

Andrew Schumann (Ed.)

Logic in Orthodox Christian Thinking



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To all people who were born in the USSR

Preface

Andrew Schumann

In Christianity quite complex reflective tools assuming that the human being applies an ethical analysis to everyday situations have been developed. For the Christian it is not enough to be a respectable layman and just to follow social norms. The Christian cannot be the same as others. (S)he should always aspire to be better.

The Christian reflexion which is based on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount ('Sermo in monte') may bear conflicts with public morals. In *Resurrection* by Leo Tolstoy all story events are developed around Nekhludoff who realises a perversity of public morals, its imperfection. In the beginning Nekhludoff aspires to be such as others:

At first Nekhludoff struggled, but all that he had considered good while he had faith in himself was considered bad by others, and what he had considered evil was looked upon as good by those among whom he lived, and the struggle grew too hard. And at last Nekhludoff gave in, i.e., left off believing himself and began believing others. At first this giving up of faith in himself was unpleasant, but it did not long continue to be so. At that time he acquired the habit of smoking, and drinking wine, and soon got over this unpleasant feeling and even felt great relief (*Resurrection* by Leo Tolstoy, translated by Mrs. Louise Maude).

Then Nekhludoff opens in himself the Christian view, i.e. he starts to see all things and events in new light. He becomes ethically sensitive thanks to the new view.

Nekhludoff could no longer move in this society without feeling ill at ease and reproaching himself. And yet all the ties of relationship and friendship, and his own habits, were drawing him back into this society. Besides, that which alone interested him now, his desire to help Maslova and the other sufferers, made it necessary to ask for help and service from persons belonging to that society, persons whom he not only could not respect, but who often aroused in him indignation and a feeling of contempt (*Resurrection* by Leo Tolstoy, translated by Mrs. Louise Maude).

According to the Russian tradition of Orthodox Christianity, the Christian view cannot be learnt by rational theology. The Orthodox Church cannot have doctrinal system in sense of St. Thomas Aquinas, because his system assumes a logical rationalisation of Christian faith, which is impossible for the Orthodoxy. For itself the Church writes not systems, but catechisms in which states the doctrine in the way how it has opened in the Holy Spirit. So, in his well-known foreword to *Theological Works* (Богословские сочинения) by Aleksey Stepanovich Khomyakov (Хомяков) (1804–1860)—the founder of Russian philosophy of Silver Age—Yury Fedorovich Samarin named Khomyakov *doctor ecclesiae*, ‘teacher of Church’ (Samarin 1995), pp. 34–35, meaning a catechetical, instead of rational character of Khomyakov’s works.

In this connection it is no wonder that Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky (Храповицкий) (1863–1936), who in many respects generated doctrinal paradigms of Russian tradition of the 20th century, estimated the writer Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky (1821–1881) as a bright Orthodox catechist, actually as *doctor ecclesiae*. So Archimandrite Kiprian Kern (1899–1960) asserted that he heard Mitrapolitan Anthony's following remark: “First of all the Bible, then the Church canons, and on the third place Dostoyevsky” (Kiprian 2002), p. 19. The famous expert in Dostoyevsky Sergey Fudel (Фудель) (1901–1977) wrote in the same spirit:

in the seventies of the last century, likely, only three persons in Russia conducted the Christian sermon in ... wide public scale: Ambrose of

Optina [Амвросий Оптинский, 1812–1891], Theophan the Recluse [Феофан Затворник, 1815–1894], and Dostoevsky (*Fudel* 2005), p. 96.

The Orthodox thinking is existential in the Russian and other late versions of the Orthodoxy. For this thinking it is more important to be able to feel and see, than to sketch rational pictures. For this reason in the Russian Orthodox Church there are few saint intellectuals, but this Church has many saints of another category: the holy fools for Christ's sake, who in the Byzantine tradition were called διὰ Χριστὸν σαλός and in Russia are known as *iurodivye*. Their madness allowed them not only to participate in profane life but also to speak ‘without control.’ Holy fools have been portrayed in numerous Russian Orthodox hagiographies. The freedom of behavior of the holy fools derives from their saintly status: they stand above, or rather outside, all communal laws and social regulations.

Nevertheless, we could distinguish the late traditions of Orthodox Christianity from the Byzantine tradition that contained many rational approaches and influenced even on the intellectualism of the West Christianity. Since the Byzantine Orthodoxy there has been a tradition of rational theology based on Aristotelianism. For example, in the doctrine about the Trinity there were used Aristotelian categories. St. John Damascene was one of the famous Orthodox followers of Aristotle. His best-known and most considerable work is trilogy *The Fountain of Knowledge* (Πηγὴ γνώσεως), consisting of treatises: (i) *Philosophical Chapters* (Κεφάλαια φιλοσοφικά)—commonly called *Dialectic*, (ii) *Concerning Heresy* (Περὶ αἱρέσεων), (iii) and *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* (Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβῆς τῆς ὀρθοδόξου πίστεως). *Dialectic*, the Russian translation in (*John of Domascus* 2002), has the following structure: the first part (chapters 1–8) is introduction; the second part is a discussion on the five logical categories (*quinque voces*, πέντε φωναί), emphasized by Porphyry among 10 Aristotelian categories (chapter 9–14), as well as similarities and distinctions between categories ‘genus’ (γένος), ‘difference’ (διαφορά), ‘kind’ (εἶδος), ‘property’ (ἴδιον) and ‘accidence’ (συμβεβηκός) (chapters 18–28); the third part is a discussion on categories of Aristotle (chapter 31–38 and 46–62); other chapters (15–17, 29–30, 39–45) are devoted to various questions connected with

categories and with construction of propositions. *Dialectic* is based on Aristotelian logic as it is understood in Aristotle's *Categories* and in Porphyry's *Isagoge*.

There were also attempts to apply modern logical theories in Orthodoxy. So Fr. Pavel (Paul) Florensky (1882–1937) was the first Russian Orthodox theologian who read Russell & Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica* (1910–1913) and implicitly proposed to use formal logic in Orthodox theological studies. Florensky published a lot of interesting works on philosophy, theology, art theory, mathematics, and electrodynamics. The best known Florensky work is *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth: An Essay in Orthodox Theodicy in Twelve Letters* (Florensky 2004). While much of this book was completed in 1908, it was not published until 1914 and was not fully translated from Russian for many years.

Florensky proposed to construct a *formal logic of antinomies* that could be applied to Orthodox theology. He believed that Orthodox Christianity is an inconsistent but non-trivial theory and a formal logic of antinomies allows to explicate the inconsistent content of Christian dogmas. As we can see, Fr. Florensky was one of the founders of present-day paraconsistent logic.

In the words of Kant, he considered the inferences of pure reason as antinomies. Florensky stated that there are self-referential sentences p such that both p and non- p are true. These sentences are called by him the truths or antinomies: “each truth has to be a non-conditional formula” and “the truth is a self-inconsistent sentence.” Florensky's instance on the self-inconsistent sentence was the following sceptic expression (ἐποχή): (i) ‘I affirm nothing;’ (ii) ‘I do not affirm that I affirm nothing.’

Nowadays, the Liar sentence is used more often as an example of the self-inconsistent one. Let us remember the Liar sentence: ‘This sentence is not true.’ There are two options: either the sentence is true or it is not. Assume that it is true and then what it says is the case. As a result, the sentence is not true. Suppose, on the other hand, that it is not true, then this is what it says. Hence, the sentence is true. In either case it is both true and untrue.

According to Florensky, the antinomy is formulated so: “If the antithesis implies the thesis and the thesis implies the antithesis, then the conjunction of thesis and antithesis, in the case that it is not false, is an antinomy.” Florensky formalizes this reasoning in the framework of Russellean propositional language as follows:

$$-p \supset p. \cap . p \supset -p \vdash p \cap -p. \cap . -\Lambda = P,$$

where Λ is a contradiction (as an example, $\Lambda := p \cap -p$), P is a sign for antinomy. In two-valued logic we see that the expression $-p \supset p. \cap . p \supset -p \vdash p \cap -p. \cap . -\Lambda$ is a true proposition.

Each Christian dogma has the form of an antinomy. For instance, the two natures of Christ (human and divine) are on the one hand unmerged and unchanged (ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως) and on the other hand, unseparate and inseparable (ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως). Thus, the dogma, including inconsistent content, shows the truth. According to Florensky's opinion, both faith in dogmas and divine love allow us to solve the dogma's antinomical nature: ‘Finis amoris, ut duo unum fiant,’ as he wrote.

Nevertheless, as a whole the subject of (symbolic) logic in the Orthodox thought is a little provocative still. The point is that logical theories in the Orthodox theology were involved more rarely than in the Catholic theology. This subject of the book was chosen to investigate possibilities of explicating the Orthodox thought from the viewpoint of modern (analytic) philosophy. For example, Florensky was one of the first who cited *Principia Mathematica* by Russel and thereby Florensky stated that symbolic logic in the classical form is unapplied in the case of the Christian thought. The clash of the Orthodox thought and modern philosophy/logic could allow us to bear new interesting ideas as in case of Florensky.

For Orthodoxy an existential dimension of things and phenomena is much more important, than their abstract-logical dimension. Nevertheless, in the Orthodox thought there are sophisticated logical schemata: Palamas' existential logical reasoning (see contributions by Richard Swinburne & Paweł Rojek), paraconsistent logical reasoning in the Orthodox theology (see contributions by Michael Craig Rhodes,

Einar Duenger Bøhn, and Bruce Foltz), illocutionary reasoning of apophatic theology of the Dionysian Corpus (contributed by Timothy D. Knepper), modal logical reasoning in the Orthodox thought (contributions by Andrew Schumann & Basil Lourié).

After the reconstruction of main forms of Orthodox logical reasoning that was carried out in this book we could claim that there exists a special logical culture of Orthodox Christianity. The features of this culture are as follows:

- (i) Orthodox thinking is modally rigorous and satisfies the following modal schemata for any well-formed theological (e.g. Biblical or Patristic) proposition p as well as for any true ontological (in meaning of Orthodox Christians) proposition p (for more details see papers by Andrew Schumann & Basil Lourié):

if p , then p is necessary;

if p is possible, then p is necessary.

- (ii) Palamite inductive-existential (see Richard Swinburne's paper) and ontological (see Paweł Rojek's paper) reasoning describes objective reality fully subordinated to (divine) necessity.
- (iii) The Orthodox Christian existential thought (an existentialism of Dostoyevsky's style, deification) is embodying the following modal truths in our behaviors, where p is any theological maxim (see Basil Lourié's paper):

if p is possible, then p is necessary.

- (iv) Theological dogmas are necessary truth, on the one hand, and paraconsistent, on the other hand (see papers written by Michael Craig Rhodes, Einar Duenger Bøhn, and Bruce Foltz).
- (v) Apophatic theology is a paraconsistent theory as well (see Timothy D. Knepper's paper).

- (vi) Paraconsistent Orthodox Christian theological theories set up any rigid limits of our thought, within them all truths and falsities are necessary.

As we see in items (i)–(vi), any claim that Orthodox thinking is just mystic and illogic is incorrect completely. The Orthodox Christian thought is the most modally rigorous among all existed and existing ones. This thought can be called totalistic or even totalitarian. For this thought any truth or falsity is necessary. As a result, the whole world is presented as logical and nomothetic. There is no place for contingency. Dostoyevsky's examples of human existences (*Existenzen*) and limit situations (*Grenzsituationen*) show ways of embodying theological maxims in our life-world to fulfill necessary truths or to avoid necessary falsities.

The logical culture of Orthodox Christianity with rigorous thinking became very influential in Russia and it is a really unusual fact that this thinking determined developing Marxism-Leninism. In the same measure, Marxism-Leninism is modally rigorous and assumes that every truth or falsity is necessary. This theory inherits main logical schemata of Christian Orthodoxy in fact. First, Marxist-Leninist dogmas are given within dialectical logic (a kind of paraconsistent one, i.e. they are given within a paraconsistent system as well as in Orthodoxy). They may be exemplified by three laws of Marxist-Leninist dialectics (the law of the unity and conflict of opposites; the law of the passage of quantitative changes into qualitative changes; the law of the negation of the negation). The main goal of these dogmas is to explain social revolutions as necessary steps in social development. Within dogmatic limits, all propositions become either necessary true or necessary false. For Marxism-Leninism you are either friend (comrade) or enemy. The Orthodox Christian deification process has a Marxist-Leninist analogy in the liberation process towards communism.

This book is the first attempt to systematically consider logic in Orthodox Christian thinking. This logical culture is unknown and ununderstandable for the West, although its schemata are very influential in Eastern Europe till now (Marxism-Leninism is just one of many possible instances).

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Rzeszów, Poland



Fall of Constantinople. The picture by A. Schumann



Aleksei Fedorovich Losev, the famous Russian Palamite of the 20th century. The picture by A. Schumann

Gregory Palamas and Our Knowledge of God

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Although Gregory wrote very little about this, he acknowledged that natural reason can lead us from the orderliness of the physical world to the existence of God; in this, he followed the tradition of Athanasius and other Greek fathers. Unlike Aquinas, he did not seek to present the argument as deductive; in fact his argument is inductive, and of the same kind as—we now realise—scientists and historians use when they argue from phenomena to their explanatory cause. Gregory wrote hardly anything about how one could obtain knowledge of the truths of the Christian revelation by arguments from non-question-begging premises; but in his conversations with the Turks he showed that he believed that there are good arguments of this kind. Almost all of Gregory's writing about knowledge of God concerned how one could obtain this by direct access in prayer; this access, he held, is open especially to monks, but to a considerable degree also to all Christians who follow the divine commandments.¹

Christian tradition has normally held that we may acquire knowledge of God by three routes—natural reason, publicly available revelation (contained primarily in Scripture), and individual direct

¹ The paper was read at the International Conference on St Gregory Palamas (Thessaloniki March 7–15, 2012) and it is published with the permission of Dr. C. Athanasopoulos, Editor of the Proceedings of the Conference.

awareness of God. In this paper I shall assess the views of Gregory Palamas on the nature and value of each of these routes.

Since Gregory was writing almost entirely for those who already believed Christian doctrines, he did not have much to say about our access to God by natural reason, and for that reason he has been viewed as denying the existence or importance of such access. That view of Gregory, I shall now argue, is mistaken. *Romans* 1:20 claims that

ever since the creation of the world [God's] eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made.

Gregory was highly critical of Greek philosophy because he saw it as leading to polytheism;² he did not, I think, realize how disconnected were the religious practices of ordinary pre-Christian Greek people from the reasonings of some Greek philosophers. Nevertheless, like most Christian theologians, Gregory saw *Romans* 1:20 as telling us that non-Christians can learn by the exercise of their natural reason that there is a God of great power, knowledge and goodness who created and sustains the world. He wrote:

knowledge of creation brought mankind to knowledge of God before the Law and the prophets; today also it is bringing men back; and almost the whole of the inhabited world ... now possesses by that means alone a knowledge of God who is none other than the creator of this universe;³

² 'By examining the nature of sensible things [Greek philosophers] have arrived at a certain concept of God, but not at a conception truly worthy of him and appropriate to his blessed nature... For if a worthy conception of God could be attained through the use of intellection, how could these people have taken the demons for gods, and how could they have believed the demons when they taught men polytheism'—[14], *Triads* 1.1.18. (All citations from *Triads* are from [14] unless otherwise stated.)

³ Ἐπέστρεφε τοίνυν ἡ τῶν κτισμάτων γνώσις πρὸς θεογνωσίαν τὸ γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων πρὸ νόμου τε καὶ προφητῶν, καὶ νῦν αὖθις ἐπιστρέφει, καὶ σχεδὸν πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς οἰκουμένης, ὅσοι μὴ τοῖς εὐαγγελικοῖς θεσπίσμασιν εἴκουσι, δι' αὐτῆς μόνης, οὐχ ἕτερον ἄρτίως ἔχουσι Θεόν, ὅτι μὴ τὸν ποιητὴν τοῦδε τοῦ παντός.—[13], *Triads* 2.3.44. The bold claim that

and he claimed that by attending to the λόγοι of beings one comes to knowledge (γνῶσις) of ‘the power, wisdom, and knowledge’ of God (*Triads* II 3.15–16).

Barlaam however had pointed out that the rules of reasoning understood as the rules of a deductive argument, that is an argument which is such that to assert the premises but to deny the conclusion would be to contradict yourself, a syllogism (in a wide sense), had been codified by Aristotle; and that these had the consequence that there could be no apodictic syllogism (i.e. one with evident premises and so indubitable conclusion) which would demonstrate the existence of God from non-Scriptural premises (see [15], pp. 188–190). Barlaam gave various reasons for this. In particular the premises would have to be general metaphysical principles, which he calls ‘common notions, hypotheses, and definitions,’ ones involving concepts abstracted from sensibles. But Aristotle held that

demonstrative knowledge must proceed from premises which are true, primary, immediate, better known than, prior to and causative of their conclusion (Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 71b, 20–25).

These are, I think, excessively demanding conditions for demonstrative knowledge; but clearly no inference is going to be of any value unless its premises are better known than its conclusion. And, Gregory acknowledged, humans could not know ‘common notions’ well enough to demonstrate the existence of God. ‘Common notions,’ he writes ‘depend on the intelligence of him who was last created,’ ([13], Ep. I Ak 10) that is on mere human intelligence.

All of Thomas Aquinas’s ‘five ways’ ([2], 1a. 2.3) to prove the existence of God invoke metaphysical principles of the kind which Barlaam must have had in mind, e.g. a premise of the first way is ‘everything in the process of change is being changed by something else,’ and a premise of the second way is ‘a series of causes must stop somewhere.’ These are not obvious truths, and that is why the five ways

theism is becoming universal seems to involve a favourable reference to the growth of Islam.

do not yield certainty. Nevertheless the subsequent Western medieval tradition from Scotus to Leibniz sought to give tight compelling deductive arguments which appealed to such general metaphysical principles, for the existence of God until it came in the nineteenth century to accept Kant's claim that this route would never yield certainty. It was not however characteristic of the patristic tradition to put natural theology into the form of a syllogism. Rather, the Fathers simply point to the facts of the existence of the universe or to its orderliness, and claim that these things are to be explained by the action of a benevolent creator. Although the Arabic philosophers (see the very thorough analysis of these arguments in [7]) discussed at length various versions of arguments from the mere existence of a physical universe, arguments which were later called 'cosmological arguments,' the brief discussions in the Greek Fathers concentrate more on arguments from the orderliness of the universe, producing versions of what were later called 'teleological arguments.'

The most sustained presentation of such an argument of which I know is that by Athanasius in sections 35 to 44 of *Against the Heathens*. He gives there many examples of the beneficent ordering of nature. Assuming that physical matter is of four kinds—earth, air, fire and water—he points out that, despite their contrary natures (earth and water move downwards, air and fire upwards), they are put together in such a way as to produce an environment in which humans can flourish. Thus:

Who that sees the clouds supported in air, and the weight of the waters bound up in the clouds, can but perceive Him that binds them up and has ordered these things so? Or who that sees the earth, heaviest of all things by nature fixed upon the waters, and remaining unmoved upon what is by nature mobile, will fail to understand that there is One that has made and ordered it, even God? Who that sees the earth bringing forth fruits in due season, and the rains from heaven, and the flow of rivers, and springing up of wells, and the birth of animals from unlike parents, and that these things take place not at all times but at determinate seasons,—and in general, among things mutually unlike and contrary, the balanced and uniform order to which they conform,—can resist the inference that there is one Power which orders and administers them ordaining things well as it thinks fit? For left to themselves they could not subsist or ever

be able to appear, on account of their mutual contrariety of nature ([5], *Against the Heathens* 36).

Similar but very brief arguments are to be found in Gregory of Nyssa,⁴ Maximus,⁵ and John of Damascus.⁶ Both the latter also give a cosmological argument, indeed the one which seems to be the source of Aquinas's first way, although not obviously in the form of a syllogism.

In the *Triads* Gregory also appeals to an argument of Athanasius's kind, though without any examples and in a passage which would be almost impossible to understand without any familiarity with simpler accounts of it:

What man of reason who sees the evident differences between the essences of things, both the oppositions of their powers and the compensating origins of their motions, their incessant successions from contrary properties and the unmingled attraction from inconceivable strife, the conjunctions of separate and unmixable things in a unity which are spirits, souls, bodies, this harmony of things so numerous, this stability in their relations and positions, this conformity of states and orders to their essence, the indissolubility in their cohesion, what man taking all this into his mind, would not think of who had positioned everything so well in its place and established this admirable harmony among all things, and recognise God in his image and in the beings which derive their origin from him?⁷

⁴ Gregory of Nyssa ch.1.

⁵ Maximus, 10.35–36.

⁶ John of Damascus, 1.3.

⁷ Τίς γὰρ νοῦν ἔχων καὶ ἰδὼν ἐμφανεῖς μὲν οὐσιῶν διαφορὰς τοσαύτας, ἀφανῶν τε δυνάμεων ἐναντιότητας καὶ ἀντιρρόπους κινήσεων ὁρμάς, ἔτι δὲ στάσιν τρόπον ἕτερον ἀντίρροπον, διαδοχάς τε ἀνεκλείπτους ἐξ ἐναντιοπαθείας καὶ φιλίαν ἀσύγχυτον ἐξ ἀσυμβάτου νείκους, συνοχάς τε τῶν διακεκριμένων καὶ ἀσυμμιξίας τῶν ἡνωμένων, νῶν, ψυχῶν, σωμάτων, τὴν διὰ τοσούτων ἁρμονίαν, τὰς μονίμους σχέσεις τε καὶ θέσεις, τὰς οὐσιωδεῖς ἑξεις τε καὶ τάξεις, τὸ ἀδιάλυτον τῆς συνοχῆς, τίς τὰ τοιαῦτα πάντα ἐπὶ νοῦν λαβὼν τὸν ἐν ἑαυτῇ ἕκαστον καλῶς ἰδρύσαντα καὶ πρὸς ἄλληλα θαυμασίως ἁρμοσάμενον οὐκ ἐννοήσειεν, ὥς ἀπ' εἰκόνος καὶ αἰτιατοῦ γινώσκειν τὸν Θεόν [13], *Triads* 2.3.44.

It was, I presume, an argument of this kind which he called in his letter to Akyndinos a method by which thinkers ascend (ἀναβαίνειν) from creation to the Creator:

For example, one can proceed from things which manifest goodness to goodness itself, and similarly with wisdom, providence, life, etc. In this manner one achieves a demonstration free from deceit (ἀφευδης ἀπόδειξις) that there exists one who is in all things and who is removed from and transcends all things, the many-named and unnameable super-essential essence ([13], vol 1, *First Letter to Gregory Akindynos*, p. 216).

As Sinkewicz comments,

there emerges from this letter a notion of demonstration quite distinct from that advocated by Barlaam and ultimately by Aristotle. It is a notion that seeks its justification not in the Greek philosophers but in the tradition of the Fathers ([15], p. 201).

Although Gregory hints that arguments to God may be *sui generis*, he and his predecessors are in fact giving an argument of a kind very familiar in science, history, and ordinary life, when we argue not—as concerned Aristotle—from cause to effect, but from effect to cause. Such arguments are not deductive, but (in a wide sense) inductive. They reach conclusions rendered probable by their premises, but not entailed by them.

Scientists argue from particular observations to some very wide theory which purports to explain the observations and also predicts much more; so the conclusion could be false even though the premises are true, but—if their inference satisfies certain criteria—the premises do make the conclusion probable. Neither Aristotle nor the medievals, East or West, had the slightest conception of the nature of inductive inference, and of the criteria which a cogent inductive inference needs to satisfy. My own account of these criteria is as follows.⁸ I suggest that an argument from observed phenomena *E* to an explanatory cause *H* is cogent (i.e. renders its conclusion that *H* is the cause probable) insofar as

⁸ I summarize here an account given fairly briefly in [19], ch 2, more fully in [17], chs 2 and 3, and yet more fully in [16], ch 4.

(1) if H is true, it is probable that E will occur, (2) If H is false, it is improbable that E will occur, (3) H is simple. This pattern of argument is one much used in science, history, and all other fields of human inquiry. A detective, for example, finds various clues—witnesses reported seeing John near the scene of a burglary at the time when it was committed, John's fingerprints on a burgled safe, and John having the stolen money hidden in his house; and then claims that these clues make it very probable that John robbed the safe. This is because (1) if John did rob he safe it is quite probable that he would be seen near the burglary scene at the time the burglary was committed, that his fingerprints would be found on the safe, and that the money stolen would be found in his house; (2) if John did not rob the safe, it would not be probable that he would be seen near the scene of the burglary; and very improbable that his fingerprints would be found on the safe, and the money be found in his house; and (3) the hypothesis that John robbed the safe is much simpler than rival hypotheses which would satisfy criteria (1) and (2). John's defence lawyer could always suggest other possible explanations of the clues. He could suggest that Brown planted John's fingerprints on the safe, Smith dressed up to look like John at the scene of the crime, and without any collusion with the others Robinson hid the money in John's flat. This new hypothesis would lead us to expect the three clues just as well as does the hypothesis that John robbed the safe. But the latter hypothesis is rendered probable by the evidence whereas the former is not. And this is because the hypothesis that John robbed the safe is far simpler than this rival hypothesis. A hypothesis is simple, insofar as it postulates the existence and operation of few entities, few kinds of entities, with few easily describable properties behaving in mathematically simple kinds of way. The detective's hypothesis postulates one entity—John—doing one deed—robbing the safe—which makes it probable that the listed phenomena will occur; whereas the defence lawyer's rival hypothesis postulates three separate individuals acting without any collusion between them.

Scientists use this same pattern of argument to argue to the existence of unobservable entities as causes of the phenomena they observe. For example, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, scientists observed many varied phenomena of chemical interaction,

such as that substances combine in fixed ratios by weight to form new substances (e.g. hydrogen and oxygen always form water in a ratio by weight of 1:8). They then claimed that these phenomena would be expected if there existed a hundred or so different kinds of atom, particles far too small to be seen, which combine and recombine in certain simple ways. In their turn physicists postulated electrons, protons, neutrons and other particles in order to account for the behaviour of the atoms, as well as for larger-scale observable phenomena; and now they postulate quarks in order to explain the behaviour of protons, neutrons and other particles. What they postulate makes probable the occurrence of the phenomena, which are otherwise not probable, and is simpler than rival explanations thereof because it involves the operation of far fewer kinds of entities behaving in mathematically simple ways.

I have argued at length over many years that the arguments of natural theology to the existence of God can be articulated in such a way as to exhibit the same pattern (see [19], [17]). I take as the phenomena requiring explanation first, the phenomenon of the conformity of all physical objects to laws of nature, which I understand as the phenomenon that they all behave in the same simple way (for example the law of gravity just is the phenomenon that all atoms attract all other atoms in accord with the same simple formula.) Then secondly there is the phenomenon that these laws are such as to lead to the evolution of human bodies; and thirdly the phenomenon that human beings are conscious. I argue that to be a person a substance has to live for a period of time, to have some power (e.g. to move his body), some true beliefs, and some freedom to choose how to exercise his power. God is the simplest kind of person there could be—since there are no limits to the length of his life, his power, his true beliefs, and to his freedom of choice; he is eternal omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly free. Omniscience entails knowledge of which actions are good, and perfect freedom involves freedom from influences deterring the agent from doing what he sees to be good. The good motivates; insofar as you recognise an action as good and can do it you will do it—unless subject to irrational influences. God, being perfectly free, is subject to no such influences; and so he will bring about what is good. He cannot bring

about everything good; for whatever good universe he makes, a bigger one would be better. But humans have a unique kind of goodness, not possessed even by God: the ability to choose between good and evil. So is quite probable that God will bring about us, and so therefore the necessary conditions for our existence—an orderly universe in which our actions will have predictable effects, human bodies, and human conscious lives. But it is immensely improbable that there would be such a universe unless an agent made it, and God is by far the simplest such agent. So the general nature of the universe makes it probable that there is a God.

Now of course, all the Fathers from Athanasius to Gregory Palamas took for granted a totally erroneous physics, in assuming that all mundane substances are made of earth, air, fire, and water. But their main point was that the chemistry of substances is such that different elements fit together in such a way as produce an orderly world (of day and night, winter and summer, rain and sun, plants and animals) fitted for humans. And I too am arguing from the powers and liabilities of the elements, now known to be quarks, electrons etc., and their initial arrangements being such as to produce an orderly world. My basic point is the same as that of the Fathers, even if expressed in terms of modern physics, and articulated in a much more sophisticated and rigorous way than theirs.

The traditional objection to any argument to the existence of God, deductive or inductive, is that God is incomprehensible, so utterly different from anything mundane, that we cannot have any significant knowledge of what he is like. And a hard-line application of the *via negativa* would hold that all predicates ascribed to God either express what he is not (e.g. to say that he is ‘immortal’ is merely to say that he is not mortal) or what he causes in the world (e.g. to say that he is ‘good’ is to say that he causes a good universe); and Dionysius, much admired by both Barlaam and Gregory, does seem to say that (or almost that⁹), and

⁹ Dionysius writes that ‘the way of negation appears to be more suitable to the realms of the divine’ and ‘positive affirmations are always unfitting to the hiddenness of the inexpressible’ [8], *Celestial Hierarchy* 2.3. However, Dionysius claims, God has the ‘positive names of everything that is ... for he is their cause, their source and their destiny’ [8], *Divine Names* 1.7. So Scripture uses for God

so does Barlaam,¹⁰ both Dionysius and Barlaam claiming that God is known through creatures only as transcendent cause. Aquinas discusses the view that all the positive predicates attributed to God are to be analysed in this causal way, a view which he attributes among others to Moses Maimonides; and he rejects it. For since ‘God is just as much the cause of bodies as he is of goodness in things’ then

If God “is good” means no more than that God is the cause of goodness in things, why should we not say ‘God is a body’ on the ground that he is the cause of bodies? [2], Ia.13.2.

And surely if all we could know about God is that he is something which causes the universe which is not bad, not weak etc., there would be no reason to worship him. He might be a powerful spider, or a being indifferent to human well-being, or some theorem of mathematics. We worship God because not merely is he the cause of goodness, but because he is perfectly good in himself and so loves his creation. And most of those who used the method of ‘ascent’ claimed in effect that not merely did it show that the universe had a cause, but that it showed something positive about that cause.

Aquinas claimed that natural reason can show us that God has whatever must belong to the first cause of all things, and he claimed to show that that included being one, simple, perfect, supremely good, limitless, omnipotent, unchangeable, eternal etc. These predicates, Aquinas claimed, do tell us what God is like, but they fail to represent it adequately. That is because ‘God’ is not in the same genus as ‘human’ (a point which, Barlaam claims, has the consequence that no syllogism can proceed from principles applicable to the created world to a conclusion applicable to God). These words, Aquinas claimed, are used analogically of God. The perfections such as goodness and knowledge which humans

‘names drawn from all the things caused: good, beautiful, wise, beloved...’ (op. cit. 1.6). Nevertheless ‘the unnamed goodness [that is, God] is not just the cause of cohesion, or life, or perfection, so that it is from this or that providential gesture that it earns a name, but it actually contains everything beforehand within itself.’ (op. cit. 1.7).

¹⁰ See the extract from Barlaam’s first letter to Palamas cited in [15], n. 169.

have to some degree exist in God *altiori modo* ([2], 1a.14.1 ad.1), and so we cannot grasp fully what they amount to. However, after this life the ‘blessed,’ Aquinas claimed, will actually ‘see’ the essence of God and not depend on natural reason for knowledge of it; and very occasional humans may see it even in the life ([2] 1a.12.1 and 2a2ae. 175.3). But no creature ever, Aquinas claimed, could ‘comprehend’ that essence ([2], 1a 12.7), that is understand it perfectly; even if a created mind can see what that essence is, it could never understand why it is like that. Aquinas had however a problem. God, he thought, was simple—but how could a simple thing have all these properties—omnipotence, omniscience etc. He solved this problem in a cavalier and superficially incomprehensible way, by asserting that really all these properties are the same property as each other, and the same as God himself! However, if we ignore this aspect of his view, what he was trying to say was: God is simple, we can know quite a bit about him, but we cannot know his deepest nature.

Now Gregory also thought: God is simple, we can know quite a bit about him, but we cannot know his deepest nature. But he put it differently, because he and Aquinas meant very different things by ‘essence’ (οὐσία, *essentia*). For Aquinas, the essence of a thing is whatever properties are necessary for the existence of a thing of that kind.¹¹ So of course omnipotence etc belong to the essence of God. For Gregory the essence of a thing is its deepest nature, whatever underlies its other necessary properties. So, he reasonably claimed, we cannot know anything about God’s essence. But we can know, he claimed, about God’s greatness and power etc—things ‘inseparable from God;’ so he called them—following earlier writers—God’s energies. And, following Basil,¹² he made the obvious point that these energies are distinct from each other; but since they do not belong to God’s essence, that does not make God un-simple. So—just like Aquinas, Gregory held: God is simple, we can know quite a bit about him, but we can’t know his deepest nature. But he expressed the point without needing to put it in Aquinas’s paradoxical way.

¹¹ ‘Essence (*essentia*) or nature (*natura*) includes only what defines the species of a thing’ [2], 1a.3.3.

¹² ‘The energies are various, and the essence simple’ (Basil of Caesarea, *Epistle* 234.1).

I pass on to consider briefly Gregory's account of publicly revealed truth. This, he held, is provided by Scripture as interpreted by the Fathers. He certainly thinks that there are good deductive arguments from Scripture and from the Fathers, for truths of Christian doctrine.¹³ Unfortunately however, as Gregory was well aware from his involvement in the controversies about the *filioque*, it is all too easy to derive contrary doctrines from verses of Scripture taken in isolation. The process of doctrinal definition must be a much more complicated one, consisting of interpreting some Biblical texts in the light of others which the Church saw as expressing already established doctrine, and in the light of knowledge provided by natural science, and allowing that some of the Fathers sometimes made mistakes. All of this was recognised by Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa.¹⁴

Further, Gregory seems largely have ignored in all his writing the issue of providing publicly available evidence in support of the claim that Scripture interpreted along the lines described above is publically revealed truth. In this he differs from the earliest fathers, such as Justin, Tertullian and Irenaeus who argued on historical grounds that the New Testament contained the teaching of the Apostles received from Christ, whose miracles, above all his Resurrection showed his divine status and so guaranteed the truth of his teaching. With the passing of time, public historical evidence about Christ and his teaching became less accessible, and then writers began to argue—albeit very briefly in comparison with the attention which they began to give to natural theology—that the very success of the Church (through the blood of the martyrs, and not the force of arms) and miracles associated therewith, showed that the Church founded by Christ had Christ's authority for its teaching.¹⁵

¹³ [14], Ep. 1 Ak 10 214.18–215.2.

¹⁴ For my account of how Scripture should be interpreted, derived from their teaching, see [18], ch 10.

¹⁵ See for example [1], 1.6. entitled 'That to give assent to the truths of faith is not foolishness even though they are above reason.' Aquinas claims that the divine wisdom 'reveals its own presence, as well as the truth of its teaching and inspiration, by fitting arguments; and in order to confirm those truths which exceed natural knowledge, it gives visible manifestation to works that surpass the ability of

The systematic listing of a catalogue of kinds of evidence in favour of the truth of Christian doctrine by Duns Scotus at the beginning of his systematic theology, the *Ordinatio*, may have been untypical of medieval thinkers, but all the kinds of evidence he mentions were known to, and cited in an unsystematic way by, other writers; and Scotus himself quotes other writers, normally Augustine, who cite these kinds of evidence. Scotus lists ten separate reasons for the credibility of Holy Scripture, and thus of the doctrines which can be derived from it ([9], Prologue, 100–119): (1) *Praenuntiatio prophetica* (the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy in the New); (2) *Scripturarum Concordia* (scriptures have a common message, and that includes the common witness of the New Testament writers to the teaching and deeds of Jesus); (3) *Auctoritas Scribentium* (the human authors' conviction that they spoke with God's authority); (4) *Diligentia recipientium* (the careful way in which the Church formed the canon of scripture); (5) *Rationabilitas contentarum* (the intrinsic probability of its doctrines); (6) *Irrationabilitas errorum* (the inadequacy of objections to those doctrines); (7) *Ecclesiae stabilitas* (the long and constant witness of the Church); (8) *Miraculorum limpiditas* (Biblical and later miracles, including the great miracle of the conversion of the western world); (9) *Testimonia non fidelium* (alleged prophecies of pagan writers), and (10) *Promissorum efficacia* (the sanctifying power of the Church's teaching in the lives of the faithful). (1), (2), (3), (4), and (8) are all aspects of historical evidence for the miraculous foundation events of Christianity; (7), (8) and (10) involve the Church's fidelity to the teaching entrusted to it, confirmed by miracles; and its sanctifying efficacy; (5), (6), and (9) involve the prior probability of what was taught. Here we have, I believe, a cogent inductive argument for the truth of Christian doctrine which conforms to the criteria which I analysed earlier, albeit one of a more complicated kind than an argument of natural theology. For it appeals to publicly accessible data which are best explained by supposing that God inspired the Church in its compilation of Scripture.

all nature.' So 'above reason' must mean merely 'not susceptible of demonstration by an apodictic syllogism.'

Scotus wrote some thirty years before Gregory's correspondence with Barlaam, but—as far as I know—there is no awareness of Scotus in the theological writings of Gregory Palamas. Gregory did however argue with Turks (as well as with Jews) during his captivity by the Turks. He resisted their suggestion that as they believe in his prophet, he ought to believe in theirs—on the ground that the Old Testament Scriptures which they also revered did not prophecy the advent of Mohammad, and that Mohammad's teaching, unlike that of Moses and Jesus, was not accompanied by miracles.¹⁶ So, he was in effect appealing to Scotus's first and eighth criteria; and he clearly did think that there are publicly available reasons in defence of at least some aspects of Christian doctrine.

Gregory thought however that only someone who had learnt to converse with God could discourse with any certainty about God. To do the latter one needs to study the Scriptures and apply them, above all by prayer. It was the experience through prayer of the Church, and especially of the monastic community, which provides full justification of Christian belief. He vigorously opposed the view which Barlaam seemed to be advocating that wise Greeks ([14], Ep 1 Bar 22. 237.9–13), meditating on the eternal Platonic ideas, had attained a similar knowledge.

And that brings me to the view for which Gregory is best known: that humans in this life can have personal detailed awareness of God, that is of God's energies, not his essence. Sometimes Gregory writes as though this vision is to some extent available to many Christians: 'This knowledge (γνῶσις) beyond reason is common (κοινή) to all who have believed in Christ' (*Triads* II. 36) Yet elsewhere he suggests that only some Christians can obtain the vision: 'Those who have obtained spiritual and supernatural grace ... becoming gods, in God they know God' (*Triads* II.iii. 68). But the fullness of this vision seems to be open only to monks, and indeed in writing to Balaam, Gregory denied that he himself had attained this vision; he had just smelled it from a distance

¹⁶ See the analysis of Palamas's own account of these controversies in [4], pp.104–18.

and not yet grasped it.¹⁷ But he adds that he has heard the testimony of fathers who have had this vision; the light of mount Tabor ‘shines even now in the hearts of the faithful and perfect’ (*Triads* II. iii. 18). Someone who ‘mysteriously possesses and sees this light ... knows and possesses God in himself, no longer by analogy,’ in contrast to one who ‘possesses knowledge of creatures and from this by means of analogy ... infers the existence of God’ (*Triads* II. iii. 16). And the light of contemplation differs even from the light that comes from the Holy Scriptures, whose light may be compared to ‘a lamp that shines in an obscure place;’ whereas the light of mystical contemplation is compared to the star of the morning which shines in full daylight, that is to say to the sun’ (*Triads* II.iii.18). Indeed this contemplation is not, ‘unless the term is employed in an improper and equivocal sense’ knowledge; but ‘superior to all knowledge’ (*Triads* II.iii.17). Although the way of impassibility is ‘most appropriate for those detached from the world’ (*Triads* II.ii. 20), those in the world must try to form themselves in accord with the divine commands, and that can change our ‘changeable disposition’ into a fixed and blessed state.

So in what sense is this contemplative vision ‘superior to knowledge?’ Since I have not myself had this ‘vision,’ and few others—according to Gregory—have had it in its fullness, I hesitate to try to make sense of the connection between this vision and knowledge proper, which—as he writes—must require ‘images and analogies’ (*Triads* I.iii.18). But there is a distinction very familiar to Anglo-American philosophers in a secular context between ‘knowledge that’ so-and-so, and knowing some person or thing, which may throw some light on what Gregory is saying. Gregory insists that the vision is available only to those who put Scripture into practice.¹⁸ The hesychasts who know God do read the Scriptures; whereas, he claims against Barlaam, pagan philosophers have not had any participation in a spiritual and divine

¹⁷ [14], Ep. 1. Bar. §10.230.6–11. Using the analogy of the vision to honey, Gregory writes that he is running towards the smell of honey but has not grasped it in his hands.

¹⁸ ‘Let us seek how to seek this glory and see it. How? By keeping the divine commandments’ (*Triads* II.iii.16).

light.¹⁹ Obviously, we can know a lot about someone, e.g. David Cameron, without knowing David Cameron personally. But I do not think we can know a person without knowing something about that person. I couldn't know David Cameron unless I could recognise him when I meet him; and that involves knowing something (indeed quite a lot) about him: that he looks like this, that I meet him often at a certain place, and that he thinks so-and-so. And plausibly the same goes for God. To know God, one has to know what one is looking for when one opens oneself to the spiritual world in prayer. Christian doctrine teaches one what God is like—for example loving (and the Scriptures tell us what God's love amounts to) and Trinitarian. That enables us to distinguish apparent awareness of other things (e.g. of oneness with nature, or of an evil demon) from awareness of God. It puts us in a position to recognise God, if he should show himself to us. And if one has practiced following the teaching of the Scriptures, one will be better aware of what God's commands mean; and perhaps also better suited to benefit from the vision of God, which otherwise might be overwhelming.

But why should we or even the monks themselves believe what Gregory says about this knowledge of God which the monks of Mount Athos believe that they have acquired? It is, I suggest, the most fundamental epistemic principle of all, which I call the Principle of Credulity, that it is rational to believe that things are as they seem to us to be—in the absence of counter-evidence (that is evidence suggesting that we are subject to an illusion.) If you believe that you are seeing an elephant in an English garden, you should believe that you are—in the absence of counter-evidence. In this case of course there will normally be some counter-evidence—other people tell you that elephants in England are always to be found in zoos or circuses. But nevertheless if things seem very strongly to be a certain way, it is rational to believe that things are that way, despite a significant amount of counter-evidence. If not merely do you seem to see the elephant, but see it from

¹⁹ 'The light that shines even now in the hearts of the faithful and perfect... has nothing to do with that which comes from Hellenic studies, which is not worthy to be called light' (*Triads* II.iii.18).

many angles, touch it and hear it, that experience will outweigh the contrary testimony; and it is then rational to believe that you are indeed seeing an elephant. So if you yourself are having overwhelming experiences apparently of God of the kind which Palamas describes, it is rational to believe that your experiences are veridical, whatever the counter-evidence, whatever the doubts expressed by others.

It is also a fundamental epistemic principle, the Principle of Memory, that it is rational to believe that we had the past experiences we seem to recall—in the absence of counter-evidence (for example evidence that the thing recalled is very unlikely to have happened). And it is a third fundamental epistemic principle, the Principle of Testimony, that we should believe what other people tell us about their experiences—in the absence of counter-evidence (for example evidence that they are unreliable witnesses). And whenever there is counter-evidence which is strong enough to show that it is not rational to believe some apparent experience, memory, or testimony, the force of that counter-evidence can itself be defeated by counter-counter-evidence in the form of evidence showing that the counter-evidence was unreliable or additional evidence in favour of the truth of the original claim. In the elephant example, counter-counter-evidence to the belief that you are seeing an elephant might be provided by reading in the newspaper that an elephant has escaped from a local zoo, which would make it again rational to believe that you are seeing an elephant in an English garden, despite the counter-evidence that people tell you that in England elephants are always to be found in zoos or circuses.

People write books and articles for which they feel there is a need. And Gregory rightly did not think that there was a great need either for natural theology or for an impartial justification of Christian doctrine among the fourteenth century Greeks to whom he ministered. And so it is understandable that he did not write much about these first two routes to knowledge of God. We however in twenty first century Europe are surrounded by people who need these things, and I have been justifying the view that Gregory would have been sympathetic to the approach to them to which I have devoted most of this paper and which I have been commending. But Gregory did of course think that there was a great

need in the fourteenth century for the direct awareness of God which comes through prayer; and who could doubt that the same applies today?

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The Logic of Palamism

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The teaching of St. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) is usually considered as a paradigmatic case of Eastern Christian mystical theology. It is held that it goes beyond rational thinking and is based on antinomic premises. Contrary to this widespread view, I try to give a consistent account of two crucial ideas of Palamism: the distinction between essence and energies, and the concept of deification. In doing this, I discuss and develop some formal analyses by Pavel Florensky (1882–1937). It proves that Palamas' teaching is no less rational than any other metaphysical theory. This result casts a new light on the alleged irrational character of Eastern Christian theology, which aspect is sometimes thought to be an obstacle in the dialog between the West and the East.

1. Introduction

The teaching of St. Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) is widely considered both as the peak of traditional patristic and Byzantine theology and also as the main source of contemporary Orthodox theology. The status of Palamas in the Christian East may be comparable only with the position of St. Thomas Aquinas in the West. The teaching of these two masters is often contrasted. Palamas is usually presented as a perfect example of the dominant eastern trend of mystical theology based on experience, whereas Aquinas is thought to be a paradigmatic case of a typical western rational and conceptual theology. If one takes into account that Palamas was involved into a long-lasting struggle with Barlaam of Calabria, who was supposed to be a Thomist, the contrast

between these two great figures reflects difficult relationships between the Eastern and Western Christendom.

One of the most popular opinions on Eastern Christian theology is that it goes beyond rational thinking: at least much further than the Western one. Indeed, many commentators suggest that the teaching of St. Gregory Palamas cannot be squeezed into a tight schema of western rationality. Particularly, his crucial distinction between the essence and energies of God is often seen as antinomical, both by his critics and his followers. Orthodox archbishop Basil Krivoshein, one of the main advocates of Palamism in the 20th century, remarked: ‘Here we are faced with a theological antinomy which, in view of the whole tendency of Gregory’s teaching, must be taken to have ontological [...], objective character’ (*Krivoshein* 1938, p. 140). The same opinion was formulated by Vladimir Lossky, a theologian who considerably popularized Palamas in the West: ‘We are taken in the presence of an antinomic theology which proceeds by oppositions of contrary but equally true propositions’ (*Lossky* 1974, p. 51). Finally, archbishop Yannis Spiteris, a contemporary Catholic scholar, warns his western readers that ‘Palamas uses concepts, which are contradictory, though consistent in God’ and therefore,

approaching the problem of Palamism using intellectual categories—the attitude, which is sometimes present in discussing famous Palamitic distinction between essence and energy—is not the best method (*Spiteris* 1996, p. 96).

I would like to challenge this popular view. Generally, I believe that theology of the Eastern Church is no less rational than western thinking. Particularly, I shall discuss here the notorious Palamistic essence/energies distinction and the concept of deification in order to extract deep logic underlying Palamas’ theology. It will be shown that there is nothing especially inconsistent in Palamism. This paper continues my attempts to provide a logical analysis of some crucial ideas of the Orthodox theology (*Roek* 2010; *Rojek* 2010a).

I am not a pioneer in a logical analysis of Palamism. It was father Pavel Florensky (1882–1937) who, exactly a century ago, in 1913, first

attempted to analyze in a formal way the Palamas' distinction between essence and energy (*Florenskij* 2000, pp. 268–274), and discuss the logical definition of identity in the context of Orthodox teaching on deification (*Florensky* 2004, pp. 53–79, 365–374). As far as I know, after Florensky's death in a Soviet Labor Camp in 1937, nobody continued his project.²⁰ Therefore, I shall take his analysis as my starting point.

First, (§2) I will briefly present the historical background of the discussion, dogmatization, falling into oblivion, and finally rediscovering Palamas' teaching. Then, I will outline the essence/energies distinction and the concept of deification of man (§3). The two elements of Palamism derive directly from the religious experience in which God reveals himself and unites with man. Next, I will undertake to analyze these two topics, starting with Florensky's formal remarks (§4–5). I will propose a plain formalization of essence/energies distinction, and discuss some issues concerning identity and indiscernibility that are crucial for the analysis of deification. In Conclusion, (§6) I shall highlight the specific character of Palamas' philosophy, which falls into the category of 'theological philosophy' (*Rojek* 2009), that is a philosophy which draws its basic concepts and axioms from theology²¹.

2. Historical Remarks

²⁰ Aleksej Losev, a student and a friend of Florensky, tried to express the principles of onomatodoxy in the terms of set theory (*Losev* 1997; *Troickij* 1997). However, I will not discuss his views, since they need an interpretation themselves and cannot be considered as a true logical analysis.

²¹ The quotations of *Triads* are taken from the (incomplete) English translation (1983). The passages from *Triads* which have not been included in the English edition are in my own translation based on the Russian complete edition (2003). Due to the lack of the English edition, all the quotations of *Treatises* are in my own translation based on the Russian (2007) and Polish editions (*Zogas-Osadnik* 2012, pp. 257–344). I adopt the following abbreviations: *Treatise I* for *On union and division*, *Treatise II* for *On the divine energies* and *Treatise III* for *On deifying participation*.

The theory of essence and energies, however philosophically or even physically it may sound, originally is of no philosophical nature. The essence/energies distinction was formulated in the 14th century to solve some strictly theological problems connected with religious practice and experience of the pious Byzantine monks called *hesychasts*. Strikingly enough, the teaching of Palamas was rediscovered in the 19th century when dealing with another controversy, namely the practice of the Orthodox monks called *onomathodoxists*.

2.1. Hesychasm

Hesychasts developed a technique of prayer, consisting of concentrating mind and body in silence. Monks practising hesychasm maintained that during long praying some of them experienced a vision of ‘divine light’ (*Krivoshein* 1938; *Meyendorff* 1998; *Mantzaridis* 1984; *Spiteris* 1996). This practice raises controversies in two points: first, concerning the role of body in the spiritual life, and second, the possibility of experiencing God. Palamas’ anthropology and metaphysics provided a theoretical explanation of the possibility of hesychastic religious experience.

Palamas formulated his doctrine during fierce and long-lasting polemics with his three opponents: Barlaam of Calabria, Gregory Akindynos and Nicefor Gregoras. The discussion started with Barlaam’s severe criticism of hesychasts’ practice. He objected to the involvement of body in praying, and argued that since God remains essentially unknowable and inexperienceable, the reported light could not be divine. Palamas, a seasoned monk from Mount Athos, retorted in his most famous work *The Triads* (1983, 2003), where he argued for the integral character of a human being on one hand, and for the distinction between unknowable essence and knowable energies in God on the other. The other two opponents argued not against hesychasm in general, but rather against Palamas’ own theory, thus giving him a stimulus to clarify his doctrine in *Treatises* (2007) and the final systematic work *One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* (1988). As usual in Byzantium, this theological dispute, was instantly linked with political, national, dynastic,

ecclesiastical and class struggles, and consequently, Palamas, as well as his followers, got embroiled in a civil war.

Eventually, Gregory Palamas celebrated a great triumph as in 1341, 1347 and 1351, local councils in Constantinople officially confirmed his teaching and, in turn, condemned Barlaam's, Akindynos' and Nicefor Gregoras'. In 1352, the decree on Palamism was included in *Synodikon*, a concise summary of Orthodox faith read out in all churches on the second Sunday of Lent called 'The Triumph of Orthodoxy'. As a result, 'hesychasm and its Palamite interpretation became the official theology of the Orthodox world' (*Bradshaw* 2004, p. 235). Palamas died as the archbishop of Thessalonica, and swiftly was canonized. The Orthodox Church venerates him on a very prestigious day in the liturgical calendar, namely on the third Sunday of Lent.

There are many interpretations of the controversy over hesychasm. The Orthodox tradition likes to perceive it as a struggle between the West and the East, Philosophy and Theology, Rationalism and Mysticism, Paganism and Christianity. A great Russian Orthodox philosopher, Aleksej Losev, wrote in the 1920s:

In the persons of Barlaam and Akindynos Orthodox Church has condemned the whole Renaissance, which has just begun, and in which all western nations engaged, perhaps to the end of their existence, since the western man without Renaissance would not be western anymore. Barlaamic dualism along with the grow of rationalism becomes Cartesianism and Occasionalism; with the grow of subjectivism [...] it becomes Kantianism, and with the fall of the sense of the transcendent becomes Positivism, etc. (*Losev* 1993a, pp. 872–873).

