EDICIONES
COMPLUTENSE

The terms of the theoretical approaches of the natural and the divine world in George Pachymeres

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Abstract. In this article, we are investigating the methods in which George Pachymeres, the commentator of the *De divinis nominibus* of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, epistemologically approaches the natural and the divine reality. It becomes clear that every judgement on God starts from the sensible world, so a reversed induction is revealed. Although the existence of God is never questioned, no final conclusion about his self-founding way of existing can be drawn. Considering the substantial difference between the two levels, two are the ways in which the natural world and the divine transcendent reality are approached. In the first case, the thinking subject functions mostly in natural-empirical terms, while in the second one it follows a mystical-intuitive course. Nevertheless, the context is consistently realistic.

Keywords: George Pachymeres; Paraphrasis; Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite; *De divinis nominibus*; Epistemology; Logia.

[es] Los términos de los enfoques teóricos sobre el mundo natural y el divino en Jorge Paquimeres

Resumen. En este artículo, estamos investigando los métodos en los que Jorge Paquimeres, el comentarista del De divinis nominibus de Pseudo-Dionisio el Areopagita, se acerca epistemológicamente a la realidad natural y divina. Queda claro que todo juicio sobre Dios parte del mundo sensible, por lo que se revela una inducción inversa. Aunque nunca se cuestiona la existencia de Dios, no se puede sacar ninguna conclusión final sobre su forma de existir autofundante. Considerando la diferencia sustancial entre los dos niveles, dos son las formas en que se abordan el mundo natural y la realidad trascendente divina. En el primer caso, el sujeto pensante funciona principalmente en términos empíricos naturales, mientras que en el segundo sigue un curso místico-intuitivo. Sin embargo, el contexto es consistentemente realista.

Palabras clave: Jorge Paquimeres; paráfrasis; Pseudo-Dionisio el Areopagita; *De divinis nominibus*; epistemología; Logia.

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1. Introduction

George Pachymeres (1242-ca.1310) is considered to be one of the leading exponents of the Palaiologian Renaissance in the fields of literature and the arts.[3] He was an erudite man with broad research and instructional interests. He dealt with most branches of sciences and areas of knowledge and delivered a highly multidimensional work, often impressive for its innovation, based on the requirements of both a general and focused epistemology. One of his main contributions lies on the fact that he established the appropriate philosophical and theological terms and conditions, which, through their composition, could lead to a scientific logical and clearly compatible with the principles of the Christian faith understanding of the sensible world, in the sense that it has been formed by a principle and that it is as a theophany which is constantly rejuvenated. Specifically, he separated human secularized wisdom and science from

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[3]   About George Pachymeres' life and work, cf. for instance, Henri Dominique Saffrey and Leendert Gerrit Westerink, *Proclus. Théologie Platonicienne V* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1987), LVII-LXIX.; Ronald F. Hoch and Edward. N. O'Neil, *The Chreia and ancient Rhetoric: Classroom Exercises* (Atlanta, 2002), 334-343. It should be mentioned that during the last years a number of scholars have dealt with him. Cf. For instance, Pantelis Golitsis, "La date de composition de la philosophia de Georges Pachymère et quelques precisions sur la vie de l' auteur", *Revue des Études Byzantines*, 67 (2009): 209-215; Christos Terezis, "The commentaries of G. Pachymeris on ontological pair 'one-being' of the platonic dialogue Parmenides", *Philosophical Inquiry*, 17 (1995): 79-92; Thomas A. Garda, Sion M. Honea, Patricia M. Stinger (trans./ed.), *Υπόμνημα εις τον Παρμενίδην Πλάτωνος. Ανωνύμου συνέχεια του Υπομνήματος Πρόκλου* (Athens: Academy of Athens, 1989).

theology as a mystical science of transcendence and stressed that the latter should mostly rely on the biblical and patristic texts and less on scientific and philosophical principles and evidence. Yet, in some cases science and philosophy are implicitly found in his analyses, synthetic judgements and interpretations, even with respect to theological questions. In this way, he also composed a system of Natural Theology, which was clearly inferior to Supernatural Theology.[4] Remaining consistent with the Christian teaching, he preserved the priority of the transcendent over its immanence, in the context of an unquestionable monism. We could argue that he is a thinker of great compositions, a fascinating eclectic encyclopedist.

In this article, we shall attempt to follow this rationale in a particular passage of his *Paraphrasis* of *De divinis nominibus* of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.[5] According to his research plan to approach the epistemological levels in which he articulates his theories, Pseudo-Dionysius makes an effort to define the special aspects that come from the dialectical relation between God and human being –and, in a broader sense, the created world– following how its context had been systematically structured in the gradually formed Christian tradition.[6] From a methodological point of view, both Pseudo-Dionysius' text and Pachymeres' commentary start from the created world, and by using an inverted inductive method, attempt to ascend, as far as possible, to the knowledge about God, who manifests his providence by following a downward process. And speaking of an inverted inductive method, we mean that, what is searched for, that is, the conclusion, is theoretically the supreme Principle, which is axiomatically considered to be the most primary, with respect both to its self-founding condition and the causal requirements that it forms, over all created being. In other words, it is considered to be the generalized Universal, through the manifestations of which the created reality is formed and functions, which is considered to be the particular that appears in many forms and modes into the world of becoming. Generally, in Christian theory human being ascends to a point through every particular to the Universal, but, without this indicating that the

truth on this Principle, which is constantly under formation, eventually depends on the sensible observations and their conceptual categorizations, which are considered only as the starting points for every epistemological ascent.[7] That is to say, God's existence is never questioned, regardless of what can be proved or confirmed through the created reality or by human cognitive capacity. Realism here dominates mostly with respect to the beginning and the end, at the same time as it is supported by nominalism with respect to the stimuli caused by the particulars, which are exhaustively elaborated. In any case, however, apophatic approaches are extensive, so idealistic foundations are explicitly avoided, even though they originally rely on human concepts and methods.

