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THEOPHANY AND ILLUMINATION:
KNOWING THE DIVINITY
IN THE PATRISTIC PHILOSOPHY
OF THE CAPPADOCIAN FATHERS AND ST. AUGUSTINE

Abstract: This article explores two seemingly opposing theories according to which the pursuit of the comprehension of God through created things, which were considered as *primum cognitum*, may lead to mutually exclusive conclusions. However, this assumption turns out to be unlikely both for the Cappadocians and for St. Augustine. In the following inquiry, I will explore two types of cognitive approach in terms of reflection on God in the Christian tradition of the early Church (Patristics), proving that Nature or created things are only an inherent and unavoidable *medium cognitum*, but not the ultimate *ratio* for gaining knowledge about God. On the contrary, there seems to be either an indispensable supernatural or at least a specific human factor at work. In order to demonstrate this, I relied on two congruous concepts, i.e. the Cappadocian Fathers' theophany and St. Augustine's illumination, which were strongly linked to both the Neoplatonic concept of emanation and the philosophical enlightenment inscribed in the so-called metaphysics of light. It mostly prevails that these theories, having their significant meanings in the teachings of the early Church, are commonly tied to theology, and sparsely combined with philosophy. Presumably, both the Cappadocians and Augustine pointed to their concepts as a sort of metaphysical categories that can convincingly connect theology with philosophy (relatively faith with reason), considering God as the supreme being who, on the one hand, reveals Himself in created realm and, on the other hand, may supernaturally inspire human rational knowledge and spiritual growth. Through this exposure, they seem to fill a certain gap that usually divides faith (theology) and reason (philosophy) in their approach to God. Despite their presumed divergences, the subject of theophany and illumination have undoubtedly

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something in common, at least in some convergent points. For the Cappadocians and Augustine, and the Neoplatonic thinkers who followed them to a large extent (e.g. John Scotus Eriugen, Nicholas of Cusa), God appears as the supreme cause of being, its foundation and ultimate destiny. He can be underlying concept and a foremost criterion of truth both for early Eastern theology that operates on the borders of philosophy and for early Eastern philosophy that operates on the borders of theology. Since they approach God in different ways, one might get the impression that they are apparently divergent. Nevertheless, they seem to refer in a comparable manner to the same object of knowledge as God, presupposing a created reality both as the first object of knowledge (*primum cognitum*) and the mediating turning point in knowledge (*medium cognitum*). This requires recourse to an intellectual-spiritual cognition higher than the senses, that is, entering upon the inevitable path leading to a heightened rational-spiritual experience, and even to that mystical one, resulting from the supernatural enlightenment flowing from God Himself.

Keywords: Cappadocian Fathers, St. Augustine; theophany; illumination; early Eastern Church theology; early Eastern Church philosophy.

1. INTRODUCTION: THEOPHANY AND ILLUMINATION

Instead of bringing out all the alleged antagonisms and animosities between theology and philosophy which have lasted from the very beginning, it would be whatsoever hard to objectively deny that far-reaching parallels can be found between earlier Christian theology and philosophy (Patristic era), both in their inquiries on God as the supreme cause of Creation and in their broad frames of monotheistic interrelation. In the early Christendom spreading throughout the territory of the Western Roman Empire, especially in the period between the Council of Nicaea (325 AD) and the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD), the ideas of Christian spirituality were permeated by Neoplatonic philosophy in a distinctly intense way (i.e. Ammonius Saccas, Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblicus the Syrian, Proclus). They were shaped by the monistic teaching of Plato, primarily commenting on *Timaeus*, against the background of Greco-Roman polytheism, thus many comparative associations and ideas can be enumerated. Some of the obvious tangent concepts are the Cappadocian theory of “theophany”, symbolizing the revelation of God Himself in the created realm, which is also described in many places in the Holy Scripture, and St. Augustine’s theory of “enlightenment”, pointing to God’s interference in the human spiritual and cognitive growing.

In the Christendom, the apologetic Church Fathers’ philosophy (i.e. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Philo, Justin Martyr, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, Clement, Origen) in their rational approach to God and Revelation – as John Kelly neatly terms it, “intellectually adventurous and inclined to speculation”, unlike their

Latin counterparts of Western Scholasticism who were “cautious and pedestrian, confining themselves to expounding the traditional rule of faith”¹ – was likely due to the Hellenization of Christianity. One might assume that to some extent this was due to the very philosophical nature of Christianity, and that the influence of Greek philosophy only slightly reinforced or strengthened this process.

This Hellenization became most fervently visible in the early Middle Ages, in active Jewish and Greek circles, both in the Jewish diasporas and the Greek philosophical schools in Alexandria and Antioch, which is especially noticeable in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. Meaning that, the convergence between Divine Revelation (faith) and philosophical thinking (reason) can be observed in and compared with the earlier Jewish religion, and is also quite evident in the germ of Christian philosophy, although it may be due rather to this Hellenistic influence than to the nature of the religion itself². In reality, however, Christianity, which preserved the truth of Jewish monotheism, was strengthened by the very Revelation and surpassed pagan thought in a way incomparable to any other philosophical streams of the Greeks. Despite these accumulating accretions and growing ideas of Hellenistic thought – especially the Neoplatonic one – imparted on Christianity, the defining foundation of medieval Christian intellectual streams should be Revelation itself and the philosophical teaching of the Fathers within the apostolic tradition, not sheer reason or Nature alone. In this respect, Christian philosophy differed substantially from the pagan, unfettered rationalism and “earth-shattering” naturalism of previous philosophies, which were the essential determinants of the legacy of Greek philosophy, but not of religious thinking itself.

Nevertheless, against this background, from the wide spectrum of concepts that mostly contained philosophical-Hellenistic legacy and were associated with the theology of the Patristic Fathers, the Cappadocian theory of theophany, certainly burdened with the Bible, stood out, as did St. Augustine’s theory of enlightened knowledge (*illuminatio*), emphasizing Platonic and Neoplatonic threads that linked them to Christian philosophical and mystical thought.

The very concept of “theophany” as the Glory of the Lord, considered in quite detail as an impact on the human senses and soul, comes from the biblical context. Referring to the Old Testament accounts, several striking examples emerge. It appears in all its splendor in a cloud in front of the Israelites (Exodus 16:7, 10). Then the Glory manifested itself in a majestic cloud on the top of Mount Sinai – “and the appearance of the Glory of the Lord in the eyes of the Israelites was like devouring fire on the top of the mountain” (Exodus 24:16-17). It also appears in the cloud covering the Tent of Meeting, filling the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35);

¹ J.N.D. KELLY F.B.A. *Early Christian Doctrines*. Fifth. Revised Edition. London – New York 1977; rep. Continuum 2001 p. 4.

² Cf. *ibidem* p. 4-22, esp. 5-11.

or during the reign of King Solomon, when the temple was filled with the cloud of the Glory of the Lord, filling the temple of God (2 Chronicles 5:14); or after Solomon's prayer, when the Glory of the Lord filled the whole house (2 Chronicles 7:1); or, it rested over the temple of the Lord, which all the Israelites saw (2 Chronicles 7:3). The theophany of the Glory of the Lord appears many times in biblical history; among the Cherubim in the Book of Ezekiel, in Ezekiel's vision of Jerusalem (Ezek 1:28; 8:4; 9:3; 10:4, 19; 11:22-23). Taking this from a philosophical perspective, the philosophical thought of the Cappadocian Fathers is fundamentally permeated by the biblical concept of theophany. However, it also has its own long philosophical tradition, harking back to Plato's *Timaeus* and its obvious connotations with Neoplatonic philosophy, which posits a theory of the emanation of Divine forms into matter, which reflects in a mirror-like way the nature and power of God Himself, who is otherwise separated from Nature itself (*supra ens*). According to this theory, forms that are the result of emanation from a Divine source exist both in the intellect of the Creator and in the created reality, binding reality with necessary laws of being. Knowledge of these forms testifies to the Divine presence in the world and, accordingly, should be the basis for human true cognition. In this conception, the ontological status of the Divine source is definitely the most significant, forasmuch it is outside of all being and is transcendent in relation to the Creation, but concomitantly immanent within it by means of forms deriving from the source. This model of outwardly creating things through the emanational process *ex Deo* is a legacy of Plato's philosophy and the subsequent systems of Neoplatonic provenance that followed it. Basically, this means that God is considered in such a way that He is an independent being, of supreme unity, eternal, outside of what He creates, while His emanated forms remain present in the created realm, which confirm His limitless and unmitigated existence through things embedded in Nature (being) by His infinite power.

