



УДК 271.2-1:81

271.2-1:111

27-1 Псеудо-Дионисије Ареопагит

DOI: 10.5937/sabornost2014067P

Оригинални научни рад

Predrag Petrović*

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Belgrade

Cosmological Aspects of Unity of the Affirmative (*Kataphatic*) and Negative (*Apophatic*) Theological Perspective

Abstract: Expressions of an affirmative and negative semantic determination are the basis of human linguistic communication. In order to communicate with one another, we must use true statements. We call true statements all those statements whose meaning is agreed upon by a large number of people. Each true statement consists of affirmative or negative statements, or both affirmative and negative statements. There are two ways of expression in the theological literature of theurgy, divine designation, and the many-faceted aspects of divine knowledge. The first way of expression is affirmative or cataphatic (gr. καταφατική), and the second one is negative or apophatic (gr. ἀποφατική). Although theological literature is full of problematic topics related to various aspects of affirmative and negative theological statements, we believe that for the sake of their fuller coverage it is necessary to include cosmological aspects in the discussion, since the cosmological dimension of existence is revealed as one of the basic assumptions of the theological problem of divine designation, which we find and in the theological tradition of the divine Dionysius the Areopagite. Finally, this theological aspect in contemporary theological studies of the various dimensions of affirmative and negative theology is particularly insufficient when considering its significance for the daily Christian life.

Key words: statement, affirmative (cataphatic), negative (apophatic), creation, opposites, unity, transcendent.

1. Introduction

The widely accepted view that affirmative and negative theology represents in fact two methods, not only of theology but also of divine knowledge, gives rise to certain theological doubts. The creation of the world is, in a way, the starting point against which both affirmative and negative divine designation have their basic sense (Ανδρούτσος, 1992, 47), so that the divine attributes are distinguished precisely on the basis of the receptivity of individual beings for

* ppetrovic@bfspc.bg.ac.rs

communion with God. However, the naming of God as well as the naming of divine attributes on the basis of affirmative or negative true statements¹ they are often understood as semantic phenomena but also as theological “methods” of divine knowledge. The writings of Dionysius the Areopagite, a disciple of the Apostle Paul, play a key role in this “division” of theology into the affirmative and the negative², but Androutsou ascribes said “division” to the scholastic teaching about *via negativa* and *via affirmationis*, that is, *via eminentiae* (in the context of correction and fulfillment of *via affirmationis*), calling them “sources of divine knowledge” (Ἀνδρούτσος, 1992, 47–48). Matsoukas, on the other hand, refers to ontology as the basis of the divine knowledge (Ματσούκας, 2000, 203), so in this context we are asked two questions in their broadest sense: are affirmative and negative theologies in themselves “sources of divine knowledge”, and what is the essential meaning of affirmative and negative statements in the context of their cosmological perspective from which we recognize the meaning of the final theological formation of the fundamental truths of the Christian faith?

2. Basic aspects of affirmative and negative theological testimony

Affirmative and negative statements (as binary oppositions; as conceptual pairs) in everyday life point to opposites: the adjective ‘good’ is opposite to the adjective ‘bad’; ‘warm’ is the opposite of ‘cold’; ‘pretty’ is opposed to ‘ugly’, etc. The meanings of affirmative statements are confronted with statements denoting the negativity of a qualitatively different reality, and both statements (of one conceptual pair) do not have the same value but are asymmetrical: “The hierarchical relationship that exists between the two segments of the opposition places one concept as original and central, while the other is derivative and marginal” (Lindhoff, 1995, 97). However, the Orthodox Christian tradition carries within a different sense of affirmative and negative statements, which places us in a gnoseological plane from which we differently approach the realities marked by these terms. Finally, there is the issue of designation in general, and therefore of divine designation, that is, of the true foundation, origin and meaning of theological statements.

The affirmative theological statements are most often associated with all those revelations of divine existence, that is, the theurgies³ in relation to the visible, clear to the senses, that is, undoubtedly observable external movements

¹ For example, “God is good,” or “God is invisible.”

