

# THE USE OF HUMAN REASON AND NOETIC ENERGY ACCORDING TO SAINT GREGORY

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Saint Gregory Palamas, continuing the teaching of the earlier Fathers, distinguishes between man's two cognitive faculties: reason (*dianoia*), which is related to logic, and the intellect (*nous*), which is related to immediate, intuitive perception. While reason is the vehicle of created knowledge, the logical power that can be expressed through reasoning about sensible and spiritual things, the intellect is the intuitive (*noera*) energy within man's heart, which constitutes the means of divine vision, and becomes the only vehicle of the uncreated knowledge of God. The discovery of the intellectual (*noera*) energy within the heart of a man that lives in repentance contributes to the unification of the powers of the soul, to the purity of the heart, and to the acquisition of self-knowledge and firm faith, thus signalling the spiritual completion of man through participation in the uncreated deifying energies.

In his second homily *On the Entrance of the Mother of God*, where he presents our Lady as a model of the hesychast life, Saint Gregory Palamas discusses at length the five powers of the soul: sense, imagination, thinking, intellection, and *nous*.<sup>1</sup> Here, the great anatomist of the human soul makes the distinction that intellection is the power of reason which, through a variety of successive syllogisms, completes

<sup>1</sup> Gregory Palamas, *Ὁμιλῖαι ΚΒ'*, *Σοφοκλέους τοῦ ἐξ Οἰκονόμων* (Αθήνα: Φ. Καραμπίνη καὶ Κ. Βαφᾶ, 1861), *Ὁμιλία* 53.35, pp. 172 ff. On the distinction between the terms *nous*, intellect, heart and soul, see Metropolitan Ierotheos of Nafpaktos, *Ὁρθόδοξη Ψυχοθεραπεία* (Λεβαδεία: Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Γενεθλίου τῆς Θεοτόκου, 1986), 91–228, where, on pp.111–17, he notes that the Fathers often interchange the terms, characterizing the *nous* sometimes as intellect or the noetic energy of the soul and sometimes as the essence of the soul. In Western theology, the *nous* is always understood as the intellect and reason. For theologians in the West, there is no such thing as 'noetic energy'. We would note here: *Νοῦς λέγεται καὶ ἡ τοῦ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ἐν λογισμοῖς συνισταμένη καὶ νοήμασι. Νοῦς ἐστὶ καὶ ἡ ἐνεργοῦσα ταῦτα δύναμις, ἥτις καὶ καρδιά καλεῖται παρὰ τῆς Γραφῆς* (Τρία κεφάλαια περὶ προσευχῆς καὶ καθαρότητος καρδίας 3, in *Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ, Συγγράμματα*, ed. P. Christou, vol. 5, [Θεσσαλονίκη: Κυρομάνος, 1992], 159 [hereafter *Συγγράμματα*]). *Ὅταν δὲ ἀπαιτώμεθα εἰπεῖν τί νοῦς καὶ τί διάνοια, τὸν μὲν νοῦν οὐσίαν λέγομεν, τὴν δὲ διάνοιαν οὐσιώδη ἐνέργειαν... ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐστὶ ποτὲ χωρὶς νοῦ ἡ διάνοια* (Επίτομος διήγησις Φακρασῆ Πρωτοστράτορος 26, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 4, 229). And Isaac the Syrian, *Λόγος* 83, Spetseris, 320: *Ὁ μὲν γὰρ νοῦς μία ἐστὶ τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς αἰσθήσεων· ἡ δὲ καρδιά ἐστὶν ἡ περιέχουσα καὶ κρατοῦσα τὰς ἑνδον αἰσθήσεις. Καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ρίζα*.

the thought process<sup>2</sup> and has the brain as its seat.<sup>3</sup> The *nous* is a self-sufficient entity, the main energy of which is noetic. When it declines from this activity, however, it is restricted to a merely intellectual life.<sup>4</sup>

People have two eyes of the soul.<sup>5</sup> The first is the intellect, which has as its object created knowledge. But our intellect is also capable of studying the uncreated, of engaging, under certain circumstances, with a variety of spiritual ‘theories.’<sup>6</sup> The intellect is not the chief eye of the soul, because it is unable to know the treasures of heaven empirically: ‘through itself, it makes intelligible both the perceptible and the noetic.’<sup>7</sup> The second eye of the soul is the *nous*, that is the noetic energy within our heart, through which we can inspect the divine and gain practical experience of God, through the uncreated, deifying energies of God.<sup>8</sup> The practice of the virtues has as its aim our union with God through his uncreated grace. Through the virtues, we can be brought to the likeness of God. Without the attainment of perceptible, ontological union by grace, however, we do not achieve, we do not ‘suffer’ deification.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> ‘Διάνοια δὲ λογικὴ μὲν ἐστὶν αἰεὶ, διεξοδικῶς δὲ πρόεισιν εἰς τὴν μετὰ λόγου δόξαν ἀποτελεωσά.’ Οἰκονόμου, 174.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. ‘Πᾶσαι δ’ αὗται δι’ ὀργάνου πρῶτον συνειστήκασιν καὶ ἐνεργοῦσι τοῦ ψυχικοῦ ἐν ἐγκεφάλῳ Νοῦ δὲ ὄργανον οὐδὲν ἐστὶν, ἀλλ’ αὐτοτελὴς ἐστὶν οὐσία καὶ καθ’ ἑαυτὴν οὐσα ἐνεργητικὴ, εἰ καὶ πρὸς τὴν κατὰ διάνοιαν ψυχικὴν τε καὶ ἀνελιγμένην ζωὴν ὑποκαταβιβάζει ἑαυτὸν πνεύματος.’

