all humanity, Allyne Smith, *Philokalia : the Eastern Christian spiritual texts : annotated & explained*, trans. G. E. H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware (U.S.A.: SkyLight Illuminations, 2006), 63.

¹⁰² Archimandrite Emilianos Simonpetritis, *About Love: Interpretation on Saint Maximus* [Περί Αγάπης: Ερμηνεία στον Άγιο Μάξιμο] (Athens: Indiktos, 2015), 24-27.

¹⁰³ Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Centuries on Love*, PG 90, II.61.

While, in the second kind of prayer, the intellect is longing for God's love and is captured by all His qualities.¹⁰⁴ Without explaining which kind of prayer could reach the highest state, we assume that this will be the second one due to the infusion of God into the intellect.

4. Maximus the Confessor in Russia

Starting from the fact that “the Russian philosophical culture had no antiquity of its own”,¹⁰⁵ we may understand how important was the role of Patristics for the development of Russian philosophy and theology.¹⁰⁶ In this section, I will examine only the case of Maximus the Confessor with relation to Russian philosophy, and in particular with relation to Vladimir Soloviev. Maximus the Confessor, already from the 11th century, was known in Slavonic Church circles through the liturgical books and after the 14th century through the translations of his works (especially *The Ascetic Life* and his comments on Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite). His writings (especially the *Disputations with Pyrrhus*) were used extensively by the Old Believers in their struggle against the Church in Russia. Several translations of Maximian theology followed during the 18th and 19th centuries, reaching their peak between 1853 - 1855, the period when Soloviev was born, when there was a tendency in Russia to translate the mystical

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., II.6.

¹⁰⁵ Aleksandr I. Abramov, “Philosophy at Theological Academies: Traditions of Platonism in Philosophizing at Russian Theological Academies,” trans. Stephen D. Shenfield, *Russian Studies in Philosophy* 42, no. 2 (2003): 24.

¹⁰⁶ For the development of the Russian religious and its relationship to Patristics it has been argued that Greek partistics should be considered, without any doubt, as the basis of different tendencies in Russian Orthodoxy, Arzhanukhin, Vladislav, “Greek Patristics in Russia of the 17th-18th Centuries”, *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 44/1-4 (1999): 565-574.

works of Maximus: *Mystagogy, Theological and Economic Centuries*, and *Interpretation of the Lord's Prayer*.¹⁰⁷

However, it seems that due to the positivist approach that prevailed in the Theological Academies of that time, Maximus' exegetical works seemed to be underestimated. The only remarkable study of Maximus' work was conducted at the end of the 19th century, by Aleksandr Brilliantov in his dissertation: *Vliyanije vostochnogo bogosloviya na zapadnoye v proizvedeniyakh Ioanna Skota Erigeny [The Influence of Eastern Theology to the West in the Writings of John Scotus Erigena]* (1893). As for Theophan the Recluse (1815-1894), who translated *Philokalia* from Church Slavonic into Russian, it should be mentioned that in the third volume of *Philokalia* (published in 1889),¹⁰⁸ which contained Maximus' writings, he included only the most understandable parts of his ascetic writings by skipping the complex ones.¹⁰⁹ So, it seems that at the end of the 19th century, the Russian philosophers knew few things from Maximus' works, most probably in a simplified way. With the beginning of the 20th century, Maximus in pre-revolutionary Russia was studied more extensively, especially by S. L. Epifanovich (1886-1918) who deeply and accurately managed to interpret the synthesis of the thought of Maximus, emphasising its features and discovering its origins in Byzantine theology.¹¹⁰

However, it is quite uncertain which sources Soloviev read to understand Maximus's teachings. Presumably, Soloviev had

¹⁰⁷ Gregory Benevich, "Maximus' Heritage in Russia and Ukraine," in Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 460.

¹⁰⁸ *Philokalia* is a Greek collection of writings by Eastern Church Fathers (4th and 5th century A.D.), which was published initially in Russia in 1782, while in 1793 was published as *Dobrotoliubie* (Lovers of the Good). The final version of *Philokalia* in Russian appeared after the 1880s, which may lead to the hypothesis that Soloviev read it. Under the hesychast tradition, these texts concerned the ways of reaching God with a mystic and ascetic way, Hughes, Michael, "Mysticism and Knowledge in the Philosophical thought of Ivan Kireevsky," *Mystics Quarterly* 30, no. 1/2 (2004): 16.