² We do not use the name Pseudo-Dionysius in our text, but we use Dionysius the Areopagite because the writer of these very important scriptures is also recognized by the Church under this name so we do not deal with the issue of the authenticity of personality in this paper, which we will refer to hereafter in several places. The research focus is primarily on the importance of certain elements of his theology within the topic we are dealing with.

³ This term used by Dionysius denotes divine actions. The word itself is composed of the word θεός (God) and the word ἔργον (deed), and it gives meaning to the specific deeds that God has done in history.

and the rest (appearance) of beings and things. On the other hand, negative of theological expressions would refer to theurgies in relation to the internal manifestations of beings who in the process of grasping the knowledge need to negate the (affirmative) divine attributes. By its semantic purpose denial involves the negation of the qualities of animate and inanimate matter that are clear to the senses, that is, of all visible movements and stillness of matter and presentation of the outside world observable by the senses, since God has largely overcome His creation with his mode of existence. In this sense, something that was first an affirmative or positive statement is “negated in another statement” (Tomasic, 1988, 364). Denial refers not only to the negation of the qualities of visible beings and things, but also to the negation of the divine being itself. Thus, for example, Dionysius the Areopagite also calls God *a non-being* (μὴ ὄν, Διονύσιος, PG 3, 588B), seeking to draw a clear ontological boundary, or rather, an ontological difference between the incomparable modes of Creators being and his creation. Many authors find the affirmative and negative variants of theology, i.e., divine knowledge, whereby we must bear in mind that these are not unambiguous concepts of cataphatics and apophaticism⁴. However, we believe that insisting on apophaticism as a ‘method’ of divine knowledge in the context of man’s individual intellectual attainment is a kind of common denominator encountered by many authors in related issues. In this sense, there is a certain discomfort regarding apophatic theology among theologians and philosophers of religion who show analytical sensibility⁵. Even when it comes to the ecclesiological aspects of apophatic theology, it consciously or unconsciously projects itself as an individual’s speculative activity. Thus, for example, whilst sublimating the meaning of affirmative and negative theology, Florovsky says:

“God can be understood and described twofold: through clear and decisive opposing the world, which means denying all the expressions and definitions that refer to Him, which fit and are appropriate to the matter, meaning to each and everyone, or through the elevation of all determinations that apply to the matter, and again, to everything and everyone. Hence, there are two paths of divine knowledge and theology: the path of confirmatory or cataphatic theology, and the path of negative or apophatic theology. The apophatic path is more exalted; only it leads to the inaccessible Light that is revealed to the creation as divine specimen. The path of opposing God to the world requires renunciation. It is impossible to say anything affirmative about God, because every affirmation is partial and therefore limited” (Florovsky, 2009, 246).

In Florovsky’s view, the apophatic path would be a more complete method of divine knowledge, which, he says, “leads to the inaccessible Light.” It gives the impression that the apophatic path is ‘less’ limited in contrast to the affirmative one, but also that the negative expressions form a kind of ‘control’ of

⁴ For more information on the ambiguity of theological statements in the context of worship, see Petrović, 2018, 45–165.

⁵ See Yadav, 2016, p. 17.

the affirmative expressions (Toroczkai, 2017, 45). Lossky also spoke of oneness with God on the basis of the Lord's theurgies, whereby God always remains incomprehensible (Lossky, 1976, 39). In other words, oneness with God does not exhaust the fullness of the divine being, so that God by nature remains always incomprehensible to man's limited powers of knowledge. Inexpressiveness as one of the apophatic divine qualities is also understood as a kind of doctrine that "transforms the theologian into a communion with God" (Yadav, 2016, 40), which certainly has as its starting point the individual achievement of communion with God as the basic task and requirement of the apophaticism thus understood. In this sense, the term "truth-bearer" (Yadav, 2016, 19) first shows the atomistic perspective of divine knowledge, which we can classify as "experiential apophatic mysticism" (Yadav, 2016, 31).

The meaning and significance of the negative divine naming certainly contains many separate gnoseological aspects relevant to the individual existence of beings and things. We do insist, however, on the fact that all individual truths of existence must have not only a common denominator, but also a common origin in the Secret of the Incarnation of the Only Begotten, who is "full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14). Insofar, as the center of gravity of the negative naming by God, it must first have a higher common denominator with affirmative divine naming.

