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Thomas Aquinas’ Impact on Late Byzantine Theology and Philosophy: The Issues of Method or ‘Modus Sciendi’ and ‘Dignitas Hominis’*

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On the occasion of the missionary activity of the Dominican friars in Byzantium from the last decades of the 13th century onwards, around fifteen Thomistic works were translated into Greek, thus entering the Byzantine intellectual world during the second half of the 14th and the first half of the 15th century. Late Byzantine intellectuals made extensive use of the partial yet outstandingly rich ‘Thomas de Aquino Graecus’, thereby adhering to a traditional model that saw the integration of pagan and Christian literature. Scholarship has already reached some conclusions on some of the issues of this use. Here I shall focus on another issue, namely, philosophical and theological method and their epistemological and anthropological implications. Aquinas’ writings provided the Byzantines with a ‘dialectical’ model of discussion. This pattern, with its systematic use

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of syllogisms both in theology and philosophy, was seen by some late Byzantines as an implication of (or, at least, consonant with) the Patristic doctrine that reasoning and its correlate faculty, namely, free will, are the distinctive features of human nature. Aquinas’ *quaestio* thus promoted cataphatic theology, inasmuch as it was seen as suggesting that reasoning enables man to discover God. In this context, Aquinas also contributed to the late Byzantine discussion on *dignitas hominis*. This dignity seemed to be vindicated by Aquinas’ alleged Christian ‘rationalism’, which looked like an alternative to some central Byzantine intellectual figures’ ‘obscurantism’, namely, hatred of theoretical and practical reason, which tended to dominate Christian theology and ethics, especially after the conclusive official victory of Palamism in 1368.

I. The form: the Latin-based Late Byzantine *quaestio*

1. Features

Aquinas’ writings provided the Byzantines with a dialectical model of discussion, which consisted of programmatically producing arguments pro, arguments contra, establishing the thesis argued for, and resolving the counter-arguments. True, this model practically goes back to Aristotle, who had defined the ‘dialectical’ question as the one admitting of a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer\(^4\) and produced some pieces following this pattern himself\(^5\), and the Byzantines were responsible for copying and preserving the original corpus Aristotelicum during the Middle Ages. Still, contrary to the situation in the Arabic world and, shortly afterwards, in Medieval Europe, the corpus Aristotelicum and Aristotle’s thought were far from being a much-loved part of the cultural heritage of the antiquity during the Greek Middle Ages up to the 13\(^{th}\) century. John Italos’ (ca. 1023–ca. 1085) numerous ‘ἐρωτήσεις καὶ λύσεις’ (‘questions’ or ‘impasses’ or ‘answers’ or ‘resolutions’), which seem to reflect an Aristotle-based\(^6\) Neoplatonic pattern of investigation


\(^5\) See, e.g., *Categories*, 8a13–b24; *Topics*, 104b13–14; *De caelo et mundo*, 279b4–284b5; *De anima*, 408a20–24; *Ethica Eudemia*, 1235b18–19; *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1164b22–23; *Magna Moralia*, 1199b10–11; *Metaphysics*, 996a4–7; 1059a38–40. Aristotle usually uses the word ἀπορία in the sense of the ‘dialectical’ question that brings the person asked to an impasse because of the existence of arguments both for ‘yes’ and ‘no’ case. Cf. his definition of “ἀπορία” as “ἀπόθεσις ἐννοιῶν λογισμῶν” (*Topics*, 145b1–2; cf. *Sophistical Refutations*, 182b32–183a13). Of course, an ἀπορία can be of the ‘why’-type or the ‘what’-type or the ‘how’-type (see, e.g., *De generatione animalium*, 776a8; *De generatione et corruptione*, 318a13; 334a21–22; 334b2; *Metaphysics*, 1000b20–21; 1044b34; 1059b3; 1060a29; *Meteorologica*, 355b20–21; *Physics*, 198b16–17; *Politics*, 1281a11); but even these sorts of ἀπορία can be reformulated in the ‘whether – or’ type.

\(^6\) To Aristotle, an ἀπορία supposedly admits of a λύσις (see, e.g., *De anima*, 422b27–28; *De caelo et mundo* 288a8–9; 309b9–10; *Ethica Eudemia*, 1235b14; *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1146b7–8; *De generatione animalium*, 321b10–11; *Magna Moralia*, 1201b1–2; 1201b22; 1206b8–9; *Metaphysics*, 1045a22; *Meteorologica* 345b21–22; *Physics*, 191b30; *Politics*, 1281b22; 1282a32–33).
into the philosophical issues\(^7\), might at first sight look like instances of ‘dialectical’ question comparable to the Latin Scholastic ones. Yet, these admirably concise pieces do not exhibit any fixed structure\(^8\). Likewise, a mere glance at the titles of the chapters (κεφάλαια\(^9\)) of Michael Psellos’ (1018–1081?) ‘Ἀποχώρισες συνοπτικαί καὶ ἔξηγήσεις πρὸς ἐρωτήσεις διαφόρως καὶ ἀτονίας’ (title of the first redaction: ‘Επιλύσεις σύντομοι ἀπορίμων φυσικῶν’; other titles: ‘Κεφάλαια φυσικῶν ἀποριμάτων; Ἀδιαπαθεία παντοδαπῆ [...] ἐν [...] κεφάλαιοις θεωρουμένη\(^{10}\)) reveals the looseness of the structure of the questions posed. Further, although these passages apparently attest to a certain educational practice in the context of teaching philosophy in the latter half of the 11th century, there is no evidence that the form of the quæstio-like writings produced from the mid-14th century onwards developed from Italos’ pieces. An imitation of Italos’ pieces could possibly be seen, for instance, in the ‘Solutiones quaestionum’ of Nicephorus Gregoras (ca. 1293–1361), an author who, dying few years after the earliest translation (1354) of some Thomistic work, the ‘Summa contra Gentiles’, was not exposed to the influence of the Latin quæstio. What differentiates Gregoras’ and Italos’ quaestiones from the Latin quæstio is that the former were not programatically formulated as ‘whether-or’ questions\(^11\) and required neither the


\(^9\) Κεφάλαια form a distinct philological genre in Byzantium, which was in common use by monastic-ascetic authors ans can be traced back to pagan literature (see E. von Ivánka, Eine byzantinische Literaturform und ihre antiken Wurzeln, in: Byzantinische Zeitschrift 47 [1954], 285–291).


production of a list of arguments on both sides nor their thorough scrutiny. This is a crucial difference. For, “resolving questions” sounds like it would form part of teaching activity; the teacher is supposed to sweep out what the disciple thinks to be an obstacle to accepting what is taught; on the contrary, the structure of a Latin *quaestio* fits into a process of an impartial seeking after truth about a clearly defined issue. Or, put in a different way, the traditional Byzantine *quaestio* pertained to teaching, whereas the Latin *quaestio* pertained to research.

This is more than a plausible estimation; Gregoras himself directly testifies to that. Reporting the first moments of a friend’s (probably Neilos Cabasilas’s) visit during his house arrest after the pro-Palamite Synod of 1351, Gregoras interprets his friend’s awkward silence as the result of mourning for the radical deterioration of Gregoras’ fate. What Cabasilas mourned for was only the fact that no students of logic, mathematics and astronomy frequented Gregoras’ house any more and that his house was absolutely silent, without any “questions and solutions” ("ἀπορίαι και λύσεις") (especially with regard to astronomy), as was quite usual before. The context of the ‘questions and solutions’ process is obvious: education.

2. Some Instances

An example of Thomas-like Byzantine work, which stands in contrast to Italos’ or Gregoras’ pieces, is the ‘Quaestio de rationis valore’ of Nicholas Cabasilas’ (1319/23–post 1391). This is a refutation of Gregory Palamas’ (1296–1357) arguments against the natural theoretical and practical reason expounded in the ‘Triads’, his unfinished anti-Sceptical writing ‘Contra Pyrrhonem’ and an anti-Latin section (Ch. 32–33) of his ‘In divinam liturgiam’.

The first, i.e. the ‘Λόγοι τῶν βουλομένων ἀποδεικνύειν ὅτι ἡ περὶ τῶν λόγων σοφία μάταιον – Λύσεις τῶν τοιούτων ἐπιχειρήματων’, consists of a set of five Palamite syllogisms against the value of secular wisdom, refuted by the author one by one. The topic of the *quaestio* is dialectical in form: “Whether secular wisdom is futile or not”. Even the title of the writing imitates the title of some

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13 Nicephoros Gregoras, Historia Byzantina XXII,4, ed. L. Schopen (Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae XIX,2), Bonn 1830, 1051,5–12.
15 Nicholas Cabasilas, Contra Pyrrhonem (nt. 12), 13–15; 18–24.
chapters of Aquinas’ ‘Summa contra Gentiles’, the most characteristic being Book II, Ch. 32 (in Demetrios Cydones’ translation: “Λόγοι τῶν βουλομένων δεικνύναι τὴν τοῦ κόσμου οικοδομή ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰλημμένου”), 33 (“Λόγοι τῶν βουλομένων δεικνύναι τὴν τοῦ κόσμου οικοδομή ἐξ αὐτῆς ληφθέντες τῆς τοῦ κόσμου γενέσεως”) and 35 (“Λόγοι τῶν προειρήμενων λόγων […]”17) as well as Book IV, Ch. 24 (“Λόγοι τῶν βουλομένων δεικνύναι ὅτι τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἄγιον υἱὸς ἐκπορευέται ἐκ τοῦ Υιοῦ, καὶ ἔλεγχος τούτων”18)19. It may not be a coincidence that out of several similar titles of the chapters of the ‘Summa contra Gentiles’20, the title of Cabasilas’ piece most resembles these two. Indeed, the topic of Ch. 32–33, i.e. the eternity or novity of the world, was discussed at approximately the same time in Byzantium (see infra, 7) and the topic of Ch. 35, i.e. the Filioque, was one of the most disputed topics in the Byzantine 14th and 15th centuries; and Aquinas’ arguments against the Greek position drew the attention of Greeks such as Nicholas Cabasilas’ uncle, Neilos (see infra, 8–10). The fact that Nicholas Cabasilas extracted Aquinas’ dialectical method as applied by the doctor angelicus to these issues in order to apply it to three (if not more) completely different issues suggests that he had drawn a clear distinction between method and content, had thought about the merits of this method and had then consciously adopted it.

The second Cabasilian writing with a Thomas-like structure (‘Κατὰ τῶν λεγομένων περὶ τοῦ χριστιανικῆς ἀληθείας, ἔτι έστι, παρὰ Πέρσανδος τοῦ καταράτου’) treats a typically dialectical question, too (“Whether the criterion of truth exists or not”), and has the same structure with the ‘De rationis valore’: a list of arguments contra are expounded and refuted21.

The third case, which, introduced by ζητεῖν (the Greek equivalent for quaerere), is explicitly described by Cabasilas as quaestio, treats the question of whether bread or Christ’s flesh is the thing sacrificed in the liturgy. It consists of two arguments for the former case, three for the latter, and a respondeo on behalf of a media solutio.

Further, it is probable that Cabasilas used a modified version of the quaestio in two of his discourses, namely, the ‘Discourse on Abuses Committed by Authorities against Sacred Things’ and the ‘Contra feneratores’. In the first22, after the prologue, Cabasilas “summarizes the arguments of the adversaries, first those of the secular authorities and then those of the religious (§§ 4–9), whereas the bulk of the ‘Discourse’ comprises a detailed refutation of each one of their arguments,

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17 Cod. Vat. gr. 614, fol. 16r, 11; 17r, 8–9; 28r, 16.
18 Ibid., fol. 222r, 20–21.
20 See Demetracopoulos, Nicholas Cabasilas’ (nt. 12), 26–27.
21 Ibid., 25.
both secular (§§ 10–32) and religious (§§ 33–59). This structure bears obvious similarities with a Latin *quaestio*. Such an influence was in principle possible, since this Cabasilian work probably dates from the 1370s or 1380s, well after 1354.

The main part of the second, whose composition can speculatively be placed shortly after the date of Cabasilas’ ‘To the Most Pious Augusta on Usury’, i.e. in the winter of 1351/52, has the form of a dialogue with an usurer, who produces eight arguments on the legitimacy of his practice, refuted one by one by Cabasilas. This probably stands as a mixture of forms. Setting forth a dialogue with an imaginary adversary was traditionally known to the Byzantines (on the basis of the ancient Greek handbooks of rhetorics) as “ethopoiia” (imaginary allocution); this literary device (very often used, e.g., by John Chrysostom) was intended to add vividness to a discourse or an oration before an audience and thereby make it more effective. Still, presenting this adversary as expounding a long list of arguments and accompanying each argument with a careful refutation is pretty similar to the structure of the Latin *quaestio*.

Prochoros Cydones’ *De essentia et operatione Dei* (1367 or earlier) is the most thoroughly Thomistic Byzantine treatise, both in method and content. Books I–V mostly consist of lengthy reproductions of various questions and articles of Aquinas’ two ‘Summae’ and ‘De potentia’. Thus, the structure of most of the chapters of these books is *eo ipso* a replica of the scholastic *quaestio*. Book VI, which is Thomist in spirit but not literally derived from Aquinas, stands as a *quaestio* (“Ζητητέων τοινν πότερον [...]”; cf. Aquinas’ usual “*Quaerendum est* [...]”) intended to prove the position “*Oi tò e ¬n tò Qabwríw ἐν κτιστόν*”.

Prochoros produces eleven arguments for (“*Kai δοκεῖ ναί* cf. Aquinas’ usual “*Et videtur quod* [...]”) the position that the Thabor light is uncreated and five counter-arguments (“*Ἀλλά τον πνευμάτιν*”; cf. Aquinas’ typical “*Sed contra* [...]”). Then Pro-

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24 Dennis, Nicholas Cabasilas (nt. 23), 82–83.
27 According to Hermogenes’ classification of ‘ethopoiia’ (Progymnasmata IX,45, ed. H. Rabe, Hermogenis opera, Leipzig 1913, 20,19–23), Cabasilas’ interlocution with an imaginary usurer is an “indefinite allocution”, i.e., an imaginary allocution not with a concrete individual but with an example of a particular type of man.
28 Even more, it is probable that Cabasilas had read and used Aquinas’ treatment of usury in the ‘Summa theologica’. Compare, for instance, his 8th counter-argument and its refutation (ed. J.-P. Migne (nt. 25), 748A10–B9) to the Ia Haec, q. 78, a. 1, arg. 7 and ad 7.
choros’ long response (“Ἀπόκρισις. Ἱησοῦν ὄτι […]”; cf. Aquinas’ typical “Respondeo dicendum […]”) comes, accompanied by a refutation of the eleven arguments in support of the Palamite position (“Πρὸς α’ […] Πρὸς β’ […]” etc.; cf. Aquinas’ “Ad primum […] Ad secundum […]” etc.)

Theophanes of Nicaea (ob. 1380/81), an officially Palamite theologian of the emperor (1347–54) John VI Cantacouzenos’ and the Patriarch (1353–54; 1364–77) Philotheos Kokkinos’ (1295/97–1379) circle, was among the protagonists of the condemnation of Prochoros Cydones for his anti-Palamite ‘De essentia et operatione Dei’ and his challenge of the Synodal Tome of 1351. Still, Theophanes had an eclectic yet strong interest in Aquinas. Earlier (probably much earlier) than 1376, he produced a treatise which, in terms of its subject, seems to be unique in Byzantium – ‘A Chain of Arguments for the Possibility that the World Could Have Been Created ab Aeterno, Deemed by Some as Conclusive – A Refutation of Them’. In Part I of this piece, Theophanes lists nine arguments for the position that the world can or even should be deemed eternal. Part II contains twenty-four arguments against the eternity of the world. Finally, in Part III, a refutation of the nine contrary arguments is offered. From the doctrinal point of view, Theophanes contradicts Aquinas, who argued that the ‘novitas mundi’ is not a ‘demonstrabile’ but a ‘credibile’, namely, it can be shown to be philosophically possible but not necessary and should be defended on the basis of Revelation. Still, the structure of Theophanes’ work is a flagrant imitation of the structure of the Thomistic “articuli” or of some running chapters of the ‘Summa contra Gentiles’ which form short treatises produced after the pattern of “articulus”.

Demetrios Cydones’ treatise ‘Δόγμα τὸ πῶς ἔλεγαν τὸ τῶν θανάτων δέος ἀποδεικνύντων’, written some years before 1371, has been traditionally described as a

30 Ibid., 262,20 sqq; 264,27 sqq.; 284,25 sqq.
31 See Demetracopoulos, Palamas Transformed (nt. 2), 310–324, where I. D. Polemis’ finding that Theophanes depends on Aquinas with regard to a variety of issues is defended against some unfounded criticism and corroborated by some new evidence.
33 Cf. Polemis, Θεοφάνους Νικαία (nt. 32), 26*–27*; id., Theophanes of Nicaea. His Life and Works, Vienna 1996, 122–123.
philosophical, Plato-based essay on scorning death. Apart from the fact that its content can be reduced to ‘Plato paganus’ only as far as a rather small number of its points and arguments (see infra, pp. 48–51) is concerned, its structure is not as loose as the term ‘essay’ suggests. In fact, this is not just a “λόγος” (treatise), but a “λόγος ἀποδεικνύν” (a piece meant to be demonstrative). In a systematic way, Cydones enumerates three arguments for the reasonableness of fearing death, which he then sets out to refute one by one. In the course of the refutation, he also argues for his position on scorning death. This structure is quite close to the scholastic quaestio and fully coincides with the Latin-based structure of Nicholas Cabasilas’ short ‘Quaestio de rationis valore’, where the respondeo and the refutation of the opposing arguments are mingled into a single part of the work.

Demetrios lays down in brief the main rule of discussion (“τῶν ἀντιλεγόντων ὁ νόμος” or “ἡ σὺν κόσμῳ καὶ τάξει διάλεξεις”) to be followed by someone whose views happen to be contested by someone else: “[…] Πρὸς ἐπος ἀποκρίνη τοὺς ἐφώτων καὶ λόγους ἀληθετέρως τὴν λογίαν τῶν ἀντιθέσεων λύσης καὶ τῶν ἐπιχειρήματῶν τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας ύπαίτερ βελόν τυφερός κενός […]”.

Obviously, this implies that the adversary has got some concrete, i.e. numerable, arrows in his quiver and that the person hurled is supposed to repel or avoid them one by one. This means that what Cydones had in mind as the ideal model of discussion was the Latin quaestio.

Let us now have a glance at some anti-Latin writings. Almost immediately after the production of the translation of Aquinas’ ‘Summae’ and the ‘De potentia’, Neilos Cabasilas (ca. 1295–1363), in Part I of his ‘Οτι οὐκ ἦστιν Λατινὸς συλλογισμὸς χρωμένος ἀποδείξας τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἐγνὸ εκ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐκπορευόμενον, namely, the methodological part, argued programmatically against the legitimacy of using apodictical syllogisms in theology. Neilos produced nineteen such argu-

34 See, e.g., B. N. Tatakis, La philosophie byzantine, Paris 21959, 268–269; K. Krumbacher et al., Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur von Justinian bis zum Ende des oströmischen Reiches (527–1453), Munich 1897, 487.
35 Cf. W. Blum’s vindication of the Christian character of the work (Furcht vor dem Tod. Die Schrift des Demetrios Kydones ‘Über die Verachtung des Todes’. Eingeleitet und übersetzt, Münster 1973, 12, nt. 20). See also Chr. Th. Kuinoel, Demetrii Kydonii opusculum de contemnenda morte gaecce et latine, Lipsiae 1786, Praefatio, iii. Most of the Platonic material of this writing can be traced back to the Platonom of the Greek Fathers of the Church; see, e.g., Demetracopoulos, Plethon (nt. 3), 58.
38 §§ 1–72 in E. Candal’s edition (Nilus Cabasilas et theologia S. Thomae de processione Spiritus Sancti, Vatican City 1945, 188–244; see especially §§ 2–28).
ments. By introducing them through the typically Thomistic "Era", which was Demetrios and Prochoros Cydones’ rendering of Aquinas’ Praeterea, he apparently imitated the first part of the structure of the articles of the ‘Summa theologica’ or the first and the second part of the structure of the articles of the ‘De potentia’ or the structure of most chapters of the ‘Summa contra Gentiles’, where such an enumeration is programmatically in order.

This is what Neilos did thrice in his ‘Oratio brevis de Gregorii Nysseni dicto; ‘Increatum nihil praeter divinam naturam’, too39. If this can be safely taken as a mark of Thomistic influence, then this piece, whose date is uncertain40, was probably written after 1354.

In view of this style of arguing against the Latins, one might say that Neilos deliberately “turned the scholastic method against some scholastic positions”41. Yet, it seems that Neilos could hardly do otherwise; compared with the syllogisms of the Latins, the arguments used in the traditional Byzantine anti-Latin orations or polemical pieces sounded more rhetorical than demonstrative. Further, mingled with each other, they sometimes appeared to miss the target. In other words, once the Latin quaestio entered the Byzantines’ intellectual life, the latter were forced to adopt it, if they were to address their adversaries by means of equally effective weapons.

Granted that Neilos Cabasilas, in his anti-Latin polemics, drew heavily on Barlaam the Calabrian’s ‘Contra Latinos’42, it is quite probable that this way of expounding his arguments might have been drawn from some of Barlaam’s anti-Latin pieces, wherein “Era often introduces some orderly enumerated arguments43. Still, this Barlaamite trait can be traced back to Aquinas himself. Even if

39 Ch. 5, 7, 8; ed. M. Candal, La ‘Regla teológeca’ (Λογος σύντομος) de Nilo Cabásilas, in: Orientalia Christiana Periodica 23 (1957), 240–257, at 246,4–14; 248,8–24; 250,3–7.
42 See G. Schirol, Il paradoss di Nilo Cabasila, in: Studi Bizantini e Neocellenici 9 (1957), 362–388. One of Barlaam’s arguments against the demonstrability of the divine things seems to go back to George Acropolites (see G. Podskalsky, Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz, Munich 1977, 122–123).
43 Barlaam the Calabrian, Contra Latinos B IV 5, l. 75; 11, l. 136; 14, l. 172; 22, l. 272; 26, l. 317; 28, l. 335; 29, l. 349; 30, l. 372 (ed. A. Fyrigos, Barlaam Calabro. Opere contro i Latini. Introduzione, storia dei testi, edizione critica, traduzione e indici, voll. I–II, Vatican City 1998, 350; 354; 358; 366; 370; 372; 374); B V 5, l. 44; 6, l. 48; 7, l. 57; 9, l. 88; 14, l. 150; 21, l. 266; 25, l. 319; 28, l. 359; 30, l. 382, ed. Fyrigos, 384; 386; 388; 402; 406; 408; 410; B VI 6, l. 80; 7, l. 85; 8, l. 90; 9, l. 94; 10, l. 97; 17, l. 150; 26, l. 250; 30, l. 283; 31, l. 288 (ed. Fyrigos, 420; 422; 426; 434; 438); A II 4, l. 31; 5, l. 37; 6, l. 44; 7, l. 48; 8, l. 51 (ed. Fyrigos, 532; 534; A IV 18, l. 171; 20, l. 178 (ed. Fyrigos, 568; 570); A VI 4, l. 23; 5, l. 30 (ed. Fyrigos, 590); Syntagma 27, l. 267; 28, l. 276; 34, l. 328; 35, l. 330 (ed. Fyrigos, 652; 658).
we have no reason to assume that Barlaam’s acquaintance with Aquinas’ writings went further than the Thomistic arguments for the Filioque\textsuperscript{44}, these Thomistic excerpts would suffice to inspire Barlaam, if only for practical reasons, to follow this pattern. True, accumulating arguments introduced by “Moreover” occurs in some earlier Byzantine texts too, e.g., by Ps.-Justin\textsuperscript{45}, John Italos\textsuperscript{46}, Photius\textsuperscript{47}, and John of Damascus\textsuperscript{48}. Still, the monotonous use of “Et\textsuperscript{e}” by Neilos renders it obvious that his model (as well as Nicholas Cabasilas’ model) was the ‘Thomas de Aquino Graecus’. After all, in contrast to Thomas’ ‘Summae’, this use of “Moreover” is quite occasional and marginal in the Byzantine literature before Demetrios and Prochoros’ translation of some of Thomas’ works.