¹⁰⁹ Gregory Benevich, "Maximus' Heritage in Russia and Ukraine," in Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 462.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 464.

read *Philokalia* as it is confirmed by his article on *Mysticism* in the *Brockhaus and Ephron Encyclopedia*.¹¹¹ Moreover, taking into consideration that Soloviev was a Slavophile during the early period of his life, this implies and to some extent confirms his embracement of the Patristic and mystico-ascetical texts.¹¹² Nevertheless, it is quite doubtful to which mysticism (Orthodox or Western) Soloviev belongs. In Orthodox mysticism, mystics experience the union with the divine (God) psychosomatically, while Catholic mystics experience the *unio mystica*, a kind of short (it may happen once in the whole life) mystical union or instant enlightenment, where the human being does not emerge from its human condition.¹¹³

However, according to B. P. Vysheslavtsev, “Vladimir Soloviev is a typical representative of Eastern Christianity, which he has adopted from the Greeks. This is expressed in his theology, his philosophy, his mysticism, and even in his attitude to other confessions: it is impossible to understand his practical attitude towards Catholicism unless we bear in mind that he is obsessed with the idea of total unity and the Orthodox idea of universal conciliation.”¹¹⁴ This statement can

¹¹¹ *Filosofskiy slovar' Vladimira Solov'yëva*, Rostov n/D: Izd-vo Feniks, BBK 87.3 (4G), 1997, 289.

¹¹² In the first half of the 19th century in Russia, positivism and a recovery of monastic tradition were in a way united. The Slavophile movement embraced the writings from the Church Fathers, while Slavophiles tried to employ that tradition with an intellectual way, almost similar to the Western intellectual tradition, Teresa Obolovitch, *Faith and Science in Russian Religious Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 48-49.

¹¹³ Konstantinos Tsopanis, *Mysticism in the religions of the world (Ancient Greece, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, Shintoism)* [Ο Μυστικισμός στις Θρησκείες του Κόσμου: Αρχαία Ελλάδα-Χριστιανισμός-Ισλαμισμός-Βουδισμός-Ζωροαστρισμός-Κουμφουκιανισμός-Σιντοϊσμός] (Athens: Iamblichus, 2005), 50; For Soloviev's disconnected parts between mysticism and asceticism, see S.S.Khoruzhiy, “Vladimir Solov'ev i Mistiko-Asketicheskaya Traditsiya Pravoslaviya” [Vladimir Soloviev and the Mystical-Ascetic Tradition of Orthodoxy], *Bogoslovskie trudy* 33 (1997): 233-245.

¹¹⁴ Publichnoye zasedaniye Religiozno-filosofskoy akademii, posvyashchennoye pamjati Vladimira Solovyeva [Public meeting of the Religious and Philosophical Academy dedicated to the memory of Vladimir Soloviev], no. 2. (1926): 219-221.

be confirmed only indirectly, since Soloviev, as a mystic, never revealed his sources in his writings. The only thing that can be supported with certainty is that regarding Eastern Christianity and in particular the Christian Neoplatonists,¹¹⁵ Soloviev analysed extensively their teachings in his entries in the *Brockhaus and Ephron Encyclopedia*.¹¹⁶

However, in his entry on Maximus the Confessor, the Russian thinker seems to be humble. He does not refer to Maximus' teachings (especially those concerning love as we might expect), but he prefers to stress Maximus' fight against Monothelitism.¹¹⁷ In total, he refers three times to Maximus in the *Brockhaus and Ephron Encyclopedia*: the first reference is in Origen's article, where Soloviev sees Maximus as a theologian who imparted Origen's and Pseudo-Dionysius' teachings to the West;¹¹⁸ the second concerns *Mysticism* where Maximus has the place of the interpreter of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite;¹¹⁹ and the third speaks about Maximus' participation, together with the monk named Sophronius of Jerusalem (c.560-638), in the Council of 633 against Monothelitism.¹²⁰

By all means, Soloviev through these references to Maximus attempted to underlie Maximus' contribution to the great theologian struggles of his time. Maybe the Russian philosopher saw in Maximus the last, and most true, representative of Patristics, who ended Christological disputes.¹²¹ Taking into consideration these limitations,

¹¹⁵ I mean here mainly Origen and the Greeks representatives of the Christian Neoplatonism between 5th and 6th century A.D.: Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and Maximus the Confessor.