3. The way of existence as mystagogy of affirmative and negative theology

In order to understand deeper meanings of affirmative and negative theology in the context of the problem of divine knowledge, we shall first focus on the gnoseological assumptions of affirmative and negative statements. True affirmative testimony points to our judgment or to reasoning that can be understood either as absolute or as relative. If we say, "God is good," anyone who believes in God will agree with such affirmation. This statement can be characterized as absolute until one raises the issue of the closer meaning of the attribute 'good'. Because the experience of 'good' it is not identical with every human, divine 'good' in this particular case is identified with the measure of the emanating God's 'good', i.e., with the measure directly recognised by the realistic communion with the divine good. A person's limited communion with the divine good cannot encompass the whole goodness of God and make proper affirmative reasoning absolute. For the same reason, every affirmative attribute that is attributable to God cannot have an absolute meaning⁶.

An identical approach to man's judgments and reasoning is also found in the example of renunciation of theology. There are several reasons why the Holy Fathers resorted to renouncing worship and theurgies. If we say, "God is

⁶ In our daily lives, we have many examples of the use of affirmative and negative statements that we believe to be absolute, although any deeper analysis may, or must, relativize their absolute meaning. The same is true of the events that, although unique in their incidental nature, have multiple eyewitness accounts of them in different ways.

incomprehensible” the first thing we think of are all the limitations of man’s natural way of knowing, that is, our *not being able to grasp* God due to our limited way of knowing. Therefore, the question arises, do the affirmations and the denials reflect the essence and the final meaning of the language of theology?

Most authors try to look at the problem of affirmative and renunciation theology from the perspective of affirmative vocabulary based on the fact that God is describable based on the creation He has created. God is, therefore, “to some extent accessible to man’s perception and verbal formulation.” (Lees, 1981, 100). From this perspective, “the use of positive terminology in relation to God in the Dionysian body has such a basis in theology” (Lees, 1981, 99). Contrary to affirmative vocabulary, negative vocabulary would be based on the denying any affirmative identification of created beings with God, revealing that what is hidden as a self-referential contradiction, such as the apophatic paradox of ineffability which, although an apophatic notion, still points to the being (Alston, 1956, 509). It is expected in this context that divine transcendence as the controlling factor (Lees, 1981, 104) also remains above all affirmation and every negation of divine attributes.

However, such “terminological” perspectives on affirmative and negative theology prove insufficient when our gnoseological orientation is maintained in the focus of realistic historical theurgies. We notice, namely, that through the way of existence of all multitude of created beings and things God *talks* to people in his creative, sustainable and perfection-making *addressings*. In other words, God is reviving *the language of creation*, which, in a seemingly paradoxical way, affirms precisely the negative aspects of the existence of being. If we tend to look at Dionysius’s writings through the prism of finished Christianised Neoplatonist teachings on The One and his attributes, then Dionysius’s tradition about unity of affirmative and negative theological expressions remains completely non-binding. Although he conveys to us a theological tradition whereby God’s mode of existence will invariably transcend every created being, Dionysius also points to theological horizons based on the real historical theurgies that set theological statements absolutely binding. Persistent insistence on the terminology of Dionysius’ theology gives the impression of Dionysius’ sophistic discipline of mind, by which we attribute names and attributes to God based on our own logic. We are free to say the opposite: Dionysius has a completely opposite intention, and it is reflected in his insistence on a real communicating to divine actions in which seemingly opposing affirmative and negative expressions and statements become reconciled in what we would identify as a concrete *mode of existence!*

4. A natural way of seeing the unity of affirmative and negative statements

The most common problem we are discussing here is the possibility of a different view of the problem *affirmative* and *negative*. As mentioned before, in secular life we are used to utilising the logic of opposites when it comes to binary

oppositions: good-bad, warm-cold, pretty-ugly, etc. Our mind clearly separates every notion from its opposite, so on the same basis, the visible is the opposite of the invisible, the cognitive to the incomprehensible, the communicant to incommunicant, etc. Should we, however, be exclusive in determining the definitive limit of semantically conflicting terms? In other words, would affirmative and negative statements have to point solely to opposites, or could we perceive the unities of these, (habitually) logical opposites from a different plane?