According to these clarifications, there are two different epistemological methods, one for the created world and one for the divine transcendent reality, which, however, meet in a point, so as human being from a phenomenon, which is considered to be a divine sensible projection, to reach appropriately through ascending steps the supreme Principle. Or else, the requirement is to consider any produced condition as a special and particular theophany, which shows the course to be followed by human cognitive reference. It should be also mentioned that what is approached is only the projections of the divine energies but not the divine substance, which eternally remains completely unparticipated; this is why it does not appertain to categorical schemata. In addition, we need to clarify that Pachymeres' inductive method is not just a process of traditional Epistemology and Logic, which can draw conclusions from the particulars to the Universal. It is also the path to be followed to reach what cannot be further analyzed, which could be described as vision. So, this is not just an apodeictic process but a productive cognitive method which combines Platonism with Aristotelianism –in the Neoplatonic sense–, which constantly remains open to new approaches regarding the unutterable mystery of the divine reality.[8] From a Christian point of view, this mystery is approached by man only in a mystical way, which intensively expresses existential conditions.

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[4] On Natural Theology, cf. Nikos Nisiotis, *Προλεγόμενα εις την θεολογικήν γνωσιολογίαν* (Athens: Minima, 1986), 146-209; William Paley, *Natural Theology*, (Oxford: R. Fauler, 2006).

[5] George Pachymeres, *De divinis nominibus – Paraphrasis Pachymerae,* 608D-609C. This is actually the introduction of the treatise, which obviously sets the general epistemological principles to be followed. In the paragraph in which the passage to be analyzed is included, George Pachymeres elaborates the Christian position on that the truth about God cannot be approached by human wisdom but only through the supernatural science of agnosia.

[6] For a general approach of Pseudo-Dionysius' treatise and the way in which he develops his reasoning, cf. for instance, Eugenio Corsini, *Il trattato "De divinis nominibus" dello Pseudo-Dionigi e i commenti neoplatnici al Parmenide* (Torino, 1962); Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An investigation of the prehistory and evolution of the pseudo-Dionysian tradition* (Leiden: E.J Brill, 1978); Rene Roques, *L'univers dionysien, Structure hiérarchiqie du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys* (Paris: Montaigne, 1954). These three books are some of the most important to day and deal with both the similarities and differences between Christianity and Neoplatonism.

[7] On this, cf. for instance, Lydia Petridou and Christos Terezis, "George Pachymeres' gnoseological system and his inductive method in the Paraphrase of De divinis nominibus of Dionysius the Areopagite", *Augustinianum*, 55/2 (2015): 405-426.

[8] Concerning the combinations of Platonism with Aristotelianism in Byzantium, cf. Gerard Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz: Den Streit um die theologische Methodik in der spätbyzantinischen Geistesgeschichte (14./15.Jh), seine systematischen Grundlagen und seine historische Entwicklung* (Munich 1977), 107-124; Linos Benakis, "Commentaries and Commentators on the Logical Works of Aristotle in Byzantium", *Byzantine Philosophy: Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy* (Athens: Parousia, 2002): 425-456; "Michael Psellos, Über die Ideen, die Platon lehrt: Einleitung, kritische Edition und Neugriechische Übersetzung", *Byzantine Philosophy: Texts and Studies on Byzantine Philosophy*, 249-258; Basileios N. Tatakis, *Christian Philosophy in the Patristic and Byzantine Tradition* (Orthodox Research Institute, 2007), 213-281.

2. Theoretical approaches of the natural world

For George Pachymeres, the first level of Epistemology is associated with the cosmic science and appears in clear conceptual outlines, for it depends on concrete and provable sensible evidence. According to his word, human wisdom, at least in the first place, gets proofs only from the sensible world and is categorized in accordance to them.[9] This is a scientific parameter, which, provided that the principles of investigation are kept until the givens to change, is unquestionable. That is to say, the cognitive starting point is strictly secularized and that is why this process is not appropriate for approaching God directly or in a simple way. Successive interventions are mandatory, the number of which cannot be precisely measured. In this sense, self-convincing sentences – that is, those whose objectivity relies upon their own foundations and results– are for the Byzantine thinker mental representations which have resulted from the senses, after the necessary categorical procedures have taken place, so as the appropriate cohesive categorization to arise, which, after investigating the repetitions, can be also confirmed by already expressed judgements or assumptions.[10] Or, else, in the context of Christian theory, cosmic knowledge can be typically proved in the natural world, provided that this world is constantly considered to be a theophany. Besides, self-convincing means something that can be explained on its own terms in which it was composed, which can be confirmed and classified in a particular way according to an abstractive method. However, full knowledge of the natural world is not possible, for its cause is transcendent, which means that creation is a sort of mystery as well. Note also that this was the case for Gregory of Nyssa in the fourth century, who presented some precise realistic

approaches, which did not lead to agnosticism or existential moral doubts for further investigation of the divine mystery. In this perspective, investigation focuses on the sensible way in which a being appears, which by extension leads to its natural unity, which actually is not completely knowable.

We could argue here that a consistent epistemological process arises, which depends on sensible experience and, by applying the appropriate methods and models of formal Logic, classifies the information into conceptual categories. Keeping in mind that George Pachymeres follows mostly the Aristotelian tradition,[11] but also the Platonic one, quite interesting would be for the history of Philosophy to investigate Aristotle's relevant theory. Either way, this is a difficult process, since the natural world not only appears in countless and clearly distinct forms but also presents variations which may change the already confirmed as stable conditions. Therefore, the conclusion is as follows: the propositional models suggested could actually define temporal conclusions, but they would also prove broad human cognitive performances, which depend on human capabilities, which exactly as such have potentiality. But this process is appropriate only for the natural world, for its goal is to explain mostly 'what' and 'how' is something happening and, only hypothetically 'the reasons why', the purpose of which in a non-metaphysical system is only to find the structural formations, which are typical of a particular –even mechanistic– scientific intention. Besides, in such systems the possibility of a mechanistic or automatic or self-formed function of matter is strong. So, it is not possible to reach the supernatural level through this process. That is why in the Christian context the mental representation which results from sensible information needs constantly to change or to be revised or to be completed. In order to

