

Theological Discourse between ‘Dematerialised Reality’ and Materialism*

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1. “Dematerialized Reality”, Materialism and Anti-materialism

The immaterial and materialism was one of the most important topics of the ancient Greek philosophy –e.g., the Pre-Socratics–, classical metaphysics and modern Western philosophy.

The term *immaterial* means that which is not composed of matter; it is the incorporeal, the spiritual, the realm of ideas. “The concept of immaterial is an imaginary one. We have no conception of the immaterial (being). We simply conceive it with our imagination, that is, with our intellect. Yet, that doesn’t mean that the things we imagine or conceive with our intellect really exist”¹. Plato believed in the world of Ideas: the whole world is a copy of the world of Ideas which is the supreme Being.

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1. S. Gikas, *Νέο Φιλοσοφικό Λεξικό*, Savvalas Publications, Athens 2002, p. 68.

In Early Modern times, *immaterialism* was characterized as “*Berkeleyism*”, which took its name from the Irish Bishop and philosopher George Berkeley (1685-1753), who believed that “a physical object exists if, and only if, we can perceive it with our senses” and articulated with the phrase *Esse est percipi* (“to be is to be perceived”)². He argued that “the objects that surround human beings do not exist objectively and independently of them. Thus, things do not exist, since they are not perceived by the senses”³.

During Antiquity, this approach has been generally called metaphysics. Two of Aristotle’s works were *Physics* and *First Philosophy*. Andronicus of Rhodes, the editor of Aristotle’s works in the 1st century BC, put the *First Philosophy* after *Physics*, so he gave it the title *Metaphysics*⁴. In this work he deals with the supreme Being, the first unmoved mover; this whole philosophical system was called metaphysics, idealism, or ontology.

Metaphysics refers to “the study of matters pertaining to the transcendental world”, and is distinguished from religion, which is based on faith, and mysticism, which, according to Neoplatonism’s teachings, is based on particular, special experience; therefore, it relies on “the mind’s thoughtful energy”. More recent representatives of metaphysics are the scholastic theologians who believed in the “universals” and modern philosophers, such as Leibniz and Hegel⁵.

The term *materialism* expresses the philosophical theories that are based on the view that “the world (the universe) consists only of matter”, and maintains that “the world by its nature is material”, “matter is eternal in time and infinite in space”, “it is neither created nor destroyed, it merely changes forms, it is transformed”. “For materialism, cognition, intellect, spirit, idea, consciousness, are properties of matter; on the other hand, idealism holds that everything pre-exists matter and that matter is essentially a phenomenon and not reality”. Materialistic theories

2. Th. Pelegrinis, *Λεξικὸ τῆς φιλοσοφίας*, Hellenika Grammata Publications, Athens 2009, p. 1103.

3. Ant. Diamantidis, *Λεξικὸ τῶν -ισμῶν*, Gnosi Publications, Athens 2003, p. 183.

4. Th. Pelegrinis, *op.cit.*, p. 413.

5. Th. Pelegrinis, *op.cit.*, pp. 413-414.

have been expounded during the Antiquity by Democritus, Epicurus, Thales, Anaximenes; since the 17th century, these materialistic theories have been systematically developed by various philosophers, such as Descartes, Feuerbach, Marx, Engels and others, each of them with a different perspective⁶.

The most recent anti-materialist or spiritualist theories claim that matter do not exist. According to anti-materialism, “everything regarded as material is nothing but a bundle of ideas, which are the contents of our experience; therefore, they possess a spiritual character”. Such theories were supported by Berkeley [subjective idealism or empirical idealism] and Leibniz. However, “anti-materialism should not be identified with the doctrines of idealism. From a certain point of view, one could be an adherent of anti-materialism, that is, reject the existence of matter, and at the same time, contrary to what the doctrine of idealism suggests, believe in the existence of spiritual entities beyond the limits of experience”⁷.

By keeping in mind these three currents, namely, immaterialism (immaterial reality), materialism and anti-materialism, we could realize that the postmodern philosophical currents express Platonic exemplarism (the theory of divine reality, of the Ideas’ preponderance) and Aristotelian materialism (the theory that every being is composed of matter and species-form).

2. Artificial Intelligence and “Apocalyptic Artificial Intelligence”

In another article⁸ we have argued that the term *Artificial Intelligence* should be understood or replaced by the term *Artificial Genius/ Intellect*, in order to avoid identifying the two different energies of the soul –the logical and the mental one.

6. Ant. Diamantidis, *op.cit.*, p. 287.

7. Th. Pelegrinis, *op.cit.*, p. 83.

8. Metr. of Nafpaktos & Hagios Vlassios, «Ἡ Τεχνητὴ Νοημοσύνη ὡς Τεχνητὴ Εὐφροσύνη», *Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ Παρέμβαση/Ekklesiastiki Parembasi* 323 (June 2023).

Nevertheless, when artificial intelligence is the topic of discussion, it relates with the development of technology and “the definition is changing and diversifying”, since “there are definitions by scientists, institutes and international organizations”, “which use the term ‘autonomous and intelligent systems’”⁹.

The term *intelligence* is defined as “the processes related with memory, imagination, association, perception, cognition, intellect and attention, considered as a set of human cognitive abilities”. This is why the term *Artificial Genius / Intellect* should be used rather than *Artificial Intelligence*. It is a “technology of artificially intelligent systems”, most of which “can be classified into the following four categories: systems that think like humans, systems that act like humans, systems that think rationally, systems that function rationally”¹⁰. Consequently, what is currently declared as “artificial intelligence” has neither a soul nor a body.