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. ‘Νοῦ δὲ ὄργανον οὐδὲν ἐστὶν, ἀλλ’ αὐτοτελὴς ἐστὶν οὐσία καὶ καθ’ ἑαυτὴν οὐσα ἐνεργητικὴ, εἰ καὶ πρὸς τὴν κατὰ διάνοιαν ψυχικὴν τε καὶ ἀνελιγμένην ζωὴν ὑποκαταβιβάζει ἑαυτὸν.’ On the distinction between the energies of the soul, in modern terminology and formulation, see Monk Chrysostomos Dionysiatos, Θεὸς Λόγος καὶ ἀνθρώπινος λόγος (Ἅγιον Ὅρος, 1998), 47. His following statement might be an interpretation of the above passage in Palamas: ‘Ὅταν ἡ ἐνέργεια τοῦ νοῦς ἐγκλωβίζεται στὴν αἴσθησις ἢ τὸν λόγο, ἡ διανόηση (λογικὴ ἐνέργεια) λειτουργεῖ ὡς ὑποκατάστατο τῆς νοήσεως (νοεῖας ἐνέργειας). Ἡ διάνοια ὑπολείπεται ἀπὸ τὸν νοῦ σὲ δυνατότητες, διότι πάντοτε ἐνεργεῖ δια-λογιζόμενη, ποτὲ ἐνορατικά.’

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων 2, 3, 15, Συγγράμματα, vol. 1, 551.

<sup>6</sup> The word ‘θεωρία’, the ‘ἄληκτος γνῶσις’ in Patristic terminology, is polysemous. It sometimes means physical vision, the physical revelation of God (not, of course, the *analogia entis* of Western theology), which occurs through the λόγοι τῶν ὄντων, by reason, and is the cataphatic way, a direct movement of the human intellect, through the creation, towards God. At other times, it means the vision of God, either ‘through a glass darkly’, at the stage of enlightenment, or ‘face to face’, in deification, which is the apophatic method, the spiralling or cyclical motion of the *nous* towards God. Vision becomes ‘αὐτοκίνητη’ or ‘κατ’ ἐπιβολήν’ when we, of our own accord, create in our intellect various concepts which derive from knowledge of God’s beneficence, from death and the judgement, perceptible and notional beings, the incarnate providence of God and the other dogmas concerning him, initially without the participation of Grace. It is ‘ἐτεροκίνητη’ or ‘κατὰ παραδοχήν’ when, through the Grace operating in the heart, the intellect is caught up into vision without the person concerned wishing it to be. On the distinction between these two visions and the superiority of the latter, see the work of Saints Callistus and Ignatius Xanthopoulos, Μέθοδος καὶ κανὼν ἀκριβής’ in the sixty-eighth chapter of Φιλοκαλία τῶν Ἱερῶν Νηπτικῶν, vol. 4 (Ἀθήνα: Ἀστήρ, 1961), 262.

<sup>7</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων 1,3,45, Συγγράμματα, vol. 1, 445.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Τῆς οὖν καθ’ ἑαυτὸν ἐνεργείας γενόμενος ὁ νοῦς, ἥτις ἐστὶν ἡ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν στροφή καὶ τήρησις, δι’ αὐτῆς ὑπερναβαίνων ἑαυτὸν, καὶ Θεῷ συγγένοιτ’ ἄν’. Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων 1, 3, 45, Συγγράμματα, vol. 1, 457.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Δεῖ μὲν γὰρ ἡμῖν ὁμοιώσεως, ὡς ἐναρμονίως σχῶμεν πρὸς τὴν ἔνωσιν ἐκείνην, δι’ ἧς ἡ θέωσις τελεῖται. Χωρὶς δὲ τῆς ἐνώσεως ἡ ὁμοίωσις οὐκ ἀποχρήσει πρὸς θέωσιν’. Περὶ θεοποιου μεθέξεως 7, Συγγράμματα, vol. 2, 142.