In contrast to Aristotelian philosophy (i.e. *creatio ab aeterno*), a different view on the process of creation by God separated from Nature stems from the Platonic model of creation, that is, although the matter of the world might be eternal and formless, at least its essential structure and forms of all existing things were created by God *ex Deo*, which was fundamentally different from the typical Christian concept of *ex nihilo*. This seems to be the reason why the Neoplatonic understanding was a more coherent view than Aristotle's, as well as adequate for thinkers of Christian origin, because it left room for God's intervening on reality, His agency, providence, and Divine will. Aristotle's position was also unacceptable to the later Neoplatonists of the Alexandrian School at the turn of the 3rd and 4th centuries, who, in fact, combined elements of Platonic thought with Aristotelian, Pythagorean, Stoic, Oriental and Hellenic Gnosticism. Following this, it ultimately influenced the Aristotelian-Platonic syncretism of later Arab thinkers such as Al-Farabi

(†950) and Avicenna (†1037)³, and even later Scholastics such as Henry of Ghent (†1293), and the 13th century representatives of the Franciscan School such as Alexander of Hales (†1245), John of La Rochelle (†1245), as well as the revival of Renaissance Neoplatonism within the Florentine Academy, especially in Gemistos Pléthon (†1450), Marsilio Ficino (†1499), Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (†1494). Thus, the idea of God in Neoplatonism assumes theological and philosophical references to the concept of the “One” emanating light or forms into matter. It is here identical with the highest Good or “Primordial One” from Plotinus’ *Enneads* (†271), which later Christian Neoplatonists referred to as God existing beyond or above being (*supra ens*). For example, Plotinus was convinced that, according to Plato’s interpretation, there are only three primary principles in the metaphysics of creation (the One, intellect, and world soul), which were also recognized by the later Platonic tradition. “One” is the first and absolutely simple principle, both the cause of itself and the cause of the existence of everything else in the Universe (*Enneads*, V.1; VI.9). It was widely believed that from “the One” came all ideas, distinct intelligences, and all created beings, including the Divine Logos (λόγος) through which all forms of natural things were created and embodied in Nature⁴. The Neoplatonist Proclus of Athens (†485), who headed the Platonic Academy until 485, a student of Plutarch of Athens (†430), and the Neoplatonist Syrianus (†ca. 437) believed that it was not enough to prove that Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover is the ultimate cause of the motion or changes in the Universe. According to Proclus, it is rather necessary to prove that God Himself is the true efficient cause of the Universe, the very source of the existence of all beings and matter. Furthermore, by uniquely combining Aristotle’s concept of the Unmoved Mover or Prime Mover with the Platonic concept of the Supreme Good from which the world emanates, the Neoplatonists, including the Arabs, attempted to derive a theory according to which the ultimate cause of the Cosmos and the existence of forms within it is not the result of a natural process (*ex materia*), but arises by emanation from an external, supernatural source beyond the Cosmos, that is, from the Being acknowledged as God⁵.

³ Cf. J. MCGINNIS. *Natural Knowledge in the Arabic Middle Ages*. In: *Wrestling with Nature. From Omens to Science*. Ed. P. Harrison, R.L. Numbers, M.H. Shank. Chicago – London 2011 p. 59-82, esp. 64-65.

⁴ See K. SEESKIN. *Plotinus on Metaphysical Causation*. In: IDEM. *Maimonides on the Origin of the World*. Cambridge 2005 p. 96-120.

⁵ J. MCGINNIS. *Natural Knowledge in the Arabic Middle Ages* p. 64. For more on this tradition, see C. D’ANCONA. *The Textual Tradition of the Graeco-Arabic Plotinus. The Theology of Aristotle, Its “ru’ūs al-masā’il”, and the Greek Model of the Arabic Version*. In: *The Letter before the Spirit: The Importance of Text Editions for the Study of the Reception of Aristotle*. Ed. A.M.I. van Oppenraay with the collaboration of R. Smidt van Gelder-Fontaine. Leiden 2012 p. 37-71.

St. Augustine (†430) also refers to the God's theophany and often draws on biblical comparisons to the manifestations of Divine power and presence within Nature, such as the angels visiting Abraham and Lot, the burning bush, the pillar of fire following the Israelites, and the cloud on Mount Sinai, and finally the theophany of the dove descending on Christ during his baptism in the Jordan, as well as the tongues of fire during Pentecost. All these biblical comparisons were meant to indicate the continuous theophanic activity of God's energy (*energeia*) in the world, its manifestation and impact in power. In other words, God, being immanent and spiritual by nature, through theophanies also becomes transcendent to Himself and present in the created realm.

In turn, the concept of enlightenment (*illuminatio*) has an intriguingly complex tradition that can be approached in many ways, including theological ones, which are most often considered autonomous and self-sufficient in relation to other explanations (e.g. philosophical ones)⁶. One can trace the evolution of the issue of light (*lumen*) as a metaphor for intellectual cognition in Greek philosophy, especially Plato (†ca. 347 BC) and Aristotle (†322 BC), who used the metaphor of light illuminating the intellect, or the same concept in Plotinus (†270), Proclus (†485), St. Augustine (†430), Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (†ca. VI cent.), and in the 15th century, Nicholas of Cusa (†1464). All of them used "sunlight" as a metaphor for intellectual light that comes from the One, the highest Good considered as God, and thanks to whom the human soul comes to intrinsic visual knowledge (*intueri*) of the ideas or patterns of creation process that are parts of and fill God's intellect. Illumination descending from God would therefore enrich the meaning given to our human impressions, thoughts and concepts of the intellect or soul, perfecting them and raising them to the rank of enlightened entities, i.e. that exist and function without the participation in physical matter. For example, for St. Augustine, the eternal, unchanging and necessary truths are the subject of perfect knowledge which in fact is the self-knowledge of the soul, obtained as a result of supernatural influence or light. Accordingly, Nicholas of Cusa, in his treatises *De quaerendo Deum* (*On the Search for God*) dated 1445 and *De visione Dei* (*On Seeing God*) dated 1453, refers to the concept of light as a metaphor for human knowledge and the concept of God as the source of this light⁷. Cusanus not only

⁶ See T. NOONE: *Divine illumination*. In: *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*. Ed. by R. Pasnau in association with Ch. van Dyke. Cambridge 2009 part IV (*Soul and knowledge*) chapter 27 p. 369-383.

⁷ *Nicholas of Cusa. Selected Spiritual Writings*. Transl. and introduced by H.L. Bond. Preface by M. Watanabe. Series: *The Classic Western Spirituality*. New York – Mahwah 1997 p. 39-41. See also C.L. MILLER. *The Metaphor of Light and the Light of Metaphor in Nicholas of Cusa*. In: *Nicholas of Cusa and Times of Transition: Essays in Honor of Gerald Christianson*. Ed. by Th.M. Izbicki, J. Aleksander, D.F. Duclow. Series: *Studies in the History of Christian Traditions*. Vol. 188. Leiden – Boston 2018 p. 286-300, esp. 286-287; L. Dupré. *The Mystical Theology of Cusanus's De Visione Dei*. In: *Eros*

used the traditional metaphysics of light within his theology, but also gave it a new meaning, especially by showing the deeper meaning of the words of St. Paul in the *First Letter to Timothy* from the New Testament that God dwells in “unapproachable light” (“[...] which the blessed and only Sovereign One – the King of kings and Lord of lords – will bring about in His own time. He alone is immortal and dwells in unapproachable light. No one has ever seen Him, nor can anyone see Him. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen”, 1 Tim 6:15-16)⁸. Cusanus, deeply rooted in the Neoplatonic and Augustinian tradition, even refers to God as both the “otherness without otherness” and *Possest* (Actualized Possibility) or *Ipsium Posse* (Possibility Itself), and the “vanishing point” where both physical light and the metaphorical light identified with God disappear⁹. In *De visione Dei*, Cusanus again evokes the motif of physical and intellectual light, and defines the path of enlightenment as a path of knowledge in an upward direction, in which man should follow from created things, through intellectual knowledge, to the limits of “enlightened ignorance” (*docta ignorantia*), until he is finally taken or carried away beyond all visible light and transformed into the transcendent “unapproachable light” spoken of in the Bible¹⁰. At last, for Cusanus, the power of God is the manifestation of God-Christ Himself, who is the illuminating light that provides true and infallible knowledge to the rational soul and who alone determines in His power the true destiny and ultimate happiness of man, who in turn must be properly disposed in dignity and strong enough to receive this Divine enlightenment:

[...] By power itself the triune and one God is signified, whose name is omnipotence, namely the power of all power, with whom all things are possible and nothing impossible, and who is the strength of the strong and the power of the virtuous. Whose most perfect appearance, than which nothing can be more perfect, is Christ, leading us to a clear contemplation of his power by word and

and *Eris*. *Contributions to a Hermeneutical Phenomenology Liber Amicorum for Adriaan Peperzak*. Ed. P. van Tongeren, P. Sars, Ch. Bremmers, K. Boey. Dordrecht – Boston – London 1992¹ p. 105-117; A. CONTY. *Absolute Art: Nicolas of Cusa's De Visione Dei*. “Religion and the Arts” 16 (2012) p. 461-487; T. KNIGHT. *In a Mirror and an Enigma: Nicholas of Cusa's De Visione Dei and the Milieu of Vision*. “Sophia” 59 (2020) p. 113-137.