What interests us in this Paper is that the pioneers of AI in the late 20th and early 21st century “produced a literature on the relationship between religion and science in the modern era”. This is the so-called “‘Apocalyptic’ AI”.

Those writers predict that the course of history will revolve around robotics and AI technology for the next fifty years and explore the transcendental realm of cyberspace. “Ray Kurzweil identifies an ‘angelic figure’ from the transcendental future age who offers advice and interpretation”¹¹. According to such theories, the Apocalyptic AI-Genius / Intellect “allegedly assumes a role in the body-spirit (soul) dualism, in the attempted alienation and transcendence of the world and the body, interpreting on this basis ancient apocalyptic approaches”¹².

Many pioneers in robotics and AI “speak a quasi-apocalyptic language”. “Its proponents predict that a radical gap in history will be resolved by

9. Archim. Aristarchos Grekas, *Τεχνητή Νοημοσύνη και άνθρωπος, Ὁρθόδοξη θεολογική προσέγγιση*, Apostoliki Diakonia tis Ekklisias tis Hellados Publications, Athens 2022, p. 20.

10. *Op.cit.*, p. 23.

11. *Op.cit.*, p. 101.

12. *Op.cit.*, p. 102.

their modern theory of alienation. This requires the creation of a new world in which mechanical life succeeds biological life"¹³.

They claim that "human beings will reject their bodily limitations by mechanically replacing them and virtual bodies that will live forever in eternal bliss"¹⁴. This is nothing short but man's self-deification. Proponents of this theory "look forward to a virtual world inhabited by intelligent machines and human beings stripped off from their limited bodies. Human beings, having turned their consciousness into machines, will have enhanced psychic abilities and achieve immortality through their unlimited reproduction"¹⁵.

Thus, there is talk of human beings building "superior biological bodies with wellness, self-healing, resilience to environmental changes and the ability to calculate quickly", while "the needs arising from the connection to real (physical) bodies will be eliminated". The "virtual body" will replace "the real body" and human beings will "reconfigure their bodies" "to live forever in the Virtual Kingdom. This Virtual Kingdom rejects both traditional humanity and traditional religion"¹⁶.

The "Apocalyptic AI" wants to create this new world that Christ and His disciples taught after Christ's Second Coming. Michael Benedikt "argues that cyberspace opens the doors to the Celestial City of Revelations". "Benedikt's eschatological architectural imagination displays the connection between virtual reality and Christian salvation"¹⁷.

The proponents of these theories, by using modern technology, want to realize the world that God promised after the end of History. They speak of a "virtual kingdom in cyberspace", of a "new kingdom", of a "transcendental virtual kingdom", "which will cure the present world's ills", while "history will be immured and reproduced in a virtual reality"¹⁸. There is a lot of talk about a "digital immortality", i.e. the simulation in the computer of all the neurons of the brain!

13. *Op.cit.*, p. 102.

14. *Op.cit.*, p. 103.

15. *Op.cit.*, p. 103.

16. *Op.cit.*, pp. 104-105.

17. *Op.cit.*, p. 107.

18. *Op.cit.*, pp. 108-111.

All this seems strange and impossible to become true. Yet, the experience so far confirms that the development of science and technology has no limits; many things could be realized, so scientists have to set limits, conditions and restrictions. Above all, the Orthodox theology of the Church must define the framework within which science, technology and man in general will move. Self-deification is the cause of the fall; the world's mistreatment and abuse leads to darkness of mind and death, and Babel's tower-making creates confusion in communication and shuts the unity among people.

That is why we should set the orthodox theological preconditions for using the scientific and technological discoveries and innovations, so that we do not end to a global Armageddon of which the *Revelation* of John the Evangelist bears witness¹⁹.

3. The Theological Discourse in Immaterialism and Materialism

The Prophets, Apostles and Fathers of the Church confronted the philosophical and religious currents of their time with the word of divine Revelation. Firstly, they experienced God and then they dealt theologically with the problems of each era.

This shows us that the contemporary currents must be treated theologically and not spasmodically, reflectionally, moralistically, or with empty slogans. It is in this context that the present Theological Conference is situated.

The question that arises is how we can articulate a theological discourse and what that discourse might be. Our discourse must be anti-metaphysical and transformative. I will content myself with a few remarks:

1. God molded the creation out of non-existent matter, from non-being. The idea, the matter, did not preexist; from them, God created the world. God is not simply the creator of the world, as a decorator, for this refers to a pre-existing unborn idea –according to metaphysics– and

19. *Rev.* 16, 16.

pre-existing eternal matter, but he is the architect of the creation. Apostle Paul speaks of creation, because the world was built out of non-pre-existent matter. Whereas for metaphysics the principle “in the beginning was the idea” («ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ἡ ἰδέα»), and for materialism the principle is “in the beginning was the matter” («ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ἡ ὕλη»), for the orthodox theology the principle is “in the beginning was the Word” («ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος»)²⁰ and “the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit creates everything” («ὁ Πατὴρ δι’ Υἱοῦ ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ ποιεῖ τὰ πάντα»).

Thus, the Son and Word of God appeared in the Old Testament as the *Lord of glory, the Angel of the Great Council*, and in the New Testament, *this Word*, the Lord of glory, became flesh, took on human nature, which He made divine “through assumption”. This is the founding stone of our faith revealed to us, and this truth is expressed in created verbs, meanings and images in all ages.

2. The uncreated and the created are dissimilar. The uncreated that belongs to God has not been built, while the created/built that belongs to all creation has a point from which it then began to exist. The uncreated has no beginning, it does not decay and end, while the created has a beginning, it decays and has an end. But God’s will that man should have no end, so he is by grace immortal.