After the fall of the first-created our spiritual powers were disturbed and fragmented.<sup>10</sup> These powers, especially the noetic, must now, by God's grace and our own efforts, be restored and united within the locus of the heart, which is the spiritual centre of the human person, the throne of divine grace.<sup>11</sup> In this way we rediscover our 'ancient beauty'<sup>12</sup> and our real personhood is re-established.<sup>13</sup> According to Palamas, the *nous* has essence and energy, just as God does.<sup>14</sup> The essence of the *nous*—the seat of which is in the heart,<sup>15</sup> in the 'first ratiocinating organ of the flesh'<sup>16</sup>—is unmoving, 'never departing from it'.<sup>17</sup> The energy of the *nous*, however, does move,<sup>18</sup> and spills outwards through the senses and thoughts. An ascetic tries to bring back this energy to the essence, through noetic prayer (the prayer of the heart), so that the *nous* can return to itself and thereupon be united with God.<sup>19</sup> It may be that, in some people, this noetic energy is active, but, because they do not know the teachings of the Fathers, they may not have realized precisely what is happening in the realm of their heart; though they certainly have the sense of divine experiences of the heart. The union of created persons with the uncreated God through the noetic energy of their heart cannot happen without God's grace. People cannot even be aware of noetic energy without the energy of divine grace.<sup>20</sup> We can say that

<sup>10</sup> The Roman Catholics claim that, after the fall, human nature remained intact (John Romanides, *Tò Προπατορικὸν ἀμάρτημα* (Athina: Dómos, 1992), 156. In other words, at the fall, an error occurred through human reason and the cure for human personality lies in the correction of reason. This is the start of all the rationalism of Western theologising, which was accepted and then dogmatised in the position of Thomas Aquinas that human reason is in accord with divine revelation (cf. S. Papadopoulos, *Φιλοθωμισταὶ καὶ ἀντιθωμισταὶ ἐν Βυζαντίῳ* [Athina, 1967], 126–27). Some Protestants, on the other hand, believe that, at the fall, the human personality was completely distorted, even as regards free-will and self-determination, and so were brought to absolute predetermination (e.g., Calvin).

<sup>11</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων 1, 2, 3, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 396.

<sup>12</sup> Προὔργου δὲ αὐτοῖς ἡ τοῦ νοῦ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐπιστροφή καὶ σύννευσις, μᾶλλον δὲ πασῶν τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεων, εἰ καὶ θαυμαστὸν εἰπεῖν, πρὸς τὸν νοῦν ἐπιστροφή καὶ ἡ κατ' αὐτὸν τε καὶ Θεὸν ἐνέργεια, δι' ἧς ἐπεσκευασμένοι πρὸς τὸ πρωτότυπον εὖ διατίθενται, τὸ ἀρχαῖο ἐκεῖνο καὶ ἀμήχανον κάλλος, ἐπανθούσης τῆς Χάριτος. Ἀντιρρητικός πρὸς Ἀκίνδυνον 7, 40, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 492.

<sup>13</sup> 'The Lord's appeal is first of all to the heart, the spiritual centre of the *persona* ... The flame of this love draws the mind (*nous*) wholly into the heart, where it merges into one with the heart and contemplates Being in the Light of Divine Love. We become "whole" —we are healed.' See Archimandrite Sophrony, *We Shall See Him as He Is* (Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, 2004), 177.

<sup>14</sup> Ἄλλο μὲν οὐσία νοῦ, ἄλλο δὲ ἐνέργεια. Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων 1, 2, 5, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 397.

<sup>15</sup> In his refutation *Katà Θωμᾶ*, the hesychast Kallistos Angelikoudis (who wrote some time in the second half of the fourteenth century) defines the heart as 'τὸ περιεκτικὸν τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπασῶν δυνάμεων' (cf. S. Papadopoulos, *Ὁρθόδοξη καὶ Σχολαστικὴ Θεολογία* [Athina, 1970], 201). Saint Nicodemus the Athonite defines it as the natural, unnatural, and supernatural centre. Cf. *Ὁ ἅγιος Νικόδημος, Συμβουλευτικὸν Ἐγχειρίδιον* (Athina, n.d.), 110–15.

<sup>16</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων 1, 2, 3, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 396.

<sup>17</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων 2, 2, 26, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 533.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> In Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων 1, 2, 5, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 398, Saint Gregory uses the classic passage from Basil the Great's letter, *Πρὸς Ἰρηγόριον Θεολόγον* 2, 2 (PG 32:228A): 'Νοῦς μὴ σκεδαννύμενος ἐπὶ τὰ ἔξω ἐπάνεισι πρὸς ἑαυτὸν, δι' ἑαυτοῦ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν'. Cf. also Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων 2, 2, 25, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 532.