¹¹⁶ For Origen, see *Filosofskiy slovar' Vladimira Solov'yëva*, Rostov n/D: Izd-vo Feniks, BBK 87.3 (4G), 1997, 332-343.

¹¹⁷ Maximus suggested two aspects of the will, desire [θέλημα] and choice [αἵρεσις], in order to solve the problem with Monothelitism. Will as desire belongs to nature, while will as choice belongs to hypostasis. The two wills of Christ are wills at the level of desire; the choice remains the same, *ibid.*, 263-264.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 343.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 289.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 291.

¹²¹ Sergey Sergeyevich Averintsev, «Nasha filosofiya» (vostochnaya patristika IV-XI vv.) [Our Philosophy: Eastern Patristics of 4th-11th

together with Maximus' unique style of writing which seemed to speak to himself without any need to be understandable, I will attempt to draw parallels between Soloviev and Maximus regarding the active role of man, through love, in the fulfilment of God's plan.

5. Discussing Soloviev's ontology of Love with Maximian love

At the centre of Maximus' philosophy seems to be the problem of man and his high destiny as a part of God's divine plan. The core of this problem is the wholeness of humanity, which lies in the multitude of human souls of all times.¹²² Adam was the first person who expressed this wholeness, unsuccessfully though due to his Fall. To restore Adam's fall, Christ came to save this whole, so that all sinners can be saved. For Maximus, this is a mystery that must be "honored with silence."¹²³ In the centre of the history of the world Maximus places the Incarnation of God and then the preparation for the deification of man. When a person accomplishes his task by overcoming in himself the split into spiritual and flesh (body and soul), even when he overcomes the opposite that lies between male and female, then the entire cosmos will be saved and creation will be reunited with the Creator. Hence, it could be argued that Maximus does not develop a theory of salvation; instead, he speaks about an active way of salvation, where man is acting as the saviour of all creation, as Christ acted as the saviour of man himself. He speaks of the behaviour of the Orthodox man, a behaviour that lies in the sphere of ascetic practice, i.e., the core of Orthodox religiosity. In this respect, the whole New Testament should be

century], in S.S. Averintsev, *Sobraniye Sochinenij: Sofiya-Logos Slovar'*, pod red. N.P. Averintsevoy i K.B. Sigova (Kiiv.: Dukh i litera, 2006), 610-639.

¹²² Gregory of Nyssa in his work *On the Making of Man* (PG 44, 125-256), he refers to the full number of souls as the *pleroma*, or fullness, of humanity.

¹²³ Maximus the Confessor, *Theological and Economic Centuries*, PG 90, 1172 D.

understood not only as a factual, moral and mystical event in the history of humankind but also as a symbol of the cosmic process.¹²⁴

Soloviev's philosophical thought does not seem to abstain significantly from Maximus' synthesis of the wholeness of humanity and man's deification.¹²⁵ Through 'All-Unity' (*vseedinstvo*) Soloviev sought to combine everything, to embrace in a synthesis the opposing principles of the Russian spirit. In *Dukhovnyye osnovy zhizni* [Spiritual Foundations of Life] (1882-1884) he gives a basic outline of ascetic themes, such as the doctrine of prayer, the relation between sins and passions, and the process of spiritual ascent to union with God. In particular, Soloviev (in the same work) adds in All-Unity the "concept of justice" (*ponyatiye o spravedlivosti*), as he calls it.¹²⁶ According to this principle, man must descend to the world and engage in the work of building up a Christian society.¹²⁷ Under these terms, prayer, charity, and fasting are not considered as individual spiritual achievements, which could lead to his deification, but as three basic activities of personal religious life, which also constitute the basic actions for achieving a kind of "spiritual collectivism."¹²⁸ It is

¹²⁴ Ibid., PG 90, 1108 A-B.