Other commentators were usually less radical, though, in general, they saw Barlaam and Palamas as two distinct figures representing the West and the East, as well as Reason and Faith. The debate between them was interpreted, for example, as a clash between western thomistic and eastern patristic theologies (*Lossky* 1957, pp. 76–77, 220), western kataphatic and eastern apophatic traditions (*Krivoshein* 1938), western rational and eastern experimental theology (*Meyendorff* 1983, p. 13; 1983, p. 139), and so on.

In view of new historical research, some of these opinions must be revised. There can be no doubt that Barlaam was not an ‘eastern thomist’; he knew scholasticism only poorly, and if he had been influenced by some western thinkers, it would rather have been St. Augustine than St. Thomas (*Bradshaw* 2004, p. 230). Some western authors even hold that Thomism virtually agrees with Palamism (*Mascall* 1971; *Siemianowski* 1993). At any rate, western influences on Barlaam should not be exaggerated. The polemic between Barlaam and Palamas, as even Lossky (1964, p. 126) finally admitted, was an internal discussion between the two eastern traditions, not simply between the West and the East.²²

Nevertheless, scholars usually agree that the most important issue in the debate is the role of rational thinking in theology, and most of them would agree with Vladimir Lossky:

It was a conflict between mystical theology and a religious philosophy, or, rather, a theology of concepts which refused to admit what seemed to it to be an absurdity, foolishness. The God of revelation and of religious experience was confronted with the God of the philosophers, on the battlefield of mysticism, and, once again, the foolishness of God put to naught the wisdom of man (*Lossky* 1957, p. 221).

In my opinion also this popular view should be revised. First of all, contrary to the opinion of his opponents, Palamas was a very well educated and capable philosopher. Before he became a monk, he studied in Constantinople and was famous for his deep understanding of philosophy. His biographer noted that once, on the occasion of a public discussion on Aristotle’s logic, Palamas’ teacher exclaimed in the presence of the emperor: ‘If Aristotle himself had been here in flesh and blood, he would have praised him’ (*Meyendorff* 1998, p. 29). Even when Palamas argued against ‘secular wisdom’, he did it with a sound knowledge of it. The controversy with Barlaam and others was, therefore, a struggle between two different philosophies, and not simply between theology and philosophy. Moreover, it was Barlaam who really

²² It is interesting that Lossky removed phrases on ‘eastern Thomists’ in English translation of his 1944 book. Cf. *Lossky* 1944 and *Lossky* 1957, pp. 76–77, 220.

denied human cognitive power, not Palamas, since Barlaam respected secular sciences while holding that that they could not give true knowledge of God. On the contrary, Palamas did not value human wisdom, but was much more optimistic as regards the capacities of human cognition. After all, a close examination of Palamas teaching shows that there is nothing especially irrational in it, and in the following parts of the study, I will try to prove it.

2.2. *Onomathodoxy*

The works of Gregory Palamas were practically forgotten for hundreds of years. He was known solely for his popular ascetical writings; systematical treatises were rarely read and copied. Only at the beginning of 20th century, Orthodox philosophers and theologians rediscovered them. Palamism quickly became an intellectual foundation of the modern Orthodox theology, and provided it with the feeling of distinction from the western tradition. Palamas was first rediscovered in Russia in 1910s. The main reason was a theological controversy concerning the status of the names of God, which broke out in some Russian monasteries at Mount Athos (see *Leskin* 2004; *Alfeev* 2007).

Religious practice of pious monks of Athos again became a trigger for a theological debate. Onomathodoxists (*imâslavcy*) claimed that since the names of Gods were divine energies, therefore they were God himself. This belief, which was only a newer version of Palamism, was discussed and condemned by some Orthodox authorities. Father Pavel Florensky wrote a foreword to a book by a monk Anthony, one of the onomathodoxists' leaders, in which he noticed a similarity between onomathodoxy and the teaching of Gregory Palamas (*Florenskij* 2000, p. 287–294). This issue was discussed by some Moscow philosophers, who subsequently prepared extensive works on this topic (*Florenskij* 2000, p. 104–363; *Losev* 1993a, pp. 865–900; 1993b, pp. 613–880; *Bulgakov* 1999; cf. *Leskin* 2008; *Obolevitch* 2011). This philosophical activity initiated the 'vogue for Palamism' among Russian lay intellectuals. Fr. Basil Lourié, an Orthodox theologian and a severe critic of Florensky, admitted: 'With no doubt traces of that vogue lead to Florensky as a source' (*Lur'e* 1997, p. 340).

This philosophical interest in Palamism evoked a reaction of professional theologians. Basil Krivosheine, a Russian learned monk of Mount Athos, published in 1930s an influential essay on the thought of Palamas (*Krivoshein* 1938). Vladimir Lossky, during World War II, gave the famous lectures on mystical theology, in which he praised Palamas' teaching²³. However, the real turning point was a great work of John Meyendorff, who prepared the first modern edition of *The Triads* and an extensive introduction to the doctrine of Palamas (*Meyendorff* 1998). From this moment on, St. Gregory Palamas acquired in the Orthodox theology a position comparable to that of St. Thomas Aquinas in Catholicism. This parallel is not so surprising if one takes into account that Lossky and Meyendorff were students of Etienne Gilson, one of the leaders of the 20th century Neothomism.

3. The Teaching of Palamas

The aim of Gregory Palamas was an explanation of the following two related facts: revelation and deification. Both have religious character and are specific to Christianity. Palamas was not interested in general natural theology but rather tried to construct special metaphysics for Christian experience and hope. His question was: 'What should the world be like since revelation and deification are possible?' Since the concept of personal God, in general, and the concepts of revelation and deification, in particular, do not fit in a classical philosophical conceptual scheme, Palamas decided to introduce some metaphysical innovations, such as the essence/energies distinction.

3.1. Two Religious Facts

Christian understanding of personal God assumes that although God is essentially unknowable for human beings, he may decide to reveal himself in the world. Therefore, Christianity goes beyond negative

²³ Agnieszka Świtkiewicz (1997, p. 156) noticed a 'great convergence, and at some points even identity' between texts by Krivoshein and Lossky. Indeed, Lossky relied on Krivoshein's interpretation and often simply repeated passages from his work.

theology, and asserts that God may decide to manifest Himself. This specific concept of revelation is expressed, for instance, by St. John:

‘No one has ever seen God; the only Son [...] he has made him known’
(*John* 1:18).

Similar statements might be found elsewhere in the Scriptures. Even in the Old Testament, though God says that ‘man shall not see me and live’ (*Ex* 33:20), God ‘used to speak to Moses face to face’ (*Ex* 33:11). Ultimately, the destination of man is a full revelation of God. ‘We know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is’ (1 *John* 3:2).

This last statement leads to the question of deification. Personal God may not only be manifest, but also may unite himself with human beings. Christian salvation is thought exactly as a kind of union with God. St. Peter used once quite a philosophical expression:

he [Jesus our Lord] has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that [...] you may [...] become partakes of the divine nature (2 *Pet* 1:4).

This union of man and God was described in Scripture in many ways, for instance as being ‘the temple of God’ (2 *Cor* 6:16), ‘children of God’ (*John* 1:12; *Gal* 4:7), ‘heirs of God’ (*Rom* 8:17; *Gal* 4:7), and finally simply ‘gods’ (*John* 10: 34). The patristic tradition introduced a special word for this union: deification (*theosis*) (Mantzaridis 1984). God, though remains essentially inaccessible, may share himself with the creatures.

Christian revelation and deification were not only theoretical premises for Palamas, they were realities experienced by monks of Mount Athos. Hesychasts believed that during their prayers God truly revealed Himself and really deified them. The teaching and experience of the Church was, therefore, the starting point of Palamas’ theology.

In order to explain the possibility of revelation and deification, Palamas introduced the distinction between essence and energies. God not only consists of one essence and three hypostases, but also of one

essence and many energies, perhaps infinite number of them. Energies are distinct, yet not separable from essence. Being such, they are really God himself, though are not God's essence. God therefore has the unknowable and inaccessible essence, and knowable and accessible energies.

Hence, energies play a double role in Palamas' ontology. On one hand, revelation consists of energies' manifestation, and on the other, deification means sharing the energies. Now, I would like to analyze these two aspects in details.

3.2. The Essence/Energies Distinction

The distinction between essence and energy was not really invented by Palamas. The concept of energy had been more or less explicitly used by the Greek Church Fathers before, not to mention Aristotle (*Bradshaw* 2004). Palamas himself willingly admitted his debt to Saint Dionysius, St. Basil and St. Maximus the Confessor. Moreover, local Constantinopolitan synod, in 1351, officially linked the essence/energies distinction with the teaching of the Sixth Council on two energies in Christ (*Losev* 1993a, p. 895). 'It would be no exaggeration to say that patristic tradition had already formulated such a teaching in a general form, and that Palamas merely took it to its furthest conclusions' (*Mantzaridis* 1984, p. 105). Nevertheless, during the heated discussions with opponents, Palamas developed such a detailed account of essence/energy distinction as no one has ever before.

The distinction between essence and energies seems, in fact, quite intuitive. Things manifest themselves. It is plausible to suppose that manifestations (energies) of a thing are not exhaustive. There probably is always something hidden in a thing (essence), the rest which has not been actually manifested. One thing can have many different manifestations depending on specific circumstances in which they are produced. As Pavel Florensky formulated it:

Being has its *inner* side, in which it turns to itself without involving anything else, and an *outer* side, in which it turns to other beings. These are two sides, but they are not joined to each other since they are primary

unity; they are one and the same being, though turned to different directions. [...] In patristic terminology these two sides of being are called essence or substance, *ousia*, and act or energy, *energeia* (Florenskij 2000, p. 255).

Energies ‘manifest’ (*Triads* III, 2, 7), ‘present’ (II, 12), ‘express’ (II, 14) the essence. They ‘characterize or present [the essence], though do not present *what* it is, that is what it is as regard to essence’ (II, 23). Essence, though is ‘present’ in each of the energies (*Triads* III, 2, 7; *Treatises* III, 3), nevertheless ‘transcendents’ (*Triads* III, 2, 7) and ‘surpassess’ (*Treatises* II, 19) all its energies.

What are energies after all? Palamas understood them very broadly, apparently uniting a few traditional ontological categories under one label. David Bradshaw (2004, p. 273) indicated that it encompassed at least three categories: ‘realities’, ‘attributes’ and ‘operations’. For instance, in the case of God, energies include realities such as uncreated light or the gifts of the Spirit, attributes such as infinity, immortality, life, and, finally, some operations like the act of creating, providence and foreknowledge. Realities seem to be separate things, while attributes are plainly inseparable and dependent, whereas operations presumably presuppose causality. Is there a common mark of all these categories?

One way to look at Palamas is as inviting us to reconceive what have traditionally been regarded as distinct categories [...] as species within a broader genus, that of acts of self-manifestation (Bradshaw 2004, p. 273).

Indeed, Palamas introduces quite a new general category, and as yet there is no reason to object to it.

It is worth comparing Palamitic notion of energy with the traditional concept of accident. Palamas himself did it in a few passages, pointing out both similarities and dissimilarities. As John Meyendorff remarked,

Nothing shows Palamas’s main preoccupation better than these hesitations; that preoccupation was to free theology from Aristotle’s philosophic categories which were clearly inadequate worthily to express the Mystery (Meyendorff 1998, p. 225).

This also shows best, in my opinion, his strenuous attempts to formulate a new, more adequate category.

There are three crucial features of accidents (*symbebekos*): dependency, contingency and non-coextensivity (Brunschwig 1991). Contrary to substances (*ousia*), accidents are dependent constituents of a thing; contrary to properties (*idion*), they need not to belong to the substance and are not specific for just one species. What about energies? John Meyendorff (1998, p. 225) referred to the following passages from Palamas:

[energy] is neither essence, nor accident, and if some theologians have used the word “accident” that was only to show that everything in God is not essence (*Capita*, 127);

accident does not always exist; energy is similar to accident in this respect since it does not always act, as well as does not always not act. Therefore energies resemble accidents in that respect, that might create or not create, but differ from accidents in this, that they cannot not exist (*Against Akindynos* VI, 21);

God [...] is able to grant the Wisdom and actually grants it [...] and He possesses it not as a property, but only as energy (*Against Gregoras* II).

It seems that these statements correspond, in turn, with the three abovementioned features of accidents. First, exactly like accidents, energies exist in a thing. Second, they differ from accidents in respect of contingency. In some sense, energies are contingent, in the other, they are necessary. Palamas distinguished an *energeia* from the corresponding *dynamis*. *Energeia* is the use of *dynamis* (Bradshaw 2004, p. 239). Palamas wrote: ‘there is a beginning and end, if not of the creative power itself, then at least of its action’ (*Triads* III, 2, 8). Both *energeia* in this narrower sense and *dynamis* are energies in a general sense. Energies may begin and end only as a temporal realization of necessarily existing *dynamis*. In short, *energeia* resembles in this aspect accident, while *dynamis* is more like property. Third, it seems that energies are not specific for one species only, and can characterize other beings. Divine wisdom, for instance, may be transferred to human

beings, so it is not a property in a strict Aristotelian sense. The similarities and differences might be summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Energies and Aristotle's categories.

	Accident (<i>symbebekos</i>)	Property (<i>idion</i>)	Energy (<i>energeia</i>)
Dependent	+	+	+
Contingent	+	—	— (as <i>dynamis</i>) + (as <i>energeia</i>)
Coextensive	—	+	—

This brief comparison reveals, I believe, that Palamas wanted to adjust traditional philosophical concepts to his purposes. Energies, in some sense, are more dynamic than properties and more static than accidents. One of the most important advantages of the category of energy is that it embraces natural as well as voluntary manifestations, and therefore fits in the concept of personal God.

The attributes-energies, to St. Gregory Palamas, by no means are abstract concepts applicable to the divine essence, but living and personal forces, [...] manifestations of personal God (*Lossky* 1974, p. 57).

Apparently, though Palamas went beyond the inherited philosophical tradition, he tried to adapt it to a new content, and not simply to abandon it.

I have presented the essence/energies distinction as a perfectly general ontological account. I think that there is strong evidence for this interpretation. Palamas taught: 'The natural energy is the power which manifests every essence, and only nonbeing is deprived of this power' (*Triads* III, 2, 7); 'no nature can exist [...], unless it possesses an essential energy' (*Triads* III, 3, 6; see also e.g. *Treatises* II, 14, 24). According to Palamas, all beings have its essence and energies; God is

only one of the applications of this general distinction. We nevertheless owe theology the proper formulation of this distinction.

Some commentators suggested, however, that either the essence/energies distinction is applicable to God only or this distinction, in the case of God, somehow differs from the other case. On one hand, Basil Krivoshein insisted:

The distinction between substance [i.e. essence] and energy is quite different from ordinary, logically definable and classifiable distinctions which exist between created objects. More than ever, here, we must remember the antinomism of our conception of God, which does not fit into the ordinary framework of logic (*Krivoshein* 1938, p. 143).

On the other, Yannis Spiteris held:

We should not apply concepts of essence and energy to God in a general meaning delivered by human reason. We might apply these concepts to God only in a metaphorical way (*Spiteris* 1996, p. 55).

Both these limitations seem to me unnecessary. Palamas adopted a downward methodology. He formulated the concept of energy for the particular case of God, and then used it for other cases. Therefore, we should not hesitate to apply it to creatures as well as God. This point was clearly formulated by Pavel Florensky:

all intellectual efforts of Palamas and his followers were historically focused on a restricted domain, but in fact the principles stated by Palamists concern an immensely broader field than it might seem at first glance; indeed, it is difficult to determine where they have no application (*Florenskij* 2000, p. 272).

Palamas frequently repeated that energies are ‘not identical’ with essence, (*Triads* I, 3, 23) nor ‘distinct’ (*Treatises* II, 12), though ‘inseparable’ (*Triads* III, 2, 13; II, 3, 15; III, 1, 34; III, 2, 20; II, 3, 37; III, 1, 24; *Treatises* II, 28, 32) from it. ‘It is impossible to separate from acting nature [...] its corresponding powers and energies, even though they differ from it in other ways’ (*Treatises* I, 10).

Being distinct, and yet inseparable, is a mark of non-substantial entities. In fact, energies are not, as Palamas often said, ‘hypostatic’ but ‘enhypostatic’, that is they need to be connected with a hypostasis (*Triads* II, 3, 6; III, 1, 9; III, 1, 18; III, 2, 23; *Treatises* II, 10). In other words, energies are ontologically dependent on their essence. That is why they are so tightly connected with essence; dependency is the best known ‘ontological glue’ (Mertz 1996). Dependent entities are exactly distinct, yet not separable entities.

Palamas, in many passages, pointed at the ontological dependency of the energies.

Energy descends from essence, not essence from energy. The former is a cause, the latter is an effect; the former exists on its own, the latter does not exist on its own (*Treatises* II, 10).

He [God] gives them [energies] existence, but He does not receive its existence from them (*Triads* III, 2, 25).

Finally, essence and energies are analogous to Sun and sunbeams. ‘There is not even a trace left after sunlight when the Sun is set’ (*Treatises* I, 30).

The relation between essence and its energies should not be conflated with causality. Cause and effect need not coexist, whereas energies actually depend on essence. Palamas on many occasions wrote that essence ‘produces’ (*Triads* III, 1, 23), ‘creates’ (*Treatises* II, 44) energies, or that energies ‘follow’ (*Treatises* II, 26) from essence. However, sometimes he also maintained that essence ‘causes’ energies (*Triads* III, 2, 7; *Treatises* II, 19). Commentators rightly pointed out that he did not understand this kind of causality in a usual way.

The energies are not effects of the divine cause, as creatures are; they are not created, formed ex nihilo, but flow eternally from the one essence of the Trinity (Lossky 1957, p. 73; see also Krivoshein 1938, p. 143).

Palamas has also stressed the difference between the creation of things and producing energies. He devoted to this topic the whole treatise *On the divine energies*. ‘Created beings are not processions [*i.e.*

energies], [...] but effects of God's processions' (*Treatises* I, 7); 'a creature is an effect of divine energies not the energies themselves' (*Treatises* III, 19).

Palamas insisted that since essence and energies are not separable, they do not, strictly speaking, make a whole. Things are not mereologically compounded of essence and energies. 'That what appears, or can be thought of, or can be given [*i.e.* energies] is not a part of God' (*Treatises* III, 6). Nor 'elements' are of God's nature (*Treatises* II, 23), since 'no being is composed of its own acts' (*Treatises* III, 25). He asked rhetorically: 'What kind of whole can be built by a mover and moving, that is by acting principle and its energy?' (*Treatises* I, 22).

It is interesting to notice that Palamas' distinction strikingly resembles the classical scholastic notion of formal distinction (Tweedale 1991). According to some medieval western philosophers, beings may be conceptually different, yet really inseparable. Conceptual difference means that things have different definitions, belong to diverse categories. Exactly the same definition may be found in Palamas: 'We do not treat the unity of essence and energies as if they had the same meaning, but as something inseparable' (*Treatises* II, 8). This coincidence calls into question the thesis on specificity of the essence/energy distinction. However it does not deny originality neither to Palamas, nor Scotus. There could hardly be any intellectual exchange between the learned monks in the East and the West.

Some Orthodox commentators tried to moderate somehow this coincidence. Basil Krivosheine (1938, p. 152), for instance, eventually admitted that essence/energy distinction corresponds to scholastic *distinctio realia minor*, but 'very relatively' and 'very inexactly'. At the same time, he understood Palamitic distinction as a *pragmatike diakrisis*, that is a real (not mental—*kat'epinoein*) distinction (not separation—*diairesis*). This is precisely meant by scholastic formal distinction. It seems there really is no gap between the eastern and the western distinction.

The distinction between essence and energies was introduced by Gregory Palamas to explain the possibility of experiencing God in hesychastic praying. Indeed, hesychasts could contemplate God himself, though not in His inaccessible, divine essence, but in knowable,

uncreated energies. It is so because divine energies are no less divine than divine essence. Energies ‘are not out of God’ (*Treatises* I, 32), they are ‘God Himself, though not in the respect of the essence’ (*Treatises* I, 15, 32). ‘God is entirely present in each of the divine energies’ (*Triads* III, 2, 7). Therefore, both the essence and the energies might be ‘named with the same words’ (*Treatises* II, 4).

The energies or divine acts belong to the existence of God himself; they represent his existence *for us*. It is therefore not only justified but necessary to apply thereto the attributes proper to the divine Being; they are God (*theos*) and Deity (*theotes*) (*Meyendorff* 1998, p. 217–218).

3.3. *The Metaphysics of Deification*

The essence/energies distinction was formulated not only for the explanation of the possibility of revelation; the most fundamental truth for Palamas, as well as to the whole the Eastern Christian tradition in general, was the reality of deification (*Meyendorff* 1983, p. 2). The whole Palamas’ theory was, in fact, an attempt to provide ontological explanation of the mystical union with God.

By his doctrine on [...] divine energies Gregory Palamas gives an indestructible theological foundation to the traditional mystical teaching of the Orthodox Church, since only on the basis of this doctrine is it possible to consistently assert the reality of the communion between God and man [...] without falling into the pantheistic confusion of creature with Creator (*Krivoshein* 1938, p. 207).

According to Palamas, the union with God is at the same time the highest cognition of God (*Mantzaridis* 1984, p. 114–115). Strictly speaking, this way of knowing has no intellectual character. Palamas understood deification as a real transformation of human being in which man ontologically unites with God. Becoming an object of knowing is, however, definitely the best way to know.

What is the ontological mechanism of deification? It appears that Palamas formulated a considerably innovating and illuminating solution. He noticed once:

dwelling of the light of grace in a soul is not a simple connection [...] but amazing internal communion, in some sense inexpressible and unparalleled (*First Letter to Barlaam* 43, *Spiteris* 1996, p. 84).

Before Palamas, patristic theology developed two distinct concepts of union—namely essential union of divine Persons in the Trinity and the hypostatic union of two essences in Christ. Palamas proposed a third solution. God and man unite neither by essence, nor by hypostasis, but by energies.

God in His completeness deifies those who are worthy of this, by uniting Himself with them, not hypostatically—that belonged to Christ alone—nor essentially, but through [...] energies (*Against Akindynos* V, 26, *Meyendorff* 1983, p. 164; cf. *Lossky* 1957, p. 87).

It is worth noticing that such analysis of eternal life seems to differ significantly from the theory of mere beatific vision developed in the western theology (*Bradshaw* 2004).

According to Dionysius the Areopagite (*CH* I, 3; cf. *Treatises* III, 7), deification (*theosis*) consists of both assimilation (*aphomoiosis*) and unification (*enosis*). Palamas carefully distinguished these two concepts. He perceived assimilation as a result of man's own effort to imitate God. It consists of ascetics and virtuous life. All Christian moral teaching concerns the way in which man can imitate their divine example. Nevertheless, Palamas insisted, that assimilation is only a necessary, but not sufficient, condition of deification (*Treatises* III, 7; see also *Krivoshein* 1938, p. 72; *Mantzaridis* 1984, p. 88). The main reason for this was the fact that imitation is a human action, whereas deification is a gift of divine grace. As St Paul said, '[God] saved us [...] not in virtue of works but in virtue of his own purpose and the grace' (2 *Tim* 1:9). Hence, Palamas taught:

Every virtue and imitation of God on our part, indeed, *prepares* those who practise them for divine union, but the mysterious union itself is *effected* by grace (*Triads* III, 1, 27; italics mine).

The crucial component of deification is unification. Palamas understood the union of man and God as sharing by man divine energies.

God, while remaining entirely in Himself, dwells entirely in us by His superessential power; and communicates to us not His nature, but His proper glory and splendor (*Triads* I, 3, 23).

‘Power’, ‘glory’ and ‘splendor’ are obviously names of divine energies. Deified man is endowed with divine energies, which become his own energies. Human being retains their created human essence and obtains uncreated divine energies.

The divine life [...] belongs to the divine nature even when man benefit from it (by grace, not by nature); hence it constitutes the means of a communion both personal and real with God, a communion which does not involve the impossible confusion of the natures (*Meyendorff* 1998, p. 217).

Thus, in some specific sense, man partially becomes a God. As Palamas put it:

He who achieves deification is fittingly defined by both: he is on the one hand unoriginate, eternal and heavenly [...] on account of the uncreated grace that eternally derives from eternal God; he is on the other a new creation and a new man [...] on account of himself and his own nature (*Reply to Akindynos* III, 6, 15, *Mantzaridis* 1984, p. 112).

Palamas quoted with approval St. Maximus’ phrase:

The one, who is considered worthy of it, by grace would be everything that God is by nature, save only the identity of nature (*Treatises* II, 34; cf. *Lossky* 1957, p. 87).

Therefore, it may be said that ‘them, who participate in energies and act in accordance with them, through God’s grace are made gods with no beginning and no end’ (*Third Letter against Akindynos*, *Spiteris* 1996, p. 78).

The possibility of human deification is given through Christ in the Church (*Mantzaridis* 1984, pp. 41–60; *Meyendorff* 1983, pp. 163–164). The human nature assumed by Christ was deified first due to the hypostatic union. Now, thanks to Sacraments, people are able to participate in that nature and to be endowed by divine energies.

To Palamas, the communion of the sacraments signifies the union with the human nature of Logos of God, which, united hypostatically with the second person of the Trinity, was deified and became the source of deification to man (*Mantzaridis* 1984, p. 54).

In the result of a sacramental life, ‘Christ’s uncreated life and energy become the property of the man who is united with Him, and in whose person Christ himself lives and operates’ (*Mantzaridis* 1984, p. 128).

4. Ontological Dependency, Relational Order and Energies

In this part, I would like to present some formal analyses of Palamas’ teaching. As I noticed in §1, Father Pavel Florensky attempted this a century ago. It should be highlighted that his analyses were in fact one of the first applications of contemporary logic to the traditional metaphysics. Now, I would like to discuss and develop some of his ideas. The first one concerns the formal analysis of essence/energy distinction as a kind of ontological dependency.

4.1. Florensky’s Analysis

In 1913, archbishop Nikon published a critical assessment of onomathodoxy. Pavel Florensky prepared an extensive commentary on Nikon’s paper, aimed at defending the monks of Athos. In one place of this commentary, Florensky sketched in a margin note a logical analysis of onomathodoxy (*Florenskij* 2000, p. 316). Though the commentary has not been published yet, the logical analysis sketch was developed further in §10 of the fundamental paper ‘Onomathodoxy as a Philosophical Principle’ in 1922 (*ibidem*, pp. 272–274). Florensky tried to give a

concise formalization of the basic idea of Palamism. In order to do it, he formulated all possible positions in the debate on essence and energies. ‘There are four abstract possible analyses of essence and energy relation, which may be formalized by four double logical inclusions’ (ibidem, 273). Let ‘ A ’ represent the energy, ‘ B ’ represent the essence. Florensky formalized possible types of interconnections between them in the following way (I intentionally leave Florensky’s old-fashioned notation without any changes):

$$(F1) \quad A \supset B : B \supset A,$$

$$(F2) \quad A \supset \neg B : B \supset A,$$

$$(F3) \quad A \supset \neg B : B \supset \neg A,$$

$$(F4) \quad A \supset B : B \supset \neg A.$$

Florensky characterized (F1) as ‘immanentism,’ (F2) as ‘extreme positivism,’ (F3) as ‘Kantianism,’ and, finally, (F4) as ‘Platonism.’ Immanentism conflates energy and essence, extreme positivism denies the possibility of revelation of essence, and Kantianism entirely breaks the connection between these two realities. Platonism, which is, according to Florensky, identical in this respect with Palamism, holds that energy ‘presents the reality itself,’ ‘really exposes the essence,’ though ‘does not exhaust completely the reality, which appears,’ since essence is ‘not reducible to phenomena’ due to its being ‘an independent reality’ (Florenskij 2000, p. 274). Florensky believed that (F4) is the proper formulation of these intuitions.

The logical core of theological disputes in the 14th and 19th centuries boils down to only this epistemological formula. [...] This is the general sense of onomathodoxy as a philosophical principle (ibidem, p. 274).

Unfortunately, the formula (F4) raises at least three serious doubts. First, it is not clear what the letters ‘ A ’ and ‘ B ’ really stand for. Do they represent propositions, concepts or rather objects? Florensky wrote ambiguously that the ‘terms of thinking’ may be equally propositions and concepts (Florenskij 2000, p. 272; cf. Florensky 2004, pp. 425–426). Second, how should the symbol ‘ $\supset$ ’ be understood? Florensky

characterized the relation between A and B both as ‘implication’ and ‘inclusion’ (Florenskij 2000, p. 273), but perhaps he really meant some other relation? Finally, it is unclear whether the sign of negation stands in the right place.

I shall start with the last problem. It seems obvious that, regardless the particular interpretation of the symbols, the negation should stand in *de dicto*, not in *de re* position. For now, the formula proposed by Florensky is simply defective. The modern version of (F4) would be

$$(P1) \quad (A \supset B) \wedge (B \supset \neg A).$$

It seems that this formula plainly fails to capture the meaning of Palamism in Florensky’s informal interpretation. It means that if A , then B , and if B , then not- A . Therefore, it denies the very existence of energy. This result may be obtained in a formal way. By the law of transitivity of implication it follows from (P1) that

$$(1) \quad A \supset \neg A.$$

The formula (1) may be true if and only if A is false. Hence, Palamism would be true if and only if there were no energies at all. It evidently contradicts Florensky’s intention. Formulas (F2) and (F3) face the same problem. The formal interpretation proposed by Florensky is somehow too strong since it implies that there is no energy or essence at all. Therefore, I propose to change the position of negation to *de dicto*. Formula (P1) should be formulated in the following way:

$$(P2) \quad (A \supset B) \wedge \neg(B \supset A).$$

If A , then B , and it is not the case that if B then A . Florensky had a well known passion for the use of logical and mathematical formulas. Unfortunately, they are quite often inaccurate or simply mistaken. In the Polish edition of his works, it was necessary to make numerous corrections of obvious mistakes in the text (Florenski 2009, pp. 35, 37, 38, 181, 183, 184). It is hard to say whether these mistakes were made

by Florensky or by his editors. At any rate, I think that (F2)–(F4) is a case which should be corrected in this way.

My proposal of this correction (Rojek 2010b, p. 54) evoked a criticism of Bogdan Strachowski (Strachowski 2010, p. 194; cf. Rojek 2010c). He pointed out that changing the place of negation in the case of (F3) leads to contradiction. The modified *de dicto* Kantianism runs as follows:

$$(2) \quad \neg(A \supset B) \wedge \neg(B \supset A)$$

This formula is inconsistent since the thesis of logic is that $(A \supset B) \vee (B \supset A)$. Therefore, according to Strachowski, one should seek a different way to make Florensky consistent. Indeed, a mere change of the negation's place is not sufficient for a uniform and consistent interpretation of Florensky's formalizations. I think that what is really needed here is a modal logic which would secure the consistency of *de dicto* interpretation of (F3). I shall come back to this problem in §4.2.

I would like to roughly sketch two different interpretations of Florensky's analysis. The first one takes '*A*' and '*B*' as names of propositions and ' $\supset$ ' as an implication. The second interprets '*A*' and '*B*' as names of objects and ' $\supset$ ' as a specific relation between energy and essence. Both interpretations assume that the negation should stand in *de dicto* position.

4.2. Dependency Interpretation

Florensky suggested that the formula ' $A \supset B$ ' means 'if there is energy, there is essence' (Florenskij 2000, p. 272). Thus, '*A*' and '*B*' should be read as existential propositions: 'there is energy' and 'there is essence'. On the ground of this interpretation, (P2) would be an assertion of one-sided ontological dependency between energy and essence. The existence of energy presupposes the existence of essence, whereas the existence of energy does not presuppose the existence of energy.

The formula (P2) may be further improved to go along Florensky's intention more precisely. It seems plausible to insert modal concepts into the formula:

$$(P3) \quad \Box(A \supset B) \wedge \neg\Box(B \supset A).$$

Necessarily, if there is energy, then there is also essence, and not necessarily, if there is essence, there is energy. This formula expresses exactly the ontological dependency in proper modal terms. Florensky could not use the modal concept as modal formal logic was not invented at that time yet.

The advantage of the modal reformulation of Florensky's formalization is that it gives a uniform and consistent interpretation of Kantianism (*Rojek* 2010b, p. 211). Now, the corrected and modalized version of (F3) is the following:

$$(3) \quad \neg\Box(A \supset B) \wedge \neg\Box(B \supset A),$$

that is, after some obvious transformations,

$$(4) \quad \Diamond(A \wedge \neg B) \wedge \Diamond(B \wedge \neg A).$$

These formulas do not lead to contradiction since, though $\Diamond(A \wedge B) \supset \Diamond A \wedge \Diamond B$ is a thesis of standard modal logic, the reversed implication $\Diamond A \wedge \Diamond B \supset \Diamond(A \wedge B)$ is not. Kantianism holds that energies and essences might exist independently. Energies do not necessarily reveal, and essences do not necessarily manifest themselves. There may be energies without corresponding essences and essences without energies. I think that this modal description closely fits in Florensky's intuitions.

The sense of Palamism may be even more accurately captured in modal quantifier calculus. The principle of Palamism can be reformulated as follows:

$$(P4) \quad \Box(\exists x \text{ En}(x) \supset \exists y \text{ Es}(y) \wedge x < y) \wedge \neg\Box(\exists x \text{ Es}(x) \supset \exists y \text{ En}(y) \wedge x < y),$$

where 'En(*x*)' stands for '*x* is energy', 'Es(*x*)'—'*x* is essence', and '*x*<*y*'—'*x* is energy of *y*'. Perhaps, instead of essence, one should speak about hypostases, which are ultimate substrates of both energies, and essence, but I will not develop this topic here (see *Triads* III, 2, 12; Meyendorff 1998, pp. 213, 214–215).

Now, are these refined Florensky's formulas appropriate? Do they express the Palamitic distinction between essence and energies well? I shall focus, in turn, on the two terms of Florensky's formula, namely on the one asserting the dependency of energy on essence, and the second asserting the independency of essence on energy.

First, with no doubt, as I indicated above in § 3.2, Palamas held that energies ontologically depend on essence. The existence of energy presupposes the existence of correspondent essence. Nevertheless, it seems that standard ontological dependency captured in Florensky's formalization is not sufficient for a proper analysis of Palamas' distinction. On the ground of this interpretation, there would be no difference between energies and effects of essence. For example, the divine grace, as well as the world, equally would not exist without the existence of God's essence; the difference is that energies, contrary to effects, are inseparable from essence. Thus, the proper formalization of essence/energies distinction should adopt a more sophisticated concept of ontological dependency.

It seems that such a concept was formulated by a Polish phenomenologist, Roman Ingarden (1964), who distinguished 'non-self-sufficiency' ('*Unselbstständigkeit*') on one hand, and 'dependence' ('*Abhängigkeit*') on the other.²⁴ Non-self-sufficient beings need some other beings for their existence; dependent beings are not-self-sufficient but, moreover, must also belong to the other being. Effects may be thought as simply non-self-sufficient, whereas energies seem to be dependent in the Ingardenian sense.

Second, as I argued above, essence is not entirely independent of energy, otherwise energies would simply be accidents. Energy as *dynamis* is essential for essence. The essence cannot exist without

²⁴ I modify the English translation of Ingarden's terminology (Ingarden 1964), which is very misleading.

having its natural *dynamis*, though *dynamis* is not essence. On the contrary, energy as a realization of potency is accidental in relation to essence. Therefore, Florensky's analysis holds only for acts, not for the potencies.

4.3. Relational Interpretation

I would like to show that at least one more interpretation of Florensky's formalization is possible. Bogdan Strachowski (2010, p. 197) suggested to treat '*A*' and '*B*' as names of objects, not propositions, and ' $\supset$ ' as a sign of a specific ontological, not just logical implication. Now, I would like to follow his suggestion and sketch a relational interpretation of Palamism.

The natural basis of this interpretation is the primitive relation 'is energy of'. The plausible reformulation of the principle of Palamism would be as follows:

$$(P5) \quad \forall x \forall y (x < y) \supset \neg(y < x).$$

This formula states that if *x* is energy of *y*, then *y* is not energy of *x*. It is a clear indication that the relation of being energy is not symmetrical. What are the other formal properties of this relation? From (P5) it follows that it is also irreflexive:

$$(5) \quad \forall x \neg(x < x).$$

It seems clear also that $<$ is transitive:

$$(6) \quad \forall x \forall y (x < y) \wedge (y < z) \supset (x < z).$$

Therefore, $<$ would be a relation of sharp order. Essences and energies may be defined as simple and co-simple elements of an ordered set $\langle U, < \rangle$:

$$(7) \quad \text{Ess}(x) \equiv \neg \exists y (x < y),$$

$$(8) \quad \text{En}(x) \equiv \neg \exists y (y < x).$$

The existence of the root of the $\langle U, < \rangle$ would mean that everything is energy of one object, presumably God. Palamas insisted, however, that there is a difference between being energy and effect, and that the creations are not divine energies. Therefore, in Palamitic universes there would be no root of the relation $<$.

Perhaps the other set of formal properties would be more adequate for Palamism. The basic relation can be understood more broadly as ‘being energy or being identical.’ That would be a relation of unsharp order $\leq$. The modified principle of Palamism would assert that:

$$(P6) \quad \forall x \forall y (x \leq y) \supset \neg(y \leq x) \vee x = y,$$

therefore, $\leq$ would be of anti-symmetrical character:

$$(9) \quad \forall x \forall y (x \leq y) \wedge (y \leq x) \supset x = y.$$

The relation $\leq$ would also be reflexive and transitive:

$$(10) \quad \forall x (x \leq x),$$

$$(11) \quad \forall x \forall y (x \leq y) \wedge (y \leq z) \supset (x \leq z).$$

The definitions of essence and energies would be as follows:

$$(12) \quad \text{Ess}(x) \equiv \neg \exists y (y \neq x \wedge x \leq y),$$

$$(13) \quad \text{En}(x) \equiv \neg \exists y (y \neq x \wedge y \leq x).$$

The analysis of the essence/energies distinction in terms of unsharp order makes it possible to express this distinction within the well known logical calculus. The same formal properties have, for instance, ‘ ε ’ in Stanisław Leśniewski’s ‘ontology’ (*Stupecki* 1955), ‘ontological connection’ in Jerzy Perzanowski’s (1996) ‘ontologies’, or ‘Moda’ in Vyacheslav Moiseev’s ‘projectively modal ontology’ (*Moiseev* 2002; 2010, pp. 243–308).

5. Identity, Indiscernibility and Deification

As I indicated, the essence/energies distinction was introduced by Palamas mainly for the explanation of the nature of deification. Florensky suggested that deification might be understood as identity of properties; this leads him to the rejection of the Principle of Identity of Indiscernibles. I shall follow his idea and point out two problems of the deification theory.

5.1. Florensky on Identity

According to Basil Lourié (*Lur'e* 1997, p. 339), Pavel Florensky discovered the teaching of Gregory Palamas only after the Athos dispute. The search for arguments in support of the revolted monks lead him to Palamas' writings. There is almost no evidence of Florensky's acquaintance with Palamas's writings in the earlier works. In *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth* (2004), the most important of Florensky's books, Palamas is mentioned only in a few footnotes. Nevertheless, in that work Florensky outlined an interpretation of the patristic notion of deification. True, Florensky did not relate his analysis directly to Palamas and neglected the essence/energy distinction, but his interpretation seems to be very close to the core of Palamas' teaching.

In Chapter V of *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth* (2004, p. 53–59), Florensky analyzed the concept of love. To him, love—primarily love between God and man—is not a mere psychological attitude, but a genuine ontological process. Love is a real unification of lovers. Florensky insisted that through love two distinct persons may become a really one being. He even used as the book's motto the Latin sententia *Finis amoris ut duo unum fiant*—‘Love is completed when two become one’. He analyzed Biblical and patristic evidences of the reality of unification between man and God. He was, therefore, concerned with the very same problem as Palamas.

When developing the ontology of love, Florensky made some surprising remarks on the logical concept of identity. The two supplements, added to the main text, were devoted directly to the analysis of the concept of identity in classical philosophy and in

contemporary formal logic (Florensky 2004, p. 365–374). First, he criticized the modern western philosophers for neglecting identity in favor of resemblance. Florensky said: ‘when there is talk of identity, what one means—more or less decisively—is fullness of similarity, not more’ (Florensky 2004, p. 60). Christian metaphysics, in contrast, allows properties to be numerically identical, not mere similar.²⁵ With no doubt, the issue here was the problem of universals, which concerns precisely the possibility of existence of numerically identical properties in many distinct things (see e.g. Armstrong 1978). Florensky made an appeal to the classical trinitarian terminology and called the modern nominalistic philosophy *homoiousian*, in contrast to Christian *homoousian* realism (Florensky 2004, p. 59; cf. Slesinski 1984, pp. 136–138). Second, Florensky protested against the bundle theory of thing. Namely, he accused positivistic logicians of a desire to ‘destroy the autonomous nature of the individual and reduce it to a sum of traits’ (Florensky 2004, p. 371). A thing is not merely a combination of traits since it contains an irreducible ‘carrier of traits’ (ibidem, p. 368). Finally, he rejected the following logical Principle of Identity (I use its contemporary formulation):

$$(14) \quad x=y \equiv \forall P (P(x) \equiv P(y)).$$

According to Florensky, this classical definition ‘replaces the question of real numerical identity with the question of the formal similarity of traits’ (2004, p. 372), whereas these two questions differ fundamentally. Florensky held that it is possible for distinct things to have numerically one nature. The three consubstantial divine Persons are the most eminent example, which also serves as a paradigm of the unity of lovers. Hence, the Principle of Identity excludes the possibility of the

²⁵ Florensky often spoke about the numerical identity of things but he evidently had in mind the numerical identity of properties (natures or energies) of numerically distinct things. His standard examples of ‘numerically identical things’ were the Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity; they are plainly numerically distinct, though have numerically one nature. The question is, however, not so clear, since in some places Florensky claimed that the terms ‘hypostasis’ and ‘nature’ are synonymous, and therefore the Holy Trinity is antinomic (Florensky 2004, p. 39–52).

Trinity and deification (though deification, as Florensky should have added but did not, does not mean sharing the nature, but energies).

Florensky's reasoning, though not completely clear, is perfectly sound. Realism in the question of universals combined with the criticism of the bundle theory leads by necessity to the rejection of the Principle of Identity. More precisely, it leads to the rejection of the Principle of Identity of Indiscernibles:

$$(15) \quad \forall P (P(x) \equiv P(y)) \supset x = y,$$

which is one of the components of the (14); the reverse Principle of Indiscernibility of Identicals is usually accepted as trivial. This reasoning, implicitly present in Florensky's remarks, plays a crucial role in analytic metaphysics as an argument either against the bundle theory or against realism (*Armstrong* 1978, p. 81; *Loux* 1978, pp. 131–137, 155–156; *Moreland* 2001, p. 141).

At this point, it seems that, to Florensky, the real union of lovers consisted of sharing all the relevant properties. Indiscernibility is meant here in a realistic manner, namely as having numerically identical properties actually, Florensky spoke about natures, but his analysis applies perfectly to energies as well. Indeed, such a unity is real and internal, contrary to merely external similarity.

Thus, Florensky virtually distinguished two kinds of indiscernibility: *homousian*, with universal properties on one hand, and *homoiousian*, with particular, yet exactly similar properties, on the other. The Principle of Identity of Indiscernibles is not valid in both cases. The realistic indiscernibility, which Florensky sometimes misleadingly called 'numerical identity of things', may be defined as follows:

$$(D1) \quad x =_o y \equiv \forall P \forall Q ((P(x) \equiv Q(y)) \equiv P = Q).$$

The right side of the (D1) is intended to be equivalent to the right side of (14). I inserted the indication of identity of properties 'P=Q' just for a clear comparison with the nominalistic indiscernibility:

$$(D2) \quad x \approx_o y \equiv \forall P \forall Q ((P(x) \equiv Q(y)) \equiv P \approx Q).$$

‘ $P \approx Q$ ’ means that properties P and Q resemble each other. In this case, all properties of things can be similar, yet not identical. Since identity follows resemblance:

$$(16) \quad P=Q \supset P \approx Q,$$

the realistic indiscernibility follows the nominalistic:

$$(17) \quad x=_oy \supset x \approx_o y.$$

The concept of *homoousian* indiscernibility is, therefore, stronger than *homoiousian* one.

Unfortunately, the analyzed text of Florensky is rather obscure. It is not clear, for instance, whether he distinguished merely two competitive theories, or rather two distinct domains in which these theories hold, or perhaps even two stages of ontological development of one thing. First, he suggested that the theory of resemblance is characteristic of ‘the Western, Catholic view of life’ (Florensky 2004, p. 367). In the same spirit Robert Slesinski (1984, p. 137) argued that David Hume perfectly fits in the description of *homoiousian* philosophy. Second, Florensky contrasted the domain of *things*, which is governed by the theory of resemblance, and the domain of *persons*, in which the theory of identity is valid (Florensky 2004, p. 58–59). Things have similar properties, whereas persons can share their actions.²⁶ Third, he suggested that beings can move from the world of mere resemblances to the world of identity. For a human being this can be achieved in the process of asceticism and moral life aimed at deification.

I am not going to analyze Florensky’s view further. For now, I would just like to point out that the presented interpretation seems to overcome the crucial problem of Florensky’s theory identified by Robert Slesinski.

²⁶ This means that Florensky could accept the bundle theory for things since things are individuated by individual properties (cf. Florensky 2004, p. 368). Persons may share universal properties, so they must have a substratum, or—as Florensky would say—hypostasis.

His understanding of numerical identity, if not properly understood, could appear to be the Achilles's heel of his whole suggested system, and, in truth, could subject it to the charge of pantheism. Specifically, how can Florensky reconcile the consubstantiality of the divine Hypostases with the consubstantiality of created species in terms of numerical identity? (*Slesinski* 1984, p. 136).

The answer for this question is straightforward if we complement Florensky's theory with the essence/energies distinction. By 'numerical identity' of things Florensky meant numerical identity of their properties in general. Numerical identity of natures yields 'consubstantiality', which characterizes the Persons of Holy Trinity; numerical identity of energies yields 'synergy', which characterizes (not only) Holy Trinity, but also human beings living in God. Indeed, without the Palamitic distinction it is uneasy to avoid the charge of pantheism.

5.2. *The Problem of Synergy*

What is the use of Florensky's analysis for interpretation of Palamism? I think that he rightly indicated the ontological dimension of deification. Deification consists of a real change of properties. He was mistaken, nevertheless, in suggesting that man can be consubstantial with God. This is such a bold mistake that one might wonder whether Florensky in *Pillar* used the word 'nature' in a strict sense. In any case, everything that Florensky said on natures holds for energies in Palamism.

Florensky distinguished two interpretations of union with God, namely in terms of identity (D1) and resemblance (D2). They may be now formulated on the ground of the essence/energy distinction:

$$(D3) \quad x =_e y \equiv \forall z \forall z' ((x < z \equiv y < z) \equiv z = z'),$$

$$(D4) \quad x \approx_e y \equiv \forall z \forall z' ((x < z \equiv y < z) \equiv z \approx z').$$

Things are energetically indiscernible in the realistic sense if and only if they share all their energies, and in the nominalistic sense if and only if they have all energies exactly similar. The former case might be called

realistic synergy, the latter—nominalistic one. As I indicated in §3.3, to Palamas *theosis* consists of both assimilation and unification. (D4) may be considered as a formal expression of full assimilation, whereas (D3) captures the meaning of unification. One should note that by virtue of (16), unification implies assimilation:

$$(18) \quad x =_e y \supset x \approx_e y.$$

Therefore, assimilation really is only a necessary but not sufficient condition of deification.

I suggest that deification consist of strict identity of energies, and not mere resemblance. It must be observed, however, that there is no agreement among commentators on this crucial point. Some authors suggest an analogy between the relation between the two energies in Christ and the energies of man and God in deification. But this, as I argue, unfortunately leads to the resemblance, not identity theory.

Patristic theology before Palamas used the notion of energy in two cases: Christ and the Holy Trinity. On one hand, Christ is the only person with two natures, and, hence, has two numerically distinct, yet reconciled, human and divine energies. The Third Constantinopolitan Council clearly stated that in Christ there were ‘two natural principles of action [*i.e.* energies] in the same Jesus Christ our lord and true God, which undergo no division, no change, no partition, no confusion’ (Tanner 1990). This statement was aimed against monoenergism, which accepts only one ‘principle of action’ in Christ. On the other hand, the Trinity consists of three divine Persons, one nature and one divine energy shared by all the Persons (*Treatises* I, 21; Meyendorff 1998, p. 215; Spiteris 1996, p. 105). ‘The energy of the Three Divine Hypostases the is one not by analogy [*i.e.* not mere similar] (as with us) but truly also one in number’ (*Capita* 138, Krivoshein 1938, p. 141). Therefore, we are also told that, in the case of human beings, we are dealing with many distinct energies, which, nevertheless, may be similar to one another and assimilated to divine energies. ‘Human acts are similar, but not identical’—Palamas stated firmly (*Treatises* I, 21; cf. Meyendorff 1998, p. 215). These distinctions may be summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. The variety of patristic ‘identities’.

	hypostases	essences	energies
numerical identity	=	=	=
excluded	=	=	≠
Monoenergists Christ	=	≠	=
Orthodox Christ	=	≠	≠
The Holy Trinity	≠	=	=
human beings	≠	=	≠
deification according to (D3)	≠	≠	=
deification according to (D4)	≠	≠	≠

What is it like in the case of human and divine energies? Is it analogous to the case of Christ or to the case of Holy Trinity? Most commentators use here the term ‘synergy;’ energies of man and God are supposed to be somehow ‘united.’ However, the specific meaning of this term may vary. Particularly, it is often not quite clear whether synergy presupposes numerical identity or mere resemblance.

John Meyendorff, for instance, suggested that the relation between human and divine energies mirrors the analogous relation in Christ.

It is not through his own activity or “energy” that man can be deified—this would be Pelagianism—but by divine “energy”, to which his human activity is “obedient”; between *the two* there is a “synergy”, of which the relation of the two energies in Christ is the ontological basis (*Meyendorff* 1983, p. 164; italics mine).

Therefore, divine and human energies would have the same characteristic formulated by the Sixth Council: ‘no division, no change, no partition, no confusion’ (see also *Strachowski* 2010, p. 203). In this interpretation, however, they still are two numerically distinct, yet exactly similar and reconciled, energies.

It seems that Pavel Florensky held another view. He also spoke about ‘synergy’ (*Florenskij* 2000, p. 256), but evidently, he understood

that term in a stronger sense. He maintained that energies may ‘join’ (ibidem, p. 358), ‘knit’ (ibidem, pp. 257, 263, 359) and ‘fuse’ (ibidem, p. 257) one another.

Beings, staying neither mixed in their essences, not reduced to one another, nor dissolved in one another, can at the same time really unite through energies. This union must be understood neither as adding one act to another, nor as mechanical pushing one being by another, but as mutual braiding of the energies, co-operation, *synergeia*, in which there is neither one, nor the other taken separately, but something new emerges (Florenskij 2000, p. 256).

I think that what Florensky had in mind was simply the identity of energies. One and the same energy is both divine and human, and at the same time is something new in the sense that it is no more solely human or solely divine. Some authors are even more radical. Basil Lourié suggested that ‘there is no more synergy in the deification; in this sense it should be said that deified man has no human energies, only divine’ (Lur’e 2006, p. 390).

It appears that Palamas held the identity view. As I pointed out in §3.3, he insisted on the real union of man and God. Resemblance, even exact one, does not suffice for this purpose. On the ground of the two energies approach, deification would be merely external imitation of God. This approach was directly criticized by Palamas. It would be only a *homoiousian* imitation, not *homoousian* union.

Palamas did not endorse the thesis that deification is analogous to hypostatic union. It is, as Palamas admitted, an ‘unparalleled’ connection which differs both from relations in Christ and in the Holy Trinity. The reason for different models for Christ and deification is that, in the case of Christ, divine and human energies do not need to be united in a strong way since the two natures of Christ were already united by one hypostasis. In the case of deification, there is no such common hypostasis, and the Christological model leads to unduly weakening of the relation between divine and human energies.

There is one analogy which may serve as an additional support for the identity interpretation. Palamas repeated that God unites with a man as soul with body: ‘He is conjoined to them as a soul is to its body’

(*Triads* III, 1, 27; III, 1, 29; I, 3, 23). How did Palamas understand the soul-body relation? The most important point, for now, is that he believed there are energies common to both soul and body (*Mantzaridis* 1984, p. 84). ‘There are, indeed, [...] common activities of body and soul, which [...] serve to draw the flesh to dignity close to that of the spirit’ (*Triads* II, 2, 12). The grace of the Spirit, transmitted to body through the soul, ‘grants to the body also the experience of things divine, and allows it the same blessed experiences which the soul undergoes’ (ibidem). Therefore, by virtue of analogy, divine energy would be common to God and man, not just similar.