<sup>20</sup> Οὕτω καὶ ὁ νοῦς ἂν ἥ νοερὰν ἔχων αἴσθησιν ὁρώη καθ' ἑαυτὸν ἐνέργεια γένοιτο μὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μετασχών

noetic energy points the way to the discovery of God's grace.<sup>21</sup> Those who participate in and commune with the uncreated, deifying energy, recognise from experience the noetic energy of the soul in their heart at the time of prayer.<sup>22</sup>

We should stress that when our rational energy is considered to be an authority in its search for the uncreated, it can produce delusion, which is related to three categories of people and is reflected in the spiritual life of each group. In the first kind of delusion, reason displaces faith. People who accept as reality solely that which is allowed by their reason, through natural laws, and what they themselves experience as life, through their senses, cannot receive the seed of faith in their heart. They are unable to accept that there is knowledge and a reality which is beyond reason, beyond the senses, beyond nature. As Palamas says, faith alone can approach and be receptive to the truth which is beyond reason.<sup>23</sup> The delusion created by reason and placed in the second category is associated with those who believe in God, but in a mistaken manner. These may be heterodox Christians or adherents of any other religion. The theology created by heterodox Christians is intellectual, not empirical, and is not the fruit of God's Revelation. The god to whom created people are drawn through reason always acts within the bounds of createdness and is a god they construct as they wish him to be.<sup>24</sup> In his interpretation of the cause of the many misinterpretations and false doctrines of the Scholastic Barlaam,<sup>25</sup> Saint Gregory Palamas says that the latter attempts, through reason and natural philoso-

φωτός', *Ἀντιρρητικὸς πρὸς Ἀκίνδυνον* 7, 33, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 485. See also *Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζόντων* 1, 3, 46, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 458 'χωρίς (τὸ ἄκτιστο φῶς) οὐδ' ἂν νοῦς ἢ νοερὰν ἔχων αἰσθησιν ὁρῶη τοῖς ὑπὲρ αὐτὸν ἐνούμενος καθάπερ οὐδὲ ὀφθαλμὸς σώματος τοῦ κατ' αἴσθησιν φωτός χωρίς'.

<sup>21</sup> *Ἡ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ βλέπεται νοερῶς καὶ γνωρίζεται ἐν αἰσθήσει νοὸς μόνον ἐν ᾧ τῆς προσευχῆς*. Elder Joseph the Hesychast, *Ἡσυχαστοῦ, Ἐκφρασις Μοναχικῆς Ἐμπειρίας* (Ἁγίου Ὁρος: Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Φιλοθέου, 1992), 335. See also Archimandrite Efraim, former Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Filotheou, *ὅπου ἡ ἐνέργεια τῆς εὐχῆς, ἐκεῖ ὁ Χριστὸς σὺν τῷ Πατρὶ καὶ τῷ Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι, ἡ ὁμοούσιος καὶ ἀδιαίρετος Ἁγία Τριάς* ('Κεφάλαια περὶ προσευχῆς', *Σύναξη* 10, no. 2 [1984]: 43).

<sup>22</sup> To those saying the Jesus Prayer—'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me'—Saint Nicodemus recommends, *ὁ λόγος νὰ μελετᾷ τὴν εὐχὴν αὐτήν, ὁ δὲ νοῦς νὰ καταβιβάζῃ τὴν νοερὰν ἐνέργειάν του μέσα εἰς τὴν καρδίαν καὶ νὰ προσέχῃ νοερῶς μὲ ὅλην τὴν δύναμίν του* (Nicodemus the Athonite, *Ἐξομολογητάριον, Ὁ ἅγιος Νικόδημος* [Ἀθήνα], 44–45).

<sup>23</sup> *Καὶ οὗτος ἂν μὴν πίστην προσαγάγῃ τὴν μόνην τῆς ὑπὲρ λόγον ἀληθείας δεκτικὴν*, *Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζόντων* 2, 2, 12, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 519.

<sup>24</sup> G. Mantzaridis, *Ἡ ἐμπειρικὴ θεολογία στὴν οἰκολογία καὶ τὴν πολιτικὴ* (Θεσσαλονίκη: Πουρναρᾶς, 1994), 27–28.

<sup>25</sup> Although he initially wrote against the Doctor Communis, Doctor Angelicus, Princeps Scolasticorum Thomas Aquinas (†1274), the rationalist Barlaam (1290–1350), later Bishop Ierakos (1341–1350), could very well be placed among the Scholastic theologians of the West, since he shared their philosophical assumptions (on the evolution of the Schools in the West, see E. Moutsopoulos, *Ἡ Σχολαστικὴ διανόησις*, Ἀθήνα, n.d.). Barlaam's philosophizing dialectical theology, which is not based upon spiritual experience, leads to agnosticism and, in the end, the acceptance of the *Filioque*, the lack of distinction between divine essence and energy, the vision of the divine essence, created grace, and other false, for the Orthodox, doctrines. Barlaam's theological/philosophical system is an amalgam of theological shortcomings (cf. *Ἐκθεσις δυσσεβημάτων*, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 2, 579–86). Barlaam seems to be an adherent of Western theology and certainly not of the Orthodox Byzantine tradition. On these positions, see Fr Theodore Zisis, *Ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς* (Ἀθήνα: Imago, 1984), 31–34; also the work by Monk Theoklitos Dionysiatis, *Ὁ ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Παλαμᾶς* (Ἀθήνα: Σπηλιώτης, 2001), 42–46, n. 380.