¹²⁵ All the references to Soloviev's works are from: Vladimir Soloviev, *Sobranie Sochinenii* (Collected Works), eds. S. M. Solov'ev and E. L. Radlov, 12 vols. (St.Petersburg: 1901-1903; reprint, Bruxelles: Foyer Oriental Chrétien, 1966). If translations are used, the details are given in the footnotes.

¹²⁶ *Dukhovnyye osnovy zhizni*, SS III: 335-345.

¹²⁷ "By this sense of justice, we stand not only for ourselves, but also for others, not only for our own, but also for someone else's right; and only then it really turns out that for us the very right - justice itself, matters. Standing up for your own even indisputable right may be wrong, for this can come from egoism and addiction, while standing up for *any* right, and in any case as your own, this is a matter of direct justice." Ibid., 340.

¹²⁸ This kind of spiritual collectivism is quite obvious when he speaks of the prayer. His position here presents a kind of balance between Maximus' ascetic approach of the inner concentration of man, gathering and striving himself to God, and to social activity as a Christian: "He who does not pray to God, does not help people and does not correct his nature by abstinence, is alien to any religion, even if he thought, spoke and wrote about religious subjects all his life." ibid., 348; For the "spiritual

necessary to add here that in the last decade of his life, especially in his work *Tri razgovora o voyne, progresse i kontse vsemirnoy istorii* [Three conversations about war, progress and the end of world history] (1900), Soloviev seems to give to the concept of justice an eschatological dimension. Herein, he presents the Antichrist as being responsible for a new Christian society, totally transformed by him. In this regard, Soloviev completes his philosophy by proposing to us to a new spiritual age, full of spiritual and mystical experience.

During the last decade of his life (in the 1890s), Soloviev criticised the social passivity of Orthodoxy. In his essay *Ob upadke srednevekovogo mirosozertsaniya* (On the Decline of the Medieval Worldview), which he read at his speech in Moscow on 19th of October 1891, he calls into question the social positions of Christianity, as well as its role in public life in all periods of history, except from the early Christian period, before Constantine the Great (272-337).¹²⁹ His criticism against this problematic part of Orthodoxy, turns to be polemical, especially when he asserts that Christian asceticism is not more than an “one-sided individualism” or even sharply a “pseudo-Christian individualism”, which limits the work of salvation to one individual life.¹³⁰ Besides, for Soloviev, the meaning of Christianity is “to transform the life of mankind according to the truths of faith.”¹³¹ Nonetheless, he acknowledges the social activity of Saint John Chrysostom (c.347-407) by referring implicitly to the theological concepts of the fourth century, when the emergence of Christianity in social life was taking its first steps.

Apart from the above polemic position, I think that this transformative strategy of our Christian experience (from internal to external and vice versa) that Soloviev introduces in his philosophy, is based on the Patristic thesis of the inseparable unity and identity of love to God, to neighbour and

collectivism” in Russian religious thought, see S.S.Khoruzhiy, “Vladimir Solov’ev i Mistiko-Asketicheskaya Traditsiya Pravoslaviya” [Vladimir Soloviev and the Mystical-Ascetic Tradition of Orthodox], *Bogoslovskie trudy* 33 (1997): 233-245.

¹²⁹ *Ob upadke srednevekovogo mirosozertsaniya*, SS VI: 383-384.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 389-390.

¹³¹ Ibid., 381-382.

especially to other (eternal union as marriage). This might originate to some degree from Soloviev's personality. As a person, he had ascetic tendencies, without excluding his participation in social life according to some of his closest friends.¹³² Maybe he was close to what Greeks call *cosmokalogeros* [χοσμοκαλόγερος], meaning a 'monk in the world'.