God is uncreated in His essence and energies/actions, while creation is created in its essence and energies. This means that all of creation participates in God’s uncreated energy. St. Maximus the Confessor speaks of the reasons of beings that are God’s uncreated energies, also called «μικροὶ λόγοι», and all beings created by God participate in Him «ἡ κατὰ νοῦν, ἡ λόγον ἡ αἰσθησιν, ἡ κίνησιν ζωτικὴν, ἡ οὐσιώδη καὶ ἐκτικὴν ἐπιτηδειότητα»²¹.

St. Gregory Palamas teaches that God’s uncreated energy/action is only one, but it is mediated accordingly by the creation, so the uncreated energy receives different names according to its effects. Thus, the whole creation participates in God’s substance-giving energy; plants

20. John 1, 1.

21. Hier. Artemios Radosavljevic, *Τὸ μυστήριον τῆς σωτηρίας κατὰ τὸν ἅγιον Μάξιμον τὸν Ὁμολογητὴν*, Athens 1975, pp. 34-35, note 2.

and animals also participate in God's life-giving energy, because they have life in addition to substance; the man also participates in God's wisdom-giving energy, because he has substance and existence, life and intellectual gifts; and angels and saints also participate in God's holy-giving and deifying energy. With this theology we do not fall into the trap of agnosticism or pantheism²².

3. Throughout the biblical-patristic tradition, we find the word "man", not the phrase "human person". Thus, man is the summary of all creation, the microcosm within the macrocosm. God first created the mind spirits and then the reasonless entities. In the end, he created man, composed of mind and sense, soul and body, and indeed from both together (τὸ συναμφότερον). The soul did not preexist the body: "the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" («ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν»)²³.

Furthermore, man was created in the image and likeness of God («κατ' εἰκόνα καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν»). "In the image of God" is the mental and free-willed and "in the likeness of God" is *theosis* (deification), which is achieved through participation in God. St. Gregory the Theologian gives the following definition of man: «ζῶον ἐνταῦθα οἰκονομούμενον καὶ ἀλλαχοῦ μεθιστάμενον, καὶ πέρας τοῦ μυστηρίου, τῇ πρὸς Θεὸν νεύσει θεοούμενον»²⁴.

This is the mystery of man: his soul does not come from the world of ideas nor is it identified with matter; he was created by God to become deified by His grace and his own synergy.

4. The fall of man is not a fall from the world of ideas, but a falling away from God – this is called the darkening of the mind. Man has misused the world. Besides, according to St. Gregory the Theologian, the

22. Gregory Palamas, *Ἀντιρρητικός πρὸς Ἀκίνδυνον*, Λόγος Ε', Ἔργα 6, E.Π.Ε., Patristic Publications "Gregory Palamas", Thessaloniki 1987, pp. 298-300.

23. *Gen.* 4, 7.

24. Gregory the Theologian, Ἔργα 5, E.Π.Ε., Patristic Publications "Gregory Palamas", Thessaloniki 1977, pp. 54 and 164.

tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not evil, nor was it enviously forbidden; it was the deification, to which he would properly attain after due preparation²⁵.

The salvation of man is not an exit from the body, but his unity with the Christ's Body – the Church. Thus, we neither consider matter evil, nor we mechanically reject it, but through man's deification, creation is also sanctified.

Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, writes: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies" (*«ἡ γὰρ ἀποκαταδοκία τῆς κτίσεως τὴν ἀποκάλυψιν τῶν υἱῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀπεκδέχεται. τῇ γὰρ ματαιότητι ἡ κτίσις ὑπετάγη, οὐχ ἑκοῦσα, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸν ὑποτάξαντα, ἐπ' ἐλπίδι ὅτι καὶ αὐτὴ ἡ κτίσις ἐλευθερωθήσεται ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς εἰς τὴν ἐλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ Θεοῦ. οἶδαμεν γὰρ ὅτι πᾶσα ἡ κτίσις συστενάζει καὶ συνωδίνει ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν· οὐ μόνον δέ, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ τὴν ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ Πνεύματος ἔχοντες καὶ ἡμεῖς αὐτοὶ ἐν ἑαυτοῖς στενάζομεν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι, τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν τοῦ σώματος ἡμῶν»*)²⁶.

Man's salvation is not the liberation of the soul from the body and the removal of man from matter, so that he might turn into something metaphysical and mystical, but the psycho-physical unity with Christ. After all, Christ in His incarnation took on the whole human nature; the

25. The tree of knowledge *«οὔτε ἐντεῦθεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς κακῶς, οὔτε ἀπαγορευθὲν φθονερῶς ... ἀλλὰ καλὸν μὲν εὐκαίρως μεταλαμβάνόμενον (θεωρία γὰρ ἦν τὸ φυτόν, ὥς ἡ ἐμὲ θεωρία, ἧς μόνοις ἐπιβαίνειν ἀσφαλὲς τοῖς τὴν ἔξιν τελεωτέροις), οὐ καλὸν δὲ τοῖς ἀπλουστέροις...»* (op.cit., p. 56).

26. Rom. 8, 19-23.

divine and the human nature were united “unchangeably, unconfusedly, indivisibly, inseparably” («ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως»), according to the Horos of the Fourth Ecumenical Council²⁷; because of «τὸ ἀπρόσληπτον καὶ ἀθεράπευτον»²⁸, metaphysics was abolished. According to the biblical-patristic tradition, therefore, man’s salvation equates with his participation in God’s cathartic, enlightening and deifying energy, which constitutes the Orthodox Church’s basic presuppositions.