Man's natural gnoseological process rests on the sensory observations and judgments of the outside world as well as man's place in it. The inanimate part of the visible world, as the primordial part of the universal hierarchical way of nature's existence, is shown to man first by appearing, and, we would say, 'superficial'. The superficial⁷ access to things, but also to the beings of this world is in the pictures. It is on this basis that one perceives, for example, the sea or lake or river, first as a surface that can be calm or restless. Words like *river*, *sea* or *lake* connote an appropriate, more or less expansive surface of water. The same is the case with other names or descriptions of the individual elements that make up the world in mutual co-existence. Because of man's limited gnoseological powers, we would not be mistaken if we characterized most of the world as invisible. If we wanted to get to know things in more detail, we would have to peek beneath their surface, but even then we would learn a smaller part of the same realities so that we could never see one thing completely while it remained simultaneously unified and whole. On the other hand, the invisible part of the visible nature forms a basis, and, unless it is a difficult word, *hypostasis* of the visible world. The same case is observed with regard to the way of knowing living beings, whereby in the living world various movements are observed which are not shown by inanimate nature as such. Most of the individually recognised living beings are not visible. Only the surface of the beings is visible. We can conclude that the inanimate and animate parts of the created world are characterized by descriptiveness (affirmation) and indescribability (negation). Descriptiveness indicates the extent or quality of our power of knowing a given being or thing, while indescribability is in some way a *summary* trait of all those dimensions of beings and things that are not visible by nature (descriptive). It is important to emphasize that negativity does not imply a negation of the existence of a thing or being, but rather a limitation in the way of knowing the internal aspects of the existence of a being and thing. We are reminding of the fact that this is only about the nature of material, that is, created things and beings.

In order to clarify the relationship between affirmative and negative statements, let us take a ball as an example, one half of which would be coloured yellow and the other red. For our example, colour yellow would indicate affirmation

⁷ Here we are talking about 'surface', not about 'superficiality' in man's gnoseological approach to the world, though superficiality refers to a kind of 'superficial' one-sidedness in man's everyday way of knowing.

and a red would indicate denial of true statements. If we were to say that the ball was yellow, or that it was red, we would only show one part of the truth about the outside appearance of the ball. However, if we were to explain that the ball is coloured both yellow and red, we would give the listener who does not see the ball an idea of its more complete appearance. The appearance of the ball would be clearer to the listener than in the previous case. In the relevant sense conveyed to our subject, affirmation does not represent separation from negation in absolute terms, but in the qualitative particularity of the one side of the existing. Of course, we learn about individual aspects of existence in material dimensions of the observed beings or things that we do not identify with the whole relative being (or thing), since that particular aspect represents but one qualitative manifestation of a being.

This fact leads us further to a different approach to realities that we have considered to be fundamentally different ones. Namely, a very important dimension of man's way of knowing is manifested in the interrelationship between affirmative and negative ways of knowing beings and things. The Divine Dionysius the Areopagite speaks of affirmative and renouncing statements as non-contradictory (cf. Διονύσιος, PG 3, 1105D), which in some ways makes it futile to try to show affirmative and negative theology precisely as mutually antinomic directions of knowing and defining theological statements.

Dionysius, however, does not speak of a speculative way of knowing God that negative theological statements would use in a syllogistic manner. He is, therefore, explicit in claiming that divine knowledge transcends any negation, which is why he speaks of divine knowledge by using terms that point not only to theological transcendentals in relation to affirmative terms (“...ὑπὲρ λόγον καὶ νοῦν καὶ οὐσίαν αὐτῆς ὑπερουσιότητος ἀγνωσία” Cf. Διονύσιος, PG 3, 588A), but also beyond the adverbial expressions (“ὑπεραρρήτως”, or “ὑπεράγνωστον”, cf. Διονύσιος, PG 3, 592D). This, we would say, third theological movement or path, besides naming many divine transcendentals, manifests its cosmological reflection through what we would call a way of being, but this time through the way of the existence of created beings and things. We believe that this theological moment is lacking in contemporary theological research among authors who have accepted a bias in the application of critical-historical research methodology that, as a rule, ignores the mystagogical structure of the divine economy of salvation. Due to the lack of a proper *mistagogical* theological perspective⁸, the only gnoseological alternative lies in we would call them textocratic⁹ access to scriptural documents. Such an approach favours claims like those that the “mystical vocabulary” used

⁸ The word ἡ μυσταγωγία (mystagogy) is composed of the root μυστ- (mystic, sacred) and the verb ἄγω (to lead), and it gives meaning, in this case, to the specific theological perspective in which lays divine symbolic path of man's recognising and adopting of the truths of life. See more.