⁸ Cf. C.L. MILLER. *The Metaphor of Light and the Light of Metaphor in Nicholas of Cusa* p. 286.

⁹ Cf. NICOLAI DE CUSA. *De visione Dei*. In: IDEM. *Opera Omnia*. Vol. VI. Ed. H.D. Riemann. Hamburg 2000 n. 21, 2; n. 75, 1-2; n. 6, 21; NICOLAI DE CUSA. *De apice theoriae*. In: IDEM. *Opera Omnia*. Vol. XII: *De Venatione Sapientiae, De Apice Theoriae*. Ed. R. Klibansky, H.G. Senger. Hamburgi 1982 n. 15, 13-16: “[...] Nam in omnibus, quae sunt aut esse possunt, non potest quicquam aliud videri quam posse ipsum, sicut in omnibus factis et faciendis posse primi facientis et in omnibus motis et movendis posse primi motoris”. See also NICOLAS OF CUSA. *De Possest (On Actualized Possibility)*. Transl. by J. Hopkins. Minneapolis 1986 p. 14-16.

¹⁰ Cf. C.L. MILLER. *The Metaphor of Light and the Light of Metaphor in Nicholas of Cusa* p. 286-287.

example. And this is the happiness which alone satisfies the highest desire of the mind¹¹.

2. THE EASTERN CAPPADOCIAN TRADITION: GOD'S IMMANENT CONSUBSTANTIAL UNITY AND TRANSCENDENT THEOPHANY

Philosophical reflection pertaining to theophany of God can be observed among the Cappadocian Fathers in the 4th century. Their philosophy significantly complements the theological understanding of the nature of God in Three Persons (Trinitarian theology) and His manifestations in human reality. Numerous concepts of the Cappadocian Fathers, especially St. Basil the Great (†379), Gregory of Nazianzus (†ca. 390) and Gregory of Nyssa (†ca. 395), permeated the religious worldview and complemented the Christian philosophy of that period. Their thought became popular during the period of Gnostic crises as in the dispute about exegesis in Antioch, Christological disputes as the most relevant on the dual nature of Christ, also on the Arian crisis, as well as on issues regarding the transcendence of the Holy Trinity and problems surrounding the question of Divine *energies*¹². The philosophy and theology of the Greek Fathers constitute a lasting patristic heritage, previously referring to important doctrinal disputes, such as the Monoteletic dispute and the one between Nestorianism and Monophysitism. They were raised at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 (e.g. Cyril of Alexandria) and later at the Second Council in Constantinople in 553 (e.g. the previous teachings of Leontius of Byzantium might have had a great impact on some later council decisions)¹³.

¹¹ “Per posse ipsum deus trinus et unus, cuius nomen omnipotens seu posse omnis potentiae, apud quem omnia possibilia et nihil impossibile et qui fortitudo fortium et virtus virtutum, significatur. Cuius perfectissima apparitio, qua nulla potest esse perfectior, Christus est nos ad claram contemplationem ipsius posse verbo et exemplo perducens. Et haec est felicitas, quae solum satiat supremum mentis desiderium” – NICOLAI DE CUSA. *De apice theoriae* n. 28, 1-7.

¹² More on Divine energies in the context of the Cappadocian tradition, especially the Neoplatonic one, which inspired me to conduct separate studies and connect them with Augustinian thought, can be read in: D. BRADSHAW. *The Divine Glory and the Divine Energies*. “Faith and Philosophy” 23 (2006) no. 3 p. 279-295.

¹³ See J.N.D. KELLY. *Early Christian Doctrines* part III (*From Nicaea to Chalcedon*) p. 221-395, esp. 380-386; B. ALTANER & A. SUIBER. *Patrologia. Życie, pisma i nauka Ojców Kościoła*. Warszawa 1990 pp. 430; H. VON CAMPENHAUSEN. *Ojcowie Kościoła*. Transl. by K. Wierszyłowski. Warszawa 1998 p. 9-145; *Chrześcijaństwo u schyłku starożytności*. “Studia Źródłoznawcze” vol. I-VI. Kraków – Warszawa 1998-2007. For more on the philosophy of the Cappadocian Fathers and earlier philosophical tradition of Christianity, see: M. MANIKOWSKI. *Filozofia w obronie dogmatu. Argumenty antytryteistyczne Grzegorza z Nyssy na tle tradycji*. Wrocław 2002 pp. 248; IDEM. *Pierwsza zasada, świat stworzony i drogi poznania. Pseudo-Dionizy Areopagita – jego filozofia i teologia*. Kraków 2006 pp. 224; *Filozofia wczesnochrześcijańska i jej źródła*. Ed. M. Manikowski. Wrocław 2000 pp. 105.

To express one of the most important terms of their theology bordering on philosophy, relating to the powers and attributes of God, and to define the consubstantial unity of the Divine Persons, the Cappadocian Fathers used a philosophically tinged category from the Council of Nicaea, incorporated into the Nicene Creed, which is the *homoousios* (consubstantial). Incidentally, it is worth noting that at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 the term *prosopon* (πρόσωπον; person) was used to refer to tritheistic matters, however, was not yet used in the Nicene and Constantinople confessions. Instead, the category of *homoousios* allowed for maintaining the unity of the Divine nature of God and at the same time did not limit the essential relationship between the multiplicity of the Divine Persons¹⁴.

In a rather attentive approach to the Cappadocians, next to the term “person” I would also list the term “nature” in the sense of “essence” in reference to God, invoking the Greek *prosopon* (πρόσωπον). This is due to the following premises. Firstly, according to the Eastern interpretation, *prosopon* in the Chalcedonian definition denotes the appearance of a person to a much lesser extent than *hypostasis*, in the latter case meaning precisely “person”. In the Church of the East, *prosopon* is the ontological whole of being, and not just “person” taken in the personalistic sense that we impose on this word today. Unfortunately, vest hitherto opinions were erroneous or at least not entirely precise. Presumably, this comes from a misreading that in Trinitarian theology the orthodox phrase was not *treis prosopa, mia hypostasis*, but was rather *treis hypostases, mia ousia*, which verbally means “three distinct individuals (persons), one substantiality”, and the word *hypostasis* here was adopted to indicate the person, not *prosopon* as a whole¹⁵. This seems to be due to the interchangeable adoption of some different meanings regarding the issue in question, terms and not entirely certain contextualism associated with them. In fact, the *prosopon* corresponds to “personality” as a whole, whereas *hypostasis* corresponds to a distinct individual (person), which is why *hypostasis* was translated as “person” (ὑποστάσεως) at Hebrews 1:3 in the vast majority of translations.

¹⁴ See BASIL OF CAESAREA. *St. Basil the Great: On the Holy Spirit*. Transl. by D. Anderson, Crestwood. New York 1997; SAINT GREGORY NAZIANZEN. *Oration XLIII: Panegyric on Saint Basil*. Ed. Ph. Schaff, H. Wace. Transl. by Ch.G. Browne, J.E. Swallow, M.A. NPNF 7. Second Series. Grand Rapids, Michigan 1983; ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA. *St. Athanasius: On the Incarnation*. Transl. by Religious of the C.S.M.V. Introduction C.S. Lewis. New York 1973.

¹⁵ For more, see A. DE HALLEUX. ‘Hypostase’ et ‘personne’ dans la formation du dogme trinitaire (ca. 375-381). “Revue d’Histoire Ecclésiastique” 79 (1984) no. 2 p. 313-369, 625-670; J. ZACHHUBER. *Basil and the Three-Hypostases Tradition. Reconsidering the Origins of Cappadocian Theology*. “Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum” 5 (2001) p. 65-85; E. HAMMERSCHMIDT. *Ursprung philosophisch-theologischer Termini und deren bernahme in die altkirchliche Theologie*. “Ostkirchliche Studien” 8 (1959) p. 202-220; B. DEGÓRSKI. *Sformułowanie wiary w Trójjedynego Boga w latach 360-380. Formuła dogmatyczna μία οὐσία – τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις*. “Vox Patrum” 21 (2001) p. 227-235; N. WIDOK. *Stanowisko Grzegorza z Nazjanzu wobec formuły trynitarnej: mia ousia – treis hypostaseis*. “Vox Patrum” 44 (2003) p. 221-233.