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9   George Pachymeres, *De divinis nominibus – Paraphrasis Pachymerae,* 609A: "Ἡ γὰρ ἀνθρωπίνη σοφία ἐκ τῶν αἰσθητῶν τὰς ἀποδείξεις ἐρανίζεται". The term 'ἀπόδειξις' is epistemologically important, since it refers to a methodologically organized thought process, which aims at internally justified conclusions. In this sense, this knowledge is relevant, but it is also the only one that can validate, according to direct proofs, what human being is able to know in a particular period of time and on what foundations this knowledge relies, which would analogously feed reductions. On this, cf. also Lambros Couloubaritsis, "Le sens de la notion "demonstration" chez le pseudo-Denys", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 75 (1982): 317-335; Roques, *L'univers dionysien*, 84, 189, 210-211, who points out the decisive role of the New Testament with respect to this epistemological aspect in the context of the Dionysian tradition. We specifically read: «La raison de cette attitude réside dans le fait que ces livres nous viennent de Dieu: ce sont les θεοπαράδοτα λόγια, les θεαρχικὰ λόγια, les θεῖα λόγια. Pour qui a reçu les lumières divines, leurs enseignements ne sont pas facultatifs. Ils s'imposent comme une loi (θεσμός), comme une disposition divine (θεία θεσμοθεσία), avant et quelquefois contre les lois ou les règles humaines. C'est d'eux que doit venir toute lumière aux intelligences, car ils sont vrais» (211). So, the texts of New Testament work as an original epistemological requirement. We shall come back to the Logia later. But, we should keep in mind that we cannot exceed the limits of human capability. In this sense, we could here compare George Pachymeres with Immanuel Kant, who says that the epistemological –but with clear correspondence to the ontological status– predicates can only be attributed to sense data or phenomena, since this is a consistent cooperation of external intuition with its intellectual elaboration. Cf. for instance, *Kritik der reiner Vernunft* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998), 193-221. It is important however to investigate whether the Christian thinker accepts an a priori formation of human mind by conceptual categories and forms of intuition. Take also into account that there is no reference to Plato's theory of recollection, at least explicitly. Cf. also Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, 270-275. For both a historical and systematic approach of how Epistemology is formed in Eastern Christianity, cf. Vladimir Lossky, *La vision de Dieu* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1962). This book describes the phases of the formation of this field, while at the same time it takes into account the influence of the Christian theologians by the ancient Greek philosophical schools.

10   George Pachymeres, *De divinis nominibus – Paraphrasis Pachymerae,* 609A-B: "Εἴπερ δὲ καὶ αὐτὴν εἴποις τὴν ἄμεσον πρότασιν, ἥτις ἐστὶν αὐτόπιστος, καὶ αὕτη ἐκ τῶν μερικῶν αἰσθήσεων τῷ νῷ συνάγεται". It should be mentioned that this is about sensible exemplifications, therefore, Epistemology depends on consistent empiricism, which Christian thinkers definitely take into account, since they accept that the divine energies manifest through material sensibilized ways.

11   Cf. Eleni Pappa (einleitung-text-indices), *Georgios Pachymeres: Philosophia, Buch 10, Kommentar zur Metaphysik des Aristoteles* (Athenis: Academy of Athens, 2002); *Georgios Pachymeres: Philosophia, Buch 6, Kommentar zu De partibus animalium des Aristoteles* (Athens: Academy of Athens, 2008); *Georgios Pachymeres: Scholien und Glossen zu De partibus animalium des Aristoteles (cod. Vaticanus gr.261)* (Athenis: Academy of Athens, 2009); Konstantinos Oikonomakou (intr.-text-index), *Γεώργιος Παχυμέρης: Φιλοσοφία. Βιβλίον ἑνδέκατον, Τὰ Ἠθικά, ἤτοι τὰ Νικομάχεια* (Athenis: Academy of Athens, 2005).

accomplish this, the required epistemological-methodological model has to change. Even the question 'for what reason' cannot be confirmed in the context of a mechanistic investigation; we can just make predictions, by taking into account the repeatability of the natural information, that is, by taking into account the logical statistical facts. In other words, if we intend to approach metaphysical world, either per se or as a cause, the way in which we investigate has to change. For the Christian tradition, the final state is vision, which develops dynamically free from any intermediates, especially the senses. Note that the Dionysian tradition (Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor, George Pachymeres) has thoroughly described vision in the *De mystica theologia* and the commentaries on it. It should be also mentioned that this process is not found in the scientific systems that rely on natural-empirical givens.

Without ignoring the fundamental importance of the scientific processes –composed by sensible and mental representations– for knowing the sensible world, Pachymeres considers them as human inventions and that is why he probably relativizes the range of their accuracy. This topic was raised at the beginning of Christianity by Justin,[12] the philosopher and martyr, who attempted to define the epistemological capabilities of ancient Greek philosophy and science under a Christian perspective, relying mostly on the Platonic dialogue *Timaeus*. At this point, we can obviously identify a consistent, with respect to the middle and late systematic period, Platonism, at least the one found in the dialogues *Meno*, *Phaedo*, and *Theaetetus*.[13] The most important conclusion is that experiences, since they are subject to change, do not provide stability or duration and that is why both the accuracy of their reasons and, mostly, their findings should be carefully approached. Nevertheless, Pachymeres' suggestion, which is constantly repeated, is consistent with empiricism: human wisdom is exclusively formed by what that can be experienced, although any poof related with the effects is constantly subject to skepticism, which, by means of successive ascents and catharses, finally results in apophatism, which eventually exceeds empiricism and reflects theological realism. Or, in other words, despite the fact that human being is not capable of knowing God, he accepts him as objectively existent –both as a creative and final cause– and as the basis for any proof about the sensible world.