⁹ We believe that this term would concisely express a purely textual approach to the living realities of human existence, which we consider extremely problematic when it comes to theological research substance.

by Gregory of Nyssa and Dionysius the Areopagite has its origin in Platonism, so that in Pseudo-Dionysius it represents “the formalization of negative theology and the establishment of the Christian mystical tradition” (Lees, 1981, 19, 75). In such and similar textual formulations, we note the complete absence of biblical tradition as one of the theological foundations, both in the writings of Gregory of Nyssa and in the preserved writings of the Divine Dionysius the Areopagite.

In the affirmative theological statements, some authors insist on recognizing the so-called fundamental truths. We recognize this approach to truth in the affirmative theology in the example of the fundamental difference between the statements “God is good” and “man is good” (Jacobs, 2015, 165; Keller, 2018, 363). However, we consider such a statement to be insufficient because of a certain incompleteness. With regard to the connection between affirmative and negative theology, we should bear in mind not only the difference in the quality of goodness (of both God and man), but also many other aspects of good among the clearly observed but also hidden, yet unnoticed ways of being and things. At the same time, we do not identify the unnoticed aspects of the existence of beings and things with the inability to observe (good), but by observing in a completely different way from the usual sensory ways of observing beings and things (Petrović, 2019b, 31–50). In this sense, not observing a particular thing does not mean its non-existence.

If man is the focus of our research, this unity of the affirmative and the negative is seen through our power and the unity of body and soul, or through the unity of body and mind. Although we usually consider another human being to be intelligent, his mind is invisible to us and incomprehensible in itself. However, how do we humans regard each other as intelligent beings? To put it in another way: How do we base our claim that someone, indeed, has a mind? We first recognise a person as an intelligent being on the basis of his actions, that is, through perceiving him in the manifestations (movements and stillness) of his visible part of the personality. Beyond the body as an indicator of what is not seen we cannot see the world of anyone’s mind. So, the body is visible — we can describe each other, but the mind is invisible and inherently indescribable. In addition to being invisible and indescribable in itself, the mind is also incomprehensible. We know things using the mind, but the mind itself is incomprehensible to us. The mind, however, forms the unity of all bodily and mental divisions, so that it is the focus and guarantor of the unity of the human being in the so-called horizontal plane of existence. We are free to conclude that, in a paradoxical way, the mind as the invisible, indescribable and incomprehensible part of man determines the very meaning of the visible part of human personality in a teleological sense. So, in a way, what is not visible is that which in one sense bears negative qualities, and in the other sense, that which brings together the corporal division of the elements we are made of in order to act as whole, unique beings. More broadly speaking, in the nature

around us and within ourselves the affirmative and negative aspects of being, although semantically antonymous, are still not ontologically contradictory to one another, so they act completely undisturbed and uniquely. The nature around us, but also every human being individually, is the union of the visible and the invisible, the knowable and the incomprehensible, so that, as we have seen, the invisible part of the world is revealed through its visible part, so that we also know the invisible world through the visible.

5. Theological significance of the “affirmative-negative” modes of existence of all creation

Insisting on semantic aspects of confirming and negative entails a speculative plane of research. Topics related to affirmative and negative theology, whose meaning would be exhausted in the linguistic-semantic field of research, would end up as a speculative system that, by its very nature, does not oblige man. In this way, affirmative and negative theology would represent a speculative skill that is somehow subsequently introduced into the Christian life as an “adopted” value system originating in late ancient times. The problem arises solely from the fact that one can speak about God in an affirmative or negative way does not oblige man in any special way of existence.