Matthaios Angelos Panaretos (fl. in the mid-14\textsuperscript{th} century), a fierce anti-Thomist theologian in the 60’s of the 14\textsuperscript{th} century, who presents many similarities with Neilos Cabasilas, had used this accumulative pattern, too\textsuperscript{49}.

This is what Demetrios Chrysoloras (ca. 1360–post 1440), one of the minor Byzantine anti-Thomists of the first half of the 15\textsuperscript{th} century, does in his defense of Neilos Cabasilas’ arguments for the Filioque. Some of Chrysoloras’ arguments are quite succinct; they do not exceed one or two lines in length. This differs from the traditionally longer and verbose Byzantine arguments, mostly produced after some rhetorical pattern, in theological or philosophical matters. So, Chrysoloras’ repetitive use of “Et\textsuperscript{e}” can plausibly be accounted for in terms of Aquinas’ influence.

Some time after 1426/29, Macarios Makres (1282 or 1283–1431) wrote a short ‘Defence of the Holy Virginity’\textsuperscript{50}. In this text, he set two lists of arguments against virginity, one based on reason (five arguments), introduced (after the second one) by “Et\textsuperscript{e}”, and one based on the Holy Scripture (two arguments). Each

\begin{footnotes}
\item[45] Ps.-Justin, Confutatio dogmatum quorundam Aristotelicorum 1–2, ed. J. C. T. Otto (Corpus apologiotorum Christianorum saeculi secundi IV), Jena 1\textsuperscript{st} 1880, 106–112.
\item[46] See, e.g., Ioannes Italos, Quaestiones et solutiones 92 (nt. 8), 145–149.
\end{footnotes}
“counter-argument” or “objection” (“ἐνστάσις”) is accompanied by a “resolution” (“λύσις”).

Last, as I have noted elsewhere, Marcos Eugenicos (ca. 1392–1445) gave the form of *quaestio* to his Περὶ Πολύτοπος έπειμόνισχον περὶ δύον ζωὴς αὐτή-σαντα, Eugenicos scrutinizes the two traditional Byzantine views on the issue of whether God determines the time of one’s death or not. He expounds the arguments pro and the arguments contra, he argues on his own ("Respondeo disicendum [...]") for the latter position, and addresses, in a reconciliatory spirit, the arguments for the contrary position.

Shortly afterwards, George Scholarios – Gennadios II (ca. 1400–ca. 1472), in his ‘Κατὰ τὸν Πλάτωνα ἀποκρίνεται’, which is a refutation of the famous Plethonic piece Περὶ τὰν Ἀμφισβήτης πρὸς Πλάτωνα διαφέρεται, orders his arguments in the same way, using several typical expressions from the ‘Summa theologiae’ and the ‘Summa contra Gentiles’. Besides ‘Ετι, Scholarios uses, for clarification’s sake, “Δεί δὲ εἰδέναι [...]” (“Sciendum autem est [...]”) and “Δεί ἕθεοσιν [...]” (“Considerandum autem est [...]”). True, opening phrases like those also occur in some earlier Byzantine pieces, e.g., in John of Damascus’ ‘Expositio fidei’53. Still, here too it is obvious that Scholarios imitates Aquinas, not Damascenus. Scholarios, like ‘Thomas Graecus’, uses “Δεί εἰδέναι”, which, when compared to a host of similar phrases, John uses rarely in his ‘Expositio fidei’ (see nt. 53). Furthermore, Scholarios’ awkward “Δεί θεοσιν”, a flagrant Latinism, does no occur in John of Damascus at all.

Scholarios also systematically refutes his opponent’s arguments: “Εκ δὲ τούτων σαφῆς καὶ ἠ πρὸς τὰ ἀνικείμενα λύσις [...]” (“Per hoc patet responsio ad objecta [...]”); “Πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον τῶν ἐπιχειρημάτων [...]” (“Ad primum [...]”). More importantly, “the general structure of each part of Scholarios’ work reflects the typical structure of a Thomistic *quaestio* (arguments contra; argument/-s pro; position held and argued; refutation of the arguments contra). In fact, his entire writing can be seen as a *quaestio* offering an argumentation pro addressed to Plethon’s famous argumentation contra the view that Aristotle is right in his disagreement with Plato”54.

51 Demetracopoulos, Palamas Transformed (nt. 2), 368, nt. 326.
54 Demetracopoulos, Plethon (nt. 3), 76–79; id., Georgios Gemistos-Plethon’s (nt. 3), 310.
Thus, in sum, it might be said that the ‘Thomas de Aquino Graecus’ resulted in the emergence of a new philological genre or literary form in the ‘hochsprachliche Literatur’ of Late Byzantium, namely, the *quaestio* (ζήτησις or ζήτημα or ζητεῖν).

II. The epistemological background to the form: the role of syllogism in the process of knowledge

Arranging arguments for this or that position in the way of enumeration was not a matter of style; after all, this form of arguing was far from being elegant in any sense. Rather, this form reflected an epistemological view of syllogisms and reasoning in general as a legitimate and effective means of resolving philosophical and theological disagreement and getting closer to the truth.

1. The initiators: Demetrios and Prochoros Cydones

1.1. A Thomistic exaltation of the power of reasoning

In this respect, a plain declaration of the value of syllogisms was made by the very translators of the two Thomistic ‘Summae’ and the ‘De potentia’, namely, Demetrios and Prochoros Cydones.

Demetrios, in his ‘Defence of Thomas Aquinas against Neilos Cabasilas’\(^{55}\), distinguishes in a recognisably Thomist way between the ‘lumen rationis’ (reason) and the ‘lumen Revelationis’ (faith) as well as between ‘credibilia’ and ‘demonstrabilia’ and stresses that reason, for all its being inferior to the intuitive knowledge possessed by the intelligible beings, is the highest cognitive faculty available to human beings in this life and has the “power” (”δύναμις“) to lead us, partly on its own and partly in collaboration with faith, to truth. Applying it to all subject-matters, including theology, is not only legitimate but also imperative. Belittling it in terms of the transcendence of God’s nature, may sound pious in some uneducated or ill-educated Christian ears yet in fact results from a misunderstanding of the epistemological implications of this transcendence, amounts to rejecting a gift which God sent to us precisely to help us reach Him and thereby satisfy our natural desire to repose on Him, and results in confusion both within one’s mind and in ecclesiastical life\(^{56}\).

This is the line of Prochoros Cydones’ defence of his own use of theological syllogisms (based both on revelational and philosophical premises) in his ‘De essentia et operatione Dei’:


It also seems highly probable that Prochoros argued for the theological legitimacy and indispensability of the use of syllogisms in his discussions with the official Byzantine Church which led to his condemnation by Philotheos Kokkinos in the Synodal Tome of 1368. In this Tome, Prochoros was accused, inter alia, of “trying to interpret the patristic passages in the syllogistic manner”.

Such a positive account of reasoning – especially the idea that human reason is capable of discovering some theological truths starting from Revelational premises and settling theological and ecclesiastical disputes – was rather typically non-Byzantine. Up to that time, the dominant view among Byzantine intellectuals was that dogma should be firmly held and wholeheartedly revered yet not developed according to each particular man’s mind, since this would possibly result in deviation and heresy. Shortly before the brothers Cydones’ vindication of the use of syllogisms in theology, this traditional Byzantine stand had been formulated in a highly articulate way by Barlaam the Calabrian (ca. 1290–1348) in his ‘Contra Latinos’, including a direct attack on Aquinas. During the same time, Nicephoros Gregoras, in his anti-Latin polemics as well as in his theological methodology, held the same position. And Neilos Cabasilas felt free to reproduce Barlaam’s arguments verbatim and did not fail to bitterly attack what he viewed as Thomistic ‘rationalism’.

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59 Ibid., l. 198, ed. Rigo (nt. 58), 105.
61 See Schirò, Il paradosso (nt. 42) in toto.
62 Neilos Cabasilas, ‘Ότι οὐχ ἐστὶ Αὐτόνως 2–72, ed. Candal (nt. 38), 188–244.
Gregory Palamas, during the first of the two phases of his conflict with Barlaam, strongly defended the ‘demonstrative’ way of anti-Latin polemics, rejecting Barlaam’s classification of theological syllogisms en bloc as “dialectical” (cf. infra, pp. 17–19). Still, Palamas denigrated human reasoning in general, and Demetrios Cydones reasonably regarded anti-rationalism as a salient feature of Palamas’ thought and held that this was the epistemological root of his theological errors. To Demetrios, the summit of virtue, i.e. “frónhsiv”, consists of properly grasping by one’s intellect (“nøı mónwı”) and firmly holding the true ideas of the divine things, including God’s simplicity and immutability. The Palamites, he explains, fail to reach this truth because their initiators (“mustagwgoí”) had from the outset repudiated all rational arguments (“lógov a çpav”) on the divine things and absurdly substituted experience (“peîra”) and sense (“ai ¢sjhsiv”) for it. By “initiators” Demetrios obviously refers to Palamas himself and his obscurantist champions. As for Demetrios’ description of the Palamite theological epistemology, he obviously alludes to passages such as ‘Triads I 1’ and ‘II 1’ 68, where a sceptical attack on the effectiveness of syllogisms is mounted, and ‘I 2’ and ‘I 3’ 70 and

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65 Cf. Plato, Leges 631C; 653A; 688B; 888B.
66 This is the way Prochoros, too, referred to Palamas; see Demetrios Cydones, ‘To the Patriarch Philotheos’, ed. Mercati (nt. 37), 327,92–93.
70 Ed. Chrestou (nt. 67), 423,23–27: “Ἡμεῖς [...] ὡς τὴν διὰ λόγων καὶ συλλογισμῶν εὐφροσυμίαν νῦν ὄντος δόξης ἄλλης νομίζωμεν, ἀλλὰ τὴν δ’ ἔργον ταύτα καὶ 'βίου' ἀποδεικνύομεν· ἢ καὶ μὴ μόνον ἄλλης ἄλλα καὶ σοφίας ἑστὶ καὶ ἀπερίστερος, 'Ἀλήθη' γὰρ, ὑπαίτιο, 'παλαιός πᾶς λόγος, τὸ δὲ βίον τίς;' (Gregory Nazianzen; see nt. 67)’. Cf. Triads II 1, 5, ed. Chrestou, 469,26–30.
37–38\textsuperscript{71} and ‘II 2’ 5\textsuperscript{72} as well as ‘Homily LIII’ 40\textsuperscript{73}, where the capability of the divinely-transformed yet bodily-functioning sense of vision of reaching God is fervently declared.

Thus, Cydones, by castigating anti-rationalism, did not mean to launch an indeterminate, loosely-targeted attack on people who disliked reasoning\textsuperscript{74}. To him, anti-rationalism was, so to speak, the ‘\textit{fons et origo malorum}’ of the absurdities of the Palamite trend, which was what he attacked when vindicating the rights of ‘ratio’. In this context, it is telling that in observing a group of Palamite monks closely associated with the palace he noted that for them, not knowledge but “complete ignorance is practically a sign of virtuousness”\textsuperscript{75}.

1.2. The \textit{quaestio} as an instance of the “vice” of “contradiction”

In the corpus of the Patriarch (1350–53; 1355–63/64) Callistos I (post 1290–1363/64), the following unedited writing is extant: \textit{\'Αδασσαλία πρὸς τοὺς λέγοντας ὧς ἡ ἀντιλογία τῆς καθαροῦς ψυχῆς ἐστὶ κίνημα}\textsuperscript{76}. Callistos describes his opponents’ position as follows:


No secure date has been established for this text. No evidence that Kallistos was attacking the holders of some specific doctrine unacceptable to the Byzantine Church — e.g., some anti-Palamites or some pro-Latins — is discernible. At first sight, it might seem that Callistos' target was Nicephoros Gregoras' anti-Palamism. According to a report by Gregoras, Callistos (that "boorish and dull man") visited him during his house arrest (in 1351) and tried to convince him to subscribe to Palamism: "Τὰς γὰρ τοιαύτας ἀντιλογίας, ἔλεγεν, ὦμῆρον καὶ Πλάτωνος ἐξαιτίας, τῶν σών διαδοχῶν· αἱ οὗτοι μὲν ἤσαν, ἀλλὰ μὴ δεξάμενοι τὸν Χριστὸν ὑπερήφανον ὡς αἰματικοὶ. ὥστερ οὖν ὦμῆρον ἐλθοῦσα αἱ σύνοδοι τῶν ἁγίων Πατέρων καὶ Ἀποστόλων καὶ Προφητῶν καὶ κατέλησαν ἐκαίνιος, ἀγάμματα δὲν, οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἀγάμματος ἄν ταὶ τὴν κατάληξιν σοφίαν· καὶ πληροῦσα τὸ ὅρθρον διὰ τοῦ προφήτου· 'ποῦ σοφίας, ποῦ γραμματεύουσι;' (Jer. 8:8–9; Is. 33:8; cf. I Cor. 1:20)."

Yet, obviously, in this context, ἀντιλογία just means opposing an official decision of the Church, not arguing against what one holds to be a false view for truth's sake. Indeed, Gregoras, in his reply to Callistos, did not take the approach that arguing for and against is a natural property of man or a right of the members of the Church. Rather, Gregoras justified his refusal to become a Palamite in highly conservative terms: we believers, he replied to Callistos by quoting a famous passage from Basil of Caesarea, are not allowed to present our personal views ("τὰ τῆς ἠμετέρας διανοίας γεννήματα") as doctrines; and, he went on, the person who contradicted the Church's doctrine of the uncompromised simplicity of God was in fact not him, but Palamas.

Likewise, Callistos' writing does not bear any sign that the author was addressing monks, as one might suppose given that he was a devotee of monastic life and that observing obedience, i.e. the virtue opposed by the vice of "contra-
diction” or “answering back”, is one of the fundamental rules of the monastic life.

One may think that a candidate for Callistos’ attack is Barlaam the Calabrian, who, as early as in the 30’s, had – by and large – stated the same idea. This hypothesis seems plausible in view of the fact that Barlaam latently yet clearly paraphrased Aristotle’s appraisal of the dialectical method by saying that

“έτσι [... ] η τοιαύτη μέθοδος ποιός την τάληπθαι θηράν, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ πάσαν ἀπελος ‘φιλοσοφίαν’, οὕτω ἤστατα κατοφρομεθα ἐν ἑκάστοις τὸ ἀληθὲς καὶ τὸ ψεῦδος, ἐὰνπερ δύναμθαι περὶ παντὸς τοῦ προτεθέντος καὶ οὕτω κάσεινος ἐπιμερείν καὶ ἐκατέρω τῶν τῆς ἀντιφάσεως μορίων θεορεῖν τὰ ἐπόμενα.”

Still, Barlaam did not hold that the process of programmatically arguing both for and against on every issue is natural for man. Rather, because of the strongly Platonic tenor of his thought, he regarded the comparison of opposing views not as a privilege of man as such but as a virtue which the elusive appearance of falsehood as truth obliges us to have, lest we mistake falsehood for truth. This is due to the fact that Barlaam inherited the idea of the usefulness of dialectic not

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86 Aristotle, Topics, 101a29: “μέθοδον [... ] ἐξοντες”.
87 Ibid., 101a27–28 and 34: “πρὸς τὰς κατὰ φιλοσοφεῖς ἐπιστῆμα”.
88 Ibid., 101a35–36: “δυνάμεις πρὸς ἀμφότερα διαπορθαι βοῶν ἐν ἑκάστοις κατοφρομέλη τάλθες ετε καὶ τὸ ψεῦδος”.
89 Ibid., 101a29–30: “prites περὶ τοῦ προτεθέντος ἐπιμερεῖν δυναμόμεθα”.
90 Aristotle, De Interpretatione, 20b23 (cf. supra, nt. 4).
91 Barlaam the Calabrian, Contra Latinos B 1, 9, ll. 97–101, ed. Fyrigos (nt. 43), 254. In his other version of this anti-Latin treatise (A 1, 3, ll. 33–38, ed. Fyrigos, 500) this passage is as follows: “ὤ μόνον ἐν τοῖς περὶ θεολογίας ή τοιαύτη μέθοδος ‘χρησιμοτάτη πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀληθείας εύρισκεν’, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ πάσαν ἀπελος ‘φιλοσοφίαν’ οὕτω μόνον ‘κατοφρομέλη’ ἐν ἑκάστοις τὸ ἀληθὲς καὶ τὸ ψεῦδος, ἐὰνπερ δύναμθαι περὶ παντὸς τοῦ προτεθέντος καὶ οὕτω κάσεινος ἐπιμερείν καὶ ἐκατέρω τῶν τῆς ἀντιφάσεως μορίων διαπορθαι τὰ ἐπόμενα”. Barlaam’s replacement of Aristotle’s “‘ἡ ἀληθείας” with “τοῦ ἀληθοῦς” shows that Barlaam used Aristotle’s ‘Topics’ along with some of the Aristotelian commentators quoted here (nt. 117), who happened to use the phrase “τοῦ ἀληθοῦς”, namely, Alexander of Aphrodisias and/or Asclepius.
92 Cf. Barlaam’s praise of the virtue of affability in his ‘Contra Latinos Β ΙΙ’ 3, ll. 43–47, ed. Fyrigos (nt. 43), 266; see Demetracopoulos, Further (nt. 60), 95–96, No 27.
from scholasticism – which he disliked both before and after his conversion to Catholicism\(^{93}\) but from Proclus’ description of the Socratic dialectic\(^{94}\).

Moreover, Barlaam’s account of the value of dialectic should be seen in the light of his fundamental methodological point that theological syllogisms can no way be called apodeictic – a point subsequently shared by Neilos Cabasilas (see nt. 63) and others\(^{95}\). This point does not allow for seeing his reproduction of Aristotle’s passage on the usefulness of dialectic for the “philosophical sciences” as meaning that the premises of a dialectical argument can be taken as “principles” from which conclusions can be drawn so that an edifice of knowledge can be built on them – which is the case with Aquinas’ conception of theology. To Barlaam, the usefulness of dialectic in theology consists in its enabling us to check truth by a negative, so to speak, process, namely, by checking if accepting or rejecting, e.g., Filioque happens to have any implications incompatible with some commonly accepted Christian doctrines. In other words, dialectic is supposed to shed light on truth not by drawing inferences from axioms (sequi), thus increasing the amount of our explicit knowledge, but just by clearing up whether the proposition at stake is compatible with the beliefs of an interlocutor (convenire) or not. This, in fact, is closer to what Aristotle holds to be a service rendered by dialectic not in the lower field of conversations rather than the realm of sciences\(^{96}\). This is why Barlaam, in his anti-Latin treatise, did not exhort people to argue both for and against the Filioque and freely discuss with each other so as to allegedly get a better, more impartial view of what the case really is (which is the spirit of Aristotle’s dialectic), but only to see whether Filioque implicitly contradicts some Christian doctrines or not. Holding such a modest view of the utility of dialectic in the theological discussions, Barlaam repudiated antilogía himself\(^{97}\), regarding it as a vice which characterises the Latins and going as far as to


\(^{96}\) Aristotle, Topics, 101a30–34: “Πρὸς δὲ τὰς ἐντεῦξες, διὸτι τὰς τῶν πολλῶν κατημιθημένων δόξας οὐκ ἐκ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων ἀλλʼ ἐκ τῶν οἰκείων δογμάτων ὑμλήσομεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς, μεταβιβάζοντες ὅ τι ἄν μὴ καλὸς φαίνονται λέγειν ἡμῖν’.

\(^{97}\) Barlaam the Calabrian, Contra Latinos B II 34, ll. 472–475, ed. Fyrigos (nt. 43), 300; B IV 33, ll. 403–404, ed. Fyrigos, 376; A 9 1, l. 11, ed. Fyrigos, 602 (a quotation from Gregory Nazianzen’s ‘Oration XXVII’ 3). See also B III 1, l. 30, ed. Fyrigos, 308.
include this personal conviction in the very title of one of his treatises against them: Πρὸς τοὺς ἀντιλογικοὺς τῶν Λατῖνων etc. Of course, in spite of this evidence of what Barlaam thought about the proper place of dialectic within theology, it is possible for him to be attacked not on the basis of his real convictions but on the grounds of Palamas’ distorted yet well-established image of him as a ‘rationalist’ or even ‘pagan’ theologian. Yet, by the time Callistos composed his attack on “contradiction”, Barlaam’s theological methodology no longer formed part of the theological discussion.

Having discarded all the above cases, we must examine the possibility that what caused Callistos’ reaction (expressed by means of his rather mediocre intellectual equipment) was the sudden transmission and rapid dissemination of the impressive technique of the scholastic quaestio (whose salient feature is the production of a double list of arguments, both for and against) from 1354 onward, regarded by him as a threat to the traditional ecclesiastical manners, according to which laymen, monks and even priests were not supposed to audaciously engage themselves in theological matters and contentiously hold public disputes on them but simply to embrace the doctrines as elaborated and officially sanctioned by the Church. As far as I am able to discern, Demetrios and Prochoros Cydones’ description and justification of “contradiction” as a necessary means in man’s quest for truth in terms of its being a natural quality of man, is the closest to Callistos’ description of the position he opposed. Demetrios, while defending Aquinas’ theological method against Neilos Cabasilas, declared that “τὸ διαλέγεσθαι ἢ καὶ συλλογίζεσθαι […] τῆς λογικῆς ψυχῆς ἕστω ἴδιον [3], παρὰ Θεοῦ διὰ τὴν τῆς ἁληθείας εὑρέσειν [2] ἐξ ἀρχῆς συμπεφυτευμένον [1] αὐτῇ”100. These lines contain all the traits of Callistos’ description of his opponents’ doctrine (cf. supra, p. 15). To him, disagreement and its resolution by means of discussion is not a natural property of man but one of the miserable results of Adam’s
fall: “Βαφτά τῇς τοιαύτῃς κακίστης ἐπινοίας! Τὸν γὰρ Θεὸν αὐτῶν τούτῳ τοῦ πτώματος λέγουσιν. [...] Διὰ τῆς παραβάσεως [...] ἐν αὐτῷ ἑπιπέδοι γίνεται τοῖς ἁρχαίοις.” Here Callistos paraphrases a much-worn passage from Gregory Nazianzen, where “contradiction” or disobedience to official Church is deemed ruinous for the Orthodox faith.