phy, to investigate that which is beyond reason and beyond nature.<sup>26</sup> From the time of Saint Augustine<sup>27</sup> until today, the West has been dominated by the temptation of reason in theology<sup>28</sup> and this is responsible for the secularisation of other dogmas in the West.<sup>29</sup> Logicity or rationality is why so many different forms of heresies have arisen.

At the same time, we have the religio-philosophical systems which have arisen out of Asia. Their belief is in an impersonal god and, through their ascetic practices, they offer their adherents the opportunity to discover the highest contemplative state, called by many a noetic state or condition, which brings devotees to self-realization, self-deification. The spiritual experiences offered by these groups, and which attract those who have not experienced divine grace within the Church of Christ, are based on psychotherapeutic techniques and greater emphasis on the utilisation of the intellect, which will bring them to these supposedly divine experiences and visions. Their heart remains impassioned and cannot, of course, open and become the point of entry for noetic energy and the grace of God.<sup>30</sup>

The third kind of delusion of reason is associated with nominal Orthodox and is more difficult to discern. It occurs with those who have come to believe in the existence of the supernatural, the uncreated, that which is, in reality, beyond reason,

<sup>26</sup> 'Πόθεν δὴ τῷ τηλικούτῳ βόθρῳ περιέπεσεν; ἔροισί τις ἄν. Ἐπεὶ λόγῳ καὶ φιλοσοφίᾳ φυσικῇ τὰ ὑπὲρ λόγον τε καὶ φύσιν ἐξηρεύνησεν.' Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζόντων 3, 3, 3, *Συγγράμματα*, vol 1, 680.

<sup>27</sup> Influenced by the philosophy of Neo-Platonism and without knowledge of Patristic literature, Augustine (354–430), fell into error when he spoke of pre-destination, divine Grace, and the Holy Trinity, concerning which he attempted to demonstrate the self-existent provenance of the persons through syllogisms, by the method of psychological analogies. Anslem of Canterbury (1033–1109), the most acute mind (*fides quaerens intellectum*) among the dialecticians continued this, with his '*credo ut intellectum*'. Thomas Aquinas, a saint of the Latin Church, held as dogma that human reason can achieve knowledge of the essence of God, which is the ultimate happiness. In our own time, modern Western theologians such as R. Bultmann speak of the necessity for the *Entmythologisierung* of Holy Scripture.

<sup>28</sup> Believing the mind to be the authority, rationalism has entered modern theology, too, through philosophy, Scholasticism, academic, and non-empirical theology. On the identification of Scholastic thought with academic theology, see the N. Matsoukas's paper 'Ἡ διπλὴ θεολογικὴ μεθοδολογία τοῦ ἁγίου Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ', *Πρακτικὰ Συνεδρίου ἁγ. Γρηγορίου Παλαμᾶ* (Θεσσαλονίκη: Ἱ. Μητρόπολις Θεσσαλονίκης, 1986), 84, where Professor Matzoukas indirectly distinguishes between reason and noetic energy, since Patristic theology has a double theological method: charismatic theology, in which the uncreated is experienced (with the mind as the organ of divine supervision); and academic, which is performed through reason. Scholastic theology, on the other hand, has only one method and that is through reason. For an analysis of the theological method, see John Romanides *Δογματικὴ καὶ Συμβολικὴ θεολογία τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας*, vol. 1, (Θεσσαλονίκη: Πουρναρᾶς, 1999), 10–20 and 65–109.

<sup>29</sup> It also threatens the *typicon* of the Orthodox Church, through seemingly attractive proposals such as, for example, the removal of the iconostasis, changes in ecclesiastical language, shortening the services and so on. Moreover, it constitutes a threat to the life of the Church in general, with the ordination of women, the acceptance of homosexuality, and so on.