However, by its modes of existence, the innumerable multitude of created beings and things actually constitutes the sum, that is, the unity of the visible, material, affirmative-negative consequences of the theurgies of divine thought. The visible and invisible, cognisant and incomprehensible dimensions of created beings and things are identified as the visible-invisible peaks of the creative powers of divine grace, which have their peace only in the creative, sustaining and perfect presence of the universal Cause of existence. The lush structures and diversity of the way the elements of creation exist, reveal to us that the invisible dimensions of existence lie behind the clear and visible essences of beings and things. In this respect affirmation does not contradict negation nor vice versa. The importance of negation is not in “negation” but in the proper relation to what it is the ipostas of existence. In our opinion the word itself *ipostas* (ὑπόστασις) would have meaning particular, special, or individual mode of existence since in its Slavonic etymological root this word bears a meaning ‘basis’. The created existences have affirmative/negative, or a symbolic structure even in their individualities. The world is a symbolic creation of God, and man is God-given to symbolically be the present God to creation by grace. Man reveals himself to creation as the Son of God (cf. Rom 8:19) and its maintainer and keeper (cf. Gen 2:15) through his invisible, or rather negative aspects of being through the activities of his clear, visible, knowable part of being; to another man, though, he is a divine symbol in which a “reflection of a higher power” (Γρηγόριος Νύσσης, PG 45, 28AB) is woven with an ineffable force. In their own peculiar ways, and in accordance with their God-ordained hierarchical places, beings and things

reveal with their movements and stillness the internal laws of existence, which operate steadily according to God-ordained order and measure.

The invisible and incomprehensible aspects of being, through their visible aspects, also reveal the theurgical character of the Creator as the Cause of all existence. The affirmative-negative nature of creation itself reveals the paths of its knowledge, testifying at the same time that it exists in a unique way. The unique mode of existence makes it impossible to imagine any duplication of the affirmative and negative qualities of man and creation in general, which exist together by acting as a single organism in an affirmatory and negative way. Awareness of the dependence of creation on its Cause of existence does not allow us to project with our mind any interruption of the connection between the created world and divine theurgies¹⁰ (see more at Petrovic, 2019a). Negative theology is not a denial of divine names and attributes, but a way of being receptive to realities that are not seen. Therefore, we must keep in mind the clear perspective of divine knowledge and not think that we are somehow 'outside' God, that is, 'beside' or 'past' His knowledge of us and the world around us. The divine presence in the world is in the theurgies of divine grace, and must be called transcendent blasphemies, but God is at the same time "God at hand... and not a God afar off" (Jeremiah, 23:23), and He "be not far from every one of us, for in Him we live and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:27-28).

The Orthodox Christian theology considers negation in divine names first as a variety of reflective aspects 'of the divine appeal' to those 'who have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches' (cf. Rev 3:6). If anyone were to question the correctness of our attitude by which it is the negation, which we have designated as invisible, incomprehensible, and non-communicant, that is communicant, we would answer in the words of the divine Dionysius the Areopagite about the very true involvement of the Old Testament fathers first in the eternal theurgies of an incomprehensible and inexpressible God in different ways of knowing God. Recently, however, this involvement, or, Divine Detachment, which may be a difficult word, has been manifested to us through the Mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ "in the most divine of that transfiguration" (Διονύσιος, PG 3, 592BC). For this reason, we find wrong and forced the efforts of the theologians who direct the apophatic theology toward another meaning. At the same time, a particular consideration of the absence of one's participation in the blessed acts of God is not identical to the consideration of the being of God in itself. Negative theology certainly includes the aspect of total unbiasedness in the way God exists forever, but negation in theology does not refer only to this dimension of unpreparedness. One cannot even comprehend the world around him using reason — the world which exists in innumerable relationships and varieties. Man, after all, does not know his essence or purpose, let alone anyone else's. If the limit of man's knowledge is

¹⁰ See more on this topic by, Petrovic, 2019a.

already within man, how can one accept the attempt of man to penetrate, much less to understand and realise the way of the Most Eternal God? However, the apostle Paul testifies of creation as a conscious organism that eagerly awaits “the manifestation of the sons of God” (Rom 8:19), and who simultaneously with his visible part of existence reveals the invisible, eternal power and Godhead of the Creator to the human powers of grasping the invisible through man’s visible part of existence. (cf. Rom 1:20).