Pachymeres next contends that perception results in knowledge, provided that the senses are associated with the referents, that is, the sensible things. The same thing holds true for the mind, which finalizes knowledge, after it is united with the intelligible.[14] It is very likely that the term 'intelligible' here refers to the metaphysical archetypes; in addition, maybe there are also conceptual-categorical descriptions of a whole of similar beings, which the abstractive method forms. So, it is possible that the term refers to the "universals", which in Christian theory have both gnoseological and ontological content.[15] The first thing to mention is that neither idealism nor realism dominates; there is a sort of balance between them, which excludes the possibility absolute conclusions to be drawn.[16] This is actually a democratic function, which serves a generalized Ontology –as in other cases as well– and ensures human cognitive initiative. In this sense, man turns into a second demiurge, since he becomes aware of his capabilities and his responsibility to utilize them. What is more, this union broadens the structural similarities between thinking and being or, in other words, it strongly supports the fact that notions correspond to ontological conditions, provided that the abstraction works perfectly well on the evidence derived from sensory experience and has been led to a precise, gnoseologically speaking, formation of 'universals'.

On this basis, it follows that 'universals' have metaphysical, cosmological and gnoseological content, so holism dominates. In other words, this approach disproves any opposition between realism and nominalism at the same time as it excludes complete domination of idealism. From a Platonic point of view, another thing that needs to be investigated is whether human mind is considered to be a priori structured by the concepts which represent the theoretical reasons of the external things and their archetypes. Or, else, we cannot accept that Christians adopt the theory of recollection. At least to this point of our analysis, there is no proof to suggest this position of a priori, while it is also not possible to provide a satisfactory epistemological answer relying on what follows. Besides, the Christian thinkers of the East are not explicitly clear on this, although Basil the Great insists on that the human cognitive capabilities contribute to the formation of the predicates.[17] Nevertheless, the former a priori presence can be easily justified according to the

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[12]   For his life and thought, cf. for instance, L. W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[13]   On the epistemology of these Platonic dialogues there is an impressive in number and quality bibliography. Cf. for instance, Yvon Brès, *La Psychologie de Platon* (Paris: Presses Universitaire, 1973); Francis Macdonald Cornford, *Plato's theory of knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Dimitrios Z. Andriopoulos, *Ancient Greek Epistemology* (Athens: Philosophical Inquiry, 2006).

[14]   George Pachymeres, *De divinis nominibus – Paraphrasis Pachymerae,* 609C: "Ὡς γὰρ ἐπὶ τῆς αἰσθήσεως ἔχει, ὅτι τότε αἰσθανόμεθα, ὅτε τῷ αἰσθητῷ ἑνοῦται ἡ αἴσθησις· οὕτω καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς νοήσεως ἔχει· καὶ γὰρ τῷ νοητῷ ἑνοῦται ὁ νοῦς, ὅτε τούτου ἀντιλαμβάνεται". Cf. also, Roques, *L'univers dionysien*, 239. And here comes to the fore also Parmenides' thought: "ταυτὸν ἐστὶν νοεῖν τε καὶ εἶναι", where 'εἶναι' refers to the referent, which can be understood only if it is identified with its mental representation.

[15]   On the concept of 'universals' in Eastern Christianity, cf. Arethas of Caesarea, *Εἰς τὴν Πορφυρίου Εἰσαγωγήν*, 23.1-26 and 25.24-27.9. Also, *Εἰς τὰς Ἀριστοτέλους Κατηγορίας*, 133.11-139.12, 168.1-173.4 (Athens-Paris-Bruxelles: Academy of Athens, 1994).

[16]   On the notions of realism and idealism, cf. for instance Thomas Nagel, *The view from nowhere* (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press 1986), 90-98.

[17]   It should be mentioned here in brief that Basil the Great considers that the names are concepts. This means that they are products of the human cognitive activity, but they do not reflect the properties of the objects or the relations between the objects. The interesting thing is that no name

'image of God' creation of human being, which does not take place in automatic terms of assimilation and is anthropologically completed after the activation of the 'likeness of God', which could be considered as a form of recollection to be performed.

3. Theoretical approaches of the divine world

According to Pachymeres, the second level of Epistemology is related to the question of the truth of the judgements about God. Here, the Christian theologian is clear: this truth cannot be founded on syllogisms and arguments formed by human wisdom, for they are two epistemological methods which get validity and proof by detailed and classifiable remarks on referents.[18] We need to mention that these are sensible things and that is why they define only what can be proved. When it comes to metaphysical questions, it has been already proved that this is risky or does not result in true conclusions, for God is beyond beings and, under no circumstances, may he become a strictly defined object of human thought or even a personal hypostatic field to refer to, not even by analogy. It should not escape attention that in the context of Christianity the creation of the natural world does not affect the divine mystery and that is why creation can be also approached in an apophatic way.[19]

For Pachymeres, the most objective strategy for approaching the hyper-essential God is the apodictic power of the theologians, in the context of which a sort of union between the thinking subject and what is unknown and inaccessible is accomplished in an actually intellectual way or by intuition.[20] It becomes clear from the context that provability here works in a different way compared to that which can be related with the sensible things and that the term 'theologian' means someone who is more than an expert; it also indicates someone who is initiated into the divine Revelation. In addition, it is explained here that 'intelligibly' shows the inexplicable and incomprehensible by man way in which the metaphysical archetypes appear, which also includes anything related to God. This is a technical term –both in Christianity and Neoplatonism–, which reveals conditions that are beyond human mind, including the state of intuition, which basically comes through the procedure of catharsis which will turn it into a direct process to the highest possible degree.[21] In fact, it is associated with the greatest activities of the mind, but in a way that has been already formed by the divine capabilities, which result in predicates that do not rely on sensible representations and their elaboration by the mind, which, at least for now, human being is not able to express. Whether initiation can provide such a capability could be just an eschatological assumption which could be connected with the 'likeness of God'. However, it is not easy to suggest that this great goal is part of Christian teleology. That is, it goes beyond direct knowledge, which is actually a requirement

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can completely describe an ontic condition. In this way, the Cappadocian Father expresses his opposition to Eunomius' nominalism, with respect to the metaphysical level as well. Eunomius thinks that the divine names are empty words. Basil suggests a moderate realism, according to which the names attributed to God by human beings represent how they communicate with his energies. Therefore, the names describe up to a point the way in which God exists. It is obvious that Basil projects the divine immanence and accepts it as objective, while at the same time he emphasizes human gnoseological initiative. The Christian theologian elaborates these positions in his dogmatic treatise entitled *Ἀνατρεπτικὸς τοῦ Ἀπολογητικοῦ τοῦ δυσσεβοῦς Εὐνομίου. Λόγος Α΄*, P.G.29b, 498A-572B.