The entire ecclesiastical life is respect for creation, since man is deified, soul and body, and becomes the creation’s sanctification. In the Church, all creation is sanctified – water, light, chrism, colors, as it can be seen in the use of material elements in the Holy Sacraments and in the ecclesiastical arts, according to the words of St. John of Damascus: «σέβω οὖν τὴν ὕλην καὶ δι’ αἰδοῦς ἄγω καὶ προσκυνῶ, δι’ ἧς ἡ σωτηρία μου γέγονε, σέβω δὲ οὐχ ὡς θεόν, ἀλλ’ ὡς θείας ἐνεργείας καὶ χάριτος ἔμπλεων»²⁹.

5. God’s substance/essence and life-giving energy permeates all creation, both in the microcosm and the macrocosm.

As far as the microcosm is concerned, which belongs to the fields of Molecular Biology and Genetic Engineering, “many biologists and geneticists and those involved in so-called alternative therapies refer to *Vis Vitalis*, the vital energy or animal energy, as well as vitalists refer to etheric energy or bioenergy”³⁰.

Vitalism is a theory according to which “life and animal functions are the result of a special and immaterial force (*vis vitalis*, vital force) that is found and acts within organisms. *Vis vitalis* is both a biological and psychic force (psycho-vitalism), emanating from a psychic essence [...]. Some consider the vital force to be of divine origin, something implanted

27. Io. N. Karmiris, *Τὰ Δογματικά καὶ Συμβολικά μνημεῖα τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*, vol. I, Athens ²1960, p. 175.

28. Gregory the Theologian, *Ἔργα* 7, E.Π.Ε., Patristic Publications “Gregory Palamas”, Thessaloniki 1986, p. 182.

29. John of Damascus, *Ἔργα* 3, E.Π.Ε., Patristic Publications “Gregory Palamas”, Thessaloniki 1990, p. 134.

30. Ath. Avramidis, «Ἐναλλακτικαὶ ἢ συμπληρωματικαὶ ἢ ἀναπληρωματικαὶ θεραπευτικαί», *Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος/Orthodoxos Typos*, December 9, 2005.

in organisms by a transcendental vital principle, which is none other than God (transcendental vitalism). Vitalism is essentially “a kind of biological idealism, since it speaks of non-material and non-physical biological forces that serve certain purposes, are moved teleologically and have been placed in organisms by a God. Vitalism was meant to protect us from the biological materialism”³¹.

Generally speaking, many biologists and geneticists who espoused agnosticism or deism, speak of a vital force and energy (*vis vitalis*) that exists within the organism, but also in the entire creation, which “is not a property of inorganic matter, nor the result of mechanical or chemical changes”. According to them, the phenomenon of life is due to this vital energy³².

As it has been mentioned above, for the Orthodox theology, in creation there is no place for vitalism, bio-energy, or “biological idealism”; God’s uncreated energy substantiates and animates creation.

As far as the macrocosm is concerned, which is connected with the universe –the sun, the stars, the galaxies–, the theological discourse refers to the God’s creative energy and praises Him for it, according to the words of the Psalmist: “as thy works are great, O Lord; thou hast wrought all things in wisdom” («ὥς ἐμεγαλύνθη τὰ ἔργα σου, Κύριε· πάντα ἐν σοφίᾳ ἐποίησας»)³³. Even if beings are found on other planets, orthodox theology will be interested in ascertaining whether they possess of mental energy and have selfless love. Orthodox theology is primarily interested in these qualities; the same goes for the Orthodox theologian, who is unaffected by the theories of Western theology about the creation of the world, the fall and salvation.

Fr. Ioannis Romanides wrote that “for the Orthodox, the discovery of intelligent life on another planet would raise the question of how advanced these beings are in loving each other and prepared for the divine glory”³⁴.

31. S. Gikas, *Νέο Φιλοσοφικὸ Λεξικό*, *op.cit.*, p. 79.

32. Ierotheos, Metr. of Nafpaktos & Hagios Vlassios, *Φεγγοβόλες ἀστραπές, μικρὸ πανόραμα τῆς ὀρθοδόξου θεολογίας*, Holy Monastery of Genethlion of Theotokos (Pelagias) Publications, n.p. 2022, pp. 276-277.

33. *Psalm*. 103, 24.

34. F. Io. Romanides, *Θεολογικὲς Μελέτες, Ἐπιστημονικὲς ἐρευνητικὲς ἐργασίες κυ-*

4. Single and Dual Knowledge Methodology

Earlier, in the second section of this paper, we noted, among other things: “In another article, we have argued that the term *Artificial Intelligence* should be understood or replaced by the term *Artificial Genius / Intellect*, in order to avoid identifying the two different energies of the soul – the logical and the mental one.

Indeed, in the paper in question we argued that “according to our tradition, mind –the mental energy–, is diachronically perceived as being different from the logical energy, the intelligence, or the human intellect, since one thing is man’s mental energy and quite another his logical energy”. Thus, “according to the entire patristic tradition, there exists a dual methodology: firstly, we have the methodology of observation and thinking executed with the intellect-brain; secondly, the methodology connected with the knowledge of God, executed by the mind. The identification of the two methodologies paved the way for the scholastic theology that created many problems in the Western world.

This is the reason why, apart from our reservations regarding the consequences of so-called ‘Artificial Intelligence’, we think that the term ‘Artificial Genius/Intellect’ should prevail over ‘Artificial Intelligence’. In this way, we will avoid the deification of these systems”³⁵.