5.3. *One-sided and Two-sided Deification*

At the end, I would like to address one more question. The proposed formal interpretation of deification (D3) involves equivalence: all energies of God are energies of deified man, and all energies of man are energies of God. This interpretation has, *prima facie*, strong evidence in the texts. Palamas wrote for example:

The *entire* Divinity comes to dwell *in fullness* in those deemed worthy, and all the saints in their *entire* being dwell in God, receiving God in His *wholeness* (*Triads* III, 1, 27; italics mine);

He [God] unites Himself to them to the extent of dwelling *completely* in them, so that they too dwell *entirely* in Him (III, 1, 29; italics mine; cf. *Krivoshein* 1938, p. 203).

It seems that every divine energy becomes human and reverse; all human energies become God’s own energies.

But at the same time, some passages suggest a different interpretation. In *Against Akindynos* (V, 26) Palamas said: ‘God in its fullness deifies them who deserve it [...] through *a small part* of the uncreated energies and the uncreated divinity’ (*Meyendorff* 1983, p. 164; italics mine). It might be thought as if all human energies were divine, but not all divine energies were human. This may be formalized in the following way:

$$(D5) \quad x =_{e*} y \equiv \forall z \forall z' ((x < z \supset y < z) \equiv z = z'),$$

The equivalence present in (D3) is replaced here by implication. In this case, deification is, as if, one-sided. Man entirely partakes in divine energies but not in all of them.

Which interpretation is correct? For sure, from the existential point of view, it seems that one-sided deification is perfectly enough to fulfill human aspirations. It appears that, contrary to the first impression, the evidence in favor of the first interpretation may be reconciled with the second. The point is that to Palamas ‘God is entirely present in each of divine energies’ (*Triads* III, 2, 7). It is thus because energies are ‘not parts of God’, and therefore ‘the whole’ God appears in them (*Treatises* III, 6). So ‘a small part of uncreated energies’ is enough to have ‘entire Divinity’; not all divine energies are required to it. Moreover, the analogy to soul and body seems to support the second reading. Though all bodily acts might be at the same time acts of the soul, there are, nevertheless, some acts of soul which are not bodily. Thus, even though all human energies may be identical with divine, God can have some energies which are not shared by man.

6. Conclusion

The distinction between essence and energies is usually considered as antinomic and, therefore, mysterious, and perhaps mystical. For instance, according to Vladimir Lossky (1974, p. 53), it is ‘a theological antinomy’, which points at ‘mysterious distinction in God’s very being’. Similar opinion might be found in many others commentators (see e.g. Losev 1993a, p. 866; Spiteris 1996, p. 97; Leskin 2008, p. 118). Since the essence/energies distinction constitutes the core of Palamas’ teaching, which is considered the peak and source of the Orthodox theology, the opinion on its antinomic character spread into the whole Eastern tradition.

I tried to show that Palamas’ teaching on energies and deification is no less rational than any other ontological positions. No true antinomy was found. Moreover, his teaching may be analyzed with the help of some logical tools. Even the most mystical elements of Palamism, such

as the divinization of human nature, can be expressed in a formal way consistently. Furthermore, the use of formal logic may help in noticing some problems usually neglected by commentators.

I believe that the opinion on the allegedly antinomic character of Palamism arose from its specific methodological character. Usually, theology accepts some concepts and axioms from philosophy. Palamas clearly saw the inadequacy of existing philosophical notions in explaining revelation and deification. However, he did not forsake the project of philosophical explanation of religious truth, but adapted the reversed methodology. To him, philosophy should accept concepts and axioms from theology. Elsewhere I labeled such theories a ‘theological philosophy’ (Rojek 2009). Palamas, therefore,

neither sacrificed revelation to philosophy nor contented himself with a dry repetition of patristic opinions, but tried to base his teaching about God on the Church’s faith and experience. Thus, man has knowledge of God’s existence through His energies which are sent into the world (Mantzaridis 1984, p. 106).

The consequence of this methodology was modification of the existing ontological conceptual scheme. For instance, he modified the Greek philosophical categories of accident and property to reach the appropriate ontological concept of energy (see above §3.2). That is why some of his theses may seem ‘antinomic’ and ‘mysterious’ from the previous point of view. The question ‘what is mysterious?’ is, nevertheless, reversible in philosophy. If one accepts essence/energies distinction as an axiom, this distinction would be no more *explanandum* but rather *explanans*.

As I tried to show, Palamas’ teaching was not restricted to philosophy of God merely. The essence/energy distinction, though formulated in the context of God, applies to all beings. Therefore, Palamism has a downward structure: creatures are governed by principles holding for Creator. Palamas’ ontology might be called a ‘theology of being’. Since Palamas’ philosophy was designed to explain some specific Christian facts, it has a specific Christian character.

The answer for the question about the character of Palamism has grave consequences for the ecumenical dialog. Some authors accepting the antinomic nature of essence/energies distinction hold that this nature even facilitates the agreement between the East and the West. If Palamism was not a rational philosophy but rather some mystical poetry, there would be no moot point for a dispute with supposedly more rational western thinking. From this point of view, any rational interpretation of Palamism would even be an obstacle for the ecumenical efforts.

We believe that the ecumenical dialog requires, among other things, the reinterpretation of Palamism through depriving it of all conceptual content, through its purification from philosophical jargon and [...] through its clarification as a type of mystical theology (*Spiteris* 1996, pp. 120–121).

I adopt here the opposite view. The logical reconstruction of Palamas' teaching reveals its deep foundations, which are not so alien to western philosophy. Therefore, philosophical, and even logical, interpretation of Palamism may become a foundation of such an ecumenical dialog which would avoid rough stereotypes of 'the intellectual West' and 'the mystical East'.

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On Contradiction in Orthodox Philosophy

*Ni la contradiction n'est marque de fausseté,
ni l'incontradiction n'est marque de vérité.
Blaise Pascal (Pensées, p. 384)*

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Orthodoxy sometimes appears to lack a respectable form of logical reasoning. This is because objective mystery is so central, and because contradiction is, therefore, a methodological necessity. However, the belief system also rejects explosion. Thus, on the one hand, the law of non-contradiction is violated, and, on the other hand, it is respected. In terms of thinking about Orthodox thinking, this is the fundamental issue, namely that logical reasoning in Orthodoxy is paraconsistent. That is what we examine in this essay.

As with other religious logical systems,²⁷ we find that in Orthodox Christian thought there are instances of tolerated inconsistencies. Moreover, the principle that anything follows from a contradiction, *ex contradictione quodlibet* (henceforth ECQ), is not embraced. To embrace ECQ is to maintain that given any proposition of the form $p \cdot \sim p$, which, by the inference rule of simplification, means that p is a premise and $\sim p$ is a premise, then any q may be inferred by the addition rule such that $p \vee q$; and this inferential process can continue *ad infinitum*, thus implying the truth of any and all sentences. That is, $\{A,$

²⁷ Such as the Hindu Upanishadic and Vedantic philosophies and the Mādhyamika philosophy in Buddhism.

$\sim A\} \models B$ (the so called inference of explosion), where B is the variable for *quodlibet*, is taken as a valid consequence relation. For writers in the Orthodox tradition, failure to maintain ECQ is implicit. This is largely because Orthodox tradition stretches back some 2,000 years, whereas ECQ has become widely embraced only in about the past 150 years. Nevertheless, whether or not one is aware of the apparent problematic logical implications, the Orthodox belief system includes two basic contradictions; and insofar as they are affirmed in isolation (that is, insofar as these but not all inconsistencies are tolerated), then ECQ is tacitly invalidated. Long before the development of modern logics, and the widespread endorsement of ECQ, a basic assumption is present and pervasive in Orthodox thought—namely that Christian belief is coherent even if it is not consistent. That assumption led thinkers like Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers to reject inferences in keeping with the law of non-contradiction (henceforth LNC)—but not necessarily the LNC itself—and to promote a (tacit) paraconsistent inferential methodology. This means that Orthodox Logic is therefore paraconsistent. For the Orthodox theories of God and Jesus Christ are inconsistent but not incoherent and explosive.

The two contradictions endemic to Orthodox thought are that God is both one and three and that Jesus is both (fully) God and (fully) man. From the perspective of non-paconsistent logics, these propositions are in fact contradictory; so they entail the truth of any and all sentences. These propositions are either contradictory and, thus, untrue, or they are contradictory, yet true. The logic of Orthodox thought, of course, affirms the latter. Our examination of this is twofold. First, we define the term contradiction, and briefly explicate the LNC. Secondly, we turn to Pavel Florensky (1882–1937), who was the first Orthodox philosopher to understand both the form of logical reasoning endemic to Orthodox thought as well as its paraconsistent implications.

It has been maintained by Ayda Iñez Arruda, and widely held since, that the earliest development of paraconsistent logics occurred in Russia in or around 1910 by Nikolai Alexandrovich Vasiliev (1880–

1940).²⁸ A similar trend was also taking shape in the work of Jan Łukasiewicz (1878–1956) in Poland, see [22], [23]. However, as already indicated, paraconsistent logic has long been an implicit feature of Orthodox thought. Several writers even deny the LNC (though most hold, at least implicitly, to both LNC and Orthodox dogma without recognizing that such a position is itself inconsistent), yet it is not until Florensky that we have an attempt to justify allowance of inconsistency in Orthodox thought. Thus, in terms of making explicit what had long been implicit in Orthodox thought, Florensky has played a role in the development of paraconsistent logics. His ability to do so more extensively was almost undoubtedly inhibited by the Revolution. But that he has not been seen to have a role in developing paraconsistent logic is understandable for at least two reasons. First, like the vast majority of his very large bibliography, his magnum opus has been accessible to scholars (until quite recently) only in Russian. Secondly, his forays into paraconsistent logic come to us, in that text, not as a treatise on logic, but rather as part of a work that, as he puts it, is ‘for Catechumens’ [13], p. 6 (hereinafter PGT). It was first published in Moscow in 1914 as *Столы и Утверждение Истины: Опыт Православной Теодицеи в Двенадцати Письмах*. That publication date puts his ideas in the developmental stages of paraconsistent logic. It is possible, of course, that Florensky had read or been otherwise exposed to the ideas of Vasiliev. And since he studied mathematics at Moscow University with Nikolai Vasilievich Bugaev (1837–1903), Sergei Nikolaevich Trubetskoy (1862–1905) and Leo Mikhailovich Lopatin (1855–1920), it is perhaps even probable that there may have been some influence. But from the evidence available in the PGT, we are compelled by charity to conclude that there was no such influence. Of course, it may be the case that there was, but that Florensky just did not cite Vasiliev when he should have. That is indeed possible. But Florensky is quite fastidious in citing his sources. So much so that the notes in the PGT run some 160 pages in what appears to be 9 pt font (not to mention

²⁸ See Vasiliev ‘Na chastichno suzhdenijah, na treugol'nike protivopolozhnostej, na zakone iskljuchenoj chetverti’ (1910) and ‘Imaginary (non-Aristotelian) Logic’ in [28] (= English summary of ‘Mnimaja (non-Aristotelevskaja) Logika’[1912]); [1], [2], [3].

his ‘Clarification and Proof’ section, roughly 75 pages). Thus, it is more improbable than probable, in our view, that Florensky was influenced in any way by Vasiliev. It is more likely that he was influenced by the neo-Kantian thought of Alexander Ivanovich Vvedensky (1856–1925) and Ivan Ivanovich Lapshin (1870–1952), both of whom speak of violating the law of non-contradiction and were less neglected than Vasiliev.²⁹ But there is no indication in the PGT of that either. Thus, Florensky’s ideas on paraconsistency are almost certainly original. That he appears to have been among the first to attempt to develop a paraconsistent logic is important as much for logic as for Orthodox thought. Before saying more about Florensky, though, we must frame the discussion a bit.

What we need initially is an answer to the question ‘What is a Contradiction?’ That can only be had with a definition of the term. The English term itself derives from the Latin verb *contradictio* (*contradicere*), ‘I speak against’ (‘to speak against’). But the initial definition of ‘contradiction’ comes to us from Aristotle. In the Greek the term Aristotle used was *antiphrasis*. That term is composed of two Greek words. The term *anti* is a preposition. In this use, it means ‘against.’ The second term, *phasis*, comes from the verb *phēmi*, which means ‘to say, speak or tell.’ It connotes the act of expressing opinion, thought or belief, and, thus, of having an opinion, thought or belief. The term *phasis* itself means a ‘saying, speech, sentence, affirmation or assertion.’ A fair etymological definition of the term *antiphrasis*, then, is that it means a ‘saying, speech, sentence, affirmation or assertion against.’ So Latin and Greek provide the same basic meaning. But both leave us with the question *against what?* And we shall answer that in due course. For now, however, we need to look at Aristotle’s own definition of the term.

Actually, we should probably say definitions. For, in addition to defining it a time or two in the *Organon* (*Cat.* 10.13b, 28ff.; *de Int.* 6.28–37; 7.17b, 38–18a, 7), Aristotle also defines *antiphrasis* twice in the

²⁹ On Vvedensky and Lapshin see [21], pp. 163–70; [31], pp. 678–87 and 687–95. Both are also mentioned in [10]. See also [26] for translated sections of Vvedensky’s *Logika kak chast’ teorii Poznaniia* (*Logic as Part of the Theory of Knowledge*) and Lapshin’s *Zakony Myshleniia i Formy Poznaniia* (*The Laws of Thought and Forms of Cognition*).

Metaphysics (cf. 1005b, 13–22 and 1011b, 13–14³⁰). We turn first to the definition given in *de Interpretatione*. For, in addition to incorporating the term *antiphrasis*, which does not appear in the *Categories* passages, the definition we get in *de Interpretatione* uses *termini technici*, which become important for Orthodox thought. (This is very explicit, as we shall see below, in John of Damascus.) Those terms do appear in *Categories*. And although they themselves have not been equally as influential in logic or philosophy, especially Analytic thought (we do see some use in Continental philosophy though, notably, e.g., in Jean-Luc Marion's *L'idole et la distance* [Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1977]³¹), their respective concepts *have* been. But what terms do we have in mind? First, Aristotle speaks of a true statement, an affirmation, as *kataphasis apophansis*, a 'positive proposition.' Second, he speaks of a false statement, a denial, as an *apophrasis apophansis*, a 'negative proposition.' The two terms *kataphasis* and *apophrasis*, then, are what we have in mind. In most cases, Aristotle is not the direct source of those terms for Orthodox thought. For a philosopher such as Pseudo-Dionysius (c. 500), this bit of Aristotelian logic comes from late ancient Neoplatonic thought, particularly Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, where he gets much of his Aristotelian influence; but most Eastern patristic writers rely on the *Isagoge* for their knowledge of Aristotle's logic. These words bear a similarity to *antiphrasis*. Both are composed of a preposition plus *phasis*. The two prepositions in question are *kata* and *apo*. The first of these, in this context, takes the meaning of 'according to' or 'in agreement with.' Thus, etymologically *kataphasis* probably means something like 'according to/in agreement with saying, speech, sentence, affirmation or assertion.' That's a bit wooden. A better rendering is 'according to/in agreement with expression.' The second preposition, *apo*, implies the idea of being 'away from,' 'at a distance from' or 'far from.' The term *apophrasis*, from an etymological perspective, denotes the idea of being 'away from/at a distance from/far from expression.' These terms distinguish between two types of

³⁰Following [25]. For the Greek of *Metaphysics* I use his [24].

³¹ Translated by Thomas A. Carlson and published in 2001 by Fordham University Press.

propositions: *kataphatic* and *apophatic* propositions. Aristotle affirms that *pasē kataphasei estin apophasis antikeimenē kai pasē apophasi kataphasi*, ‘every *kataphasis* has an opposite *apophasis*, and similarly every *apophasis* an opposite *kataphasis*’ (*de Int.* 6, 33–5³²). This is what he calls an *antiphasis*. As (existential and universal) examples, he gives ‘Socrates is white’ (*p*) and ‘Socrates is not white’ ($\sim p$), and ‘every man is white’ and ‘not every man is white’ (*de Int.* 7.18a, 1–2). In *Categories*, Aristotle argues that this distinction (as opposed to contraries, correlatives, positives and privatives) always involves truth and falsity. Thus, it is either the case, for example, that ‘Socrates is ill’ or that ‘Socrates is not ill’ (*Cat.* 10.13b, 28ff). Even in theory, it cannot be the case that ‘Socrates is both ill and not ill.’ John of Damascus (c. 650–ante 754³³) picks up on this definition in his *Philosophical Chapters*³⁴ (ch. 63). His examples of *kataphatic* propositions are ‘Socrates is wise’ and ‘Socrates walks.’ For *apophatic* propositions, he gives ‘so-and-so is not wise’ and ‘so-and-so does not walk’ (cf. [7], p. 97; for the Greek I have used PG 94). A contradiction, or *antiphasis* (John also wrote in Greek), then, is understood in terms of opposition between *kataphatic* and *apophatic* propositions. Likewise, John follows Aristotle (*via* Ammonius *in Cat.*) on *kataphasis* and *apophasis*. He defines *kataphasis* as ‘the stating of what belongs to something, as, for example, ‘he is noble.’’ And *apophasis* is ‘the stating of what does not belong to something, as, for example, ‘he is not noble’ [7], p. 88. Thus, for John, *antiphasis* is ‘the *apophasis* opposed to the *kataphasis* and the *kataphasis* opposed to the *apophasis*’ (cf PG 94:653).

Formal definitions do not strictly follow the Aristotelian (and thus Damascenian) conception of *antiphasis* as the opposition of *kataphasis* and *apophasis*; but they are nevertheless Aristotelian. The terminology of *kataphasis* and *apophasis*, for example, is not maintained, and we see an emphasis on logical impossibility as the criterion for truth and falsity.

³² This is E. M. Edghill’s translation in [25], p. 43. Line numbers here (and for *Cat.*) follow the Greek text in LCL 325 (= [8]).

³³ John’s dates are difficult to determine exactly, and they often differ considerably. The dates I give here follow Robert Volk’s ‘John of Damascus’ in [9] (1998=*Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur*), pp. 338–9.

³⁴ Also known as *Dialectica*.

For example, in his *Symbolic Logic* (fifth edition), Irving M. Copi gives the following sentential definition:

One statement is said to contradict, or be a contradiction of, another statement when it is logically impossible for them both to be true... A statement form that has only false substitution instances is said to be *contradictory* or a *contradiction*, and the same terms are applied to its substitution instances. The statement form $p \cdot \sim p$ is proved a contradiction by the fact that in its truth table only **F**'s occur in the column that it heads (1979 [1954], p. 28; author's emphases).

Such a statement form may have any number of different substitution instances, each of which is equally logically impossible and (thus) contradictory. But what will be definitive has already been noted by Aristotle. Opposing predicates cannot be ascribed to the same subject at the same time and in the same respect (cf. *Cat.* 10.13b, 33–5). Thus, it is also the case that a statement of the form $((x)(\Phi x \supset \Psi x) \cdot (\exists x)(\Phi x \cdot \sim \Psi x))$ or $((x)(\Phi x \supset \sim \Psi x) \cdot (\exists x)(\Phi x \cdot \Psi x))$, for example, is a contradiction. This kind of contradiction is often portrayed in logic texts³⁵ as a diagram composed of four statements (two contraries, two subcontraries and two contradictions), which is known as the square of opposition. It is the proverbial AO (universal affirmation [all S are P] plus particular negation [Some S are not P]) and EI (universal negation [No S are P] plus particular affirmation [Some S are P]) diagonal pairs that are contradictory. Such contradictions are defined in terms of logical entailment, when both p and q entail the other's negation. A statement p logically entails the negation of q (i.e. $\sim q$), and q logically entails the negation of p ($\sim p$). That is, $((p \supset \sim q) \cdot (q \supset \sim p))$. Thus, both 'all men are mortal' (p) entails 'some men are not mortal' (q) is false ($\sim q$), and *vice versa*.³⁶

So what is contradiction a speaking *against*? Several answers are possible. It is speaking against in the sense of the opposition of

³⁵ For example: [17], p. 7; and [6], pp. 267–272; Copi (1979 [1954]), pp. 66–8. The original source is *An. Pr.* 1.2, 1–25 and *de Int.* 17b, 17–26.

³⁶ See [29]; and Peter Geach 'Contradictories and Contraries' in chapter two ('Traditional Logic') of [16], p. 70ff.

kataphasis and *apophasis*, and *vice versa*, or a speaking against a subject predicate relation, or a propositional truth, or a speaking against speaking, etc. Or, as our discussion has been anticipating, it is a speaking against the law of non-contradiction (LNC). A contradiction is a speech act that instantiates LNC violation. We must turn back to Aristotle for an explanation of what we mean by LNC. He presents three versions of it in *Met.* These appear at 4.3.1005b, 19–20, 4.3.1005b, 24 (cf. 29–30), and 4.6.1011b, 13–20. In the latter of these sections, he speaks of the LNC as ‘the most indisputable of all beliefs’. And the formulation runs as follows: ‘contradictory statements are not at the same time true.’ But the LNC in Aristotle is primarily a principle of being. In *Met.* 3, for example, he holds that ‘a thing cannot at the same time be and not be’ (2.2, 29–30; cf. 4.1005b, 23–26 and 11.1061b.5ff). Thus, we get contemporary formulations such as ‘nothing in reality can correspond to a logical contradiction.’ This is more basic to Aristotle’s notion of the LNC. For it is because a thing cannot both be and not be at the same time that *kataphatic* and *apophatic* propositions, which have the same subject and predicate, cannot both be true. Thus, in propositional calculus, $\sim(p \cdot \sim p)$.

Not every Ancient Greek philosopher bought the notion of LNC. Heraclitus, for example, seems to have promoted just the opposite. His was a position with which Aristotle was not sympathetic. He expresses disagreement with Heraclitus’ tolerance of contradiction in *Topics* (8.5, 159b, 31–3), *Physics* (1.2.185b, 19–25), *Metaphysics* (4.3.1005b, 23–4; 4.7.1012a, 24–5; 11.5.1062a, 32–4). Beginning with the latter text, he says (see *Met.* 4.3.1005b, 23–4) that ‘it is impossible for anyone to believe the same thing to be and not to be, as some think Heraclitus says.’ And in 4.7.1012a, 24–5 he speaks of ‘the doctrine of Heraclitus,’ which is, in his view, ‘that all things are and are not.’ And *that*, Aristotle says, ‘*eoike...hapanta alēthē poiein*,’ ‘seems...to make everything true.’ Turning now to the *Phys.* 1.2.185b, 19–25, he argues that ‘if all things are one in the sense of having the same definition, like ‘raiment’ and ‘dress,’ then it turns out that they are maintaining the Heraclitean doctrine, for it will be the same thing ‘to be good’ and ‘to be bad, and ‘to be good’ and ‘to be not good,’ and so the same thing will be ‘good’ and ‘not good,’ and man and horse; in fact, their view will be not that all

things are one, but that they are nothing; and that ‘to be of such-and-such a quality’ is the same as ‘to be of such-and-such a size.’ Heraclitus’ position is similarly referenced in *Top.* 8.5, 159b, 31–3. Aristotle conjectures in *Met.* 11.5.1062a, 32–4 that Heraclitus might have been argued out of his delusion if someone had questioned him and ‘forced him to confess that opposite statements can never be true of the same subjects.’ Jonathan Barnes [5] has maintained that

Heraclitus’ central contention, the Unity thesis, is inconsistent; it flagrantly violates the Law of Contradiction; hence it is false, necessarily false, and false in a trivial and tedious fashion (p. 60).³⁷

This seems to be consistent with, though somewhat more strongly worded than, Aristotle’s own view of Heraclitus. G. S. Kirk has suggested that Aristotle ‘seems entirely to misrepresent the opposite doctrine, or at any rate to subject it to a kind of criticism which is really irrelevant to it.’ For, in Kirk’s view, Heraclitus’ concept of ‘the same’ is not synonymous with ‘identical’ ([20], p. 19). This may or may not be the case, although it is likely that Heraclitus had a more nuanced view of the matter. But it is not a significant issue as regards the LNC, as Laurence R. Horn has suggested it is in his ‘Contradiction’ in SEP [30], because whether Aristotle correctly regards Heraclitus on this in particular, he is nevertheless justified in viewing him as one who does not share an understanding of contradiction that is consistent with his own. For whether Heraclitus maintains that $p = \sim p$, or had in mind some fine distinction that is not explicit in his fragments, he seems certainly to have maintained, as Hegel later thought, that $p \cdot \sim p$. And, for Aristotle, that position is the real problem with Heraclitus. For if the most fundamental alternatives are motion and immobility, rather than one and many, as regards *kataphasis* and *apophasis*, and if it is the case that, as Plato maintains in *Theatetus*, ‘if all things are in motion, every answer to any question whatsoever is equally correct’ (183a³⁸)—with which Aristotle seems to agree when he says ‘if all things are in motion, nothing will be true; everything will be false. But it has been shown

³⁷ See also his [4].

³⁸ LCL 164 (= [15]).

(*Met.* 4.7.1012a, 24–5?) that this is impossible’—, then contradiction is, for Aristotle, an instance of such lack of permanence, and, as he sees it, the problem with allowing inconsistency of the form $p \cdot \sim p$, then, is that, as he puts it in *Met.* 4.7.1012a, 24–5, it ‘seems... to make everything true.’ And that is perhaps the earliest expression of something like what comes to be known as the ECQ. It would be saying too much to affirm that this is in fact a position that Aristotle held; for it is presented in *Met.* 4 as something that *eoike*, or seems, to be the case. He may have suspected that tolerance of (some) contradiction would be explosive; but he did not clearly endorse that view.

The LNC is important for Aristotle’s logic, but it does not necessitate adherence to ECQ. However, commitment to both runs deep in analytic philosophy. William Stanley Jevons’ comment in his *Elementary Lessons in Logic* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1957 [1870]) expresses a somewhat weaker perspective than what becomes generally accepted in analytic philosophy. What he says is, in fact, quite in accord with Aristotle. As he sees it,

It is the very nature of existence that a thing cannot be otherwise than it is; and it may be safely said that all fallacy and error arise from unwittingly reasoning in a way inconsistent with this law. *All statements or inferences taken which imply a combination of contradictory qualities must be taken as impossible and false, and the breaking of this law is the mark of their being false* (118; italics mine).

But it is this sort of perspective that is nevertheless the source of the modern ECQ notion. By the time of Russell and Frege, ECQ becomes a philosophical dogma for analytic thought, and, thus, the source for the kind of inconsistency intolerance of the form indicated by Barnes above. Many such examples could be cited. One figure who has undoubtedly played a leading role in promoting it is W. V. Quine. Speaking to the suggestion that we ‘reject the law of non-contradiction and so accept an occasional sentence and its negation both as true,’ Quine says ‘[m]y view of this dialogue is that neither party knows what he is talking about. They think they are talking about negation, ‘ $\sim$ ’, ‘not;’ but surely the notation ceased to be recognizable as a negation when they took to regarding some conjunctions of the form $p \cdot \sim p$ as true, and stopped

regarding such sentences as implying all others. Here, evidently, is the deviant logician's predicament: when he tries to deny the doctrine he only changes the subject' (in 'Deviant Logics' chapter 6 of his *Philosophy of Logic* [Prentice Hall: 1970], p. 81). For Quine, and many others, intolerance of inconsistency, especially contradiction, is a cardinal philosophical dogma. That, as we noted above, is derived in large part from Aristotle's own view of the LNC.

The two Orthodox beliefs mentioned above are instances of contradiction; thus, they violate the LNC. But there are two types of contradiction amongst writers in the Orthodox tradition. Most writers have held these beliefs in such a way that inconsistent predicates are affirmed of the same subject. Others, most importantly Pseudo-Dionysius, both affirm and deny inconsistent predicates with regard to the same subject. The first type of contradiction takes the form $p \cdot \sim p$, where the contention is that this proposition is true. The other type is of the form $((p \cdot \sim p) \cdot (\sim p \cdot \sim \sim p))$. Thus, Pseudo-Dionysius maintains that God is one and three and denies that God is one and three. This Pseudo-Dionysian form, though enormously (albeit at times confusingly) influential is not the conciliar, and, thus, technically Orthodox position. *That* is the simpler proposition that God is both one and three. In the terminology of the councils (i.e. Nicea 325 and Constantinople 381) Father, Son and Holy Spirit are *homoousios*, which is taken to mean that God is *mia ousia kai treis hypostaseis*, one essence and three persons (as later formalized at Constantinople in 553). This is the form the contradiction takes in the PGT. In 'Letter Six: Contradiction' (pp. 106–23), we find Florensky assuming the paraconsistent logic of Orthodox thought, but also trying to justify it. For if the LNC *is* true in the sense that isolated contradictions are never to be tolerated, then the Orthodox theory of God is false; for the logic supporting it would be faulty.

We have just said that it is a paraconsistent logic that produces the Orthodox theory of God. That may not be obvious. What would that kind of logic look like in this situation? The logic behind the Orthodox theory may be summarized as follows. First of all, it is a theory of simultaneous unity and distinction in God, namely the contention that God is *both* one *and* three. According to that theory, God is one essence in three persons. In earliest Christian thought, this took the form of

triadic ‘subordinationism.’ The most notorious form of that view was Irenaeus of Lyons’ ‘two hands’ theory. During the Arian crisis of the fourth century, Athanasius of Alexandria and the Cappadocian Fathers successfully argued for a triadic view that included the concept of co-equality. However, experience of divine behavior (especially an instance such as the baptism of Christ [theophany], e.g.), which had formed an integral part of its Trinitarian theory, indicated that there is *either* one God *or* three gods. Hence, Orthodox theory was not consistent with all of its experience. So in terms of the formulation of its theory of God not everything about experience was inferred. And viable options—monarchianism, arianism, pneumatomachianism (or ‘macedonianism’), tritheism,³⁹ e.g.—any one of which would have been a sensible inference according to the LNC, were rejected. Therefore, the inferential methodology used was paraconsistent. Florensky formally justifies this sort of paraconsistency in rejecting the *reductio*. And in doing so, he formalizes the dialtheism of Orthodox thought. In writing the PGT, Florensky was influenced by Jevons (and many others). This is explicit in the text of ‘On the Methodology of the Historical Critique’ (PGT, pp. 384–89), where Jevons is twice (PGT, p. 384, 388) quoted and mentioned by name. Much earlier in the PGT, in ‘Letter Six: Contradiction’ (*loc. cit.*), the reader is referred to Jevons (among several other logicians—Poretsky, Peano, Schröder, Russell, Couturat, etc.) in two notes. But the LNC is not a logical dogma for him, as it is for Jevons and others. Rather tolerance of inconsistency means, very explicitly, tolerance of *противоречие* (*protēvoryechēye*) or *антиномия* (*antēnomēya*), ‘contradiction’ or ‘antinomy.’⁴⁰ What he has in mind in particular is propositions of the form $p \cdot \sim p$, which is what he speaks of as the *antēnomēya* P (cf. PGT, 112–3). He justifies embracing (at least

³⁹There were proponents of each of these inferences. Respectively: Noetus, Praxeus, Sabellius, Photinus, Marcellus of Ancyra (=modalists), Theodotus, Paul of Samosata (=adoptionists, psilanthropists, dynamic monarchists); Arius, Eustathius of Sabastia (whom Basil speaks of as the leader of the pneumatomacians [*ep.* 263.3]); and tritheism appears a bit later in John (Grammaticus) of Philoponus (and, much later in the west, probably Roscellinus and Gilbert de la Porrée, who, incidentally, was influenced by Boethius).

⁴⁰According to the new (post-revolution) orthography.

some) contradictions on his rejection of the *reductio*. His analysis of the *reductio* shows that (what we now call) classical logic is explosive. For, according to his analysis, $p \cdot \sim p$ is derivable using the *reductio* form and a few basic replacement rules. He calls $p \cdot \sim p$ ‘the antinomy P.’ Thus, $P = (p \cdot \sim p) = V$, where ‘P’ is a proposition with two contradictory terms (or a class whose members mutually exclude one another), and V is the truth truth-operator. An antinomic proposition, he says, ‘contains thesis and antithesis, so that it is inaccessible to any objection...[and] *above* the plane of rationality’ (PGT, 113). Truth is antinomic for him. But that is not the same as saying that any contradiction is true. He is very explicit that the antinomy P is synonymous with contradiction. That term and the meaning we can now associate with it, gives us the fullest sense of what he means by ‘antinomy,’ namely speaking *against*. And that is essentially how we would understand it here were we to interpret it in a strictly etymological manner. For in that sense, antinomy means ‘against (the) law’ (from *anti* and *nomos*). Lexically, we find ‘conflict of laws’ and ‘contradiction between laws’ (LSJ). In a philosophical context, it is natural to understand ‘law’ in terms of the ‘laws of thought,’ specifically the LNC.

Some writers have been hesitant to affirm this. In his *Pavel Florensky: A Metaphysics of Love*, for example, Robert Slesinski says that ‘the requirements of conceptual clarity and terminological rigor demand that he be faulted for his poetic license and propensity for literary flourish,’ specifically as regards his synonymous use of the terms antinomy and contradiction. For they ‘denote different things,’ Slesinski asserts, ‘and should not be confused.’ In his view, “‘antinomy’ would have been the better, more properly nuanced choice, even though it connotes the idea of contradiction’ (p. 147). In addition to speaking of it as a contradiction, the OED defines ‘antinomy’ as a ‘paradox.’ ‘Paradox’ comes from *para* and *doxa*. The preposition *para* here (as in the term paraconsistent) takes the meaning ‘contrary to’ or ‘against.’ The term *doxa* from *dokeo*, most likely means ‘expectation.’ It is commonly taken to mean ‘opinion,’ which is not wholly inaccurate. But a paradox is not what it is because of misalignment with opinion *per se*. It seems, rather, to be a matter of expectation. Something is a paradox (Zeno’s Achilles’ paradox, e.g. See *Phys.* 4.9.239b14–29) because it does not

(seem) to be consistent with expectation. Indeed, one expects the quicker runner to overtake the slower one. But this meaning for ‘antinomy’ does not give us a more accurate definition. Since it is rather more epistemological, it may even complicate matters. And, in any case, an antinomy, as we use the term, is not merely something that goes against expectation. The OED gives a rather different meaning for ‘paradox’— ‘a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that may in fact be true.’ That is the way the term is commonly used, and it also has the merit of being about speaking rather than thinking. But the only significant nuances here are the qualifications ‘seemingly’ and ‘may in fact be true.’ And those are qualifications Florensky is not making. Nor are they consistent with Orthodox dogmas. The term dogma also derives from *dokeo*. The lexical meaning of import for *dogma* is that of ‘a resolution’ or ‘decree.’ And concerning truth in particular, the Trinitarian and Christological dogmas of Orthodox thought are, thus, reckoned to be true, in spite of the obvious inconsistencies. They are not maintained as paradoxes; nor (therefore) are they held to be antinomies in the sense indicated by the OED. For Florensky, the antinomy P is robust. It is a contradiction. Moreover, as he reads it, the Trinitarian and Christological dogmas are too. But why would he want to assert this? Does that claim not implicate falsity? This seems to be Slesinski’s concern. For, speaking of the dogmas as contradictions seems to hyperbolize the indigenous inconsistency. For insofar as ‘Christ is God,’ then it follows that ‘Christ is not a man.’ But insofar as ‘Christ is a man,’ then it follows that ‘Christ is not God.’ And, similarly, insofar as ‘God is one,’ then it follows that ‘God is not three.’ But insofar as ‘God is three,’ then it follows that ‘God is not one.’ And, furthermore, insofar as ‘All men are mortal’ and ‘Christ is a man,’ then ‘Christ is mortal.’ But insofar as ‘No God is mortal’ and ‘Christ is God,’ then ‘Christ is not mortal.’ And from this it follows both that ‘All men are mortal’ and ‘At least one man is not mortal’ and ‘No God is mortal’ and ‘At least one God is mortal.’ However, this is not hyperbole; it is clarity. Moreover, the dogmas are of the form $P = (p \cdot \sim p) = V$. In other words, $P = \text{‘Christ is God’ and ‘Christ is man;’}$ and $P = \text{‘God is one’ and ‘God is three.’}$ And, $P = \text{‘All men are mortal’ and ‘At least one man is}$

not mortal;’ and $P = \text{‘No God is mortal’}$ and ‘At least one God is mortal.’

In terms of the language of contradiction, however, Florensky tends to favor Kantian and Hegelian terminology rather than the Aristotelian and (later) Orthodox use of *kataphasis* and *apophasis*. The antinomy P , as he puts it, is composed of the ‘thesis p ’ and the ‘antithesis $\sim p$.’ P is true iff it cannot be shown that the thesis and antithesis are false. In other words, if it can be shown that thesis p and antithesis $\sim p$ are false contraries, then P is not true. If it is a bona fide contradiction, then it is true. He borrows the term ‘antinomy’ from Kant’s use of it in book two, chapter two of the second division of the first *Critique* (esp. A427/B455 ff.), crediting him for its ‘very late origin.’⁴¹ For the origin of the concept, he turns to Heraclitus. And his reading of Heraclitus is consistent with Aristotle’s. He finds him to be a proponent of the opposition of *kataphasis* and *apophasis*; but, for him, this means that Heraclitus is a champion of the concept of truth as contradiction, and (as Russell does in his ‘Mysticism and Logic’) presents several of the fragments of Heraclitus to show this. He also mentions several other figures who, in his view, were proponents of antinomy. This begins what amounts to a general (and sometimes effusive) summary of the history of philosophy and Orthodox thought as it pertains to antinomy. After Heraclitus, he makes brief reference to the Eleatics (Xenophanes, Parmenides, Zeno, Melissus⁴²), Plato and Nicholas of Cusa’s *coincidentia oppositorum*; and then merely names Hegel, Fichte, Schelling, Renouvier and the ‘pragmatists’ (with reference to a previous note [77] on Pascal’s wager in which he cites numerous texts of and on pragmatic philosophy). Next he turns to *Job* as a scriptural example of antinomy. In that paragraph, he also relates the concept of antinomy with the concept of mystery (*taina*) and the act of silence (*molchaniya*). He adds that

⁴¹ On what he calls *perezhivani antinomichnosti*, he refers the reader to his [11]. See also his [12].

⁴² And perhaps others (cf. *Sophist* 242c–d).

The mysteries of religion are not secrets that one must not reveal. They are...inexpressible, unutterable, indescribable *experiences*, which cannot be put into words except in the form of contradictions... (PGT, p.117).

And so the next important proponent of antinomy he mentions is Orthodox dogma, which he contrasts with heresy. In his view, whereas dogma is antinomic, heresy chooses sides, either the thesis *p* or the antithesis $\sim p$. In this way, heresy is rational, but false. Orthodox rationality, however, acquires the truth by means of a kind of rational humility. Earlier in the chapter (cf. PGT, p. 109), he says that *o podvige rassudka est vera*, ‘the *podvig* of reason is belief/faith’. The term *podvig* indicates a bold feat or great deed; it is commonly used in Orthodox thought to designate ascetic and spiritual practices. In his *The Path to Salvation: A Manual of Spiritual Transformation*,⁴³ the prominent Russian spiritual writer, Theophan the Recluse, speaks of *podvig* as consisting of ‘self-opposition and self-forcing’ (p. 208). Here Florensky uses it because, in his view, antinomy is *vne-rassudochnogo*, ‘extra-rational’, (rather than irrational or non-rational). The *podvig* very, ‘*podvig* of belief/faith’, as he also calls it (cf. *ibid.*), is the method of attaining truth beyond the LNC. In the *podvig* of which Theophan speaks, one forces oneself to engage in exercises such as fasting and alms giving or confession and communion. Such practices are thought of as spiritual exercises. From Florensky’s perspective, belief/faith is the fundamental *podvig*, the most elemental spiritual exercise. It is a difficult feat, and comes to something along the lines of what Paul has in mind when he speaks of *tēn logikēn latreia*, ‘rational worship,’ and of being *metamorphousth tē anakainōsei tou noos (ēmōn)*, ‘transformed by the renewing of your mind’ (Rm. 12.1, 2). From Florensky’s perspective, and here he is very much in tune with the logic of Orthodox thought, contradictions are eliminated not by disjunctive reasoning but by conjunctive reasoning. Rather than either *kataphasis* or *apophasis* being true and the other one being false, Florensky promotes the idea that, concerning the *tajny religii*, ‘mysteries of religion,’ the *podvig* of both-and logic, of believing in spite of opposition, achieves coherence supra-

⁴³Translated by Fr. Seraphim Rose and the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood (Platina: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1998).

rationally. This is apparently what he finds in the authors he mentions. And it is, as indicated in the brief comments about Plato, a kind of *cel'nogo rassudka*, which Jakim renders as 'integral rationality' (PGT, p. 116).⁴⁴ The term *airesis*, from which we get the English 'heresy' (and the Russian *eres*'), has the lexical meanings of 'conquering,' 'taking for oneself' and 'choosing;' (it can, of course, also designate a 'sect'). These meanings have one main thing in common. For conquering, taking and choosing each has to do with something, something that is part of other things. If there is something called 'integral rationality,' then, in Florensky's mind, there is also a heretical rationality, a form of reasoning that opts for one part or another, either p or $\sim p$. But it is necessary to keep in mind, in spite of fulsome comments such as 'contradictions are in everything' (PGT, 116), that integral reasoning, since it is tolerant of inconsistency, is not explosive. It may be the case that contradiction is the hallmark of truth, but that does not mean that just any contradiction turns out to be true. Spinoza's pantheism is an example. Thus, there are no grounds for showing that Florensky is as unavoidably committed to the truth of the contradiction 'Pavel is his own daddy,' for example, as to something like 'God is both one and three.' Integral reasoning does not imply the truth of just any contradiction. For some contradictions are intuitively intolerable. They are, we might say, *prima facie* false. Claiming that a man is his own daddy immediately smacks of incomprehensibility and error. And other contradictions are equally erroneous, though perhaps not as obvious. Consider, for example, 'The universe is both geocentric and heliocentric' and 'One of the five solids is a one-dimensional figure known as the round-square or dodecahedron.' Whereas 'Pavel is his own daddy' is intuitively intolerable, these latter two seem to require some pre-existent knowledge. But they are just as false. Provided we have a fair understanding of astronomy and geometry, we can quickly determine that. These two types of contradictions are absurd and falsifiable. A third category consists of counter-intuitive claims—such as the Liar (or Epimenides) Paradox, the Chalcedonian definition or the

⁴⁴ Precursors to this concept include [18], v. 1, p. 327 (*cel'nosti razuma*); [19]; and [27].

Hilbert Hotel Paradox (where it is true that the hotel is both full and has vacancies)—that seem to be true. If such claims are accepted as being inconsistent but true, then they are contradictory in a manner quite distinct from the above two types of contradictions. That difference consists in the uncovering of mystery. Intolerable contradictions (absurd and falsifiable claims) are not able to do that. It is this sort of tolerable contradiction—integral instances of LNC violation—that interests Florensky. By way of concluding the chapter we have been discussing, he lists eleven of them. Each concerns Orthodox belief and practice. The top two are the ones we have already mentioned, namely the Orthodox doctrines of God and Jesus Christ. The others we do not need to rehearse here. We must only underscore that the list is composed of contradictions that are relevant to Orthodox belief and practice. The first two are the core of Orthodox thought. There is a unique feature to these contradictions, which is especially explicit in these first two examples. That feature concerns an analytical criterion of integral contradiction, which we may call the principle of simultaneous union and distinction. For that gives a more refined sense of what sort of mystery is the subject of accepted instances of inconsistency in Orthodox thought.

A true contradiction is a mystery. This is the difference between false and true contradictions. The distinct characteristic of mystery is the difficulty one experiences in trying to understand and explain it either as true or false. A false contradiction, however, can be either known or shown to be so quite easily and conclusively. No mitigating factors remain. The claim ‘Pavel is his own daddy’ is not difficult to understand or explain; we understand (and could explain) that it is erroneous. The truth-value of something like ‘God is both one and three’ is similarly determinable in that it is not demonstrably false. Why? To answer this, we must introduce a distinction. For in Orthodox thought metaphysics is not just a matter of being *per se*, as is the proposition about Pavel; it is rather about two classes of being. On the one hand, there is *created* being; and, on the other, there is *uncreated* being. In general, in Orthodox thought the LNC applies to created being, but not to uncreated being. However, there are indications in the thought of the Eastern Fathers that it is not applicable in created being. One obvious example, similar in form to ‘married bachelor,’ is the Orthodox belief in Mary as

Virgin Mother; the most evident and universally acknowledged instance where it is not wholly applicable, though, is in the incarnation. Back to the main point, though, the claim ‘God is both one and three’ is not absurd or demonstrably false because the subject, according to Orthodox thought, is uncreated.

So, what is the inference mechanism that allows affirmation of inconsistency in isolation? Florensky gestures toward mystery. Not just any mystery though. The mystery Florensky sees as distinguishing a true contradiction from its false cousins induces silence; it gets one to the point of being speechless. Not just speechless. Lack of speech is understood in terms of prayer and worship, and in terms of ineffability. Moreover, that sort of mystery must be akin to hope. But again, Florensky has a particular kind of hope in mind. The only hope that matters is his concern. If inconsistency is to be tolerated in isolation, then it must provide hope *in the face of death*. The source of that hope must be love that is victorious over the enemy of being: death. Thus, measuring mystery in Orthodox thought requires not just critical evaluation of the logic of propositions; but also, and most essentially, it requires love.

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The Logic of the Incarnation

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I argue that by distinguishing and employing the intuitive notions of essence and fundamentality we can see that the incarnation, as stated in the Chalcedonian Creed, is a logically coherent scenario.

The problem of the incarnation is that, supposedly, there once was a person who was both fully human and fully divine, at the same time, in the same place. But humanity entails being limited in certain ways, which is ruled out by divinity, and divinity entails not being limited in certain ways, which is ruled out by humanity. So, how can one and the same person have ever been fully human and fully divine?

The problem of the incarnation is just a particular case of a more general metaphysical problem: how can there be cases of some possible concrete object x and two seemingly mutually exclusive intrinsic properties F and G , such that x has both F and G in a world w at a time t ? Substitute the person Jesus Christ for x , *being divine* for F , *being human* for G , the actual world for w , some time in the past for t , and we have the particular problem of the incarnation in Christianity. But then from a purely theoretical standpoint we should first abstract away from the particular problem of the incarnation and search for an answer to the more general metaphysical problem, independent of any particular instance of it. The more cases a theory can handle, the better it is.

In what follows, I first suggest a strategy for solving the more general metaphysical problem by moving from mere truth to a mixture of essential and fundamental truths (section 1). I then show how this strategy solves the problem of the incarnation in particular (section 2). I end by replying to some anticipated objections before briefly

distinguishing my account of the incarnation from some other types of account (section 3).

I assume throughout that we strive for coherency without violating classical logic.

1. The Strategy

Here is a logically perspicuous statement of the general metaphysical problem of which the incarnation is a particular instance:

1. $\forall x \forall y (x=y \rightarrow (\Phi[x/y] \leftrightarrow \Phi[y/x]))$
2. $\forall x (Fx \rightarrow \sim Gx)$
3. Fa
4. Gb
5. $a=b$

where $\Phi[x/y]$ means we substitute the free y in Φ for one or more occurrences of the free x in Φ .

Lemma 1. Any set of propositions of the form 1–5 is mutually inconsistent.

Proof: by 2, we instantiate: $Fa \rightarrow \sim Ga$. By 3, it then follows that $\sim Ga$. By 1 and 5, it follows that $\sim Gb$, which directly contradicts 4. *Q.E.D.*

Note that the metaphysical problem is not an *immediate* formal contradiction. That is, the question is not how something can be both F and $\sim F$. That I take it is just straightforwardly impossible. The question is rather how something can be both F and G , if being F entails something that is formally inconsistent with being G .

But then the easy solution is to deny premise 2 for the properties F and G at hand. In the case of the incarnation, this means denying that being human entails not being divine. This can perhaps best be done by denying that being human entails that one is limited in certain ways that

being divine entails one is not. In short: one needs to argue that being human is compatible with being divine, and vice versa.

But, arguably, this is not the best solution. There is no reason to think premise 2 is false in all cases of the general problem. So, theoretically speaking, the solution suffers from insufficient generality.

But denying premise 1 amounts to denying the classical logic of identity, and as far as I can see, that results in more confusion than clarification. And premises 3–5 are just the scheme for the particular cases we try to understand, so denying any of 3–5 amounts to simply denying that there are any such cases. But then, on pain of violating classical logic, there is no premise left to deny. What else can be done?

We can broaden our theoretical framework, rather than violate classical logic. The framework I suggest includes two notions of some controversy, but the controversy nowadays mostly concerns *how* to understand them, not *whether* we can understand them. I will therefore not defend the overall legitimacy of these two notions, but rather explicate some seemingly necessary conditions for how to understand them.

The first notion needed is that of an *essence*. This notion can and has been understood in various ways, but what seems common to most such ways is that the notion of an essence is a modal notion: the essential properties of x are the properties that x as the thing it is cannot exist without. In terms of possible worlds, we might loosely say that E_x is the essence of x just in case x instantiates E_x in all possible worlds in which x exists. But this must in the end be just loose talk because it provides the wrong kind of essence. For example, the number 7, which presumably is a necessarily existing thing, necessarily has the property of being the successor of 6, which presumably is also a necessarily existing thing, but then the property of being such that 7 is the successor of 6 is part of my essence, which is wrong, at least on any intuitive understanding of the term.⁴⁵ Essence is a modal, but *hyperintensional* notion.

The second notion needed is that of *fundamentality*. This notion too can and has been understood in various ways, but what seems common

⁴⁵ Cf. Fine (1994).

to most such ways is that the notion of fundamentality is a categorical (non-modal) notion: the fundamental properties of x are the properties of x (partly) in virtue of which all other properties of x are instantiated, but themselves not instantiated in virtue of any other properties of x .⁴⁶ We can say that one property F of x is a *more* fundamental property of x than another property G of x , if x instantiate G (partly) in virtue of x instantiating F . But, ultimately, we want (I take it) to be able to talk of *the* absolute most fundamental properties of x , the properties of x that are not instantiated in virtue of any other properties of x . So, by ‘fundamental’ I henceforth mean the latter absolute notion.⁴⁷

Note that while the notion of an essence is modal (involving metaphysical possibility), the notion of fundamentality is categorical (non-modal). The two notions need therefore not be necessarily co-extensional notions. Neither is any one of them necessarily co-extensional with the notion of just having a property *simpliciter*, or what we might call a *mere* truth about something. That these notions are not necessarily co-extensional is crucial for the solution that follows. So, let me give a plausible example of each one of the four kinds of cases that supports this point.⁴⁸ First, I can sit, but sitting is neither an essential nor a fundamental property of mine. Second, I am a biological being, which is an essential property of mine, but not, I take it, a fundamental property of mine. Biological properties are, plausibly, reducible to other

⁴⁶ On fundamentality, see Fine (2001), Schaffer (2009), Rosen (2010), and Sider (2011). I understand the *fundamental* properties and relations to be those in virtue of which all other properties and relations hold, but which themselves hold in virtue of no other properties and relations; I understand *grounding* to be the relation between the fundamental and the non-fundamental properties and relations; and I understand the *perfectly natural* properties and relations to be the properties and relations that perfectly “carve nature by its joints”, or make for perfect intrinsic similarity among things. Naturalness might also come in degrees. On grounding, see Schaffer (2009). On naturalness, see Lewis (1983; 1986:59–69).

⁴⁷ Schaffer (2009) accepts that there must be an absolute fundamental level in virtue of which all other properties are instantiated, but Rosen (2010) accepts that there might be infinite descent, no absolute fundamental level, only more and more fundamental levels, *ad infinitum*. My solution in this paper is compatible with both views, but I henceforth talk as if there is an absolute bottom level to fundamentality.

⁴⁸ By ‘co-extensional’ I henceforth mean *necessarily* co-extensional.

properties. Third, negative charge is both an essential property of electrons (i.e. part of what it is to be an electron) and a fundamental property of electrons (i.e. not had in virtue of anything else about them). Fourth, I am mereologically composed of some particles, and being composed of *those very particles* is a fundamental property of me, but not an essential property of me. I could have been composed of a (slightly) different collection of particles.