Moreover, Demetrios explicitly connected διαλέγεσθαι with ἀντιλογία and the quest for truth and described both as God-sent in one of his ‘Meditations’:

“‘Ο γνώσις τοῖς ἀνθρώποις διδάσκειν’ (Ps. 93:10; cf. Job 21:22; 22:2) καὶ τὴν ἀληθείαν βουλόμενος ἡμῖν εἶδέναι θεός, μέγα πρὸς τὴν ταυτής εἰδέων βοήθεια τὸ διαλέγεσθαι δέδωκεν, ἵνα διδόντος καὶ λαμβάνοντος ‘λόγον’ (I Petr. 3:15) καὶ ταύτῃ τὴν ἀληθέων διάνοιαν ὁπερ τινά λόθον πάντως τάς ἀντιλογίας ἑκείθεν τὸς ἀληθείας ἐλκομέν τῷ.”

Furthermore, as we have seen (nt. 57), Prochoros Cydones claimed expressis verbis that “the tool of reason” should be put in the service of finding out the truth (“πρὸς τὴν ἀληθείαν”; “πρὸς εἰδέων τῆς ἀληθείας”; “πρὸς τὴν τῆς ἀληθείας εἰδέων; τις τῆς ἀληθείας ἐξητέρησαν”). Likewise, in the epilogue of his condemned work, Prochoros remarked that his intention was to find out the truth and that, if his research was successful, he deserved to be praised for that (“διὰ τὴν τῆς ἀληθείας εἰδέων”). This is exactly how Callistos I describes his adversaries’ position that contradiction should be used as a tool “for the sake of discovering truth” (“διὰ τὴν τῆς ἀληθείας ἀνέφεσαν”; cf. supra, pp. 15–16).

Callistos I died in 1363/64. Is it possible that he read some of Demetrios’ or Prochoros’ writings referred to above? Prochoros’ ‘De essentia et operatione Dei’, which seems to have been the peak of the Thomist-Byzantine trend of applying the quaestio method to theological matters, was finished in 1367 at the latest, when the monks in the Great Lavra monastery denounced him to the patriarch Philotheos claiming that they had found some heretical books in his cell; at that point the process of Prochoros’ interrogation commenced. In regard to its terminus ante quem, what only can be said with certainty is that it was composed after the date of the translations of the two ‘Summae’ and the ‘De potentia’, since several long quotations from these translations were integrated into it. The
The translation of the ‘Summa contra Gentiles’ was finished in 1354, the translation of the I Pars of the ‘Summa theologicae’ probably in 1358\(^\text{108}\), and the translation of the ‘De potentia’ before 1358–59/61, i.e. before Neilos Cabasilas’ composition of the “Ὅτι οὖν ἐστὶ Λατινοὶ”\(^\text{109}\) (nt. 21), where some passages from the two ‘Summae’ but also from the ‘De potentia’ were quoted\(^\text{110}\). Thus, it is in principle possible that Prochoros had started composing or even finished his ‘De essentia et operatione Dei’ well before 1367. The fact that the Prochoros case goes back as far as 1364/65\(^\text{111}\) suggests that Prochoros had started steadily opposing Palamism some time before this year. Demetrios regarded anti-rationalism as a fundamental defect of the Palamite theology (cf. supra, p. 14), and it may have been that Prochoros produced his short text on the legitimate and imperative use of syllogisms in theology\(^\text{112}\) early enough. Still, there is no positive evidence for that.

What about Demetrios’ ‘Defence of Thomas Aquinas against Neilos Cabasilas’? This work was probably finished shortly after Neilos Cabasilas’ death in 1363\(^\text{113}\). I would be inclined to think that its sophisticated arguments, its high literary quality and its being not excessively yet not negligibly lengthy indicate that it took Demetrios some considerable time to produce. The opening words of this polemical piece suggest that Demetrios, in the context of his vivid interest in the Greek-Latin issue both from the ecclesiastical and the theological point of view, had his watchful eyes on Neilos’ anti-Latin production and that, as soon as he saw that Neilos was audacious enough to attack not the Latins in general (which was quite usual for a Byzantine from the time of Photius onwards) but a really exceptional Latin figure, i.e. Thomas Aquinas, he indignantly started producing a refutation of Neilos for Thomas’ sake. Still, even if we do not take for granted that Demetrios started writing immediately after the completion of Neilos’ piece, most probably written between 1358/59 and 1361, we can plausibly assume that he wrote it during Neilos’ term of office as archbishop of Thessaloniki (1361–63) and that he just abstained from publishing it because his opponent held an official ecclesiastical post. This plausible scenario suggests that Callistos might have been familiar with Demetrios’ ‘Defensio’. After all, it seems that only an unofficial dissemination of Demetrios’ piece can account for the close affinities of Callistos I’s wording with Demetrios’ indicated in the above.

Thus, it seems that, if Callistos was acquainted with some written form of Demetrios and/or Prochoros’ ideas of the value of “dialectical” conflict, this might concern only the former’s defence of Aquinas. Yet, we should also take into account that Callistos I’s patriarchate included the years of John VI Canta-

\(^{108}\) See Papadopoulos, Ελληνικά (nt. 2), 47.
\(^{109}\) See Kisl, Nil Cabasilas (nt. 40), 83–87.
\(^{110}\) See Demetracopoulos, Palamas Transformed (nt. 2), 313, note 140.
\(^{111}\) See Rigo, Il monte Athos (nt. 58), 49; 90.
\(^{112}\) Prochoros Kydones, On the Use of Syllogisms in Theology (nt. 57), 515–527.
couzenos’ encouragement of Demetrios to translate the ‘Summa contra Gentiles’ as well as the years during which the ‘Summa theologiae’, the ‘De potentia’, the ‘De articulis fidei’ and the ‘De rationibus fidei’ were translated\textsuperscript{114}. This means that it was both objectively possible and practically easy for Callistos to hear the echo of the scholastic method which had been introduced to Byzantium and raise his own voice against Thomas’ methodology, just as Neilos Cabasilas – who practically died the same year as Callistos – did during the same time.

Further, it was just as reasonable for Callistos as well as for his successor Philotheos Kokkinos to practically identify Prochoros’ theological methodology with Demetrios’ and the latter’s with Thomas’; after all, they (and only they) were the translators of some of Aquinas’ pieces\textsuperscript{115}. Because Demetrios enjoyed a peculiar immunity due to his high official posts, it was only Prochoros who was accused of ἀντιλογία to what the Church had officially decided in 1351 on Palamas’ theology. This is why ἀντιλογία occurs so frequently in the Synodical Tome of 1368, which was not the case with the previous pro-Palamite Synodical Tome, that of 1351\textsuperscript{116}.

Now if we assume that Callistos’ ἀντιλογία is simply a pejorative reference to the Latin-based Byzantine quaestio as introduced to Byzantium by Demetrios and probably by Prochoros Cydones as well, which broke fresh ground in the eyes both of Palamites and anti-Palamites, we should view this in the light of the fact that Demetrios’ and Prochoros’ appraisal of dialectic goes back not only to Aquinas but also to the way in which Aristotle defined the “dialectical question”: “The dialectical question is a request for an answer, i.e. […] for the admission of one of two contradictories” (nt. 4). Furthermore, “dialectic” is described by numerous Aristotelian commentators, on the basis of Aristotle’s own words, as a method necessary for an intellectual process to be “philosophical” and result in discovering truth\textsuperscript{117}. This means that the quarrel between Callistos and the Cydones brothers concerned nothing less than the very value of philosophy.

\textsuperscript{114} See secondary bibliography on p. 1, nt. 2.

\textsuperscript{115} Cf. Demetrios’ close connection of “contradicting” (“ἀντιλέγειν”) or “disputing” (“διάλεξεῖς”) with truth in his ‘To the Patriarch Philotheos’ (see supra, p. 8).

\textsuperscript{116} In this Tome, this lexeme has not the meaning of a vice and plays no role in the arguments of its redactors. It refers to the oral and written counter-arguments set forth not only by the anti-Palamite party (ed. J.-P. Migne, col. 725C; 726A; 740A; 741A; 741C; 742B), which is not accused of counter-arguing per se, but also by Palamas himself (723B: “ἀντιλογία εἶναι τὰ ἀλήθειας ἀντιλογία”), who was praised for that. This shows that this lexeme was used neutrally.

\textsuperscript{117} Alexander of Aphrodisias, In Aristotelis Metaphysica commentaria (nt. 7), 173,27–174,4: “τὸ χρήσιμον τῆς διαλεκτικῆς πρὸς φιλοσοφίαν καὶ τὴν τὴν ἀλήθειας ἐγερευνὴν τῆς γὰρ διαλεκτικῆς τὸ διαστορεῖν καὶ ἐπεφανεῖν εἰς ἑκάτερα. Ἀλήθεις ἄρα τὸ ἐν τοῖς Ἐσπερίαῖς” (101a34–36; cf. 163b9–11) ἑρμηνεύον, τὸ χρήσιμον εἶναι τὴν διαλεκτικὴν πρὸς τὰς κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν ἐπίθετας”. Id., In Aristotelis Analyticorum priorum librum I commentarium, ed. M. Wallies (Commentaria in Aristotelis Graeca II.1), Berlin 1883, 8,19–29: “χρήσιμον πρὸς ὑπόδειξιν καὶ τὴν τὴν ἀλήθειας ἐγερευναν ό τα γὰρ τοῖς διαλεκτικοῖς ἐγερευνομένοις συλλογισμοῖς καὶ τὸ πιθανὸν καὶ τὸ παρατηρομένον τὸ ταλῆθεν συνοργάνων δυνάμεως χάον τὸ ἀλήθεις εὐθύτερον γὰρ ἀπατώμους ἀπὸ τῆς ὁμοιότητος τοῦ πιθανοῦ τῆς πρὸς τὰλῆθες, ἀλλ’ εἶδος αὐτοῦ τὴν ὁμοιότητα τής ἀλήθειας. τὸ δὲ τὸ ἀλήθεις ἀπὸ τῆς ὁμοιότητος τοῦ πιθανοῦ τῆς πρὸς τὰλῆθες ἀνέφερε.”
2. A faithful disciple: Manuel Calecas

Later on, in 1396, shortly before Demetrios Cydones’ death, Manuel Calecas (ca. 1350–1410), whose intellectual spirit was very close to that of Demetrios (and, in some respect, of Prochoros), tried to justify the very production of his ‘Apology II’, which he addressed “ad viros eclesiasticos, adversarios suos”, by qualifying that his “talking back” did not spring from a quarrelsome spirit but from his love for truth: “Ωτι δὲ ἡ παροῦσα ἀντιλογία ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς τῆς ἄληθείας ἐστὶν, φανερὸν […] ἐκ τῶν κατ’ ἐμὲ. […] Οὕτω φιλόνεικον μὲ τινὲς ἱσόοιν ὄντα […]”\(^{118}\). This sounds like an attempt by Calecas at neatly distinguishing between two types of men ineptly confused by Callistos, i.e. the combative arguer and the lover of truth, and presenting himself as an instance of the truth the latter, the Calecas seems to have been aware of the fact that “contradiction” was deemed to be a vice per se; that is why he addresses his adversaries in this way:

“Μη δὴ τοῦτο μόνον σκοπεῖτε, τὴν ἀντιλογίαν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν τρόπον καὶ εἰ καλὸς· ἐνεκά γὰρ τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἄληθείας. [...] Οὕτως πάς ὁ ἀντιλέγων πικός, ὥσπερ οὗτο τὸ..."
Once more (see supra, p. 20), “contradiction” is presented as serving truth. Although Calecas admits that it can be put in the service of maliciousness, too, he nevertheless seems to construe it as a right a believer can legitimately exercise if he feels that the institutional Church he belongs to happens to err.

The Thomism of Manuel Calecas, who regarded Demetrios Cydones as his main mentor, was inspired by Demetrios’ reception of Thomas’ thought and was often expressed in a way extremely close to the lines in Demetrios’ writings. For example, Calecas, in his ‘Apology I’, which he addressed to Manuel II Palaiologos, an author who knew his Aquinas and was interested in methodological matters (cf. infra, pp. 63–65), defended his conversion to Catholicism by presenting it as the outcome of his personal quest for truth, which is every man’s natural end:

“‘Αληθείας οὔτε οὔτε γνησιότερον οὔτε ὑφελμιστέρον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις εἶναι’ φασιν. Ἐστι γὰρ τῆς νοησίς ἡμῶν φύσεως οὔ τι κόσμοι καὶ φάσι. [...] Εἴπατον τοῖς ἄντον, ὅταν τὸν οἰκείον ὄρον φιλάττετι, αὐτῷ τῷ ἀληθείᾳ εἶναι καὶ μετέχειν ἀληθείας φαμέν. [...] Τοῦ γὰρ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ τοῦ εἴδενα φύσει πάντες ὁρέγονται.”

The last line is a trivial reproduction of the famous opening sentence of Aristotle’s ‘Metaphysics’. Yet, the entire passage is practically an exact reproduction of a section of Demetrios Cydones’ ‘Apology II’, which, in turn, had reproduced the exaltation of truth in the introductory chapters of Aquinas’ ‘Summa contra Gentiles’.

Following Cydones in enriching his ‘Apologies’ by means of Aquinas’ ideas, Calecas, in the concluding paragraph of his ‘Apology I’, justified his refutation of his enemies’ arguments as follows:

“Τότε γὰρ τῆς ἀληθείας δύνατ’ ἂν τε ἐχεσθαι πλέον, ὅταν οὐ μόνον αὐτὴν ἐξ κατηγορίας αὐτὴν δεικνυμένην ὧδ’ ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἀντικειμένους αὐτῆς λόγους ἐξελέγχειν ἀισχύνῃ. Τὸν γὰρ

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120 Manuel Calecas, Apology III (fragm.), 44–51, ed. Loenertz (nt. 118), 322–323.
121 Id., Epistle 25, l. 4, ed. Loenertz (nt. 118), 199; id., Epistle 45, 10–12, ed. Loenertz, 230.
122 See Demetracopoulos, Palamas Transformed (nt. 2), 327–341.
124 Demetrios Cydones, Apology II, ed. Mercati (nt. 37), 417,58 sqq. This dependence shows that the similarity of Calecas’ ‘Apology I’ to Cydones’ respective pieces is much closer and more substantial than has so far been estimated (e.g., by Loenertz (nt. 118), 29).
125 Thomas Aquinas, Summa contra Gentiles I, 1,4 and 2,1; see Demetrius Cydones’ translation in: Demetracopoulos, Plethon (nt. 3), 175; 176–177.
That truth is corroborated in the eyes of one’s addressee when falsehood is refuted is an Aristotelian idea. Still, Calecas’ source is not Aristotle but Aquinas’ reproduction of Aristotle’s idea:

―Toû δ’ αὐτοῦ ἦσστε θάτερον τῶν ἕναντίων προσείσθαι καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν ἀποθέκεσθαι· ἀπόστερον ὄρμον τῶν ἅτερων ὑπέστη μὲν ἐμποιοῦντα, νόσον δὲ ἀπελαόντα. Ἅπαντα όσα ἐδέχατον ἡ κύρια ἡμᾶς ἀλλοτρία καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις διασώθητε, οὐτω καὶ τοῦ ἑναντίου πολέμησι τὸ πείθει.‖

Now Christian truths, although coming from revelation, are not irrational; as Calecas says in an epistle of his to Demetrios Cydones, for one to discern truth from falsehood the use of “proper reasoning” ("ὁρθὸς λόγος") and “demonstration” ("ἀπόδειξις") is not only helpful but also imperative; for Christian truths are not unjustified commands given to irrational beings ("ἄλογα ἐπιτάγματα"), but rather, according to the well-known I Petr. 3:15, truths supposedly accountable by those who hold them, namely, Christians. Here, Calecas paraphrases the subsequent passage from Gregory of Nyssa’s ‘De anima et resurrectione’:

"Εγὼ δὲ [...] θρασύτερον πως ἄπεκρινήν, οὐ πάντως περισσεύμενος τὸ λεγόμενον. Εἴτε γὰρ ἐπιτάγμασιν εἰσώμαι τὰς θείας φωνὰς [...] οὐ μὴν λόγῳ τινὶ τοῦ τοιοῦτος προσήχθημεν ὁμάθα. Ἀλλ’ ἐνεμέν ἡμῖν δουλικαίς ἐνδοθεν ὁ νοῦς φῶρα τὸ κελεύομενον δεχόμασθα, οὐ χωσίνε τινὶ ὁμφῇ τοῖς λεγομένοις αντίθεθαι."}

Since Gregory is then replied to by his pious and wise sister Macrina who notes that λόγος can show the reasonableness of Christianity, we are led to conclude that Calecas’ paraphrasis of Gregory’s passage suggests that he shares this optimistic conviction. Still, Calecas does not do so in Gregory’s ultra-optimistic and contradictory way, but in Thomas’ moderate, clear and consistent way. For instance, he explicitly places the doctrine of ‘Deus trinus’ among the credibilia:

128 Thomas Aquinas, Summa contra Gentiles I,1,6 (Demetrios Cydones’ translation in: Demetracopoulos, Plethon (nt. 3), 176). Likewise, Calecas, when reproducing in a non-philosophical context (Epistle 86, 7, ll. 117–119, ed. Loenertz [nt. 118], 300: "Ἰδον ἢτε χρήσιμα πρὸς τὸ ἐλπίσας φῶς ἐξώθην οὐκ οὐκ ἔδει γινομένων ὑμᾶς τοῖς τις λεπτομερῶς ὑπαγορεύοντες [4], ἐφ᾽ οὓς τοὺς τὴν ἤλιον [1], ἐμψευγα λήγῃ τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ὄντα διάνοιαν"), the well-known bat simile from Aristotle’s ‘Metaphysics’, did not have recourse to the ancient Greek text but to Demetrios Cydones’ translation of Aquinas’ ‘Summa theologicæ’ and/or Demetrios’ ‘Defence of Thomas Aquinas’, where the simile occurs (see infra, pp. 41–43; Calecas’ “τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς ὄντα διάνοια” occurs in Demetrios’ ‘Defence’: “ἡ τῆς ἡμετέρους ἡμετερής της ψυχῆς δύναμις”).
130 Gregorii Nysseni opera omnia, ed. J.-P. Migne (Patrologia Graeca 46), Paris 1863, col. 17A.
131 See J.A. Demetracopoulos, Philosophy and Faith. The Rational Demonstrability of Christian Dogmas in Gregory of Nyssa or Fides deprecans intellectum (in Modern Greek, with an English Summary), Athens 1996, 19–66; 169–175. Of course, I do not claim that Calecas shared my views on Gregory of Nyssa’s ultra–‘rationalism’ and inconsistent fideism. Still, it is not implausible to say that any Byzantine theologian of Calecas’ capacity was able to discern both.
Gregory of Nyssa offers a rational proof of the ‘Deus trinus’ (which is a unique case in the entire patristic literature)\(^{132}\). Yet, Calecas follows Thomas’ line, not Gregory’s, on the reason – revelation issue. Calecas explicitly reproduces Aquinas’ distinction between ‘demonstrabilia’ and ‘credibilia’: “Τὰ ἐκ τῶν τῆς θεολογίας ἀρχῶν συμπεραίνομενα θεολογικά τὴν ἐπιστήμην ἔχειν καὶ τὰ μὲν ἐξ ἀποκάλυψις, τὰ δὲ ἀποδεικτικά, οἰκείας ὁμολογοῦν τῷ γένει τῶν οἰκείων ἀρχῶν”\(^{134}\). On the basis of this distinction, Calecas formulates what he holds to be the right theological methodology in contradistinction to the Orthodox one, which practically proclaimed an absolute prohibition of constructing theological syllogisms:

“Οὐ τούτων τὸ ἀποδεικνύοντα κοινὸν, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὴ πρὸς τὸ προσεῖσμαν οἰκείας ταῖς ἀρχαῖς χρησθαί καὶ τὸ οὐκάσθα τὴν πίστιν φυσικὰς ἀρχαίς ἀποδεικνύον. Ὡς δὲ γε χρώμενος μὲν περὶ τὸ ζητοῦμεν ἕκαστοτε τῶν περὶ Θεοῦ προβλήματόν ταῖς κοιναῖς τῆς πληθύνσεως ἀρχαίς καὶ τὰς ὁμολογουμένας ἀποκάλυψις τῶν ἀρχῶν, ὧν ὑποκείμενοι οὐδέποτε τῶν κειμένων ἀναφορομενοί, σύμφωνα συμπεραίνει· ὡς τοῖς παλαιοῖς πατριάδα περὶ τῆς ὁμοουσίας διαλεγμένων ἔγενετο, καὶ πολλῶν ζητηθέντων περὶ τὴν πίστιν ἔτερον οὐδὲ ἢ τὸν κάσκον τὸν συμπέρασμα τῆς Γραφῆς ἀπόφασις, τῶν ἐκείθεν ἀρχῶν ἡμετέρων καὶ ταῖς αὐτῶς οἰκείοις, ἀφ’ ὧν προῆρεται, ὁμολογῦσθαι, καὶ θεολογικόν κατείστω πληθύνειν τὸν ἐκ τῆς ἀποκάλυψις εἶναι, διότι ‘γεωμετρικά’ τὰ τοῖς γεωμετρικῶς ἀρχαῖς ἐπόμενα συμπεραίνατα ἐν τῇ πίστει, ἀπὸ διαφοράν ὦν γέγραπται, ἀναφέρει.”\(^{136}\)

Manuel defends the use of philosophical principles in theology. One of his arguments is that philosophical principles, since they spring out of our very nature, should not be distrusted; otherwise, one should blame God, Who is the truth itself, for providing us with epistemological equipment whose use conflicts with what He has revealed to us as true regarding the divine things\(^{137}\). Further,


\(^{134}\) From “un opuscule inédit sur la simplicité divine” (J. Gouillard, Les influences latines dans l’œuvre théologique de Manuel Calécas, in: Échos d’Orient 37 (1938), 36–52, at 47, note 5).


\(^{136}\) Manuel Calecas, De processione Spiritus sancti III, ed. Migne (nt. 132), col. 185C–186A (Greek text in: J. Gouillard, Les influences [nt. 134], 48, note 1).