Nevertheless, we need to further analyze this serious theological issue.

a) Mind and Reason / Word – Intellect

The ecclesiastical patristic tradition distinguishes between mind and reason, i.e. mental and logical energy. Here, we will limit ourselves to a few remarks, without exhausting the treatment of the subject.

In the Bible there are references to the man’s mind. Although the terminology had not yet been clarified and distinguished, it is nevertheless clear that the mind is not completely identical with reason; rather, it is connected with the heart, in the biblical sense of the term, as the center

ρίως της περιόδου 1954-1970, transl. (Greek) An. Filippidis, Holy Monastery of Genetikhion of Theotokos (Pelagias) Publications, 2024, p. 470.

35. Metr. of Nafpaktos & Hagios Vlassios, «Ἡ Τεχνιτὴ Νοημοσύνη ὡς Τεχνιτὴ Εὐφυΐα», op.cit.

of man's existence. Thus, the Evangelist Luke writes: "Then he [Christ] opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures" («Τότε [ὁ Χριστός] διήνοιξεν αὐτῶν τὸν νοῦν τοῦ συνιέναι τὰς γραφάς»)³⁶. Obviously, here we are not dealing with the "opening" of reason / intellect.

The Apostle Paul uses the word mind to express some power of man, which is different from the rational intellect: "Who has known the mind of the Lord?" («Τίς γὰρ ἔγνω νοῦν Κυρίου;»)³⁷. "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" («Τίς γὰρ ἔγνω νοῦν Κυρίου, ὃς συμβιβάζει αὐτόν; ἡμεῖς δὲ νοῦν Χριστοῦ ἔχομεν»)³⁸. In another context, Paul writes: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" («καὶ μὴ συσχηματίζεσθαι τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ, ἀλλὰ μεταμορφοῦσθε τῇ ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοός...»)³⁹.

Elsewhere, the Apostle Paul speaks of the "futility of the mind" («ματαιότητα τοῦ νοός»), the "darkening of the understanding," and the "hardness of heart" («πώρωσιν τῆς καρδίας») – that is, he refers to mind, understanding, and heart⁴⁰.

Of course, the Fathers of the Church further elucidated this terminology: with the fall of man came "the darkening of the mind", not that of the intellect; after his fall, the intellect still functions in relation to the environment, yet the mind was left to function properly or to under-function and partake of the glory of God. That is why baptism enlightens the mind, not the intellect, and those baptized are characterized as enlightened as to the mind.

Saint John of Damascus clarifies the difference between mind and intellect. He writes that God created the "mental substance", («νοητὴν οὐσίαν»), i.e. the angels; then, he created the sensible world and finally he created man by combining the sensible and the mental "from the visible and invisible nature" («ἐξ ὁρατῆς τε καὶ ἀοράτου φύσεως»). He created the body from the earth, «ψυχὴν δὲ λογικὴν καὶ νοερὰν διὰ

36. Luke 24, 45.

37. Rom. 11, 34.

38. 1 Cor. 2, 16.

39. Rom. 12, 2.

40. Eph. 4, 17-18.

τοῦ οἰκείου ἐμφυσηματος δοὺς αὐτῷ, ὅπερ δὴ θεϊὰν εἰκόνα φαμέν»⁴¹.

Referring to the incarnation of the Son and Word of God, St. John of Damascus writes that Christ received from the pure and pure blood of the Holy Virgin «σάρκα ἐμψυχωμένην ψυχῇ τε λογικῇ τε καὶ νοερᾷ, ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ ἡμετέρου φυράματος»⁴². The Son and Word of God «πάντα ἀνέλαβε, σῶμα, ψυχὴν νοερὰν καὶ λογικὴν καὶ τὰ τούτων ιδιώματα (τὸ γὰρ ἐνὸς τούτων ἀμοιροῦν ζῶον οὐκ ἄνθρωπος)· ὅλον γὰρ ὅλος ἀνέλαβέ με, καὶ ὅλος ὅλῳ ἠνώθη, ἵνα ὅλῳ τὴν σωτηρίαν χαρίσῃται· “τὸ γὰρ ἀπρόσληπτον ἀθεράπευτον”»⁴³.

It is obvious that the soul has mental and rational energy, and indeed the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in Christ did not take place in the realm of reason, but that of the mind: «Χωρίον ὁ νοῦς γέγονε τῆς καθ’ ὑπόστασιν αὐτῷ ἠνωμένης θεότητος»⁴⁴.

The experiential Fathers divided the verb «διανοοῦμαι» (“thing of”) into two words: *διάνοια* (*intellect*) and *νοῦς* (*mind*): they understood that the mind, which in its natural state acts in the heart, is different from the intellect that acts in the brain⁴⁵. It seems that Saint Macarius of Egypt was the first to make this clarification. He writes that Christians are different from all the other men because «ἐν τῷ τὸν νοῦν καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν πάντοτε ἐν τῷ οὐρανίῳ φρονήματι τυγχάνειν...»⁴⁶.

Saint Maximus the Confessor makes a distinction between mind and word when he writes: «Νοῦς μὲν καθαρός, ὁρθὰ βλέπει τὰ πράγματα, Λόγος δὲ γεγυμνασμένος, ὑπ’ ὅψιν ἄγει τὰ ὁραθέντα»⁴⁷.

St. Gregory Palamas clearly speaks of how the mind exits the body into the environment and how the hesychasts introduce the mind into the inner man – and this is described as *sabbatism*. In fact, he speaks of

41. John of Damascus, *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβοῦς τῆς ὀρθοδόξου πίστεως*, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 1976, pp. 148-149.