Prosopon, besides its regular and colloquial usage, pointed to something greater than just an ordinary person, namely to something like a personality or individual nature of that personality, and it was not merely a person or man in the contemporary sense. It seems to have a deeper meaning, for example, this can be read in the passage from the Epistle to the Hebrews: “[...] ὁς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ δι’ εαυτοῦ καθαρισμόν ποιησάμενος τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς” (Heb 1:3). Secondly, the difference between these concepts, such as πρόσωπον, ὑπόστασις, οὐσία, are not so sharp as it might seem, and even quite blurred in the early tradition of the Church. A *hypostasis* is in itself a self-contained entity (*per se subsistent* individual or person), but it can have an equally strong reference to *ousia* in the sense of the Aristotelian substance or essence (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι). Moreover, as rational *hypostasis* would be a person, then rational *suppositum subsistens* can be named a person either, and the same concerns the rational *essence* or *ousia* which can also be defined a person¹⁶. Thus, such linguistic misunderstandings and the philosophical background contained in these concepts and terms have likely caused errors in interpreting their correct meaning. The *prosopon* as a person-individual, with the exclusion of minor connotations, was not a wholly accurate definition attributed to God as a person-individual in the early Christian Church, which have become entangled in various debates because of these ambiguities (e.g. Sabellianism or Nestorian heresy, etc.). With a touch of irony, one can assume that almost all the disputes between Greeks and Romans on the contrasts between *hypostasis* and *prosopon* resulted from certain doctrinal confusions and often divergent interpretations with a philosophical tinge. More than that, even the Greek Orthodox held that the word “person” indicates only the three modes of a single *ousia*, but not exclusively the three *per se subsistent* individuals in the *per se subsistent* Divine substance (θεῖα οὐσία). Thirdly, although Chalcedon resolved to maintain the creed promulgated at Nicaea and Constantinople, the new word *homoousias* appears twice in the Chalcedonian document to designate and emphasize the full humanity of the incarnate Christ alongside his full divinity. The text of this document also contains two extra-biblical (but more philosophical) terms that are not found in the Nicene and Constantinopolitan creeds, namely the “nature” (φύση) and “person” (πρόσωπον); the term “hypostasis” (ὑπόστασις) appears there as well. Now, the key term is *prosopon*, which serves as a means of explaining the idea of two separate natures in Christ-God or the three persons of the Holy Trinity, but closely

¹⁶ On how to understand the *suppositum subsistens*, especially in relation to the hypostatic nature of Christ in St. Thomas’s approach, see L. SZYNDLER. *Osoba jako ‘suppositum subsistens’ w ‘De unione Verbi incarnati’ św. Tomasza z Akwinu*. “Studia Philosophiae Christianae” 37 (2001) no. 2 p. 174-190.

related to each other. The concept of “person”, which is used in contemporary personalistic anthropology, was completely alien to pre-Christian Greek philosophers. It was rather adopted as a “mask” or “facial expression”, later as a legal category. Nonetheless, in the Christian writings of the first centuries, the *prosopon* appeared as early as the 3rd century, so just before the Council of Chalcedon, and even before the Council of Nicaea. It was used by two eminent Western theologians, such as Hippolytus (†ca. 235) and Tertullian (†ca. 225). It is noteworthy that they used this word solely in the context of considerations on God revealing Himself, as the Cappadocians did, but not of God as a person in modern sense of the term. They therefore operated with this word in a sense similar to the Hellenic “facial expression”. Following in the footsteps of the generations that passed them by, both Hippolytus and Tertullian were sensitive to ensuring that in their considerations about God the idea of the oneness and unity of God was not undermined, so as not to fall into pagan polytheism or the dualism of the Gnostics¹⁷.

However, the most significant thing is that the Cappadocian Fathers, in particular Gregory of Nazianzus, following Basil and his concept of three *hypostases*, were fully aware that the language of theology was undergoing modification, hence they treated the *prosopon* as a synonym for the *hypostasis*, as Basil perceived it¹⁸. Therefore, the pivotal term of the Cappadocian doctrine is not *prosopon*, but *hypostasis*, treated in a deeper philosophical context. This interchangeable meanings and applications caused many inaccuracies and still does. This stems also from the fact that the Eastern theology expresses even Redemption more often in philosophical and ontological terms, similar to the nature of God, than in biblical or Christian moral terms. The alternative word *hypostasis* thus appears to be much more personalistic in nature than *prosopon*, having – ironically enough – philosophical and even Gnostic connotations. It may also designate three essential and consubstantial *modes* existing in one indivisible Divine substance, but not three persons as persons. Regardless of these uncertainties as to the exact meaning of the terms in the early Eastern Church, the relevant and undisputed foundations of Christian dogmatics, e.g. the Christological ones, were formulated many centuries later in the philosophical terminology of Aquinas (†1274) and are still recognized today by almost all churches, with the possible exception of the Coptic Church and Protestantized churches, which are considered to be completely separate. There are other contexts and references that could be enumerated to analyze terminological discrepancies or convergence between “nature” and “person” derived from *prosopon* and *hypostasis*, but at least these arguments establish some obvious connotations and the truth of the premises, namely by pointing to the consubstantial

¹⁷ A. SIEMIANOWSKI. *Proces hellenizacji chrześcijaństwa i program jego dehellenizacji*. “Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis” no. 1836. Wrocław 1996 p. 24-25.

¹⁸ *Ibidem* p. 25-26.

wholeness and Divine unity in the nature of God who, despite this unity, is an undifferentiated oneness existing in three consubstantial persons or hypostases.

When it comes to the issue of theophany and the revelation of God Himself in and through created realm, Gregory of Nyssa identified God with the supreme True Being, which is also seen in the Neoplatonic tradition of the metaphysics of light, but, contrary to the later scholastic tradition, he excluded the knowability of God as Being through rational apprehension, conceptualization or discourse, in the sense that God contingently contains within Himself all ontic determinations, but at the same time transcends all limitations of Nature, including the human intellect¹⁹. God as the Supreme Being is indeed unknowable directly through reason, but instead of this, Gregory of Nazianzus argued that we know Him from created things treated as *primum cognitum* and *medium cognitum*, related to God's existence and presence (*peri auton*). Even though He transcends the concepts of time, Nature, and mind, we eagerly yearn to comprehend Him as Self-presenting Truth²⁰. In turn, St. Basil defines this comprehension as intellectual illumination through cognitive insight into the created realm, in which by means of reason we apprehend the Divine emanations in being, such as goodness itself, beauty itself and other perfect attributes. This very act of knowledge in the soul is thus triggered and conditioned by both the created Nature and the differentiated action of the power or *energy* of the Holy Spirit (*energeian*), which, depending on the level of a person's faith, enables him to grasp God's undifferentiated unity and immutability in proportion to his faith²¹.

[...] Like the ability to see in a healthy eye, so the power of the Spirit [works] in a purified soul... although not as a constant activity (*energousa*). Just as the ability to create is potentially contained in the artist and operates only during his activity (*energousa*), when the artist cooperates in accordance with this ability,

¹⁹ GREGORY OF NYSSA. *The Life of Moses*, Classics of Western Spirituality. Transl. by A. Malherbe, E. Ferguson, J. Meyendorff. New York 1978 b. II sec. 234; See also D.L. BALÁS. *Μετουσία Θεοῦ: Man's Participation in God's Perfections According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa*. Ed. Studia Anselmiana, Fasciculus LV. Romae 1966.

²⁰ SANCTI PATRIS NOSTRI GREGORII THEOLOGI VULGO NAZIANZENI, ARCHIEPISCOPI CONSTANTINOPOLITANT. *Opera quae exstant omnia, Tomus Secundus*. In: *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*. Series Graeca, in qua prodeunt patres, doctores scriptoresque ecclesiae Graecae a S. Barnaba ad Photium, accurante J.-P. Migne. *Patrologiae Graecae Tomus XXXVI*: 317B-C. Paris 1858, *Orat.* 38, 7; see also *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Vol. 7. Ed. Ph. Schaff, H. Wace. Grand Rapids, Michigan 1982 p. 346-347; *Documents of the Christian Church*. Selected and edited by H. Bettenson. London – Oxford – New York 1967 pp. 343.