\(^{137}\) Ibid., 186B–C.
arguing against using arguments in theology is a blatant self-contradiction. Moreover, to those who appeal to St. Paul’s anti-philosophical passages such as I Cor. 1:17 and 2:4, Calecas replies that this tendentious interpretation of these Scriptural passages contradicts what Paul himself says in Rom. 1:20 and Jesus Christ’s famous exhortation in Joh. 5:39 to “explore the Scriptures” as well as Jesus’ own use of syllogisms in various circumstances – not to mention that theologians did make use of syllogisms in their Trinitarian discussions. Furthermore, he who attacks syllogisms and arguments en bloc deprives man of what is his “salient feature” (iδidion) and cancels the humans’ ability to communicate, which, in turn, concedesthe place to violence. Besides, literature, arts and science, which are products of human reason, are what “ornates human nature” (οι κοσμεῖν). It is obvious that most of these arguments, which either vindicate the dignity of human nature against theological fideism or plead for a theological methodology that does not go against this dignity, can be traced back to Demetrios Cydones (see supra, pp. 13–14; infra, pp. 36–37; 45–46).

3. Some anti-Latins’ Thomas-based doctrine of the limits of reasoning

However, constantly and conscientiously using syllogisms was only one side of Aquinas’ methodological tenor. For all that he is “almost breathing syllogisms rather than air” (to use Neilos Cabasilas’ ironic words), Thomas was well aware of the inherent limits of human reason, which are due to the composite nature of man, as well as of the hindrances (the causae errorii) emerging in the course of one’s using reason in order to discover truth. Aquinas’ warning against these limits and obstacles was used by Neilos Cabasilas as an argument against the Latins’ theological ‘rationalism’. In regard to this, he was closely followed by John VI Cantacouzenos (ca. 1292–1383), who, in the course of his refutation

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138 Ibid., 185B.
139 Ibid., 184D–185A.
140 Ibid., 184D.
142 Manuel Calecas, Laudatio funebris Melidonae 14, ll. 235–243, ed. Loenertz (nt. 118), 332.
143 Ibid., 64, ed. Candal (nt. 38), 238,24–25. Cf. Ibid., 47, ed. Candal, 224,1–2.
144 “Nullus philosophorum ante adventum Christi cum toto conatu suo potuit tantum scire de Deo et de necessariis ad vitam aeternam, quantum post adventum Christi sit una vetula per fidem”. This is not Luther, but Aquinas (Expositio in Symbolum Apostolorum, Proem; cf. É. Gilson, Christianisme et philosophie, Paris 1949, 82).
146 John VI Cantacouzenos, Refutationes duae Prochori Cydonii I,16, cdd. E. Voordeckers/F. Tinnefeld, Joannis Cantacuzeni Refutationes duas Prochori Cydonii et Disputatio cum Paulo patriarcha Latino epistulis septem tradita, Turnhout 1987, 22–24. As noticed by the editors (ad I,16, ll. 2–5; II. 39–56), Cantacouzenos reproduces both the argument and the wording of Neilos Cabasilas (“Θωμᾶ τιλλογισμοί τὸν ἄμφοτερον ἂν”

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of Prochoros Cydones’ theological ‘rationalism’, quoted Ch. 9 (“Περὶ τῆς τάξεως καὶ τοῦ τρόπου τῆς ἐν τῇ παροχή τῆς πραγματείας μεταφράσεως”147) of Book I of the ‘Summa contra Gentiles’ in full, where Aquinas shows that one should be very watchful when using syllogisms as well as modest as to how far one thinks one can in principle reach by reasoning. In fact, Cantacouzenos just amplifies Neilos’ three brief yet explicit quotations from this Thomistic chapter148.

Admittedly, an anti-Latin appeal to Thomas may sound like contradiction in terms or, at least, merely rhetorical and opportunistic. Still, Neilos quotes a lot of Thomistic passages of such spirit149 and explicitly says that this spirit is genuinely Christian150. On the other hand, however, it would be wrong to take this appeal as testifying to any Thomistic commitment by Neilos. Likewise, Cantacouzenos’ full citation of ‘Summa contra Gentiles’ I,9 does not mean that his theological methodology fully or really coincides with Thomas’; for, as we shall see (pp. 61–63), Cantacouzenos held a rather negative view of the value of syllogisms both in theology and in general.

4. Plethon’s two-sided assimilation of Aquinas’ methodology

One of the numerous disciples of Demetrios Cydones, George Gemistos (ca. 1360–1452 or 1454)151, who coined the name “Plethon” for himself, integrated into his thought both sides of Aquinas’ evaluation of syllogism as a tool legitimately and effectively put in the service of man’s task to reach truth.

Plethon was a pagan philosopher, whose break with Christianity most probably took place very early in his life152. Still, he was able to see that Scholastic theology was not a purely Christian product but was imbued, inter alia, with the Aristotelian method of searching into truth by means of syllogisms. Thus, to summarize

147 See a provisional edition of this chapter in Demetrios Cydones’ translation in: Demetracopoulos, Plethon (nt. 3), 188–189.
148 Neilos Cabasilas, “Οτι οὐκ ἐστι Λατινευς 33, 65 and 69, ed. Candal (nt. 38), 210,7–8, 240,19; 242,14–19.
149 Ibid., 12; 13; 14; 17 (ex Summa contra Gentiles I,3,8: “Οὐκ ἀρκεῖ πᾶν τὸ πείρη ὧν ἔγινεν, εἰ καὶ λόγος διεῖναι μὴ δυνατόν, εὖθες ὡσπέρ τι φέστος ἄποροι τῇ προοιμίᾳ, ὡσπέρ Μυκηναῖος καὶ οἱ πλεῖστοι τῶν ἀπόστολν ὑπέλαβον”; Demetracopoulos, Plethon [nt. 5], 180; cf. infra, p. 70); 18; 19 bis (19a ex ‘Summa theologicae’, 1, a. 8 ad 2; see Demetracopoulos, 200); 22; 29; 40–41 (cf. Demetracopoulos, 196–198); 47; 64; 65–66; 69; ed. Candal, 194,18–28, 196,3–5, 196,14–21; 198,22–200,3; 200,4–8; 200,10–12; 202,13–15; 202,15–18; 206,21–24; 206,24–26; 216,14–218,24; 224,1–12; 238,29–33; 240,1–20; 242,14–19 (I am denoting the Thomistic passages not indicated by the editor).
150 Ibid., 33, ed. Candal, 210,10.
151 For evidence on this relationship between Cydones and Gemistos see Demetracopoulos, Plethon (nt. 3), 29–31; 97–100.
what I have argued in length elsewhere\textsuperscript{153}, in the impressive programmatic anti-
sceptical and anti-fideist \textit{encomium rationis} set forth in his ‘Laws’ (I, 2–4), Plethon “ascribed to ‘ratio’ two tasks practically coinciding with those implied by the famous Christian tenet ‘\textit{philosophia ancilla theologiae}’: (i) developing the ‘God-sent maxims’ by means of formally correct conclusions; (ii) defending, modo apolo-
getico, these maxims against the attacks by the various enemies of truth”; even his wording is derived from Demetrios Cydones’ translation of the ‘Summa theologiae’ (I\textsuperscript{a}, q. 1, a. 2; 8; II\textsuperscript{a} II\textsuperscript{ae}, q. 2, a. 4) as well as from Demetrios Cydones’ Thomistic vindication of the right of reason to get involved in man’s research into God in the ‘Apology II’. Apparently, (i) is to be identified to the ‘\textit{pars constructiva}’ of the Scholastic method of \textit{quaestio}, whereas (ii) with the well-ordered Scholastic reply to the counter-arguments. Yet, it should not escape our attention that Plethon had an optimistic predilection for arguing for, not both for and against, as happens in the Scholastic \textit{quaestio}; what he liked in Thomas was less the objective – more accurately, inter-subjective, dialogal – process of approaching truth and more the trust of reasoning.

III. The anthropological background: ‘\textit{dignitas hominis}’

1. First Episode: Nicholas Cabasilas vs. Nicephoros Gregoras

Around two decades before the transmission of Thomism in Byzantium, a dis-
cussion was held on the issue commonly known by its modern name, namely, the
‘\textit{dignitas hominis’}. Gregoras, radicalising his mentor Theodoros Metochites’ epi-
stemological views, held a fideistic and sceptical (bordering on nihilistic) view on
all the cognitive faculties of man, from the bodily senses up to intellect\textsuperscript{154}. Human wisdom and discipline is able to grasp the truth about neither God nor His creature; man can only guess (“\textit{στοχασμός αμιγδός άληθίας” vs. “ή τόν άντων άλρμης κατάληψις”) with some meagre probability how the heavens or the sublunar world operates\textsuperscript{155}. Gregoras also held that, although man is capable

\textsuperscript{153} Demetracopoulos, Plethon (nt. 3), 96–100; 111–112; id., Georgios Gemistos-Plethon’s (nt. 3),
316; 323–328; 329–330.

\textsuperscript{154} See Demetracopoulos, Nicholas Cabasilas’ (nt. 12), 84–116; 120–122; 310–314. I would be inclin-
ed to revise my estimation (op. cit., 108; 231–232, nt. 364) that the central issue of Gregoras’
‘\textit{Antilogia}’ is the vility of man in his postlapsarian state; it now seems to me that the ταυτεύνως
talks about refers to the traditional moral virtue of humility rather than to human vility. Even
my translation of the passage I quoted from this short writing was, partly misguided by the
editor’s wrong punctuation, wrong, too. What I am still convinced is that Gregoras does hold an
extremely negative view of the postlapsarian man, a unequalled negative one in the whole history
of the Byzantine intellectual life.

\textsuperscript{155} Nicephoros Gregoras, Phlorentius 1621–1632, ed. P. L. M. Leone, Niceforo Gregora. Fiorenzo
o intorno alla sapienza. Testo critico, introduzione, traduzione e commentario, Università di
Napoli 1975, 123.
of living a virtuous life regardless of the conditions of the particular place and time he happens to live in, and in spite of the fact that the starting point of his morality is the innate “seminal laws” implanted in our soul by God, yet what one can morally achieve by means of one’s own efforts, if compared with what Christians can achieve by means of God’s grace, looks like the light of the stars compared with the sunlight.\(^{156}\)

Nicholas Cabasilas’ optimistic view of the ‘dignitas boninis’ is linked with his view of the ‘humana conditio’. In contrast to Gregoras’ view that Adam’s sin almost blinded man and rendered him disabled to find and follow the way toward truth unless aided by God and Church, Cabasilas adopted Aquinas’ view that the original sin did not damage human nature but only caused a partial misuse of its powers, a state of affairs that can be repaired. The ‘De vita in Christo’ II,59, where this idea is expounded, is a paraphrase of ‘Summa theologiae’, I° II\(^{16}\), q. 85, a. 11.\(^ {157}\)

To Cabasilas, what radically differs in the two is not the prelapsarian and the postlapsarian condition but the ‘status viae’ and the ‘status patriae’. This is outlined in the opening words of his ‘De vita in Christo’, which are a latent but direct and faithful paraphrase of Aquinas’ ‘Summa contra Gentiles’ III, 63.\(^ {158}\) Contrary to his friend Demetrios Cydones (see next paragraph), Cabasilas had no taste for theological arguments; when stressing man’s ability to discover truth, what he had in mind was rather science and morality. Probably reproducing Aquinas’ distinction between philosophical and theological virtues, Cabasilas held\(^ {159}\) that man can run, roughly speaking, half of the way towards morality by himself. This amounts to ascribing man an irreducible degree of dignity and recognizing an autonomous sphere of life conducted besides (or, desirably, as preparatory to but by nature distinct from) the Christian one.

This means that Cabasilas’ acquisition of the heathen erudition – with regard to which, he was, according to John VI Cantacouzenos\(^ {160}\), who knew him well, as


\(^{158}\) Demetracopoulos, Échos (nt. 157), 79.

\(^{159}\) Nicholas Cabasilas, Commentary on the Divine Liturgy XII,8, ed. Salaville (nt. 16), 108–110.

\(^{160}\) John VI Cantacouzenos, Historiae IV,16, ed. L. Schopen, Joannis Cantacuzeni eximperatoris Historiarum libri IV, vol. III (Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae 20), Bonn 1832, 107,15–16: “Κατὰ πάντας Νικόλαος καὶ Λημυστρίου ο Κωνδύνης, σοφίας μὲν εἰς ἄκρον τῆς ἔξωθεν ἐπετελημένου”.

equal to Demetrios Cydones – was not antiquarian in spirit; it was of substantial import for him and (yet according to Cantacouzenos\(^{161}\)) shaped his very life.

This is why Cabasilas defends reason as the virtue of the rational part of the human soul. Although he admits, along with Gregory Palamas, that “error is involved in reason” and that “reason has indeed been a cause of perdition for some”\(^{162}\), he nevertheless qualifies (against Palamas) that this happens per accidens, not per se; it is not reason itself that must be maligned but those who misuse it. “Otherwise we would malign sight because of blindness and temperance because of intemperance”\(^{162}\).

2. Second Episode: Demetrios Cydones

The second episode was Demetrios Cydones’ defence of the use of apodeictic syllogisms in theology. Cydones held the Scholastic method of _quaestio_ (cf. supra, pp. 2–4) to be the best way of _dialektai_. This conviction formed part of his occasionally yet coherently expressed views of the sources of truth in this life, which in turn were connected to his view on human dignity. Demetrios, a humanist well versed in the various kinds of high literature, regards philosophy as the supreme literary genre\(^{164}\). Truth is for him “both the most ancient and the most seasonable of all things”\(^{165}\); it coincides with God Himself, being His most suitable name\(^{166}\).

“‘Truth is’ for everybody ‘the most lovable, the most pleasant and the most useful thing in the world’\(^{167}\). For truth is, so to speak, the beauty and the light of our best part, i.e. of our intelligent nature; man, illuminated by this light, can see himself and what he intends to act as well as discern what he must pursue and what avoid. He can also know how to treat his fellowmen and set himself in the context of his everyday life contacts; for it is knowledge of these matters that, in the utmost past, enabled men to create cities and impose laws and suggested to him that he should prefer living in communities to behaving to each other like beasts. Besides, man investigates into the substances of the beings, discovers them and reduces through them himself to the common cause of everything; thus, attached to the truth, he avoids error and ceases wanting, since he possesses what can absolutely fulfill his desire. Truth is for mankind a

\(^{161}\) Ibid., ed. Schopen, 107,16–17: “οὐχὶ ἔτον δὲ καὶ ἔγραφος Θεοφορόντες”. On the genuine character of Cabasilas’ Aristotelianism and humanism see Demetracopoulos, Nicholas Cabasilas’ (nt. 12), 125–127; 315–317, where it is argued that Joseph Bryennios had noticed that.

\(^{162}\) Nicholas Cabasilas, _De racionis valore_ 28–29 (ad 2); 40 (ad 3); 59–64 (ad 4), ed. Demetracopoulos, Nicholas Cabasilas’ _Quaestio_ (nt. 14), 56; 57.

\(^{163}\) Demetrios Cydones, _Apology_ III (nt. 37), 330,78–81; _Epistle_ 103 (nt. 64), 141,76–79; _Epistle_ 399, ed. R.-J. Loenertz, _Démétrius Cydonès. Correspondance_, vol. II, Vatican City 1960, 354,10–12.

\(^{164}\) Id., _Apology_ I, ed. Mercati (nt. 37), 367,36–43.

\(^{165}\) Id., _Epistle_ 25, 18–19 (nt. 64), 54; id., _Apology_ I (nt. 37), 379,40–380,44.

\(^{166}\) Id., _Apology_ I, _Apology_ II; _Apology_ III; _Meditations_ (nt. 37), 409,87–88; 409,2; 380,57–58; 390,80–81; 400,12; 328,98–99; 436,6–7.

\(^{167}\) A latent quotation from Aquinas’ _Summa contra Gentiles_ I,2,1.
sort of road towards God, or rather a road that leads men through itself to itself; for God Himself [sc. Jesus Christ] declared that He is the summit of ‘truth’ (Joh. 14:6). This was, I think, God’s purpose, when the truth ‘dwelled in men’ (Joh. 18:37), i.e. ‘to be searched for’ with regard to everything, ‘discovered’ (Matth. 7:7–8; Luc. 11:9–10) and used as a guide to prosperity and true beatitude. In this respect, there is a very apt and right dictum by a sage man, that ‘all men by nature desire knowledge’.

The distinctive feature of the life of human beings is the ability to contemplate truth and discover the best way of acting in this life; this task is fostered by means of high literature and science. Neglecting one’s natural desire for truth demotes one from the rank of rational beings, where one was honourably placed by God by being given reason, to the realm of the irrational animals, which do not understand usefulness but seek only after pleasure. The highest truth refers to the highest being, i.e. God, and the human end is the “contemplation of God”.

The journey to truth is, however, difficult and the Christian Scriptures along with the ecclesiastical tradition are the only infallible guides. Christians hold the truths of the Old and the New Testament more firmly than the plain truths of everyday life. Reproducing Aquinas’ ‘Summa contra Gentiles’ I, 4–5 and 8, Cydones states that natural reason (“ο τοις ἀνθρώποις ἐγκεκριμένος λόγος” or “ἀνθρώπινοι λογισμοί”; Sap. 9:14; cf. infra, p. 43) fails to reach most of the revealed truths; in the best case, it can just disprove the adversaries’ statements which go against revelation.

Yet, in parallel with the truth revealed, the truths contained in the great philosophical systems of the Greek antiquity (such as Platonism and Aristotelianism) can be accepted, provided they are checked against revelation and are found to be compatible with it. Those Fathers of the Church who were not only saints but

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168 Aristotle, Metaphysics I 1,1.
169 Demetrios Cydones, Apology II (nt. 37), 417,58–417,74.
170 Id., Propylaem II, 19 (nt. 64), 19,38–20,1.
173 Id., Oration on the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, cod. Par. gr. 1213, fol. 335v, 10–13: “Τίνα ἀνθρώπος […] φρονεῖν τῇ θείᾳ πειθήν καὶ […] κατὰ λόγον ξῆν δοξάσθη καὶ οὖτος διὰ τῶν ὁμοίων ἐπὶ τὸν ἄρουρον καὶ τὴν θεοτόκον αὐτοῦ διαβῆ, δὴ τῆς ἀνθρώπινης φυσικῆς πάσης πράξεως καὶ γνώσεως καὶ ἐφέσεως.” (see also fol. 336r, 4–6).
also sages, principally “the doctor of truth”, “the most wise” Augustine, have fully carried out this check and established some safe conclusions\textsuperscript{176}. Although, therefore, sanctity has a high value on its own, possessing, along with Christian erudition, some solid heathen erudition, is advisable\textsuperscript{177}.

Cydones sets forth a complementarist doctrine of the faith-reason issue, which he derived from Aquinas:

“We should not cast doubt on the statements fully subscribed by all people; for we must accept that these statements contain the natural, pure notions which are equally known by everybody and have been implanted by God in the human souls from their beginning. For this reason, these statements do not contradict the statements of the Scripture; for, if it were so, God would deliberately clash through them with the truths He offered to us by means of Scripture, turning truth against truth, pushing the humans to an impasse and making them feel that finding truth is a task they should not ever hope to accomplish. We must, therefore, avow and accept that the divine truths and the truths reached by means of syllogisms, if properly examined, are fully compatible with each other”\textsuperscript{178}

Thus, any religious conviction that contradicts either plain or properly inferred truths is false\textsuperscript{179}.

Cydones, like Barlaam the Calabrian (cf. supra, p. 17), stresses that seeking after truth presupposes purifying one’s soul from selfishness, prejudice, and contentiousness; intellectual honesty may, therefore, lead someone to abandon the beliefs that were once implanted in his soul during his early age as well as those currently regarded as dominant in his social environment; for truth is not discerned by means of habit (“ἐκθος”) or by the longevity of a tradition, but by means of reason alone\textsuperscript{180}. Likewise, the power and the glory of a state and its capital (such as Constantinople) is not a mark of its possessing the truth; for this would amount to establishing stones and bricks as a criterion of truth and result in showing idolaters such as Babylonians to be the wisest people throughout history\textsuperscript{181}. Cydones argues that inheriting the beliefs of one’s father in the way one inherits one’s property would, if generalized, immobilize discussion between people\textsuperscript{182}. Love of truth and freedom of the religious conscience (“ἡ τοῦ συνε-δότος ἔλευθερία”) are values superior to an ill-intended loyalty to one’s parents, friends or comrades, even to the traditional value of patriotism as formulated in

\begin{itemize}
  \item Id., Epistle 25, 22–24 (nt. 64), 55; id., ‘Apology II’ (nt. 37), 420,33–34; id., Defence of Thomas Aquinas, cod. Vat. gr. 614, fol. 124\textsuperscript{v}, 3–4.
  \item Id., Funeral Epistle (nt. 37), 347,39–42; 348,48.
  \item Id., Defence of Thomas Aquinas; see Thomas Aquinas, Summa contra Gentiles I,7,3–4.
  \item Id., On the Alleged Help from the Latins, in: Joannis Cantacuzeni opera omnia, ed. J.-P. Migne (Patrologia Graeca 154), Paris 1866, col. 963B.
  \item Id., Apology I (nt. 37), 359,1–6; 370,19–20; 384,76; 386,39–40; 405,77–81; 385,12–13.
  \item Ibid., 371,60–372,76.
  \item Ibid., 380,61–108.
\end{itemize}
Plato’s famous passage in ‘Crito’183. Progress through time is attainable only to the extent that people change by orienting themselves towards the eternal truth, regardless of the time and the contingent circumstances that one happens to live in184. Being nurtured by one’s parents with the ideal of cultivating one’s mind is, therefore, more helpful than being provided with money by them185; for this ideal helps one to embrace truth more promptly than either the inherited beliefs of one’s ancestors or of one’s society; it should be loved more than one’s own life186.

True, in the real world, most people are not truth-seekers or sages; rather, they have once and for all subscribed uncritically to this or that view, which has happened to reach and captivate their minds more or less by chance yet once for all187. Thus, always speaking what one regards as true (parrhsía) may make one look like an “old-fashioned and foolish man”, who does not know how to set himself safe. Still, forming one’s own intellectual and spiritual identity in accordance with the principle of integrity also enables one to be convincing when discussing with others; for it is rather easy for one to convince someone of an idea one is genuinely convinced of188.