It is in this context that the divine Dionysius insists on a dual theological tradition. Namely, the ineffable and mysterious tradition of Dionysius seems to be joined by a clear and informative aspect of the tradition, so that the first in its communicantness is symbolic and worshipful, and the second is philosophical and demonstrative. In that manner the inexpressible joins (συμπέπλεκται) the expressible, so that one “reassures and holds the truth of the (things) spoken, and the other acts and establishes (in) God-taught secrets (ταῖς ἀδιδάκτοις μυσταγωγίαις, see Διονύσιος, PG 3, 1105CD)¹¹. In other words, where the boundary of rational knowledge of the mind does not allow for further access, that is, from the moment when the cherubs flap their wings (cf. Ἀθανάσιος, PG 26, 572A), knowledge needs to commence with faith that has to act in the manner of divine service and symbols, so that it can be a living faith (cf. Jac 2:26).

Since the unity of affirmative and negative theology is not limited to the cosmological paradigms of existence, we are free to refer to the Christological, that is, the ecclesiological side of the same problem that takes the affirmative-negative dimension of the existence of man and substance in communion with God to a higher and more divine level. Therefore, the holy fathers spoke not simply of Christ, but of the “Mystery of Christ” (Κύριλλος, PG 70, 1457C), which implies the historical manifestation of God “whom no one has ever seen” (Jn 1:18). Certainly, the meaning of the existence of the created world is to indicate, on the basis of all the structures that individually and collectively testify to affirmative-negative modes of existence, the more divinely related horizons of the beneficent revelations of those theurgies that are invisible, unexpressed and unattainable. On the path of human recognition of eschatological-historical theurgies, creation is certainly the initial and unavoidable paradigm and direction.

¹¹ Dionysius speaks of a mystagogical mode of knowing which, as it emerges from his experience, rests on an internal reconciliation with God, and with the God-established hierarchical structure of universal existence. In this sense, we take the right to speak of the mysterious, mystagogical way of knowing mankind, whose auspices is the symbolic-symbolic way of existence of the Church in which the theurgies pass to the last limits of God’s creation.

Sources

- Ἀθανάσιος Μέγας (1857). Πρὸς Σεραπίωνα. In J.P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca* [=PG], Vol. 26. Paris.
- Γρηγόριος Νύσσης (1863). Λόγος κατηχητικὸς ὁ μέγας. In J.P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca* [=PG], Vol. 45. Paris.
- Διονύσιος Ἀρεοπαγίτης (1857). Περὶ θείων ὀνομάτων. In J.P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca* [=PG], Vol. 3. Paris.
- Διονύσιος Ἀρεοπαγίτης (1857). Ἐπιστολή θ. In J.P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca* [=PG], Vol. 3. Paris.
- Κύριλλος Ἀλεξανδρείας (1864). *Fragmenta ex Catenis*. In J.P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca* [=PG], Vol. 70. Paris.
- Golitzin, A. (2014). *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita*. Collegeville: Cistercian Publications (Liturgical Press).
- Florovsky, G. (1976). *Revelation, Philosophy and Theology, Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, Vol. III: Creation and Redemption*. Belmont: Nordland Publishing Company, 21–40.
- Franke, W. (2006). Apophasis and the Turn of Philosophy to Religion: From Neoplatonic Negative Theology to Postmodern Negation of Theology. *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion*. New York City: Springer Publishing. 61–76.
- Kaufman, G. (1972). *God the Problem*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bibliography

- Alston, W. (1956). *Ineffability*, *Philosophical Review*, Vol. 65. Durham: Duke University Press, 506–522.
- Ἀνδρούτσος, Χ. (1992). *Δογματικὴ τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Ἀνατολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας*. Ἀθήνα: Ἄσπὴρ.
- Флоровски, Г. (2009). Византијски аскетски оци и духовници, (ориг. *Византијски аскејски оци и духовници*). Београд: Отачник.
- Jacobs, J. (2015). “The Ineffable, Inconceivable, and Incomprehensible God: Fundamentalism and Apophatic Theology”, *Oxford Studies in the Philosophy of Religion*, 6, 158–176.
- Keller, L. J. (2018). Divine Ineffability and Franciscan Knowledge. *True Philosophica*. Saint Louis University, 95, 347–70.
- Lees, R. A. (1981). *The Negative Language of the Dionysian School of Mystical Theology*. University of York: Centre for Medieval Studies.