In other words, we have the following matrix showing non-co-extensionality of our mere, essential and fundamental truth (note: it's not too hard to come up with other cases, if you find any one of them controversial):

	Fundamental truth:	Non-fundamental truth:
Essential truth:	Electron x is negatively charged	I am a biological being
Non-essential truth:	I am composed of <i>these</i> particles	I am sitting

With the overlapping, but non-co-extensional notions of essence and fundamentality onboard, we must view the general problem we started out with in a new, more sophisticated light. We can no longer just consider whether something instantiates a property or not, but must now consider *how* it instantiates it. That is, we can no longer just consider whether x is F, since that led us into paradox, but must consider whether x is essentially F as well as whether x is fundamentally F.

Let's treat e and f as predication modifiers, and write ' Fx ' whenever x is merely F, ' eFx ' whenever x is essentially F, and ' fFx ' whenever x is fundamentally x . We might loosely think of e and f as being analogous (but nothing but analogous) to adverbial modifiers: just as x can be F, but also be F essentially and be F fundamentally, so x can, for example, walk, but also walk slowly, walk funnily, etc. Or we might loosely think of e and f as being analogous (but nothing but analogous) to adjectival modifiers: just as x can be F, but also be essentially F and be fundamentally F, so x can, for example, be red, but also be dark red,

homogenously red, etc. But as we will see shortly, these analogies might in the end be just loose analogies, limited in central ways.

More should of course be said about these two notions of essence and fundamentality, but let's for now simply take some such notions for granted, and see what happens to the general metaphysical problem we started out with. The above set of propositions 1–5 is a scheme of which we now must consider the cases of essential and fundamental truth. Here is the case of essential truth:

- 6. $\forall x \forall y (x=y \rightarrow (\Phi[x/y] \leftrightarrow \Phi[y/x]))$
- 7. $\forall x (eFx \rightarrow \sim eGx)$
- 8. eFa
- 9. eGb
- 10. $a=b$

Lemma 2. Just as 1–5, 6–10 is likewise mutually inconsistent.

Proof: by 7, we instantiate: $eFa \rightarrow \sim eGa$. By 8, it then follows that $\sim eGa$. By 6 and 10, it follows that $\sim eGb$, which directly contradicts 9. *Q.E.D.*

And the same goes for the case of fundamentality: just substitute f for e in the above proof.

But what if, as we have already seen, the cases of essential truth and fundamental truth can cut across each other? Then the above proofs can be blocked, and the paradox resolved.

Here is such a case:

- 11. $\forall x \forall y (x=y \rightarrow (\Phi[x/y] \leftrightarrow \Phi[y/x]))$
- 12. $\forall x (eFx \rightarrow \sim eGx)$
- 13. fFa
- 14. eGb
- 15. $a=b$

The set of propositions 11–15 is not mutually inconsistent like 1–5 and 6–10. By 12, we can instantiate: $eFa \rightarrow \sim eGa$, but we then have

nothing by virtue of which we can discharge the consequent (by Modus Ponens), which is needed to derive the contradiction. It does not help to, by 12, instead instantiate: $eFb \rightarrow \sim eGb$, and then by 14 discharge the negation of the antecedent (by Modus Tollens); the result doesn't contradict 13, by 11 and 15.

Here is a (admittedly somewhat tendentious) model showing formal consistency: we let our domain D consist of a certain statue and the clay it is made of, we let 'F' be *atomistic* (in the historical sense of a mereological simple) and we let 'G' be *statue-shaped*. Then, plausibly, whatever is essentially atomistic in D (the clay) is not essentially statue-shaped (because the clay is essentially atomistic, but could also have been scattered across the floor), so 12 is satisfied. Letting ' a ' denote the clay and ' b ' denote the statue, we also get that 13 is satisfied: the clay is fundamentally atomistic (according to completed physics, it is composed of mereological simples we might assume). Proposition 14 is also satisfied because the statue is essentially statue-shaped (the statue could not have been scattered across the floor). Finally, at least according to many *live* metaphysical theories (hence the somewhat tendentious part of the model), for example, counterpart theory (Lewis, 1986), or the theory of occasional identity (Gallois, 1998), proposition 15 can be satisfied as well: the statue is nothing but the clay (statue=clay). So, at least if any of the two latter theories are consistent, 11–15 is established as a mutually consistent set of propositions.

If one is unconvinced by the viability of the metaphysical theories the model rested on, one should feel free to try to come up with a better model. But in any case the type of contradiction that we derived in the cases 1–5 and 6–10 is blocked in the case of 11–15 due to the formal inability to discharge the consequent or the negation of the antecedent in any relevant instance of 12.

But the acute reader will have noticed that there still is a formal problem. Walking does not entail walking slowly, and being red does not entail being dark red, but obviously walking slowly entails walking, and being dark red entails being red. So, one might think, likewise being F does not entail being essentially/fundamentally F, but obviously being essentially/fundamentally F entails being F. So, we have to accept, among others, the following two additional claims:

$$16. \quad \forall x (eGx \rightarrow Gx)$$

$$17. \quad \forall x (fFx \rightarrow Fx)$$

By instantiations of 16 and 17, we get: $eGb \rightarrow Gb$ and $fFa \rightarrow Fa$, which from 14 and 13 entails: Gb and Fa . By 11, it then follows that Ga and Fb . But then we are back at our initial problem: one and the same thing is both F and G, so from 2 we then get our initial contradiction just as we did to begin with!

But by inspecting the matrix I gave earlier showing that mere, essential and fundamental truth are non-co-extensional, I believe it is pretty clear what should go: at face value, 16 and 17 are false. The matrix shows that there is no entailment from mere truth to neither essential or fundamental truth, nor an entailment from essential truth to fundamental truth, nor an entailment from fundamental truth to essential truth. So why believe there are entailments from essential and fundamental truth to mere truth?

One reason is by the analogy with adverbial and adjectival modifiers. Walking slowly entails walking, and being dark red entails being red, so, by analogy, being essentially/fundamentally F entails being F. But mere analogy is too weak. We are asking for a reason to believe the analogy is that strong.

Another reason is intuition. It just seems pretty clear that being essentially/fundamentally F entails being F; after all, how can anything be essentially/fundamentally F *without* being F? But the intuition is too weak. I can explain it away, so it carries no justificatory weight. The intuition is something like this: being essentially/fundamentally F is *factive*, so being essentially/fundamentally F must entail being F. But all the factivity we need is given already by the tautological fact that being essentially/fundamentally F entails being essentially/fundamentally F. In other words, assume a is essentially/fundamentally F. Then a is F *because* a is essentially/fundamentally F. So, if a is essentially/fundamentally F, there is no *additional*, or *separate* fact of a

being F. When we truly say that a is F (in the case considered), we really express the fact that a is essentially/fundamentally F.⁴⁹

So, 16 and 17 are either expressing tautologies of the form $\forall x (eGx \rightarrow eGx)$ and $\forall x (fGx \rightarrow fGx)$, respectively, or they are false. As shown by the matrix above, we can make sense of cases of mere truth that are neither essential nor fundamental truth (e.g. that I am sitting). But we cannot make sense of an essential/fundamental truth that is also such a case of mere truth. An essential/fundamental truth is an essential/fundamental truth, not some other truth in addition to that.

So, in short, here is my suggestion for a strategy in terms of which we can search for a solution to particular cases of our general metaphysical problem. We have the initial scheme:

1. $\forall x \forall y (x=y \rightarrow (\Phi[x/y] \leftrightarrow \Phi[y/x]))$
2. $\forall x (Fx \rightarrow \sim Gx)$
3. Fa
4. Gb
5. $a=b$

As is, this scheme (just like 6–10) is inconsistent. So, for any instance of it, we must, on pain of paradox, ask ourselves whether we can “modify” away the paradox by the help of e and f . Since e and f can cut across each other, the formal paradox can be blocked by modifying one of the predicates (and hopefully its corresponding property) with e and the other with f . In this way, and (it seems) only in this way, one blocks the road to paradox without violating classical logic. There is of course no guarantee that all instances of the general problem can be thus made formally consistent. But we now have a general strategy by which we can consider it case by case. In short: move from operating with just truth to a mixture of essential and fundamental truth.

⁴⁹ I believe the same can be said of the adverbial and adjectival modifiers, and thus preserve a better analogy with e and f : assume a is walking slowly. Then a is walking *because* a is walking slowly; that a walks is here no separate fact from the fact that a walks slowly. The same goes for being dark red entailing being red.

Interestingly, the problem of the incarnation is a particular case that yields to this strategy.

2. The Incarnation

According to the Chalcedonian Creed, which I will here take to represent Christian Orthodoxy, there is one and the same person being

truly God and truly man ... one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures ... the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person.

Accepting that being human rules out being divine, the Chalcedonian Creed presents us with an instance of the general metaphysical problem we started out with. Here is the instance of our schema for this particular problem:

- 18. $\forall x \forall y (x=y \rightarrow (\Phi[x/y] \leftrightarrow \Phi[y/x]))$
- 19. $\forall x (Hx \rightarrow \sim Dx)$
- 20. Hj
- 21. Ds
- 22. $j=s$

where H is *being human*, D is *being divine*, j is *Jesus*, and s is *the Son of the Trinity* (God = the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit⁵⁰).

Lemma 3. As is, 18–22 are mutually inconsistent.

Proof: by 19, we get: $Hj \rightarrow \sim Dj$. By 20, we then get that $\sim Dj$. By 18, 21 and 22, we get that Dj . Contradiction. *Q.E.D.*

But the Chalcedonian Creed takes no stand on whether the two natures in question are both essential natures, both fundamental natures, both neither essential nor fundamental, or one of each. So, by our above

⁵⁰ On the problem of the Trinity, see Bohn (2011).

strategy, we modify the predicates in various ways by e and f , and thus get consistent versions of 18–22. Consider this case:

- 23. $\forall x \forall y (x=y \rightarrow (\Phi[x/y] \leftrightarrow \Phi[y/x]))$
- 24. $\forall x (fHx \rightarrow \sim fDx)$
- 25. eHj
- 26. eDs
- 27. $j=s$

By 24, we get: $fHj \rightarrow \sim fDj$ and $fHs \rightarrow \sim fDs$, but from neither one of those two instances can we discharge the consequent or the denial of the antecedent by the help of 25 or 26, which is needed to derive a formal contradiction. Or, consider this case:

- 28. $\forall x \forall y (x=y \rightarrow (\Phi[x/y] \leftrightarrow \Phi[y/x]))$
- 29. $\forall x (eHx \rightarrow \sim eDx)$
- 30. fHj
- 31. fDs
- 32. $j=s$

From 29, we get: $eHj \rightarrow \sim eDj$ and $eHs \rightarrow \sim eDs$, but, again, from neither one of those two instances can we discharge the consequent or the denial of the antecedent by the help of 30 or 31, which is needed to derive a formal contradiction.

So, by such modifications, we simply don't get the same contradiction as we did in the unmodified case of 18–22. So, by the modification strategy, the incarnation leads to no contradiction, even if we accept that humanity excludes divinity (within one and the same way of truth). So, by accepting essential and fundamental modifications of truth, Christian orthodoxy is a logically consistent doctrine (at least along the axis of the incarnation).

But there is another problem. It seems Christianity is, in fact, committed to the following set of propositions:⁵¹

⁵¹ Note that i–viii supports 23–27 as being the correct case of modification over 28–32.

- i.* eHj
- ii.* eDs
- iii.* $\sim eHs$
- iv.* $\sim eDj$
- v.* fDj
- vi.* fDs
- vii.* $\sim fHs$
- viii.* $\sim fHj$

I take it, for a Christian, that ii, iii, vi and vii are obvious. In defense of proposition i: if Jesus was not essentially human, he could have been something non-human. But just like I could not have been non-human and still be what I am, so Jesus could not have been non-human and still be what he was. Or so it seems to me, when I think of people as something biological. In defense of iv: Jesus could have been a completely ordinary human being, witnessed by the seemingly perfectly coherent scenario that Christians are wrong about the historical Jesus of Nazareth being divine. It is not incoherent to imagine him as an interesting, but ordinary fisherman, the human son of an even more ordinary carpenter. In defense of v: Jesus is the second person of the Trinity, which is the Son, which is fundamentally divine, so by Leibniz's Law, Jesus is fundamentally divine too. Finally, in defense of viii: by vii, the Son is not fundamentally human, but the Son is identical with Jesus, so, by Leibniz's Law, Jesus is not fundamentally human either.⁵²

Lemma 4. By virtue of Leibniz's Law (LL, or proposition 18/23/28 above) and i–iv, we get four new contradictions on our hands.

Proof 1: i+LL entails eHs , which contradicts iii. *Q.E.D.*

Proof 2: ii+LL entails eDj , which contradicts iv. *Q.E.D.*

Proof 3: iii+LL entails $\sim eHj$, which contradicts i. *Q.E.D.*

Proof 4: iv+LL entails $\sim eDs$, which contradicts ii. *Q.E.D.*

No similar contradiction results from combining either one of v–viii with LL. This is no accident. Note the structure: propositions i–iv deal

⁵² Fundamentality, but, as we will see shortly, not essentiality, is closed under LL.

with essential truths; propositions v–viii deal with fundamental truths. Essence is *modal*; fundamentality is *categorical*. The contradictions are derived from combining LL with i–iv, which deals with essential truths, which are modal truths; but not from combining LL with v–viii, which deals with fundamental truths, which are categorical truths. Conclusion: essential, but not fundamental truths fail to be closed under LL. So, the last four paradoxes are traditional paradoxes from applications of LL to instantiations of modal properties!

This is an interesting result. The last four paradoxes are of the same kind as, for example, the paradox of the statue and the clay. Let *Statue* be a statue made from some clay; call it *Clay*. Assume that Statue = Clay. Statue, but not Clay has the property of being essentially statue-shaped. So, by LL, we get that Statue $\neq$ Clay, contradicting our initial assumption. Likewise, assume Jesus = Son. Jesus, but not Son has the property of being essentially human. So, by LL, we get that Jesus $\neq$ Son, contradicting our initial assumption.

The natural response is thus to solve the four paradoxes above in the very same way we solve the other traditional paradoxes with respect to the combination of modal properties and LL. As such, it is not a pressing problem for Christianity in particular, but a general problem for everyone. We are all companions in guilt at this point.

This is of course not the place to defend my favorite solution to the traditional paradoxes, but let me just briefly mention it: *counterpart theory*.⁵³ Counterpart theory is the theory according to which no object exists in more than one possible world. In other words, there is no trans-world identity. So, for example, object *a* exists in one and only one possible world *w*. The modal truth at *w* that *a* could have been F, even though *a* is not in fact F at *w*, is true because there is another possible world *w** containing some *b* numerically distinct from *a*, but which resembles *a* in the relevant respects picked out in the context at hand,

⁵³ There is a well-known analogous temporal problem of identity in the vicinity here. My favorite solution to the temporal problem is *perdurantism*, or temporal parts theory, according to which objects are sums of temporal as well as spatial parts. On both counterpart theory and perdurantism, see Lewis (1986). There is of course no present need to commit to Lewis's notion of possible worlds being concrete. For more on persistence in general, see Sider (2001).

and b is F in w^* . In short: any way a could have been is represented by other things similar to a in other possible worlds in fact being that way in those worlds.

A result of counterpart theory is that the essential properties of things is not fixed once and for all, but differs a bit from context to context, depending on how one conceptualizes the thing one is talking about. So, for example, when we focus on Jesus as a human being, we (might, if we are somewhat scientifically oriented in that context) focus on him as a biological being, and as such he is not essentially divine, or non-biological. In such a context, i and iv are true. But when we focus on Jesus as the Son of the Trinity, we naturally think of him as being necessarily divine, and as such he is not essentially biological, or non-divine. In such a context, ii and iii are true. Nonetheless, in both contexts of focus, Jesus = the Son, the one and only person that, according to Christianity, has sometime in the past, walked around in the one and only actual world.

According to counterpart theory, claims of essence are thus not “deep” metaphysical claims, but rather contextually variant claims, the truth of which depends on which properties we focus on. Nothing similar is going on with claims of fundamentality. The fundamental properties of a thing are fixed once and for all, independent of all contexts, and independent of which properties we focus on. Claims of fundamentality are thus “deep” metaphysical claims: they are claims about what a thing is *really* like, behind all appearances and more and less pragmatically appropriate ways of speaking of it in our ordinary day-to-day life.

Conclusion: propositions i–iv are contextually variant, but propositions v–viii are not. The four paradoxes above arose because we treated i–iv as not being thus contextually variant. At least so goes my favorite solution to such traditional modal paradoxes, and hence to the above modal paradoxes of the incarnation in particular. But the reader should feel free to come up with his own alternative. It is in any case not Christianity’s problem in particular.

3. Objections, Replies and Distinctions

Before I consider some objections to my solution to the problem of the incarnation in particular, let me be clear on what I have *not* done. I have not defended the general distinctions between mere truth, essential truth and fundamental truth. I simply claimed that there are some such distinctions, and that these distinctions, whatever they are more exactly, or whichever names we ought to give to them, helps resolve the general metaphysical problem, of which the problem of the incarnation is a particular instance. I have also, in my mind, not fully defended the assumption that the three notions fail to be co-extensional, but simply claimed with the support of an intuitive case that they are not.

I have not defended counterpart theory as a solution to the incarnation. I simply showed how to employ it in solving the last four paradoxes I raised, but there might be other solutions that in the end turn out to be better. In any case, these paradoxes turned out not to be peculiarities of Christian doctrines in particular, so we are all companions in guilt on this point.

I have not, of course, argued that the incarnation, or any other instance of our more general problem, has actually happened. I was intentionally abstract and non-committal. I am only interested in showing a way for an instance of our general problem, and the incarnation in particular, to be a logically consistent scenario, and so without violating classical logic. I believe we at present have no way to prove the truth of any of the central Christian doctrines, but there are ways of proving their classical logical consistency, which have been my present interest.

With these caveats onboard, let me now reply to a few anticipated objections. First, one might object that since, on the above account, we have $\sim fH_j$ (i.e. claim viii above), we really have that Jesus is not fully human, which violates the Chalcedonian Creed. But the reply should be obvious by now: $\sim fH_j$ does not entail $\sim eH_j$; and essential truth is full truth in any reasonable sense of ‘full truth.’ So, Jesus is fully human by being essentially human, not by being fundamentally human (which he is not). Likewise, by the above claims (i.e. iii and vii) we have that $\sim fH_s$

and $\sim eHs$, so one might object that the son is not human. But again, $\sim fHs$ and $\sim eHs$ do not entail $\sim Hs$; and mere truth is full truth in any reasonable sense of ‘full truth’ (for example, it is fully true that I am sitting right now). So, the son is fully human by being merely human, not by being either essentially or fundamentally human (which he is not).

Second, one might object that we still have a paradox when it comes to mere truth, witnessed by 18–22, so there is, in one sense, still a paradox within Christian doctrine. *Reply*: as long as we stay exclusively within one of mere, essential or fundamental truth, I have granted that at least one of the premises must go, witnessed by the paradoxical 1–5 and 6–10. In the particular case of 18–22, 19 is obviously what must go: being human doesn’t entail not being divine precisely because something can be essentially human, but fundamentally divine. This is no acceptance of the “easy” solution rejected at the outset, according to which being human and being divine are not mutually exclusive. On my account, they are mutually exclusive within one of the truths, but not across them.

Third, one might object that the modifiers e and f only modify our predications, not the real properties of the world. And then, when we consider the real properties that are instantiated in the world, our initial paradox comes back with full force. But this objection is not taking my proposal seriously. Rather, it is simply restating the initial paradox in exclusive terms of fundamental truth, i.e. propositions 6–10, with f in place for e . But my proposal explicitly granted the inconsistency of 6–10 with f in place for e . The whole point of my proposal is to show that one must *mix* essential truth and fundamental truth such that the paradox goes away. It is therefore no objection to my proposal to simply insist that there is a paradox in the case in which one is *not* thus mixing the truths.

Fourth, one might object that while I invoke different “categories” of truth, Christianity only operates with one notion of truth, so I have simply changed the subject rather than solved the problem. *Reply*: I am not invoking different *categories* of truth. Rather, I am invoking three different *ways of instantiating a property*, namely merely, essentially

and fundamentally.⁵⁴ In whichever of those three ways a property is instantiated, it is true—in the one and only sense of ‘true’—that it is instantiated in that way. So, when I speak of three different truths, I really mean the one and only truth of three different ways of instantiating a property. And note: Christianity should be no enemy of such talk. Consider: “We are all fundamentally creatures of God” and “Humans are essentially searching creatures.” Compare: “Jesus of Nazareth is essentially a human being” and “Jesus of Nazareth is fundamentally God.”

Let me end by briefly distinguishing my account of the incarnation from some other types of account.⁵⁵ First of all, my account is not a version of *Kenoticism*, the view according to which the Son ceases to be divine while being human. The main worry for this type of account is that he is not fully divine, which violates the Chalcedonian Creed. On my account, the Son is always fundamentally divine, so he is always fully divine.⁵⁶

Second, my account is not a version of *Compositionism*, the view according to which Jesus is a composite such that one of its proper parts is divine and another of its proper parts is human. The main worry for this type of account is that he is not fully human and fully divine, but only partly each, which violates the Chalcedonian Creed. On my account, the whole person is fully (fundamentally) divine, and fully (essentially) human.⁵⁷

Third, my account is thus also no version of *Nestorianism*, the view according to which Jesus was really two people, one human and one divine. On my account, Jesus was one person who was fundamentally divine, but essentially human.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ The nominalist might here interpret me as invoking three different ways of *predication* instead, namely merely, essentially and fundamentally. My solution still goes through.

⁵⁵ For a nice taxonomy of the different types of views, see Hill’s introduction to Marmodoro & Hill (2011).

⁵⁶ For a defense of Kenoticism, see Forrest (2000).

⁵⁷ For a critical discussion of Compositionism, see Le Poidevin (2009).

⁵⁸ Thanks to Ben Caplan for discussion and comments.

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Techniques and Rules of Ineffability in the Dionysian Corpus

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Is the Dionysian God, or an experience of the Dionysian God, absolutely ineffable? Does the Dionysian corpus assert or perform such ineffability? This paper will argue that the answer to each of these questions is no. The Dionysian God is known *hyper-nous* as the *hyper-ousia* cause of all. And the Dionysian corpus unambiguously refers to, asserts of, and metaphorizes about this God just so. In arguing these points, this paper will call upon both the speech act theory of John Searle and the metaphor theory of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. More particularly, it will look to Searle's rules of reference and predication and conditions of illocutionary acts, as well as Lakoff and Johnson's schematization of metaphor gestalt and entailment to show how Dionysian expressions of inexpressibility are rule-governed and the Dionysian God is thereby (relatively) effable.

Is the Dionysian God, or an experience of the Dionysian God, absolutely ineffable?⁵⁹ Does the Dionysian corpus assert or perform

⁵⁹ The Dionysian corpus is composed of four treatises—*Celestial Hierarchy* (CH), *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* (EH), *Divine Names* (DN), and *Mystical Theology* (MT)—and ten epistles (EP). Although its author claimed to be the first-century Dionysius whom the book of Acts reports converting to Christianity after hearing the apostle Paul's sermon about the unknown God at the Areopagus in Athens (*Acts* 17:34), contemporary scholarship has definitely dated this unknown author's work to the early-sixth century and conclusively established its dependence on both late Neoplatonic and Patristic texts and motifs. Due to the literal inaccuracy of Colm Luibheid's Paulist Press translation of the Dionysian corpus, I have translated all

such ineffability? This paper will argue that the answer to each of these questions is no. The Dionysian God is known *hyper-nous* as the *hyperousia* cause of all. And the Dionysian corpus unambiguously refers to, asserts of, and metaphorizes about this God just so. In arguing these points, this paper will call upon both the speech act theory of John Searle and the metaphor theory of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. More particularly, it will look to Searle's rules of reference and predication and conditions of illocutionary acts, as well as Lakoff and Johnson's schematization of metaphor gestalt and entailment to show how Dionysian expressions of inexpressibility are rule-governed and the Dionysian God is thereby (relatively) effable.⁶⁰

Such arguments go against the grain of Dionysian studies. They therefore require a good deal more exegetical and dialectical work than a single essay can accomplish. Given this spatial constraint, this paper opts for breadth over depth. The goal here cannot be that of conclusively demonstrating any one set of rules through fine-combed exegesis of all the textual evidence. Instead, this paper seeks to sketch an overall picture of Dionysian expressions of inexpressibility, one that layers the rules of Dionysian illocutionary acts upon rules of Dionysian referring and predicating expressions, and upon all of these, rules of Dionysian metaphor systems. The paper therefore aims to produce a cumulative case argument for the relative effability of the Dionysian God.

1. Expressions of Inexpressibility within the Speech Act

quoted passages from the Dionysian corpus directly from the critical edition of the Dionysian corpus. See [21], [19], [20].

⁶⁰ *Absolute ineffability* applies to that about which nothing can be said (except, perhaps, that it is ineffable). As soon as that something gets identified or predicated or asserted or metaphorized as a certain something (e.g., a *hyper-being* cause) or as doing a certain something (e.g., causing all things), it ceases to be absolutely ineffable. To provide the rules that govern such identifying or predicating or asserting or metaphorizing is therefore to show how that which is so identified or predicated or asserted or metaphorized is not absolutely ineffable.

This first section of the paper identifies and analyzes Dionysian expressions of inexpressibility *within the speech act*, more specifically within referring and predicating expressions. It focuses on two such grammatical techniques: *hypernames*, the identification of *hyper*-prefixed divine names with God; and *negation*, the negation of divine names of God. It asks whether these techniques are governed by Searle's rule of reference and predication. And it answers that they are so governed, concluding that the Dionysian God therefore is relatively effable.

It is the simplicity of Searle's theories of reference and predication that make them so useful for the identification and analysis of ineffability discourse within the speech act. In the case of acts of singular definite reference, the referring expression itself must contain an identifying description that serves to pick out or identify the object in question (or the speaker must be able to produce such an identifying description on demand).⁶¹

- (1) [Referring expression] R is to be uttered only in the context of a sentence (or some similar stretch of discourse) the utterance of which could be the performance of some illocutionary act;
- (2) R is to be uttered only if there exists an object X such that either R contains an identifying description of X or [the speaker] S is able to supplement R with an identifying description of X, and such that, in the utterance of R, S intends to pick out or identify X to [the hearer] H;
- (3) The utterance of R counts as the identification or picking out of X to (or for) H ([25]⁶²).

⁶¹ [25], p. 88. Although an account of singular definite referring expressions is avowedly "incomplete," Searle believes it constitutes a necessary point of origin for other kinds of referring expressions (p. 72).

⁶² If I had the space here, I would side with Searle against his causal-theory opponents: not only do the causal critiques of descriptivism fail to hit their mark, but the causal theory of reference in fact depends upon and therefore is a type of descriptive theory of reference. But this hardly matters for the sake of an analysis of referring expressions *in texts* since such an analysis can only proceed by way of the analysis of identifying descriptions. Put differently, textual identifying descriptions are linguistic-empirical phenomena that may be identified and analyzed using concrete tools, whereas casual "connection" is not (unless it is rendered in terms of possession and provision of identifying descriptions, which is to confirm

And in the case of predication, the predicate expression must count as raising the question of its truth or falsity with respect to the object referred to by the referring expression (in the mode of the utterance's illocutionary force) ([25], pp. 122–124).

- (1) P [predicate expression] is to be uttered only in the context of a sentence or other stretch of discourse T the utterance of which could be the performance of some illocutionary act;
- (2) P is to be uttered in T only if the utterance of T involves a successful reference to [object] X;
- (3) P is to be uttered only if X is of a type or category such that it is logically possible for P to be true or false of X;
- (4) The utterance of P counts as raising the question of the truth or falsity of P of X (in a certain illocutionary mode determined by the illocutionary device of the sentence) ([25], p 127).

With these rules this paper will ask whether the Dionysian corpus successfully refers to and predicates of a God that is therefore not (absolutely) ineffable.⁶³

One of the more prevalent and important ways in which the Dionysian corpus expresses inexpressibility at the referential-predicative level involves the use of *hyper* (ὑπερ) as prefix or preposition. Not only is *hyper* ubiquitous in the Dionysian corpus;⁶⁴ it is considered by some to be “the key to the central dialectic in Dionysian thought” [3], p. 193. The very opening line of the *Mystical Theology* hymns the Trinity as *hyper*-being and *hyper*-god and *hyper*-good (MT 1.1, 997A). *Divine Names* 2.3 specifies “the things unified (ἡνωμένα) of the whole

Searle's claim that the causal-historical theory of reference is just a variant form of the descriptive theory of reference. See [24], pp. 244–246.

⁶³ A quick preliminary issue is first in order: since every identifying description serves not only to pick out a referent but also to raise the question of the truth of itself of the referent, and since every predication serves not only to raise the question of the truth of itself of the referent but also to pick out the referent, referential and predicative techniques will be considered at one and the same time.

⁶⁴ A Thesaurus Linguae Graecae search reveals 728 total occurrences of *hyper* in the Dionysian corpus, 559 of which are *hyper*-prefixed terms. Much less frequent are the preposition *epekeina* (22 occurrences) and the comparative *kreitton* (22 occurrences).

divinity” as “the *hyper*-good, the *hyper*-god, the *hyper*-being, the *hyper*-life, and the *hyper*-wise and whatever else is of the *hyper*-having removal (τῆς ὑπεροχικῆς ἐστὶν ἀφαίρέσεως)” (DN 2.3, 640B). And *Divine Names* 11.6 informs the reader that when Dionysius speaks of God as “that which gives substance (ὑποστάτην) to life-itself or peace or power” (rather than as life-itself or peace-itself or power-itself), he does so “as *hyper*-beingly *hyper*-be-ing *hyper* all and the first beings” (DN 11.6, 953BC). What does the Dionysian corpus mean in referring to and predicating of God with such *hypernames*?

Given the usual translation of *hyper* as *beyond*, scholars generally read these *hypernames* as indicating transcendence beyond the name that has been *hyper*-prefixed. But Liddell and Scott’s *Greek-English Lexicon* suggests that when *hyper* is used with respect to place and measure, it can be translated not only as *beyond* but also as *over*, *above*, and *exceeding*:

1. with respect to place in reference to motion: *over*, *beyond*;
2. with respect to measure: *above*, *exceeding*, *beyond*;
3. with respect to number: *above*, *upwards*;
4. with respect to time: *beyond* (i.e., *before*, *earlier than*);
5. in some dialects: *on behalf of*, *concerning* ([16], p. 1858).

As is the case with most prepositions, these different meanings reflect different spatial relations, two of which are principal here: a sense of being beyond or across something (horizontal distance), and a sense of being over or above something (vertical height). And these two different spatial relations convey two different logical meanings: in the first case, the complete inapplicability or falsity of that which one is beyond or across; in the second case, an excessive measure or manner of that which one is over or above. Moreover, these two different logical meanings suggest two different senses of transcendence: removal beyond and superiority above.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Very similarly, the spatial direction of *up* has two different metaphorical applications in everyday discourse, as it is used to convey both a sense of *more* and a sense of *unknown*. According to Lakoff and Johnson, these two metaphors—*more is up* and *unknown is up*—have very different experiential bases: the former, that of

And it is not merely the case that *hyper* itself is grammatically ambiguous; it is also the case that the Dionysian corpus deploys *hypernames* ambiguously, sometimes to stress *preeminence above*; other times, *removal beyond*; and rarely to mean one to the exclusion of the other. *Divine Names* 4.3, for example, is not clear about whether hyper-prefixed and alpha-privative divine names, when said of the *hyper-being* good, denote excess above or exceeding beyond the name in question.

If the good is *hyper* all beings, as it is, the formless produces-form. And in it alone non-being (ἀνούσιον) is excessive (ὑπερβολή) being, non-life (ἄζωον) is preeminent (ὑπερέχουσα) life, and non-intellect (ἄνουν) is exceeding (ὑπεραίρουσα) wisdom, and whatever is in the good is of the preeminent (ὑπεροχικῆς) form-production of that which is formless. And, if it is lawful to say, non being (μὴ ὄν) itself desires the good *hyper* all beings, and strives somehow to be in the good, and is truly *hyper-being* with respect to the removal of all (τὴν πάντων ἀφαίρεσιν) (*DN* 4.3, 697A).⁶⁶

And *Mystical Theology* 1.1 uses several different *hyper-light* variations, each of which is ambiguous between a superabundant excess of light and a complete removal beyond light (thereby rendering the first three hyper-prefixed names ambiguous as well).

Trinity *hyper-being* and *hyper-god* and *hyper-good*, overseer of Christians in divine wisdom, guide us to the *hyper-unknown* (ὑπεράγνωστον) and *hyper-brilliant* (ὑπερφᾶη) highest summit of mystical scripture; there the simple, absolute, and unchanged mysteries of theology are veiled by the *hyper-light* (ὑπερφωτον) darkness of hidden silence, *hyper-illuminating* (ὑπερλάμποντα) the *hyper-most-*

observing rising and falling levels of piles and fluids; the latter, that of finding it easier to grasp something and look at it if it is on the ground. See [14], p. 21; [15], pp. 51, 54. For Dionysius' use of height as a metaphor for divine transcendence, see section III below.

⁶⁶ I've gone with some of the more standard translations of *hyperbolē* (excess), *hyperexō* (preeminence), and *hyperairō* (exceeding) here. But note that if the *hyper* prefix is retained on each of these terms, they translate, respectively, more like *hyper-throwing*, *hyper-having*, and *hyper-raising*.

appearing (ὑπερφανέστατον) in the darkest and *hyper*-filling (ὑπερπληροῦντα) the sightless minds with *hyper*-beauty (ὑπερκάλων) beauties in the wholly imperceptible and invisible (MT 1.1, 997B).

What does this ambiguity entail for an analysis of the grammatical technique of *hypernames* as an expression of inexpressibility? Provisionally, it suggests that *hypernames* frustrate reference and predication in not one or two but three different ways. Read as significations of excessive measure, *hypernames* fail both to refer to and predicate of God insofar as they attribute to God some property in excess of its greatest possible degree. It is crucial here to understand this: taken excessively, *hypernames* are not mere superlatives; they are *super-superlatives* that immeasurably exceed the maximum possible (superlative) degree. With respect to some divine name *dn* they indicate that God is *more-dn-than-maximum-dn*.⁶⁷ *Hypernames* therefore fail both to refer to and to predicate of God for the simple reason that, according to the grammatical logic of comparatives and superlatives, something cannot possess more of some attribute than the greatest possible measure of that attribute. Such *more-dn-than-maximum-dn* phrases therefore cannot serve as either individuating identifying descriptions or logically possible categories. And if we read *hypernames* as significations of utter inapplicability, then they fail to refer to and predicate of God for a different and simpler reason. In this case *hypernames* indicate that the divine name in question simply does not count as an identifying description or predicate term since the object of reference and subject of predication is entirely beyond it—they signify, with respect to some divine name *dn*, that God is *beyond-dn*. Moreover, when such *hypernames* are conjoined in rapid succession they imply that no divine name may count as an identifying description or predicate term of God, that God is beyond the domain of all differentiation and therefore cannot be identified or predicated as *anything*—they signify that God is *beyond-all-dn*. And it is by virtue of the ambiguity between these two interpretations that *hypernames* ostensibly frustrate reference and predication in a third way: if

⁶⁷ See, for example, [4].

hypernames do not at all apply to God, then God cannot possess them in excessive superabundance; but if God possesses them in excessive superabundance, then God cannot be utterly beyond them. Such a contradiction obviously renders *hypernames* unsuitable as both identifying descriptions that unambiguously identify and predicate terms that are logically possible. It is therefore necessary to turn to a second referential-predicative technique to resolve this ambiguity.

This second, very prevalent, very important means by which Dionysius expresses inexpressibility at the referential-predicative level is negation. It is crucial immediately to observe, though, that there are two principal terms for and types of negation in the Dionysian corpus: *aphairesis* (removal), a method of removing predicate-terms; and *apophasis* (negation), a logic for interpreting predicate-terms preeminently rather than privatively.⁶⁸ And it is important next to note that the former is employed much more frequently than the latter: whereas *aphairesis/aphairō* shows up a total of twenty-six times in the corpus, *apophasis/apophaskō* makes just eight appearances, only two of which can be found in the “apophatic” treatise *Mystical Theology*, neither of which falls after the introductory chapter.⁶⁹ The term *apophasis* is therefore entirely absent from the central methodological and performative chapters of the *Mystical Theology* (while *aphairesis* is used twelve times in these chapters and fourteen times in the entire treatise). Instead, the chapters on method (chs. 2–3) present *aphairesis* as the privileged means of hymning the *hyper*-being God, and the subsequent performative chapters (chs. 4–5) implement this method,

⁶⁸ In translating from the Dionysian corpus, I translate *aphairesis* as *removal* and *apophasis* as *negation*, as seems to be common translational practice outside of Dionysian studies. (Note that the Paulist Press translation translates *aphairesis* as *denial*; this, however, does not properly preserve the semantic distinction between *aphairesis* and *apophasis*.) But in my own prose I leave the Greek term *apophasis* un-translated so that the English term *negation* can function inclusively of both *apophasis* and *aphairesis*. For stylistic ease, I also sometimes translate *aphairesis* as *removal* in my own prose.

⁶⁹ The register of Greek terms in the critical edition of the Dionysian corpus lists twenty-six occurrences of ἀφαίρεσις/ἀφαίρεω and eight occurrences of ἀπόφασις/ἀποφάσκω. A Thesaurus Linguae Graecae search reveals an additional adjectival appearance of *apophasis* (ἀποφατικάς, at CH 2.3, 140D).

hymning the *hyper*-being God through the removal of perceptible and intelligible properties from God. Together these chapters present the following picture of *aphairesis*. *Aphairesis* hymns God by removing “beings” from it. *Aphairesis* removes these beings sequentially, from last or furthest to first or closest: first alpha-privative prefixed intelligible properties (e.g., being-less, life-less), then sensible properties, then intelligible and trinitarian properties, and finally properties pertaining to thinking and speaking about God. *Aphairesis* removes such predicate-terms by means of narrow-scope predicate-term negation in which negative particles precede and therefore apply to the predicate-terms alone (rather than the entire predicate).⁷⁰ And *aphairesis* removes “all” beings from God, yet paradoxically reveals an underlying “statue,” thereby yielding true “knowing” and “seeing” of the unknowable divine darkness.

We pray to come to this *hyper*-light darkness, and through not-seeing and not-knowing to see and to know not to see and to know that which is *hyper* sight and knowledge itself—for this is truly seeing and knowing—and [we pray] to hymn *hyper*-beingly the *hyper*-being through the removal of all beings (τῆς πάντων τῶν ὄντων ἀφαίρεσως), just as those making a life-like statue lift-out (ἐξαίρουντες) every obstacle to the pure view of the hidden and reveal the hidden beauty in it by the removal alone (τῇ ἀφαίρεσει μόνῃ). It is necessary, I think, to hymn the removals (τὰς ἀφαίρεσεις) oppositely from the positions; for we posit these beginning from the first things and descending through the middle things to the last things; but then we remove everything (τὰ πάντα ἀφαιρούμεν) making the search for the highest principles from the last things, so that we may unhiddenly know this unknowing that is covered by all the knowledge among all beings, and we may see this *hyper*-being darkness that is hidden by all the light among beings (MT 2, 1025AB).

⁷⁰ According to Aristotle, both infinite or indefinite names (e.g., not-wise) and alpha privatives (e.g., wise-less or un-wise) are instances of predicate-term negation. See Aristotle’s *Categories* 11b17ff, 11b38ff, 13b12ff; *On Interpretation* 19b20ff, 20a31ff; and *Prior Analytics* 51b5ff. See also [10], pp. 6—21, 102—103, 110.

When *apophasis* does make its appearances in the Dionysian corpus, it does so not as a method of negating predicate-terms but as a logic of interpreting negative predicate-terms “*hyperochically*” (preeminently) rather than “*steretically*” (privatively). This understanding of *apophasis* comes out particularly well when several of the passages in which it appears are read together. According to *Celestial Hierarchy* 2.3, *apophatic* predicate-terms such as *invisible*, *infinite*, and *inseparable* signify not what God is but what God is not. In hymning God as invisible, the theologians deny that God possesses the attribute of visibility (with respect to being) rather than affirming that God possesses the attribute of invisibility.

[... God] is *hyper*-cosmically hymned in negative (ἀποφατικαῖς) revelations by the scriptures themselves, named invisible (ἀόρατον), infinite (ἄπειρον), ungraspable (ἄχωρητον), and that which signifies not what it is but what it is not (*CH* 2.3, 140D–141A).

Divine Names 7.1 then furthers this, asserting that *apophatic* predicate-terms such as *invisible*, *ineffable*, *unnamable*, *incomprehensible*, and *inscrutable* indicate not God’s lack but God’s excess. In calling God invisible, the theologians attest to God’s abounding luminosity (i.e., all-shining light) rather than God’s deprivation of (ordinary) visibility: God is invisible in the sense that God is other than (ordinary) visibility *qua* excessive or exceeding visibility.

[...] it is customary for theologians to negate (ἀποφάσκειν) the things of privation (τὰ τῆς στέρησεως) with respect to God in an opposite sense. Thus, scripture calls the all-shining light invisible (ἀόρατόν), and the many-hymned and many-named ineffable (ἄρρητον) and unnamable (ἄνώνυμον), and that which is present in all things and discoverable from all things incomprehensible and inscrutable (*DN* 7.1, 865BC).

And *Epistle* 4 maintains that affirmations about Jesus’ love for humanity have the power of preeminent negation (*hyperochikēs apophaseōs*). In saying that Jesus was non-human, we maintain that Jesus is *hyperochē* or *hyper* human: Jesus is not-human in the sense that Jesus is other than (ordinary) humanity *qua* excessive or exceeding humanity.

Why should one go through the remaining things, which are numerous? Through them the one who sees divinely will know *hyper* mind that the affirmations (καταφασκόμενα) about Jesus' love for humanity have the power of preeminent negation (ὑπεροχικῆς ἀποφάσεως). So we may say briefly, he was not human (οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπος), not as non human (μὴ ἄνθρωπος), but as from humans being beyond humans and as *hyper* human having truly become human, and, as for the rest, not having done the things of God as God, nor the things of humans as human, but administering for us a new theandric activity as God having become human (EP 4, 1072BC).⁷¹

Two phrases are here of crucial significance. The first, *to negate the things of privation*, states that *apophatic* negation must be sharply differentiated from privative negation (*sterēsis*, or less commonly *elleipsis*). The second, *preeminent negation*, shows that this difference must be understood semantically—*apophatic* negation states preeminence (*hyperochē*), not privation (*steresis*). Thus “negating the things of privation” does not change the syntactic form of a predicate-term negation (which can be of either the alpha-privative (*unwise*) or indefinite (*not-wise*) variety). Rather, it indicates that the predicate-term negation in question should be interpreted preeminently rather than privatively. And as passages such as *Divine Names* 7.2 suggest, when negative predicate-terms are applied to God, we should always interpret them preeminently rather than privatively.

But as I have often said, one must intellect the divine divinely. For one must arrange in order non-intellection (ἄνουν) and non-sensibility (ἀναίσθητον) of God according to preeminence (ὑπεροχήν) and not defect (ἐλλειψιν), just as we attribute non-reason (ἄλογον) to that which is *hyper* reason, non-perfection (ἀτέλειαν) to that which is *hyper*-perfection and *pro*-perfection, and non-manifest (ἀναφῆ) and non-visible (ἀόρατον) darkness to the inaccessible light according to a preeminence (ὑπεροχήν) of visible light (DN 7.2, 869A; Cf., EP 1, 1065A).

⁷¹ Note that it is the individual who sees divinely *hyper*-mind who knows this. More will be said about such *hyper-nous knowing* in the next two sections.

Taken together, all of these passages in general and both of these phrases in particular reveal Dionysius' *apophatic* logic of negation: negative predicate-terms, read *apophatically*, indicate preeminence rather than privation. To say that God is not some divine name is to say not that God is lacking some divine name but that God preeminently possesses some divine name.

One could initially say therefore that *aphairesis* and *apophasis* are referentially-predicatively troublesome in opposing ways: whereas *aphairesis* turns away identifying descriptions and predicate-terms, thereby effectively refusing to identify and predicate anything of God (*beyond-dn*), *apophasis* identifies and predicates an excessive measure of divine names of God, thereby associating problematic identifying descriptions and predicate-terms with God (*more-dn-than-maximum-dn*). But there are two difficulties with such a neat reading. On the one hand, *apophasis* interprets that which *aphairesis* removes—the identifying descriptions and predicate-terms that *aphairesis* turns away are to be interpreted *apophatically*.⁷² (To put it in the above imagery of the

⁷² See my paper “Not Not” for the claims that (1) *aphairesis* is properly contrasted with *thesis* as the difference between a method that removes properties from God and a method that posits properties of God, and (2a) *apophasis* is properly contrasted *syntactically* with *kataphasis* as the difference between a negative predicate-term and a positive predicate-term, and (2b) *semantically* with *sterēsis* as the difference between a negative predicate-term that signifies excess and a negative predicate-term that signifies lack [12]. This is how I render these distinctions in tabular form:

	Method	Logic
Positive	<i>Thesis</i> : the position of a positive (<i>kataphatic</i>) predicate-term of God (e.g., God is wise)	<i>Kataphasis</i> : a positive predicate-term (e.g., wise)
Negative	<i>Aphairesis</i> : the removal of a negative (<i>apophatic</i>) predicate-term from God (e.g., God is not-wise)	<i>Apophasis</i> : a negative predicate-term of excess (e.g., not-wise <i>qua hyper</i> wise)
		<i>Sterēsis</i> : a negative predicate-term of lack (e.g., not-wise <i>qua</i> lacking wisdom)

statue, the *aphairetic* removal of all beings reveals an underlying *apophatic-hyperochic* statue.⁷³) On the other hand, *apophatic*

⁷³ MT 2, 1025AB. Here are two other pieces of evidence in support of my claim that *aphairetic* removal discloses divine preeminence. First, Dionysius' discussion of the two ways of approaching God at *Divine Names* 7.3 combines *aphairesis* and *hyperochē* in one and the same way (contrasting it to the way of causation):

It is never true to say that we know God in its nature since this is unknown and *hyper*-raised (ὑπεράρῳν) all reason and intellect; but rather out of the order of all beings as projected out of it and as having some likenesses and similarities to its divine paradigms, we approach, as far as we have power, to that which is beyond (ἐπέκεινα) all by a way and order in the removal (ἀφαίρεσει) and *hyper*-having (ὑπεροχῇ) of all, and in the cause of all. Therefore God is known in all and apart (χωρὶς) from all (DN 7.3, 869D–872A).

In this passage Dionysius says that one of the two ways of approaching God not only removes properties of God but also interprets these removed properties *hyperochically* (rather than *steretically*). He says that *aphairesis* itself states preeminence. Thus he effectively says that removed properties should be interpreted *apophatically*.

Second, Dionysius twice conjoins the terms *aphairesis* and *hyperochē* together in the phrase *hyperochē aphairesis*.

It is permissible for no one who is a lover of the truth *hyper* all truth to hymn the thearchic *hyper*-beingness—whatever is the *hyper*-subsistence (ὑπερύπαρξις) of the *hyper*-goodness—as word, power, mind, life, or being, but as *hyper*-havingly removed (ὑπεροχικῶς ἀφαιρεμένην) from all condition, motion, life, imagination, opinion, name, word, thinking, intellection, being, rest, foundation, unity, limit, non-limit, and whatever else has being (DN 1.5, 593C).

As we showed in the *Theological Outlines* with many examples from the sacred writings, the things unified of the whole divinity are the *hyper*-good, the *hyper*-god, the *hyper*-being, the *hyper*-life, and the *hyper*-wise and whatever else is of the *hyper*-having removal (τῆς ὑπεροχικῆς ἔστιν ἀφαίρεσεως) [...] (DN 2.3, 640B).

In these passages Dionysius indicates that *aphairesis* states *hyperochic* preeminence. To remove from God condition, motion, and life is to interpret these

interpretation is *hyperochic*, where a sense of preeminent-having is balanced by a sense of beyond-having. (This is so since *hyperochē* is composed of the preposition *hyper* and the verb *to have* (*echō*), and the preposition *hyper* is ambiguous between preeminent excess and exceeding beyond.⁷⁴) At second blush, therefore, Dionysian negation appears to be referentially-predicatively troublesome in the same three ways as Dionysian *hypernames*. But in fact it is *hyperochē* that provides the key to resolving this ambiguity in general and to demonstrating how to refer to and predicate of the Dionysian God in particular.

If the Dionysian corpus deploys *hyperochē* at all like other Neoplatonists did, then it means by it the preeminence of causes over their effects (see [16], [11]). This is not to say that causes participate in their effects but rather that causes pre-exist and therefore pre-contain their effects. This, the Dionysian corpus tells us several times.⁷⁵ But what it tells us more often is that it is the divine-names-themselves that are the causes of the properties they effect: life-itself is the cause of the

properties *hyperochically*, just as to name God as *hyper-good*, *hyper-god*, and *hyper-being* is implicitly to remove these names (in their non *hyper*-prefixed form) with respect to being. To *aphairetically* remove in a *hyperochic* manner is therefore to remove *apophatically*.

⁷⁴ It is also so since Dionysius uses *hyperochē* ambiguously. See, for example, *DN* 12.4, 972AB; *DN* 11.1, 949AB; *EP* 5, 1073A; *EP* 9.5, 1112C; *CH* 13.4, 304C; *DN* 7.1, 865B.

⁷⁵ For Dionysius' claim that causes do not participate in their effects, see *DN* 2.8, 645D; *DN* 4.7, 701C–704A; *DN* 9.6, 913CD. (Note, though, that *DN* 2.6, 644BC indicates that divine names themselves give themselves whole and the same to that which participates in them.) And here are Dionysius' terminological varieties of precontainment: *pro-hyparxis* (*DN* 4.10, 708B); *pro-hypostasis* (*DN* 1.4, 592D; *DN* 4.7, 704A; *DN* 4.12, 709D; *DN* 5.5, 820B; *DN* 5.6, 820D; *DN* 5.8, 824C; *DN* 6.3, 857B; *DN* 7.2, 869B); *pro-(en)eimi* (*DN* 2.8, 645D; *DN* 4.14, 712C; *DN* 5.5, 820A; *DN* 5.5, 820B; *DN* 5.8, 821D; *DN* 5.8, 824A; *EP* 9.5, 1112C), *pro-echō* (*DN* 1.6, 596B; *DN* 2.10, 648C; *DN* 4.6, 701B; *DN* 4.7, 704A; *DN* 5.5, 820B; *DN* 5.8, 824B; *DN* 5.9, 825A; *DN* 5.10, 825B; *DN* 7.2, 869B; *DN* 8.2, 889D; *DN* 8.6, 893C; *DN* 9.4, 912C; *DN* 13.1, 977B), *pro-lambanō* (*DN* 1.4, 593A; *DN* 1.5, 593A; *DN* 1.7, 597A; *DN* 4.12, 709B; *DN* 5.4, 817D; *DN* 5.8, 824B; *DN* 5.8, 824C; *DN* 7.2, 869A; *DN* 7.2, 869B; *DN* 7.4, 872C; *DN* 9.10, 917A; *DN* 13.3, 980B).

property of life; being-itself, the cause of being.⁷⁶ And what it never tells us is that God is not cause of all things.⁷⁷ Put all this together and

⁷⁶ When Dionysius needs to differentiate between divine names *qua* causes and divine names *qua* effects, he does it the way any good Platonist would—by *auto*-prefixing the divine names *qua* causes (see, for example, *DN* 2.8, 645CD; *DN* 5.5, 820B; *DN* 5.5, 820BC; *DN* 11.6, 953C–956B). In fact, Dionysius sometimes employs three different grammatical devices to designate three different respects of divine names: divine names are prefixed with *hyper* (beyond) to refer to them as they are precontained in and subanced out of God prior to or independent of their causal roles; they are prefixed with *auto* (itself) to refer to them as causes apart from the participation of beings in them; and they are suffixed with *ōsis* (making)—or, less frequently, *poiēsis* (producing), *gonos* (begetting), or *dōros* (giving)—to refer to them as they actually flow forth to participating beings. *DN* 11.6 is the most sustained treatment of these distinctions. But for passages that *auto*-prefix divine names, see also *DN* 2.1, 636C; *DN* 2.8, 645D; *DN* 4.16, 713C; *DN* 4.21, 724C; *DN* 5.5, 820ABC; *DN* 6.1, 825C; *DN* 6.1, 856B; *DN* 6.2, 856C; *DN* 6.3, 857C; *DN* 7.1, 865B, 868A; *DN* 8.2, 889D; *DN* 9.6, 916A; *DN* 9.10, 917A; *DN* 11.2, 949C. And for passages that refer to particular divine names as the sources or causes of particular properties, see also *DN* 4.1, 693B; *DN* 4.4, 697CD; *DN* 4.7, 701C; *DN* 4.12, 709CD; *DN* 5.1, 816B; *DN* 5.2, 816C; *DN* 6.3, 857B; *DN* 7.1, 868A; *DN* 8.7 83D–896A; *DN* 8.9, 896D; *DN* 9.6, 913D; *DN* 9.8, 916B; *DN* 10.3, 940A; *DN* 11.1, 948D–949A; *DN* 12.4, 972AB; *DN* 13.2, 977C–980A. And for other uses of *ōsis*-, *poiēsis*-, *gonos*-, and *dōros*-suffixed divine names, see also *DN* 2.4, 640D; *DN* 2.5, 641D–644B; *DN* 2.7, 645A; *DN* 2.11, 649AB, 652A; *DN* 4.7, 701C; *DN* 11.6, 956AB.