2.2. Human dignity and human condition

Demetrios, trying to offer an anthropological foundation for his theological methodology (see supra, pp. 20–22), argues189 first that any attempt at removing serious reasoning by means of syllogisms from the human society amounts to nothing less than acting against human nature itself and, more specifically, against the noblest element of it, namely, reason. This, he remarks190, is inextricably associated with freewill,191 which distinguishes man from animals. Using one’s mind

183 Id., Apology II (nt. 37), 403,15–16; Apology I (nt. 37), 400,1–2 (latent quotation of Plato’s ‘Crito’ 51A). Demetrios deems country as truly deserving high respect, yet he places it lower than God, truth, and the human soul (cf. 409,88; 409,2–3). See also 424,76–77: “ἀλήθειαν, ἢς οὐδὲν ἀνθρώποις ἀντίςχειν”.
184 Id., Apology I (nt. 37), 380,59–60.
185 Ibid., 359,9–15; cf. Ps.-Plutarch, De liberis educandis 4E.
186 Id, Apology I; Apology II, Funeral Epistle (nt. 37), 380,61–381,8; 400,94–401,39; 424,76–77; 346,3–4; Epistle 235, 96–103 (nt. 64), 133.
188 Demetrios Cydones, Apology I; Apology II, ed. Mercati, 405,78–81; 413,32–38; 421,82–86; 370,15–16.
190 Demetrios Cydones, De contemnenda morte 11 (nt. 36), 21,1.
191 See also Demetrios Cydones’ Oration on the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, cod. Par. gr. 1213, fol. 329v, 3–4: “Ἐλάθειεῖν γὰρ τι χρήστα ὃ λόγος”.
("νοûς") as a means of constructing syllogisms on every topic, either trivial or high ("περὶ πάντα λόγον χοûσθαι"), is not only possible but also imperative.192

"God, who imparts us knowledge and wants us to know the truth, has granted to us a great tool for finding it, which is discussion (διαλέγοντως). By means of it, we are able to explain what we claim and be explained what is claimed by others; and, by colliding one's views to another's like two stones with each other, we get the light of truth, provided, of course, that we dispute not so as to defeat each other but to find the truth. We must argue for our views as well as listen to the arguments of the others calmly, by asking questions in due order and replying to the others' questions with precision and by trying to convince them either by necessary reasons (λόγοι αναγκαίοι) or by appeal to this or that absolutely safe testimony. In some cases, we may use just plausible reasons, if it is impossible to produce necessary reasons. Privileging an idea by stating so and so without arguments is a mark of wretched people, who rave because of their ignorance and boastfulness; people of this kind participate in the discussion of a company and then leave away after having rendered it full of anger and screams and having been awarded, as the prize for their inappropiate squabbling, the ignorance of truth, which fairly punishes them this way.193"

Likewise, Prochoros Cydones ironically remarked that the enemies of syllogisms, whenever they deem that they could profit from using them, do not hesitate to do so.194 Demetrios' and Prochoros' argument implies that even the worst misuse of human nature has no chance to destroy it; it can only render it inactive. This is exactly what Nicholas Cabasilas held as well (see supra, p. 31).

Keeping the divine things away from reason's scrutiny, is, in spite of its allegedly pious tenor (extolling God's transcendence, stressing man's weakness, calling for humbleness et sim.), not only absurd but also a logical impossibility; for, embarking upon arguing from this or that premise against using arguments as means of reaching agreement on the disputed matters is a blatant self-refutation. Even the most fanatic enemies of syllogisms inevitably slip into using them; sometimes,

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192 Demetrios Cydones, Funeral Epistle (nt. 37), 348,50–51.
193 Id., Meditations (nt. 37), 436,14–437,27. Demetrios seems to echo the following lines from Boethius’ ‘Consolatio philosophiae’ III, pr. 12, in Maximus Planoudes’ translation, ed. M. Papathomopoulos, Anicii Manlii Severini Boethii De Consolatione Philosophiae. Traduction grecque de Maxime Planude. Édition critique du texte grecque avec une introduction, le texte latin, les Scholies et des index, Athens 1999, 57: "Βοûλεῖ δὲ τοûς λόγους αὐτοûς ἀλλήλους συµφωνώντως; Ἡσσὶ εἶ τῆς τοûκοις διαµερίστης τις ἐξεπειράζει τῆς ἀληθείας σταυρίζων". (I am grateful to Dr. Guy Guldentops [Cologne] for indicating this passage to me.) On discussing calmly cf. Plutarch’s ‘De audiendo’ 39C–D and 41A.
194 Prochoros Cydones, On the Use of Syllogisms in Theology (nt. 57), 520,4; 521,13–18. This might be an implicit critique of Part III of Neilos Cabasilas’ work against the Filioque, Palamas’ two ‘Apodeictic Treatises on the Procession of the Holy Spirit’ or even Barlaam the Calabrian’s ‘Contra Latinos’. Indeed, Barlaam, whereas he repeated in every possible way that philosophical premises and syllogisms should never be allowed to contaminate theology, strongly believes that, should this be allowed, it would not result in strengthening the Latin’s but the Orthodox’s point (Barlaam the Calabrian, Contra Latinos A I, 34–36, ll. 312–329, ed. Fyrigos [nt. 43], 524–526).
they even enumerate the arguments in their pieces. Apparently, Demetrios mocked such anti-Latins as Neilos Cabasilas, who, for all their alleged anti-scholasticism, adopt the form of the Latin *quaestio* (cf. supra, pp. 8–10).

Whereas reasoning permeates every sector of human life, its most important task is to search for God, Who is the best being. Indeed, God, for all His infinity, can be approached by means of reasoning; for He is “infinite” ("α̂πειρος") not in the negative sense of lacking “form” but in the positive sense of having no limit ("περα") whatsoever; and, it goes without saying, our cognitive powers can be applied to a positive being. The process and the degree of effectiveness of this application depend, however, on the ontological rank of the knower:

> "God lies beyond substance and stands incomparably higher than everything. Thus, human thought cannot grasp in an apodeictic way anything about Him per se; it can know Him only as far as beings are more or less clear images and likenesses of Him. To do so, our mind starts from these images, removes what is not like God and keeps what is more akin to Him; and it is only up to this level that the natural light, which has been bestowed by God upon the human soul as part of His 'image' in man (Gen. 1:26), can lift the human soul.”

Still, this should be seen more from a positive than from a negative viewpoint:

> "Why the human mind should not exhibit its power even in the divine matters and construct syllogisms in this field, too, by using as principles or starting-points ("αρχο") the truths traditionally delivered up by the Scriptures and proceed to the next truths by virtue of the starting-points? For, in fact, the things we believe about God are not all starting-points; in this field, too, some things are starting-points, whereas some other things are sequels from them. And, where this is the case, how can anybody deny that syllogism is present? Besides, if it were impossible to use syllogisms in regard to the divine things, the case should be that all truths on God lie in the Holy Scripture explicitly, [which is obviously not true]."

Demetrios and Prochoros Cydones’ bitter theological and ecclesiastical opponent, the Patriarch of Constantinople, Philotheos Kokkinos, mistook their theological methodology for what is called in theology ‘rationalism’, i.e. claiming that all things, not only worldly but also divine, can, at least in principle, be successfully and fully investigated by means of human reason. In fact, however, Demetrios’ positive evaluation of reason was not that of Anselm of Canterbury’s, but that of Thomas Aquinas, who clearly distinguished between ‘demonstrabilia’ and ‘credibilia’, i.e. between articles of faith demonstrable (God’s existence, incorporeality, goodness, immutability, eternity etc.) and non-demonstrable (trinity,
incarnation, final judgment) by means of unaided natural reason. To Cydones, syllogism is, as Aristotle states, just a tool for producing formally valid statements; it is not connected with any particular doctrine. The truth-value of a syllogistic argument depends not only on its formal validity but also on the solidity of its premises; such premises can be found both in theology and philosophy. In both sciences, reasoning or demonstration (ἀπόδειξις) is indispensable.

Besides, to Cydones, man’s endeavour to acquire truth is of doubtful outcome; in fact, to him, we humans would be practically unable to find the path of truth had God not revealed Himself to us. Yet since error, misunderstanding and other misleading agents always play their role in this life, syllogism, instead of proving useless because of our potential failure in our application of it on the various issues emerging in the course of our lives, proves all the more indispensable in our efforts to clear up any difficulty both in thinking and acting.

Still, what does differentiate Cydones’ method from Kokkins, Neilos Cabasilas and the principal source of Neilos’ anti-Latin polemics, i.e. Barlaam the Calabrian (cf. supra, pp. 17–19), is that Cydones, following Aquinas and drawing a conclusion from his complementarist view of the faith-reason problem, claims that it is legitimate to construct syllogisms on a mixed basis, i.e. on revelational and natural premises together (“προσπλέκειν”).

The second way Demetrios tries to vindicate the use of demonstrative syllogisms in theology passes through the idea that man’s ability of reasoning is what grants him superiority to the other animals and constitutes his dignity. Let us see how he places the human being in creation:

“The creator of the human soul placed her midway between the intelligent and the sensitive nature; for this reason, the kind of her knowledge stands midway between the kinds of knowledge of these natures. The former nature, i.e. the intelligent, as she has the species of the intelligible beings innately in her substance and contemplates them by herself and in a direct manner, is not marked by any transition when activating her cognitive faculty. As for the latter nature, i.e. the sensitive, it applies directly itself by itself to the species of the sensible beings and thus knows by itself each of the sensibles, acquiring a particular knowledge of them, i.e. grasping them each time as existent in a particular point of time and place, which reflects their mode of existence. The

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200 See, e.g., ibid., cod. Vat. gr. 614, fol. 111’–116’ passim.
202 Demetrios Cydones, Apology III (nt. 37), 332, 33; 40–41.
203 Cf. Demetrios’ treatise ‘On the Authority of the Church Fathers’ 111–112, ed. A. Koltsiou-Niketa, Τό κίνησ τῶν Πατέρων τῆς Ἐκκλησίας. Μία ἀνέκδοτη ἐπιστολική πραγματεία, Thessaloniki 2000, 230,16–21, where he stresses the absolute validity of the κεφάλαια τῆς θεραπείας by contrasting it with the doubtful validity of the conjectural arguments in a forensic process (“ἐν τούς δόκιμας τούς στοχουμοίς”).
205 Id., Apology I (nt. 37), 388,28–30; id., ‘De contemnenda morte’ 8 and 10 (nt. 36), 15,20–16,2; 18,25.
human soul is akin to the intelligent nature. Consequently, she possesses, like this nature, some innate knowledge, accessible intuitively and immutably by means of her very nature; this knowledge consists in the prime notions (πρῶται ἐννοίας), which are known per se by all people. The human soul does not contemplate them by moving from one proposition to another, because these notions have been implanted in her from her very creation; instead, she directly attaches herself to them as to the prime knowable things. She knows them per se and, starting from them, progressively ties up to them the truths that follow thereby; thus, in so doing constantly, she gets to the truth searched for. In this way, the human soul activates her faculty of reasoning and teaches and learns by connecting each new thing with the bits of knowledge already existing. At the same time, however, since she participates in the nature of the other animals, inasmuch as she possesses the sensitive cognitive faculty, she assumes, whenever she wishes, the sense data as starting-points, proceeds to the proximate truths and comes to those prime and direct principles. The processes of this sort, i.e. either going from the absolutely simple being down to the composite ones or gradually ascending from the latter to the former, is called ‘discursive reason’ (διάνοια) or ‘thinking’ (διάνοια), and it cannot be carried out without change. This is the distinctive feature of the human nature, i.e. reason. Reason ranks below the intelligent nature inasmuch as man does not know the truth on whatever he is interested in by virtue of his own nature and in a direct manner (since the intelligible species are not innate in his nature), but he looks like a blind man, who wanders here and there in a house and, when searching for something of the things lying inside, cannot, because of his disability, move directly towards it; instead, he first grasps a thing he happens to know, then another and another, till he reaches what he was actually searching for. On the other hand, however, our soul is superior to the sensitive nature, inasmuch as she does not grasp only the particular beings as existing here and now but takes away the matter and the concomitant things and grasps the species in a universal mode; this process is exactly what we mean by ‘using syllogisms’ and ‘reasoning.’

Demetrios’ illustration of the “blind man” looks promising for us if we are to understand his view of the value of syllogism in the human condition. Of course, the use of the metaphor of light and darkness or sight and blindness to allude to knowledge and ignorance respectively is quite trivial; it goes back to the time of the Presocratic philosophers (with a potentially metaphysical tenor) and permeates a large amount of the entire ancient (both pagan and Christian) Greek literature. Still, Cydones’ version of this metaphor shares some traits with a Sceptical version of it. I am thinking of one of two of Sextus Empiricus’ illustrations of Xenophanes’ famous fr. B34:

“For just as, if we were to suppose that certain people are searching for gold in a dark room containing many treasures, what will happen is that each of them, whenever he lays hold of some one of the treasures in the room, will imagine that he has grasped

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206 Cf. Aquinas’ clear distinction between the angelic intellect and man’s reasoning in ‘De potentia’ XV,1.
207 Demetrios Cydones, Defence of Thomas Aquinas, cod. Vat. gr. 614, fol. 110r, 34–111r, 17 (cf. Demetracopoulos, Plethon [nt. 3], 99–100).
the gold, even though none of them will be convinced that that he has lighted on the gold, even though, in fact, he has lighted upon it; so also into this universe, as into a great house, there has entered a host of philosophers bent on the search for truth, and it is quite likely that the one who has laid hold of it has not the conviction that he has achieved his aim.  

Although Sextus’ “people”, unlike Cydones’ “man”, are not blind, the absolute dark where they are searching for the valuable thing of truth renders them practically blind; for what they only can use for this purpose is their touch, that is, the least informative of the five senses. In both cases, the process seems to be that of ‘discursus’, namely, of moving from one thing to another, till the thing aspired for is found. Since I know of no other Greek or Latin illustration so closely aligned to Demetrios’, and since Sextus Empiricus’ writings were well-known and used from the late 13th up to mid-15th century in Byzantium, particularly with regard to the issue of the possibility of knowledge, which is the issue at stake here, it is plausible to assume that Demetrios deliberately produced his illustration as a version of Sextus’ illustration or, at least, that many readers of his lines would recall Sextus’ illustration and presumably compare the two. Sextus reaches the negative conclusion that, since only light allows one to discern gold from things with a feel similar to it, there is no way for the people of his illustration to know if they have attained their goal, even if they are granted plenty of time so as to actually get gold in their hands. By contrast, Demetrios’ man, although equally and thus fully deprived of the possibility of directly discerning what he is looking for, is nevertheless deemed able to reach his end. This is exactly Demetrios’ point. At the first stage, Demetrios concedes that living on earth is very close to living in the dark. In so doing, he aligned himself with Sextus by making it clear that he is not as naïve a realist as to lay claim to possessing full and plain truth. Apparently, Demetrios sets his “man” blind as to the “separate substances”; the sight his “man” is deprived of in this life is ‘intuitus’ or ‘contemplatio’ (“αὐτοπτικός θεοσθα”)210. At the second stage, however, Demetrios assesses the process of ‘discursus’ quite differently from Sextus’ nihilism. Discursive thought, rather than being a helpless effort of some desperate beings which run here and there on earth, motivated by their natural desire to find truth yet doomed to fail, is capable, if patiently and carefully used, of providing us with what she is supposed to,


namely, truth – at least partial yet sufficient truth. So, it seems that Demetrius’ “blind” yet mentally energetic “man” was meant to stand as his response to the revival of scepticism in his time – a response Thomistic in tenor, since Aquinas, too, held the possibility of producing a mediate knowledge of beings on the basis of the data provided through our senses and carefully elaborated by our reason.

The way Demetrios uses, in Part I of his work, another ancient Greek simile corroborates this interpretation of his thought:


Demetrios uses the following simile from Book II (a book most probably written not by Aristotle himself but by Pasicles, a nephew of Aristotle’s disciple Eudemus of Rhodes212) of Aristotle’s ‘Metaphysics’ (993b9–11): “Ὄσπερ γὰρ τὰ τῶν νυκτερίδων ὄμματα [4] πρὸς τὸ φέγγος ἔχει τὸ μεθ’ ἡμέραν [1], οὕτω καὶ τῆς ᾧμετέρας φυσῆς ὁ νοῦς πρὸς τῇ φύσει [2] φανερωτὰτα [3] πάντων.” Yet, Demetrios, before writing his anti-Cabasilian piece, had translated this passage from Latin back into Greek eleven times, namely, seven in the ‘Summa contra Gentiles’213 and four in the ‘Summa theologiae’214, whereas his brother Prochoros, as a translator of the ‘De spiritualibus creaturis’, had done so twice215. Here are the three most relevant occurrences:

‘Summa contra Gentiles’ I,3,7:

211 Ibid., fol. 112v, 18–24 (cf. Demetracopoulos, Plethon (nt. 3), 169).
213 Thomas Aquinas, Summa contra Gentiles I, 3,7; 11,1; II, 60,22; 77,4; III, 25,4; 45,5–8; 54,9.
214 Id., Summa theologiae, P, q. 1, a. 5 ad 1; q. 12, a. 1; q. 64, a. 1, arg. 2; P IIæ, q. 102, a. 6 ad 1.
215 Id., De spiritualibus creaturis V, X ad 7. Further, since Prochoros Cydones had translated the Proem of Aquinas’ ‘Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics’, he and his brother might have taken a glance at Aquinas’ anti-Averroistic interpretation of this simile (Thomas Aquinas, Sententia libri Metaphysicae II, 1,10–16).
216 Demetracopoulos, Plethon (nt. 3), 180.
The words marked in these passages show that the direct source of Cydones’ passage was, for the most part, Aquinas, especially the first passage. In the ‘Summa contra Gentiles’, Aquinas appealed to the bat simile in order to show the limits as well as the mediate character of human knowledge. In the ‘Summa theologiae’, he appealed to it in order to explain that knowing a thing only through mediation does not belittle the thing known but the quality of the knower’s knowledge of it yet in no case cancels the possibility of such knowledge. Demetrios, for his own part, reproduces Thomas’ use of the simile in the ‘Summa contra Gentiles’ I,3 in order to show against Neilos Cabasilas that the infinity of God is not an objective but a subjective obstacle to our effort to know Him. Like the blind man in a house (cf. supra, p. 39), in this scenario man is described as unable to see God per se and obliged to reach Him through syllogisms. Cydones’ conclusion is not negative; it only qualifies how man can get some safe knowledge of God. As for the tenor of this simile in the ‘Metaphysics’, it is neither optimistic nor pessimistic; it is only used to illustrate the fact that the knowledge of truth is difficult. If pressed, one would be inclined to say that its tenor is more negative than positive, if compared, e.g., with the genuinely Aristotelian declaration that, as a rule, men reach truth (see infra, p. 51). Besides, the incommensurability between human intelligence and the objects to be known as presented

217 Ibid., 197.
218 Cod. Vat. gr. 609, fol. 25v, 4–7 (translation ca. 1355/58).
219 Cydones seems to latently quote from Aristotle when writing “ὅ τις ἤμιτέρας ψυχής ὁ νοῦς”, which reflects Aristotle’s “τῆς ἤμιτέρας ψυχῆς ὁ νοῦς”; according to a traditional, Platonic in origin, metaphor, intellect is the eye of the soul.
221 L. Bruce-Robertson (A Commentary on Book ‘Alpha Elatton’ of Aristotle’s ‘Metaphysics’. A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1998, 52–53) interprets this simile in terms of Aristotle’s concept of “habit” so as to prove it to be Aristotelian in spirit: “The eye is made for
in this simile is far from being Aristotelian in spirit. And yet, Cydones uses this simile in a more optimistic than pessimistic spirit. Apparently, this was dictated by his polemical target; his intention was to show that Neilos Cabasilas’ strict prohibition of using reason in theology was so extreme that it canceled man’s excellence, which lies in reasoning and satisfying through it his natural desire for God.

Still, Cydones, when speaking of reasoning and discussing truth, does not always refer to apodeictic syllogism. Being a Christian and a Thomist, he holds that some truths are ‘credibilia’ (cf. supra, pp. 12; 38), namely, that they cannot be proven, and that theological rationalism is a sign of arrogance:

"'Ἀνθρωπίνοις' μὲν οὖν 'λογισμοῖς' καὶ ταῖς ἐκ τούτων ἀνάγκαις τὴν περὶ τῶν τηλεκούσων ἐπιτρέψαντα χρῦσιν ἱσχυοῦν τινος οἰκεθῆναι λαβέσθαι ὑπερήφανον μοι ἐδόκει καὶ ικανὸς κινήσῃς· ἦδειν γὰρ καὶ οὕτως ἅδειος· ὅταν τοὺς θνητοὺς λογισμοὺς καὶ ἐπιστώματες τῆς ἐπινοίας αὐτῶν' (Sap. 9:14)."  


To produce the former passage, Cydones did not hesitate to appeal to Sap. 9:14 ("λογισμοὶ γὰρ θνητῶν δειλοὶ, καὶ ἐπιστῶματες οἱ ἐπινόουσι ἡμῶν"), a passage also appealed to by Neilos Cabasilas in accordance with a traditional Patristic fideistic use of it. To produce the latter, Cydones mixed some phrases from Aquinas with some phrases of Gregory of Nyssa’s extreme repudiation of using syllogisms in theology:

Aquinas:


seeing and the potency for this is actualized most fully in the blaze of day, but the nocturnal habit of the bat keeps it from perfecting this sense’. This interpretation can be accepted only if we construe the ‘we’ implied in “τῆς ἡμετέρας ψηφής” (993b10) as referring not to all people but only to those who have not practised their intellectual skills; still, such an assumption can hardly be shown to be made in these lines of ‘Metaphysics’ II.


223 See also Demetrios ‘On the Authority of the Church Fathers’ 121 (nt. 203), 234,11–13, where he almost equates the validity of mediate theological knowledge, namely, knowledge attained by means of syllogisms, with knowledge by acquaintance.

224 Demetrios Cydones, Apology II (nt. 37), 419,23–26.

225 Id., Spiritual Testament (nt. 37), 428,93–102.

226 Neilos Cabasilas, Ὅτι οὐκ ἐστι Λατίνοις 9, ed. Candal (nt. 38), 192,22. Neilos quotes this passage as part of his quotation of a passage from John Chrysostom’s ‘De incomprehensi Dei natura’.
Gregory of Nyssa:

Cydones concludes that truth on matters such as the procession of the Holy Spirit can be reached with some plausibility by finding out what has been really taught on them by the God-inspired men, who established the ecclesiastical truth by God's grace. Still, to come back to the simile of the bat, to Cydones, there are some persons who “err like bats in the darkness of falsehood”; these are all those who recoil from using their mind to orient themselves in the ‘humana conditio’ and find the road to truth. So, to conclude, what Demetrios deems imperative is not the use of philosophically based syllogisms on theological matters; this is necessary only as far as the truths susceptible to such an approach are concerned and quite dangerous as far as the ‘credibilia’ are concerned. What is a prerequisite for one to act in conformity with the dignity of one’s nature and improve one’s state in our common ‘humana conditio’ is to use language properly, namely, with affability and sincerity, as prescribed by the rules of dialectic. This policy enables one to conceive of arguments that are at least plausible or, in the best case, necessary and therefore come close to truth.

Furthermore, Cydones admits that using syllogisms is not an easy task and that error lurks in man's efforts to reach truth through this means. Still, like Nicholas Cabasilas (see supra, p. 32; infra, p. 73), he refuses to malign syllogisms for that; it would be absurd, he says, to malign medicines and medicine in general because of the occasional (‘accidental’) misuse of this art by some impertinent doctors; on the contrary, this misuse stresses the importance of properly studying and using medicine.