- Lindhoff, L. (1995). *Einführung in die Feministische Literaturtheorie*. Stuttgart: JB Metzler.
- Lossky, V. (1976). *The Eastern Church Mystical Theology*. New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.
- Ματσούκας, Ν. (2000). *Δογματική και συμβολική θεολογία (Εισαγωγή στη θεολογική γνωσιολογία)*, έκδ. Π. Πουρνάρα. Θεσσαλονίκη.
- Петровић, П. (2018). *Бојословље дожанских имена (Есхајџолошко-исџијоријски ѱрисџиуј дожанском оџкривењу, доџоименовању и доџојознање)*. Београд: Институт за теолошка истраживања ПБФ.
- Петровић, П. (2019). Сотириолошки аспекти језика догословља. In З. Матић (ур.), *Видјехом свјејџ исџијиниј — Исихазам у живојџу Цркве срџских и џоморских земаља* (pp. 31–50). Београд–Пожаревац: ИСБ–ОПК.
- Петровић, П. (2019а). *Приврженосџи свейџа узроку џосџојања (Еџијолошки асџекџи црквеноџ џредања дожансџивеноџ Дионисија Ареоџаџиџа)*. Београд: Досије студио.
- Tomasic, Th. M. (1988). The Logical Function of Metaphor and Oppositional Coincidence in Pseudo-Dionysius and Johannes Scottus Eriugena. *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 68(13). University of Chicago Press, 361–376.
- Toroczka, C. J. and Andrei, O. (2017). The Philosophia perennis of Hellenistic Christianity: Theological and Ecumenical Implications of Fr. Georges V. Florovsky's View. *Review of Ecumenical Studies (RES)*, 9–1, The Journal of Lucian Treasure University of Sibiu, 36–52.
- Yadav, S. (2016). *Mystical Experience and the Apophatic Attitude*, Journal of Analytic Theology, Vol. 4. Center for Philosophy of Religion at the University of Notre Dame. 17–43.

Предраг Петровић

Универзитет у Београду, Православни богословски факултет, Београд

Космолошки аспекти јединства потврдне (*катафатичке*) и одречне (*апофатичке*) богословске перспективе

Искази потврдног и одречног семантичког одређења основ су човекове језичке комуникације. Да бисмо могли међусобно комуницирати морамо се служити истинитим исказима. Истинитим исказима називамо све оне исказе базиране на аксиомима око чијег значења се слаже највећи број људи. Сваки истинити исказ чине потврдни или одречни, или и потврдни и одречни искази. У богословској литератури богодејства, богоименовања, као и многозначни аспекти богопознања исказују се на два начина. Први начин исказивања је потврдни или катафатички (грч. катафатикή), а други, одречни или апофатички (грч. апофатикή). Иако богословска литература обилује проблемским темама у вези са различитим аспектима потврдних и одречних богословских исказа, сматрамо да је зарад њиховог потпунијег обухвата у расправу неопходно укључити и космолошке аспекте постојања, будући да се космолошка димензија постојања открива као једна од темељних претпоставки богословске проблематике богоименовања, што налазимо и у богословском предању божанственог Дионисија Ареопагита. Сматрамо коначно да овај богословски аспект недостаје у савременим богословским истраживањима. Велики богословски значај сагледавања различитих димензија потврдног и одречног богословља нарочито долази до изражаја када сагледавамо унутрашњу аналогију *богословској* и *космолошкој*. Другим речима, академски приступ потврдном и одречном богословљу добија на значају само уколико постоји реална, односно, богоустановљена парадигма која у свакодневном хришћанском животу пројектује еклисиолошку перспективу космологије. На тај начин, Тајна Христова дејствује као Тајна јединства или Тајна поистовећења *космолошкој* и *еклисиолошкој* у божанском начину постојања човека и света.

Key words: исказ, потврдни (катафатички), одречни (апофатички), творевина, супротности, јединства, надилаз, богопознање.