⁷⁷ Plenty of passages attribute causal activity of the Dionysian God. Consider, for example, the following four: *CH* 4.1, 177C declares that the *hyper*-being thearchy hypostatizes the beings of all beings, bringing them into being; *EH* 3.III.4, 429C says sacred scripture teaches, among other things, the generated constitution and order of things from God; *DN* 1.3, 589C, “speaking simply,” asserts that God is the source and cause of every life and being; and *DN* 8.2, 889D–892A makes it clear that even though God is in some sense before and beyond power, God is still the cause of every power. Moreover, not a single passage denies causal activity of the Dionysian God. Not even in the concluding chapters of the *Mystical Theology* (chs. 4–5), wherein Dionysius removes every ostensibly conceivable property from God, does Dionysius remove from God any variation of *aitia* (cause), *archē* (source/principle), *hypostasis* (substance, give substance to), or *hyperaxis* (constitute, make subsist). In fact, all the properties that are removed in these chapters are removed from a God that is said to be at once “cause of all and being *hyper* all.” Further, even when *Divine Names* 1.5 predicates thearchy itself as *hyper-hyperaxis*,

this is what you get: God is the cause of all things by means of his divine names; these divine-names-themselves pre-exist and pre-contain the properties that they source (in a manner that is *hyper*-unified and *hyper*-existent); these divine-names-themselves do not participate in the properties that they source. Add to this what we now know about Dionysian negation and the following picture emerges: to interpret *apophatic* predicate-terms *hyperochically* is to see that *aphairesis* removes from God the divine names *qua* properties to reveal a *hyper*-being God that pre-contains the divine names, which themselves pre-contain their effects. Combine this with what we know about Dionysian *hypernames* and the picture gets clearer: *hyper*-prefixed divine names function to indicate both that God is completely beyond the divine names *qua* effects (which are things of being) and that God preeminently possesses the divine names *qua* causes (which are *hyper*-being). Put differently, God is not the divine names insofar as God does not participate in the properties that they source, but God is divine names themselves as the *hyper*-unified, *hyper*-existent sources of these properties.

This disambiguation makes good sense of the evidence already presented—*apophatic* interpretation is *hyperochic* not *steretic*, *hyperochē* registers both transcendence and preeminence, the Dionysian God is the cause of all, divine names themselves are divine causal powers, divine names themselves are pre-contained in God, divine names themselves are *hyper*-unified and *hyper*-existent, divine names themselves are not removed from God,⁷⁸ the properties that divine names

it goes on to say that this *hyper-hyparxis thearchy* is the *hyparxis* of goodness and *hypostasis* of the whole (DN 1.5, 593CD). And further still, although nine passages in the corpus prefix *archē* with *hyper* (DN 1.3, 589D; DN 4.10, 708A; DN 11.6, 953D–956A; CH 1.2, 121B; CH 7.4, 212C; CH 9.1, 257B; CH 10.1, 273A; CH 13.4, 304C; EP 2, 1069A), none calls into doubt the claim that God is cause and source of all (and all but one employ some variation of the phrase *hyper-source source*, thereby suggesting that the *hyper*-being God is a source that is preeminent to ordinary sources, i.e., a *hyper*-being source).

⁷⁸ When Dionysius does remove divine names from God in *Mystical Theology* 5, what he removes is only the properties that the divine names themselves source, not the divine names themselves. This is so for three reasons. Syntactically, these terms are not *auto*-prefixed (as divine names themselves often are). Semantically,

themselves source are pre-contained in the divine names themselves in a *hyper*-unified manner, and so on. This disambiguation also makes good sense of the evidence yet to be presented—that the *hyper-ousia* God may be known *hyper-nous*, and that this God dwells on an enshrouded divine summit that may be ascended. But here I will argue that this disambiguation makes good sense of the grammatical-logical form of *aphairetic* removal. As indicated above, the logical form of Dionysian negation is narrow-scope predicate-term negation, which, according to Aristotle fails to obey the law of the excluded middle just in case either the referring expression is vacuous or the predicate expression is a category mistake. This means that, if mind is a category mistake of God, then there is no contradiction when Dionysius asserts at the beginning of *Mystical Theology* 4 that *God is not mind-less* and then later asserts in *Mystical Theology* 5 that *God is not mind*. But it means more, since it is not the middle but the *non*-middle that Dionysius excludes.⁷⁹ Both mind and mind-less are false of God since God is *hyper* or *hyperochē* mind. And God is *hyper* or *hyperochē* mind as the cause of mind, the *hyper*-unified and *hyper*-existent divine name mind-itself that precontains its effects.⁸⁰

these terms are referred to as “beings” (and therefore cannot refer to divine names themselves, which are *hyper* being), and also seem to be of a similar logical type as the perceptible symbols removed in the preceding chapter (which, unlike divine names, do not possess a causal respect). And logically, as mentioned above, if divine names themselves are removed from God then causality itself must be removed from God; but causality itself is not removed from God; so the divine names themselves cannot be removed from God.

⁷⁹ Laurence Horn, explicating the position of Otto Jespersen, provides the following example of an excluded non-middle: If someone believes that *War and Peace* is an excellent book, she may in certain circumstances deny both that *War and Peace* is a good book (since it is more than just good) and that *War and Peace* is not a good book (since it is not a bad book) [10], p. 204. See here Horn’s treatment of scalar predication (pp. 204–267). But note that Horn believes scalar predicates are pragmatically, not semantically, ambiguous—i.e., in certain contexts they can be used to mean “exactly *p*” rather than “at least *p*” (pp. 243, 250, 266–267).

⁸⁰ Another way of understanding *hyperochē* mind is as *mind hyper being* (or *hyper-being mind*, or *hyper-mind mind*, or *mind hyper-mind*—Dionysius uses all such combinations). It’s not surprising, then, to find Dionysius not only making frequent

The Dionysian God can therefore be unambiguously identified and logically predicated as, on the one hand, the *hyper*-being cause of all, the source of the properties in which beings participate, and on the other hand, not itself a being, utterly beyond the things of being. The Dionysian techniques of *hypernames* and *negation* are therefore governed by the following rules:

- Dionysian Rule of Reference: God is properly identified as that which cannot be identified by *anything* of being (i.e., the properties sourced by the divine names themselves), but possesses of everything of being in *hyper*-being preeminence (i.e., precontains the properties sourced by the divine names themselves).
- Dionysian Rule of Predication: God is properly predicated as that which cannot be predicated by *anything* of being (i.e., the properties sourced by the divine names themselves), but possesses everything of being in *hyper*-being preeminence (i.e., precontains the properties sourced by the divine names themselves).

These rules constitute an intra-textual logic or grammar, regulating Pseudo-Dionysius' otherwise antinomian techniques of reference and predication. These rules show that the Dionysian God is not absolutely ineffable.

2. Expressions of Inexpressibility at the Speech Act

and key use of the adverb *hyperbeingly* and the formula *hyper-dn dn* (e.g., *hyper-being being*, *goodness hyper-good*) but also objecting to the application of things of being both to the divine names themselves and to the persons of the Trinity. For uses of *hyperbeingly*, see *DN* 1.3, 589C; *DN* 2.10, 648CD; *DN* 2.11, 649BCD; *DN* 4.7, 704B; *DN* 5.8, 824AB; *DN* 9.8, 916B; *DN* 11.6, 953C; *DN* 13.3, 980BC; *DN* 13.3, 980D–981A; *CH* 7.4, 212D; *CH* 9.4, 261D; *MT* 1.2, 1000A; *EP* 1, 1065A; *EP* 4, 1072AB. For uses of *hyper-dn dn* formulas, see *DN* 1.1, 588B; *DN* 1.3, 589C; *DN* 2.4, 641A; *DN* 2.11, 649C; *DN* 4.7, 704A; *DN* 5.1, 816B. And for objections to the application of things of being to that which is *hyper* being, see the following: *DN* 2.7, 645AB; *DN* 7.1, 865C–868A; *DN* 7.3, 869C–872A; *DN* 11.1, 949AB; *DN* 13.3, 981A; *MT* 1.1, 997B–1000A; *MT* 1.2, 1000AB; *CH* 2.3, 140D–141A; *CH* 13.4, 261C; *MT* 2, 1025AB; *EP* 1, 1065AB; *EP* 5, 1073A–1076A.

This second section of the paper identifies and analyzes Dionysian expressions of inexpressibility *at the level of the speech act*, more specifically with respect to illocutionary force. It focuses on two such grammatical techniques: *assertions of ineffability* and *directions of ineffability*. It asks whether these techniques are governed by Searle's conditions of illocutionary force. And It answers that they are so governed, concluding that the Dionysian God therefore is relatively effable.

Searle's theory of illocutionary force rests upon the simple yet revolutionary insight that the speech act is "the basic or minimal unit of linguistic communication" [25], p. 16. Every saying is a doing; every speech act therefore contains not only some *propositional content* (*p*) that is said but also some *illocutionary force* (*F*) that is done. One motivation for this distinction, according to Searle, is that it enables us "to account for and represent the generally overlooked distinction between illocutionary negation and propositional negation": while in most cases negation is of propositional content alone (e.g., it's not raining), in some cases negation is instead of illocutionary force (e.g., I don't say it's raining) or even of both propositional content and the illocutionary force (e.g., I don't say it's not raining) [25], p. 32. Another motivation, one that is of particular use in the identification and analysis of antinomian illocutionary techniques, is that the distinction between illocutionary force and propositional content enables an analysis of the conditions of successful illocutionary acts. These include not only an essential condition, which concerns what the speaker does (overall illocutionary point), and a propositional content condition, which concerns what the speaker says, but also a preparatory condition, which pertains to what the speaker implies, and a sincerity condition, which pertains to what the speaker expresses [25], pp. 66–67. These conditions therefore make possible an understanding of the ways in which illocutionary acts can be unsuccessful ("self-defeating"), the following five of which are itemized:

- The illocutionary point cannot be achieved on the propositional content (e.g., "All my assertions are false");

- The illocutionary point cannot be achieved with the required mode of achievement of F on the propositional content (e.g., “I order you to disobey all orders”);
- The propositional content is inadequate (e.g., “I predict that John Paul the Second has been elected as Pope”);
- The preparatory conditions are impossible to presuppose (e.g., “I promise to do it, and I cannot keep this promise”);
- The psychological state is impossible to express (e.g., “I apologize for that course of action which benefited you”) [26], pp. 151–152.

Here we have what is probably the most useful instrument for the identification and analysis of illocutionary techniques. Its use, though, obviously requires prior determination of the illocutionary force type of the speech act in question. And so, Searle’s taxonomy of illocutionary force—which is derived from the primary criteria of illocutionary point, direction of fit, and expressed psychological state [23]—is also necessary:

Table 1: Searle’s Illocutionary Act Taxonomy

	Illocutionary Point	Direction of Fit	Psychological State	Propositional Content
Assertives	Commit speaker to truth of expressed proposition	Word-to-world	Belief	Any proposition
Directives	Attempt by speaker to get hearer to do something	World-to-word	Want, wish, desire	Future act of hearer
Commissives	Commit speaker to some future course of action	World-to-word	Intention	Future act of speaker
Expressives	Express psychological state about a state of affairs	None	Range of different possible states	Some property ascribed to speaker or hearer
Declaratives	Bring a state of affairs into existence by declaring it so	Both	None	Any proposition

Together Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary force, conditions of illocutionary force, and distinction between illocutionary and propositional negation prove of considerable use to the identification and analysis of Dionysian illocutionary techniques.⁸¹

The most obvious illocutionary technique used by Dionysius to convey the (relative) ineffability of God is a direct assertion that God is ineffable or *hyper* effable. As the previous sentence suggests, this technique comes in two basic forms, each of which possesses variations. The first form, the assertion that God is in some way ineffable, comes in two basic variations. In most cases Dionysius either asserts negative (alpha-prefixed) predicate-terms such as *unnamable* (*anōnymos*), *ineffable* (*arrētos*), *unspeakable* (*aphthegktos*), and *logos-less* (*alogos*) of God (or divine things) or denies positive predicate-terms such as name (*onoma*), speech (*legō*), and logos (*logos*) of God (or divine things).⁸² And in a couple of other cases Dionysius denies the methods

⁸¹ If space permitted, I would argue on behalf of a modified-Searlean fourfold typology of illocutionary force, one that recognizes (1) that assertives *as well as expressives* possess a word-to-“world” direction of fit and therefore have their foundation in the intentional state of perception, (2) that directives and commissives have a world-to-word direction of fit and therefore have their foundation in the intentional state of action, and (3) that expressives and commissives both concern the self whereas assertives and directives both concern the world/other; and (4) that declaratives do not constitute a distinct type (but rather function as a subtype of each of the four main types). This is how I render this typology in tabular form:

	Target external/other	=	Target internal/self	=
Fit = word-to- “world”	Assertive		Expressive	
Fit = world-to-word	Commissive		Directive	

⁸² The critical edition of the Dionysian corpus lists 6 occurrences of *nameless* (*DN* 1.1, 588B; *DN* 1.6, 596A (3 occurrences); *DN* 1.7, 596 C; *DN* 7.1, 865C), 11 occurrences of *unspeakable* (*DN* 1.1., 585B (2 occurrences); *DN* 2.4, 641A; *DN* 2.5, 641D; *DN* 2.10, 648D; *DN* 2.10, 649A; *DN* 6.3, 857B; *DN* 8.2, 892A; *DN* 11.1, 949B; *CH* 4.4, 181B; *MT* 3, 1033C), and 21 occurrences of *ineffable* (*DN* 1.1, 588B (2 occurrences); *DN* 1.3, 589B; *DN* 1.4, 592A; *DN* 1.5, 593B; *DN* 2.6, 644C; *DN* 2.9, 648A; *DN* 2.10, 648D; *DN* 3.3, 684B; *DN* 5.1, 816B; *DN* 7.1, 865C (2

of position (*thesis*) and removal (*aphairesis*) of God.⁸³ These illocutionary techniques, especially those that fall in the last chapter of the *Mystical Theology*, play a crucial role in the Dionysius corpus, culminating the *aphairetic* removal of individual divine names by denying “all” *thetic* positioning of and *aphairetic* removing from God whatsoever. But whereas these techniques seem perfectly intelligible and successful on this account, they technically defeat themselves for at least two reasons: their illocutionary points of assertion cannot be achieved on their propositional contents of unassertability, and their preparatory conditions of evidence are impossible to presuppose. The claim that one cannot name and speak about God is itself a naming and speaking of God; the assertion that one cannot assert is itself an assertion; the removal of removal is itself a removal. Thus these propositional contents of unassertability cannot be realized on their illocutionary force of assertion. Moreover, these assertions presuppose evidence for their truth (regardless of whether the speaker is actually in possession of such evidence). But what evidence could one have for the ineffability of something, since all such evidence would require having at least some knowledge about what that thing is (even when that “thing” is no-thing or beyond-things)? The preparatory condition of evidence is therefore impossible to presuppose.⁸⁴

Dionysius’ second form of *ineffability assertion* is still more problematic as it is plagued by both of these difficulties as well as a couple of additional complications. Much like the assertion that God is ineffable, the assertion that God is *hyper* effable can take the form of an assertion that God is *hyper* name or word or speech as well as an

occurrences); *DN* 11.5, 953B; *DN* 13.3, 981A; *CH* 2.3, 141A; *CH* 15.9, 340A; *EH* 2.I, 392B; *EH* 2.III.8, 404D; *EH* 4.III.10, 484A; *EP* 3, 1069B; *EP* 9.1, 1105D. A Thesaurus Linguae Graecae search confirms these and also finds 27 occurrences of *logos-less* (*alogos*).

⁸³ Both cases occur at *MT* 5, 1048AB.

⁸⁴ Perhaps then their psychological conditions are also impossible to express since expression of one’s belief in the ineffability of God would require being able to identify God in some way.

assertion that God is *hyper* the methods of position and removal.⁸⁵ But it can also take the form of an assertion that God is *hyper-ineffable*, an assertion that appears to be at odds with the assertion that God is *hyper-effable*.⁸⁶ And on top of this, there is again the problem of determining how to translate and interpret these uses of *hyper*: when Dionysius says that God is *hyper* effability, *hyper* ineffability, and *hyper* both effability and ineffability, does Dionysius mean that God is *beyond in/effability*, *more-in/effable-than-most-in/effable*, or both?

But this added complication, the ambiguity of *hyper*, in fact provides a key to resolving all of these difficulties. To be such a key, though, the full (dual) resonance of *hyper* must be allowed to sound out. This is to say that although it is tempting to interpret these *hyper*-constructions in such a way as to make the Dionysian God beyond effability as exceedingly ineffable, this misses the fact that the Dionysian God is also *beyond ineffability* and *exceedingly effable*. And it also fails to provide a basis for Dionysius' assertion that God is ineffable. Both of these arguments require some explanation. Since the ineffability of something is always relative to some semiotic system in which that thing cannot be said, the ability to know and say that something is ineffable is only possible from the perspective of some other semiotic system.⁸⁷ Put in Dionysian terms, if God is ineffable to beings, then this can only be known and said to be the case from some perspective that is not of being. This other perspective, in short, is the humanly (and angelically) unknowable realm of *hyper-being*. Thus Dionysius' assertion that God is *hyper* both effability and ineffability functions on the one hand as indication that God is *beyond* both effability and ineffability, neither effable nor ineffable, from the perspective of being (since in/effability is a category mistake of God). But since this can only be known and said from a *hyper-being* perspective, Dionysius' assertion that God is *hyper* both effability and

⁸⁵ There are four occurrences of *hyper position and removal* in the Dionysian corpus: *DN* 2.4, 641B; *MT* 1.2, 1000B; *MT* 3, 1033CD; *MT* 5, 1048A–1048B.

⁸⁶ The register of the critical edition of the Dionysian corpus lists 4 instances of *hyper-ineffable* (*hyperarrētos*—*DN* 1.4, 592D; *DN* 2.4, 640D; *CH* 13.4, 304C; *EP* 7.2, 1080C).

⁸⁷ See here especially [9] and [18].

ineffability must on the other hand serve as pointer to this transcendent mode of “discourse.” Here God is transcendentally ineffable *qua* transcendentally effable, *more-ineffable-than-most-ineffable* as *more-effable-than-most-effable*.⁸⁸

Granted, this is not the simplest of solutions. But it is the only one that provides a ground for Dionysius’ claim that God is ineffable, and is therefore the only one that preserves a non-contradictory reading of Dionysius’ assertions of unassertability, sayings of unsayability, and removals of removal.⁸⁹ And it is the only solution that can explain—without resorting to hyperbole—those passages in the Dionysian corpus that speak of God’s ineffability as transcendent namability or speakability and ineffable truth or logos.⁹⁰

For just as intelligible things are incomprehensible and unseen to the senses, and uncompounded and unformed things [are incomprehensible and unseen] to that in shape and form, and the intangible and unstructured formlessness of bodiless things [are incomprehensible and unseen] to that which is formed according to the structure of bodies, then, according to the same analogy of truth, the *hyper*-being infinite lies above beings and the *hyper* mind unity lies above minds. The one *hyper*

⁸⁸ Even better, the *hyper*-being God is (a) sayable *qua* being through the “position of all” the properties that the divine names themselves source; (b) unsayable *qua* being through the “removal of all” the properties that the divine names themselves source; and (c) sayable *hyper* being as the *hyper*-existent and *hyper*-unified divine names themselves, which are “*hyper* all position and removal” insofar as position and removal are of things of being. And note that this saying *hyper* being is, technically speaking, not a saying at all, since all saying is of things of being. Thus it is a silent saying, a saying beyond *logos* (e.g., *MT* 3, 1033BC; *DN* 1.3, 589AB). Still, it is a communicative something that makes possible the transmission of *hyper-nous* knowledge of divine things.

⁸⁹ Another, initially plausible solution is that of taking Dionysius’ ineffability assertions as second-order assertions about first-order assertions about God. One problem with this solution, though, is that it renders God in some small way effable from the perspective of being. Another problem with this solution is that it fudges passages that indicate that the *hyper*-being God is both ineffable and transcendentally effable.

⁹⁰ In addition to the passages quoted below, see *MT* 1.3, 1000C; and *DN* 13.3, 981AB.

thought is unthinkable (ἀδιανόητόν) to all thinking, the good *hyper* speech is ineffable (ἄρρητόν) to all speech, *henad* uniting every *henad* and *hyper*-being being and un-intelligible (ἀνόητος) intellect and ineffable (ἄρρητος) speech, speechlessness (ἄλογία) and intellectlessness (ἄνοησία) and namelessness (ἄνωσυμία) and being according to nothing of being and cause of all being, but itself not being as beyond all being so that it alone could properly and scientifically (ἐπιστητῶς) manifest itself about itself (DN 1.1, 588B).

On the one hand, [God is] nameless, since they say the godhead itself, in one of the mystical sights of the symbolic theophany, rebukes him who says “What is thy name?” and, leading him away from all knowledge of the divine names, says “Why do you ask my name?” and “It is most wondrous.” Is not this truly the most wondrous name, “the name *hyper* all,” the nameless, the *hyper*-established (ὑπεριδρυμένον) “every name that is named,” whether in this age or in the future? (DN 1.6, 596A).

For example, this is unified and common to the henarchic trinity with respect to the divine unity *hyper*-beingness: the *hyper*-being subsistence, the *hyper*-divine divinity, the *hyper*-good goodness, the identity beyond all of the whole identity beyond all, the *hyper* unity-source unity, the unspeakable (ἄφθεγκτον), the much-speaking (πολύφωνον), the unknowable, the all-intelligible, the position of all, the removal of all, the *hyper* all position and removal, the remaining and foundation of the henarchic substances in one another (if I may so speak), wholly *hyper*-unified, and in no part comingled, [...] (DN 2.4, 641A).

[...] it is customary for theologians to negate (ἀποφάσκειν) the things of deprivation (τὰ τῆς στέρησεως) with respect to God in an opposite sense. Thus, scripture calls the all-shining light invisible, and the many-hymned (πολυύμνητον) and many-named (πολυώνυμον) ineffable (ἄρρητον) and unnamable (ἄνώνυμον), and that which is present in all things and discoverable from all things incomprehensible and inscrutable. In this way, even now, the divine apostle is said to have hymned as foolishness of God that which appears unreasonable and paradoxical in itself, but which uplifts us to the ineffable truth before all reason (DN 7.1, 865BC).

It is also the only solution that resolves the first two illocutionary difficulties encountered above. If the assertion that God is ineffable is

made from the perspective of *hyper*-being with respect to the things of being, then its propositional content can be realized on its illocutionary point and its preparatory conditions can be presupposed. God can be known and said to be ineffable in one “language” provided that this ineffability pertains to some other language. Of course, there is problem pertaining to how Dionysius, a being, could know and say that God is ineffable. But here, we can do as Dionysius does and appeal to revelation: Dionysius knows and can therefore say that God is ineffable since this has been revealed to Dionysius by God (through the celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies by means of a *hyper*-logos “saying”).⁹¹

⁹¹ A good many of the passages that speak of God as ineffable or unknowable explicitly state not only that such ineffability-unknowability is due, at least in part, to human limitation but also that it can be—indeed, is—overcome through divine revelation through the celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies. This is a common motif in the opening chapter of the *Divine Names*, a chapter that is often said to concern the problem of naming an utterly ineffable and unknowable God. Instead, Dionysius indicates right from the get-go not only that ineffable-unknowable things may be known through divine revelation but also that they are so known in a state of union that surpasses our ordinary rational and intellectual powers.

And now, O blessed one, after the *Theological Outlines* I will proceed to the explication of the divine names as far as I am able. And now let the law of the scriptures, which limits us beforehand, bind us fast to the truth of what is said about God, “not in persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration” of the spirit-moved “power” of the theologians, by which we are unspeakably (ἀφθέγκτως) and unknowingly (ἀγνώστως) conjoined to unspeakable things (ἀφθέγκτοις) and unknowable things (ἀγνώστοις) through a union (ένωσιν) that is superior (κατὰ τὴν κρείττονα) to our rational and intellectual power and activity. (*DN* 1.1, 585B–588A)

The second paragraph of *Divine Names* 1.1 then picks up and develops these themes.

Therefore, in general one must dare neither to say nor, indeed, to conceive anything about the *hyper*-being and hidden divinity over and above that which has been divinely revealed to us in the sacred scriptures. For one must attribute to the *hyper*-beingness unknowing (which is *hyper* speech and mind and being) the *hyper*-being science

(Note, though, that Dionysius, a being, would not be able to know or say what this means—more on this later.)

The Dionysian corpus is not always content simply to assert the ineffability of God. Occasionally Dionysius also directs his reader, or asks God to direct both himself and his reader, to an experience of divine ineffability and unknowability. Such illocutionary acts of *ineffability direction* are quite prevalent in the *Mystical Theology*, which opens by petitioning Trinity to guide Christians “to the *hyper*-unknown (ὑπεράγνωστον) and *hyper*-brilliant highest summit of mystical scripture;” then exhorts its reader, Timothy, both to “leave behind sensible and intellectual activities, all sensible and intelligible things, all non-beings and beings, and unknowingly strive upward, as far as possible, toward the union (ένωσιν) of that which is *hyper* all being and knowledge” and to be “purely uplifted (ἀναχθήσῃ) to the *hyper*-being ray (ἄκτινα) of the divine darkness;” and later directs the reader *now* to enter the *hyper* mind darkness of complete logos-less-ness, unknowing,

(ἐπιστήμην), looking up to this great height as much as the ray of the thearchic scriptures gives itself, drawn together to the higher splendors by temperance and piety for the divine things. For if one must trust the all-wise and most-true theology, the divine things are revealed and contemplated, according to the analogy of each of the minds, of the thearchic goodness, which divinely distributes the immeasurable (as that which cannot be contained) in saving justice of those things that are measured. (DN 1.1, 588A)

Here we are first told that the *hyper*-being and hidden divinity has been revealed in the sacred scriptures, but that we are not to say or conceive anything about it over and above this revelation. Then we are told that we must attribute to this *hyper*-beingness unknowing, which is *hyper* speech and mind and being, a *hyper*-being science (*epistēmē*). Clearly, then, the fact that God is a *hyper*-being and hidden divinity, a *hyper*-beingness unknowing *hyper* logos and intellect and being, is not the end of the story for human knowability and effability about God. For this *hyper*-being and hidden divinity is revealed in the sacred scriptures, which are a *hyper*-being “science” of divine things. And it is revealed, as the last sentence tells us, in accordance with the analogical position of our intellect. Although humans cannot know the *hyper*-being God through their natural rational-intellectual powers, they can know God in divine revelation by means of power that exceeds these powers. See the rest of *Divine Names* 1, especially DN 1.2 and 1.4, for more.

and soundless, and to become “wholly unite to the unspeakable (ἄφθέγκτω)” (*MT* 1.1, 997A–1000A; *MT* 3, 1033BC).

If Dionysius’ *ineffability assertions* culminate the removal of individual divine names from God, then *ineffability directions* culminate *ineffability assertions*. Here the Dionysian corpus does more than just say that God is ineffable; it realizes ineffability, a state of silent unknowing. As was the case with Dionysius’ *ineffability assertions*, however, these *ineffability directions* are ostensibly self-defeating. Since their propositional contents concern states that cannot be said and known, they are inadequate to their illocutionary forces of direction. One cannot be directed to strive toward that which is essentially unknowable and unsayable. Thus one of the preparatory conditions of these illocutionary acts of direction—ability to undertake the directed action⁹²—also cannot be presupposed. One cannot do that which cannot be known and said. Of course, it could be said that such a destination is not unknown to all, that God quite clearly “knows” what happens when one is guided into the divine darkness. And it could also be said that the destination would not itself have to be knowable and sayable (by humans) for the path to it to be effective (for humans). Still, though, there would be, as in the case of *ineffability assertion*, the problem of knowing and saying that some destination is unknowable and unsayable, for if that destination were really unknowable and unsayable then it could not be known and said to be a something that is unknowable and unsayable.

As was the case of *ineffability assertion*, however, a way out of this dilemma lies in Dionysius’ use of the term *hyper-unknowable*, which, much like *hyper-ineffable*, registers not only a sense of being *really* unknowable but also a sense of being knowable in a preeminent or transcendent manner.⁹³ Moreover, this solution is confirmed throughout

⁹² The preparatory conditions of a direction are two: (1) Hearer is able to do the action, and speaker believes the hearer is able to do the action; (2) It is not obvious to both speaker and hearer that hearer will do the action in the normal course of events of the speaker’s own accord [25], p. 66.

⁹³ The register of the critical edition of the Dionysian corpus lists 4 instances of *hyper-unknowable* (*hyperagnōstos*—*DN* 1.4, 592D; *DN* 1.5, 593B; *DN* 2.4, 640D; *MT* 1.1, 997A). Thesaurus Linguae Graecae reveals an additional occurrence of

the *Mystical Theology*, as several other passages reveal the destination of Dionysius' directions to be a state of both unknowing and knowing. The last sentence of chapter one describes it as one of knowing *hyper* mind by knowing nothing:

And then [Moses] is released from what sees and is seen and enters into the truly mystical darkness of unknowing, in which he shuts out every knowing apprehension and comes into the wholly intangible and invisible, being entirely of that which is beyond everything and nothing, neither himself nor another, united surpassingly (κατὰ τὸ κρείττον ἐνούμενος) to the completely unknown by an inactivity of all knowledge, knowing *hyper* mind by knowing nothing (*MT* 1.3, 1000C–1001A).⁹⁴

The final sentence of chapter two describes it as unhiddenly knowing the unknowing that is covered by all the knowledge among beings:

It is necessary, I think, to hymn the removals oppositely from the positions; for we posit these beginning from the first things and descending through the middle things to the last things; but then we remove everything making the search for the highest principles from the last things, so that we may unhiddenly know this unknowing that is covered by all the knowledge among all beings, and we may see this *hyper*-being darkness that is hidden by all the light among beings (*MT* 2, 1025B).

And the first sentence of chapter two “directs” God to conduct us to the *hyper*-light darkness in which true knowledge of the unknowable God is acquired by not-knowing to know not to know that which is *hyper*-knowledge:

We pray to come to this *hyper*-light darkness and through not-seeing and not-knowing to see and to know not to see and to know that which is

hyperagnotatēs at *CH* 10.3, 273C. Note that Dionysius never says that God is *hyper* not-removal or not-position.

⁹⁴ See the discussion of *MT* 1.3's phrase “according to what is greater” in [7]. For sources that identify the reference of this phrase with a certain *hyper-nous* faculty in humans, see also [28], [22], [1].

hyper sight and knowledge itself—for this is truly seeing and knowing—and [we pray] to hymn *hyper*-beingly the *hyper*-being through the removal of all beings, just as those making a life-like statue lift-out every obstacle to the pure view of the hidden and reveal the hidden beauty in it by the removal alone (*MT* 2, 1025A).

If one takes unknowing and knowing to apply here in the same way and at the same time, these illocutionary acts, whether said with an assertive force or a directive force, are self-defeating. Their propositional contents are contradictory and therefore “inadequate” to their illocutionary forces. And their preparatory conditions—evidence, in the case of assertion; ability, in the case of direction—are therefore impossible to presuppose. But if unknowing and knowing apply to this destination or state in different respects, then the former of these objections disappears: God transcends all ordinary modes of knowing yet is known through a transcendent mode of knowing; God is unknowable from the perspective of being yet known from the perspective of *hyper*-being. Moreover, if such knowledge about unknowing knowing is not only revealed by God (through the celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies) but also experientially realized while in a state of unknowing knowing, then the latter of these objections also disappears. And here, unlike the case of *ineffability assertion*, Dionysius, a mere being, could really know and say that God is unknowable and unsayable, having attained to a *hyper*-being perspective from which such things are knowable and sayable. (Dionysius could also therefore know and say that humans can attain to such a state.)

Importantly, this solution is reinforced by passages elsewhere in the corpus that show that Dionysius knows quite a lot about the character of silent unknowing knowing. The opening sentences of the *Divine Names* maintains “we are unspeakably and unknowingly conjoined to unspeakable things and unknowable things through a union that is superior to our rational and intellectual power and activity” (*DN* 1.1, 585B–588A). The first *Epistle* confirms this, adding that our knowledge of that which is *hyper* everything known is *hyper-nous* knowledge (which escapes those with knowledge of *being*):

But God, *hyper*-established *hyper* mind and being, not known and not being in general, is *hyper*-beingly and is known *hyper*-mind. And the surpassingly complete unknowing is a knowledge of that which is *hyper* everything known (*EP* 1, 1065AB).

The fourth *Epistle* adds that those “who see divinely will know *hyper* mind that the affirmations about Jesus’ love for humanity have the power of preeminent negation (ὑπεροχικῆς ἀποφάσεως)” (*EP* 4, 1072BC). *Divine Names* 7.3 also identifies unknowing knowing as *hyper-nous* knowledge, going on to specify that *nous* is illumined by the inscrutable depth of wisdom when it stands away from all beings and itself:

And there is, further, the most divine knowledge of God, which is known through unknowing during the union *hyper* mind, when the mind, having stood apart from all beings, then having given up even itself, is united to the *hyper*-brilliant rays, there illumined by the inscrutable depth of wisdom (*DN* 7.3, 872AB).

And given this standing away, *Divine Names* 7.4 exclaims that what is in fact complete knowledge appears as madness from the perspective of ordinary speech and intellect (*DN* 7.4, 872D).

Moreover, what we see in all these passages is not only a characterization of the state of silent unknowing knowing (as *hyper-nous* knowing) but also an indication of how this state is achieved: one must stand away from all beings and one’s mind; one must remove all beings, from last to first; and one must leave behind all sensible and intelligible things. This is the path of *aphairetic* removal, best exemplified in the hymns of *Mystical Theology* 4 and 5, which *qua* hymns most likely served a performative-ritualistic role within the liturgy.⁹⁵ The assertive illocutionary acts (removals) of *Mystical Theology* 4 and 5 are therefore best understood as *declarative*-assertives—assertive illocutionary acts that by virtue of their proper performance convey the utterer to a state of

⁹⁵ For my argument that the hymns of the *Mystical Theology* probably served a theurgical role in the liturgy, see my forthcoming paper [13]. And for more on hymns as theurgic devices, see [27].

silent unknowing knowing.⁹⁶ Thus, while *ineffability directions* culminate *ineffability assertions*, serving to direct to a state of ineffability rather than simply asserting ineffability, these *ineffability declarative-assertives* culminate *ineffability directions*, actually producing a state of silent unknowing knowing. That which seems to be a simple series of assertions about God's (relative) ineffability is actually a performative means of creating a state of ineffability in the asserter, of conveying the hymnist or liturgist to a *hyper-ousia* plane from which God's ineffability and unknowability to beings can be known *hyper-nous*.

It is crucial then to bear in mind that the *aphairetic* removals of *Mystical Theology* 4–5 do more than simply remove from God; they also state preeminence. The Dionysian God is more than just ineffable and unknowable—the Dionysian God is *hyper* effable and *hyper* knowable. The following rule of illocutionary force therefore regulates Dionysius' assertions about God in a manner comparable to the way in which Dionysius' rules of reference and predication regulate Dionysius' naming of God:

- Dionysian Rule of Assertion: God is properly asserted as that which, on the one hand, is ineffable (or beyond the category of in/effability) and unknowable (or beyond the category of un/knowability) from the perspective of being, and on the other hand, preeminently effable (or

⁹⁶ Consider here the uses of *now* in *MT* 3, 1033BC:

I think you have noticed how the last things are more wordy than the first things; for it is necessary that the *Theological Outlines* and the unfolding of the *Divine Names* are less wordy than the *Symbolic Theology*. Since the more we look upward, the more words are constricted by the synopsis of the intelligibles; just as *now*, entering into the *hyper* mind darkness, we will find not few-words but rather complete a-logos and unknowing. Descending from what is above to the last things, the logos widens according to the measure of the descent with analogical multitude/number. But *now*, ascending from what is below to that which *hyper*-lies, [the logos] is shortened according to the measure of ascent and, after all ascent, is wholly soundless and wholly united to the unspeakable.

sayable *hyper-logos*) and preeminently knowable (or knowable *hyper-nous*) from the perspective of *hyper-being* as the *hyper-being* cause of all.

This rule, in conjunction with the above rules of reference and predication, constitute an intra-textual logic or grammar, regulating Pseudo-Dionysius' otherwise antinomial techniques of illocution. The Dionysian corpus is rule-governed at the illocutionary level; the Dionysian God is not therefore absolutely ineffable.

3. Expressions of Inexpressibility above the Speech Act

In this third section of the paper things go a bit differently. The overall goal is that of identifying and analyzing Dionysian expressions of inexpressibility *above the speech act*. But such identification is focused on Dionysian metaphors of ineffability—*metaphors of darkness* and *metaphors of height*—since these metaphors have an internal structure and external interconnection that extends beyond any one speech act. And such analysis is prosecuted by means of the metaphor theory of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson—in particular their notions of gestalt and entailment—since Searle does not offer tools for the analysis of systematically structured and interconnected metaphors. Nevertheless, this section of the paper draws a conclusion similar to those of the previous sections: Dionysian metaphors of ineffability are rule-governed; the Dionysian God is not completely ineffable.

As in the case of Searle's theories of reference and predication, Searle's theory of metaphor is quite elementary: metaphors are cases in which speaker's utterance meaning differs from literal word or sentence meaning; the interpretation of metaphors therefore requires only principles of conversation and rules of speech act theory, the following three of which Searle enumerates:

1. If the utterance is defective if taken literally, look for an utterance meaning that differs from sentence meaning.
2. Whenever you hear "S is P", to find possible values of R [utterance meaning] look for ways in which S [subject expression]

might be like P [literal sentence meaning], and to fill in the respect in which S might be like P, look for salient, well known, and distinctive features of P things.

3. Go back to the S term and see which of the many candidates for the values of R are likely or even possible properties of S ([23], pp. 105–106).⁹⁷

But here, unlike Searle's theories of reference and predication, simplicity is a vice. To pin metaphorical meaning solely on deviant usage is to fail to appreciate those aspects of signs and sign-systems that make possible metaphorical usage: the richly connotative and deeply embodied nature of signs as well as the systematically structured and intricately interconnected nature of sign-systems. And to limit the interpretation of metaphors to the above principles of conversation and rules of speech act theory is to fail to provide concrete tools for the analysis of systematically structured and interrelated metaphors. This section of the paper therefore turns to the metaphor theory of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, which, despite an overreaching theory of metaphor and uncharitable reading of its opponents, provides such tools.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Although Searle believes there is no "algorithm" for calculating the value of a metaphorical utterance (p. 149), he does provide eight "principles" for computing metaphorical meaning, six of the more notable of which follow: (1) Things which are P are by definition R; (2) Things which are P are contingently R; (3) Things which are P are often said or believed to be R; (4) Things which are P are not R, nor are they like R things, nor are they believed to be R; nonetheless it is a fact about our sensibility, whether culturally or naturally determined, that we just do perceive a connection, so that P is associated in our minds with R; (5) P things are not like R things, and are not believed to be like R things; nonetheless the condition of being P is like the condition of being R; (6) There are cases where P and R are the same or similar in meaning, but were one, usually P, is restricted in its application, and does not literally apply to S (pp. 107–112).

⁹⁸ Lakoff and Johnson speak of metaphors as conventionally fixed means of understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another, they use the term quite broadly, denying any substantial difference between novel and lexicalized metaphors ([15], 66–70). It is here that Lakoff and Johnson's work is at its weakest as it fails to give an adequate explanation of the production and

Lakoff and Johnson make two crucial insights about the embodiment and structure of abstract concepts: humans draw on concrete bodily experience in understanding and expressing abstract concepts, and they do so by systematically structuring abstract concepts in accordance with bodily experiences. Particularly relevant to the former insight is Lakoff and Johnson's idea of a *primary metaphor*. While all metaphors are "cross-domain mappings" from source domains to target domains, the primary metaphor maps sensorimotor source domains (vehicles) to subjective target domains (tenors), and does so both naturally and unconsciously.⁹⁹ This mapping is the result of two processes: an initial conflation of sensorimotor experiences like warmth and subjective judgments like affection such that neural activations of the sensorimotor source network are immediately "projected" to the subjective target network, and a later awareness of and differentiation between these experiences such that sensorimotor concepts can be used to conceptualize and verbalize subjective experiences in absence of their corresponding sensorimotor experiences. These primary metaphors then function as atoms for the molecular *complex metaphor*, which, although not directly grounded in a single sensorimotor experience, receives an indirect grounding through its component primary metaphors.¹⁰⁰ Thus, Lakoff and Johnson believe that "[m]any, if not all, of our abstract concepts are defined in significant part by conceptual metaphor" [15], p. 128.¹⁰¹

Even more importantly for the analysis of Dionysian metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson understand abstract concepts to be internally

comprehension of novel, complex metaphors (as well as the lexicalization of novel metaphors).

⁹⁹ Thus although Lakoff and Johnson do not think that primary metaphors are innate, they do state that there appears to be "at least several hundred such widespread, and perhaps universal, metaphors" ([15], p. 57).

¹⁰⁰ Complex metaphors are also composed of "commonplace knowledge" (cultural beliefs, empirical facts, etc.) ([15], p. 60)

¹⁰¹ According to Lakoff and Johnson, abstract concepts have two parts: "(1) an inherent, literal, nonmetaphorical skeleton, which is simply not rich enough to serve as a full-fledged concept; and (2) a collection of stable, conventional metaphorical extensions that flesh out the conceptual skeleton in a variety of ways (often inconsistently with one another)" (p. 128).

structured and interconnected. This is due to what they call *gestalt* and *entailment*. The former notion, *gestalt*, refers to the way in which abstract concepts are internally structured into coherent wholes by carrying over the inferential patterns of the source domain into the target domain. Just as some concept itself is understood in terms of some metaphor, so that concept's component parts—e.g., participants, parts, stages, linear sequences, purposes, and causes—are understood in terms of that metaphor's component parts.¹⁰² Thus, if, for example, argument is metaphorized as war, then its participants are metaphorized as adversaries; its parts, as attack and defense; its purpose, as victory. In this way metaphors bestow a complex internal structure upon concepts that reaches far beyond the actual source-target mapping itself. Quite commonly, though, concepts are structured by multiple, apparently inconsistent metaphors.¹⁰³ In such cases, these different metaphors will cohere to the degree to which they possess overlapping experiential entailments. The apparently inconsistent metaphors *an argument is a container* and *an argument is a journey*, for example, cohere due to the following overlapping entailments: as one makes an argument, more surface is created; as more surface is created, more ground is covered; as more ground is covered, more content is provided ([14], pp. 93–94). Thus the notion of entailment provides a means of showing how partially inconsistent metaphors to “fit together,” even though there is no single image that completely fits them ([14], p. 94).¹⁰⁴ Together these tools are invaluable to the analysis of Dionysian metaphors of ineffability: the notion of *gestalt* serves as a means of elucidating the internal complexity of such metaphors, while entailment offers a way of

¹⁰² Lakoff and Johnson speak instead of the “natural dimensions” of human experience, which, in the case of concepts pertaining to action, activity, event, and experience are the “component parts” listed above ([14], p. 176).

¹⁰³ In fact, Lakoff and Johnson believe that most concepts require multiple metaphorical structurings insofar as no one metaphor is extensive and supple enough to “do the job” ([14], p. 95).

¹⁰⁴ And when two different metaphors do not possess overlapping entailments, “mixed metaphors” result (p. 95).

reconciling apparent inconsistencies within and between these metaphors by demonstrating their overlapping entailments.¹⁰⁵

The most common way in which Dionysius metaphorizes divine ineffability and unknowability is by using darkness to symbolize the dwelling place of God. The *Mystical Theology* is rife with such metaphors. Alluding to *Psalms* 18:22, *Mystical Theology* 1.2 asserts that darkness is the hiding place of God (*MT* 1.2, 1000A). *Mystical Theology* 1.3 follows this not only by citing Bartholomew as authority for the claim that the good cause of all is undisguisedly and truly manifested to those who enter “into the darkness where, as the scriptures say, the beyond all truly is,” but also by illustrating this claim with the example of Moses, who, after being released from what sees and is seen, “enters into the truly mystical darkness of unknowing” where he is “united surpassingly to the completely unknown” (*MT* 1.3, 1000C, 1001A). And then *Mystical Theology* 2 maintains that the removal of everything yields a seeing of “this *hyper*-being darkness that is hidden by all the light among beings” (*MT* 2, 1025B). These passages draw on the metaphor *unknowing is darkness*, an extension of the primary

¹⁰⁵ This said, a couple of caveats are in order. First, in referring to these concepts or predicates as *metaphors*, I want to be clear that I do so in the Lakoff-Johnsonian sense of cross-domain mappings that employ direct sensorimotor experiences (darkness, height) to conceptualize and speak about subjective experiences (unknowing) or abstract concepts (God); put differently, these mappings are semiotically codified; they constitute (in most cases) conventionally-established, literally-coded meanings of their respective terms (even if not their primary or original meanings), not novel metaphors. Second, if we are to speak about these conventionalized, cross-domain mappings as *metaphors*, we must be careful not to think that they do not make (literal) truth-claims about their subjects. It is hard to know how to read Lakoff and Johnson on this point: although they oppose the reduction of metaphors to literal language, the fact that they map a subjective judgment such as unknowing to a sensorimotor experience such as darkness seems to entail that darkness can be reduced to unknowing (along with an accompanying gestalt and set of entailments) ([15], p. 122); and although they assail a correspondence theory of truth, the fact that metaphorical truth rests on true judgments about sensorimotor experience seems to presuppose some sort of correspondence theory of truth (as do the three assertions with which they begin *Philosophy in the Flesh*: the mind is inherently embodied; thought is mostly unconscious; abstract concepts are largely metaphorical) (p. 128, 3).

metaphor *knowing is seeing*, to symbolize the ineffability and unknowability of God as a dwelling in darkness.¹⁰⁶ Thus this metaphor—in conjunction with the primary metaphors *states are locations*, *destinations are purposes*, and *means are paths*¹⁰⁷—provides a gestalt that structures the complex Dionysian metaphor *God dwells in darkness (into which the seeker of God must enter)* as follows:

Table 2: Gestalt of the Dionysian Metaphor *God Dwells in Darkness*

Participants	Christian as seeker, God as that which is being sought
Parts	Lighted area in which God does not dwell; dark area in which God does dwell
Stages	First seeking for God, then finding God
Linear Sequences	Progressive entry into the divine darkness
Purposes	Finding God by entering into the divine darkness
Causes	Seeker enters into the divine darkness by removing the things of being from God

This metaphor gets much of its force from the fact that it draws on the primary metaphor *knowing is seeing*: since knowledge is (near) universally metaphorized as seeing and sight requires light, darkness is indeed an apt symbol for ignorance. But this metaphor is also apt due to the fact that it highlights an important difference between the metaphorical darkness that hides God and the physical darkness that obscures physical objects: God is not a corporeal object that could be enshrouded in actual darkness.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ [15], pp. 53–54. Cf., [8], p. 296.

¹⁰⁷ [15], pp. 52–53. Cf., [8], p. 286.

¹⁰⁸ This metaphor is also reinforced by Dionysius' use of metaphors of light—the contrary of darkness—to symbolize knowing. (Although Dionysius chiefly uses metaphors of light (sun, fire) as symbols for God's causation and illumination of celestial and terrestrial beings, he says in the *Celestial Hierarchy* that fire is an appropriate symbol for God for a number of other reasons (e.g., omnipresence,

But there is a tension in this metaphor: on the one hand, God dwells in darkness and is therefore unknowable; on the other hand, the Christian seeker enters into this darkness in order to find God—to be “united surpassingly to the completely unknown by an inactivity of all knowledge,” to “unhiddenly know this unknowing that is covered by all the knowledge among all beings,” to “see this *hyper*-being darkness that is hidden by all the light among beings.” To put this tension in terms of Lakoff and Johnson’s metaphor theory, there is an apparent incompatibility between the primary metaphor *knowing is seeing*, which entails that God cannot be known if God cannot be seen, and a cluster of proximity metaphors—*similarity is proximity*, *intimacy is proximity*, *knowing is proximity*, *degree is distance along a path*¹⁰⁹—which entail that, as the seeker draws close to God, the seeker better knows God. Here we have what initially appears to be an antinomian grammatical technique. One possible way of resolving it is to say that, upon entering into the divine darkness, what the seeker knows about God is that God is unknowable. But this does not do justice to fact that Dionysius describes the divine darkness not as a simple or stark darkness, but as a luminous or *hyper*-light darkness. (And it also does not do justice to the

invisibility, inexorability, power, dynamism; *CH* 15.2, 329ABC.) *Celestial Hierarchy* 13.3, after explicitly using the light of the sun and the heat of fire as symbols for knowledge, declares that God is really and properly by nature the source of illumination (*CH* 13.3, 301D). And although *Divine Names* 4.1–4 tends to use light more broadly as a symbol for all divine procession, *Divine Names* 4.5–6 narrows the meaning of light to that of knowledge. Moreover, still other passages oppose light to darkness as contrary symbols for knowing and unknowing, respectively. *Epistle* 1 says that darkness disappears in the light just as unknowing is removed by light (*EP* 1, 1065AB). And the above passage from *Mystical Theology* 1.3 indicates that Moses enters the divine darkness of unknowing only after passing beyond “the many pure lights that flash forth and the greatly-flowing rays” (*MT* 1.3, 1000D).

¹⁰⁹ For the first and second metaphors (*similarity is proximity*, *intimacy is proximity*), see [15], pp. 51, 50; and [8], pp. 283, 293. And for the fourth metaphor (*degree is distance along a path*), see [8], p. 285. Although I cannot find the third metaphor (*knowledge is proximity*) in either of these sources, it seems obviously primary insofar as the sensorimotor experience of getting closer to something is constantly conjoined with the subjective experience of better knowing what that thing is.

fact that the experience of luminous darkness is a *hyper-nous* knowing.) On a number of occasions Dionysius very clearly declares that darkness should not be understood as a privation of light. Darkness, rather, is a preeminence of light. *Epistle 5*, for example, identifies divine darkness with unapproachable light and *hyper*-having brightness:

The divine darkness (γνόφος) is the “unapproachable light” in which it is said God lives, being invisible through its *hyper*-having brightness (ὑπερέχουσιν φανότητα), and being unapproachable through its *hyper*-throwing of *hyper*-being light-pouring (ὑπερβολὴν ὑπερουσίου φωτοχυσίας). In it enter all who are worthy of knowing and seeing God—not (actually) knowing and seeing God, but truly coming to be in the *hyper* sight and knowledge, knowing this thing, that it is after all perceptible and intelligible things, and saying prophetically, “Knowledge of you is too wonderful for me; it is too high; I cannot attain it.” Thus it is said that the divine Paul knew God as *hyper* all intelligence and knowledge. Hence, he says that his ways are inscrutable and “his judgments are unsearchable,” and his gifts are indescribable, and his peace transcends “all understanding,” for he found him who is *hyper* all and knew beyond understanding that he is beyond all as the cause of all (*EP 5*, 1073A–1076A).

And *Mystical Theology* 1.1 not only petitions Trinity to guide Christians to the highest summit of mystical *logiōn* that is both *hyper*-unknown and *hyper*-brilliant but also implores Timothy to be uplifted to the *hyper*-being rays of the divine darkness:

Trinity *hyper*-being and *hyper*-god and *hyper*-good, overseer of Christians in divine wisdom, guide us to the *hyper*-unknown and *hyper*-brilliant (ὑπερφᾶν) highest summit of mystical *logiōn*; there the simple, absolute, and unchanged mysteries of theology are veiled by the *hyper*-light darkness (ὑπερφωτον γνόφον) of hidden-mystical silence, *hyper*-illuminating the *hyper*-lightest in the darkest (ἐν τῷ σκοτεινοτάτῳ τὸ ὑπερφανεστάτον ὑπερλάμποντα) and *hyper*-filling the sightless minds with *hyper*-beautiful beauties in the wholly imperceptible and invisible. This is my prayer; and you, dear Timothy, in the earnest study of mystical sights, leave behind sensible and intellectual activities, all sensible and intelligible things, all non-beings and beings, and unknowingly strive upward, as far as possible, toward the unity of that

which is *hyper* all being and knowledge. By an undivided and absolute *ecstasis* of yourself and everything, shedding all and freed from all, you will be purely uplifted to the *hyper*-being rays of the divine darkness (τὸν ὑπερούσιον τοῦ θείου σκότους ἀκτῖνα) (MT 1.1, 997A–1000A).