In this respect, we should recall that Aquinas distinguishes between one’s reaching truth and being certain that one has reached truth. Thomas, on one hand, believes that some truths about God are attainable through natural reason;
on the other, he thinks this way risky and estimates that it leaves much room for personal doubt on the outcome of one’s syllogisms. In the end, all of this results in a lesson of modesty (cf. supra, pp. 38; 43); still, “modesty is not equivalent to scepticism”233, but only a virtue necessary for one to avoid hasty conclusions and to be always open to other people’s ideas. This, far from degrading man, implies that man is able, this or that way, to reach his end.

In the ‘Treatise on Scorning Death’, Demetrios Cydones’ doctrine of the dignity of man, expressed in his ‘Defence of Thomas Aquinas’ in terms of man’s middle place in the world, is expounded more plainly. Cydones, differentiating himself from the sceptical and Platonist tradition of antiquity, which was reproduced by Nicephoros Gregoras (cf. supra, pp. 30–31), states that man’s sensorial faculties are equally effective as those of the other animals234. Man proves the supreme animal, inasmuch as his soul is rational and immortal. Its rationality is shown by the fact that he discovers and invents a lot of things not accessible through sensory experience; thus, he realizes the existence of God, to whom he prays; he has religion; he seeks after truth; he has created civil and penal law; he has invented the craft arts as well as the fine arts, which do not serve any practical purpose. All these things enable man to free himself from the guidance of the senses and the dictatorship of the bare instincts and allow for historical progress235. The highest rational activities of man are philosophy, science, rhetoric, dialectic, and self-denying in the context of a well-ordered social life. All these testify to the “excellence” (“κράτος”) and “the perfection of human nature” (“ἀνθρωπινή τελειότης”)236.

Rationality goes hand-in-hand with man’s innate aspiration for freedom; for reason, in contrast with nature, conceives in each particular circumstance of one’s life of more than one option, even options contrary to the dictates of nature237. The apparently rational activities of the animals should not be mistaken as resulting from a rational soul inherent in them; for, in fact, the animals are not aware of what they do; they are just programmed by their intelligent creator to perform mechanically so and so.238 Reason is by nature the master of the body, as the extreme possibility of one’s ability to kill himself shows239.

Now what about the actualisation of freewill for one to achieve morality and happiness? Morality springs from the princess of the cardinal virtues, to wit, prudence, which results from applying the knowledge of truth to the practical issues. Of course, prudence must be accompanied by the remaining cardinal

234 Demetrios Cydones, De contemnenda morte 8 (nt. 36), 15,18–20.
235 Ibid., 8–9, 15,20–18,10.
236 Ibid., 10 and 18, 18,11–19,23; 33,28–34,1.
237 Ibid., 10–12, 19,23–22,9.
238 Ibid., 13, 24,2–25,6.
239 Ibid., 12, 22,9–23,23.
virtues. Still, frankly speaking, gazing upon truth and thereby becoming prudent is less a matter of choice and self-discipline than of natural idiosyncrasy. Yet, Cydones also states optimistically that, even without much speculation, everyone is roughly capable of attaining morality by following the principles innate in his soul and activating them by means of reason. In contrast with speculative truth, morality is more (though not fully) attainable through purely natural means. In fact, all nature precepts, must be taken as a precept by God. This has some Stoic-derived patristic antecedents; for instance, Basil of Caesarea argues that the human soul has a natural propensity to the cardinal virtues. Yet, it also seems to be an echo of Aquinas’ parallel arguments from ‘natura’ and ‘lex’ on all ethical matters. Every being’s duty consists in acting according to its proper nature; morality does not consist of performing excessive, supra-human achievements but of accomplishing the tasks dictated by human nature. Therefore, one deserves to be praised “when fully corresponding with the virtue that belongs to one’s nature and acting in accordance with this”. Thus, in the end, Demetrios Cydones’ account of the place of man in the creature as well as on earth (the ‘humana conditio’) is clearly more optimistic than pessimistic.

Demetrios directly links this optimism with the possibility that man could know God. The desire to know God is innate in man. He who averts man from searching for God demotes man from the level of his high dignity to the level of the irrational animals. Demetrios states that by quoting the famous Ps. 48:13 = Ps. 48:21, which was traditionally quoted to testify to the dignity of man and the loss or denigration of this dignity because of man’s subjection to sensual pleasure

240 Id., Apology III (nt. 37), 315,69–316,88; Epistle 130, 11 (nt. 64), 167.
241 Id., Propylæum II, 7 (nt. 64), 13,40–14,10. This is one of Maimonides’ ‘causae erroris’ reproduced by Aquinas in the ‘Summa contra Gentiles’ I,4,3.
242 See also Demetrios Cydones, Oration on the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, cod. Par. gr. 1213, fol. 332’, 24–27 and 333’, 8–10; ‘τὸν λογισμὸν, […] δὴ παρὰ τὴν Δημιουργοῦ δόμου ἔξωθεν ἐλεφθην άθως καὶ ὁ καθάπετρ φοιν χρήματος ἡγομένος έκτο ἐμελλε τὸν θέλοντον ἀποτυγχάνειν. […] Λόγου δὲ καὶ τῆς παρ’ ἑαυτῷ χρήσεις κατασταθήσεται βέβαιο συνεδεῖ ὀαν γνωρίσας καὶ αύξους τῆς θείας εἰκόνας καὶ ὁμοίωσις (Gen. 1:26) τὸν άνθρωπον γένος ἀντέλθησαν”.
243 Demetrios Cydones, Apology I (nt. 37), 397,88–100. This seems to contradict Aquinas’ view (cf. infra, p. 75) that Adam’s sin impedes the attainment of morality more than the attainment of truth.
244 Id., Proem to a Golden Bull IV 42–43 (nt. 189), 192.
246 See, for instance, Thomas Aquinas, Summa contra Gentiles III,114–121.
248 Id., Meditation 11 (nt. 247), 54.
after Adam’s fall\(^\text{250}\). To Demetrios, it is equally bestial for man to give up searching for God by means of his natural capacities. Of course, he explains\(^\text{251}\) that, in this life, man can only get knowledge of the οὐκ-\(^\text{252}\) type, not of the διότι-\(^\text{252}\) type; this means that one can draw from some true propositions on the created beings some true propositions on God inasmuch as the former reflect the latter, yet one cannot explain why the latter propositions hold true. Still, this should not disappoint us; for getting indirect yet safe knowledge is by nature better than getting no knowledge at all. Once more, Demetrios sees the glass as being half-full.

2.3. Harmony between Thomism and sane classical philosophy

True, describing the dignity of human nature as well as the God-like element in man in terms of the faculties of reason and freewill is a commonplace of the Greek Patristic literature\(^\text{253}\), which turned out to be even more common in the middle and late Byzantine era because of John of Damascus’ inclusion of it in his widespread and authoritative theological textbook, ‘Expositio fidei’\(^\text{254}\).

Besides, Cydones could well have found this idea in some famous ancient Greek authors. Isocrates regarded “philosophy” as the distinctive feature of man as well as one’s participation in it a mark of one’s superiority to those who do not...

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\(^{251}\) Demetrios Cydones, Defence of Thomas Aquinas, cod. Vat. gr. 609, fol. 114v, 7–11.

\(^{252}\) See Aristotle, Posterior Analytics, 75a34–35; 78a22–79a16.

\(^{253}\) See e.g., Basil of Caesarea, Homiliae in Psalmos XLVIII, 21, ed. Migne (nt. 250), col. 449B–452B; Gregory of Nyssa, De opificio hominis 4, in: S. P. N. Gregorii episcopi Nysseni opera omnia, ed. J.-P. Migne (Patrologia Graeca XLIV), Paris 1863, col. 136B–D; Nemesius of Emesa, De natura hominis I, 44–55, ed. M. Morani, Nemesii Emeseni De natura hominis, Leipzig 1987, 5,9–19. This Patristic definition of man derives from the Stoic anthropology, especially as instantiated by Posidonius (see M. Pohlenz, La Stoa. Storia di un movimento spirituale. Traduzione di O. De Gregorio. Note e apparati di B. Proto, Milan 2005, 466–468), as well as in the form it was integrated into the Middle Platonism by Philo of Alexandria (see, e.g., De opificio mundi 134–144, ed. L. Cohn, Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt, vol. I, Berlin 1896, 46,12–50,25, where a sharp contrast between the ‘dignitas hominis’ as patently evident in the Adamite state and the deplorable postlapsarian ‘humana condition’ is made) and others. Describing reasoning and freewill as mutually inextricable from each other and identifying them with what is holy and divine in man occurs in plain terms in Stoicism. See, e.g., Seneca, Epistulae morales, XI, 2–8 and Epistle XC, 2 (free assent to truth is required for the possession of truth to be of value for man). Mainly in terms of these qualities, it was Posidonius who praised man, and Origen transmitted this praise in Christianity, whence Nemesius borrowed in Ch. 1 of his ‘De natura hominis’, where he speaks about man’s “ευγενεία” (ed. Morani, 15,3–4; 15,24–16,1; 16,6) and describes his own work as “ανθρώπου ἐξουσία” (ed. Morani, 15,21) (W. Jaeger, Nemesios von Emesa, Berlin 1914, 133–135; cf. M. E. Skard, Nemesiosstudien, in: Symbolae Osloanies 15/16 (1936), 23–43, at 35–39; E. Garin, La ‘dignitas hominis’ e la letteratura patristica, in: La Rinascita 4 (1938), 102–146, at 112–113).

\(^{254}\) John of Damascus, Expositio fidei XXI, 130–132; XXVI, 19–20; XXXIX, 32–37; XL, 9–10; XLI, 11–20 (nt. 48), 59; 76; 97; 98.
share in it: 255 “Φιλοσοφήσαν [...] τούτο μόνον εξ άπαντον τῶν ζῶσιν ἰδιών ἐρήμων ἐχοντες καὶ διότι τούτω πλεονεκτήσαντες καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀπαίων αὐτῶν δηηγήκαμεν.” This is how Demetrios, too, evaluates philosophy 256 and reasoning: “Τὸ γὰρ ἀποδεικνύει καὶ συνλογίζεθαι, τούτῳ ἣν ἄρα τὸ τῶν ἁλόγων τούς ἀνθρώπους χωρίζειν καὶ τὴν ὑπεροχὴν ἡμῖν νῦν, ὡς τὰ γε άλλα ἡμῶν τὸ λοιπὰ ᾽ζος πλεονεκτεῖ.” 257 Isocrates describes the role of reason and speech in human life with the brightest colours:


Likewise, Philo of Alexandria, in a writing of his which seems to have been read a lot in late Byzantium, i.e. the ‘De somniis’, has produced the following interesting yet rather neglected praise of reason 260:

“Ἀνμαρτω λόγος [1] δόμημα κάλλιστον ἐκδήπι παρὰ θεοῦ [...] πρὸς ἄλον τοῦ μίου [8] κόσμου [9]: ὃ γὰρ ἐπειδὴ ἐκᾶστο καὶ πάντα ἅγαν ἐπὶ τὸ κρείττον αὐτῶς ἦστιν. [...] Ὅσπερ γὰρ ἦστιν τὸ χρηματίζειν ἄλον (10) καὶ τὸ ἐλακτῖν κινεῖ καὶ βως τὸ μυκάσθαι καὶ τὸ ἀφύσεθαι λέοντος, οὕτω καὶ αἰνετῶς τὸ λέγει καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ λόγος [1]. Τούτω γὰρ ἐννοια, περιβλήμα, πανοπλία, τείχος τὸ ζῶν τὸ θεοφιλέστατον, ὁ ἀνθρω-

255 Isocrates, Panegyricus 47–49.
256 Id., De Contemnenda morte 10 (nt. 36), 18,15–21.
259 Isocrates, Antidosis 253–255; 257; cf. 293–294.
Demetrios used some material from Isocrates’ and Philo’s passages to produce his own praise of reason:


Although Cydones, being a skilful master of atticizing Greek, reformulated what he had read in Isocrates and Philo in his own way, the verbal similarities indicated by 3, 4, 8, and 9 show that he used these ancient writings consciously. This proves that Cydones held that believing in the value of reasoning goes back to the ancient Greek literature.

In another oration by Isocrates, one can also find Cydones’ idea that religion, too, made an important contribution to man’s striving to detach itself from the beastful way of life²⁶⁴.

Moreover, to Isocrates, those who attack erudition deserve to be despised as equally as those who attack gods²⁶⁵. This resembles Cydones’ statement (see supra, pp. 35–36) that belittling reason amounts to rejecting an advantage granted to us by God. Even Cydones’ statement that the only animal which possesses knowledge of the divine and that this privilege is a gift from the divine itself, closely connected with the privilege of reason, occurs in a well-known Stoicising author of the Second Sophistic, namely Dio Chrysostom: “τόδε ἐξαίρετον ἔχοντες εἰς τῶν θεῶν πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα ζώα, λογιζόμεθα καὶ διανοεῖσθαι περί αὐτῶν.”²⁶⁶

²⁶³ Demetrios Cydones, De contemnenda morte 8 (nt. 36), 15,20–16,9.
²⁶⁴ Isocrates, Busiris 24–25.
²⁶⁵ See Plato, Menexenus 237D6–8: “ἀνθρώπου, ὅ [sc. the animal called ‘man’] συνείσι τε ὑπηρέτη ἐκ τῶν ἄλλων καὶ δίκη καὶ θεοῦ μόνοι νομίζει”.
Besides, this idea was adopted by Basil of Caesarea: “Ποτέ δὲ τὸν Θεὸν ἐπίθυμα ἄσιμος τῷ λόγῳ πιστεύειν ἐνέπαυσται.”

Likewise, Philo, in the same paragraphs of his ‘De somniis’, bitterly attacks those who repudiate reason and set themselves to avert young men from studying philosophy; he calls them enemies of human nature. To a philosophically predisposed Christian mind such as Demetrios’ these lines by Isocrates and Philo would have looked as a sort of condemnation of the Palamite ‘sacrificium intellectus’.

Finally, Isocrates, like Demetrios and Prochoros Cydones, stresses the indispensability of rational discussion in cases of disagreement and ignorance.

Moreover, Aristotle is well-known for his position that reason is the distinctive feature of man and that it should be cultivated precisely in terms of its being our distinctive natural capacity, which can practically be taken as tantamount to our true being. Further, Aristotle, although he believes that some people are by nature more able than others to discern truth from falsehood, optimistically assumes that “people” in general “have a sufficient natural capacity for truth and indeed in most cases attain to it”; for “generally speaking, that which is true and better is naturally always easier to prove and more likely to persuade.”

267 Basil of Caesarea, De fide (nt. 84), col. 464B.
268 Philo of Alexandria, De somniis (nt. 260), I, 105–106: “Ένιαύτης ὁ ζῷος ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπου καὶ λόγος ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπου τοῦ λόγου, ὁ λόγος τῷ Θεῷ ἑνώμενος, ὁ λόγος ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπου καὶ ἀνθρώπου τῷ Θεῷ ἑνώμενος.”
270 Aristotle, Ethica Nicomachea, 1098a–8; 1166a–22–23; Politics, 1253a–9–10.
271 Id., Topics, 163b12–16.
Apparently, this is just a corollary from Aristotle’s famous statement that all people by nature desire knowledge, since nature does nothing in vain, it would be absurd to assume that man has a natural desire that in most cases fails. Most probably, this is the direct source of Demetrius’ statement (see supra, p. 35) that arguing for truth is more effective than arguing for falsehood.

Further, as Demetrius could also see, this optimistic description of man, roughly found sane, i.e. theologically acceptable, by many illustrious Greek theologians, had also passed to Aquinas, who amply reproduced Nemesius of Emesa’s and John of Damascus’ assimilation of this doctrine and explicitly described human dignity in terms of reason and freewill and thereby held man to be superior to the irrational animals.

Now using this trivial idea to justify the construction of syllogisms on every issue, both practical and theoretical, both secular and theological, and appealing to this idea to defend Aquinas’ theological methodology was anything but an indifferent truism in the Byzantine 14th century. As for the fact that this idea was just as Hellenic, for Cydones this was just a proof that Aquinas and the Westerners in general were better acquainted with the ancient Greek spirit, which they willingly inherited and used more profitably than its allegedly natural inheritants, namely, the Byzantines, whom he thereby exhorted to imitate the Latins. Indeed, Cydones, though he recognises that heathen wisdom flourished as being by nature and irremediably wicked (Demetrius Cydones, Sententiae variae 14.3-4 [nt. 247], 56).


275 See, e.g., Aristotle, De coelo et mundo, 271a33; De anima, 432b21; De incessu animalium, 704b15; 711a18; De generatione animalium, 744a36–37; De partibus animalium, 744a36–37; De partibus animalium, 658a8–9; 695b19; Politica, 1253a9.

276 See Aquinas, Summa theologiae, I, q. 59, a. 3 s.c. and co. in Demetrius Cydones’ translation (cod. Var. gr. 609, fol. 81r, 45–49): “Τὸ αὐτεξούσιον τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐστὶν ἄξιοματος. […] Εἰδί τινα μὴ κατὰ τινὰ χρήσιν ἐνεγοροῦτο, ἀλλ᾽ ὅπερν χρὴ ἔπερν μόνον κυνωμένια, ὡσπερ τὸ βέλος ἕπο τοῦ τοξώτου μόνον κυνεῖται πρὸς τὸν σκοπὸν. Τινὰ δὲ ἐνεγοροῦσα μὲν χρήσις, ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἔλευσθαι, ὡσπερ τὰ ἄλογα βραδάρως τὸ γὰρ πρόβατον γεγονεῖ τὸν λόγον ἐκ τοῦ χρώματος, ἢ χρίσει τοῦτον βλαβεῖται ἀλλ᾽ αὐτὴ ἡ χρήσις οὐκ ἐστὶν αὐτῷ ἔλευσθαι, ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ ψεύσεως ἐργαμένη. Μόνον δὲ τὸ ἔξων νοῦν ἔλευσθαι χρήσις δόγματα ἐνεγοροῦσαι, καθόσον γινώσκει τὸν καθόλου λόγον τοῦ ἄγαθου, εἰ δὲ δόγματα χρίνει τοῦτο ἡ ἐκείνη εἶναι ἄγαθον. "Ὅθεν, ἐσοῦ ἐν ἑν ἣ νοῦς, ἐκεῖ καὶ τὸ αὐτεξούσιον": Cf. I I 496, Prologue (with a reference to John of Damascus); I II 496, q. 64, a. 2 ad 3; q. 103, a. 3 ad 3; III 4, q. 2, a. 2 ad 2; a. 3; q. 4, a. 1; q. 89, a. 3. Cf. J. A. Izquierdo Labeaga, Alcune fonti dell’antropologia di San Tommaso (terza parte), in: Alpha Omega 5.2 (2002), 255–258, at 267–272.


in ancient Greece, clashes with the nationalistic Byzantine ideology (from the early 13th century onwards), i.e. with the conviction that the medieval Greeks are the privileged heirs of the ancient Greek spirit, and contends that the ‘Latins’ are by nature equally and, due to the historical circumstances, more capable of acquiring ancient Greek philosophy and making it flourish again279. Aquinas is for him even wiser than Plato and Aristotle; his thought “will survive forever”280.

2.4. Demetrios Cydones’ polemical targets

2.4.1. Nicephoros Gregoras’ epistemological nihilism

Demetrios Cydones, when declaring man’s ability to find truth, still seems to oppose Gregoras’ rude degradation of the cognitive faculties of man. Gregoras claimed that the cognitive powers of many animals (in particular their senses) exceed man’s powers, all the more so because using senses is for them natural whereas for man, a being which is intellectual in its essence, this use goes against nature281. By contrast, a few decades after Gregoras, Cydones stated that man “Ων [...] ένα καὶ χολός μεμηχάνηται, πάντων άνταλμάσται, άστη τούτων γε ένα καὶ τούς λοιπούς ζώος μηδένος έλαπτος”282. This statement by Cydones probably derives from Aristotle, in whose epistemology the bodily senses, when sanely functioning, are never mistaken as to the object proper to each of them283.


282 Demetrios Cydones, De contemnenda morte 8 (nt. 36), 15,18–20. Μεμηχάνηται is a word often used by Aristotle to denote the teleological wisdom of nature as to this or that member of the body of the living beings and its function (De generatione animalium, 717a29; 745a31; De partibus animalium, 652b20; 653b34; 655b7; 664b22; 32; 665b13; 675b12; 687b22).

To Cydones, the body is clearly inferior to the soul; still, it has been wisely created by God so as to perfectly serve the soul’s need for knowledge. Further, this positive statement also accords with Aquinas' Aristotle-based idea that all of the knowledge man can obtain in this life inevitably starts from sensory data. To Demetrios, it pertains to human nature to use sense experience in its road to knowledge. This feature of all human beings should not be seen as a hindrance to their efforts to reach truth; this is simply the way that composite rational beings acquire knowledge. If we try to by-pass this way and directly see the light of the intelligible realities, our soul would feel dizzy and this light would appear to us as dark. It is probably telling that Demetrios describes the negative state of one's presumptuous attempt to get a direct knowledge of the intelligible realities by means of a rather rare word, ἀλλαγήν, which Plato uses in a well-known passage in his 'Phaedo' in order to describe the negative state of the human mind when trying to reach truth by means of the bodily senses; it seems that, in so doing, Demetrios consciously differentiated himself from the Platonic distrust of senses. Even more, Demetrios distinguishes, like Aquinas, between (i) reaching truth and (ii) making sure that one has reached truth. He optimistically explains that, if one gets some knowledge of the divine by means of some evidence provided by the senses, the certainty of the knowledge thus acquired increases, because this

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285 Thomas Aquinas, Summa contra Gentiles I, 3,4 (see Demetracopoulos, Plethon [nt. 3], 178); III,47 (“Ὅτι οὐ δυνατὸν ἐν τῇ παρακολούθῃ ζωῇ καὶ οὕμως ἀπὸ τῶν Θεῶν”), § 8: “Ἡ περὶ Θεοῦ γνώση, ὡς ἐκ τῆς ἀνθρωπικῆς διακονίας λαμβάνεται, οὐχ ὑπερβαίνει τὸ γένος ἐξαιτίας τῆς γνώσεως, ἐπεὶ λαμβάνεται ἀπὸ τῶν αὐθηρίσων ἐπεὶ καὶ αὕτη ἡ φύσις τοῦ ἔτοι γινόμαι περὶ αὐτῆς διὰ τοῦ τῆς αὐθηρίσου φύσεις νοεῖν. […] Ὁθεν οὐδὲ διὰ τῆς ὠδοῦ τούτων ὑψιλότερον τρόπον ὁ Θεὸς γινόμαι καὶ καθός ἡ αὕτη γινόμαι διὰ τοῦ ἀποτελέσματος” (cod. Var. gr. 616, fol. 49r–50r). Cf. E. Gilson's comment on the second passage (The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. Authorised Translation from the Third Revised and Enlarged Edition of 'Le Thomisme'. Translated by E. Bullough, New York 1937, 255–256): “This is a truth which cannot be sufficiently emphasized [...] We must [...] be content with the little intellectual light which is natural to us and sufficient for the needs of our knowledge, but we must beware of asking of it more than it can give. [...] We shall act as it behooves the lowly intellects that we are, and we shall accept the limits set to our faculty of knowing by the place we occupy in the hierarchy of created beings”. See also Summa theologica, 1, q. 55, a. 2 ad 2; q. 57, a. 2 ad 1; q. 84, a. 2.

process of knowledge fits with the innate epistemological apparatus of man.\textsuperscript{287} Apparently, this is just a corollary from Aristotle’s idea\textsuperscript{288} that a demonstration is more convincing if its starting-point is what is most accessible to its addressee, namely, the sensory data. Besides, Aristotle’s distinction between propositions “more knowable per se” and “more knowable for us” seems to be a rephrasing of the bat simile in ‘Metaphysics’ II, which was used by Aquinas as well as by Demetrius Cydones (see supra, pp. 41–43).