It could also indicate a connection with the Maximian concept of a unified love, fully detached from passions and earthly matters. Here, I will not compare love for God in Maximus and Soloviev's *Smysl lyubvi*, but I will focus only on their interesting insights, through love, into genders (male and female) and marriage. Several researchers have underlined Maximus' contribution to the possibility for a married couple to reach perfection (through love) now and forever.¹³³ Here, I examine love between genders as elaborated by Maximus in his work *Ambigua* (especially 10 and 41).¹³⁴

¹³² Alexander Blok gave him the nickname "the knight-monk" ("Rytsar'-monakh"), Samuel D. Cioran, *Vladimir Solov'ev and the Knighthood of the Divine Sophia* (Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1977), 93. One of his closest friends, V. L. Velichko, wrote that "Vladimir Sergeevich loved both people and life, experienced its joys with particular intensity, but deliberately removed himself from all earthly bonds, deliberately set limits to his own heart, even in manifestations of love for family and friends." He was "an ascetic both in his convictions and in his vocation" V. L. Velichko, "Vladimir Solov'yev: Zhizn' i tvoreniya" [Vladimir Soloviev: Life and Works] in *VI. Solov'yev: Pro et contra, Lichnost' i tvorchestvo Vladimira Solov'yeva v otsenke russkikh mysliteley i issledovateley* [Vladimir Soloviev: Pro et contra. Personality and creativity of Vladimir Solov'ev assessed by Russian thinkers and researchers] Antologiya, I (Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatel'stvo Russkogo Khristianskogo gumanitarnogo instituta, 2000), 34.

¹³³ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Brian E. Daley (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 196-205; Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1965), 157-159, 376-377; Adam G. Cooper, *The Body in St Maximus the Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified*, The Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 213, 218-227.

¹³⁴ The *Ambigua ad Iohannem* are a collection of more than 60 chapters devoted to the explanation of a selection of passages from Gregory of Nazianzus.

In *Ambigua* 10, Maximus touches upon the spiritual failure of the first couple (Adam and Eve) to show the ways of a sanctified life.¹³⁵ I discern here the word that he is using for Eve, *σύνοικος*, which means the ‘cohabitant’. While this word does not sound so sacramentally Christian in comparison to the word *syzygos* that Soloviev employs, maybe it shows Maximus’ intention to speak of the role of the wife with domestic terms, implying that both, under one house that they had in paradise, are sharing (or should have shared) the responsibility for their fall.¹³⁶

Soloviev, however, in *Smysl lyubvi*,¹³⁷ does not examine man and wife as a couple when he speaks of the responsibility that lies behind our choice to eliminate our ego. On the contrary, Soloviev focuses first on the person as a monad, and then he sees union between genders (*syzygy*) not as a condition of tests as Maximus does, but as the realisation of sexual love to incarnate the idea of All-Unity in material reality and human existence.¹³⁸ We cannot say with certainty that Soloviev when he referred to the person as a monad, he meant a not married person with the sense of a virgin. If this was the case, then Soloviev might validate the two ways (marriage and celibacy) that lead to perfection. In any case, it seems that what for Maximus was considered the beginning of a spiritual life (after the fall), for Soloviev seemed to be the end of a spiritual process.

The conclusion in *Ambigua* 10 is quite indicative of Maximus’ intentions to integrate love between genders into his broad project of humanity’s holiness. He says that “...death lives throughout the whole of this temporal span and we are

¹³⁵ Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua Io.* 10, PG 91, 1156D-1157A.

¹³⁶ With Maximus’ references to Moses as an example of a married man who “became a lover of divine glory” Maximus acknowledges married life as a pathway to holiness, Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua Io.* 10, PG 91, 1161D.

¹³⁷ According to Georgios D. Panagopoulos, in *Smysl lyubvi* the theocracy, which characterizes his period of 1880s, is replaced by an erotic utopia. Georgios D. Panagopoulos *Russische Sophiologie zwischen orthodoxer Tradition und moderner Philosophie* (V. Soloviev, S. Bulgakov, G. Florovsky). Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2021, 45.