²¹ *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Vol. 8. Ed. Ph. Schaff, H. Wace. Grand Rapids, Michigan 1982 p. 15.

so the Spirit works and is present in those who are properly disposed in dignity [...] in whom the Spirit realizes the effect of its power (*energēmasin*) [...]²².

The concept of the so-called “theophany” ultimately concerns the nature of the relationship between Creation (being) and God, as well as between God Himself and the Divine radiation perceived as Glory, Emanation of Divine Power, Divine Energy, Beam of Light, Light of God, and the like. The philosophy of the Cappadocian Fathers does not avoid Platonic terms and, under philosophical terms, tells us a lot about how God’s attributes defined theologically refer to the philosophical concept of God’s attributes. Neoplatonic doctrine permeated their rational thinking and was reinterpreted by them in theological terms on many momentous points. One of the central threads of this doctrine is also the distinction between *ousía* and *energeia*, namely between God as an eternal substance distinguished from the created being but likewise from his Glory as an emanation of His own Divine power or nature. This concept is built on and derived from the original (biblical) meaning of theophany. The emanation of the Glory of God is understood here as a distributive illuminating power and manifestation (*energeian*) of the presence of One True God. He is indeed the absolute unity, the indivisible spirit, but simultaneously He is accessible to man both in His numerous existential and multiplied hypostatic representations. However, this is not pantheism, as it might seem, in the Spinozian sense, or panentheism (*pán en theós* – all in God), but an exemplification of God’s vast power or a manifestation of His infinite and real *energies*.

The unapproachability of obtaining absolute knowledge of transcendent God as an object external to Creation (*supra ens*), however, does not limit His knowability through human cognitive experience of real things in Nature. This limitation of cognition is not contained in God Himself by virtue of His nature – as the Bishop of Caesarea, St. Basil the Great holds in the treatise *On the Holy Spirit* (ca. 375) – but, on the contrary, it is the result of limited cognitive abilities of human nature itself. Man rather knows God from His *energies* or theophanies, the emanations of which – to put it philosophically – are many in the world, but he does not recognize His internal essence, which is completely beyond the reach of any cognition²³. For obvious reasons, this doctrine takes as its starting point the unquestionable acceptance of Holy Scripture and the issues of grace and Redemption, and in the end it dominates not only the sphere of theology, but also of philosophical theology of the East. God can be known by recognizing His emanations in Nature, i.e. the principles of created reality, through which and in which the inner Divine causes of the process of creation must be carefully perceived. One can

²² *Ibidem* p. 38. Unless otherwise indicated, all Latin and Greek translations in the text are entirely mine.

²³ *Ibidem* p. 274.

also find similar later Latin versions of Cappadocian thought that appeared in the West in the writings of medieval thinkers and were paraphrases of theories originating outside the Eastern tradition. Much of the Western contamination in the reading of Cappadocians of Neoplatonic origin is perhaps the result of a foreign evolution of their concepts and thoughts, with which later Western Scholasticism was familiar mainly through the *De Divinis nominibus* of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and the *De fide orthodoxa* of John Damascene (†ca. 749)²⁴.

Gregory of Nyssa was particularly radical in his claims regarding the God's theophany and the relationship between God's essence and the emanation of God's power. His exegesis of the Gospel according to St. John (esp. 17) indicates that God's Glory corresponds to the meaning of the Holy Spirit²⁵. While God in His intrinsic essence is unknowable, God's extrinsic or transcending Glory and Divine power can manifest itself as the emanating Divine agent in created reality through the Holy Spirit, His numerous gifts, miracles, manifestations of energy (*ho energōn* or *energei*). Accordingly, God becomes present as the self-presenting Divine truth in the human soul through knowledge of reality and secondarily through the soul's insight into intellectual ideas and forms that reflect unchanging eternal truths corresponding to the perfect harmony of Divine creation. Even the supernatural visions of Moses (and the other Prophets) were interpreted by the Cappadocian Fathers as a combination of images of the created reality, namely the substantial things, with the structure of the intellectually knowing soul. God obviously cannot be identified directly with created being or Nature, because He transcends being to a degree of infinite extension and by His infinite capacity to create all forms of being. God remains, as He always was, in an external relation to created being, because His being is rather *supra ens*, above the being of created things and the whole Universe. In this sense, the emanational aspect seems to have a deeper justification, which at the same time reduces pantheism, forasmuch as God is not Nature, and Nature is also not God. Whatever we know and say about God is not only insufficient, but is closer to the truth solely in a supra-sensory approach that goes beyond being (*ens*) and Nature. God as a direct object – if we may say so – as pure existence in the truth of His Being (*tou ontōs ontos*) is entirely unknowable and thus remains unapproachable to empirical and sensory

²⁴ D. BRADSHAW. *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom*. Cambridge 2004 p. 222-225; see also F. O'ROURKE. *Being and Non-Being in Pseudo-Dionysius*. In: *The Relationship between Neoplatonism and Christianity*. Ed. Th. Finan, V. Twomey. Dublin 1992 p. 55-78; see also IDEM. *Aquinas and Platonism*. In *Contemplating Aquinas*. Ed. F. Kerr. London 2003 p. 247-279; IDEM. *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*. Notre Dame University Press 2005.

²⁵ Cf. *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*, in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera dogmatica minora*. Ed. W. Jaeger [et al.]. Vol. III pars I. Leiden 1987 (issued between 1958-1996) p. 21-22.

approach (sensualism) or to an imaginary one (fictional)²⁶. However, as existence itself, goodness itself, beauty itself, love itself, and therefore as the fullness of being in its perfection, embodied analogously in the world, God, through emanation or manifestation of energy (theophany) in all these perfections, reveals Himself on the intermediate pattern of Nature, which reflects the archetypal pattern (ideas) of the Divine substance apprehending in the intellectually knowing soul²⁷. In this sense, the Glory of the Lord or the theophanic agency of the Holy Spirit is a concentration of power that exemplifies for man the omnipotence and limitless essence of God in an indirect way.

This concept of transferring the manifestation of God through His energy by means of created Nature into the order of intellectual knowledge, which corresponds to a certain kind of intelligibile visibility or *quasi*-visibility of God in the soul, making His Divine essence and power available indirectly in ideas and cognitive forms (species) abstracted from real being (*ens reale*), can be found among most representatives of Neoplatonic philosophy²⁸. Although the Cappadocians place strong emphasis on the indirect possibility of knowing God through divine theophanies embedded in Nature, there are conflicting theories that point to the possibility of seeing God directly, albeit this refers to the afterlife and the spiritual realm, not the temporal one in which we participate. One of the leaders of this opinion, that is, that the blessed (redeemed human beings) will have the honor of seeing God directly (not only in ideas abstracted from created things) after the Last Judgment in Heaven was Pope St. Gregory the Great (†604). Based on the Augustinian concept, in his famous commentary on the Book of Job (XVIII) he also confirmed the transcending status of Divine theophany, nonetheless claiming that it does not differ essentially from the immanent nature of God:

[...] Some hold that even in the blessed ones God will be apprehended in His glory, but will not be seen in His nature. They probably were deceived by the lack of accuracy of their studies. Concerning this, His nature, which is simple and unchangeable, cannot be one thing and the glory another, but on the contrary, His true nature is His glory and His true glory is His nature [...]²⁹.

He speaks in the same vein as the others, that is, that the essence of God is not separated from His eternal Glory, Divine energy, as well as His infinite ability

²⁶ GREGORY OF NYSSA. *The Life of Moses* b. II sec. 235.

²⁷ *Ibidem* b. II sec. 231.

²⁸ See Ph.L. REYNOLDS. *The Essence, Power, and Presence of God: Fragments of the History of an Idea, from Neopythagoreanism to Peter Abelard*. In: *From Athens to Chartres: Neoplatonism and Medieval Thought. Studies in Honour of Edouard Jeuneau*. Ed. H.J. Westra. Leiden 1992 p. 351-380.

²⁹ GREGORIUS MAGNUS I PAPA. *Moralia in Job. XXXV. Moralia, sive expositio in Job. Beatus Gregorius papa librum beati Job petente sancto*. Ed. B. Ruppel. Basel 1468 vol. II (X-XXI) lib. XVIII 54, 90; more lib. XVIII 54, 85-91.

to create things in Nature, but the dower to see God will be the merit only of those who are worthy of attaining this Glory.