Now, although the main implication of Aquinas’ statement that all human knowledge is based on sensory data was that knowledge of the separate substances is unattainable in this life, an implication which, in some sense, can be seen as a lesson of modesty\textsuperscript{289}, this statement also means that there is a solid – although not very far reaching – bulk of material available for man to edify knowledge on his own. Patiently and carefully elaborating the data offered by the senses by means of the tools of Aristotle’s logic is for Aquinas a painstaking yet fruitful process of knowledge. Likewise, using our sense data by means of Aristotle’s logic in our effort to understand the revealed truths leads desirably to an amplification of the content of faith, which is known as ‘sacra doctrina’ or ‘scientia sacra’.\textsuperscript{290}

2.4.2. Palamite obscurantism

This should be stressed in view of the fact that Gregory Palamas accorded with Gregoras’ belittling of sense-based knowledge. Palamas, to extol the “ecstatic” or “enthusiastic”\textsuperscript{291} contemplation he was fervently preaching and defending against Barlaam the Calabrian, stated that “contemplation”, if restricted to the scientific theories, which start from sense-data, would, in fact, not exceed the rank of knowledge possessed by the irrational animals, which is based on some bodily sense-data, too:

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
No explicit account of the possible unreliability or insufficiency of the senses is offered here, still, the meaning is clearly that, in the philosophical and scientific activity, it is not reason that upgrades the epistemological value of the bodily senses but rather the bodily senses that downgrade reason. In contrast, the “intellect” of the holy hesychasts upgrades the status of the functions of their bodies. In contrast to “the truly real men”, sc. those who contemplate God, philosophers and scientists can only nominally be called men; they lie by and large at the same level as the irrational animals and it is highly questionable if they will be granted the possibility of turning into men proper. Elsewhere Palamas describes man in his use of discursive thought aiming at producing scientific knowledge as acting “similarly to the serpents, which proceed by gathering...”

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292 Cf. Gregory Palamas, Homily LIII 8 (nt. 73), 143,16–19: “τοίς πάντων θεωρίαις”.


294 Gregory Palamas, Homily LIII 39–40 (nt. 73), 177,26–27; 178,11–15. Cf. id., Triads I 3, 12 (nt. 67), 422,12–26: “Τοῖς οἰκείοις λογισμοῖς καὶ ταῖς δῦ αὐτῶν συξηρίσεις [...] διαφόροι τε καὶ συλλογισμοὶ καὶ ἀνάλυσις [...]. [...] Φιλοσοφία διανοία τέσσερις φιλοσοφίας”. To him, “sense-data sometimes are absolutely safe”, yet this does not render them knowledge in the proper sense of the term (Gregory Palamas, Triads I 3, 8 [nt. 67], 418,1–3).


296 Cf. Gregory Palamas, Triads II 2, 9 and 12 (nt. 67), 514,31–515,10, 518,6–13 and 519,5–6.

297 Cf. Gregory Palamas, Triads II 1, 17 (nt. 67), 479,1–4: “Τοῦτου μὲν ἁνθρώπους ἀξιόμενος τοῖς καθ’ Ἑλλήνως σοφοὺς καλεῖν καὶ τὸ δύναμθην γενόθελε ἐπιστατάντος”. Cf. supra, nt. 68, where Palamas says that, strictly speaking, philosophers are not rational beings.
material and ordering it [into distinct sections].” 299 As I have noted elsewhere 300, Palamas latently reproduces a passage from Simplicius’ (or Priscianus Lydus’) ‘In Aristotelis libros De anima commentaria’, where a distinction between discursive and intuitive knowledge is drawn:

“Ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ οὐκ ἀμέριστος, ὡς ἢ ἀνελλημμένη αὐτῆς δήλοι ἐνέργεια, ἐν διαφέρει ἁμα καὶ συναγερμὴ πρόοδος. Έμφασα οὖν εἰς τὸ ὀριζόμενον τε καὶ εἰδοποιούμενον μετέχει καὶ οὐσιωδός ἒπείται ὅρον καὶ ἐνδος. [...] Τοῦ δὲ εἰς τὸ ἐξοματισμοῦν καὶ συμπληροῦμεν ταῖς συμμεταπειγόν γνώσει (Plato, ‘Phaedo’ 66B; 81B–C; 81E; 83D), καὶ τούτου ἢ ἀπελοὺς ἢ τελείον μὲν, ὑπὸ δὲ τοῦ πρῶτου τελειούμενον καὶ πληροφοροῦμεν τὸν εἰδον. [...] Τὸ μὲν ὡς ἀνελλημμένα, τὸ δὲ διὰ τὴν αὐτῇ ὁροὺς μετάμειν καὶ διὰ τὴν τῶν ἀνελλημένων πάντων εἰς ἐν συναγερμὴν ως πάμελμομένη τῷ ὁριζόντι νῷ.” 301

“Contemplation” reached through such a process, is, to Palamas, mere “phantasy” (“fantasía”) if compared to the “truth” (“ἀλήθεια”) granted to man by Christian “contemplation”302.

More light can be shed on what Palamas had in mind here by noting that in the lines above he probably paraphrased the following passages from the ‘Corpus Hermeticum’:


299 “Τὴν μόνην τελείαν καὶ πάντη ἁμέρῃ τῶν καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς οὐσίαν, καὶ τοὺς καθὰ διάνοιαν ἀνέλιμμος, ἐν ἑαυτῷ καὶ τὰ τῶν ἐπιστημῶν ἔχει τὴν ἀσφάλειαν, σχεδὸν κατὰ τὰ ἐρτηστικά τῶν ἑργῶν ἐν συναγερμὴ καὶ διαφέρει προϊόντων ἀνέλιμμος ἐνω σύμπτωσε ὅτε εἴδος οὐσίας ἐνδος. [...] Νοῦς [...] φύει τὴν μετὰ σῶματος ἑργῶν συμπλοκὴν καὶ ταῖς συμμεταπειγόν γνώσει συμπεριφερμένος” (Gregory Palamas, Triads I 3, 45 (nt. 67), 457, 4–7 and 20–22 ( = id., Homily LIII 38 [nt. 73], 175,8–11; 175,23–28).


301 Simplicius (or Priscianus Lydus), In Aristotelis libros de anima commentaria, ed. M. Hayduck (Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca XI), Berlin 1882, 217,32–35; 218,39–40; 221,26–28. On the inferior state of discursive reasoning in the Neoplatonic commentators see Sorabji, Animal (nt. 273), 74–75.

302 Cf. Gregory Palamas, Homily LIII 8 and 33 (nt. 73), 169,4–6 and 170,24–25.

303 Cf. Rom. 1:19–32.

304 See Joh. 4:10; Act. 8:20; cf. Act. 17:2; Rom. 5:15; II Cor. 9:15; Eph. 3:7.
Both the context and the wording of these passages are identical. The two authors intend to exalt the highest knowledge attainable by man in this life by contrasting it to ordinary human knowledge. To stress the most striking affinity, a search in the patristic and Byzantine literature for Palamas’ usage of the phrase “οντως ανθρωπος” would be in vain. Referring, like the ‘corpus Hermeticum’,
to the human “intellect” (“νοῦς”) or “the highest of the things we have in us” (“τὸ ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν”), Palamas states that man is the only being that can become god on earth (“μόνος τῶν ζηκομοίους θεῶς”)308.

In sharp contrast to Demetrios Cydones’ (see supra, p. 36) and Nicholas Cabasilas’ (see supra, p. 31) declaration that what sin cannot destroy in man is reason and free will to act righteously, Palamas claims that the “spiritual” dimension of man, which grants him the possibility of contemplating the divine light even in this life, is innate (“τὸ ἐμφύτευμα”); it was given to man as part of his very constitution, as is suggested by Gen. 2:7 (“ἐνεφώσεν”). Although, because of the original sin, most postlapsarian men exhibit no sign of this dimension at all, few persons, who have restored their “intellect” (“νοῦς”), do activate this faculty of theirs and thereby know God directly. So, what sin can only obstruct yet not destroy is man’s natural ability to reach contemplation309.

Stating the same thing in a negative way, Palamas says that the devotees of secular wisdom (“ἐξω σοφία”) are a far cry from the wisdom that comes from God (“θεία σοφία”) – no less far than the pigs are from gazing upon stars and understanding the order of their positions310. This holds for both pagan philosophers and scientists311.

In this respect, Palamas feels free to extol the Virgin Mary for her thorough scorn of ordinary knowledge, which is acquired through education; contrary to normal children, Palamas explains, Mary had direct recourse to the very source of wisdom, i.e. God312. In doing so, Palamas reproduced the traditional ascetical view

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308 Gregory Palamas, Homily LIII 36 and 38 (nt. 73), 173,9–11 and 175,7 = id., Homily XXVI, in: Gregorii Palamae opera omnia, ed. J.-P. Migne (Patrologia Graeca 151), Paris 1865, col. 33A.

309 Id., Triads I 3, 15 (nt. 67), 425,16–20. Demetrios Cydones regarded this claim for deification not as being in keeping with man’s dignity (cf. Palamas’ description of “ἡ τελεία τῆς ἀνάθεμης ἒν γνώσει εὑρῆσεται”, ibid.) but as a mark of arrogance (Demetrios Cydones, To the Patriarch Philotheos [nt. 37], 303,27–28).

310 Id., Triads II 1, 8 (nt. 67), 472,9–11.

311 Id., Capita CL 25,2–14, ed. Chrestou, in: Chrestou (ausp.), vol. V (nt. 32), 48,23–49,10 = ed. Sinkewicz, Saint Gregory Palamas (nt. 32), 88: “Ἐὐκλείδης […] Μαρίνος […] Πτολεμαῖος […] Ἐμπεδοκλῆς καὶ Σωκράτης καὶ Αριστοτέλης καὶ Πλάτωνος […] Σέκδον […] ὡς τὰ ἀλόγα τῶν ζῴων πρὸς τὴν ἐκείνην σοφίαν […] ἔχουσιν οὕτως πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθη καὶ ὑπερηφανείμενην σοφίαν καὶ διδασκαλίαν τοῦ Πνεύματος”.

that some religiously exceptional persons, for all their being absolutely illiterate and remaining so in their entire life, could pretty well access divine wisdom.\(^{313}\)

Furthermore, Palamas uses the rarest phrase συνουσία Θεοῦ ("intercourse with God") for the Holy Mary\(^{314}\), which seems to be borrowed from the same paragraph of the 'Corpus Hermeticum': "ο ἀνθρώπος, ὁ καὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ δεκτικός καὶ τῷ Θεῷ συνουσιαστικός· τούτω γὰρ μόνῳ τῷ ζῷῳ ο Θεὸς μιλεί".\(^{315}\)

Palamas’ repudiation of the 'ratio discursiva' is also connected with a traditional anthropological theory, which passed to the Byzantine intellectual world through Nemesius of Emesa and was established thanks to John of Damascus’ inclusion of it in his 'Expositio fidei'.\(^{316}\) According to this theory, plainly subscribed to by Palamas, discursive thought ("διάνοια"), in contrast to intellect ("νοῦς"), is activated by means of something material in man’s bodily structure, i.e. a specific ventricle of the brain and the "psychical spirit" attached to it.\(^{317}\)

All of this matches squarely with Palamas’ subscription to the traditional Christian acceptance of scepticism (from Xenophanes’ famous B34 through Sextus Empiricus’ critique of all ‘dogmatic’ philosophies), which aimed at repudiating the cognitive ability of the postlapsarian man and paved the way towards revelation as the only alternative for reaching truth.\(^{318}\)

Palamas’ negative attitude toward the unaided reason of postlapsarian man, which amounts to an obscurantist stand toward secular knowledge as well as a depreciation of man’s power to exert morality and reach happiness, was reproduced by many theologians who officially stood on the Palamite side.

Neilos Cabasilas, in his ‘Encomium of Gregory Palamas’, probably based on some passages from the Palamite corpus, attributes the following idea to him: “[...] τὸ μὲν τῇ θεωρηθείς εισέρχεται καὶ τὴν τῶν ὑπὸν γνῶν ἐκ ταύτης θηράν πρὸς τὸ μηδενὸς ἐπ’ ἀσφαλεῖς βεβηρέναι· τοῖς γὰρ ἀλλήλων τῶν


\(^{314}\) Gregory Palamas, Homily XIII 37 (nt. 73), 174,19–20.

\(^{315}\) Tractatus XII 19 (nt. 305), 181,21–22.


\(^{318}\) J. A. Demetracopoulos, Christian Scepticism: Xenophanes’ B34 in the Greek Patristic and Byzantine Theological Literature (forthcoming).
According to Palamas, Neilos says, the “reasons of beings” can be safely and immutably known not by acquiring the contradictory and frustrated doctrines of the philosophers but through the contemplation granted to monks by God.

This is what Philotheos Kokkinos said about Palamas as well. To do so, he reproduced in extenso Palamas’ own description of the fruits of the extraordinary function of the human intellect and ascribed this function to Palamas: “[…] ὁ διατρανθὴν τοὺς τῶν ὄντων λόγους λόγος καὶ ἀνακαλύπτων οἴκοθεν ἐκ καθαρότητος τὰς φύσεως μυστήρια. […] ἔντειθεν αἱ ά τέ ἄλλα ποιώλα θαυματοποιεῖ καὶ τὸ διοράν καὶ προοράν καὶ περί τῶν πόρων συμβαίνοντων ὃς ἕν’ ὀρθαλμοῦς διαλέγεσθαι.”

This is a commonplace of the intellectualist trend of Byzantine spirituality, with the difference that Palamas and his adherents combined it with an obscurantist repudiation of ordinary scientific knowledge. Indeed, Palamas explicitly subscribes to this commonplace; yet he makes it clear that this is just a lateral profit gained by the person who gazes upon God, man’s real target being the union with his real inner self and God. John VI Cantacouzenos’ reply to Prochoros Cydones’ allegedly audacious and theologically absurd praise and use of ‘ratio’ includes demoting human knowledge to the level of animal knowledge. Presumably making a concession to Demetrios and Prochoros Cydones’ anthropology, John says that “reasoning is indeed a natural activity of man”, “like eating, drinking and seeing”. Still, he adds, reasoning is not an exclusively human activity; for animals reason, too, despite being conventionally yet inaccurately called irrational. Cantacouzenos appeals to the famous ‘Chrysippus’ dog’, which is described as speechlessly yet properly drawing logical inferences (‘either p or q or r’, ‘neither p nor q’, ‘therefore, r’) when hunting, to show that reasoning is not as excellent a faculty as the badly ‘rationalist’ theologian Prochoros claimed. John VI’s wording shows that out of the

319 ὁ ἐν ἀγίας πατρὸς ἡμῶν Γεργορίου ἄρχιεπισκόπου Θεσσαλονίκης τοῦ Παλαμᾶ ὠμίλια τεσσάροντα καὶ μία, ἀν προφητεύεται ἔνθε γνομενικοὶ Φιλοθέου καὶ Νείλος πατριαρχῶν Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, Jerusalem 1857, 89b35–90a8. On the Palamite background to Neilos’ wording see Demetracopoulos, Christian Scepticism (nt. 318).
320 Ibid., 90a6–8; cf. 94a5–8.
323 John VI Cantacouzenos, Refutatio I Prochori Cydonii 17,22–36 (nt. 146), 25.
ancient Greek sources of ‘Chrysippus’ dog’ theoretically available to him he
used Sextus Empiricus and Aelian325. What is telling is that Cantacouzenos was also in principle aware of Aquinas’ explicit treatment of the issue of the apparent rationality of animals326. To Aquinas, a dog looking after a deer through a certain path after having excluded some others has not really reasoned; it has just followed “a natural inclination to carry out the intricate process planned by supreme art. That is why we call some animals clever or intelligent, not because they are endowed with reason or choice327. This solution, explicitly based on Aristotle’s doctrine of ‘nature’ as only apparently exhibiting signs of ‘art’ as well as of ‘reason’ as the distinctive feature of humankind, was traditionally regarded as compatible with Christianity.

Aquinas’ stand can be seen as an elaboration of Basil of Caesarea’s view on this issue. Basil is one of the ancient Greek testimonies to ‘Chrysippus’ dog’328. Still, for all his emphasis on the admirable character of animal behaviour, he is not at all prepared to ascribe real reasoning to the irrational animals; instead, he


326 Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, Ia IIae, q. 13, a. 2, arg. 3 and ad 3.


carefully says that the irrational sensation or understanding appears to be superior to human apprehension and is as effective as reasoning and that this is due to God's wisdom, which is revealed in the works of inanimate nature, too. Likewise, Theodoret of Cyrrhus draws from the innate wisdom of some animals the conclusion that God is their wise architect, who gave them some natural capacities and ordered everything in nature to work for man's sake. He also extols men as bearers of mind, of the valuable quality of reason and wisdom, wherefrom the various crafts and sciences sprang. Whatever a dog achieves for man's sake, Theodoret remarks in the course of his argument, does not come from reason but from some natural gift to it by the creator.

This Greek Patristic as well as Thomistic solution was implicitly yet clearly discarded by Cantacouzenos in the setting of his polemics against Prochoros Cydones' anthropological justification of theological 'rationalism'. Apparently, John, to defend Palamite antirationalism, sacrificed the dignity of natural man as described by some great figures of the Greek patristic age. True, as shown, the 'dignity of man' was not always described by them in an unambiguous way and did not find a central place in their thought, as it might anachronistically seem today. Besides, a purely heathen factor, i.e., ancient Greek philosophy, played an important role in the emergence of this concept in Christian thought. Still, refusing to take man's intellectual skills as comfortably superior to the animal ones, is clearly a deviation from the Greek Patristic view of man.

John VI's grandson, Manuel II Palaiologos (1350–1425), held, in general terms, his grandfather's theological line. Some peculiar features of his thought can be explained in terms of the fact that, whereas Cantacouzenos was an eclectic Thomist of the first generation and had used Demetrios Cydones more as a political rather than as an intellectual mentor, Palaiologos was a disciple and a fervent admirer of Demetrios Cydones and belongs to the second generation of eclectic Byzantine Thomism.

Part I (namely, Chapters 1–17) of his major work, the 'Σύγγραμμα περὶ τῆς τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος ἐκπορεύσεως', is devoted to the issue of the relationship be-

329 Basil of Caesarea, In Hexaemeron IX, 18–21 (nt. 245), 153.
331 Ibíd., col. 637B. To be fair, in the Greek Patristic literature, one can find a few declarations of the irrational animals' superiority to man (see, e.g., Gregory of Nyssa's 'In sanctum Pascha', ed. E. Gebhardt, Gregorii Nysseni opera, vol. IX.1, Leiden 1967, 255.24–256,5). Still, Gregory limits this superiority to some concrete advantages of theirs, namely, some bodily functions (running fast, seeing very far et sim.) and is used just as a rhetorical means to teach man humbleness. See also Gregory Nazianzen, Carmina moralia X (nt. 67), col. 766A–778A.
tween philosophy and theology and the role of syllogism in theology. Obviously, this is an imitation of Neilos Cabasilas’ “Ὅτι οὐχ ἔστι Λατίνοις” as well as Demetrios Cydones’ ‘Defence of Thomas Aquinas’; in Part I of both of these works the issue of theological methodology is treated.

Manuel declares that the use of syllogisms in theology is in principle legitimate, since truth, sc. the propositions provided by revelation, can only produce truth. Still, for this to be actually carried out, two conditions are necessary. First, only revelational, not philosophical propositions are allowed to be posed as premises; secondly, the logical rules of inference should be respected. Otherwise, a syllogism can lapse into sophistry and introduce to Church strange, innovative doctrines (“καινὰ παρείσχειν θεολογίαν”). These conditions were met by the Church Fathers, who are the models for the usage of syllogisms in theology. In stating this, Manuel was fully in accordance with Neilos Cabasilas yet in partial disagreement with Demetrios Cydones (see supra, pp. 28–29; 38; 43–45).

So, as a last resort, Manuel comes to view the glass as half-empty; although reasoning on matters of faith is not in principle forbidden, it is safer for Chris-
tians, he warns, just to have knowledge of and belief in the content of the Holy Scripture and the doctrines of the Fathers of the Church without elaborating this material by means of syllogisms of our own; instead, the task of this elaboration should wisely be left to a few people, inspired by God Himself.

Up to this point, Manuel aligns himself with Neilos Cabasilas, whose arguments against using philosophically based syllogisms in theology as well as warnings against precipitously producing theological syllogisms even on theologically acceptable premises was for the most part based on the theological methodology programmatically declared and actually followed in Barlaam the Calabrian’s anti-Latin pieces (see supra, pp. 17–19). Yet, Manuel was writing in the beginning of the 15th century (1400/02), four decades after Neilos Cabasilas so he could hardly by-pass Demetrios Cydones’ arguments for the use of philosophical premises in theology. These arguments, as we have seen (pp. 32–39; 47–51), are Tho-

334 In the Preface, Manuel declares his ambition to write an anti-Latin work whose quality would render it a major contribution to the existing theological literature in defence of the Orthodox teachings (ed. Dendrinos, 1,15–16). This means that he was well versed in this kind of Byzantine literature and presumably knew his Cabasilas and Cydones well.


337 Manuel II Palaiologos, On the Procession of the Holy Spirit 7 (nt. 335); Epistula ad dominum Alexium Iagoup (ed. Dendrinos, 10,5–11, 354,2–6, 358,5–6, and 359,8–9).

338 Dendrinos, xvii–xx.
mist in spirit and were tenored by the Greek concept of ‘human dignity’. Since
Manuel formulated his Palamism in terms of an eclectic Thomism\(^{339}\) and also
given his predilection for ancient Greek literature\(^{340}\), it is in principle highly
interesting to see how he envisaged his mentor’s theological methodology.