¹³⁸ *Smysl lyubvi*, SS VII:58-59.

the food eaten by him'', which probably means that what happened to the first couple (as a whole) had a great impact on the general experience of humankind. So, he seems to mean that the loss of immortality by Adam and Eve dragged humanity to death. Here, Soloviev's position about immortality could be added supplementarily to Maximus' insight: Soloviev proposes that true love (sexual love) is revealing a new way of being a self by overcoming death.¹³⁹

In *Ambigua* 41, Maximus speaks of the five divisions of being (uncreated and created nature, mind and senses, heaven and earth, paradise and inhabited world, male and female) and the way that man is related to each of them.¹⁴⁰ Each of these divisions indicates five syntheses, which all constitute a holistic framework. Regarding the last division, between male and female, seems to be the necessary prerequisite for humankind naturally engendered: "And so, in accordance with the divine purpose, it [i.e. the human being] should be shown as – and [truly] become – a human being exclusively undivided because of the designation as male and female."¹⁴¹ I think that here Maximus does not speak of a kind of desexualization, but rather a purification which will raise humanity in a mode of existence which will not be characterised by gender. There will be a human, unified with the Divine Nature, since "in Jesus Christ, there is neither male nor female."¹⁴² Besides, the division into genders was something out of nature, says Maximus.¹⁴³ So, it seems that Maximus does not speak of a kind of *androgyny* as we know it in Plato, but of something above even *androgyny* which may touch an angelic form. The striking difference with Soloviev's *androgyny* in *Smysl lyubvi* is that in the latter the androgynous human being is the absolute and perfect incarnation of Sophia. While for Maximus, it is Christ into whom the perfect man [τέλειος ἄνθρωπος] is incarnated.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ *Smysl lyubvi*, SS VII:30-31.

¹⁴⁰ Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* 41, PG 91, 1305 A-D.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, PG 91, 1305 C-D.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, PG 91, 1309A-B.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, PG 91, 1309A.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, PG 91, 1309A.

Although he does not mention it here explicitly, I think that the purification that Maximus is talking about can be accomplished with *apatheia*, an ascetic virtue that belongs equally to both genders. This virtue in its highest form, becomes love [ἀγάπη] i.e., how human beings commune with God. Here, Maximus stays consistent with his monastic perception of holiness (and wholeness) by providing the trinity of virtue (ascesis), knowledge (contemplation) and love (union).¹⁴⁵

A similar pattern of spiritual triad is used by Soloviev in *Smysl lyubvi* with several differentiations though. Soloviev seems to apply in *Smysl lyubvi* his own triad of ‘integral life’, i.e., a synthesis of features that define human nature (integral knowledge-integral creativity, integral society). Integral knowledge is based on ‘thought’, integral society on ‘will’ and integral creativity on ‘feeling.’ Love comes only through the ‘sexual love’ between male and female, while knowledge for Soloviev acts simultaneously as ascesis (elimination of the catastrophic aspect of ego) and as contemplation through the mystic knowledge of the ‘other’, i.e., accomplishment of self-knowledge.¹⁴⁶ Regarding wholeness above division, Soloviev in the fourth article of *Smysl lyubvi*, overcomes the division between body and soul, by pointing it out as hypocritical for sexual relationships because it separates physical body from the whole of the human essence.¹⁴⁷

Another concept that may reveal some kind of connection between Maximus and Soloviev is the notion of ‘otherness’. The dialectic of the One and the Other especially in *Smysl lyubvi*, was considered organic and necessary for understanding the revelation for man itself as being-for-other. If Soloviev employed in *Smysl lyubvi* the notion of ‘other’ with the terms of Christian asceticism, as Maximus did, this might mean that he intended to create a kind of dialectic of otherness,

¹⁴⁵ Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1965), 332-368.

¹⁴⁶ *Smysl lyubvi*, SS VII:15.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 37, 39.

which reveals itself in numerous combinations of opposites between individual and the ultimate universal.¹⁴⁸