<sup>30</sup> The opening of the heart and the entry of the mind (noetic energy) into it can occur only in the presence of divine Grace. Conditions, spiritual experiences, as described by Eastern Mysticism as a pulsation of the heart, mental attitude, ecstasy, and the vision of spiritual lights are either emotional movements of the heart, intellectual, imaginary or, in the end, the vision of lights created by the human mind and by demons. They are in no way an experience of uncreated divine Grace. Indeed, such 'experiences' are not without peril for our psychosomatic life and, in many instances, have even resulted in death (see Fr Antónios Alevizopoulos, *Προσευχὴ ἢ διαλογισμός* [Ἀθήνα: Ἀποστολικὴ Διακονία, 1993], 197–98).

but who, because of their inflated reason and the passions which dwell ‘in the holy place’,<sup>31</sup> that is their heart, have not actually achieved union with the supernatural, the Uncreated God. To this category belong those who have an intellectual relationship with God, those who are content that they know him. These are people who, externally, may have a moral lifestyle, but who, in essence, do not know what purity of heart means, do not know themselves and have no faith in the miraculous acts of the saints. According to Palamas, entry of noetic energy into the heart assists in the unification of the powers of the soul and reveals the purity of the *nous*.<sup>32</sup> Then people are able to receive the divine gifts of insight and foresight.<sup>33</sup> Some may talk or write about God, or theologise, without knowing him empirically.<sup>34</sup> True, unerring theology derives from participation in the uncreated, deifying energies, from the supernatural union ‘from which alone the ability to theologize reliably derives’.<sup>35</sup> Saint Gregory asserts that, if theology remains on the level of intellection and is not the result of the vision of God, there is a huge gap between the two positions. It is as if you were talking about something you have not seen have not nor acquired.<sup>36</sup> Gifted theologians have developed both their noetic and rational energy to the fullest extent. We should applaud those modern academic theologians who note that the ‘key’ to understanding the dogmas, the path of authoritative theologising, is the experience of grace, the experience acquired through Orthodox asceticism, the quest and concern for purity of heart.<sup>37</sup> The central and essential point of Saint

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ps 23:3.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Όταν γάρ ἅπαν αἰσχροὺ πάθος ἐνοικοῦν ἀπελαθῇ καὶ ὁ νοῦς ... αὐτὸς τε πρὸς ἑαυτὸν καὶ τὰς ἄλλας τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεις ἐπιστρέψας ὁλοκλήρως τῇ γεωργίᾳ τῶν ἀρετῶν φιλοκαλήσῃ τὴν ψυχὴν, προΐων ἐπὶ τὸ τελεώτερον καὶ πρακτικὰς ἔτ’ ἀναβάσεις διατιθέμενος καὶ ἐπὶ πλέον, Θεοῦ συναιρουμένον, πλύνων ἑαυτὸν, οὐ τὰ τοῦ πονηροῦ μόνον ἀποσμήχει κόμματος, ἀλλ’ ἅπαν ἐπικτήτων ἐκ μέσου ποιεῖται, κἂν τῆς χρηστοτέρας ἢ μοίρας καὶ διανοίας’. Ἀντιρρητικὸς πρὸς Ἀκίνδυνον 7, 34, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 487. See also *Πρὸς Ξένην* 58, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 5 (Ἀθήνα: Κυρομάνος, 1992), 223.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Ἐντεῦθεν ἡ κατ’ ἀρετὴν θεοειδὴς καὶ ἀπαράμιλλος ἕξις καὶ τὸ πρὸς κακίαν ὅλως ἀκίνητον ἢ δυσκίνητον, αἶ τε θαυματοποιεῖται καὶ τὸ διορᾶν τε καὶ προορᾶν’. Εἰς τὸν Βίον τοῦ ὁσίου Πέτρου τοῦ ἐν Ἄθῳ 20, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 5, 172, and *Πρὸς Ξένην*, 225, and Ἀντιρρητικὸς πρὸς Ἀκίνδυνον 7, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 491.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Οὕτω κἂν μυριάκις περὶ τῶν θείων θησαυρῶν διανοήσῃ, μὴ πάθῃ δὲ τὰ θεῖα, μηδὲ ἴδῃς τοῖς νοεοῖς καὶ ὑπεράνω τῆς διανοίας ὀφθαλμοῖς, οὔτε ὁρᾷς, οὔτε ἔχεις οὔτε κέκτησαι τι τῶν θείων ἀληθῶς’. Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων 1, 3, 34, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 445.

<sup>35</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων 1, 3, 15, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 425.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων 1, 3, 34, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 445 and 1, 3, 42, 453.