And *Mystical Theology* 2 offers a prayer to come to the *hyper*-light darkness:

We pray to come to this *hyper*-light darkness (ὑπέρφωτον γνόφον), and through not-seeing and not-knowing to see and to know not to see and to know that which is *hyper* sight and knowledge itself—for this is truly seeing and knowing (MT 2, 1025A).

Given the above claim that divine darkness is an unapproachable light, these *hyper*-light constructions cannot be read simply as indications that divine darkness is symbolically beyond light. Divine darkness must in some sense also be excessive light. But then both darkness and light would symbolize unknowing.

Another way of attempting to resolve these conflicts, more particularly of explaining the assertion that God dwells in luminous darkness, is to interpret them as paradox. Here, Dionysius could be understood as conveying the super-unknowability of God through the paradoxical conjunction of two conflicting extensions of the basic metaphor *knowing is seeing*: unknowing is excessive darkness, and unknowing is blinding light. (The paradox would be generated by the fact that although both excessive darkness and excessive light prevent seeing, these two states cannot obtain at one and the same time.) Here, the Dionysian God would be so unknowable that it dwells in inscrutable darkness and blinding light at one and the same time. But this “solution” fails to take account of Dionysius’ claim that true knowledge of God is revealed in such states of luminous darkness, that proximity to God yields “knowledge” of God. A more plausible solution instead takes luminous darkness to be a symbol for *hyper*-mind knowledge of the *hyper*-being God—a transcendent form of knowledge that requires ignorance of the things of being. Thus, whereas simple light stands for knowledge of the things of being and simple darkness signifies ignorance with respect to the things of being, luminous darkness

symbolizes both the complete absence of knowledge from the perspective of being and a *hyper*-mind knowledge of the *hyper*-being God. The key to understanding Dionysius' use of metaphors of light and darkness lies therefore in a proper understanding these metaphors' inner complexity. Here, Lakoff and Johnson's notion of gestalt is again of considerable use, as it shows us precisely where this complexity resides, allowing us to emend our former gestalt as follows:

Table 3: Gestalt of the Dionysian Metaphor *Knowledge of God is Luminous Darkness*

Participants	Christian as seeker, God as that which is being sought
Parts	Lighted area in which God does not dwell, luminously dark area in which God does dwell
Stages	First seeking for God by entering into the divine darkness by removing the (lighted) things of being, then finding God by having the darkness illuminated by God
Linear Sequences	Progressive entry into the divine luminous darkness
Purposes	Finding God in the divine luminous darkness by attaining <i>hyper-nous</i> knowledge of God
Causes	Seeker enters into the divine darkness by removing the things of being from God, God illuminates the darkness by bestowing <i>hyper-nous</i> knowledge of the divine <i>hyper</i> -being

Like the basic metaphor *knowing is seeing*, the Dionysian metaphor *divine knowledge is luminous darkness* possesses two stages: a stage of initial darkness or ignorance, and a state of final illumination or knowledge. But unlike the basic metaphor *knowing is seeing*, the Dionysian metaphor *divine knowledge is luminous darkness* does not

present these stages as mutually exclusive. To enter into the light of *hyper*-mind knowing is to remain within the darkness of ignorance of the things of being. To enter into the divine darkness is to be illuminated. The power of this Dionysian metaphor is its ability to do double duty, conveying both states at once.

A second metaphor of divine ineffability, height, is not as common as that of darkness and, moreover, never occurs independently of it. Nevertheless, height is a crucial metaphor for understanding the nature of God in the Dionysian corpus, especially since procession is symbolized as movement down from God, reversion, as movement up to God. But this God that is “up” is metaphorized in two seemingly conflicting ways: both as unknown and as more. As many of the above passages illustrate, the primary metaphor *unknowing is up* is frequently in play in the *Mystical Theology* where it is conjoined with the metaphor *unknowing is darkness*. The opening prayer of the first chapter asks God to guide Christians to “the *hyper*-unknown and *hyper*-brilliant highest summit (ἄκροτάτην κορυφήν) of mystical scripture” where “the simple, absolute, and unchanged mysteries of theology are veiled by the *hyper*-light darkness of hidden silence” (*MT* 1.1, 997AB). Not much later, the first chapter adduces Bartholomew’s belief that God is manifested only to those who ascend the holy summit (ἀγίων ἀκροτήτων) and enter the divine darkness (*MT* 1.3, 1000C). And then the first chapter draws to a close by reporting Moses as one who has in fact made such an ascent and entered “the truly mystical darkness of unknowing” (*MT* 1.3, 1000D-1001A). In these passages Dionysius implicitly draws on the basic metaphor *unknowing is up*, which, according to Lakoff and Johnson, has its experiential basis in the fact that it is easier to see and grasp objects that are close to the ground, and is therefore closely related to the operative metaphor in Dionysius’ use of darkness as a symbol of divine unknowability, *knowing is seeing*.¹¹⁰ These two metaphors reinforce one another, serving to symbolize God as doubly unknowable

¹¹⁰ [15], p. 54. According to Lakoff and Johnson, *understanding is grasping* and *seeing is touching* are also part of this family of metaphors ([15], p. 54). Interestingly, these metaphors also have a phonetic manifestation: the rising intonation used in questions, and the falling intonation used in statements ([14], p. 137).

(according to the things of being)—unknowable as dwelling not only in impenetrable darkness but also on an inaccessible mountain peak; unknowable, in short, as residing on an enshrouded summit. The gestalt for this metaphor—*God dwells on an enshrouded summit (up to which the seeker must ascend)*—can be tabulated as follows:

Table 4: Gestalt of the Dionysian Metaphor *God Dwells on an Enshrouded Summit*

Participants	Christian as seeker, God as that which is being sought
Parts	Base of mountain where God does not dwell, enshrouded summit where God dwells
Stages	First seeking, then finding
Linear Sequences	Progressive climbing up the divine mountain
Purposes	Finding God by reaching the enshrouded summit
Causes	Seeker reaches the enshrouded summit by removing the things of being from God

As in the case of *God dwells in darkness*, two things are of note here. This metaphor gets much of its force from the fact that it draws on the primary metaphor *unknowing is up*: since knowledge is (near) universally metaphorized as grasping objects that are close at hand and objects that are up high are not close at hand, height is indeed an apt symbol for ignorance. And this metaphor is also apt due to the fact that it highlights an important difference between the metaphorical height that distances God and physical height that distances physical objects: God is not a corporeal object that could be physically distanced from humans.

There is of course the aforementioned tension at the heart of this metaphor's gestalt: on the one hand, God dwells on an enshrouded summit and is therefore unknowable; on the other hand, the Christian seeker climbs to this divine summit in order to find God. In terms of

Lakoff and Johnson's metaphor theory, this is again to say that there is an apparent tension between, in this case, the primary metaphor *unknowing is up*, which entails that God cannot be known if God resides on a mountain summit, and the aforementioned cluster of proximity metaphors, which entail that as the seeker ascends the divine mountain, she draws closer to God thereby better knowing God. But in this case this proximity metaphor cluster is most evident in passages that speak of the removal of divine names from God as an ascent from last things that are least similar to God (in this case perceptible symbols) to first things that are more similar to God (in this case divine names). *Mystical Theology* 2 tells us that whereas the method of *thesis* begins from the first things and descends through the middle things to the last things, the method of *aphairesis* ascends from the last thing to the first things in a search for the highest principles (*MT* 2, 1025B). And *Mystical Theology* 3 uses similar language, adding an example that makes it clear that the first things (e.g., life and goodness, speaking and thinking) are more similar to God, while the last things (e.g., air and stone, drunkenness and anger) are further away from God:

But why, you may ask, do we begin the divine removal from the last things (ἑσχατόων), having posited the divine positions from the first thing (πρωτίστου)? [The reason is] that [when] positing that which is *hyper* all position it is necessary to posit the hypothetical affirmation from the more akin to it (τοῦ μᾶλλον αὐτῷ συγγενεστέρου); but [when] removing that which is *hyper* all removal [it is necessary] to remove from the farthest away from it (τῶν μᾶλλον αὐτοῦ διεστηκότων). Is it not life and goodness more than air and stone? And [is it not] more not drunkenness and not anger than not speaking and not thinking? (*MT* 3, 1033CD).

In these passages *up* signifies not (only) God's ineffability and unknowability but (also) divine names that are more and more similar to God. As one climbs the divine mountain, one removes divine names that are more and more similar, thereby getting closer to closer to God. But this would seem to make no sense! If these divine names are more and more accurate, how can the removal of them from God bring us

closer and closer to God? Is this again an antinomian grammatical technique, the clashing of two different logics of transcendence?

Of course, we have already seen how this apparent inconsistency is resolved in the case of divine names: the God that is *not-dn* from the perspective of being is *more-dn-than-most-dn* from the perspective of *hyper-being* (*qua* precontaining both the divine names themselves and the properties they source in a manner that is *hyper-unified* and *hyper-existent*). The removal of divine names from God reveals their preeminence, thereby drawing us closer and closer to the *hyper-being* God. The ascent to God is therefore at one and the same time an ascent into darkness with respect to the things of being and an illumination of the *hyper-being* God. What remains to be shown, however, is how these contrasting uses of height are resolved at the metaphorical level. Here, it is crucial to see that height is a metaphor that serves to symbolize not only divine unknowability but also divine preeminence. In the above passages from *Mystical Theology* Dionysius draws the primary metaphor *more is up*, which has its experiential basis in “the observation of rising and falling levels of piles and fluids as more is added or subtracted” (as well as the primary metaphor *good is up*, which assigns a positive valence to such rising piles and fluids).¹¹¹ Now, it would seem that this is in contradiction with the primary metaphor *unknowing is up*.¹¹² One and the same thing cannot be both unknowably removed and preeminently superabundant. But, as has been shown in the preceding chapters, this is just what the Dionysian corpus says. And here it is the metaphor of height that gives semantic expression to this theological claim, doing double duty by signifying not only God’s utter unknowability (according to the things of being) but also God’s preeminent superabundance. Thus, we can emend our earlier gestalt as follows:

¹¹¹ [15], p. 51. Note that Lakoff and Johnson do not provide an experiential basis for *good is up*. They do however say that the primary experience of another related metaphor, *important is big*, is the realization that big things (e.g., parents) are important and can exert major forces on a child and dominate a child’s visual experience (p. 50).

¹¹² According to Lakoff and Johnson, the *more is up* and *unknown is up* metaphors “have a very different experiential basis” ([14], p. 21).

Table 5: Gestalt of the Dionysian Metaphor *God is Up and More*

Participants	Christian as seeker, God as that which is being sought
Parts	Base of mountain where God does not dwell, enshrouded summit where God does dwell
Stages	First seeking for God by climbing up the mountain by removing the things of being, then finding God on the mountain as that which is <i>hyperbeingly</i> preeminent
Linear Sequences	Progressive climbing up the divine mountain
Purposes	Finding God by climbing to the enshrouded summit where God is revealed as <i>hyperbeingly</i> preeminent
Causes	Seeker reaches the enshrouded summit by removing the things of being from God, after which God is revealed as <i>hyperbeingly</i> preeminent

Here, two things should be mentioned. Firstly, Dionysian metaphors of height more or less coincide with Dionysian metaphors of light: on the one hand, the metaphors *unknowing is up* and *unknowing is darkness* symbolize God as unknowable according to the things of being; on the other hand, the metaphors *more is up* and *knowing is light* symbolize God as *hyper-nous* knowable in *hyper-being* preeminence. Secondly, it is the enshrouded divine mountain, Dionysius' favorite example of both height and light, that serves as a common entailment between these otherwise conflicting metaphors: mountain peaks make outstanding examples of the unknown, especially when they are enshrouded in dark clouds that obscure vision of them from the bottom; in ascending a mountain one ascends over more and more of the mountain, thereby getting closer and closer to the "unknown" summit; but upon reaching the summit, one sometimes finds it penetrated by the light of the sun.

There is therefore a logic or rule to Dionysius' application of metaphors to God. Such metaphors must be able to do double duty, conveying not only the ineffability and unknowability of God with respect to the things of being but also the *hyper-nous* knowing of the *hyper-ousia* God that is the cause of all things of being.

- Dionysian Metaphor Rule: God is properly metaphorized as that which is both ineffable and unknowable from the perspective of being and preeminently effable and knowable from the perspective of *hyper-being*.

As in the cases of reference, predication, and illocution, this rule constitutes an intra-textual logic or grammar, regulating Pseudo-Dionysius' otherwise antinomian techniques of symbolization. This rule therefore shows that the Dionysian God is not absolutely ineffable.

But the symbol of the divine mountain serves as more than just a harmonizing entailment of Dionysian metaphors of height and light; it generates a *story of ascent* that offers a "narrative isotopy" for the entire Dionysian corpus.¹¹³ As the Christian climber ascends the divine mountain, removing more and more things of being from God, she progressively enters into the unknowing darkness—a state in which nothing of being can be said or known about God. But upon arrival at the summit of the enshrouded divine mountain, the Christian climber "knows" God *hyper-nous* as the *hyper-ousia* cause of all things, a cause that precontains its effects in a manner that is *hyper-existent* and *hyper-*

¹¹³ For more on the notion of an *isotopy*, see [6] and [5]. *Isotopies* are the semantic properties of texts that make possible their disambiguation through abductive inferences known as *topics*. Put differently, topics are pragmatic devices used to by readers to identify the semantic properties of texts called *isotopies*. Thus topics make possible the uniform readings of stories. As such, Eco understands isotopy to be "an umbrella term," a general category under which various parallel (autonomous yet interactive) levels of textual coherence or sense can be subsumed ([5], p. 189). Of the eight isotopies that Eco provides in *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, the one that is most useful to a disambiguation of Dionysian metaphors of darkness and height is *narrative isotopies connected with discursive isotopic disjunctions that generate complementary stories*, since it provides a way of reconciling apparent conflicts at a discursive level simply by showing how such disjunctions generate a complementary story at the level of the text.

unified. This is the narrative isotopy of the Dionysian corpus, a single story that makes possible a uniform reading of the corpus, reconciling not only these metaphors of darkness and height but also the other grammatical techniques considered above: *hyper*-names, negation, ineffability assertion, and ineffability direction. This isotopy constitutes a textual narrative, regulating all of Dionysius' techniques of ineffability. This isotopy therefore shows that the Dionysian God is not absolutely ineffable.

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The Fluttering of Autumn Leaves: Logic, Mathematics, and Metaphysics in Florensky's *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*

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Difficulties in understanding Pavel Florensky's work *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth* are daunting due in large part to its methodical transgressing of identities: between disciplinary boundaries (his work drawing freely from philosophy, theology, logic and mathematics, art history, linguistics, and philology); between literary identities, as he fluidly shifts between literary criticism, logical proof, poetic discourse, and philosophical dialectics in his own writing; as well as in collapsing identities between concepts that appear to be binary and incompatible. Nor does his work proceed in the developmental and synthetic manner of German Idealism, aiming toward higher and increasingly more hegemonic syntheses, but instead through emphasizing discontinuity, otherness, and antinomy. Important insights can be gained into both the foundations and the broader importance of his work by seeing that these difficulties are intentionally generated by the author, and arise largely from his philosophical commitments in logic and mathematics, and above all his attempt to go beyond the limits of the Aristotelian principle of identity through outlining a more fundamental principle of identity influenced as much by Heraclitus and the ascetic theology of the Eastern Church as it is by Georg Cantor's research into the mathematics of infinity and by the celebrated Russian School of Mathematics, of which Florensky was himself a founding member.

1. Two Worlds

Pavel Florensky's *The Pillar and the Ground of the Truth* [4] (hereinafter *Pillar*) is surely one of the most unusual books of philosophy published in the twentieth century. More often than not, it produces in the reader a consternation that has caused many to reject it altogether after a few glances, thinking it an example of the aestheticism and even decadence that has come to be associated with Russian Symbolism. This stigmatization is both unfortunate and unjust, for it is a work of great logical, mathematical, and philosophical rigor as well as a source of deep spiritual insight. Moreover, one of its primary claims is that the formal rigor of logic and mathematics is ontologically rooted—not just applicable to the real, but of one piece with being itself. And another of its claims is that spirituality does not concern some rarified dimension separate from empirical reality, divorced from the human body and natural science and works of art, but that it extends into and illumines every aspect of life; it does not inhabit a world unto itself. Transcendence and immanence, visible and invisible, are not just “two worlds,” but ultimately two aspects of one world. Like Heraclitus and Parmenides before him, Florensky seeks to show that “it is wise to agree that all is one,” *hen panta*.

Thus, for example, the sky-blue color which he chose for the cover of the book (and to which he devotes a seventeen page excursus, rivaling Melville's chapter exploring the color white) is a visual representation of one of his central themes, “Sophia” or Divine Wisdom—the theme for which the book is best known, and which is perhaps better approached only after some of its more basic concepts have been mastered. So too, the book is written not as a series of chapters, but a sequence of twelve “Letters” written to a close, but unspecified friend, each of which (like a Japanese *haiku* poem) begins with an evocation of the natural surroundings that indicates the season of its writing and reflects a mood that attunes what follows. Each chapter is headed by a different graphic vignette, depicting some curious object or action, and drawn from peculiar and esoteric sources, along with rather cryptic sayings that resonate with the vignette in some indefinable manner. Yet the text that follows is never something merely “aesthetic.” It might just as likely

involve a discussion of scientific findings, of world mythology, of mathematical analysis or philosophical logic, of comparative linguistics and etymology, of theological controversies from the fourth or eleventh centuries, and of course perennial philosophical difficulties—all interwoven and mutually illuminating one another, all advancing the investigation which the book undertakes in a rigorous and carefully crafted manner. But this lush and lavish variety is not put forth merely to display his extraordinary intellect and prodigious learning (which have made it fashionable to compare him to Leonardo da Vinci) but to show how each of these disciplines leads to the same understanding of his great themes—and thus that, say, mathematics and theology and ethics might be not just interconnected, but properly understood, different languages for the saying the same things. If all things are one, then any starting point will lead to the same conclusion. And demonstrating this is not extraneous to the subject matter—a *tour de force* of intellectual virtuosity—but part of the argument itself, one that must be experienced by the reader, rather than merely asserted by the author.

At first glance, however, this bewildering juxtaposition of writing styles from the lyrical to the logical; of disparate disciplinary approaches and concepts; and of four different literary formats that includes two sizes of type and some 1057 footnoted elucidations occupying one quarter of the text, along with 15 often lengthy appendices—all this seems disconnected and discontinuous, requiring strenuous leaps of understanding. And this is just as Florensky intended, for the idea of *discontinuity* is itself one of the key themes of the book, and the author attempts to lead the reader to this insight precisely through the employment of “discontinuous thoughts,” as he characterizes his writing—a mode of exposition that he shares with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche before him, and Heidegger after him, not to mention the “dark,” aphoristic style of his master, Heraclitus. Moreover, the author goes on to announce that he will be proceeding “without system, only placing a signpost here and there” with the expectation of arriving only at “schemata” and “fragments” (*Pillar*, p. 13). Visible and invisible, same and other, heaven and earth, transcendence and immanence are not two worlds but one. And yet it takes a leap, a discontinuous trajectory,

to realize this—to experience the epiphany of the one within the many, of the heavenly within the earthly—and the most demanding and rigorous philosophical work to lead to the brink of this leap—and to convince the reader not to lose heart at the edge of the precipice. How, then, can genuine rigor of thought be combined with the kind of intuitive, and indeed existential, demands that are more commonly expected in poetic and religious writing?

“Letter One,” itself subtitled “Two Worlds,” begins early in the morning, on that first day in which it has become evident that summer is over and “something new” is in the air. “Golden leaves whirled over the ground in serpentine, wind-driven eddies,” fluttering like butterflies. “The air was filled with the cool aroma of autumn, the smell of decaying leaves, a longing for the distances.” “One after another, leaves were falling to earth... describing slow circles in the air as they descended to earth.” “How good it was,” he exclaims, “how joyous and sad” was the “sight of these fluttering leaves.” “Autumn leaves keep falling, without interruption,” the author continues, and as he watches them he reflects on friends who have come and gone, he reflects on temporality and death: “Everything whirls. Everything slides into death’s abyss.” Is there a center, he asks, toward which all these whirling trajectories would point—recalling perhaps the transcendent “point at infinity” that allows the infinite number of points on a given plane to converge around the Riemann Sphere, but more explicitly evoking that Center toward Whom is drawn “the whole course of events, as the periphery to the center,” and toward Whom “converge all the radii of the circle of the ages,” the Center described by the nineteenth century Russian saint, Theophan the Recluse? Or must we concur with the sad wisdom of Pliny the Elder, that since “in life everything is in a state of unrest,” then “the only certain thing is that nothing is certain and that there is nothing more miserable or arrogant than man” (*Pillar*, p. 12). How to draw together the two worlds of Parmenides, the realms of being and appearance, time and eternity, finite and infinite? How to affirm with Heraclitus that within the change and flux and fluttering upon which he dealt at such length, there is yet a unity that draws together all things, and thereby allows us to gather them together in thought and language?

2. Noumena and Numbers

In his autobiographical account of his boyhood in the Caucasus Mountains, Florensky describes at length the way in which nature everywhere spoke to him, manifested to him its inner life—described what he called “the unusual yet sweetly known and familiar revelation from native deeps” that he found all around him in the rugged canyons and gentle seaside of his native Georgia, and that continued to motivate his studies in mathematics, science, philosophy, and theology even to his final days, during which he occupied himself by studying algae while confined in the brutal Solovetsky Monastery *Gulag* on the White Sea, just below the Arctic Circle.¹¹⁴ It was not physical nature as such that enthralled and enchanted him, but what he later called the “*Empyrean*”—the divine or heavenly—manifest in the empirical or earthly, and which he associated with the inner reality of things, their noumenal character as they were rooted in the Divine, a rootedness that he came to call “Sophia” or Divine Wisdom. And it was in the mysterious character of the symbol that he found the locus of this conjunction between the two worlds:

All my life I have thought, basically, about one thing: about the relationship of the phenomenon to the noumenon, of its manifestation, its incarnation. It is the question of the *symbol*.¹¹⁵

Not surprisingly, then, Florensky came to see his great nemesis in the philosopher whom, perhaps more than any other, he felt had led modern thought astray:

The Kantian separation of noumena and phenomena (even when I had no suspicion of the existence of any one of these terms: ‘Kantian,’

¹¹⁴ Pavel Florensky, *For My Children*, trans. in [7], p. 9. Pyman has an illuminating discussion of Florensky’s early, untranslated essay, “On the Empirical and the Empyrean” on pp. 41–45. Written in 1904, it provides an important prolegomenon to his major work, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, much of which was written by 1908, but which was not published until 1914.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, emphasis added.

‘separation,’ ‘noumena’ and ‘phenomena’) I rejected with all my being.¹¹⁶

Instead, Florensky felt strongly drawn to the tradition of Platonism, which he saw as joining together these two worlds, of showing how the visible made manifest the invisible, and how the invisible shines through the visible.¹¹⁷ It was, then, to a strongly realist approach to mathematics (in the Platonic sense of “realism” that sees mathematics as ontological, rather than empirical or psychological or constructivist) that Florensky was drawn in his earliest studies, and above all to the investigations of Georg Cantor, whom he thanks for his own understanding that “the number is therefore a prototype, an ideal schema, a primary category [both] of thought and of being” [3], p. 195.

“For me,” wrote Florensky to his mother at the age of 18, “mathematics is the key to a world view... for which there would be nothing so unimportant as not to be worth studying and nothing that was not linked to something else” (cited in [7], p. 27). Several years later, he was to write:

My studies of mathematics and physics led me to acknowledge the formal possibility of theoretical foundations for a religious world view for all humanity (the idea of discontinuity, the theory of functions, numbers.) (cited in [7], p. 36f).

Most of Florensky’s earliest papers were on mathematics, and a recent critic, S. S. Demidov, has maintained that

without [an] understanding of the significance of mathematics in his method of understanding the world, outside the frame of his opinions on

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ “In contrast [to Kant] I was always a Platonist... the appearance was for me always the appearance of the spiritual world” And thus, “the appearance—two-in-one, spiritual-material symbol—was always precious to me in its immediacy.” Florensky, *For My Children*, my own English translation from the German translation [5], p. 212.

the place of mathematics in the Universe it is impossible adequately to evaluate either his method or his philosophical views.¹¹⁸

Florensky was fortunate to study with one of the great Russian mathematicians of the early twentieth century, Nikolai Bugaev, and he is considered by a recent study in English to be (along with Nikolai Luzin and Dimitri Egorov), one of the “trio” of founders of the Russian School of Mathematics. In this paper, then, mathematics will serve as a key for understanding some of the central concepts of his greatest work.

The *Pillar and the Ground of the Truth*, consistent with the very task it takes upon itself, can legitimately be read in many ways. It can be approached as a sustained inquiry into the theology of the Christian Trinity, perhaps one of the most important since Chalcedon. It can be read as one of the great philosophical attempts to resolve philosophy’s perennial problem of the One and the Many, the Same and the Other. It can be read, as its own subtitle suggests, as an “Orthodox Theodicy,” justifying the ways of God to man, by showing the necessity of asceticism and suffering, the ontological grounds of sin, and even the possibility of what he calls “Gehenna” in the ceaseless striving of “bad infinity.” But it can also be approached from the direction of formal reasoning, mathematics and logic, as will be done in this paper. From this perspective, it can be read as a sustained assault upon the primacy of the law of identity—a principle that has been taken since Aristotle as the foundation of formal reasoning—an assault that paradoxically employs important concepts of mathematics and logic themselves, such as the concepts of actual and potential infinity, discontinuous functions, the recurrence of antinomies, and the problem of irrational and transcendental numbers. Yet paradoxically, it is only the primacy of the law of identity that Florensky seeks to overthrow, not the law itself. Indeed, he seeks to show that the law of identity is grounded in something deeper and more basic than logic. Just as Heraclitus and Parmenides believed, it is grounded in the nature of being itself when it is understood according to the mode of truth that is proper to it.

¹¹⁸ S. S. Demidov, “*O matematike v tvorchestve P.A. Florenskogo*,” p. 171, cited in [7], p. 260.

3. The Law of Identity and its Limitations

It will, perhaps, be useful to present at the beginning a very abstract formulation of Florensky's claims concerning the law of identity. Florensky argues that there are higher and lower versions of the law of identity, one that is ultimately empirical and psychological (and which has been traditionally embraced by logicians) and the other reflecting an ontological understanding, a radically realist understanding, whereby the knower in a most important sense becomes the known, where $A=A$ only by means of becoming not- A .¹¹⁹ Here, the term identity applies to the relation of knower to known, of thinking to being, and not the relation of the knower to himself. The knowing self ($A=A$, which for Florensky is ultimately $I=I$) must go out of itself, leave itself behind and unite with the known, in order to know and in order to be itself in more than an abstract sense. And conversely, the not- A that is known, can be known only within this unity of knowing: not- A must become A .

$A=A$, Florensky argues, is first of all numerical unity, and not simply generic or specific unity. Yet this numerical unity cannot be found in a thing, which exhibits only generic identity, but only in the person who is *himself* self-forming, self-realizing, self-creating. The thing, in contrast, can never be strictly speaking one, for it is merely a member of a larger unity—even if it happens to be the only member. Yet pure self-positing, in the Fichtean sense, is something purely empty, abstract, and ultimately negative. The “this-here-now,” immortalized in the first chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, is nothing more than the negation of every other this, here, and now, a defensive or combative vacuum that indeed defines itself as a self-identity, but only

¹¹⁹ It would not be wrong to see this realism as something anticipated in the anthropologies of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, who both argued that in a very limited sense, the knower and known become united: what is known, in the very act of being known, assumes a new being in the understanding of the knower. But Florensky here is proposing something much more radical—more radical even than Hegel, who understands the self as needing to discover itself through its relation to the other. Rather, for Florensky, the knowing self must unite in love with the known, both in order for meaningful knowledge to take place, and for the self to be a concrete self. It is, one might say, an *erotics* of identity.

in an abstract and purely negative way. “In excluding all the other elements, every A is excluded by all of them, for if each of these elements is for A only not-A, then A over against not-A is only not-not-A” (*Pillar*, p. 23). But how, and on what basis, could A go beyond its identity to become one with not-A, I with not-I? How can the self go beyond itself to become one with the other: how does the merely psychological self-identity of self-assertion become the ontological identity that is proper to a person? Here, logic and ontology merge with theology, for the A that is A through becoming not-A is an A that is able to love, and love in this radical sense, Florensky argues, can only be realized through a kind of *ascesis* of the self-contained self, resulting in an openness to a mystical identity with an eternal reality whose own very being consists in a dynamic of unity with otherness. And the logical and mathematical principles with which Florensky seeks to undertake this philosophical journey are the concept of discontinuity; the contrast between actual infinity and potential infinity, along with the Absolute Infinity first discussed by Cantor; the antinomies of rationality, and thus the contradictions to which the lower law of identity must lead; and the contrast between generic identity and numerical identity. We will, then, take the last of the principles first, proceeding one by one through the other three until a point is reached at which a brief overview of Florensky’s logical-mathematical critique and correction of the law of identity becomes possible.

4. Modes of Identity

Florensky argues that the neglect and misunderstanding of numerical identity extends back to Latin scholasticism and its logic of terms. Examining the logical works first of Thomas Aquinas and then Francisco Suarez, Florensky finds three modes of identity enumerated: generic, specific, and numerical (*generice, specificie, numerice*). That is, identity is understood as the negating of division according to genus, according to species, and according to number. It is as if, he argues quoting Suarez, a state of contraction (*status contractionis*) can be observed at work here, in which diversity of genus and species is progressively negated, and finally the size of the class itself is contracted

into a singular class: the individual Socrates understood as no more than a class with only one member. But this kind of understanding of identity “remains limited to the category of things,” leaving us with merely an impersonal entity that is no more than the shrunken remnant of its own tribe, a general concept identified with itself as a singular class. Strictly speaking, Florensky argues, this is not yet numerical identity at all—not truly one, but still essentially generic and general. For true self-identity to be possible, there must be something else entirely than such a “gradual evolution” from genus to species to the elimination of one member after another until there is only one left, a progression that can never yield more than conceptual, and external, identity. Rather, there must be a break, something new altogether: there must be the self-positing that is possible only from within, and thus only for a person who is not, nor cannot be, subordinated to any class at all (*Pillar*, pp. 365–368). The only beings capable of being numerically (rather than generically or specifically) identical with themselves are persons: “the source of the idea of numerical unity must be sought in the self-identity of consciousness” (*Pillar*, p. 60). For

concrete individuals possess *creativity*, are capable of creating absolute, unforeseen relations, which are not part of any group, no matter how large, of already existing relations (*Pillar*, p. 374).

Rejecting the gradualism of a smooth, continuous “contraction” of class membership that stays within the realm of things and their properties, Florensky engages here a *discontinuity* that moves beyond thingness altogether, emerging into the identity of a realm of relations that cannot be categorized and grasped through rationality at all, yet which before all concepts and rationality is always already identifying itself.

A thing is characterized through its *outer unity*, i.e., through the unity of the sum of its features, while a person has his essential character in an *inner unity*, i.e. in the unity of the activity of self-building... Therefore, the identity of things is established through the identity of concepts, while the identity of a person is established through the unity of his or her self-building or self-positing activity (*Pillar*, p. 59).

5. The Need for Discontinuity

Florensky argues that numerical identity is founded on consciousness, i.e. on the self-establishing reflexivity that is exclusively characteristic of persons. But this would mean that the law of identity, $A=A$, is really grounded in self-identity, $I=I$. Yet so far, the $I=I$ is confined to simple self-positing: “I am I” means nothing more here than I am not this not-I, nor that not-I, nor yet another not-I, continuing unto a kind of infinity—the potential infinity or endlessness that Florensky argues characterizes the futility of mere self-identity in its various modes (and about which more will be said later.) $I=I$ is sheer negation, and although it yields an actual (as opposed to merely conceptual) self-identity, it is purely negative, and thus is itself a kind of prison of self-affirmation and self-assertion. At the same time, it lacks any positive content of its own, beyond the negation that is entailed in self-assertion. Florensky describes this powerfully in a passage that those unaccustomed to the idea of linking thoughts in logic, metaphysics, psychology, and theology may find somewhat surprising:

The law $A=A$ becomes a completely empty schema of self-affirmation, a schema that does not synthesize any real elements, anything that is worth connecting with the “=” sign. “ $I=I$ ” turns out to be nothing more than a cry of naked egotism: “I!” For where there is no difference, there can be no connection. There is therefore only the blind force of stagnation and self-imprisonment, only egotism. Outside of itself, I hates every I, since for it this [other] I is not-I; and hating, I strives to exclude this I from the sphere of being. <...> Thus, since the naked “now” is a pure zero of content, I hates the whole of its content, i.e., the whole of its life. I turns out to be a dead desert of “here” and “now” (*Pillar*, p. 23).

To escape from this “self-imprisonment,” something radical must intervene, something incommensurate with the monadic self-positing of the I. It would have to break the bonds of the Cartesian *cogito*, which seeks in futility to transcend the bubble of solipsism through concepts alone. And it would also need to be more radical than the Hegelian *Aufhebung* which, even as it gradually raises the level of development, still evolves dialectically along an epistemological and ontological

continuum, seeking otherness only to assimilate it into an expanded self-identity. There must be a second discontinuity, a leap traversing an abyss that is even more radical than the first one that led from thinghood to personhood—a *discontinuity* that would lead the self beyond the prison-walls of its own self-assertion ($I=I$), and thus would lead the law of identity itself beyond the monadism of $A=A$. Somehow, I must be more than I, and A more than A. And it is here that Florensky's great theme of discontinuity, mentioned already at several points above, assumes decisive importance. If the soul is to ascend beyond self-affirmation, if it is to find life in a "higher, spiritual law of identity, rather than the "lower, fleshly law of identity" which confines it, then this must be "attained not through gradual approach, not through continuous development, but through discontinuous rejection of selfhood" (*Pillar*, pp. 224f). As Kierkegaard had also seen clearly in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Truth cannot be attained through the bad infinity of what he called an endless "approximation process."

Florensky was always grateful to have studied with the great mathematician Nikolai Bugaev during his first semester at Moscow University. Bugaev sought to build on Cantor's work in set theory, his work on transfinite numbers, and his analysis of the "continuum," as a set of points—while himself pursuing research into the mathematics of discontinuous functions—in order to develop a critique of what he believed were the deterministic implications of the concept of continuity, a concept he saw as dominating the mathematical and scientific work of his time. For example, if every continuum is in fact an infinite set of discrete points, then discontinuity is more fundamental than continuity, an insight that he saw as important not just mathematically, but metaphysically as well. As Bugaev had written in 1897, "discontinuity is a manifestation of independent individuality and autonomy. Discontinuity intervenes in questions of final causes and ethical and aesthetic problems" [6], p. 68. Florensky, then, took delight in these famous lectures of Bugaev, which linked the mathematics of discontinuous functions with "excursions in to psychology, into philosophy and ethics," an approach upon which Florensky himself was to build so richly ([7], p.27). The concept of discontinuity continued to be crucially important for Florensky throughout this work, and his

undergraduate dissertation (for which he received the highest marks) was entitled, “On the Characteristics of Flat Curves as Loci for Breaks in the Continuum.”

But Florensky carried both the mathematics and the metaphysics of discontinuity beyond his teacher Bugaev. He saw the principle of continuity as the calamitous “governing principle” of nineteenth century thought as a whole, and he believed it was vital to overcome its dominance, which manifested itself in areas as diverse as Marx’s philosophy of history, the uniformitarian philosophy of Lyell in geology, and Darwin’s view of evolution as developing from gradual small changes. “The cementing idea of continuity,” he argued, “brought everything together in one gigantic monolith” ([6], p. 88). Subsequent thought has in fact, as he anticipated, vindicated Florensky on this point, from the post-modern critique of meta-narratives such as Marx’s, to the discovery of the role of chaos in meteorology and other earth sciences, to the realization of the role of mutations in biology, to the paradoxes of discontinuity in quantum mechanics, to the notion of paradigm shifts in the history and philosophy of science, but at the time the assumption of continuity and gradualism (perhaps a last manifestation of the “great chain of being” assumed in medieval thought) was dominant and everywhere taken for granted. As Florensky put it,

the idea of continuity, making these transitions, took possession of all disciplines from theology to mechanics, and it seemed that anyone who protested against its usurpations was a heretic ([6], p 88).

Nevertheless, Florensky countered,

inspiration, creativity, freedom, *ascesis*, beauty, the value of the flesh, religion, and much else... stands outside the methods and means of scientific research [as it is currently practiced], for the fundamental presupposition of such methods and means is, of course, the presupposition of connectedness, the presupposition of continuity, gradualness (*Pillar*, p. 94).

Yet Florensky sees this bondage to continuity and un-freedom as simply reflecting the limitations of nineteenth century science and

mathematics, even as this presupposition was already being left behind through more recent discoveries that pointed instead to the primacy of discontinuity (*Pillar*, pp. 485f; 574).

Thus, both of the first two letters of *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth* revolve around one of the greatest of all discontinuities—the discontinuity between life and death. The first letter, discussed already, focuses not just on the melancholy of change and the transitory character of life, but more fundamentally upon the reality of death that underlies them. The endless whirling and fluttering of autumn leaves, “one after another,” suggests a kind of slow, spiritual death: the bad infinity of one sin after another, one petty baseness or inattention or cruelty after another scarring the soul, and “gradually crippling it.” And

one after another, one after another, like the leaves of autumn, those people whom our heart has come to love forever whirl above the dark chasm. They fall, and there is no return, no possibility of embracing the feet of each of them” so that “now between me and them lies an abyss.

This abyss and chasm of death—this discontinuity between life and death that radically breaks with the continuity of decline—poses at the same time the thought of renewal and new life. “It appears that the soul has a foretaste of resurrection in this fluttering,” and in this “fragrance of faded aspen groves” (*Pillar*, p. 11). Just as the ceaseless fluttering leaves evoke the longing for a center, so too do the endless truths that correspond to our boundless curiosity suggest our need for a single, central truth. Here we discover within ourselves a hunger not just for

the particular and fragmented human truths, which are unstable and blown about like dust chased by the wind over mountains, but [for] total and eternal Truth, the one Divine Truth, the radiant and celestial Truth (*Pillar*, p. 12).

And as will be discussed in a later section, for Florensky this one Truth was anticipated not only in Trinitarian theology, but also in the Absolute Infinity at which Cantor had arrived at the end of his reflections on actual infinity; which both Florensky and Cantor

identified with God; and which could never be arrived at through the smooth continuity of a potential infinity.

But how, through what kind of discontinuity, are we then to approach this Absolute Truth that Florensky identifies as the highest mode of Absolute Infinity? Florensky proposes a preliminary answer in his Second Letter, called simply “Doubt.” He begins with the foundational thought of modernity, discovered by Descartes, that “for theoretical thought” the one Truth, “the Pillar and Ground of Truth,” is *certitude*. And Florensky analyses the attempts made by the soul hungry for Truth to fulfill this demand for certitude, first through various modes of givenness, which never lead beyond the self-assertion of $I=I$ and $A=A$ discussed already, and secondly by an analysis of the futile attempt of rationality or discursive thought—the endless pursuit of one explanation after another—to arrive at anything more than yet one more truth, which leads to an endless sequence of successive truths, where every A is derived from a not- A , which must in turn be derived from what is not-not- A , and so on. Modern thought, then, leaves us with the choice between

an impenetrable wall and an uncrossable sea, the deadliness of stagnation [in the $A=A$] and the vanity of unceasing motion [in the endless regression from A to its explanation by not- A]; the obtuseness of the golden calf and the eternal incompleteness of the Tower of Babel (*Pillar*, pp. 26f).

In a subtle and complex dialectic that cannot be easily summarized, Florensky proceeds through skepticism and probabilism to a final impasse, in which the *longing* for the Truth, whose light manages to penetrate the darkness of the $I=I$, lures the seeker to a willingness to go beyond this bubble of self-identity, not just in an endless quest for yet another conceptual not- A , which will in turn become subordinated back into the circle of self-identity, but to leave the sphere of the I altogether—to break with self-identity in a radically discontinuous movement that is nothing less than, for the I , a death unto itself and to the “lower law of identity,” in order to be reborn through the achieving of an impossible identity with what is not- I , discovering in the process a

higher, truer law of identity, a “spiritual law of identity” (*Pillar*, p. 348). If Parmenides’ “untrembling Heart of immutable Truth,” and with it the ontological ground of the law of identity, is to be reached, then the path must lead not through the serene, ethereal heights into which daimonic charioteers had carried the Eleatic, but through the Garden of Gethsemane (*Pillar*, p. 45).

Consonant with all the great traditions of spirituality, then, Florensky argues that it is only through a kind of intellectual *ascesis*—like the casting-off of all that is cumbersome to the athlete in training, as the word once suggested for the ancient Greeks—that the highest truth can be found. The image upon which Florensky draws here is Abraham, the father of faith, and the father of peoples, who is called to leave behind his ancestral home for an unknown land, a new land, a “better” and indeed “divine” country (*Pillar*, p. 55; *Heb.* 11:8, 14–15). Likewise, the knower must leave behind his own self-identity, leave behind the law of identity itself, cross over the abyss of rationality and go out to another—another who cannot be proved, because He is Himself a “self-proving Subject,” which alone could be Absolute Truth (*Pillar*, pp. 33ff). Moreover, this “going out” must at the same time be an “entering in,” an ontological union with the Truth who alone can be considered as “*actual infinity*, the Infinite conceived as integral Unity, as one Subject complete in itself” (*Pillar*, p. 33). Thus,

the act of knowing is not only a gnoseological act but also an ontological act, not only ideal but real. Knowing is a real *going* of the knower *out* of himself, or (what is the same thing) a real going of what is known into the knower, a real unification of the knower and what is known (*Pillar*, p. 55).

But this is to say that knowing is itself a mode of love: “in love and only in love is real knowledge of the Truth conceivable” (*Pillar*, p. 56). “Love takes the monad out of itself” and “unity in love is that which takes each monad out of the state of pure potentiality, i.e. spiritual sleep, spiritual emptiness, and amorphous chaos” (*Pillar*, p. 236). And in knowing (and loving) Absolute Truth, which is related to every individual truth as actual infinity is to every finite element—as including

them, without being contained by them—it is possible to then know (and love) finite things as well, within that Absolute.

Knowing is not the capturing of a dead object by a predatory subject of knowledge, but a living moral communion of persons, each serving for each as both object and subject. Strictly speaking, only a person is known and only by a person (*Pillar*, pp. 55f).

Hence, in a manner entirely different from the way it is argued by Spinoza, every truth known is a truth known about God. But, rather than God being dissolved into the world, the world is itself personalized within the God whose very energies it manifests, yet who nevertheless essentially transcends it. “God is transcendental for the world, but the world is not transcendental for God: rather it is wholly permeated with divine energies” (*Pillar*, p. 363). Thus, this mode of knowing that frees the self from its own self-imprisonment, that is itself a mode of love allowing every truth to entail a personal relation to God, is possible only because in each case the initiative always already proceeds from God. “God’s love goes over to us,” and indeed, it is this divine love itself that has lured the self beyond itself, enticed the I to find itself in unity with the not-I (*Pillar*, pp. 56f).

Happily, however, we need not somehow plunge into mystical unity with God all at once, and with no preparation. There are certain modes of knowing within which we are offered an anticipation, a preparation—nothing less than a “preliminary hint... of the heavenly in the earthly”:

This revelation occurs in the personal, sincere love of two, in friendship, when to the loving one is given—in a preliminary way, without *ascesis*—the power to overcome his self-identity, to remove the boundaries of his I, to transcend himself, and to acquire his own I in the I of another, a Friend. Friendship, as the mysterious birth of *Thou*, is the environment in which the revelation of the Truth begins (*Pillar*, p. 283).

Crossing the abyss, making the leap, entering into this radical discontinuity, going from the life that is a kind of death, the empty self-identity of the I=I, into a death (I= not-I) that is a kind of life, the soul discovers a “new” self, finds the truth that only by losing oneself can

ones self be found. But once again, we need not think that this discontinuous exit from the monadic hegemony of self-identity necessarily requires some dark night of the soul, an anguished state of mystical longing such as we find in some of the Western mystics. It can take place, to some degree, in the moment when some wisp of cloud, or an ancient scent lingering in the autumn air, or the song of a mocking bird in the calm depths of a Southern night, penetrates our shell and moves us beyond and outside ourselves, i.e. the moment in which we, however briefly, embody “the act by means of which a creature is liberated from its selfhood and goes out of itself” (*Pillar*, p. 235). We are made, Florensky argues in harmony with Patristic Christianity, in the image of God. And thus, remarkably,

to love visible creatures is to allow the received Divine energy to reveal itself—through the receiver, outside and around the receiver—in the same way that it acts in the Trihypostatic Divinity itself. It is to allow this energy to go over to another, to a brother (*Pillar*, p. 62).

6. The Uses of Contradiction

It would be a mistake, however, to see Florensky’s critique of the law of identity as a form of irrationalism, similar either to that of Breton and Duchamp in France, or to that articulated by his Russian contemporary Lev Shestov and his admirer, D.H. Lawrence. Florensky was first of all a mathematician and scientist, and long after his philosophical voice was silenced, he continued work in these fields. Rather, Florensky is appealing to a distinction and contrast that goes back to ancient Greek philosophy—and which was important to his Slavophile predecessors such as Khomyakov—between lower and a higher modes of knowing, between *dianoia* and *nous*, between what Florensky terms in Russian *rassudok* or “rationality” and *razum* or “reason,” or between discursive rationality, which seeks to explain conceptually, and what German Idealism called intellectual intuition, which grasps higher truths through non-sensuous immediacy (*Pillar*, p. 7). While the former is fragmented and divisive, the latter is integral and unifying, drawing people together into a kind of loving concord that in

Russian is called *sobornost* (Pillar, p. 430). And while “rationality” insists upon the “lower” law of identity, “reason” transcends it and operates according to a “higher,” spiritual law of identity.

Kant, of course, argued that such intellectual intuition was impossible for human beings, and employed a series of antinomies, or equally compelling arguments supporting contradictory conclusions, which arise when human understanding tries to go beyond the limits of empirical experience. Yet something on the order of *nous* or *theoria* or *contemplatio* (or intellectual intuition) has until modernity been seen by philosophers as the highest mode of knowing, from Parmenides to the Middle Ages. In his retrieval of *noesis* through *ascesis* and the experience of religious mystery, Florensky shows just how deeply the roots of patristic epistemology extend into ancient Greek philosophy, which characteristically (and notably in Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus) saw noetic rationality as the fulfillment of the human condition, the mode in which (however they articulated it) human beings could come closest to the divine—yet one that for the ancient philosophers, for the most part merely flickered on the horizon, reachable if at all only for a few, and only then for brief periods. And indeed, modernity itself may be defined by its very rejection of noetic or contemplative knowledge, this purportedly direct or immediate apprehension or intuition of higher, eternal, transcendent realities, which traditional, patristic Christianity saw as the birthright of all the faithful who undertook the *ascesis* of the *ekklesia*, the ancient Christian community. Florensky, then, may be seen as undertaking the most significant attempt to justify this putatively higher rationality since the German Idealists had sought to overcome Kant’s limitations on human knowledge. But just as Feuerbach and Marx saw the need to go beyond German Idealism not within theory, but through an exodus from theory into praxis, so too (in a very different mode) Florensky also seeks to justify higher knowledge through something active and engaging—through experience, and through the love that takes the knower beyond the bounds of self-identity and the law of identity itself, i.e. through an ontological migration from self-identity to identity with the other.

How to activate or engender this higher mode of reason? In Book VII of the Republic, Plato had posed the question of what “*would be apt*

to summon or stimulate noetic activity” (523e; [9], p. 202, translation altered). And Socrates here engages his interlocutor Glaucon with a strange exercise, asking him to hold up his fourth (ring) and fifth (little) finger, and report whether the fourth finger is little or small, to which he answers that it is large. Next, he asks Glaucon to hold up his third (middle) and fourth fingers, upon which Glaucon reports that the same finger, the fourth, has now become little. The same thing, the fourth finger, is thus both itself and not itself, both big and small. And this contradiction in the visible realm—and this encounter with what Plato in his later philosophy called the indeterminate dyad—is precisely what he maintains is able to stimulate and awaken the noetic intellect to go beyond the visible toward what is intelligible, but not visible: to make the transition from one world to another. Likewise, Florensky takes the concept of antinomy, which to Kant was a warning sign beyond which we must not advance, as in fact a spur to awaken our noetic powers.

“Rationality,” clinging to the illusory safety of the I=I and the law of identity, must undergo the discipline of *ascesis*: the rationalistic mind must be “tamed,” i.e. it must forgo its own pretensions to absoluteness, in order to arrive at a genuine Absolute (*Pillar*, pp. 7, 23). And it is precisely the great antinomies or mysteries of religion upon which this discipline and taming must be exercised:

The mysteries of religion are not secrets that one must not reveal. They are not the passwords of conspirators, but inexpressible, unutterable, indescribable experiences, which cannot be put into words except in the form of contradictions, which are ‘yes’ and ‘no’ at the same time (*Pillar*, p. 117).

Thus, when these mysteries of religious experience are put into words, they become antinomies embracing both thesis and antithesis—or to use a word that for Florensky is synonymous with religious antinomy, they become *dogmas*.

The basis of dogma would thus be not some kind of mandate based on “blind faith,” but quite the opposite: dogma would in this case be the “mind’s eye,” or rather “that eye by which mankind looks at the inaccessible light of ineffable Divine glory,” but stated in conceptual

language (*Pillar*, p. 79). Moreover, we should expect *beforehand* that whenever these mysteries and this noetic experience are translated into conceptual language, the discourse of rationality, the result will be manifest as an antinomy. Moreover, it is just this antinomic character that should stimulate rationality to purify and discipline itself, in order to arrive at “living religious experience as the sole legitimate way to gain knowledge of the dogmas” (*Pillar*, p. 5). The usual proofs for the existence of God and all the other attempts to create what Florensky sees as the absurdity of a “rational faith” would thus be proceeding in precisely the wrong direction. “So-called ‘rational faith,’ faith with rational proofs ... is a harsh, cruel stony growth in the heart, which keeps the heart from God.” Rather, “the truth is known only through itself” (*Pillar*, p. 48). Even the very “existence of Truth” is “not deducible but only demonstrable in experience.

What are examples of such dogmas that invite the soul to proceed beyond the safety of its own self-identity? Surely, and above all, we must list the dogma of the Self-proving Subject, the Trihypostatic Unity which through the unity of its own embrace of otherness with itself, invites us into the very loving dynamic which has been the ontological mode of God from eternity. But there are more accessible examples, and Florensky cites many of them in *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*. There is, for example, what he calls the antinomy of *philia* and *agape*, that salvation is esoteric and for the elect, *and* that it is open to everyone. Or that one should “preach the gospel to every creature” (*Mk* 16:15) *while at the same time* “neither cast ye your pearls before swine” (*Mt* 7:6; *Pillar*, pp. 300f; see also pp. 295f). Or there is the great antinomy of faith and works, i.e. “between God’s grace and human *ascesis*” (*Pillar*, p. 255). Indeed, sometimes the antinomy is presented in a single passage (*Phil.* 2:12–2:13) of scripture: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (the thesis) “for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his pleasure” (the antithesis). Or the antinomy may reveal itself within a few pages of a single Gospel: “For judgment I come into the world” (*John* 9:39) and “I come not to judge the world” (*John* 12: 47). Thesis and antithesis must both be embraced simultaneously, not through conceptual explanation, but through rising

to the kind of noetic experience to which these binary realities in each case point.