This intention was already posed by him in his early work *La Sophia* (1875-1876) through a pagan approach though: it is Sophia, as a Gnostic principle, who tends to unite the human souls to the All-Unity and unify all the opposites. On the contrary in *Smysl lyubvi*, the above intention is coloured by Christian terms (i.e., *syzygy*) when Soloviev speaks of the realisation of divine-human unity in a mystical way, through the experience of faith.¹⁴⁹ He wants to show that man may completely realise his existential purpose (through his loving relationship with the ‘other’), which in Orthodoxy is firmly believed to be deification. His references on how to overcome death and being immortal are related to the eternal union (*syzygy*) between a man and a woman. However, he does not sound to be in favour of a strictly individual path, full of silence and solitude as the Hesychasts proclaimed,¹⁵⁰ that a Christian should follow. Not even he is speaking about an unconditional love for the ‘other’ as Maximus does.¹⁵¹ Contrariwise, he expands the *syzygy* relationally in social terms, by seeing an analogy of the relations between individuals and some of society’s parts (family, nation, Church, humanity as a whole).¹⁵² Undoubtedly, it cannot be argued that in *Smysl lyubvi* Soloviev speaks of a complete inner connection between true religion and politics as he does in

¹⁴⁸ S.S.Khoruzhiy, “Vladimir Solov’ev i Mistiko-Asketicheskaya Traditsiya Pravoslaviya” [Vladimir Soloviev and the Mystical-Ascetic Tradition of Orthodoxy], *Bogoslovskie trudy* 33 (1997): 233-245.

¹⁴⁹ *Smysl lyubvi*, SS VII:49.

¹⁵⁰ At the end of the 18th century, Hesychasm obtained two directions in Russia: the first finds its realisation in the synthesis between Hesychasm and pilgrimage, while the second is flourished by Slavophiles, who connect the Hesychasmic practice with secular life. The strategy of such a connection gets the name ‘monastery in the world’ (‘monastyr’ v miru’), S.S.Khoruzhiy, “Vladimir Solov’ev i Mistiko-Asketicheskaya Traditsiya Pravoslaviya” [Vladimir Soloviev and the Mystical-Ascetic Tradition of Orthodoxy], *Bogoslovskie trudy* 33 (1997): 233-245.

¹⁵¹ Maximus the Confessor, *The Four Hundred Centuries on Love*, PG 90, 1044 D.

¹⁵² *Smysl lyubvi*, SS VII:58.

Opravdaniye dobra [The *Justification of the Good*] (1897).¹⁵³ In this work, by posing first the ascetic principles of ‘pity’ and ‘altruism’, he raises *Good* as the moral path through which the relationship between individual and society is being developed.¹⁵⁴

It could be suggested that Soloviev tries to avoid, especially during the last decade of his life, a kind of extreme individualism, where man would completely ignore the whole sphere of social life. Instead, he seeks a balance between ascetic and social activity.¹⁵⁵ It seems that he intends to achieve a kind of synthesis between a horizontal catharsis for a man (when he speaks of the relationship between the individual and the social consciousness during history)¹⁵⁶ and a vertical catharsis for a man when he speaks of the man’s struggle with his ego.¹⁵⁷

Conclusions

In *The Four Hundred Chapters on Love* and *Letter 2: On Love* Maximus repeats in a quite simple way the commands to love spoken by Christ, expanding them to the love of ourselves

¹⁵³ In the preface of the second edition of *Opravdaniye dobra* (8th December 1898), Soloviev says that “the chief claim of my theory is to establish in and through the unconditional principle of morality the complete inner connection between religion and sound politics”, Vladimir Soloviev, *The Justification of the Good: an essay on moral philosophy*, trans. Nathalie A. Duddington (London: Constable, 1918), xiii.

¹⁵⁴ In the preface of the second edition of *Opravdaniye dobra* (8th December 1898), Soloviev says that “the chief claim of my theory is to establish in and through the unconditional principle of morality the complete inner connection between religion and sound politics”, Vladimir Soloviev, *The Justification of the Good: an essay on moral philosophy*, trans. Nathalie A. Duddington (London: Constable, 1918), xiii.

¹⁵⁵ This balance was underlined before Soloviev from F. Dostoevsky, S.S.Khoruzhiy, “Vladimir Solov’ev i Mistiko-Asketicheskaya Traditsiya Pravoslaviya” [Vladimir Soloviev and the Mystical-Ascetic Tradition of Orthodoxy], *Bogoslovskiye Trudy* 33 (1997): 233-245.