[18] George Pachymeres, *De divinis nominibus – Paraphrasis Pachymerae,* 609A: "τὴν τῶν περὶ Θεοῦ λεγομένων ἀλήθειαν οὐ καταδοῦμεν, καὶ καταδεσμοῦμεν ἐν ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας πειθοῖ καὶ λόγῳ". It is to be mentioned that this passage is from the introduction of the *Paraphrasis* of the *De divinis nominibus* (which obviously reflects Dionysius' thoughts as well) and this is why epistemologically holds a key role. Cf. also, Roques, *L'univers dionysien*, 210, 214, 220-221, where we read the following: «Toute tentative pour *dire* Dieu aux hommes sera nécessairement entachée d'anthropomorphisme. Et c'est pourquoi lorsque tout est dit, il reste encore tout à dire, ou plutôt il reste à nier tout. Emprisonnée dans le dilemme de la théologie affirmative et de la théologie négative, l'intelligence naturelle ne trouve dans la première que des images grossièrement déformantes et des concepts orgueilleusement inadéquats, et elle ne voit dans la seconde que des négations exclusives de toute réalité».

[19] For instance, Basil the Great in *Homilia II in Hexaemeron* says: "Καὶ τίς ἱκανὸς κατατολμῆσαι τῶν ἀδύτων; Ἢ τίς ἐπόψεται τὰ ἀπόρρητα; Ἀπρόσιτος μὲν γὰρ αὐτῶν καὶ ἡ θέα, δυσερμηνεύτος δὲ παντελῶς τῶν νοηθέντων ὁ λόγος" (P.G.29b, 28C). Gregory of Nyssa expresses his doubts on whether human being is capable of knowing the essence of the created beings. Human mind knows only some properties of the beings and approaches them as phenomena. But it is open to developments and constantly discovers new properties. For Gregory, however, beings per se do not appertain to complete knowledge or those methods that would provide it. In this sense, he draws the conclusion that a possible knowledge of the created beings would lead in a complete knowledge of the demiurgic powers of God as well. But this is totally excluded. He elaborates this topic mostly in his treatises entitled *Contra Eunomium*, such as the *Liber Secundus*, P.G.45, 465A-572A, and the *Liber Tertius*, P.G.45, 572B-616B. On the positions of Gregory of Nyssa, cf. the collective volume edited by Lenka Karfíková, Scot Douglass and Johannes Zachhuber, *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

[20] George Pachymeres, *De divinis nominibus – Paraphrasis Pachymerae,* 609B: "Οὐχ οὕτω γοῦν καὶ εὐοδοῦμεν τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἐν πειθοῖ ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας, ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει τῆς τῶν θεολόγων δυνάμεως, καθ' ἣν τοῖς ἀφθέγκτοις καὶ ἀγνώστοις συναπτόμεθα νοερῶς". For a synthetic and critical approach of this topic, in the light of how Theology meets Philosophy in the field of Epistemology, cf. Jean-Claude Piguet and Gabriel Philippe Widmer, *Le renversement sémantique: Dialogue d'un théologien et d'un philosophe*, (Genève-Lausanne-Neuchâtel: Faculté de Théologie de Lausanne, 1991), 59-84.

[21] Metaphorically speaking, the term 'intuition' is opposed to the epistemological status quo. That is to say, it is opposed to anything established, which quite often confines human being within compromises. From a philosophical point of view, it is considered to be a clarification, which results in a limitless openness. The world that is formed introduces a new state, which is intensively existential. It is a state at which the entire human knowledge is ignored, in order intuition, in the sense of an independent gnoseological and constantly existential process, to take place. And note that intuition works in a direct way, completely incompatible to anything and out of any kind of control. Note also that an in-depth interpretation of intuition as a theological request shows the intense tendency for providing answers to existential questions or even for fulfilling inner needs that exceed what intra-world processes can provide. This is a total change of the intra-world anthropological model, since what has been theoretically achieved is actually being ignored, while there is a direct communication with the divine projections. It is where 'νοερῶς' is formed, which cannot be described in other words. So, this term is used by expressive economy.

for what takes place by successive procedures in a human being-initiate; this could be considered as inner dialectics, which follows a particular analogy between God and human.

Attempting to be more specific, the Byzantine thinker contends that teaching and learning –which are both mediated and mediating epistemological procedures– and their effects, are not appropriate –or sufficient– methods for approaching concepts which are related with God.[22] Or, more correctly, the gifts provided by God to human beings are not enough to form concepts about him and his providence, except from those that reach the supreme point of our cognitive power; furthermore, the possibility to become independent from the natural world, which is not underestimated at all, is achievable only to a point. On the contrary, divine theology –which first of all is considered to be God's word addressed to human beings– performs an indescribable connection, which is a union superior to logic, intellectual power and constantly ascending energy of the human capability.[23] That is, it is the state at which what is considered by human being to be transcendent is placed under the terms of hyper-potentiality, namely, a sort of communication which is found beyond phenomena and predicates. This is where the mystical course towards God begins.[24]

In this case, human being feels an unspeakable attraction, which results in an existential openness that could be described as an unutterable and indescribable in predicates mystical experience. Human being experiences in the present time –and according to his own terms and conditions– the super-historical state, that is, how he will communicate with the divine at the greatest end of his personal journey. In this way, he becomes able to exist consciously as the 'image of God', which, when it reaches the highest point, frees from the bonds of a close-minded approach of the material level. In other words, it sets human being free from the necessities of the nature, which constantly disorientates from the truth in an actually barely noticeable way. It is the moment at which he will be transformed –to some extend by grace as well– into a metaphysical personal presence that is accordingly understandable and describable in new terms,[25] namely, unutterably, a concepts which changes or exceeds the principles of formal Logic. Either way, such a personal achievement –which relies on experi-

ence and intuition– is unique and cannot be associated with another person. In this context, the relationships 'genus-species' and 'whole-parts' have no place. The principle of individuality is actually involved even when it comes to the theoretical reason.