Again, Florensky's affinity for paradox, first honed in his work with the paradoxes of infinity around which so much of Cantor's work revolves, is pivotal in his theological and philosophical insights here. One of the most important appendices of *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth* discusses how the problem of irrational numbers, long dismissed as "fictitious numbers" and "*numeri surdi*," propel us to break through and leave behind the "circle of operations which arithmetic knows... in order to be born into a new, hitherto unseen and unthought of world" (*Pillar*, p. 362). This is, he argues, the world of actual infinity, entered through the portals of the paradoxes generated by the juxtaposition of the finite and the infinite, effecting "a leap, a discontinuity in development." These insights into the role of paradox, contradiction, and antinomy cast new light upon Christ's use of *parables* in his teaching, which usually entail an antinomy, a set of opposing insights that must both be embraced. They allow Florensky important insights into the relation between these two modes of rationality themselves, while aligning him against the one-dimensional rationality of modernity, and alongside traditional religious discourse, such as is common not only in the enigmatic paradoxes of Taoism, Zen Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sufism, but above all in the splendid paradoxes evoked by so many of the great Orthodox *Kontakia* and *Stichera*, especially those celebrating its holiest feast days, each of which centers upon a paradox: "Thou hast dwelt in a cave, and hast lain down in a manger, O thou whose throne is in heaven... The Unseen is seen, the Untouchable is touched, the Beginningless beginneth"; "He who hung the earth upon the waters is hung upon the Cross... He who wraps the heaven in clouds is wrapped in the purple of mockery" ([2], pp. 411f; [8], p. 609).

But when it encounters this antithetical character of dogma, being foreign to the experience that engenders and underlies it, "the rational mind involuntarily shudders," for it senses "that it is required to sacrifice itself" (*Pillar*, p. 121). Rationality does not have the taste or the capacity to bring together thesis and antithesis, for "only religious experience apprehends antinomies and sees how their reconciliation is possible" (*Pillar*, p. 120). Rather, in its refusal to go beyond the

security of its own self-identity, rationality clings to one side or another of the religious antithesis—

a one-sided proposition takes the place of absolute Truth, and such a proposition thus excludes everything in which is seen the antinomic complement to the given half of the antinomy, rationally incomprehensible.

The Greek word for choice is *airesis*, which came to mean “one-sidedness,” and which forms the root of the English word “heresy.” Thus, choosing one side or the other, thesis or antithesis, this one-sidedness of rationality is necessarily sectarian, “heretical,” or one-sided: “a heresy, even a mystical one, is a rational one-sidedness that claims to be everything” (*Pillar*, p. 119).

7. From Actual Infinity to Absolute Infinity

Surely the greatest paradox discovered by Cantor, and doubtless the one that meant the most to him, as it did to Florensky after him, was that there were higher and lower orders of infinity, leading up to an absolute infinity that exceeds comprehension altogether, and that both men identified with God. Once Cantor began to take seriously the concept of actual infinity, as opposed to the merely potential infinity familiar from the paradoxes of Zeno and the ordinary concept of endless iteration, the paradoxical notion of a hierarchy of infinities began to pose itself—paradoxical, because it would seem that infinity is something that cannot be exceeded. And yet he came to understand that there was, for example, a lower infinity of the integers, and then a higher infinity of the integers plus all the rational and algebraic numbers. Beyond this was a yet higher infinity of what he called transfinite numbers, those irrational numbers (such as “Pi”) that were not algebraic (i.e. capable of being designated by a formula, such as “the square root of two”), and whose infinite number so far exceeded all the preceding infinite sets taken together that the ratio had to be rounded to 1—i.e. if the rational and algebraic numbers were mixed together with the transcendental numbers, the probability of randomly choosing a transcendental number

would be one, and the probability of choosing one of the infinite number of integers, or one of the infinite number of rational fractions, or one of the infinite number of algebraic numbers would be zero ([1], pp. 90, 132)! And of course, the movement from a lower infinity to a higher one is necessarily *discontinuous*.

Yet the infinity of the transcendental numbers still did not stand at the top of the hierarchy. For Cantor, to whom Florensky refers to as “the founder of the modern theory of actual infinity,” the realization that there were a hierarchy of infinities—at the pinnacle of which was what he variously understood as the “set of all sets,” or “the totality of everything conceivable”—led him to an absolute limit to mathematical understanding, something that “cannot be known, not even approximately,” and which he called absolute infinity, or simply “the Absolute,” and sometimes compared to the “One” of Plotinus (*Pillar*, p. 574; [6], pp. 55, 95). Thus, for Cantor, this Absolute was by no means an abstraction, but rather that which was most real of all:

it is the single, completely individual unity in which everything is included, which includes the Absolute, incomprehensible to the human understanding. This is the *Actus Purissimus*, which by many is called God.¹²⁰

Perhaps Cantor was himself a mystic, having not merely arrived mathematically at the incomprehensible concept of this Absolute that he called “God,” but had in some sense encountered this reality in experience. But it is clear that Florensky’s main innovations beyond Cantor were (a) to show a path not just theoretically, but within religious experience to this Absolute, and (b) to show that this Absolute Infinity could only be grasped by employing the higher rationality discussed above, as Trihypostatic Unity and Self-Proving Subject, i.e. as the Trinitarian God of Patristic Christianity and Orthodox Faith. It is one of Florensky’s main theses that there are ultimately only two choices: *either* the endless futility and hopeless despair of the “bad infinity,” i.e. the *potential infinity* that ceaselessly seeks what it can never have—the

¹²⁰ From one of Cantor’s last letters to the English mathematician Grace Chisholm Young, cited in [1], p. 189.

central dynamic of torment to many of the figures in Dante's *Inferno*—or ecstatic fulfillment of the search for Truth in the actual infinite, ecstatic because it entails a “going beyond” itself for rationality and self-identity, or in theological terms, a *kenosis* or self-emptying, the sacrificing or abandonment of oneself that makes possible a new, and higher kind of existence. But is there an actual infinity, let alone a hierarchy of actual infinities? And if so, what character would this highest order of infinity possess? Finally, through what path could experience arrive at the highest level of actual infinity?

Florensky's answer to these three questions is extraordinarily rich and complex, and can only be addressed in outline here, although it should be possible to at least sketch out an answer to them, for they will help illumine the other main topics of this paper (the law of identity, discontinuity, and antinomy). First, Florensky makes some very simple observations concerning what he regards as “the fundamental and wholly elementary distinction between *actual* and *potential infinity*,” a distinction that he feels has recently suffered from error and neglect (*Pillar*, p. 351). Both potential and actual infinity are quanta, like any other kinds of quantum. But potential infinity is a *variable quantum*, changing in relation to any other quantum with which it may be compared, since by definition it must exceed any given quantum. Thus, potential infinity is not a specific quantum at all, but simply “a special way of considering a quantum,” i.e. that it is indefinitely variable. Thus, potential infinity is not something actual at all, but an *ens rationis*, an entity posited by rationality. Its infinite character never actually exists, but is always variable, in process, underway, and thus it is never fully itself. It is what the ancient Greeks called the *apeiron* and viewed disparagingly, and what German Idealism called *schlechte Unendlichkeit*, “bad infinity,” the infinity of the ceaseless “etcetera.” And as we have seen already, Florensky associated this with the endlessness of desire and dissatisfaction, of unsatisfied striving, of a movement that can never achieve its goal and for which it is impossible to ever find peace—for as soon as it varies to exceed one quantum, there remain endless greater quanta which it must still exceed (*Pillar*, pp. 351f).

Actual infinity, in contrast, is complete in itself, and thus is not a variable quantum at all, but a *constant quantum*. It is always already fulfilled, fully itself. As a simple example, we may take the set of all points inside a certain closed figure, such as a circle or square. Since the figure is bounded, the number of points within it is complete and constant, fully determinate, rather than variable. Yet it is at the same time infinite, since the number of points exceeds each of the numbers in the series 1, 2, 3, ..., n ... and is greater than them. It is, then, an actual infinite. Or, to give a more theologically significant example,

we can say that the powerfulness of God is actually infinite, because it, being determinate (in God there is no change), at the same time is greater than all finite powerfulness (*Pillar*, p. 353).

Moreover, Florensky adds, the concept of actual infinity is more basic than that of potential infinity. For in order for potential infinity to be possible, there must be an already infinite domain within which its ceaseless variations can endlessly proceed. That is, “*every potential infinity already presupposes the existence of an actual infinity as its super-finite limit*” (*Pillar*, p. 353, italics in original). Moreover, it is important to observe that no actual infinity can be gradually reached through the variation process of potential infinity, for between actual infinity and the infinite increase of a quantum that we consider potentially infinite, there is a radical *discontinuity*—not necessarily unreachable, but certainly not attainable through increase along a progressive continuum, which could only aspire “farther and farther, without ever being able to achieve a synthesis and to find peace in the whole” (*Pillar*, p. 353).

Now we may return to the *aporia* discussed earlier between givenness and discursion, neither of which alone could provide a successful path toward Truth, leaving us with the dilemma of choosing between the lifeless desert of the here and now, which intuition offers, and the torment and bad infinity of endless explanation, which never arrives at its goal—between the egoistic assertion of a particular givenness, certain merely because it is *my* givenness, and the ceaseless discursivity that continually seeks to explain every A by some new not-

A, i.e. between the law of identity and the law of sufficient reason. Yet Absolute Truth would somehow need to possess both characters. On the one hand, if it is to be experienced, it must be *given* in experience, arrived at by *finite intuition*. But if it is to be more than arbitrarily asserted, it must be exhaustively explained, and the grounds for it as a judgment absolutely proved, and this could only be possible not through a potentially infinite process, but within the actual infinity of an already completed *infinite discursion*. Absolute Truth, then, would need to be both finite infinity and infinite finitude, both actually infinite in having already synthesized its grounds, and at the same time capable of being intuited as a given, i.e. it must be a “unity of opposites, *coincidentia oppositorum*” (Pillar, p. 33). Moreover, since finite discursion cannot itself provide for it the actually infinite synthesis of all its grounds, Absolute Truth would have to be self-proving or self-grounding, a feature that we saw earlier (in the discussion of numerical identity) is characteristic only of a person or *subject*. Absolute Truth, then, if it exists, would be our experience of an Absolute Self-Proving Subject. And we have seen already how the *kenosis* that leads beyond self-identity and the *ascesis* that leads beyond rationality open the self for the experience of such a Self-Proving Subject. But is there such a reality? Florensky is clear that this must be discerned through ascetic experience alone: the Truth cannot be known beforehand, nor can it even be known for sure whether it exists, but rather it must be encountered in experience. He is able to show only that there must be such a Self-Proving Subject if there is to be not just truth, but the Truth; for in the same way that actual infinity provides the domain for potential infinity, Truth would itself be necessary even for a single finite truth to be possible. Thus, Florensky concludes, “rationality is possible not in itself but through the object of its thought, and if, and only if, it has an object of thought in which both contradictory laws of its activity, i.e. the law of identity and the law of sufficient reason, coincide.” And in addition, we must add that

rationality is possible if Absolute Actual Infinity is given to it. But what is this Infinity? It turns out that such an Object of thought, making thought possible, is the Trihypostatic Unity.¹²¹

But we may carry this yet another step further. To be fully a subject, such an Absolute subject would have to go beyond itself, to enter in love into another: “this Subject is such that it is A and not-A” (*Pillar*, p. 36). Let us, then, designate this not-A as B. But what is B? B too must go out from itself, transcend itself, in order to be a personal reality. But if B is merely not-A, then its going over in love to not-not-A would end up with the result that A has never really left itself at all, i.e. with A returning to itself. For if $A=B$, and if $B=A$, then we have not left the solipsistic self-identity of $A=A$. Thus, B must be something more than not-A, which we can designate as C. But here, Florensky concludes,

through C the circle can be closed, for in its ‘other,’ in [B understood as] not-C, A finds itself as A. In B ceasing to be A, [i.e. through B finding a not-B which is not simply A] A receives itself mediately from another, but not through the one with which it is equated, i.e., [it receives itself] from C. And here it receives itself as already ‘proved,’ already established. The same thing goes for each of the subjects A, B, C of the triple relationship (*Pillar*, p. 36).

Or, as he summarizes, “Truth is the contemplation of Oneself through Another in a Third: Father, Son, and Spirit.”¹²² But this contemplation is far from being a lifeless, bloodless “theoretical” state. Rather, “Absolute Truth is known in love”—not in love as a psychological condition but love as a metaphysical act, the love that makes possible the leap beyond the bad infinity of self-identity into the actual infinity of ontological communion (*Pillar*, p. 67). Thus, Florensky has shown a path whereby experience itself can “go beyond

¹²¹*Pillar*, p. 347. For Florensky’s discussion of the *Absolutum* in Georg Cantor’s work, see *Pillar*, p. 354.

¹²²*Pillar*, p. 37. Florensky offers a detailed comparison between the Christian understanding of Trinity and the views found in non-Christian religions, such as the Hindu triad of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, on pp. 478–482.

rationality, to enter the domain where rationality with all its norms is rooted” (*Pillar*, p. 44).

The First Nicene Council, which established the initial and guiding understanding of Christian thought, can be seen as primarily the search for the right word, a word that Florensky takes as central for his entire mathematical-philosophical-theological project. For the Greek word upon which the great Nicene Council of 318 finally settled as its cornerstone—the foundational word of Patristic Christianity and the fundamental word for this identity of substance (*ousia*) that is constitutive of personhood—is *homoousios*, “of one substance,” or “consubstantial.” It is for Florensky the true Principle of Identity, not the impoverished and paranoid self-identity of $I=I$, but the fulfilled, peaceful identity between Same and Other by way of a Third. If he is right, it is the great, foundational principle of ontology. “It is impossible,” exclaims Florensky here,

to mention without reverent fear and holy trepidation that moment—infinitely significant and unique in its philosophical and dogmatic importance—when the thunder of *Homoousios* first roared over the City of Victory [i.e. Ancient Nikea, City of *Nike*] (*Pillar*, p. 41).

Thus, Patristic Christianity can be seen, and indeed was seen by many of the Church Fathers (such as the Alexandrians and the Cappadocians) who were well versed in Greek philosophy, as offering the solution to what is arguably the great unsolved philosophical problem of antiquity: as articulated in Plato’s *Sophist*, it is the problem resolving the unstable relationship between the Same and the Other, without ending up in the state of perpetual warfare entailed by dualism, or the state of inescapable totality entailed by monism. Moreover, it demonstrates the ontological identity between thought and being that was sought and posited by both Heraclitus and Parmenides, through the experience of the Love of the Persons of the Trinity for one another, by means of the grace-given identity with the very dynamic of that love itself. And this would, at the same time, be the experience of the identity between Reason and Truth, between thought and being, between God and humanity, between the world of fluttering leaves and the Center

toward which they, along with all things, are drawn. As Florensky writes in his concluding paragraph, “The Triune Truth Itself does for us what for us is impossible. The Trihypostatic Truth Itself draws us to Itself” (*Pillar*, p. 348).

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Stoic Roots of Orthodox Christian Thinking

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In the paper logical features of dogmatic thinking are shown, namely an appropriate modal logic is constructed. First, this modal logic was sketched by Stoics in their doctrine on destiny. Main properties of modal operators ‘possible’ and ‘necessary’ can be expressed by means of the figure that may be called the Stoic square of opposition. The latter considerably differs from the Aristotelian one. The Stoic modal logic has intuitively been used in the Orthodox thought. This allows us to claim that the Orthodox thinking has Stoic roots. Then this modal logic was implicitly involved in the Marxist-Leninist thinking.

1. Introduction

Usually, dogmatic thinking is understood as a way of thinking that is incapable to innovations and strictly obeys any measurement standards, samples. It is confronted with creative or innovative thinking which avoids templates and rigid patterns and it conflicts with it. In this connection it is assumed that dogmatic thinking is inert enough and logically undeveloped. It does not contain critical analysis and includes not enough reflexion. However, all these valuations are false. Dogmatic thinking can be logically well-developed and is reflexive in fact. The difference of dogmatic thinking from creative thinking consists in another feature, namely dogmatic thinking aspires to harmonize everything, and it avoids uncertainties and fuzziness. Innovative thinking, on the contrary, pays attention to inconsistencies and contingencies.

There are many examples of dogmatic thinking; one of them is Marxism-Leninism in the Soviet Union. The Marxist-Leninist thinking was harmonic and systematic. Its task was in reflexising and systematising all social phenomena on the basis of an original canon—Marx, Engels, Lenin's works. This task was grandiose and in many respects it has been realised. It has been fulfilled, first of all, due to the reform of philosophy and especially philosophy history. According to Marxist-Leninists, all philosophical knowledge needed to be harmonised, all philosophical ideas to arrange. Any philosophical thought needed to be checked up on correspondence with the Marxist-Leninist canon.

In the USSR the scientific journal *Questions of Philosophy* (*Вопросы философии*) which should have set up all the academic standards of the Marxist-Leninist philosophical reflexion has been established. This journal should have become a philosophical measurement standard in the country, therefore the steadfast public attention has been riveted on it. Let us notice that this journal exists in Russia till now and it is the leading Russian philosophical journal still, thus it supports the academic traditions of the Soviet philosophy until today.

All philosophers had to be classified into materialists (true philosophers) and idealists (reactionary philosophers), to reveal all disadvantages of modern bourgeois philosophy. Communist Party bodies monitored carefully, how precise all these tasks have been realised in a correct way. There are saved documents in which the reflexion of ranking officers concerns the content of numbers of the journal *Questions of Philosophy* how they follow the measurement standard: the *Report of AgitProp* [Agitation and Propaganda Department] of the *Central Committee to G.M. Malenkov about the Meeting of Employees of the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR* 18.03.1949 (*Agitprop* 1949); the *Letter of Heads of the Institute of Philosophy of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and the Journal Questions of Philosophy to G.M. Malenkov Concerning the Struggle against Cosmopolitanism* 21.03.1949 (*Institute of Philosophy* 1949); the *Note of the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal Questions of Philosophy, D.I. Chesnokov to G.M. Malenkov about the Content of the 3rd Number of*

the Journal for 1948 04.04.1949 (Chesnokov 1949); *D. Shepilov and L.Ilyichev's Note to M.A. Suslov about the Content of the 3rd Number of the Journal for 1948* 21.07.1949 (Shepilov & Ilyichev 1949) etc.

All these documents wake a considerable interest because of open principles of constructing the philosophical standard on the basis of the Marxist-Leninist canon—Marx, Engels, Lenin's works. We quote one of these documents:

The Propagation and Propaganda Department has in detail studied the content of the recently published third number of the journal *Questions of Philosophy*. All main articles of this number of the journal are read by the group of workers of the Propagation and Propaganda Department.

In the journal *Questions of Philosophy* No.3 an improvement is seen. In comparison with the earlier published numbers the content of the 3rd number favourably differs.

In the journal there is the detailed criticism of the errors contained in the earlier numbers of the journal *Questions of Philosophy*. Subjects of articles changed and became more actual. In the third number of the journal articles are published on the following themes: the development of historical materialism by Lenin and Stalin; Lenin and Stalin about the state form of dictatorship of proletariat; the development of the Marxist doctrine by Lenin and Stalin about two phases of communism. Articles about the dialectic-materialistic basis of I.V. Michurin's doctrine, about the Marxist philosophical materialism and modern physics are printed out. Some articles against the bourgeois reactionary philosophy are placed.

The Editorial Board of the journal was right having published in this number the final materials on the erratically started before discussion about the nature of physical knowledge. In these materials the gross errors of comrade Markov and his followers are subjected criticism. The discussion on the new project of the syllabus on Aesthetics is completed also.

In the Criticism and Bibliography Section of the journal there are critical reviews on S. Rubinshteyn's book *Foundations of the General Psychology*, M. Leonov's book *the Sketch of Dialectic Materialism* and M. Strogovich's book *Logic*.

However, the materials printed out in this number of the journal contain a set of serious disadvantages and errors (Shepilov & Ilyichev 1949).

Within the limits of this detailed analysis of the journal *Questions of Philosophy* No.3 the significant interest is woken by critical remarks of workers of the Propagation and Propaganda Department of the USSR. The first, what categorically is denounced by them, is any doubt in the linear sequence of ideas from Marx and Engels to Lenin and Stalin:

Thus, comrade Yovchuk replaced 'two bases' of Leninism by 'two sources.' That is an error. The Leninism has only one basis, Marxism. The statement of comrade Yovchuk that classics of Russian philosophy had priority in connection of materialism with dialectics is erratic: it is known that this task was solved by Marx and Engels. It is necessary to mark an immodest tone of M. Yovchuk's article (see pp. 215–216) (*Shepilov & Ilyichev* 1949).

Another important item of criticism concerned an inaccuracy of statements in interpretation of canonical works, in particular Stalin's books:

In his article comrade Stepanyan makes a variety of errors and confused statements. Comrade Stepanyan affirms that 'at the change of one class society by another there is only a replacement of one form of oppression by another' (p. 69). Comrade Stepanyan absolutely forgets that our Soviet society is class as well and at the same time it carried out for the first time in history the liberation from oppression.

Further comrade Stepanyan writes:

'Comrade Stalin teaches that "the occurrence of new manufacturer forces and appropriate production relations exists not separately from an old system, but in depths of the old system."

This general law of historical development in the conditions of revolutionary transformation of capitalism into socialism has a specific manifestation in the form of a transition period' (pp. 69–70).

Comrade Stepanyan commits here an error, he incorrectly applies comrade Stalin's position to the transition period in the USSR. It is known that the transition period towards socialism in the USSR is carried out not in depths of the old system, but after the disappearance of old system, already in the conditions of the new, Soviet system (*Shepilov & Ilyichev* 1949).

According to this criticism, all statements in Marxist-Leninist philosophy should be as much as possible exact, there should be neither double meanings nor different interpretations. To be obeyed these statements should be formulated in the strict coordination with the Party hierarchy. It is possible to command the ideological inheritance of Marxism only under the strict control of the Central Party Committee:

Comrade Stepanyan in the article (pp. 71–75) voluntarily and at least crudely quotes many out-of-date from his point of view positions of Marx and Engels. Certainly, in Marx and Engels' works written in the last century, it is possible to find out places which have become outdated now. But the search of out-of-date positions is not a philosophical task now. The only heir and manager of the great ideological inheritance of the founders of scientific communism, Marx and Engels, is our Party, and without the permission of the Central Party Committee nobody can command the ideological inheritance of Marxism and under the personal will to consider this or that position from works of the founders of Marxism as backward or obsolete (*Shepilov & Ilyichev* 1949).

So, on the basis of the analysis of the documents discussing the content of numbers of *Questions of Philosophy*, it is possible to emphasise the following features of Marxist-Leninist thinking: (1) the tendency to harmonise all knowledge on the basis of the Marxist-Leninist canon; (2) the dogma of linear succession of Marxist-Leninist ideas; (3) the significance of Party hierarchy in supporting and developing Marxism-Leninism.

Another example of dogmatic thinking is Orthodoxy. Let us notice that the Marxism-Leninism development in Russia as dogmatic thinking became possible in many respects thanks to that for centuries in Russia another dogmatic thinking—Orthodox—was cultivated. The following became its features: (1) the tendency to harmonise all knowledge on the basis of the Orthodox canon; (2) the idea of linear succession of Orthodox tradition; (3) the significance of the Church hierarchy in supporting and developing Orthodoxy.

From the logical point of view, dogmatic thinking follows the logical determinism: any statement is either true or false, and we can say about any event that either it will be necessary or its negation will be

necessary (in sense of modal logic, instead of mechanicism or any other physical theory). This determinism is responsible for a harmonic picture which dogmatic thinking offers. In Marxism-Leninism any modern view is either good (Communitic) or bourgeois, and any act either corresponds to Communitic appropriate standards (is good) or does not. In the same measure in Orthodoxy any view either corresponds to the norms of Orthodoxy or does not, and each act is resulted by salvation or is not.

In this connection we can remember the Orthodox reasoning about ‘adiaphora’—actions which in the Orthodox canon both are not prohibited and do not belong to commandments directly, i.e. which pertain neither good nor evil. Nevertheless, adiaphora also is dual, since it is considered that any action carried out by the person “with consciousness and purpose” certainly is either good or evil. Neutral actions do not exist. In the full sense, neutral actions, from the Orthodoxy position, can be presented only by what are made by the person without any intention and even without thought.

The term ‘adiaphora’ (ἀδιάφορα; μέσα, οὐδέτερα; indifferentia, res mediae) was made up in ethical doctrines of Ancient Greek philosophers and designated neutral actions in ethical relations. So, for Stoic philosophers any real is subdivided into good, evil, and adiaphora (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* VII, 101). Further, the adiaphora is classified by them into things ‘preferable’ (προηγμένα), corresponding to the nature (ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ζῆν), such as health, corporal force, beauty, mammon, glory, and things opposite to the nature which should be avoided (ἀποπροηγμένα), such as illness, pain, poverty (*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* I, 191–196; 559–562; III, 117–168; persons. 119). Thus, for Stoics the adiaphora is not neutral things in the pure sense, but things which directly are not ordered or prohibited, however it is necessary either to prefer them or to avoid. This understanding of adiaphora is close to Orthodoxy. In Christianity one of the first Augustine of Hippo began to deny the possibility of existence of “neutral” human acts: ones of them are necessarily resulted by salvation and others by the eternal destruction.

So, the Orthodox reasoning about adiaphora shows a kind of logical determinism, characteristic for dogmatic thinking: each act either is necessarily good or necessarily evil.

The Orthodox canon has been created at the Ecumenical Councils. At them all dogmas of the Orthodox Christianity and all rules regulating all aspects of the life of community have been established. It is important to notice that all items, accepted at Councils, were accepted by means of voting. Then after voting the minority was offered to regret of the views and to accept the point of view of the majority. Otherwise all who were not consent were declared as heretics. As a result, a unique precedent of collective decision-making which completely regulates both the intellectual and social life of community has been created. Accordingly, the individual opinion loses sense. There is ever a probability that it appears heretical. Since then there has been a tradition to vote solidly—the tradition continued in the Soviet Union.

From times of the Ecumenical Councils the Orthodox canon cannot be extended or vary in any way. At the same time in the major questions of understanding and application of the Orthodox canon a collective decision-making is used also. So, in the Russian Orthodox Church the supreme body of hierarchical management is presented by the Council of Bishops and consists of diocesan bishops, and also vicar bishops heading Synodal institutions and theological academies or having canonical jurisdiction over appropriate parishes. The Council of Bishops is also the higher Church court (on disagreements between two and more bishops; on affairs about Church offences of bishops and heads of Synodal institutions etc.).

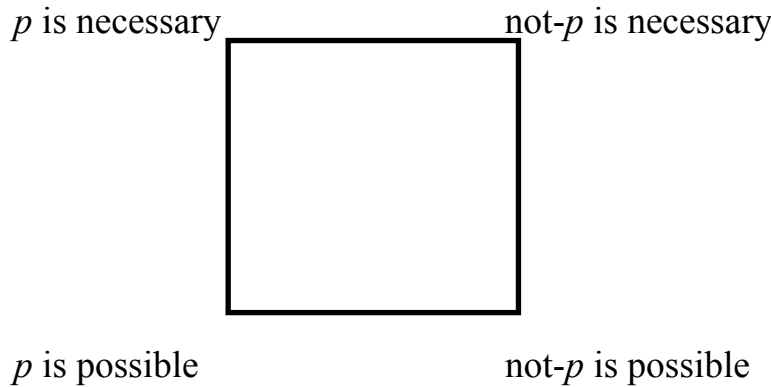
The higher authority in the field of doctrinal statements and canonical organisations belongs to the Local Council (τοπικός σύνοδος). Members of the Council are presented by diocesan and vicar bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Council Presidium consists of the Chairman (the Patriarch Moscow and All Russia or the Locum tenen) and twelve bishops. The presidium supervises over Council meetings.

The Local Council interprets the doctrine of the Orthodox Church on the basis of the Scriptus and the Sacred Legend, saving the theological and canonical unity with Local Orthodox Churches; it takes canonical, pastoral decisions as well as decisions on divine service,

providing the unity of the Russian Orthodox Church, saving cleanliness of the Orthodox belief, Christian morals and godliness; it approves the decisions of the Local Council concerning doctrinal statement and the canonical device; it canonizes saints; it selects the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia etc.

As we see, the collective decision-making in Orthodoxy by means of voting with the further ignoring of opinion of minority makes Orthodox thinking conservative enough and dogmatic. Actually, the Orthodox thinking became the first example of dogmatic thinking in the mankind history, as wide as possible realised in a community life. Nevertheless, the methodology of dogmatic thinking had been developed much earlier, in Stoic philosophy.

Dogmatic thinking can be emphasised by an unusual understanding of modalities, when they have many unique features. Since Aristotle modalities ('... is possible,' '... is necessary') have been considered within the limits of the logical square:



$\text{'}p \text{ is necessary'} \wedge \text{'not-}p \text{ is necessary'} \equiv \text{false}$

$\text{'}p \text{ is necessary'} \wedge \text{'not-}p \text{ is possible'} \equiv \text{false}$

$\text{'not-}p \text{ is necessary'} \wedge \text{'}p \text{ is possible'} \equiv \text{false}$

$\text{'}p \text{ is possible'} \vee \text{'not-}p \text{ is possible'} \equiv \text{true}$

$\text{'}p \text{ is necessary'} \vee \text{'not-}p \text{ is possible'} \equiv \text{true}$

$\text{'not-}p \text{ is necessary'} \vee \text{'}p \text{ is possible'} \equiv \text{true}$

$\text{'}p \text{ is necessary'} \Rightarrow \text{'}p \text{ is possible'} \equiv \text{true}$

$\text{'not-}p \text{ is necessary'} \Rightarrow \text{'not-}p \text{ is possible'} \equiv \text{true}$

According to the modal square of opposition it is pointed out that the statement $\text{'}p \text{ is possible'} \wedge \text{'not-}p \text{ is possible'}$ can be true, but it does

not hold in general case, and the statement ' p is necessary' $\vee$ ' $\text{not-}p$ is necessary' can be true as well, although it is not true generally. The statement ' p is possible' $\wedge$ ' $\text{not-}p$ is possible' ('both possible to be and possible not to be') expresses contingency, and the statement ' p is necessary' $\vee$ ' $\text{not-}p$ is necessary' ('either necessary to be or necessary not to be') expresses logical determinacy. Hence, by Aristotle generally there is neither contingency nor determinacy and if contingency (respectively, determinacy) takes place, then surely determinacy (respectively, contingency) does not take place.

On the Aristotelian understanding of modalities modal logic S4 is based. For this logic there is a topological interpretation (*Tsao-Chen* 1938; *McKinsey and Tarski* 1948). The characteristic matrix S4 is set up by any subsets of dense-in-itself normal separable topological space, when elementary logical functions are interpreted standardly, and functions ' p is necessary' and ' p is possible' as **Int** p (an interior of set p) and **Cl** p (a closure of set p), respectively.

But in dogmatic thinking another understanding of modalities has been used since the very beginning. It is claimed that contingency does not exist at all (' p is possible' $\wedge$ ' $\text{not-}p$ is possible' $\equiv \text{false}$), and determinism always takes place (' p is necessary' $\vee$ ' $\text{not-}p$ is necessary' $\equiv \text{true}$). We can show that this understanding of modalities first was characteristic for Stoics. The basic properties of modalities are defined within the limits of relations which we will call Stoic logical square. We can easily show that logical schemata of Stoics have been inherited in Orthodoxy that became the first global project of dogmatic thinking.

2. Stoic Logical Square

Diadorus the Megarian was one of the first philosophers, who put forward the idea of logical determinism. Then this idea was picked up and developed by Stoics. Meanwhile their understanding of determinism essentially differed.

By Diodorus as well as Chrysippus the Stoic's claim, each statement is either true or false—it is realised within the interval 'either true or false.' At the same time, Diodorus is convinced that any event is

realised within the interval ‘either it is necessary to be or it is necessary not to be’ only owing to the definiteness of proposition logical value. By such understanding of modal operators there is no logical structure and among propositions there are no deep semantic connections. There is a set of necessary true propositions and a set of necessary false propositions. Anything extralinguistic (ontological) cannot be said about propositions.

According to Chrysippus of Soli, we can accept propositions about future events which are realised within the interval ‘both it is possible to be and it is possible not to be.’ Among all propositions about futures only some are considered as ‘either necessary true or necessary false,’ the latter propositions describe events which have appropriate “natural causes.” In other words, any necessary true (false) proposition *A* assumes a logical structure in which an event *A* appears (does not appear) and by which a proposition *A* is regarded as necessarily true (false).

As Chrysippus notes, all propositions in Diodorus’ opinion are singular—they do not assume among themselves an ordering relation. For example, for astrologists the following implication holds: ‘If a man was born at the rising of the dogstar, he will not die at sea.’ Let us assume, on its basis such a proposition was derivated: ‘If Fabius was born at the rising of the dogstar, Fabius will not die at sea.’ By Diodorus, it is enough for us to know logical rules for implication and the truth of antecedent causes that the succedent is true in the given situation. By Chrysippus, the succedent is necessarily true just in case of appearing a natural cause: ‘if there is a natural cause why Fabius should not die at sea, it is not possible for Fabius to die at sea’ (Cicero. *De Fato* 7:14).

As we see, for Diodorus it is sufficient that the general implication is considered true, after all both propositions ‘If anyone was born at the rising of the dogstar, he will not die at sea’ and ‘if Fabius was born at the rising of the dogstar, Fabius will not die at sea’ in the theory without structure are logically equivalent. The meaning of both propositions can be reduced to the following singular proposition: ‘It is not the case both that some person was born at the rising of the dogstar and that that person will die at sea’ (Cicero. *De Fato* 8:15).

For Stoics, any proposition is either necessarily true or necessarily false only because an event described by an appropriate proposition always has a natural cause. In Stoics' opinion, the logical structure—a logical simulation of world—thus, is important, thanks to this all propositions are either necessarily true or necessarily false. For Diodorus there are no logical structures at all and, as a result, all propositions are either true or false just due to singular facts.

When an event A has a natural cause, but an event A has not occurred yet, it is possible to say that both there can be A and there can be no A . Nevertheless, when an event A was already accomplished or finally not accomplished (to say, there is an event eliminating A), we can affirm that A is either necessary to be or necessary not to be. A sequence of natural causes which have entailed an appearance or non-appearance of A will be called a *necessity cycle*. If two events eliminate each other, then we say that one event of both whose cycle of necessity is longer and accomplished later (thereby some fragments of two cycles of necessity occurred simultaneously) is necessary to be, then another event is necessary not to be.

Propositions about past events are 'either necessarily true or necessarily false,' because the cycle of necessity expressed in them is already completed. In propositions about future events the cycle is started or not started still, therefore their value can appear indefinite. The system of cycles constitutes the Stoic logical structure. The length of cycles defines an order of proposition necessity. If a cycle of proposition A contains the whole cycle of proposition B as fragment, we will state that an order of necessity of A is higher, than an order of necessity of B . The interval 'either true or false' is realised then by any proposition. If between nonequivalent propositions there is no order relation of necessity, these propositions cannot hold within the given interval.

Meanwhile, "movement" (change, occurrence or destruction) introduces the interval 'both can be and cannot be' which appears everywhere ruined if and only if all world surrenders to fate, i.e. realises "pneuma" (the greatest cycle of necessity)—there is the maximum order of necessity covering absolutely all propositions. Chrysippus writes about this so:

Si est motus sine causa, non omnis enuntiatio (quod ἀξίωμα dialectici appellant) aut vera aut falsa erit; causas enim efficientis quod non habebit, id nec verum nec falsum erit; omnis autem enuntiatio aut vera aut falsa est; motus ergo sine causa nullus est. Quod si ita est, omnia, quae fiunt, causis fiunt antegressis; id si ita est, fato omnia fiunt; efficitur igitur fato fieri, quaecumque fiant.

If uncaused motion exists, it will not be the case that every proposition (termed by the logicians an *axioma*) is either true or false, for a thing not possessing efficient causes will be neither true nor false; but every proposition is either true or false; therefore uncaused motion does not exist. Precedent causes for all things means fate and causal determinism. It is better to give up the truth/falsity of propositions. If this is so, all things that take place take place by precedent causes; if this is so, all take place by fate; it therefore follows that all things that take place take place by fate (Cicero, *De Fato* X, 20–21).

In the formal notation: If *A* ('uncaused motion'), then non-*B* ('not the case that every proposition is either true or false'); *B*; thus, non-*A*.

The necessity order completely ranks all phenomena: 'Since in the nature there is something, what the human being cannot do, there exists also something better, than the human being' (Cicero, *De natura deorum* 7:17).

For Diodorus past and future events have the same zero structure, for Chrysippus they have necessity cycles, therefore a future event is true if it has appropriate causes.

Future things that have not got causes *why* they will be in the future cannot be true; therefore those that are true must necessarily have causes; accordingly when they have occurred they will have occurred by fate (Cicero, *De Fate* 11:26).

In the structure of cycles there are only true events. False events stay outside of the structure. In order to confute Chrysippus' point of view, Cicero follows Carneades' statement that a proposition can be true casually:

Multum enim differt, utrum causa naturalis ex aeternitate futura vera efficiat, an etiam sine aeternitate naturali, futura quae sint, ea vera esse possint intellegi. Itaque dicebat Carneades ne Apollinem quidem futura posse dicere nisi ea, quorum causas natura ita contineret, ut ea fieri necesse esset.

Quid enim spectans deus ipse diceret Marcellum eum, qui ter consul fuit, in mari esse periturum? Erat hoc quidem verum ex aeternitate, sed causas id efficientis non habebat. Ita ne praeterita quidem ea, quorum nulla signa tamquam vestigia extarent, Apollini nota esse censebat; quanto minus futura, causis enim efficientibus quamque rem cognitis posse denique sciri quid futurum esset; ergo nec de Oedipode potuisse Apollinem praedicere nullis in rerum natura causis praepositis, cur ab eo patrem interfici necesse esset, nec quicquam eius modi.

For it makes a great deal of difference whether a natural cause, existing from all eternity, renders future things true, or things that are going to be in the future can be understood to be true even without any natural eternity. Accordingly Carneades used to say that not even Apollo could tell any future events except those whose causes were so held together by nature that they must necessarily happen.

For what consideration could lead the god himself to say that the Marcellus who was three times consul was going to die at sea? this had indeed been true from all eternity, but it had no efficient causes.

Carneades says the gods have no foreknowledge of events without causes.

Therefore Carneades held the view that Apollo had no knowledge even of these past events which had left behind them no trace of their passage—how much less had he knowledge of future events, for only by knowing the efficient causes of all things was it possible to know the future; therefore it was impossible for Apollo to foretell the fate of Oedipus when there were no causes fore-ordained in the nature of things making it necessary for him to murder his father, nor could he foretell anything of the sort (Cicero, *De Fate* 14:32–33).

However, true casual events are possible only in another structure, in the Aristotelian one, where besides the possible there is also the casual (contingent). In other words, truth-values of all propositions are located in the range from ‘possible to be and possible not to be’ (casual) to ‘either necessary to be or necessary not to be’ (subordinated to destiny). Therefore for Aristotle the space is complete—in it there is

both the casual and necessary, both true and false, and outside of this space there is nothing, i.e. there is neither emptiness nor not-real. For Chrysippus truth-values of all propositions are located in the interval ‘either necessary to be or necessary not to be’ (surrendered to fate). Therefore the space contains only true, only necessity, and outside of this space there is both an emptiness and not-real, i.e. falsehood and contingency.

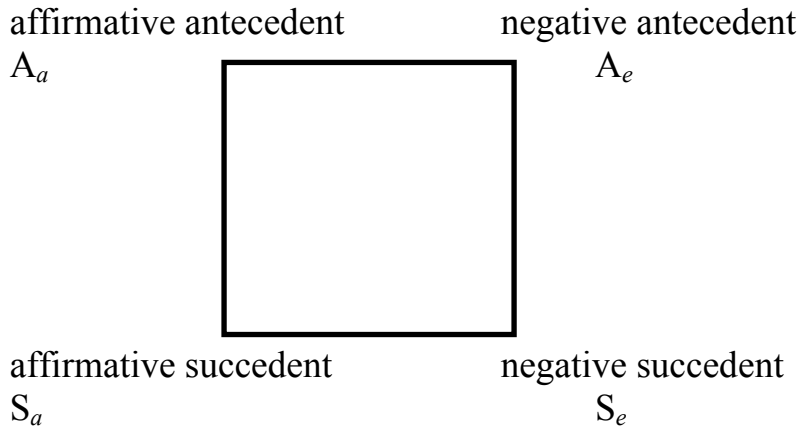
A necessity cycle includes two sorts of causes: absolute (‘perfect and principal’) and auxiliary (‘neither perfect nor principal’): ‘Hence when we say that everything takes place by fate owing to antecedent causes, what we wish to be understood is not perfect and principal causes but auxiliary and proximate causes’ (Cicero, *De Fate* 8:41). Absolute causes simultaneously are both sufficient and necessary conditions of the phenomenon, auxiliary and proximate causes are just necessary conditions.

Proximate causes form a node of phenomenon. A node can be exemplified by the roller or spinning-top, they ‘cannot begin to move unless they are pushed or struck, but which when this has happened, he thinks, continue to move of their own nature, the roller rolling forward and the top spinning round’ (Cicero, *De Fate* 18:42). The node is a cycle of necessity of smaller order. In modern physics a node is understood as an autowave.

A necessity cycle can have a singular succedent—‘Socrates will die at a given date’ and a non-singular succedent—‘Laius will have a son Oedipus,’ the latter is complex and means as well that ‘Laius will lie with a wife and that he will beget Oedipus by her’ (Cicero, *De Fate* 8:30).

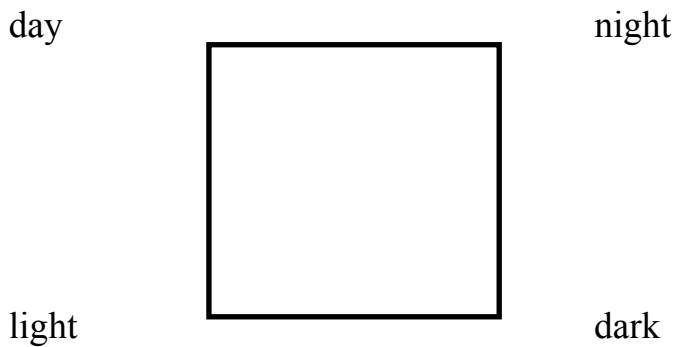
The sequence of events in a cycle of necessity $A_0, A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$ where A_n is a final event which is either necessarily true or necessarily false, and A_0 is the first event without which A_n would be impossible, expresses the following sequence of conditional propositions: $A_0 \rightarrow_S A_1, A_1 \rightarrow_S A_2, \dots, A_{n-1} \rightarrow_S A_n$. Thus, conditional propositions for Stoics express cause-and-effect relations, for example ‘if it is day, then it is light.’ These propositions are said to be Stoic implications (or for short S-implications). Let us notice that S-implication has semantics that differs from any traditional understanding of implication. Truth-values

of S-implication are defined by means of the following square of opposition:



Among its vertices other relations, than in the Aristotelian square take place already. So, A_a and A_e cannot be together true, but can be together false. However, S_a and S_e cannot be together true and cannot be together false, therefore the duality relations between $A_a \wedge A_e$ and $S_a \vee S_e$ does not arise. In other respects, the Stoic square is similar to the Aristotelian one. There are a contradictory relation between A_a and S_e (respectively, between A_e and S_a) and a subordination relation: from A_a it follows that S_a and from A_e it follows that S_e .

An example of the Stoic square:



On the basis of the Stoic square five ‘proveless modes’ (axioms in modern meaning) are obtained:

1. $\{A \rightarrow_s S, A\} \vdash S$ “If it is day, then it is light; it is day now; hence it is light.”
2. $\{A \rightarrow_s S, \neg S\} \vdash \neg A$ “If it is day, then it is light; it is not light; hence it is not day.”

3. $\{\neg(A_a \wedge A_e), A_a\} \vdash \neg A_e$ (resp. $\{(A_a \vee A_e), A_a\} \vdash \neg A_e$) “It cannot take place that it is both day and night; it is day now; hence it is not night.”

4. $\{(S_a \vee S_e), S_a\} \vdash \neg S_e$ “It is either light or dark; but it is light; hence it is not dark.”

5. $\{(S_a \vee S_e), \neg S_e\} \vdash S_a$ “It is either light or dark; but it is not dark; hence it is light”.

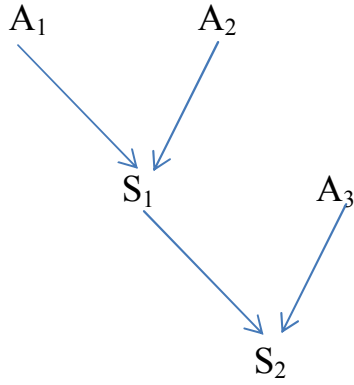
The Stoic implication possesses the property of transitivity: ‘When we have in a deduction combined premises of any conclusion, we potentially have in them as well this conclusion though it is not expressed explicitly’ (Sextus Empiricus. *Adversus Mathematicos* VIII, 231). Trees of cause-and-effect relations have the logical meaning of deduction trees. Modes 1–5 are used for constructing all proofs. As Stoics would say, any inhomogeneous reasoning is a combination of homogeneous propositions. For example, that is the case of Aenesidemus’ reasoning:

If phenomena similarly are all being in an identical state, signs are phenomena, then signs similarly are all being in an identical state. Nevertheless, signs anyway are not similarly all being in an identical state. And phenomena similarly are all being in an identical state, therefore, signs are not phenomena (Sextus Empiricus. *Adversus Mathematicos* VIII, 234).

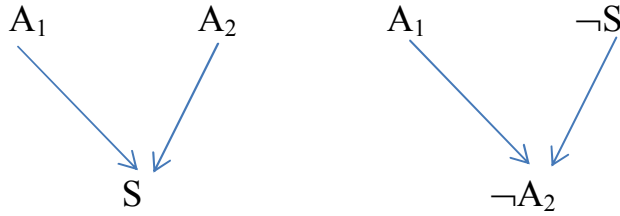
In the form of “rolling”: ‘If it is the first and the second, then it is the third; it is not the third, but it is the first; therefore, it is not the second.’ Formally: $\{(A_1 \wedge A_2) \rightarrow_S S, \neg S, A_1\} \vdash \neg A_2$. From here it is obvious that the given proof consists of the 2nd and 3rd modes, namely, first, $\{(A_1 \wedge A_2) \rightarrow_S S, \neg S\} \vdash \neg(A_1 \wedge A_2)$, second, $\{\neg(A_1 \wedge A_2), A_1\} \vdash \neg A_2$.

The features of proof-trees are shown by means of the following topics (*topoi*):

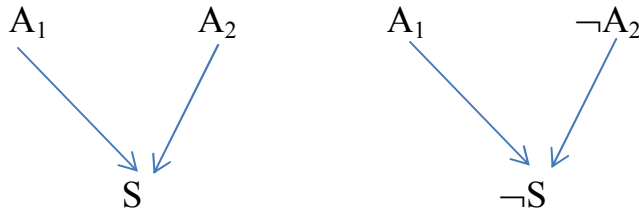
1. $\{(A_1 \wedge A_2) \rightarrow_S S_1, (A_3 \wedge S_1) \rightarrow_S S_2\} \vdash (A_1 \wedge A_2 \wedge A_3) \rightarrow_S S_2$. This schema as a tree (both proof-theoretic tree and tree of cause and effect) is as follows:



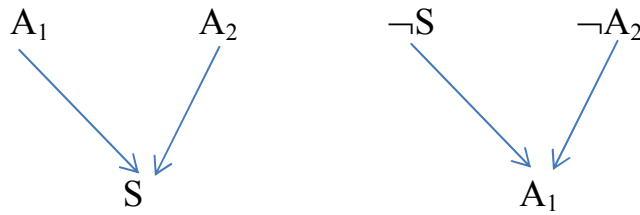
2. $\{(A_1 \wedge A_2) \rightarrow_s S, \neg S, A_1\} \vdash \neg A_2$. 'If he is judicious and also has a tendency to bad, then he is vicious; however, he is not vicious and he is judicious; therefore, he does not have a tendency to bad.' This schema as a tree is as follows:



3. $\{(A_1 \wedge A_2) \rightarrow_s S, A_1, \neg A_2\} \vdash \neg S$. 'If he is judicious and also has a tendency to bad, then he is vicious; he is judicious and has a tendency to good; therefore, he is virtuous.' This schema as a tree is as follows:



4. $\{(A_1 \wedge A_2) \rightarrow_s S, \neg S, \neg A_2\} \vdash A_1$. 'If he is judicious and also has a tendency to bad, he is vicious; however, he is virtuous and has a tendency to good; therefore, he is judicious.' This schema as a tree is as follows:



Each grandparent (antecedent) in the tree structure is called by Stoics “sign.” ‘A sign is a premise, being a basis in a correct conclusion from true to true, and it opens the conclusion and permanently it appears as a present sign for available’ (Sextus Empiricus. *Adversus Mathematicos* VIII, 256). Both aspects of sign are followed from the circumstance that it expresses a singular event, i.e. it can be presented as an antecedent of necessity cycle. Therefore the sign logically determines a conclusion irrespective of the fact, whether implication takes place now, in the past or in the future. So, succedent is logically determined in an equal measure in all the following implications: ‘If somebody had a scar, then (s)he had a wound,’ ‘If he is wounded in his heart, he will die,’ ‘If she has milk in her breast, she has become pregnant,’ ‘If somebody has spat out a blood clot, he has an ulcer in his lung.’

The Stoic implication is considered false if its antecedent is true and succedent is false. A tree of cause-and-effect relations is being constructed only for those implications for which antecedent and succedent are simultaneously true and they obey the Stoic square.

The following conclusion is starting with true and finishing at true: ‘If gods exist, the world is controlled by the divine prevision;’ starting with false and finishing at false: ‘If the earth flies, then the earth has wings;’ starting with false and finishing at true: ‘If the earth flies, it exists;’ starting with true and finishing at false: ‘If somebody moves, (s)he walks,’ when (s)he does not walk, but only moves (Sextus Empiricus. *Adversus Mathematicos* VIII, 246).

The first three propositions are called “deductible” as the conclusion follows from premises with necessity—these propositions satisfy the Stoic square. The fourth proposition is not deductible, because the antecedent should be logically weaker, than succedent. We have a “proof” only in the first proposition.

There is the higher grandparent—the deepest root of tree—the greatest member of structure. For example, ‘If there is a sign, the sign exists. If there is no sign, there is a sign. However, either there is a sign or there is not. Therefore it ever exists’ (Sextus Empiricus. *Adversus Mathematicos* VIII, 28). There is also the least descendant. For example, ‘If it is the first, it is the second, if it is the first, it is not the second; thus, it is not the first.’ So, ‘if you know that you have died [then you have died; if you know that you have died, then] you have not died. Thus, you do not know that you have died’ (Origenes. *Contra Celsum* VIII, 15).

3. Stoic Modal Logic

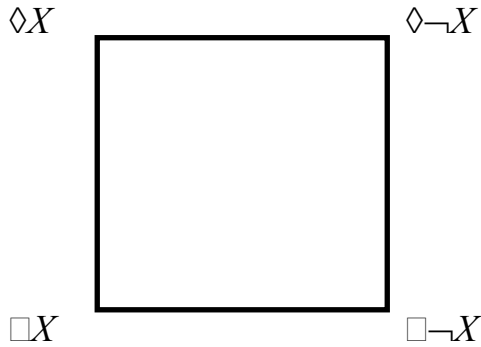
Since in Stoic logic there is no contingency, i.e. the statement ‘both it is possible to be and it is possible not to be’ is always false, there is no argumentation and debates at all. From two points of view only one is true, any compromises therefore are eliminated.

Someone who said: ‘Never take decisions without having listened to both sides,’ was objected by Zeno by means of the following reasoning. Either the first put forward exhaustive arguments (then there is no need to listen to the second because the required is found out). Or he did not put forward them (he was not on call of court or, answering, was not intelligible, it is all the same). Hence, either he proved his correctness or did not prove. So, in any case there is no need to listen to the second (Plutarch, *De Stoicorum repugnantibus* 8, 1034e).

In this connection it is possible to approve that Stoic logic became the first system of modal logic in which ‘both it is possible to be and it is possible not to be’ is always a false opinion. On such a system any dogmatic thinking is built up—in this system compromises are not possible, there are only two points of view: the correct one and the wrong one.