¹⁵⁶ Vladimir Soloviev, *La Sophia et les autres écrits français*, ed. et présentés par François Rouleau (Lausanne: La Cite- L’Age d’Homme, 1978), 68-69.

¹⁵⁷ *Smysl lyubvi*, SS VII: 15-17.

(‘good’ self-love). In the *Ambigua to John* (especially in *Ambigua* 41), Maximus touches upon love between the two genders, while in *Ad Thalassium* he presents a love for God correcting the narcissistic view of love, self-love, by unifying the powers of the soul, turning them towards God and one’s neighbor. However, Maximus highlights the ontological consequences both for the subject and the other of the ‘evil’ self-love. The ‘other’ is existentially murdered by self-directed passions, leading to a violation of nature’s principle itself. But if, indeed, self-love is the fragmentation of nature, then for Maximus love itself transforms nature, leading the human being to consubstantial unity. Lord’s commandments of love, as Maximus discusses them in *The Ascetic Life*, project Christ as an ethical and ascetic paradigm through which His command to love is manifested, while in *Mystagogy* Maximus emphasises the soul’s upward movement towards divine love.

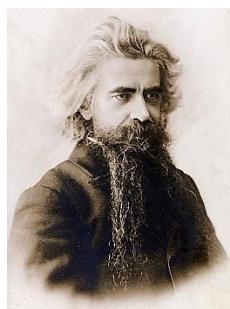
By comparing the above aspects of Maximian love to Soloviev’s view of love, it is noteworthy to proceed to the following remarks. The texts that were written by Maximus before the Monothelite crisis and constitute the core of my analysis here, were based on the triad of *practical (or ethical) philosophy, natural contemplation and theological mystagogy*. This triad, in *Ad Thalassium* (Questions 3 and 52), is eliminated by Maximus into the dyadic system of ‘practical philosophy’ and ‘contemplative mystagogy’. Indeed, as we have already analysed his approach to love, it seems that love for Maximus cannot be experienced outside of the ultimate value of *apatheia*. The latter is not only an inevitable moral value, but, mainly, it leads to the revelation of God. In this respect, love ultimately becomes an action which enhances the well-being of ourselves and of our neighbor.¹⁵⁸ This moral goal is transformed into the Christian concept of *agapē* which is employed by Soloviev in *Smysl lyubvi* not only when he speaks of one’s love for God and one’s love for one’s neighbour, but

¹⁵⁸ This will be expanded later by Solov’yëv to love other nations: “the demand to love other nations as your own does not at all imply a *psychological identity* of feeling, but only an *ethical identity* of conduct”, because “I must desire the true good for all nations as much as that of my own.” Soloviev, *The Justification of the Good*, 298.

also when he speaks for one's love for others, incarnated as the eternal union via marriage.

Moreover, I suggest that each pair of the five divisions of being that Maximus elaborates on in *Ambigua* 41 (uncreated and created nature, intelligible and sensible, heaven and earth, paradise and inhabited world, male and female) and the ways that man is related to each of them, should be examined under the model of practical and theological mystagogy. The question of whether there might be any connection between this triad (or dyad afterwards) model of Maximus of Christian philosophy and Soloviev's system of 'integral life' (integral knowledge, integral creativity, and integral society) when examining love, cannot be answered with certainty. It is more likely that Soloviev was influenced by the brilliant concept of integral knowledge by Ivan Kireevskii,¹⁵⁹ while Maximus was most probably by Origen's model of *ethics*, *physics*, and *eopoptics* (metaphysics).¹⁶⁰

However, this philosophical triad that both are using implicitly, is interesting when discussing the love between genders. In my interpretation, for Maximus, the situation of marriage (the couple of *syzygoi*) reflects the practical mystagogy in contrast to the monk's life which reflects the theological mystagogy. Both ways may lead to man's perfection, through love according to Maximus. Soloviev by setting the elimination of a person's ego as the precondition of spiritual life, may have indicated as well two ways (marriage and celibacy) leading to man's perfection.



¹⁵⁹ Oravecz, *God as Love*, 42.

¹⁶⁰ Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor*, 74.

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τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸν νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἰναι

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