Special attention is required here in order not to misinterpret 'unutterably'. It relies on a general theory about how the relation of the divine with human is formed, without these two factors to be confused or mixed. There is no identity between them, but, due to the gifts of God, their relation has been defined as similarity, but not an essential one. So, the limited epistemological performance mentioned before takes place because a similar can understand only the similar to it.[26] The risk to misunderstand is quite obvious here as well. The only thing that can be proved is the following: man is a composite being, so his similarities are various, both sensible and spiritual, without this fact causing any controversy, provided that the necessary terms and conditions are kept, which exclude any possible material similarity between God and human being. Note, however, that this does not change the fact that in the context of Christian monism, in which the cause is one source that is manifested in endless ways, God is the creator of materiality. In this sense, the analogy of human being with his cause is defined by the special productions of the latter.

4. The 'Logia' as the source of the two theoretical approaches

According to Pachymeres, the two epistemological levels, that is, the knowledge about the world and the knowledge with no directly detectable ontological content, are found in an open prospect, each one in a particular way that is appropriate for approaching any assumptions made about what is true. This could be considered as a sort of epistemological dualism, that is, a theoretical construction that shows an ontological opposition, or, more correctly, a kind of otherness, which indicates the radical difference in which human mind necessarily functions, in order to preserve realism and its correspondences. So, a radical way of thinking arises, quite dramatic regarding the balance but also attractive regardless of its theoretical deficiencies. Nevertheless, there is a close relation

[22]   George Pachymeres, *De divinis nominibus – Paraphrasis Pachymerae,* 609C: "Εἴ τι γὰρ ἂν φθέγξαιτό τις διὰ διδασκαλίας, καὶ εἴ τι γνώσεται διὰ μάθησιν, οὐκ ἔστι κατάλληλον ταῖς περὶ Θεοῦ ἐννοίαις". On the concept of analogy, cf. Vladimir Lossky, "La notion des analogies chez Denys le Pseudo-Aréopagite", *Archives d'Histoire doctirnale et littérraire du Moyen Age* 5 (1930): 279-309.

[23]   George Pachymeres, *De divinis nominibus – Paraphrasis Pachymerae,* 609C: "…εἰ μή πως ἐνδυναμωθείη τῶν νοερῶν ἡμῶν ταῖς πνευματοκινήτου θεολογίας, ἐπὶ τῷ διατεθῆναι εἰς τὴν τοιαύτην ἄφθεγκτον σύναψιν, κατὰ τὴν κρείττονα ἕνωσιν τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς λογικῆς καὶ νοερᾶς δυνάμεως, καθ' ἣν δυνάμεθα εἰπεῖν τι καὶ νοῆσαι, καὶ ἐνεργείας, καθ' ἣν λέγομεν ἢ νοοῦμεν". The word 'τι' refers to something strictly particular and reduces human capabilities. However, with respect to its intellectual terms, this model of communication is according to the Christian teaching clearly holistic.

[24]   Cf. Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, 276-277.

[25]   George Pachymeres, *De divinis nominibus – Paraphrasis Pachymerae,* 609C: "…κατὰ τὴν προσήκουσαν ἀναλογίαν τῆς γιγνωσκομένης νοοῦμεν καὶ οἷον τούτοις συναπτόμεθα καὶ ἑνούμεθα". The word 'οἷον' preserves the ontological boundaries between God and man and reveals modes of being with common characteristics but in totally different terms.

[26]   George Pachymeres, *De divinis nominibus – Paraphrasis Pachymerae,* 609C: "Τοῦτο δέ ἐστι, ὅτι τῷ ὁμοίῳ ἐστὶ νοῆσαι τὸ ὅμοιον". The general context and the precise explanation of the terms result in capabilities, in the sense that similarity has to be accomplished in a specific way after a particular process has taken place.

between them, which should not be ignored. Since the divine is the cause of the natural world, a part of its apophatism, after its immanence, is transferred to its effects. On the other hand, the affirmative side of the effect provides an acceptable way for a logical ascending approach of the divine, as far as this is possible. This sort of combination as well reveals an especially complex realism, which constantly results in the metaphysics of immanence or, in other words, the highest point of an optimistic ontological anthropological model. Human being understands how important is to stand between these two worlds and act appropriately, and that is why he actually relates with both of them.[27] Therefore, epistemology is something more than just a mental process. It is the safest factor for defining the ontological levels.

Keeping in mind exactly this distinction, Pachymeres considers as the most valid source for justifying his views about God the Logia, that is, the texts in which the projection of the divine and the experience of its presence are directly shown, which are actually described in many ways that reveal human cognitive and expressive power.[28] These are texts that have been definitely written by human beings; nevertheless, they are considered to be totally inspired by God, so their writers as well are thought to be inspired mediators and, by extension, valid regarding their word. So, even though they are parts of the divine Revelation, they also show how it can be understood by the whole and described in a system of predicates that reflects the dialectic relationship between God and man, which in the Christian context is constantly renewable.