In S-implication $A \rightarrow_s B$ the antecedent A contains “spermatic logos” which generates the succedent B . Thereby A is a possibility for B and B is a necessity for A . Hence, two modal operators (‘possible,’ ‘necessary’) are defined within the Stoic logical square, where $\Diamond X$: = ‘ X

is possible to be,' $\Box X$: = ' X is necessary to be,' $\Diamond \neg X$: = ' X is possible not to be' and $\Box \neg X$: = ' X is necessary not to be.'



$$\Diamond X \wedge \Diamond \neg X \equiv \text{false}$$

$$\Box X \wedge \Box \neg X \equiv \text{false}$$

$$\Box X \vee \Box \neg X \equiv \text{true}$$

$$\Box X \wedge \Diamond \neg X \equiv \text{false}$$

$$\Box \neg X \wedge \Diamond X \equiv \text{false}$$

$$\Box X \vee \Diamond \neg X \equiv \text{true}$$

$$\Box \neg X \vee \Diamond X \equiv \text{true}$$

$$\Diamond X \rightarrow_s \Box X \equiv \text{true}$$

$$\Diamond \neg X \rightarrow_s \Box \neg X \equiv \text{true}$$

This square will be called by us the Stoic modal square. On its basis a unique modal logic explicating dogmatic thinking is constructed.

If two sets A and B are not intersected, their initial sets $\Diamond A$ and $\Diamond B$ also are not intersected as well as their limit sets $\Box A$ and $\Box B$ are not intersected. At the same time, two sets can have a common limit set. For example, 'if it is day, it is light' and 'if it is a lamp, it is light.'

The cycle of the necessary truth of event A (i.e. $\Box A$) is concurrent to the cycle of necessary falsehood of event A (i.e. $\Box \neg A$). They are being put forward in a parallel way, but if the cycle is not completed in the actual world, uncertainty takes place. Such uncertainty is called the cycle node. In the future either the necessary truth or necessary falsehood of A will take place. It depends on what cycle will be extended longer. If the

cycle of $\Box A$ is longer, then $\Box A \equiv \text{true}$, and if the cycle of $\Box \neg A$ is longer, then $\Box \neg A \equiv \text{true}$.

There are situations when necessity cycles are not intersected, i.e. they concern different events A and B . However, these various events A and B will belong to some cycles of bigger events C and D such that $A \subset C$ and $B \subset D$ so that necessity cycles of A and B will be intersected for either C or D . Finally, all events appear interconnected, and “destiny” arranges all cycles.

The four categories of Stoics have a modal meaning. First, substance, essence (*ousia*) or subject ($\text{\textit{\text{ὕποκείμενον}}}$), expressing an indefinite singular event. This is the primary matter, formless substance, which makes up things. An uncertainty of a subject can be expressed by the phrase ‘both it is possible to be and it is possible not to be.’ Second, quality ($\text{\textit{\text{ποιόν}}}$) considered as a limit set of substratum, its purpose, its necessity. The way in which matter is organised to form an individual object. *Pneuma* (air or breath) arranges qualities. Third, somehow disposed ($\text{\textit{\text{πῶς ἔχον}}}$), particular characteristics regarded as appearance of small nodes, i.e. necessary but insufficient causes. Fourth, somehow disposed in relation to something ($\text{\textit{\text{πρὸς τίπῳ ἔχον}}}$), characteristics which are related to other phenomena—as appearance of necessary and sufficient causes.

So, the Stoic doctrine about destiny is, actually, a specific theory of modal logic in which modal operators ‘possible’ and ‘necessary’ satisfy the Stoic modal square.

4. Fate or God's Providence?

In Orthodoxy the Stoic doctrine on destiny is denounced as heretical:

Really, the beloved, there is no else doctrine that would be so vicious and full of incurable putridity, it is just the doctrine on destiny and fate. It sets in souls of seduced people the blasphemous, impious and baneful opinion and it convinces to speak about the Lord what nobody would say even about demons, it also destructively influences on our life, it fills anything with trouble and the big disarray; and what is introduced by the

Lord and the nature, by prophets and saint men for teaching and correcting, it subverts and destroys and proves that all this is useless. If there is fate, there is no court; if there is fate, there is no belief; if there is fate, the Lord does not exist; if there is fate, there is neither virtue nor fault; if there is fate, all is vain, all is without advantage both what is done and what we tolerate; there is no praise, there is no censure, there is no shame, there is no disgrace, there are no laws, there are no courts (*John Chrysostom* 1991).

Destiny is replaced by the Church doctrine on the Lord as the Prethinker. In the *Letters of East Patriarchs on the Orthodox Belief* this doctrine is expressed so:

We believe that all existing, both visible and invisible, is controlled by the Divine Providence [Prethinking, pronoia, Промысл]; however evil as a whole the Lord only foreknows and condones, but does not prethink about it as He has not created it. The happened malicious is already directed to something useful by the highest Goodness that itself does not create evil but only directs this to the best, how many it is possible (*Macarius I* 1999), pp. 514–515.

John of Damascus proposes the following definition of God's Providence:

Providence [Prethinging] is a care taking place from the Lord in relation to all existing. And again: Providence is God's will by that all real is controlled expediently (*John of Damascus* 1894), p. 111 (183).

John of the Ladder writes about Providence as follows:

One thing is God's Providence; another thing is God's help; another is keeping; another is God's favour; and another is comfort. God's Prethinking reaches any creature. God's help is given only to the believer. God's keeping happens to such believers who believe really. God's favour is deserved by people who works for the Lord; and comfort is deserved by people who loves Him (*John of the Ladder* 1898), p. 180.

In Orthodoxy it is emphasised that the doctrine on Prethinking is adjusted for the Trinity dogma. John of Damascus claims: ‘The Lord (Father) creates thought, and this thought becomes the business, carried out by the Word and made by the Spirit’ (*Macarius I* 1999), p. 530. Prethinking about the world is an action to know everything and to be everywhere; it is the higher wisdom, God's omnipotences and goodnesses—all these properties equally belong to all Persons of the Trinity.

Difference of Lord's Prevision from destiny is fundamental. God's Prethinking is not only the law of the higher expediency, but also a manifestation of Creator's will, His Personality, whereas Stoics' destiny is only a natural depersonalized expediency. The Lord may be propitiated, fate is faceless and blind, it is the higher natural law. Thus, the existential meaning of Prethinking and destiny is different, I differently comprehend them and differently experience them in the life-world. However, the logical sense of Prethinking and destiny is almost identical. Both destiny and Prethought assume an implementation of the Stoic modal square. Really, on the one hand, if something surrenders to fate (according to Stoics, all surrenders to it), it is either necessarily true or necessarily false and if something is prethought by the Lord (according to Orthodoxy, Prethinking covers all) it also either necessarily true or necessarily false.

Orthodoxy inherited the Stoic modal logic in its thinking, but developed thus another existential doctrine. Actually, Orthodoxy embodied the Stoic model of thinking in the life-world of numerous communities. As a result, the Stoic thinking with certain modifications laid down in the basis of the new global social project, for a long time having defined the specificity of cultures of the Orthodox Christian countries, e.g. Eastern Europe, including present-day Russia.

The founders of Stoic philosophy were from cities of Asia Minor and were influenced by the Semitic culture very deeply in comparison with other Ancient Greek philosophers. Their native cities became then directly connected with the first waves of propagating Christian views. Recall that first it was just in the Syriac environment. So, the native city of Zeno—Citium—was a centre of the Phoenician civilisation, and in Orthodoxy it is considered as burial place of Lazarus of Bethany (*John*

11). The native city of Chrysippus—Soli—was allocated in the province Cilicia close to Syria, and in the same province Apostle Paul, as it is known, was born. The native city of Cleanthes—Troad—is mentioned in *Acts* 16:8–11 as place of Paul’s revelation. Quite probably, ideas of dogmatic thinking soared in air of the Eastern Hellenistic Ecumene, which, on the one hand, allowed Stoics to philosophically reflect these ideas, and, on the other hand, allowed the Church Fathers to apply them in organising the life-world of many communities.

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Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite: Modal Ontology

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Areopagite's basic theological presuppositions which make his ontology distinct from any Western Christian model, from Augustine to Leibniz, are the so-called "Semi-Pelagianism" (explaining the origin of the evil) and the patristic doctrine of salvation as deification. The modal states of original (or purified) being, non-being, being with divine illumination, and, finally, deified being form the full logical square, where the evil is presented as having no being in itself, that is, as a connective (external negation applied to being). The axioms of the corresponding alethic modal logic are NR, K, D, CD.

1. Introduction: Back from Leibniz

1.1. Leibniz and Intensional Interpretation of Modality with Ontological Commitment

Modal logic is a rare non-theological domain where the ways of the Eastern and Western Christian philosophies parted. Regardless of theology, the philosophical ontology of Dionysius the Areopagite¹²³ and

¹²³ I call this author as he called himself, without the prefix "pseudo-." For the historical circumstances of composition of the *Corpus*, with a discussion of all available viewpoints, see [26]. According to this reconstruction, the *Corpus* was composed through the following steps: 1) vision of heavenly hierarchies by John the Eunuch at the (most probably, first) celebration of the Dormition of the Virgin in Gethsemane in 444, 2) composition of the core of the *Corpus* after John's death by his close friend and cellmate Peter the Iberian in the late 460s or somewhat later,

Maximus the Confessor was different from that of Augustinus, Boetius, and Thomas Aquinas, even if both Eastern and Western traditions shared the same classical heritage. East and West were thinking differently not only when thinking God but even when thinking creature, that is, not only in theology but even in philosophy.

The Eastern and Western modal approaches met each other somewhere near Leibniz and especially in Leibniz's own works, albeit in a quite different theological context. It is useful to understand this difference before trying to translate Dionysius the Areopagite into the modern formal language that goes back directly to Leibniz, the main inspirer of Clarence I. Lewis in his seminal monograph on the modal logic ([24], pp. 5–18, 373–387; cf. [34]).

The main issue is over mutual relation between purely logical possibilities and ontology. For the West, the typical approach was that which was aptly coined by Simo Knuuttila “extensional interpretation of modality,” namely, that the possibilities must be “dealt with from the point of view of their actuality in history without an idea of alternative domains” [18], pp. 507, 511. This was not the only available approach, however, even in the West. Its alternative, also in the West, was a “décosmologisation radicale du concept de possible,” even before Duns Scot, which allowed operating with “pure” logical possibilities ([37], pp.

and 3) pseudonymisation of the *Corpus* after the death of Peter in 491 by the monks of the monastery in Maiouma founded by the émigrés from Crete, who were close to Peter during his life. This procedure was destined to use the *Corpus* as a weapon against the *Book of Holy Hierotheos*, the manifesto of the Origenistic Palestinian monks of this time. This is the same monastery where Severus, future patriarch of Antioch (512—518), was tonsured monk (near 491). Severus will be the first who quotes Dionysius in a theological discussion (between 518 and 528, most probably, in the middle of the 520s). The *Corpus* in the present form is to be dated to *ca* 500 or several years earlier. The Christology of the *Corpus* was acceptable for the official Church of its time, whose teaching was formulated in the *Henotikon* of the Emperor Zeno (482) and accepted by the Eastern patriarchates, including both adversaries and partisans of the Council of Chalcedon, whereas not by Rome (from Rome's viewpoint, shared by nobody in Byzantium, the four patriarchates of the East were then in the so-called Akakian schism). Thus, the influence of the *Corpus* became widespread regardless of the issue of Monophysitism.

25 and n. 40)¹²⁴ and, in this way, to overcome the extensional approach. Both approaches had roots in Aristotle or, at least, in the mediaeval understanding of Aristotle.¹²⁵ Leibniz and, shortly before him, some Jesuits started establishing links between these logical possibilities and ontology, which resulted into the concepts of the Pre-established Harmony.¹²⁶

1.2. “Vague Concept” of Man against “Semi-Pelagianism”

In the Byzantine East, the logical possibilities were not necessarily considered as free from any ontological/cosmological commitment, and so, some concepts in the vein of “pre-established harmony” were a matter of course. Dionysius the Areopagite’s teaching on the non-existence of the evil is, in this aspect, a kind of *Theodicy*, as Leibniz would call it were he acquainted with Dionysius somewhat deeper.¹²⁷ The theological premises, however, are here quite different from those of Leibniz and his Jesuit predecessors.

The main difference lays in defining of the very source of perturbation of the strictly determined order of things, the concept of free will. Leibniz and like-minded Jesuits escaped the total

¹²⁴ I am very grateful to Jacob Schmutz for providing me a copy of this valuable paper.

¹²⁵ Cf. [37] and, for a modern reconstruction of modalities in Aristotle in the same lines, *pace* Jaakko Hintikka’s most accepted reconstruction, [40]. Van Rijen’s view is partially corroborated by Matthews’ analysis of Aristotle’s intensionality: [28]. This short paper is still valuable as an introduction to the topics relevant to modality in the Byzantine Aristotle. Unfortunately, the whole matter of modalities in Byzantine interpreters of Aristotle, especially in John Philoponus (the most important among them for both East and West), is still almost unexplored.

¹²⁶ Cf., [12], pp. 199–210, esp. 208–210. The author is among those who argue for a direct influence of Jesuits on Leibniz. What is certain, it is the fact that, at least, some of their relevant publications were available to Leibniz.

¹²⁷ Leibniz’s mentions of Dionysius (according to the database Kumuliertes Personenverzeichnis (zur Akademie-Ausgabe): <http://www.gwlb.de/Leibniz/Leibnizarchiv/Veroeffentlichungen/Personendatenbank/index.php>) leave a feeling that he was, for Leibniz, an ancient theologian who wrote about angelical hierarchies, one among other authoritative but remote figure of the past.

predestination *via* doctrines of “vagueness” of the concept of each individual man. The divine predestination establishes only “vague” concepts, which are to be sharpened with the free choice made by the created beings themselves between different possibilities. The omnipotence of God is here limited with the principle of “moral necessity,” that is, a necessity to God of turning the scale to the best at any outcome of creature’s free choice. The concept of “moral necessity” imposed on God (by God himself, of course) was elaborated by the Spanish Jesuits Diego Ruiz de Montoya (1562–1632) and Diego Granado (1571–1632),¹²⁸ who were preoccupied of avoiding both dangers of total predestinationalism¹²⁹ and what they called “Semi-Pelagianism.”¹³⁰

The danger of “Semi-Pelagianism” consisted in limitation of the divine omnipotence with the human or angelic will. Instead, Spanish Jesuits invented a peculiar way of divine self-limitation without involving any created will. God himself creates the rational beings as “vague” concepts (the attitude shared by Leibniz and defended by him against criticisms of Arnaud) and, then, pre-establishes the best consequences for any possible outcomes of their free choices. All possible “world histories” (or, shortly, “possible worlds”) are equally “predestined,” and so, no casual chain is created by the non-divine free will.

¹²⁸ Cf. especially [17] and his earlier papers: [13]–[16]. Cf., more recently, with pointing out several important unclosed problems, [31].

¹²⁹ Actual in the Counterreformation context, cf. *De servo arbitrio* by Luther (1517).

¹³⁰ Another Jesuit, a correspondent of Leibniz and the translator of his *Theodicy* into Latin, Bartholomew Des Bosses (1668–1738), who was the first to expose Jesuit connexions of Leibniz’s ideas on moral necessity (without, however, claiming any direct dependence), explained in this way Leibniz’s modal thinking: no wonder, he wrote, that “non paucos” (quite a few) Protestants turn out to be not abhorring the (Jesuit doctrine of the) *scientia media*, while abhorring the Semi-Pelagianism, “[e]t hos fortasse praecipuam indigitare voluerit Leibnitius” (“and Leibniz probably would especially wish to demonstrate this,” that is, his negation of Semi-Pelagianism and tacit acceptance of the Molinist “middle knowledge” doctrine); [5] [separate foliation], here f. 6v. For Leibniz and the “middle knowledge,” s. esp. Knebel, “Leibniz, Middle Knowledge...”

To a modern reader, this notion of “vague concept” of something recalls very much the wave function of Erwin Schrödinger, which was proposed as an “objective” (containing no explicit reference to the act of observation) description of a quantum object. The act of observation leads to the collapse of the wave function, when only one possible outcome of this act takes place. Similarly, in Leibnizian “vague Adam,” Adam’s free choice led to realisation of the only one of the possible scenarios.

This doctrine looked, nevertheless, as denigrating the omnipotence of God to many Catholic (including Jesuit) and Protestant scholars. However, even less it was theologically compatible with the standard Eastern doctrines on the free will.

1.3. “Semi-Pelagianism” in the East: the Normative Doctrine

What the West called “Semi-Pelagianism” was the normative doctrine of the whole Christian East. Such polemics as that which took place between John Cassian, an Eastern-minded Western theologian and a direct disciple of great monastic Fathers of the Egyptian desert,¹³¹ and Prosper of Aquitaine, a disciple of Augustine of Hippo and the most prominent distributor of the Augustinian anti-Pelagian views,¹³² would have never taken place in the East. In the East, nobody saw any problem in considering the divine omnipotence as limited by the free will of the rational beings.

¹³¹ For a theological exposition of his “Semi-Pelagianism,” see, first of all, [3], pp. 67–73 *et passim*.

¹³² It is still disputable whether John Cassian’s polemics was aimed at Augustine himself, but, anyway, to say the least, Cassian “...was not an Augustinian in any meaningful sense of the term,” as said the scholar who tried to smooth all disagreements between Cassian and Augustine ([2], p. 102; cf. *ibid.*, 112–117, where the author tries to withdraw Augustine from Cassian’s attack while sacrifices Prosper of Aquitaine). On the influence of Prosper’s anti-Cassian polemics, s. forthcoming thesis of Jérémy Delmule “Prosper d’Aquitaine contre Jean Cassien. *Le Liber contra collatorem*: introduction, édition critique, traduite et annotée et étude de la réception,” to appear in the series *Sources chrétiennes*.

The whole discussion on the free will, in both East and West, was theologically preconditioned by the discussion of the Fall and the meaning of the Baptism. The anti-Pelagianism of Augustine was based on his doctrine of the original sin as a hereditary culpability making the human will incapable to perform the right choice by itself; thus, the infant Baptism is a necessity for remission of the original sin and to free the free will. This doctrine was absolutely alien to the Christian East. Here, even the most opposite to each other Antiochene and Alexandrine theological schools were agreed that the infants need no remission of sins because they are sinless; they could be baptised, however, in order to communicate them the supernatural life.¹³³ Only a remote parallel with Augustine's teaching on the original sin as a feature of the human nature acquired after the Fall is to be detected in Julian of Halicarnassus' (first half of the sixth cent.) "aphthartodocetic" teaching on the difference of the human nature in Christ and in us after the Fall. This ephemeral teaching was abandoned by the Julianists themselves to the late sixth century.¹³⁴

Therefore, it was directly the human and angelic free will that limited, in the Eastern Christian theologies, the divine omnipotence. Nevertheless, the divine providence acts in each point of the causal chain in continuous interaction with the free will of each rational creature. The latter continuously chooses whether to cooperate with the divine operation ("energy") or not. This results certainly into a kind of harmony leaded by the divine providence, and this harmony certainly is foreknown by God, but it is not to say that this harmony is pre-established by God alone. It is rather continuously established than pre-established, and not by God alone but by God in cooperation (often called "synergy"—συνέργεια) with the rational creatures.¹³⁵

Diego de Montoya, when arguing that the divine knowledge and love act not only in creature in general but also in each particular created

¹³³ [42], [43]. As a general but more theological than scholarly exposition, see [36]; cf., for a larger theological perspective, a useful review by [4]. The most important available study in the field is now, to my opinion, that of [22] (ch. II: La question de l'hérédité adamique).

¹³⁴ [6], pp. 118–127. For the most up-to-date introduction, see [25].

¹³⁵ On this very central idea in Eastern patristics, see, e.g., [29].

being, was referring, among others, to Dionysius' doctrine of the omnipresent divine *eros* (DN 4¹³⁶):

Dionysius (see the whole chapter 4 of the *On the Divine Names*) teaches, that the love for the creatures prompted God to communicate participation to his goodness to each one of them, according to its capacity.¹³⁷

This is the part of Jesuits' and Leibniz's theological background that they shared with the Eastern patristic tradition: the omnipresence and operating love of God reaches each particular creature without exception. They were, however, differing in further understanding of this interaction between the God and the created being. Nevertheless, in both cases, this understanding led to some kind of intensional interpretation of modality.

2. Being and Non-Being

2.1. Classical and Non-Classical "Statistical" Models for Modality

The free will of the creatures comprehended as a source of perturbation of the divine order entails introducing a kind of uncertainty principle in the ontology. This fact opens a door to modal thinking. In the Eastern patristic tradition, this is only one of the two such doors. The second door is opened by the conception of deification; it will be dealt with later (section 3).

¹³⁶ The texts of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* will be quoted according to the critical editions: [39] (for *De divinis nominibus* = DN) and [9] (all the rest), but the references will be given within the text as following: abbreviated title (DN), chapter, paragraph, page of the critical edition, and, after slash (/), column and part of column (from A to D) in PG 3. English tr. (very often too free to be useful for any scholarly purpose) by [35]; electronic edition at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/rolt/dionysius.html>.

¹³⁷ Dionysius de divin[is] nom[inibus] toto fere cap. 4. docet, amorem erga creaturas impulisse deum, ut unicuique pro suo captu suae bonitatis participationem communicaret [30], p. 42.

In the Eastern tradition, there is no exact analogue of the “vague conception” of a rational being, but there is its logical equivalent. In the eyes of a modern reader, this equivalent could be compared with the matrix mechanics of Werner Heisenberg *vis-à-vis* the wave mechanics of Erwin Schrödinger. Heisenberg’s matrices comprise possible outcomes of observations, without, however, claiming that anyone of them could reflect, more or less, the “objective” state of things. The very notion of the “objective,” that is, independent from the act of observation state of things becomes void of sense. In the classical statistical physics, the differences in outcomes of the acts of observation are to be interpreted as resulting from differences in the situations defined by a stochastic process, but not from the “uncertainty” of the reality itself; all the observable values, even if being random, are considered as existing regardless of whether they are measured or not. In the same way, in the classical wave mechanics, such thing as the collapse of the wave function is impossible. Both Schrödinger and Heisenberg constructed physical formalisms similar to but different from their classical prototypes. However, Schrödinger struggled throughout his life for the objectivism of the scholarly interpretation of reality, whereas Heisenberg did not believe in an “objective reality” of the positivistic science.¹³⁸

Such comparisons with different formal interpretations of quantum physics are far from being arbitrary, because the modern discussions on the reality behind the quantum phenomena were (and still are) continuing the mediaeval and ancient discussions about what reality is. The basic distinction between Schrödinger and Heisenberg’s quantum formalisms, namely, preserving of an apparent “objectivity” (Schrödinger) or an explicit refuse thereof (Heisenberg), is traceable back throughout the centuries. In Leibniz and his Jesuit predecessors we have seen an objectivistic, Schrödinger-like approach. In Eastern patristics, we will see a Heisenberg-like approach operating only with the outcomes of the acts of observations (*viz.* acts of free choice). The formal logical equivalency of both approaches is unable to mask the gap between their respective philosophical (ontological) backgrounds.

¹³⁸ As a concise introduction to these topics accessible to the readers without training in physics, I would recommend [10].

The latter approach has its classical prototype in one of the Aristotelian understandings of modality, which Oscar Becker (1952) and, after him, Jaakko Hintikka [11] called “statistical” model for modality. Simo Knuuttila defines it as following:

...the habit of associating the notion of necessity with omnitemporal actuality or actuality in all members of a species, contingency with actuality at some times or in some members of a species, and impossibility with the lack of actuality in these respects. Possibilities are dealt with from the point of view of their actuality in history without an idea of alternative domains [18], p. 509.

Such an approach is traceable in the mediaeval and especially Scholastic sources, too. This is also the same model that could be applied to the classical statistical physics, where probability is equivalent to contingency comprised as actuality at some times.

The free will of created beings, especially taken apart from Augustinian restrictions and in a “Semipelagian” manner, leads automatically to a deviation from this classical way. If we still try to keep unchanged our Aristotelian “statistical” approach, we obtain a Heisenberg-like non-classical “statistics.” The only accessible created reality is now that of the outcomes of the acts of observation or, in our case, the acts of free choice. The created reality “as if there would be no acts of free choice” would look as a strange chimera having no relation to any real thing.

2.2. *Logoi of Divine Predestination and Divine Will*

In Dionysius, we will see three basic ontological categories, namely, the being, the well-being (deified being), and the lack (negation) thereof. This scheme is simpler and more approximative than its further (seventh-century) development in Maximus the Confessor, but it contains yet the main components of future Maximus’ synthesis.

The ontology of the created being is sharply distinct but, in the same time, derived from the divine being. Its *conditio sine qua non* is the direct divine presence in each creature *via* uncreated *logoi*. The latter term has many synonyms. This teaching of Dionysius and its difference

from the non-Christian Platonic doctrines of ideas and emanations of the One is described many times (cf. esp. [21], pp. 289–329) and needs not to be repeated here in details. It is important not to confound these uncreated *logoi* of Areopagite and other Eastern patristic authors with the created “seminal reasons” (*rationes seminales*, *rationes causales*) of Augustine and Scholasticism [1], pp. 104–105: in the Eastern tradition, no such created *logoi* are needed or possible.

As well as all the creatures are participating to the sun through its light, wrote Dionysius, in the way that the only sun “uniformly contains in advance” (μονοειδῶς προείληφε) all the causes of its effects,

...much more it is to be acknowledged the same concerning the cause of it [sun’s] and everything, which (contains in itself) as pre-existing, according to the unique super-essential union, the paradigms of all beings, because it produces essences by outgoing from the essence. And we call “paradigms” those *logoi* which, pre-existent in God as a unity, create the essences of the beings. These *logoi* the Theology calls “predefinitions/predestinations (προορισμούς)” and “divine and beneficent volitions,” which are defining and creating the beings, according to which the Super-Essential [*sc.*, God] predefined/predestined and brought (into being) all the beings.¹³⁹

“To be” is thus equal to “to participate to God *via* his *logoi*.” Moreover, different *logoi* are responsible for different modes of being, which ensures the movement of creatures from their creation to their deification.

2.3. *Evil as Negation of Being*

¹³⁹ ...πολλῷ γε μᾶλλον ἐπὶ τῆς καὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ πάντων αἰτίας προῦφεστάναι τὰ πάντων τῶν ὄντων παραδείγματα κατὰ μίαν ὑπερούσιον ἔνωσιν συγχωρητέον, ἐπεὶ καὶ οὐσίας παράγει κατὰ τὴν ἀπὸ οὐσίας ἑκβασιν. Παραδείγματα δέ φαμεν εἶναι τοὺς ἐν θεῷ τῶν ὄντων οὐσιοποιούς καὶ ἐνιαίως προῦφεστῶτας λόγους, οὓς ἡ θεολογία προορισμούς καλεῖ καὶ θεῖα καὶ ἀγαθὰ θελήματα, τῶν ὄντων ἀφοριστικὰ καὶ ποιητικά, καθ’ οὓς ὁ ὑπερούσιος τὰ ὄντα πάντα καὶ προώρισε καὶ παρήγαγεν (DN 5:8; p. 188/824 C). Translation is mine but using Rolt’s one.

If there is nothing having no participation to God, the origin of the evil becomes an acute ontological problem. Dionysius deals with it especially in *DN* 4:19–35. His answer is that the evil does not exist at all: “How can evil things occur at all if there is the Providence? The evil as such is neither being nor among those that have being.”¹⁴⁰ On the contrary, it is, in fact, a lack of existence of something: the evil appears as only “weakness, impotence, and deficiency (ἀσθένεια καὶ ἀδυναμία καὶ ἔλλειψις)” of something good (*DN* 4:35; p. 179/736 A).

It is worth noting that the evil is here clearly discerned from incompleteness and imperfection. The evil is not something that is planned or presupposed but not yet accomplished; it is only a lack of something that already was. This understanding is at odds with Leibniz’s understanding of imperfection of the created world. According to Leibniz, the whole creation *ex nihilo* is prefigured with the binary numbering system, where all the numbers are to be produced from combinations of 1 and 0. Taken as the model of creation, this system corresponds to God’s creating power (1) and its limitation (0).¹⁴¹ Leibniz’s system does not allow discerning between imperfectness and sin, or, more exactly, for Leibniz, the sin itself is an imperfection: God’s will is limiting itself when taking into account in advance the sinful imperfection of the creation. Let us recall that Leibniz was not a “Semi-Pelagianist,” and so, he did not allow to God’s will being limited with anything except for itself.

In Dionysius, the ontology is richer because he does not equate the evil (which is always sinful) and imperfectness, although the very possibility of sinning is a consequence of imperfection. The perfect rational creature is that that became God by deification,¹⁴² and so, it is

¹⁴⁰ Πῶς ὅλως τὰ κακὰ προνοίας οὔσης; Οὐκ ἔστι τὸ κακόν, ἢ κακόν, οὔτε ὄν οὔτε ἐν τοῖς οὔσιν (*DN* 4:33; p. 178/733 A). Tr. is mine.

¹⁴¹ For a careful analysis of this often misinterpreted Leibniz’s doctrine, see [38], pp. 18–27. A frequent error of modern interpreters of Leibniz consists in confusing 0 with “nothing” in the sense of some alternative (to God) essence, a kind of “anti-essence” of God.

¹⁴² It is important to take in mind Dionysius’ definition: “...but this [salvation] is not possible otherwise than as deification of those who are saved, while deification is assimilation and union, as it is possible, with God (ἡ δὲ [*sc.*, σωτηρία] οὐχ ἑτέρως

not able to sin by the same reason as God himself is unable to sin. The evil is a negation of the modal state of being, but perfection is another modal state than either being or negation of being (s. below, section 3).

In Dionysius, it is not forbidden to speak about the evil in terms of existence, but two important reservations must be expressed: first, that this existence is accidental (thus, not necessary, as everything that is in accordance with the divine *logoi*, s. the next section), and, second, that even this accidental existence the evil has in something else (*sc.*, something good) but not in itself: “One has to attribute to the evil the accidental existence and (the existence) through the other but not (the existence) from its own principle.”¹⁴³ This is why the evil has no hypostasis (an independent individual existence) but is “parhypostatic” (this means that it is outside of any hypostasis) and “occurring through the good and not itself.”¹⁴⁴

Thus, there is no specific ontology of the evil. There is, in the evil, only a negation of the common ontology of the ordinary beings.

2.4. Deontic Structure of Ontology

The evil and the imperfection of creation in its original (even pre-Fallen) state¹⁴⁵ are the two sources of modal “delamination” of the created world. The doctrine of creation through the increate *logoi*, on the one side, enforced the Aristotelian so-called Necessitation Rule (NR):

$$(NR) \quad A \rightarrow \Box A$$

(if something exists, then, it exists with necessity).

γενέσθαι δύναται μὴ θεουμένων τῶν σωζομένων· ἡ δὲ θέωσις ἐστὶν ἡ πρὸς θεὸν ὡς ἐφικτὸν ἀφομοίωσις τε καὶ ἔνωσις) (*On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 1:3; p. 66/375 D–376 A).

¹⁴³ Τῷ κακῷ τὸ εἶναι θετέον κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς καὶ δι’ ἄλλο καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἀρχῆς οἰκείας (*DN* 4:32; p. 177/732 C).

¹⁴⁴ Διὸ οὔτε ὑπόστασιν ἔχει τὸ κακόν, ἀλλὰ παρυπόστασιν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἔνεκα καὶ οὐχ ἑαυτοῦ γινόμενον (*DN* 4:31; p. 176–177/732 C).

¹⁴⁵ For the problem of pre-Fall imperfection of Adam in a larger patristic context, see [20], pp. 178–186, and [33].

On the other side, however, both evil and original imperfection of creatures prevent from being true the reverse axiom, the so-called Modal axiom (M):

$$(M) \quad \Box A \rightarrow A$$

(if something is necessary, it is the case that it is). In fact, many things which are necessary according to the *logoi* of Providence are still or forever not present.

If we apply NR to the original condition of the created being, we have not to forget that this being is, in turn, the possibility of the eventual deification. Thus, seen from the highest layer of the ontological hierarchy, the initial condition of being is only a possibility (s. below, section 3.4).

The Providence does not lead anybody somewhere against his own will. It only supports and preserves the free will of those who have it (who are, in Dionysius' terms, "self-moving"):

This is why we do not accept the senseless argument of many those who say: "It is suiting to the Providence to lead us to the virtue even unwillingly, because the corruption of the nature is not [compatible with *or* an act of] the Providence." The Providence is making provision to preserve each nature of the self-moving ones as self-moving, for all of them in general as well as for each of them in particular, conformably to both general and particular."¹⁴⁶

This aim of preserving the "self-movability" has priority over the necessity of the divine plan of deification/salvation, although this plan, certainly, is a necessity. This is the point where the Areopagite (and the Eastern patristic tradition in general) is incompatible with all kinds of Augustinism, even with the softest versions of Leibniz and the like-minded Jesuits. Dionysius explicitly proclaims that the free will of the

¹⁴⁶ Διὸ καὶ τὸν εἰκαῖον τῶν πολλῶν οὐκ ἀποδεξόμεθα λόγον, οἱ χρῆναί φασι τὴν πρόνοιαν καὶ ἄκοντας ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν ἄγειν, τὸ γὰρ φθεῖραι φύσιν οὐκ ἔστι προνοίας. Ὅθεν ὡς πρόνοια τῆς ἐκάστου φύσεως σωστικὴ τῶν αὐτοκινήτων ὡς αὐτοκινήτων προνοεῖ καὶ τῶν ὅλων καὶ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστον οἰκείως ὅλῳ καὶ ἐκάστῳ (DN 4:33; p. 178/733 B). Tr. is mine.

rational beings is more important in the eyes of God than his own plan and his own will that all will be saved.

This is why, in the created world, it is a weaker axiom that takes place instead of the axiom M. It is the Deontic axiom (D):

$$(D) \quad \Box A \rightarrow \Diamond A$$

(whatever is necessary is possible). This axiom is analogous to the axiom of the deontic logic $OA \rightarrow PA$ (whatever is obligatory is permitted), but here we are dealing with the ontology and not with norms.

Here a real parallel with Leibniz's way of thinking is striking. Leibniz derived his deontic modal logic from the alethic one [23]. In both cases, the point of depart was the alethic modality in Aristotle.

In the Areopagite, unlike Aristotle, the ontology is grounded on the will of God and his Providence, and so, it allows unrealised necessities, and the axiom M does not hold. As to Leibniz, any comparison here is more difficult because we still have no study of his late version of the modal logic of the possible worlds, which would take into account the "moral necessity" for God. We will readdress this issue below (section 2.3).

Before to proceed further, we can discuss shortly applicability of other well-known modal axioms to Dionysius' universe.

Nothing is preventing applicability of the Distribution axiom (now called K, after Saul Kripke):

$$(K) \quad \Box(A \rightarrow B) \rightarrow (\Box A \rightarrow \Box B)$$

The meaning of this axiom in Dionysius' world is that, in the created beings, the causality takes place, and it is distributive in the sense that the Providence governs both individual beings and their mutual relations (cf. the passage from *DN* 4:33 quoted in the previous

section). The axiom K is normally accepted in the deontic logic, and so, we have here one more mark of deontic nature of our ontology.¹⁴⁷

However, all the iteration axioms (S4, S5, B) are highly problematic. Out of hand, we can see inapplicability of iteration of necessity, that is, the axiom S4:

$$(S4) \quad \Box A \rightarrow \Box \Box A$$

Necessity is depending directly from God (his divine *logoi*), and so, there is no room to necessitate it additionally.

Generally, we can suppose that the whole ontology of Dionysius is an alethic logic constructed after some patterns, which are more familiar to the modern reader as deontic ones, but we still have to continue our observations.

3. Being and Well-Being

3.1. *Beginning—Middle—End*

The created beings were created sinless but imperfect. Thus, they *have* to become perfect, although they *can* to become, so-to-say, less than perfect. In Maximus the Confessor, we will see a corresponding scheme of different levels of being in a much elaborated form. He discerns between τὸ εἶναι (being), τὸ εὖ εἶναι (well-being), τὸ ἀεὶ εὖ εἶναι (eternal well-being), and even sometimes τὸ φεῖν εἶναι (bad-being). The eternal well-being is the final inconvertible deification, and the bad-being the condition of damnation [20], pp. 165–174. Here the very

¹⁴⁷ Thus, the axioms K and NR, taken together, could lead to the well-known in the deontic logic Good Samaritan paradox. Indeed, this is a frequent question for the theodicy: whether the wounded man met by the Good Samaritan was ought to be wounded... This paradox is to be resolved in the same way as it is done in the deontic logic (the scope of the deontic operator is in fact not the situation as a whole but only its particular constituents). It is possible to trace in Dionysius a similar way of thinking (when he subtly discerns between the good which is present in every situation and the evil which is not ought to be and even has no being, cf. above), but we will not go deeper into this matter.

wording of Maximus goes back to Dionysius, whereas Dionysius developed this scheme in a different direction in his doctrine of hierarchies. In one instance (*DN* 4:1; p. 144/696 A), Dionysius discerns between “being” (τὸ εἶναι) and “well-being” (τὸ εὖ εἶναι) of the rational creatures, where the latter term is clearly denoting their final condition in accordance with the divine Providence.

Nevertheless, in Dionysius, as well as in Maximus, the number of the levels of being is three, and this is to be seen not only from the structure of the threefold Dionysian hierarchies but also his ontology in general, that is, including the non-rational beings which are not members of the hierarchies. God “...contains in advance in himself, said Dionysius, the beginnings, the middles, and the ends of the beings as unrelated (to them) and drawn away.”¹⁴⁸ The beginning, the middle, and the end as the three-stage way of deification are also familiar in Maximus. This three-stage scheme is universal for the whole creation and is not limited to the Dionysian hierarchies of the rational beings. The hierarchies are its particular cases.

The logic of the way from the being to the well-being is basically the same as the logic of not to fall away from the being (that is, not to sin/to do evil) that we have discussed above. It is also an alethic logic which looks, to the modern reader, as a deontic one. The well-being is necessary because it is the aim of the divine Providence. However, it is not the case that the axiom M holds: nobody is leaded to the deification without his own free work for this. Thus, for some individuals, the necessity of deification could never be effectuated.

One can say that the sin is alethically forbidden, whereas the deification is alethically obligatory. Such a terminology could be adequate for an ontology constructed as a rational plan (implying laws and norms) which was at the beginning nowhere accomplished and can even fail in some parts.

What is alethically forbidden leads outside the being as such, to the non-being which is the evil. One can say, in this context, that the Hell is a gathering of the individuals which lost their existence without ceasing to

¹⁴⁸ ... ἀρχὰς καὶ μέσα καὶ τέλη τῶν ὄντων ἀσχέτως καὶ ἐξηρημένως ἐν ἑαυτῷ προειληφώς (*DN* 5:8; p. 187/824 B).

be individuals. These individuals preserve their individualities when losing their being. Such formulations, however, would lead us beyond the texts of Dionysius, who was not elaborating on this. It is clear, however, that those who are sinning without repentance (in Dionysian terms, are not among those who are “purified,” not to say of those who are “illuminated” or “perfected”) eventually put themselves outside hierarchies, and so, have no accesses even to the “beginning” of the three-stage ontological staircase. They are certainly outside Dionysian ontology.

Dionysius is certainly not among those who resolve the problem of ontological status of the eternal damnation by denying its eternity¹⁴⁹ (as were, in his time, the Origenists). But he excluded the eternally damned from the being itself.¹⁵⁰

It is important to us that both Dionysian being and well-being are to be understood within the unique modal scheme of an alethic logic which is, if seen “from the viewpoint of God,” a deontic logic, whose axioms we have just started to explicate.

3.2. *Deontic Logic of Ascetics*

To go further in understanding Dionysius’ ontology and the corresponding alethic logic, it is useful to see how the deontic-like alethic logic of Dionysius diverges from his own deontic logic, that is, the deontic logic which is implied in his works.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. *Epistle* 8:6; p. 191–192/1100 CD: a vision of the eternal abyss with snakes and *men* attributed to apostle Carpus. Cf. also the previous passage where the author explicitly claims that there are two “lots (λήξεις)” “in the eternal age (εἰς τὸν αἰὲν ὄντα αἰῶνα)” for the humans, together with either angels or demons (8:5; p. 187–188/1096 D–1097 B).

¹⁵⁰ We have to refrain from further speculations about possible understanding of the ontology of eternal damnation in the *Corpus Areopagiticum*, because we are limited to the available texts. To my opinion, it must be considered within the patristic philosophical traditions, where the notion “hypostasis” was defined as something irreducible to its “constituents,” that is, the essence and the individual *idiomata*. Cf., in the 6th cent., Eulogius of Alexandria and, in the 9th cent., Theodore the Stoudite. Cf. [27].

The issues dealt with by Dionysius are almost exclusively of ascetical nature and not those of the canonical law. Thus, his deontic logic is not a logic of prohibitions and their transgressions (which is to be expected in any logic of law, the Church law being not an exception), but rather a logic of, so-to-say, normative ideals, that is, the ideals which are taken as norms. These norms are not prohibitions of some acts (such as, e.g., the ten “Do not” in the Decalogue of Moses) but rather prescriptions of performing some acts.

Indeed, Dionysius almost everywhere refers to some ideal models of behaviour, whereas, normally, does not discuss another kind of norms, namely, the limits that should not be transgressed.¹⁵¹ In Dionysius’ system, these are the models which are provided by the higher hierarchical orders to the inferior ones, and especially by the angels to the humans.

This corresponds to the following axiom of some deontic logics¹⁵²:

$$(OM) \quad O(OA \rightarrow A)$$

It means that it ought to be the case that if A ought to be the case, then it is the case.

The meaning of OM as a normative axiom of ascetics (of course, far from being limited to Dionysius’ works) could be shown clearer using Kripke frames. Let we have a frame $\langle W, R, f_i \rangle$, where W is a non-empty set of possible worlds $\{w_i\}$ (that is, in deontic logic, possible lines of behaviour), R is the accessibility relation between the possible worlds, and f_i is an intensional in the sense of Montague, that is, an assignment function with assigns truth values to the sentences in the possible world w_i . Let R is interpreted so that $w_i R w_j$ iff (if and only if) $w_j \in M$, and M is a non-empty subset of W containing only perfect lines of behaviour (those of angels and somewhat idealised saints). Thus, the axiom OM corresponds to the following truth condition (T means “True”):

¹⁵¹ The most important exclusion from this rule forms the *Epistle* 8, where Dionysius discusses the consequences of breaking Church hierarchical order.

¹⁵² Cf., for this and the next section, [7], pp. 108–111.

$$f_i(OA) = T \text{ iff } f_j(A) = T \text{ for all } w_j \in M.$$

In other words, there is some group of individuals (namely, the angels and idealised images of saints) for whom the deontic analogue of the modal axiom M holds. Thus, for them, $OA \rightarrow A$: they always perform everything that is obligatory. The axiom OM establishes that all others must follow their example (and not any other example), even if it is not always the case.

The accessibility relation R is in this case shift reflexive. It differs from the reflexive relation, which would correspond to the modal axiom M: $w_i R w_i$, that is, in our previous terms, to the case of $M = W$ instead of M being a subset of W never equal to W .

Let us retain, from the above discussion, that the deontic logic of Dionysius leaves room to the possibility of not obeying the norms.¹⁵³ His deontic-like alethic logic will look quite different.

3.3. Alethic Logic with Unique Accessibility Relation

Dionysius proposes the irreversible deification as the final condition of the rational beings (and, through them, of the whole world) that *ought* to be eventually met. Those who eventually fail to be deified (= saved), will put themselves out of being. Thus, there is no *ontological* alternative to this path along which the rational creatures are leaded by the Providence. The only alternative is negation of any kind of ontology.

Such situation corresponds to the axiom CD known from a very specific kind of deontic logic:

$$(CD) \quad \Diamond A \rightarrow \Box A$$

¹⁵³ Our survey of Dionysius' deontic logic is simplified, because it does not take into account that the same deontic scheme is recursively repeated on different levels of hierarchies. It is only important to us that the shift reflexivity is preserved in each link of these recursive chains. For "theomimetic" function of Dionysian hierarchies, see [8], pp. 137–139.

which says that it is possible only what is necessary. Together with the axiom D, it results into logical equivalency between the possibility and the necessity:

$$\Diamond A \leftrightarrow \Box A$$

It is not stating that they are the same but only that they are logically equivalent while being different. Thus, if, in our case, the iteration axiom S4 is inapplicable, the same are other iteration axioms (S5 and B), which involve the operator of possibility.

The accessibility relation in the corresponding Kripke frame is unique. This means that if $w_k R w_i$ and $w_k R w_j$, then $w_i = w_j$.

The kind of deontic logic all this reminds of is that of *The Brave New World* of Aldous Huxley (1932): it is permitted only what is obligatory. However, in Dionysius' case, it is not a deontic logic (his deontic logic, as we have seen, is quite different). It is alethic logic.¹⁵⁴

The free will has possibility of not obeying the Providence, but the ontology has no such possibility. Thus, in the cases where the free will and the Providence become incompatible, the free will can act only as a negation of some part of being. Otherwise it acts for acquiring more being (that is, to ascend to higher levels of being).

It is interesting that Leibniz's and his Jesuit predecessor's logic of the "moral necessity" imposed on the divine Providence leads to the same kind of logic. Thus, for God, the domain of possible concerning his providential acts is restricted to the domain of (morally) necessary. This logic can be understood as an alethic logic on which the Pre-established Harmony is founded. Nevertheless, "from God's point of view," as it was formulated, it is a deontic logic whose accessibility relation is

¹⁵⁴ Another side of this difference is that the deontic logic of *The Brave New World* becomes easily derivable from the alethic logic of Eastern patristics, providing that the ontology is changed. Such a shift would result in a rather radical change of the meaning for the situation when somebody freely put himself outside the predestined order, and so, the ontology as well. In both logics, there is some providence, but any free individual can act against it; in both logics, the final result of such actions is losing of one's being—although not in the same sense (because the ontologies are different).

unique. Unlike *The Brave New World*, Leibniz and Spanish Jesuits imposed on God and not on the feeble humans the burden of deontic logic with the unique accessibility relation.¹⁵⁵

To Dionysius, as well as the Eastern patristic thought in general, it would be theologically impossible to speak about God in any deontic categories. Indeed, even in the Western tradition, the idea of “moral necessity” for God was unfamiliar and much controversial. However, the Providence and the free will are harmonized through a similar logical structure, whereas in ontological categories related to the created being and not in the deontic categories related to God. In both cases it is unique accessibility relation that was required.

3.4. Hierarchies: Recursive Structures Based on Logical Square

The different levels of Dionysius’ ontology are connected to his teaching on hierarchies. This part of his doctrine is and was the most famous throughout the centuries.¹⁵⁶ The hierarchies in a multi-level ontology could be interpreted, as it is clear *a priori*, as some different modal states.

Basically, in Dionysius, the hierarchies are particular cases of the beginning—middle—end triad (s. above, section 1.3) realised in the rational creatures. In rational creatures, the beginning corresponds to “purification (κάθαρσις),” the middle to “illumination (φωτισμός),” and the end to “perfection (τελείωσις)” (with some different synonymous terms). The angels are organised into three triads, thus forming the nine

¹⁵⁵ The modal logic of Leibniz is still a discussed matter. Cf. Lenzen’s conclusion: “...since in Leibniz’s work nothing corresponds to the accessibility relation among worlds. Therefore it is almost impossible to decide which of the diverse modern systems like T, S4, S5, etc. best conforms with Leibniz’s views” [23], p. 357. Probably, at least, in some cases the accessibility relation is defined, such as it is certainly defined in Leibniz’s logic of “moral necessity.” It is also doubtful that Leibniz did not have different systems of modal logic for different cases. It is in this light that one can consider apparent inconsistencies of Leibniz’s modal logic; cf. [32].

¹⁵⁶ On the Dionysian hierarchies and their theological context, see [8], pp. 135–141 *et passim*.

τάξεις (“ranks”) of the heavenly hierarchies. The triadic structure within each angelic triad is thus recursively repeated on the level of mutual connexions between the three triads themselves.

The human hierarchies are two, one of the ancient Old Testament hierarchy, and another one of the actual New Testament Church hierarchy (the main topic of Dionysius’ book *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*). Finally, there is another kind of human hierarchy, not quite explicit in Dionysius, which is the hierarchy of human personal sainthood; its highest level is the mystical experience described in the book *On the Mystical Theology* which corresponds to the human condition of the mystery of monasticism (according to ch. 6 of the *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* called “The Mystery of the Monastic Perfection”—Μυστήριον μοναχικῆς τελειώσεως).

Without going deeper into theological details, let us consider the formal structure common to all the Dionysian hierarchies. We have already touched this problem when discussing the evil as negation of being. Moreover, it is clear from the above (section 2.3) that the being in its primordial condition (which is the same as its “purified” condition) is a kind of possibility.¹⁵⁷ The created being is a possibility of further deification. The deified condition (“perfection”) is necessity, that is, the full realisation of being (on the level available for a given hierarchical triad).

There is, here, a specific effect of the multi-layer ontology: what is necessary when seen from its own ontological level becomes an unrealised possibility when seen from a higher level of being.

The whole scheme looks as follows. The possibility corresponds to the state of being (“beginning”), the necessity corresponds to the state of deification (“perfection”), the external negation corresponds to the evil-being (which is not a being at all), and, finally, the internal negation corresponds to the possibility of some other being, which is, in the Dionysian system, the middle, “illumination.”

¹⁵⁷ Here we have a striking similarity with Leibniz’s understanding of being as possibility: “L’essence dans le fond n’est autre chose que la possibilité de ce qu’on propose” (*Nouveaux Essais* III, iii, 15) etc. ; s., for the details, [41].

The Dionysian “illumination” implies that there is something added to the original being but still not transforming this being itself, as it will be in the “perfection,” when this illumination will be internalised.

The number three which is the numerical core of all Dionysian hierarchies is thus not arbitrary. However, one can add that when Dionysius writes “three,” he has in mind “four,” because there is always the fourth condition, that of falling away from the hierarchy (and the being as such) because of the evil.

Now we are able to provide a quite concise formulation of what is the evil, according to Dionysius, and why it is not any kind of being. From the logical point of view, the evil is a connective, namely, the external negation of the being.

4. Conclusion

The modal ontology of Dionysius the Areopagite is a recursive scheme of hierarchies, whose base case (repeated recursively in all hierarchies) is the unique triad “beginning—middle—end,” which correspond to the full logical square. Namely, the “beginning” is possibility, which is the being in its created (or purified) state; the “middle” is internal negation of possibility, that is, possibility of something else, which corresponds to “illumination”; the “end” is necessity, or dual of possibility; moreover, the external negation of possibility (= impossibility) is the result of the evil. The evil itself is a logical connective (external negation) and not any kind of being.

The axioms of the corresponding alethic logic are $K + D + CD$.

Such a modal ontology, regardless of its theological context and commitment, has much in common with that of Leibniz and his Spanish Jesuit predecessors, but, however, many things are different. The most striking differences in logical systems follow directly from the theological disagreements. Eastern doctrines of deification together with the “Semi-Pelagianism” were far beyond the horizon of the Western thought. Moreover, the Western doctrine of “moral necessity” imposed on the divine Providence was an attempt of an “objectivist” description of a non-classical (non-Aristotelian) logical object, whereas the Eastern (“Semi-Pelagian”) synergy doctrine was not an “objectivistic” one, and

so, the two approaches could be compared, respectively, to Erwin Schrödinger's and Werner Heisenberg's approaches to the quantum reality.

It is noteworthy that, in both Dionysius and Leibniz, the harmonisation of the divine Providence with the ability of the free will to choose the evil is effectuated with a modal logic with the unique accessibility relation, whereas, in Leibniz, it is the deontic logic of the "moral necessity" for God, whereas, in Dionysius (and the Eastern patristic tradition in general), it is the alethic logic for the ontology of the created world.

Note

The present paper is a continuation of my work *Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite. Part One: Intensional Semantics* (forthcoming), but it can be read independently from the Part One, although I skip here a general outline of the philosophical problems of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* (as distinct from the theological ones), which is to be found in the Part One.

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Andrew Schumann (Ed.)

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About the Editor

Andrew Schumann is associate professor at the Department of Philosophy and Science Methodology at the Belarusian State University, Minsk, Belarus. His research focuses on logic and philosophy of science with an emphasis on non-well-founded phenomena: self-references and circularity. He contributed mainly to such research areas as reasoning under uncertainty, probability reasoning, non-Archimedean mathematics, as well as their applications to cognitive science.

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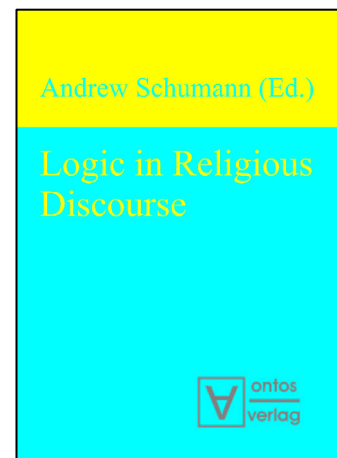
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