3. ST. AUGUSTINE'S ILLUMINATION

Upon further scrutiny, a closer examination of St. Augustine – whose thought fits into the Neoplatonic and Plotinian theory of emanation, as well as into the Cappadocian Fathers' theophany, in which the theophanic connection of reality with the vastness of Divine manifestations comes to the fore, defining the mystical world of unity – reveals that Godhead assumes a multitude of degrees of emanation and, at the same time, a variety of manifestations of God's power in one medium of Creation. The Neoplatonic intermediate degrees of being or hypostases of emanation (ὑπόστασις – hypóstasis) between the transitory world of phenomena and the absolute being of the One, namely natures arranged according to the degree of essences (*naturas essentialium gradibus ordinavit*)³⁰, focus on the concept of God as the highest Being who is not subject to direct cognition (*quod nihil aliud dicam esse, nisi idipsum esse*)³¹. God does not have such attributes as man or Nature, but He is them to an absolute extent (wisdom itself, beauty itself, goodness itself). You cannot think of God by separating perfections from the object. In the concept of St. Augustine, all perfections and denominations of God indicate His Divine essence, and His essential resemblance or "mirror-imprint" can be visible only in the human soul (*repraesentatio animae*). Therefore, philosophical reflection on God in St. Augustine's thought – or rather we should say that it is philosophical theology – is closely related to the inner spiritual experience (religious and philosophical activity combined into one mystical flow), which is expressed in his theological

³⁰ "Cum enim Deus summa essentia sit, hoc est summe sit, et ideo inmutabilis sit: rebus, quas ex nihilo creavit, esse dedit, sed non summe esse, sicut est ipse; et aliis dedit esse amplius, aliis minus, atque ita naturas essentialium gradibus ordinavit (sicut enim ab eo, quod est sapere, uocatur sapientia, sic ab eo, quod est esse, uocatur essentia. Et propterea Deo, id est summae essentiae et auctori omnium qualiumcumque essentialium, essentia nulla contraria est" – SANCTI AURELI AUGUSTINI EPISCOPI. *De Civitate Dei Libri XXII*. Recognoverunt Bernardus Dombart et Alfonsus Kalb. Vol. I / Lib. I-XIII. Duas Epistula Ad Firmum Addidit Johannes Diujak. Editio Quinta. Stutgardiae et Lipsiae 1993 cap. XII a. 2 p. 21.

³¹ "Deum ergo diligere debemus trinam quamdam unitatem, Patrem et Filium et Spiritum sanctum, quod nihil aliud dicam esse, nisi idipsum esse. Est enim vere summeque Deus, ex quo omnia, per quem omnia, in quo omnia: haec verba Pauli sunt" – SANCTI AURELI AUGUSTINI. *Opera*. Sect. VI / Pars VII: *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae et De Moribus Manichaeorum Libri Duo*. Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum. Editum Consilio et Impensis Academiae Scientiarum Austriacae. Vol. XC. Recensuit J.B. Bauer. Vindobonae 1992. Liber Primus (*De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*) cap. XIV (*Trinitati Summo Bono Dilectione Haeremus*) a. 24 p. 28.

concept of the “inner master”, i.e. the Divine teacher who speaks to man from within, teaching sublime truths³².

Following St. Augustine’s commonly known approach, things exist on two levels and in two ways: in themselves and their own created natures, and in God and their eternal ideas or representations in God’s intellect. This existence is simultaneous. For this theory of representation or mirror-imprints, namely the Platonic division into the spiritual world (*mundus intelligibilis*) and the world of changeable things (*mundus mutabiles*), is also included in St. Augustine³³. While the first world is an intentional or intellectual reality (*creatura intellectualis*) and in it the soul participates in the world of eternal ideas (*rationes aeternae*), the second world is temporal and transient (*mutabilita*) and heads towards non-existence (*tendit non esse*)³⁴. In this context, the most significant and crucial theory in his eschatology combined with Neoplatonic philosophy is the concept of “enlightenment” (*illuminatio*), alluded to philosophical theory of *ideae exemplares*, that is, ideas that have eternally existed in the mind of God as archetypes of creation. This theory is also widely known in the literature on the subject in question, although it is rarely combined with the concept of theophany. Thus, alongside created things which constitute the primary *medium cognitum*, inner enlightenment is an indispensable and core condition for knowing the truth (*ipsa veritas*). For St. Augustine, a man conditioned by enlightenment can attain unconditioned truth only through intellectual ideas that arise in the soul both through natural cognition of created things and through the intervention of God’s enlightenment. This resembles the

³² See AUGUSTINUS. *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*. In: SANCTI AUGUSTINI. *Opera*. Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum. Editum Consilio et Impensis. Academiae Scientiarum Austriacae. Vol. XCI. Edidit D. Weber. Wien 1998 lib. I, 2, 3 p. 67-70; SANCTI AURELI AUGUSTINI. *Contra Faustum Libri Triginta Tres*. In: IDEM. *De utilitate credendi, De duabus animabus, Contra Fortunatum, Contra Adimantum, Contra epistulam fundamenti, Contra Faustum*. Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum. Vol. XXV / Pars I. Ed. I. Zycha. Editum Consilio et Impensis. Academiae Litterarum Caesariae Vindobonensis. Praegae – Vindobonae – Lipsiae 1892 lib. I-II p. 251-261; see also É. GILSON. *Introduction à l’étude de Saint Augustin*. Deuxième édition. Paris 2003 première partie (*La recherche de Dieu par l’intelligence*) V, I (*Le maître intérieur*) p. 88-102. Although there is considerable literature on the subject, the following study is worth recommending on the influence and spread of Manichaeism: W.H.C. FRENCH. *The Gnostic-Manichaean Tradition in Roman North Africa*. “Journal of Ecclesiastical History” 4 (1953) no. 1 p. 13-26.

³³ See G.P. BOERSMA. *Augustine’s Early Theology of Image. A Study in the Development of Pro-Nicene Theology*. Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. Oxford 2016 chap. VII (The Ascent of the Image in *De vera religione*) p. 224-253; also chap. IV (The Plotinian Image) p. 135-164.

³⁴ “Praesens autem si semper esset praesens nec in praeteritum transiret, non iam esset tempus, sed aeternitas. Si ergo praesens, ut tempus sit, ideo fit, quia in praeteritum transit, quomodo et hoc esse dicimus, cui causa, ut sit, illa est, quia non erit, ut scilicet non uere dicamus tempus esse, nisi quia tendit non esse?” – SANCTI AURELI AUGUSTINI. *Confessiones*. Post Editorem Parisiensem Novissimam Ad Fidam. Codicum Oxoniensium Recognitae, Et Post Editionem M. Dubois, Ex Ipso Augustino Illustratae. Oxonii 1838 lib. 11, c. 14, a. 17 p. 214.

Neoplatonic tradition and metaphysics of light. Ideas, however, are not a subjective *a priori* object of human cognition, but – according to St. Augustine – the result of a spiritual-intellectual experience combined with trans-subjective illumination coming from above (namely the Divine effect). In its internal depth and structure, this ecstatic spiritual reflection “on oneself” (*reflexio in te ipsum*) or “inward turn” is strictly based on Plotinus’s cosmological doctrine of emanation, which at the same time allows man to transcend his own limitations (*transcende et teipsum*)³⁵ and thus participate in the eternal ideas of God (*participatio in rationes aeternae*). However, even a mystic-philosopher conditioned by illumination is separated from God by a long, even infinite distance. Hence, the ideas that a human soul learns in the act of internal Divine illumination are only a sign and trace of God’s eternity; Divine eternity is similarly elusive like a time itself (*signum et vestigium aeternitatis*)³⁶. In this illuminating inner experience, these ideas do not identify with the essence of man himself, much less God Himself. It is quite noticeable that the high level of spiritual and intellectual knowledge in St. Augustine’s theory relativizes exclusively discursive, purely rational knowledge. It means that *illuminatio* does not equal *lumen rationis* (the light of human reason). The so-called Neoplatonic motif of the “return of the soul to the One” (ecstatic re-union) occurs only in the form of an ascent towards the metaphysical perfection of the soul, which jointly concentrates spirituality and intellect within one inner experience of the soul. Even though knowledge is triggered by created things, this increasing perfection of the soul is the result of a movement from simple religious faith towards Divine enlightenment, i.e. through Divine knowledge and understanding as foremostly based on this very faith (*credo ut intelligam*). A person or believer who

³⁵ “Quaere in corporis voluptate quid teneat, nihil aliud invenies quam convenientiam: nam si resistentia pariant dolorem, convenientia pariunt voluptatem. Recognosce igitur quae sit summa convenientia. Noli foras ire, in teipsum redi; in interiore homine habitat veritas; et si tuam naturam mutabilem inveneris, transcende et teipsum. Sed memento cum te transcendis, ratiocinantem animam te transcendere” – SANCTI AURELII AUGUSTINI. *Opera*. Sect. VI / Pars IV: *De magistro liber unus. De vera religione liber unus*. Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum. Editum Consilio et Impensis Academiae Scientiarum Austriacae. Vol. LXXVII. Recensuit G.M. Green, G. Weige. Vindobonae 1961 cap. XXXIX 72.