It should be mentioned that the term 'Logia' was typically used by the Neoplatonist philosophers. But the original meaning does not affect the context here,

for in the Christian teaching it gets a new meaning and is associated only with theological texts which show how God exists –the highest point of which is Jesus Christ–, which indicates in many ways that God intended to project himself and the only thing that remains to do is to use the proper concepts-words to describe this fact.[29] These will be revealed during the development of the Church, which is believed that it makes true God's planning in history. So, in these texts human being has to identify the historical factor as well, that is, the temporal path that the mankind followed, until the chosen ones to communicate with a God who really intends to communicate and denies remaining in his bliss. In metaphorical terms, God does not wish to remain isolated from all those that he has created and brought into existence, for the created world has already expressed a great kind of communication. Besides, in any religion the Logia are considered to be the divinely inspired texts, which feed men and their inner procedures and capabilities of reconstructing, which actually take place so that an ascending theory to be formed; they are the highest point of a process that exceeds any pathogenic, mental or broadly existential condition.

This last remark refers to catharsis, in the sense that the writers of these texts have already accomplished their goal due to their personal struggle and in the sense of a suggestion for an analogous course to be followed by any reader. So, these texts contain important points of the Practical Reason, which, in addition to the unchanged general principles, is in each culture or worldview specified. Moreover, any other text that resulted from the long process followed by initiated thinkers who attempted to explain the divine mystery can be also considered to be Logia. That is why they are also considered to be intensively an-

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[27]   Regarding the cataphatic and apophatic teaching in the Dionysian corpus, cf. for instance. Otto Semmelroth, "Gottes überwesentliche Einheit. Zur Gotteslehre des Ps-Dionysius Areopagita", *Scholastik*, 25 (1950): 209-234; Jean-Hervé Nicolas, *Dieu connu comme inconnu* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966); Hella Theil-Wunder, *Die archaische Verborgenheit. Die philosophischen Wurzeln der negative Theologie*, (München: Humanistische Bibliotek, 1970).

[28]   George Pachymeres, *De divinis nominibus – Paraphrasis Pachymerae*, 609A: "…στοιχειώδης τῶν περὶ Θεοῦ ἐν ταῖς Γραφαῖς εἰρημένων, ἧς τινος κατὰ ἀκολουθίαν ἡ παροῦσα ἐπραγματεύθη". So, the past tradition is necessarily the starting point for any text. However, the term 'ἀκολουθία' possibly indicates a renewal-opening of the conceptual frame, which in the Christian tradition constantly develops.

[29]   For instance, Proclus the Neoplatonist used in his writings the Chaldean Logia, which represent the religious spirit of the Middle East. On this, cf. for example *Theologia Platonica*, IV, 111.5-113.28 [Saffrey and Westerink (éds) (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968-1997)]. For a general approach on the relation between Neoplatonism and the Chaldean Logia, cf. Henri Dominique Saffrey, *Recherches sur le Néoplatonisme après Plotin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1990), 63-94. Also, Luc Brisson, "La place des Oracles Chaldaiques dans la Théologie Platonicienne", in *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, eds. Alain Philippe Segonds and Carlos Steel (Paris-Louvain: Les Belles Lettres-Louvain University Press, 2000), 109-162, who says in the sense of a fertile synthetic eclecticism: «Proclus met en parallèle les réponses oraculaires, en quoi consistent le *Oracles Chaldaïques*, avec un système philosophique, où choque de réalité vient s'inscrire à un degré déterminé dans une hiérarchie rigide. Cette practique se fonde sur des procédés particulièrement discutables. 1) Proclus ne cite des Oracles Chaldaïques que de courts fragments isolés et donc indépendants de leur context. 2) Pour obtenir le résultat qu'il attend, il n'hésite pas à jouer sur les mots: ce procédé se trouve justifié aux yeux des Grecs par le caractère fontamentalement ambigu de toute réponse oraculaire. D'où des consequences redoutables. a) Il suffit que Platon et les *Oracles Chaldaïques* utilisent le même terme ou la même expression pour que Proclus leur fasse dire la même chose. b) La même expression peut être transpose d'une divinité à l'autre sans explication aucune. c) Enfin, de la possession commune de deux prédicats, on peut déduire l'identité des sujets auxquels s'appliquent ces prédicats. Il faut cependant reconnaître que, dans la *Théologie Platonicienne*, Proclus fait prevue d'une grande virtuosité pour établir l'accord le plus complet possible entre Platon et les enseignements des *Oracles Chaldaïques*. Cette tâche n'était pas facile, car il fallait faire rentrer in texte d'inspiration médio-platonicienne dans une interprétation néo-platonicienne particulièrement élaborée». Note that Proclus' intention to find similarities between Plato –and basically the *Parmenides*– and the Chaldean Logia, which is found mainly is his treatise *Theologia platonica*, is quite obvious. However, these similarities should not be approached independently from the culture of the time at which they appeared. For a systematic approach of the Logia in Christianity, cf. Rene Roques, *Structures théologiques de la Gnose à Richard de Saint-Victor* (1962). Also important are Michael Psellos' treatises under the title *Τοῦ Ψελλοῦ ἐξήγησις τῶν Χαλδαϊκῶν ρητῶν, Τοῦ αὐτοῦ Ψελλοῦ Ἔκθεσις κεφαλαιώδης καὶ σύντομος τῶν παρὰ Χαλδαίοις δογμάτων* and *Τοῦ αυτοῦ Ψελλοῦ Ὑποτύπωσις κεφαλαιώδης τῶν παρὰ Χαλδαίοις ἀρχαίων δογμάτων*, which follow a systematically critical direction.

thropocentric, namely, they represent the broader community of the believers of which their writers are parts. In the case discussed here, they represent the idea of human being about what he thinks to be theophany both in the external world and in him. In both cases, this is the dialectic relation between God and human being, provided that for every level the starting point is different. From an anthropocentric point of view, the starting point of the Logia is human religiosity, in the sense of a state of consciousness that develops into theology, which is considered to be the word for God, which, as a discussion on the supernatural projections, requires expanding our existential horizon. As it is commonly believed, in Christianity many texts which are considered to be Logia have resulted from the local or ecumenical Councils, in which each participant presented the ecclesiastical experience of his own region in relation to the others, in order truth to be revealed in both a dialectic and synthetic way.[30]