42. *Op.cit.*, pp. 212-214.

43. *Op.cit.*, pp. 230-232.

44. *Op.cit.*, p. 232.

45. f. Io. Romanides, *Πατερικὴ Θεολογία*, Parakatathiki Publications, Thessaloniki 2004, p. 19.

46. Macarius of Egypt, *Φιλοκαλία τῶν νηπτικῶν καὶ ἀσκητικῶν*, Patristic Publications “Gregory Palamas”, Thessaloniki 1985, p. 100.

47. *Φιλοκαλία*, v. II, Papadimitriou Publications, p. 48, σγ’.

the attentive mind: «Τοῦτο δ' ἴδοι τις ἂν καὶ αὐτομάτως ἐπόμενον τῇ προσοχῇ τοῦ νοῦ»⁴⁸.

Throughout the patristic and hesychast tradition, we can observe the distinction between mind, reason, intellect and heart⁴⁹.

According to Fr. John Romanides, the Fathers of the Church consider the fall as a darkening of the mind of Adam and his descendants. Thus, they differ from the views St. Augustine and the Western tradition hold, that Adam's intellect directly contemplated the ostensibly uncreated, "taken as a whole", or the species in the divine substance, and therefore he possessed full knowledge of the created beings in the uncreated substance and source or their reasoning. "In view of the modern science's astonishing progress, it would be difficult to support this view", because it presents man's intellect as being limitless in its ability to discover and know the mysteries of the universe.

"According to the Fathers, it is unusual for the mind to be identified with the intellect or reason, i.e. rationality; rather, it is a distinct and different action of the soul which has been rendered inefficacious by its confusion with the intellect and its enslavement to the intellect, the passions and the body".

The purpose of man is: "1) to dwell in the Holy Spirit completely free from the intellect's thoughts, emanating from the senses and the passions of the bodily environment, and 2) on the contrary, to illuminate the intellect, the soul's senses, the passions, and even the environment without the mind being influenced by anything else except Christ's blessing in the Holy Spirit".

Then, he argues that it is necessary to separate the mind from the intellect, as it is also possible for the mind to come under the demonic influence, starting to function abnormally, but also to act under the Holy Spirit unbound from demonic energies, united with Christ.

Yet, for someone to be "grace-endowed and god-inspired, does not mean that he or she acquires an unmistakable knowledge of the created

48. Gregory Palamas, *Ἔργα* 2, E.II.E., Patristic Publications "Gregory Palamas", Thessaloniki 1982, p. 132.

49. See Ierotheos, Metr. of Nafpaktos & Hagios Vlassios, *Ὁρθόδοξη Ψυχοθεραπεία*, Holy Monastery of Genethlion of Theotokos (Pelagias) Publications, n.p. 2014, p. 117 ff.

truth in its scientific details, but only of its relation and dependence on uncreated truth”.

Thus, “the one who is found in theory deified and God-inspired does not become an infallible philosopher or scientist, but an infallible theologian. He speaks of God without erring, but he does not become infallible in relation to the structure and mysteries of the universe. He knows the reasoning of beings by blessing, but not the essence and nature of beings”⁵⁰.

These remarks are noteworthy because they establish the distinction between theology and science, but also between “Artificial Intelligence” –the work of the intellect, concerned with science–, and mental energy, which is the basis of empirical theology.

b) Purification, Illumination, Deification

Throughout the biblical-patristic tradition, there is extensive talk of purification of the mind-heart, illumination of the mind, and deification. These are the steps of the spiritual life; in reality, though, it means that human beings in every period of their lives, proportionally participate in the grace of God. When the energy of God cleanses the mind and heart of man, it is called cathartic, when it illuminates the mind, it is called illuminating, and when it deifies him with the irradiation of Light it is called theoptic. Therefore, it is not a matter of impermeable stages, but of a proportionate measure of God’s uncreated grace.

Certain modern theologians deny the theories of purification, illumination and deification, because –according to them– these are Neoplatonic influences and are out of step with the ancient ecclesiastical tradition. However, according to Neoplatonism, the salvation of the soul means its exodus from the body and its return to the source from which it came, the Supreme Being. This is achieved through “theurgy”: the soul is purified from the stigmata caused by the material body, and illumination is to know the archetypes of beings⁵¹.

50. Io. Romanides, «Κριτικὸς ἔλεγχος τῶν ἐφαρμογῶν τῆς θεολογίας», in: *Χαριστήρια εἰς τιμὴν τοῦ Μητροπολίτου Γέροντος Χαλκηδόνος Μελίτωνος*, Patriarchikon Idryma Paterikon Meleton Publications, Thessaloniki 1976, pp. 501-503.

51. Th. Pelegrinis, *Νεοπλατωνισμός*, Hellenika Grammata Publications, Athens 2003.

However, according to the ecclesiastical tradition, although the words catharsis / purification, illumination, deification are used, their meaning is completely different. Purification is the transformation of the powers of the soul, illumination is the mental prayer in which man participates body and soul, and perfection or *theosis* is the vision of God in the light, without the soul being released from the body.

Expiations can also be found in the Old Testament, expressed by purifications through sprinkling, washing with water and anointing with oil. Famous are the verses from David 50th Psalm: "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow" («Ραντιεῖς με ὑσσώπῳ καὶ καθαρισθήσομαι, πλυνεῖς με καὶ ὑπὲρ χιόνα λευκανθήσομαι»)⁵².