³⁶ “Et sint in signis et temporibus, et in diebus, et in annis. Videtur mihi hoc quod dixit, in signis, planum fecisse illud quod dixit, et in temporibus; ne aliud acciperentur signa, et aliud tempora. Haec enim nunc dixit tempora, quae interuallorum distinctione aeternitatem incommutabilem supra se manere significant, ut signum, id est quasi vestigium aeternitatis tempus appareat” – SANCTI AURELII AUGUSTINI HIPPONENSIS EPISCOPI. *De Genesi ad Litteram Imperfectus Liber*. In: *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*. Seu Bibliotheca Universalis, Integra, Uniformis, Commoda, Oeconomica, Omnium SS. Patrum, Doctorum Scriptorumque Ecclesiasticorum, Sive Latinorum, Sive Graecorum ... Recusio Chronologica. Series Latina Prior. In Qua Prodeunt Patres, Doctores Scriptorumque Ecclesiae Latinae A Tertulliano Ad Innocentium III. Accurante J.-P. Migne. Patrologiae Latinae Tomus XXXIV/S. AURELIUS AUGUSTINUS. *Opera Omnia*. Tomus Tertiu Pars Prior. Parisina 1861 cap. XIII a. 38 p. 236.

is opened to God's illumination and properly disposed in the spirit of faith and humility sees in the representative ideas or forms (*repraesentatio* means presentation, awareness) the spiritual reality and the Divine in its immutability. The philosopher and at-the-same-time theologian sees the Divine through the eyes of the soul, and through illumination in the idea of the unity of all perfections, ultimately refrains from making judgments and goes beyond the sensual world and sheer rational knowledge (*tenebam cor meum ab omni assensione*)³⁷. Only at the climax of this process does the *illuminatio* reveal a purely spiritual, almost mystical experience of God that fulfills the cognitive aspirations of a man convinced that he has just experienced a great process of internal transformation, the most difficult of all paths. Thus, a human being also achieves a kind of liberation, which becomes the overcoming of the contradiction between internal spirituality and external materiality (sensuality), namely between his soul and constantly existing body "in external exile". The Aristotle's First Cause or Prime Mover (ὁ οὐ κινούμενον κινεῖ), or the first uncaused cause from Book 12 of the *Metaphysics*, hidden in the very essence of real being, which God theophanically reveals in the Word and through intellectual ideas reflecting the perfect attributes of being, becomes visible in all its depth in the concepts realized by means of intrinsic (spiritually intellectual) cognitive experience of the soul.

Illumination, therefore, consists in the unification of the human intellect, which is the supreme power and potency of the soul, with the light of pure intelligible forms (ideas), through which a human being cooperates with God's emanation or the intellectual theophany of God. To some extent, this is related to the peculiar prophetic enlightenment (as in Moses' case), which St. Augustine described as intelligent as possible. In this experience, however, the soul of the knower needs a supernatural *Mover* from outside. In the illumination of the knower, something like a *mystical transformation* of the soul takes place, which awakens the intellect to a knowledge that is born from the deepest awareness of the unity of the Divine substance. The soul comes to know the Divine reality in the unity of its own heart and intellect. Even the multiplicity of God's forms and Divine attributes (*quidditas absoluta* – a term given by Nicholas of Cusa), initially manifesting themselves in created reality, is recognized by the soul in this very unity, namely in His representational or intelligible forms.

Furthermore, St. Augustine analyzes the biblical concept of theophany of God's manifestation in created realm, which was completely foreign for pagan

³⁷ "Littera occidit, spiritus autem vivificat, cum ea, quae ad litteram perversitatem docere videbantur, remoto mystico velamento spiritaliter aperiret, non dicens quod me offenderet, quamvis ea diceret, quae utrum vera essent adhuc ignorarem. Tenebam enim cor meum ab omni assensione timens praecipitium et suspendio magis necabar. Volebam enim eorum quae non viderem ita me certum fieri, ut certus essem, quod septem et tria decem sint" – SANCTI AURELIJ AUGUSTINI. *Confessiones* lib. VI cap. 4 a. 6 p. 86-87.

Greek philosophers as much for Western scholastic ones, but not for Eastern theological thought. He refers to this issue in books 2 and 3 of the treatise *On the Holy Trinity* (*De Trinitate*). In the biblical context, i.e. in the specific religious reality in which St. Augustine is referenced quite often, theophanies are manifestations of God's presence. It may be a manifestation of power or even physical revelation, as only a real manifestation of true Divinity can affect the senses and soul. This is a very characteristic pillar of the concept of the Christian Greek East, which considers the possibility of seeing the object of theophany in the immediate substance of God or in created things acting as a medium of Divine demonstration (*medium demonstrationis*).

CONCLUSION

Although St. Augustine did not explain the theory of mystical illumination based on the concept of theophany in an accessible and profound way as the Cappadocians did, he did use it to provide a more detailed description of acts of reflection and the presence of God (*praesentia*) revealing Himself through ideas as an intermediary object within the inner, enlightened soul. This is his complementary exposition of the higher order of the soul in the ongoing contemplation of specific "layers" of the idea of the Divine, His essential attributes alongside the absolute and undifferentiated unity. Theophany – as God Himself or an external manifestation of God's presence in the created realm (this was a matter of dispute in the East) – is of a supernatural nature. According to the interpretation of St. Augustine, Divinity is a simple essence (*summe simplex essentia*)³⁸. Hence, he identifies God's existence (*esse*) to be in a direct line with the attributes of God's essence (*essentia*). Essence and existence constitute one whole; this is an almost identical idea to the concept of *Ipsium Esse* by Aquinas and quite clearly related to his *De ente et essentia*³⁹. In this sense, Glory – the theophany of God – is indistinguishable from the Divine substance, which also brings to mind the connection proposed by St. Gregory the Great. However, as we find in Gregory of Nazianzus, who speaks in the same vein, Divinity in St. Augustine is an indirect object of knowledge, made itself present through created things and accordingly manifested in intellectual enlightenment, which allows for the spiritual or intellectual "seeing" of the Divine substance in its

³⁸ The same can be found in St. Thomas. Cf. SANCTI THOMAE AQUINATIS. *Super Boetium De Trinitate*. In: IDEM. *Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. Edita*. Tomus L. Roma – Paris 1992 lib. VII cap. I, 2.

³⁹ Cf. IDEM. *De ente et essentia*. In: IDEM. *Opera omnia iussu impensaue Leonis XIII P. M. Edita*. Tomus XLIII (*De principiis naturae, De aeternitate mundi, De motu cordis, De mixtione elementorum, De operationibus occultis naturae, De iudiciis astrorum, De sortibus, De unitate intellectus, De ente et essentia, De fallaciis, De propositionibus modalibus*). Cura et studio fratrum praedicatorum. Editori di San Tommaso, Santa Sabina. Roma 1976 n. 66-91, esp. 78, 80, 89-91.

unity and immutability⁴⁰. This entire cognitive experience, both among the Cappadocians and St. Augustine, drawing on the one hand from created things and the rationalism of human nature, and on the other supplemented by supernatural illumination, creates, as it were, one stream of knowledge directed towards God. In particular, one could venture to say that this refers to the biblical motif from which it follows that the soul is capable of knowing what is visible by means of the senses, and what is invisible by means of the enlightened intellect, as the words of the Apostle state:

For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and Divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made (Rom 1:20).