<sup>37</sup> From the purely academic sphere we would mention Professor G. Mantzaridis, who, borrowing the term ‘understanding sociology’ from Max Weber, speaks of an ‘understanding academic theology’: ‘Κατ’ αὐτὴν ὁ ἐρευνητὴς ὅχι μόνον δὲν ἀποκλείει ἀπὸ τὴν ἐρευνά του τὴν θεολογικὴ ἐμπειρία, ποὺ εἶναι ἐμπειρία τοῦ ἀκτίστου, ἀλλὰ καὶ προσπαθεῖ, ὅσο μπορεῖ, νὰ τὴν κατανοήσῃ καὶ νὰ τὴν παρουσιάσῃ. Ἡ κατανόηση ἐδῶ δὲν ἔχει βέβαια διανοητικὸ, ἀλλὰ βαθύτερο πνευματικὸ χαρακτήρα. Δὲν πρόκειται γιὰ διανοητικὴ προσπέλαση, ἀλλὰ γιὰ πνευματικὴ προσέγγιση, ποὺ πραγματοποιεῖται μὲ τὴν ἐνέργεια τοῦ ἀνθρώπινου νοῦ, ὅπως ἐπισημαίνεται στὴν βιβλικὴ καὶ τὴν πατερικὴ ἀνθρωπολογία’. Further on he emphasizes that: ‘ἡ ἄσκηση γίνεται μέθοδος τῆς θεολογικῆς γνώσεως ἢ τῆς θεολογικῆς ἐπιστήμης. Καὶ ἡ μεθοδολογία τῆς θεολογικῆς ἐπιστήμης συμπίπτει οὐσιαστικὰ μὲ τὴν μεθοδολογία τῆς ἀσκητικῆς τελειώσεως... Ἡ καθαρὸτητα δηλαδὴ τῆς καρδιάς ἀποτελεῖ τὴν προϋπόθεση τῆς θεοπτίας, ποὺ εἶναι ἡ πηγὴ τῆς ἐμπειρικῆς θεολογίας’ (Georgios Mantzaridis, *Πρόσωπο καὶ θεσμοί* [Θεσσαλονίκη: Πουρναρά, 1997], 64 and 73). See also the passage by Saint John of the Ladder, ‘τέλος ἀγνείας, θεολογίας ὑπόθεσις’, *Λόγος* 30 (Ὡρωπὸς Ἀττικῆς: Ἱερά Μονή

Gregory Palamas' teaching is that our deification is not a moral event, founded on human logic, but an ontological, empirical event involving the whole of our being. It is personal participation in the uncreated energies of the personal God.

We will make good use of the rationality bestowed on us by God only if, through the ascetic tradition of the Orthodox Church, we discover the noetic energy in our heart. Then we who are 'potential' persons will begin to become 'active' persons, when 'the person hidden in the heart'<sup>38</sup> is revealed and transformed through God's grace. When the 'revolting mask'<sup>39</sup> falls and in its place the Christ-like face is revealed. Only those who have become persons through God's grace can make good use of their logicity,<sup>40</sup> because those who are at the stage of enlightenment have been liberated from the bonds of the passions and do not allow their reason to take precedence in the experience of God. In this empirical relationship with God, our noetic energy, the *nous*, as the only organ of divine scrutiny is united with the uncreated, deifying energy which is common to the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. God will be revealed in the *nous*, and reason as energy will be that which formulates and expresses the experiences of the *nous*.

People today are either devoted to unrestrained hedonism and perverseness or are hemmed in by the rationality and dependence on technology which are typical of the age in which we live, and so they let themselves down. They abandon the realm of freedom of the spirit for the temporal level. Palamas presents to the people of today the truth and life which open up the human person to infinitude. In this way, life on earth becomes a preparation for eternity and we are consciously and freely transformed by God's grace into eternal persons, in the image of God. Any proper management of the rapid technological advances, particularly in genetics and information technology, and, indeed, of an ecological catastrophe, can be effected only by scientists and political agencies whose noetic energy—their direct experience of and communion with God—is as well-developed as their rational powers. Otherwise, reason and any other intellectualist ethic are powerless in the face of the great challenges arising either from modern scientific achievements or insatiable consumerism. People are 'weary and heavily laden'<sup>41</sup> by sin, by the stress of their materialistic and prosperity-based manner of life and, directly or indirectly, seek to see and live for themselves that experience which will relieve their burdened conscience and fill every kind of void in their existence.

Παρακλήτου, 1978): 376.

<sup>38</sup> 1 Pet 3:4.

<sup>39</sup> "Όταν ανακύψει και κατοπτεύσει τὸν ἐντὸς ἄνθρωπον, τέως μὲν ἐνιδὼν τὸ προσγεγόμενον εἶδεχθὲς προσωπεῖον...". Εἰς τὸν Βίον τοῦ ὁσίου Πέτρου τοῦ ἐν Ἄθῳ 18, Συγγράμματα, vol. 5, 171.

<sup>40</sup> 'Μία φιλοσοφία ποὺ θέλει νὰ ἐξηγήσῃ τὰ πάντα μὲ βάση τὴν λογικότητα τῆς ὑπαρξης, δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ βρῇ λογικότητα σ' αὐτὴ τὴν ὑπαρξη ἔξω ἀπὸ τὸ πρόσωπο ποὺ τὴν παράγει, τὴν μεταδίδει καὶ τὴν συλλαμβάνει. Κάποτε, οἱ ἄνθρωποι εἶχαν ἐξαπατηθῇ ἀπὸ μία τέτοια φιλοσοφική ἢ ἐπιστημονική "λογικὴ" ἐξήγηση τῆς ὑπαρξης'. Fr D. Stanilaoe, Ἁγίου Μαξίμου Ὁμολογητοῦ, Φιλοσοφικά καὶ θεολογικά ἐρωτήματα, Ἐπὶ τὰς πηγὰς (Ἀθήνα: Ἀποστολικὴ Διακονία, 1978), 33.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Matt 11:28.