Christ spoke of the heart's purification: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" («Μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν Θεὸν ὄψονται»)⁵³. Likewise, in Paul's Epistles: "Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" («Καθαρίσωμεν ἑαυτοὺς ἀπὸ παντὸς μολυσμοῦ σαρκὸς καὶ πνεύματος, ἐπιτελοῦντες ἀγιωσύνην ἐν φόβῳ Θεοῦ»)⁵⁴; "How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" («τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ ... καθαριεῖ τὴν συνείδησιν ὑμῶν ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων εἰς τὸ λατρεύειν Θεῷ ζῶντι»)⁵⁵.

Christ also said: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" ⁵⁶. Apostle Paul has written more than once about the light that will illuminate people. "When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" («Ὅταν ὁ Χριστὸς φανερωθῇ, ἡ ζωὴ ἡμῶν, τότε καὶ ὑμεῖς σὺν αὐτῷ φανερωθήσεσθε ἐν δόξῃ»)⁵⁷.

52. *Psalms* 50, 9.

53. *Matth.* 5, 8.

54. *2 Cor.* 7, 1.

55. *Hebr.* 9, 14.

56. *John* 8, 12.

57. *Col.* 3, 4.

It is obvious that the illumination of the mind, of the heart, is participation in God's uncreated Light. The Church Fathers should be viewed within this context; they speak of purification of the mind-heart, illumination of the mind, deification (theosis)-God's vision.

St. Dionysius Areopagite speaks of purification, illumination, perfection. «Νῦν δὲ τὴν ἱερατικὴν διακόσμησιν ἐξῆς ἀφηγητέον, εἰς καθαρτικὴν καὶ φωτιστικὴν καὶ τελειώσιν εὐταξίαν διαιρουμένην»⁵⁸.

St. Gregory the Theologian says: «Οὐδὲ κάθαρσις, ἔλλαμψις· ἔλλαμψις δέ, πόθου πλήρωσις τοῖς τῶν μεγίστων, ἢ τοῦ μεγίστου ἢ ὑπὲρ τὸ μέγα ἐφιεμένους». «Διὰ τοῦτο καθαρτέον ἑαυτὸν πρῶτον, εἶτα τῷ καθαρῷ προσομιλητέον»⁵⁹. «Καθαρθῆναι δεῖ πρῶτον, εἶτα καθᾶραι σοφισθῆναι, καὶ οὕτω σοφίσαι γενέσθαι φῶς, καὶ φωτίσαι ἐγγίσαι Θεῷ, καὶ προσαγαγεῖν ἄλλους· ἁγιασθῆναι, καὶ ἁγιάσαι, χειραγωγῆσαι μετὰ χειρῶν, συμβουλευῶσαι μετὰ συνέσεως»⁶⁰.

Saint Maximus the Confessor speaks of three levels of spiritual life: "practical philosophy-purification, "natural theory-illumination, "mystical theology-deification"⁶¹.

St Symeon the New Theologian speaks about «κεφάλαια πρακτικά, καὶ θεολογικά»⁶².

St. Gregory Palamas writes about «κεφάλαια ἑκατὸν πεντήκοντα φυσικά καὶ θεολογικά, ἠθικά τε καὶ πρακτικά»⁶³.

Saint Nicodemus of the Mount Aghos, who together with Saint Makarios of Corinth (Michael Notaras) compiled the *Philokalia*, gave the following title: «Φιλοκαλία τῶν ἱερῶν Νηπτικῶν ... ἐν ᾗ διὰ τῆς κατὰ τὴν προᾶξιν καὶ θεωρίαν ἠθικῆς φιλοσοφίας ὁ νοῦς καθαίρεται, φωτίζεται καὶ τελειοῦται»⁶⁴.

58. Dionysius Areopagite, *Φιλοκαλία τῶν νηπτικῶν καὶ ἀσκητικῶν*, E.P.E., Patristic Publications "Gregory Palamas", Thessaloniki 1986, p. 420.

59. Gregory the Theologian, *Ἔργα* 5, *op.cit.*, pp. 84-86.

60. Gregory the Theologian, *Ἔργα* 10, E.P.E., Patristic Publications "Gregory Palamas", Thessaloniki 1986, p. 164.

61. Βλ. Hier. Artemios Radosavljevic, *Τὸ μυστήριον τῆς σωτηρίας...*, *op.cit.*, pp. 115-179.

62. Syméon le Nouveau Théologien, *Chapitres théologiques, gnostiques et pratiques*, J. Darrouzès – L. Neyrand (eds), Paris, SC 51, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris 1980.

63. Gregory Palamas, *Ἔργα* 8, E.P.E., Patristic Publications "Gregory Palamas", Thessaloniki 1994, p. 73 ff.

64. *Φιλοκαλία τῶν Ἱερῶν Νηπτικῶν*, Papadimitriou Publications, Athens 1957.

It is obvious that theology as the knowledge of God is participation in His uncreated energy as purification, illumination and deification; the contemplative or scholastic theology springs from it.

c) Hesychast and Scholastic Theology

Orthodox theology is hesychast; it is based on stillness / rest, i.e. the participation in God's purifying, illuminating and God-created energy. The holy hesychasm was established as consensus patrum in the hesychastic Councils of the 14th century, notably the Council of 1351, considered to be the Thirteenth Ecumenical Council – undoubtedly so.

All of Christ's discourses refer to holy stillness; it suffices to mention here that Christ hinted at hesychia by retiring to the mountain to pray. The same can be seen in the Epistles of the Holy Apostles. It is enough to refer to the Paul's word on sabbatism: "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; [...] Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest"⁶⁵.