Almost identical issues, especially those concerning created Nature as theophany (Eriugena) and enlightened knowledge guided by an “unapproachable light” (Cusanus), will be directly addressed in the 9th century by John Scotus Eriugena (†877), and in the 15th century by Nicholas of Cusa (†1464), whose lectures on Nature, theophany, and enlightenment will be deeply permeated by the teachings of the Greek Fathers, including Epiphanius of Salamis (†403), Maximus the Confessor (†662), Pseudo-Dionysius (†ca. VI cent.), Gregory of Nyssa, St. Augustine, and others. Although Eriugena’s work entitled *Periphyseon* was condemned in 1225 by Pope Honorius III and intended for burning, a situation which seriously affected the reception of his thoughts related to the Almarician heresy, the condemnation of this work did not cover all of his theories⁴¹. Eriugena’s translation of the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, his commentary on Pseudo-Dionysius’ *Celestial Hierarchy*, including the general concept of theophany, albeit in a less philosophical than biblical sense, remained free from heresy. His thoughts were referred to by Prudentius (†861), bishop of Troyes, William of Saint-Thierry (†1148), Alain of Lille (†1202), Garnier de Rochefort (†ca. 1225), and later Nicholas of Cusa (†1464), who in the *Apologia doctae ignorantia* mentions Eriugena – next to Maximus the

⁴⁰ See SANCTI AURELII AUGUTINI HIPPONENSIS EPISCOPI. *De civitate Dei. Libri XXII, in duos tomos divisi, ex vetustissimis MSS, exeplaribus emendati, juxta novissimam editionem Coloniensem. Accedunt Commentarii eruditi, & integri quidem, Joan. Ludov. Vivis Hispal. Ac Leonh. Coquei Aurelianensis. Pars Prima.* Francof. Ac Hamburgi 1661 lib. XI cap. X (*De simplicibus & incommutabilitate Trinitatis, Patris & Filii, & Spiritus Sancti, unius Dei: cui non est aliud qualitas, aliud substantia*) p. 1037-1043; see also SANCTI THOMAE AQUINATIS. *Super Boetium De Trinitate* lib. V cap. X, 11; lib. VI cap. VII, 8.

⁴¹ See I.P. SHELDON-WILLIAMS. *Eriugena and Cîteaux*. “*Studia Monastica*” 19 (1977) p. 75-92; see more W. BEIERWALTES. *Eriugena und Cusanus*. In: *Eriugena Redivivus. Zur Wirkungsgeschichte seines Denkens im Mittelalter und im Übergang zur Neuzeit. Vorträge des V. Internationalen Eriugena-Colloquiums Werner-Reimers-Stiftung Bad Homburg 26-30. August 1985*. Hrsg. von W. Beierwaltes. Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. Heidelberg 1987 p. 311-343; A. KIJEWKA. *Świat jako teofania: Eriugena – Kuzańczyk*. “*Kwartalnik Filozoficzny*” 26 (1992) no. 2 p. 33-50, esp. 34-35.

Confessor, Hugh of St. Victor (†1141) or Robert Grosseteste (†1253) – as a leading expert Neoplatonist and eminent reader on the *Mystical Theology* of Pseudo-Dionysius⁴². Finally, the Cappadocians' theophany and St. Augustine's theory of illuminated soul and the theory of God in Divine absolute unity – widely explored theories by later thinkers influenced by Neoplatonism – were also recognized in some contexts, but to the exclusion of supernatural illumination (*illuminatio Divina*) within the natural knowledge of God, in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, although Aquinas' philosophy contrasts both methodologically and conceptually with the doctrines of the Cappadocians, St. Augustine, Eriugena, and other Neoplatonists alike⁴³.

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⁴² W. BEIERWALTES. *Eriugena und Cusanus* p. 311-313; cf. A. KIJEWSKA. *Świat jako teofania: Eriugena – Kuzańczyk* p. 35; for more, see A. MAŁACHOWSKI. *Jedność i mnogość jako kategorie modelu trynitarnego w ujęciu Mikołaja z Kuzy*. Wrocław 2008 pp. 219; IDEM. *Koherentność modelu soteriologicznego Mikołaja z Kuzy*. Wrocław 2011 pp. 238.

⁴³ Cf. SANCTI THOMAE DE AQUINO. *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*. In: IDEM. *Opera Omnia iussu Leonis XIII P. M. Edita*. Tomus XXII. Cura et studio fratrum praedicatorum. Vol. II QQ 13-20. Romae 1972 q. XIII a. 2; IDEM. *Summa contra gentiles*. In: IDEM. *Opera omnia iussu impensaue Leonis XIII P. M. Edita*. Tomus Decimus Tertius, ad codices manuscriptos praesertim Sancti Doctoris autographum exacta et Summo Pontifici Benedicto XV, dedicata cum commentariis Francisci de S. Ferrariensis. Cura et studio fratrum praedicatorum. Romae 1918 lib. III cap. 47, 2-3, 51; IDEM. *SUMMA THEOLOGIAE I^a* q. XII; IDEM. *Summa theologiae I^a-II^a*. In: IDEM. *Opera omnia iussu impensaue Leonis XIII P. M. Edita*. Tomus Sextus (*Prima secundae Summae theologiae*). A quaestione I ad quaestionem LXX, ad codices manuscriptos Vaticanos exacta, cum commentariis Thomae de vio Caietani Ordinis Praedicatorum S.R.C. Cardinalis. Cura et studio fratrum eiusdem ordinis. Romae 1891 q. 175; see also D.J. O'MEARA. *Eriugena and Aquinas on the Beatific Vision*. In *Eriugena Redivivus* p. 224-236.

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TEOFANIA I OŚWIECENIE: POZNAWANIE BOSKOŚCI W FILOZOFII PATRYSTYCZNEJ OJCÓW KAPADOCKICH I ŚW. AUGUSTYNA

Streszczenie: W artykule zbadano dwie pozornie przeciwstawne teorie, zgodnie z którymi dążenie do poznania Boga poprzez rzeczy stworzone, które traktowano jako *primum cognitum*, może prowadzić do wykluczających się wniosków. Jednakże takie założenie okazuje się mało prawdopodobne zarówno w odniesieniu do Kapadocjan, jak i św. Augustyna. W niniejszym artykule przedstawiam dwa rodzaje podejścia poznawczego w polu refleksji nad Bogiem w chrześcijańskiej tradycji wczesnego Kościoła (patrystyka), dowodząc, że Natura lub rzeczy stworzone są inherentnym i niezbywalnym *medium cognitum*, ale nie ostatecznym *ratio* poznawania Boga. Przeciwnie, wydaje się, że działa tu niezbędny czynnik nadprzyrodzony albo przynajmniej specyficznie ludzki. Aby to wykazać, oparłem się na dwóch zbieżnych koncepcjach, tj. teofanii u ojców kapadockich i oświecenia u św. Augustyna, które były silnie powiązane zarówno z neoplatońską teorią emanacji, jak i filozoficznym oświeceniem, wpisującym się w tzw. metafizykę światła. Zazwyczaj przeważa pogląd, zgodnie z którym teorie te, mające istotne znaczenie w naukach wczesnego Kościoła, najczęściej bywają wiązane z teologią, a rzadziej z filozofią. Można wszakże przypuszczać, że Kapadocjanie i Augustyn wskazywali na swoje koncepcje jako na rodzaj kategorii metafizycznych, które mogą przekonująco łączyć teologię z filozofią (względnie wiarę z rozumem), traktując Boga jako Istotę Najwyższą, która z jednej strony objawia się w rzeczywistości stworzonej, a z drugiej inspiruje w sposób nadprzyrodzony ludzką wiedzę i rozwój duchowy. Przez takie ujęcie wydają się oni wypełniać pewną lukę, która zwykle dzieli wiarę (teologię) i rozum (filozofię) w ich podejściu do Boga. Pomimo zakładanych rozbieżności zagadnienia teofanii i oświecenia niewątpliwie mają coś wspólnego. U Kapadocjan i Augustyna oraz neoplatońskich myślicieli, którzy w dużej mierze podążyli za nimi (np. Jan Szkot Eriugena, Mikołaj z Kuzy), Bóg okazuje się być najwyższą przyczyną bytu, jego fundamentem i ostatecznym przeznaczeniem. Może On stanowić podstawowe pojęcie w systemie wiedzy i naczelną kryterium prawdy zarówno dla wczesnej teologii wschodniej, która działa na granicach filozofii, jak i dla wczesnej filozofii wschodniej, która działa na granicach teologii. Skoro nauki te wydają się podchodzić do Boga w różny sposób, można odnieść pozorne wrażenie, że są one rozbieżne. Niemniej jednak wydają się one odnosić w porównywalny sposób do tego samego przedmiotu wiedzy, tj. do Boga, zakładając rzeczywistość stworzoną zarówno jako pierwszy przedmiot poznania (*primum cognitum*), jak i mediacyjny punkt zwrotny w poznaniu (*medium cognitum*). Podejście to wymaga odwołania się do wyższego od zmysłów poznania intelektualno-duchowego, tzn. wkroczenia na nieuniknioną drogę prowadzącą do podwyższonego doświadczenia racjonalno-duchowego, a nawet tego mistycznego, które jest wynikiem nadprzyrodzonego oświecenia płynącego od samego Boga.

Słowa kluczowe: ojcowie kapadoccy, św. Augustyn, teofania, iluminacja, wczesna teologia Kościoła wschodniego, wczesna filozofia Kościoła wschodniego.