5. Epilogue

George Pachymeres, by adopting the main principle of Christian Ontology that the world consists of two levels, the natural and the supernatural, tends to select the appropriate cognitive course according to the particular experiences that a thinking subject accepts.[31] In order a thinking subject to be able to explain any challenge caused by the objective reality, it has to maintain watchfulness and to function either in natural-empirical terms or with intuition, without excluding the transition from the former to the latter in the light of a cognitive extension to an improvement. These challenges are quite a lot and often unpredictable, and that is why special attention is required for

understanding what really takes place; in this process, composing already formed experiences, including the internal-mystical ones, is very important. The fact that the experiences can be also mystical shows that they usually result from the conscious participation in the religious ceremonies. Initiation here is endless, since it is an attempt closely related to personal exercise, which leads to catharsis, a fundamental term in order –in Platonic terms– the logical part to be capable of functioning properly, without any pressure from the appetite and by co-operating in harmony with the spirited part.[32]

According to this principle, human mind activates the appropriate epistemological powers for each ontological level, a method which indicates that Epistemology is not a coherent research model with common predicates; instead, it is internally structured and includes many predicates which depend on the experiences caused by the objects. In the context of interactivity, the epistemological schemas broaden human references. As in any other relevant Christian attempt, here as well, a consistent realism appears which excludes idealism, but not the thinking subject's responsibility –or, even, tendency. It should be also mentioned that the predicates arisen, are not just conceptual expressions – that have resulted from human mind; they also show both the relations developed among beings and the dialectical communication of the two ontological levels, which takes place due to the original initiative of the metaphysical world. It is an initiative that is up to a point identified by human being and regulates his cognitive function as well as any other existential behavior of his. In this sense, realism turns into metaphysical or theological realism. Note that in the fifth chapter of his commentary in the *De divinis nominibus* George Pachymeres elabo-

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30   On this, cf. for instance, Norman P. Tanner, *The Councils of the Church: A short history* (New York: Herder and Herder, 2001).

31   About the concept of 'subject', in the context of systematic Christian Anthropology, it means all the common human properties that appear in a unique particularity. More specifically, in the case discussed, it is about discovering and understanding anything included in the term 'human', which have to be composed in a personalized way. Subjects show the diversity in which human nature can be expressed, provided that every individual is capable of acting consciously. Here what may be defined as identity comes to the fore, which requires the unique realization mentioned before and the differentiation or otherness from the rest of the subjects, which are considered to be special identities as well. However, this differentiation does not indicate a separation, since all subjects own common properties; they are individuals that, either intentionally or not, communicate with each other in the Church. The process for actualizing identity or communicating with the self requires an activation, which is closely related to understanding human nature as a developing special value. The question here is how and in relation to what properties this value could be interpreted. Does it only serve interests or is it about a transcendent value? At this point, subject is associated with the rules of the Practical Reason, that is, those by which it has to transform itself or those which need to be revealed by means of its moral or virtuous actions. These actions, however, require the Theoretical Reason, which will reveal what deserves to be produced, in the sense that it refers to great states of the human consciousness. Here, the secularized schema changes and approaches intuition, which apparently connects in a direct way value with transcendent foundations. It is the moment at which human being opens his existential horizons and acts in an authentic way. Communication holds a key role, since it activates subconscious properties in the form of ecstasy. From a Christian point of view –quite popular in many worldviews–, the term 'subject' completes the term 'person'. For instance, Paul Ricœur, *Soi-même comme un autre* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1990), 49, says: «Premièrement, la détermination de la notion de personne se fait par le moyen des prédicats que nous lui attribuons. La théorie de la personne tient ainsi dans le carde général d'une théorie de la prédication des sujets logiques. La personne est en position de sujet logique par rapport aux prédicats que nous lui attribuons. C'est la grande force d'une approache de la personne par le côté de la référence identifiante». In this context, note also that a subject which acts in a cognitive way experiences internal changes, which add to it new unique properties-predicates. Obviously, it does not remain in the same state in which it was before. It performs totally new actions, which actually broaden and strengthen its identity, which becomes able to act and communicate in multiple ways.

32   Plato elaborates his famous theory on the distinction of rational, appetitive and spirited parts of the soul mostly in the chapters 13 and 17 of the fourth book of his *Respublica*. In Christianity, a number of ecclesiastical writers and Church Fathers have dealt with this three-parted distinction of the soul. For instance, cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Epistula canonica ad Letoium*, P.G.45, 221B-236C. This Cappadocian Father systematically discusses the distinction and includes it in the context of Christian Anthropology, with some extensions to Ecclesiology and Ethics. His reasoning is thorough and precise with the philosophical and theological approach.

rates thoroughly what has been already discussed in this article. Note also that this chapter is one of the most important for collecting valid judgements on the encounter between Christianity and Neoplatonism, considering both the similarities and the differences.[33]

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[33] It should be mentioned that when we refer to the Dionysian tradition, indirectly investigation is associated with Neoplatonism, since there are some common topics between Proclus, the Neoplatonist philosopher, and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, who lived almost during the same historical period. Cf. for instance the following studies, which in our view have a great impact on the topic: Corsini, *Il trattato "De divinis nominibus" dello Pseudo-Dionigi e i commenti neoplatnici al Parmenide*; Entre von Ivánka, "'Teilhaben', 'Hervorgang' und 'Hierarchie' bei Pseudo-Dionysios und bei Proklos (Der 'Neoplatonismus' des Pseudo-Dionysios)", *Plato Christianus* (Einsieldeln: Johannes Verlag, 1964), 254-261; "Zum Problem des christlichen Neoplatonismus? Inwieweit its Psedo-Dionysios Areopagita Neuplatoniker?", *Plato Christianus*, 262-285.

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