St Gregory the Theologian, giving the definition of the theologian, writes: «Οὐ παντός, ὃ οὔτοι, τὸ περὶ Θεοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν [θεολογεῖν], οὐ παντός [...] ὅτι τῶν ἐξητασμένων καὶ διαβεβηκότων ἐν θεωρίᾳ καὶ πρὸς τοῦτων καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ σῶμα κεκαθαρμένων τὸ μετριώτατον [...] δεῖ γὰρ τῷ ὄντι σχολᾶσαι, καὶ γινῶναι Θεόν»⁶⁶.

This means that orthodox theology is a revelation of God given to the one who rests, remains still, lives the holy hesychasm, by purifying and illuminating his mind.

Saint Gregory Palamas defines what holy hesychia [stillness, rest] means: «*Ἡσυχίαν τὴν νοῦ καὶ κόσμου στάσιν, τὴν λήθην τῶν κάτω, τὴν μύησιν τῶν ἄνω, τὴν τῶν νοημάτων ἐπὶ τὸ κρεῖττον ἀπόθεσιν αὐτῇ προᾶξις ὡς ἀληθῶς, ἐπίβασις τῆς ὡς ἀληθῶς θεωρίας ἢ θεοπτίας, εἰπεῖν οἰκειότερον, ἢ μόνῃ δεῖγμα τῆς ὡς ἀληθῶς εὐεκτούσης ψυχῆς*». Hesychia is the medium through which «*θεοποιεῖται ὁ ἄνθρωπος, οὐ τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν λόγων ἢ τῆς τῶν ὀρωμένων στοχαστικῆς ἀναλογίας, ἅπαγε (χαμαῖζηλος γὰρ αὕτη καὶ ἀνθρωπίνη), ἀλλὰ τῆς ἀπὸ τῆς καθ'*

65. *Hebr.* 4, 9-11.

66. Gregory the Theologian, *Ἔργα* 4, E.II.E., Patristic Publications "Gregory Palamas", Thessaloniki 1976, p. 14.

ἡσυχίαν ἀγωγῆς»⁶⁷.

There is a difference between “hesychast theology” and “contemplative analogy”. The first is the orthodox patristic theology, the second one is the western-scholastic– theology.

Regarding the content of faith, the scholastic theology resorted to the “methodical use of logic and systematization in closely structured units”. “Theology basically adopted the methods of the secular sciences, and the scholastics accepted that the theology’s object of knowledge had the same characteristics as the other sciences’ objects of knowledge”. Thus, an “extreme rationalism” also prevailed in theology. Therefore, “scholastic methodology is uniform. In other words, theology’s object of knowledge is an integral part of the created reality”⁶⁸.

On the contrary, the Orthodox hesychast theology of the Church Fathers does not use a methodology covering both created reality and the knowledge of God; instead, it adopts a “dual theological methodology”: the first one is the method of knowing God through the pure mind; the second one is the method of knowing created things through reason and rational discourse⁶⁹.

Therefore, the distinction between mind and reason is crucial for Orthodox theology.

St. Gregory Palamas writes that in man, the mind and the senses were combined into one by the higher wisdom that mixed the two qualities that are in principle unmixed; the link between these two extremes is imagination, opinion/notion (doxa) and intellect. From perception, the cognitive activity through which we perceive the sensible objects, comes imagination, from the latter comes opinion, while intellect is rational and proceeds by degrees, ending to opinion/notion. Despite the fact that all these four energies (perception, imagination, doxa, intellect) are constituted and act having as their first organ the psychic spirit in the brain: «νοῦ δὲ ὄργανον οὐδὲν ἐστίν, ἀλλ’ αὐτοτελής ἐστίν οὐσία

67. Γρηγορίου Παλαμά, *Ἔργα* 11, E.P.E., Patristic Publications “Gregory Palamas”, Thessaloniki 1986, p. 328.

68. N. Matsoukas, *Δογματική καὶ Συμβολική Θεολογία Α΄, Εἰσαγωγή στὴν θεολογικὴ γνωσιολογία*, P. Pournaras Publications, Thessaloniki 2009, pp. 150-154.

69. *Op.cit.*, p. 137 ff.

καὶ καθ’ ἑαυτὴν οὐσα ἐνεργητική», although it descends itself to the psychic life developing under the aegis of the intellect⁷⁰.

Therefore, with the mind, which is independent from the soul’s other powers, man acquires knowledge of God, and with perception, imagination, notion/opinion and intellect he acquires human knowledge – that of the objects of the environment. This difference between patristic methodology and scientific methodology can be seen in the book by George Panagopoulos: *Introduction to the History of Western Theology*⁷¹.

The conclusion is that the mind of first humans, Adam and Eve, was illuminated; they were able to behold God and their intellect communicated with the created world. When their minds were identified with the intellect and passions, they darkened; they were enslaved to reason, passions and the environment.

The creation was given by God as a gift to man; at the same time, it became the object of the devil’s deception, with man’s decision, while it should be offered as thanksgiving to God, and a return– gift to God and men. The Son and Word of God, by His incarnation, received human nature, He deified it and sanctified all creation. God’s actions in creation can elevate man when he makes good use of them; especially when the mind experiences God and the intellect-reason is engaged with the created world. Thus, the dual methodology of knowledge is applied.

This means that theological discourse balances between the two extremes, i.e. between “immaterial reality”-metaphysics and materialism, and this is what our age needs.

70. Gregory Palamas, *Ἔργα* 11, *op.cit.*, pp. 332-334.

71. G. Panagopoulos, *Εἰσαγωγή στὴν ἱστορία τῆς δυτικῆς θεολογίας*, Enallaktikes Publications, Athens 2011.