We promote the experience which is in accord with the Patristic Tradition. The return to the Fathers, the ‘watch-word’ that once again has begun to dominate the conscience of the Church in recent decades, does not mean that we should seek to enrich our knowledge by reading Patristic literature — which would be a process of reason — but that we should apply the Patristic experience, which is revealed through the discovery of noetic energy in our heart, through God’s grace. In referring to the component parts of the human being, Saint Gregory Palamas, the initiate and herald of grace,<sup>42</sup> writes: ‘Spiritual persons are made up of three parts: the grace of the heavenly Spirit; a rational soul;<sup>43</sup> and an earthly body.’<sup>44</sup> Therefore, if spiritual people are to learn about their body in detail, they ought to know about uncreated, deifying grace, about the powers of their soul and, in particular, how to discover the noetic energy which enables them to share in the deifying energy of the Holy Trinity and, as Palamas says, makes them without beginning and eternal, a new creation, new persons,<sup>45</sup> gods by grace.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Cf. the Dismissal Hymn of the saint. In his apologetical works, Palamas often says that he ‘is defending grace’.

<sup>43</sup> In this passage, when Palamas says the soul is rational he does not mean that it is not also noetic. Following Saint John Damascene (see *Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβῆς τῆς ὀρθοδόξου πίστεως*, κεφ. 26 [PG 94:920BC] ‘*ψυχὴν δὲ λογικὴν καὶ νοερὰν διὰ τοῦ οἰκείου ἐμφυσήματος δοὺς αὐτῷ*’, and further on, ‘*ψυχὴ τοίνυν ἐστὶν οὐσία ζωσα... λογικὴ τε καὶ νοερὰ*’ (924BC)). When he wishes to define the soul, he does not forget ‘noetic’. See, for example, in *Κεφάλαια, Συγγράμματα*, vol. 5, ‘*πάντα λογικὴ καὶ νοερὰ φύσις ... ἀλλ’ ἡ μὲν ἐν ἡμῖν λογικὴ καὶ νοερὰ φύσις*’, 30, p. 51. ‘*Ἡ λογικὴ καὶ νοερὰ ψυχὴ οὐσίαν μὲν ἔχει τὴν ζώην*’ 33, p. 52. ‘*Ἡ νοερὰ καὶ λογικὴ φύσις τῆς ψυχῆς*’, 39, p. 56. ‘*Μόνοι γὰρ ἡμεῖς τῶν κτισμάτων ἀπάντων πρὸς τῷ νοερῷ τε καὶ λογικῷ τε καὶ τὸ αἰσθητικὸν ἔχομεν*’, 63, p. 71. On the three hypostases of the human person, see also the wonderful passage by Saint Symeon the New Theologian from *Catechesis* 15 (SC 109, 228), ‘*Ὡ τοῦ θαύματος, ὅτι ἄνθρωπος Θεῷ ἐνοῦται πνευματικῶς τε καὶ σωματικῶς, εἴπερ οὐ χωρίζεται τοῦ νοῦ ἢ ψυχῆ οὐδὲ τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ σῶμα, ἀλλὰ τῇ οὐσιώδει ἐνώσει γίνεται τρισυπόστατος κατὰ Χάριν καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς θέσει Θεὸς ἐκ σώματος καὶ ψυχῆς καὶ οὐπερ μετέιληφε θείου Πνεύματος*’.

<sup>44</sup> Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζόντων 1, 3, 43, *Συγγράμματα*, vol.1, 454.

<sup>45</sup> ‘*Καὶ ὁ ἐπιτυχὼν τῆς θεώσεως ἄνθρωπος ἐπ’ ἀμφοτέρων εἰκότως, καλεῖται νῦν μὲν ἀναρχος καὶ αἰδιος καὶ οὐράνιος, ὡς ἀνωτέρω μικρὸν ἀκηκόαμεν, διὰ τὴν Χάριν τὴν ἄκτιστον καὶ αἰεὶ οὖσαν ἐκ τοῦ αἰεὶ ὄντος Θεοῦ, νῦν δὲ καινὴ κτίσις καὶ νέος ἄνθρωπος*’. *Ἀντιρρητικὸς πρὸς Ἀκίνδυνον* 3, 15, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 3, 172.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζόντων 3, 2, 12, *Συγγράμματα*, vol. 1, 666.