Manuel describes the theological methodology of his adversaries as follows:

“Φασκουσὶ λογικὰν τὸν ἂνθρωπὸν ὄντα ὑπὸ ἄραμπαντεῖν αὐτοῦ τὸ γνήσιον, ὅ ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων ὄντων κρατεῖ. Καὶ δὴ πολλὰ πρὸς λογικὰν τελευομένας τὸ πρῶτον καὶ ἀποσιμεύ-
νοντες τοὺς συλλογίσμους, οἷς ἔνν ότιν τοὺς, καὶ τὴν πρὶν τοῦτο τὴν ἀμηή-
θείν τι δεικνύντες, ἐπείτα τετρωσόκεν πειρόμενο τοῖς ἐκ τῶν συλλογίσμων βέβαιον [...] Τὸ πάν [...] τῆς ἱερολογίας τῶν συλλογίσμων ἐξαιροῦντες.”\(^{341}\)

It is clear that Manuel is referring to Part I of Cydones’ ‘Defence of Thomas
Aquinas’ (see Cydones’ relevant views supra, pp. 38–39)\(^{342}\). Manuel, in a chapter
with the telling title: “Ὅτι ὁ συλλογίσμος ὑπεροχάρια καὶ ἀμαθίας ἐπὶ τὸ παρα-
λογίζομαι τρέπεται, καὶ πολλάκις ἄκων ἐπὶ τούτῳ φέρεται”, replies to this argu-
ment as follows:

συλλογίσμοις [3] τὴν ἁπάτην [4b]. Ἐνοικε γὰρ συμπαραραθεῖται τὸ παραλογίζομαι τὸ
προσωπείαν λάθρα λαβέται, ὅπως ἐν αὐτῷ περιθέμενου καὶ ἐξαπατήσατο τριψή ταῖς
dιαμαρτήσεις τῶν ἀλλαζόνων [5].”\(^{343}\)

In the next chapter, Manuel goes on to single out ancient Greek philosophy as
the most flagrant instance of an arrogant and failed enterprise to seize truth:

“Ταῦτα πολλὰ [6a] πεπόνθασοι καὶ τῶν ἐπὶ φιλοσοφία πάντα βεβομένων [5b] καὶ
πολλάκις [4a] ἁπάταις [4b] περιεπτώσασα μεταβαίνοντες ἐκ πλάνῃς ἐφ’ ἑτέρας, ἐξ ὑπὸ
ἀγαθής ἐπὶ φαυλοτέραν. [...] Καὶ δῆλοι τὰ καὶ ἀλλόλιον παρ’ ἀλλόλιον εἰρήμενα, ἄπερ
ἐναντίος ἔφεστα ὦτε πάντα ἀλληθεῖσθαι ὦτε πάντα φεῦδοσθαι ταῖς ἱδοναις. Τοῦτον
ὁ ἐνία φευδός ὄντα σαφές, ἀλληθεῖσθαι ἐνομίζετο, εἰ καὶ μὴ τούς αὐτοὺς. Καὶ ταῦτα τίπο
Τοῖς διαφερόντως φιλοσοφεῖσαν [6] καὶ παρὰ πάντων ἐπὶ τῇ τῆς τιμῆς ἑαυτομοίων. Οὕτω
σφαλεῖρόν ἐστι μεθόδος καὶ τέχνης τῆς πρώτης θαρρεῖν.”\(^{344}\)

All of this looks like a reproduction of a Patristic and Byzantine fideist and
anti-intellectualist argument against ruining faith through philosophy. Besides, as
we have already seen (pp. 58–59), Gregory Palamas revived this traditional trend
in an extremely aggressive way, laying emphasis on the deplorable failure of the

\(^{339}\) See Demetracopoulos, Palamas Transformed (nt. 2), 327–341.

\(^{340}\) See, e.g., his ‘Epistula ad dominum Alexium Iagoup’ (nt. 337), 357,14–358,1.

\(^{341}\) Manuel II Palaiologos, On the Procession of the Holy Spirit 10 (nt. 335), 14,8–17.

\(^{342}\) See also his strong attack on “ὥ νῦν παρ’ ἐνομίζομεν τῶν Ἑλλήνων σοφία” in his ‘Επι-
στυλα ad dominum Alexium Iagoup’ (nt. 337), 340,12–341,13 (see especially 341,5–6).

\(^{343}\) These lines sound as a paraphrase of 1 Petr. 5:8.

\(^{344}\) Ibid., 11, 15,6–8.

\(^{345}\) Manuel II Palaiologos, On the Procession of the Holy Spirit 12 (nt. 335), 16,1–10. See also
op. cit. 17, 23,5–7.
“possessed Hellenes”. Besides, Manuel, in another work of his, paraphrases a relevant passage from Palamas’ ‘Capita CL’, referred to above (p. 59, nt. 311). And yet, this is not quite so; in fact, Manuel diligently paraphrases and develops ‘Summa contra Gentiles’ I, 4,5 and 5,4, where Aquinas tries to explain why God revealed to man some truths which man is able to discern by means of natural reason as well as why God revealed to man, who is a rational being, truths in-accessible to our reason:

\[
\text{∫En tñ ı tñv a ¬njrwpínhv a ¬podeízewv diexódw ı }\]


In taking refuge in Aquinas, Manuel was probably inspired by Neilos Cabasilas’ strategeme to turn Aquinas’ reservations (as far as the individual’s use of syllogisms in philosophy and theology is concerned) against the theological methodology of the Latins (see supra, pp. 28; 38) as well as by John VI Cantacouzenos’ use of these Thomistic reservations against Prochoros Cydones’ ‘rationalistic’ approach to theology (see supra, p. 63). John had quoted the Thomistic chapter in toto where the passage latently used by Manuel can be found. As for Neilos, he had used a lot of Thomistic passages for his purpose, including the one reproduced by Manuel. These are Neilos’ words:

\[
\text{Kaì tò dæ mégiston, tò mhdè toútouv a ¢neu u ™poyíav }\]


As the detailed verbal similarities show, these lines are a combined paraphrase of the passage from Aquinas’ ‘Summa contra Gentiles’ cited above with the following passage from Gregory of Nyssa on the ineffectiveness of using syllogisms in the matters of faith:

348 Neilos Cabasilas, ‘’Oti oìn ësti ëstrívoi’ 15, ed. Candal (nt. 38), 196,19–21.  
349 Gregory of Nyssa, De anima et resurrectione (nt. 130), col. 52B–C.
Interestingly, as we have seen above (p. 44), the same two passages had been used by Demetrios Cydones in his ‘Apology II’. Some of the same wording was picked up and used by both Demetrios and Manuel, but they also independently adopted different words from them. This selectivity does not necessarily result in a difference in meaning. Besides, both Aquinas’ and Gregory’s passages are vague enough to admit of different uses; Aquinas had stated that Christian truths lie above human reason without qualifying which truths he had in mind, and Gregory had rejected the legitimacy of reason to demonstrate the Christian doctrines in such an absurdly absolute way351 that he calls for his reader to re-elaborate this rejection in more acceptable terms. Still, Manuel’s tenor is flagrantly different from Cydones in that it suggests that one should practically handle all theological truths as if they were ‘credibilia’. It would be implausible to assume that Manuel was not aware of the fact that he was using Gregory and Aquinas as well as that his mentor Cydones had done the same, Manuel presumably wanted his readers to believe that Gregory and Aquinas support his own, not Cydones’ theological epistemology. In so doing, Manuel was most probably following John VI Cantacouzenos, who, in his refutation of Prochoros Cydones’ theological methodology, quoted both Aquinas’ ‘Summa contra Gentiles’, Book I, Ch. 9 in toto (cf. p. 28) and Gregory of Nyssa’s passage from the ‘De anima et resurrectione’352.

Manuel’s final argument against using philosophical premises for constructing theological syllogisms runs as follows353: “Επει τῶν χριστιανῶν θεολογίαν μηδεμίας ἐπιστήμην ὑπὸ τοὺς ἐπιστήμους ἔχειν τελοῦσα (καὶ γὰρ ἄλλα πάσας μᾶλλον πρὸς αὐτὴν θεραπαινίδος ἔχοιν λόγον, ὡς καὶ Θεωμάς φησιν, ὁ δὲ θείος Χρυσόστομος οὐ ‘θεραπαινίδος’ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ταύτης

350 This passage was reproduced by two other fideists of that time, namely, Nicephoros Gregoras (see Demetracopoulos, Nicholas Cabasilas’ [nt. 12], 229, nt. 354) and Barlaam the Calabrian (see Demetracopoulos, Further [nt. 60], 99–100, No 43).
351 See Demetracopoulos, Philosophy and Faith (nt. 131), 49; 173.
352 John VI Cantacouzenos, Refutatio I Prochori Cydonii 13,20–31 (nt. 146), 20.
353 Manuel II Palaiologos, On the Procession of the Holy Spirit 12 (nt. 335), 17,6–8.
Neilos’ two Thomistic references are to ‘Summa theologiae’, I, q. 1, a. 5 (Sed contra and ad 2): “Therapaiainai taüthyi ai ἀλλα λέγονται εἰστήμηι. [...] Οὔ γάρ ἐκ τῶν ἀλλων ἐπιστημῶν λαμβάνει τὰς ἐαυτῆς ἀρχῶς, ἀλλ’ ἀμεὸς παρὰ Θεοῦ δε’ ἀποκαλύψεις”359.

Manuel also indirectly argues360 that the full independence of theology from philosophy is shown by the fact that most – and even the best – theologians, in contrast to all haeretic Christians361, had no knowledge of philosophy at all. Philosophy is useful only in so far as it helps us to unmask the various sophistries against sane faith362. This is what Aquinas says about the usefulness of philosophical reason for theology363.

Still, the wording that Manuel uses to describe the aversion of most saints to philosophy is strange:

“[…] ‘παιδείαν’ […] ‘τὴν ἐξ’ λέγω, ἣν ὁμοῦ πάντες ἄγιοι ‘διαπίπτοναιν’, ἄτι ἡ πολιτεία τῶν πρὸ αὐτῶν εἰς ἀπόνοιαν προβάλλονται ἐμπειρίαν καὶ χρήμαν ἑονται ταῦτα ὑπομανόντες, οὔ χαλίνον ταῖς ἀκαθήκτοις ὀρμάς τῶν ταῦτα εκτετμιένων ἀναφέρεται.”364

This is a paraphrase of some famous lines of Gregory Nazianzen’s ‘Oration XLIII’, with the difference that Manuel paraphrased them in such a way as to express his full disagreement with them. This is what Gregory Nazianzen had said (see supra, p. 49, nt. 262): “[…] παιδείαν […] τὴν ἑξοδεῖν, ἤν ὁ πολλοί
Χριστιανών διαπτύουσαι ώς ἐπίβουλον καὶ σφαλεῖαν καὶ Θεοῦ πόροι βάλλουσαι, καὶ εἰδότες.” Up to “διαπτύουσαι”, Manuel reproduces Gregory’s lines verbatim, except for replacing “most Christians”, which refers to the illiterate Christians, whose stance, rather than standing as a criterion, is subject to evaluation, with “all the saints unanimously”, whose stance is, on the contrary, not to be judged but used as a model. Further, the next lines of Manuel are a negative reproduction of what follows in Gregory’s text. This process results in a full reverse of Gregory’s conviction that it would be wrong to reject philosophy from Christianity from the outset. In so doing, Manuel seems to have been influenced by one of the bitterest Byzantine attacks on secular knowledge, that of Georgius Monachus, who, as seen (p. 16, nt. 80), might have been the source of Palamas’ crude rejection of heathen philosophy, too. To Georgius, Moses, the most ancient God-inspired author, produced ‘Genesis’ after having fully rejected (“διαπτύουσαι”) the wisdom of the Egyptians; this enabled him to speak the truth about God and the world. As for the Hellenes, they failed to free themselves from ignorance and impiety; even worse, they themselves refuted every doctrine they produced; this was quite expectable, since the unaided human mind is from the outset unable to reach and establish any truth at all.365

Manuel, to justify his expressly absolute prohibition of using philosophical premises in theological syllogisms and his practically absolute prohibition of constructing theological syllogisms at all, treats what he thinks to be the core of the problem of theological methodology. Why have philosophers failed so deplorably to reach God? Why had their supposedly brilliant “minds” remained “absolutely dark as far as the divine things are concerned” and left God no way to make Himself manifest to humans other than through such radical a means as Incarnation?366 God, Manuel says, stands far away from the vility of our nature (“τὴν ἰμετέραν ταύτην εὐτέλειαν”). In fact,368 the distance between man and God is not just immense; it is infinite. So, whatever description of God is offered, it does not concern His nature (“φύσις”); as a matter of fact, the divine names, even the most holy ones, such as “great”, “wise”, and “saint”, are meaningful only to the extent they contrast the excellence God to “the vility of the human nature” (“τὴν τῆς ἀνθρωπίας φύσεως φαυλότητα”). Nobody should slip into wishful thinking and believe he can attain a better knowledge of God. Indeed, should this have been objectively possible, it would have been God Himself Who, because of his absolute “goodness”, “magnanimity”, “lack of envy” and “promptness to benefit”, would grant us knowledge of His own nature. The problem does not lie in Him, but in us; our nature does not have the capacity to receive such an exceptionally abundant outflow of knowledge (“μὴ τοιαύτην εἶναι τινα οἶναν γε

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365 Georgius Monachus, Chronicon I,19 (nt. 80), 42,5–19.
366 Manuel II Palaiologos, Epistula ad dominum Alexium Iagoup (nt. 337), 338,1–3.
367 Id., On the Procession of the Holy Spirit 108 (nt. 335), 200,11.
368 Id., Epistula ad dominum Alexium Iagoup (nt. 337), 338,7–340,2; 342,1–6.
kataklusiothénai toîs εξ αὐτοῦ ὑπερφυέον νύμασι”). Therefore, it was not out of contemptuousness or snobbishness that most theologians viewed “heathen erudition” (“παιδεία”) as a mere “play” or “joke” (“παιδία”), as an intense and perplexed yet effectually vain activity (“ματαιώτης πολυσκόλος”); it was just a matter of realism. One must recognise the limits of one’s own nature.

This curt position, Manuel’s astonishing deliberate alteration of one of the most famous dictums of Gregory Nazianzen, and his reproduction of Palamas’ repudiation of heathen philosophy suggest that his use of Aquinas’ views was only superficial. In fact, it was only a reproduction of Neilos Cabasilas’ polemical (anti-Latin) use of these Thomistic views. Even Manuel’s appeal to the “vility of man” and his sharp distinction between the finite knowledge of man and the infinity of God is a direct reproduction of one of Neilos’ arguments:

“Ὅι ταῦτα ἁμοίοντες ἢ τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην εὐτέλειαν ἡγούμεθα καὶ τὸ τοῦ διαβόλου ἔπαθον τὴν σοφίαν τὴν ἔωσιν τῇ θείᾳ καὶ ἀπειρο παρεξεισοῦσις σοφίας, ή τὴν τάξιν εἰσόδες τὴν ἐωσιν καὶ τὴν ἀγώναν <«καί» τὸ περὶ ἡμᾶς σκότος ἀπετυφλάθησαν πρῶς τὰς ὑπερίτηρας αὐγάς καὶ μηδὲν τι πλέον ἡμῶν τὸν Θεὸν ἐνόμισαν ἐρέιν, τὴν τῶν Μανιστῶν ἀθέταν νοοῦμενες.”

Once again, the traditional motto of the Manichean theological ‘rationalism’, which goes against man’s “rank” (“τάξις”) in the order of beings, is to be found in the introductory chapters of Aquinas’ ‘Summa contra Gentiles’: “Οὐκ ἂρα πάν τὸ περὶ Θεοῦ λεγόμενον, εἰ καὶ λόγω δεικνύει μὴ δυνατόν, εὕθες ὄσπερ τι


370 Neilos Cabasilas, "Ὅτι οὐκ ἔστι Λατίνοις 17 (nt. 38), 198,12–20."
psiéðos aπo ρυζητέων προσήχει, ὁπερ Μανιχαῖοι καὶ οἱ πλείστοι τῶν ἀπόστολων ἅπελαβον".371 Still, later on in his anti-Latin piece372, Neilos accused Aquinas of "ignorantly" and "audaciously" using philosophical premises in his discussion of the procession of the Holy Spirit, which had been the reason why Neilos’ major source, namely, Barlaam the Calabrian, had stuck on Aquinas the label of the “possessed”373. This shows that Neilos’ explicit and Manuel’s latent appeal to Aquinas was only an a fortiori argument against the Latins: even your own champion confesses that syllogisms are not allowed in theology.

Thus, in contrast to Manuel’s Thomistic reformulation of the Palamite distinction between God’s essence and energies, which went against the core of Palamas’ theological doctrine (nt. 122), Manuel’s adoption of Aquinas’ reservations as regards man’s ability to obtain a solid knowledge of God in this life had nothing peculiarly Thomist; in this issue, Manuel aligned himself with the fundamentalist Palamite anti-rationalism.

Demetrios Chrysoloras, a member of the intellectual circle of Manuel II, was not a first-rank author. The tone of his refutation of Demetrios Cydones’ ‘Defence of Thomas Aquinas’374 is crudely polemical and the philosophical and theological equipment of the author, although not poor, is mediocre. As title indicates, Chrysoloras stands explicitly on Neilos Cabasilas’ side. Chrysoloras stresses the limits of man’s knowledge of God: “Ὅν πάντα θνητή φύσει γνώριμα: οἱ γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν γεγονότων περὶ τοῦ αἰενήθητον νοεῖν τι σοφολογοῦντες ομοίον τι δρόσοι τοῖς ὑπὸ δύναμις μονάδος φύσει ἐπιξηνοῦν.”375 This means that Christians should abstain from taking any initiative in the field of theology; embracing the traditional doctrines and expressions of the Fathers of the Church is what one must restrict oneself to, since this is both sufficient and safe376. As we saw in the previous paragraph, this is exactly what Neilos Cabasilas and Manuel II had stated on this issue.

Interestingly, Chrysoloras tackles Cydones’ views on the value of reasoning (“συλλογίζεσθαι”) directly, and he does so in his own way. Out of the four arguments he produces against Cydones in Part I of his work377, the first, second and

371 Thomas Aquinas, Summa contra Gentiles I,3,8 (Demetrios Cydones’ translation in: Demetracopoulos, Plethon [nt. 3], 180).
372 Neilos Cabasilas, "Ὅτι οὐκ εἶναι Λατίνοις 76 (nt. 38), 248,22–27.
373 See Demetracopoulos, Further (nt. 60), 111–112.
374 Demetrios Chrysoloras, Διάλογος ἀναμνηστικὸς τοῦ λόγου, ὁ ἐκφάντω χαράς Δημήτριου ὁ Κυδώνης κατὰ τοῦ μεθαρμονικὸς Θεολογικὸς χαράς Νείλου τοῦ Καβάσηλα, ed. V. Pasiourtidis, An Annotated Critical Edition of Demetrios Chrysoloras’ ‘Dialogue on Demetrios Kydones’ Antirrhetic against Neilos Kabasila’ (Ph.D. thesis in preparation, The Hellenic Institute, University of London, Royal Holloway). The line numbers indicated here may not eventually coincide with those to appear in the conclusive version of the dissertation; yet the divergence is not expected to be so great as to render the passages referred to here unidentifiable.
375 Ibid., Part I, ll. 688–691.
376 Ibid., Part I, ll. 652–655.
fourth are relevant to our discussion. Like John VI Cantacouzenos (see supra, p. 61), Chrysoloras cannot help but acknowledge that Demetrios and Prochoros Cydones’ praise of reasoning has some degree of truth. Still, he tries to combat the theological implications of this praise in this way. He distinguishes – in a rather unclear way – between (i) ‘ratiocinari sine scientia’ and (ii) ‘ratiocinari cum scientia’

The former belongs to all men; with regard to this, Cydones’ claim that reason is a natural faculty of man, which has been bestowed upon him by God, is right. As for the latter, only a very small number of men possess it, namely those who have studied it as a science. This, is is not a gift by God, but, presumably, just an activity invented and practised by man. Now Cydones’ praise of reasoning cannot be applied to (ii); for it admits of both good and bad use on one’s part and is subject to errors. Both (i) and (ii) can contribute practically nothing to our efforts to know God; what they can only bring about is to show the existence of God. Apparently, Chrysoloras, on the one hand, finds it difficult to challenge the traditional conception of man as ‘animal rationale’. On the other hand, however, his basic preoccupation was the defence of a theological discourse that would not be contaminated and thereby ruined by ‘rationalism’. So, he fully and emphatically subscribes to Palamas’ and Manuel II’s depreciation of philosophy as a means of searching for God. To Chrysoloras, “the wisdom of the world” (I Cor. 1:20; 3:19) was a blatant failure: “Τί πάντας ἄνησεν ἤ τοῦ κόσμου σοφία; Τί[π] ἡ γνώσις αὐτοῦ περὶ τὸν Θεόν; Πάντα πάντα πάντας οὐδέν. Ἄλλα καὶ παρέσχεται καὶ ἐξημίωσεν οὐ μικρόν”, producing a lot of philosophical errors before Christ and a long series of heresies after Christ. This is why most illiterate persons are believers, whereas most erudite men are not380. By subscribing to this Palamite argument against heathen sages, Chrysoloras stood in full disagreement not only with Demetrios Cydones (see supra, pp. 38–39) but also with Nicholas Cabasilas. Nicholas was quite explicit:

“Those who malign reason on the grounds that have some misused its power are, first, ignorant of the subject-matter laid down at the beginning; for this is not about the sages and their life but rather about reason. Moreover, they commit something ridiculous, attacking one man but hitting another, like madmen. […] For, there is a great distance between the subject matter, the matter under their inquiry, and their conclusion. For, while reason is the subject-matter under inquiry, they have the impression that by proving that those who have pursued it became evil they have proved reason itself to be evil.”381

Chrysoloras argued for his theological methodology as if Nicholas’ argument had never been produced.

380 Ibid., Part I, l. 506.
381 Nicholas Cabasilas, De rationis valore 40–48 (ad 3) (nt. 14), 56; 59–60.
In sum, Chrysoloras stands as a minor representative of the Byzantine anti-Latin depreciation of man’s dignity, at least in his postlapsarian state. For one thing, he did not go as far as to subscribe to John VI Cantacouzenos’ blurring of man’s superiority to the irrational animals (cf. supra, pp. 61–63). For another, he elaborated Manuel II’s restricted estimation of reasoning so as to render it harmless for faith and, above all, inappropriate for Demetrios Cydones’ argument for using philosophical premises in theological syllogisms.

2.5. The theological background to the second episode: two different doctrines on the effects of the original sin

As is known, Aquinas, through his Aristotle-based theory of knowledge intended to combat Averroes’ ultra-optimistic, strongly Neoplatonist interpretation of Aristotle’s epistemology. Still, in the eyes of any Byzantine thinker familiar with Gregoras’ and Palamas’ (as well as with some Palamites’) views of the knowledge that humans can attain on their own, Aquinas’ epistemology sounded like an optimistic reply to the question whether postlapsarian man should be deemed able to obtain knowledge or not. Demetrios Cydones argues for this optimism in terms of the divine origins of man’s cognitive powers:

“I see that some people, when being surrounded and attacked by arguments, launch an attack on argument per se and try to cancel its use in theological matters on the pretext that it is not pious to approach these matters by this means. It is purposeless to try to refute these people; for, upon their being defeated they think they have won. To them, their having reached an impasse by means of refutations proves that what they say comes from the divine wisdom, which is an enemy of philosophy and arguments, so that these two things can never be in step with each other. In so claiming, they impute this conflict to God, implying that He has put before us a double truth or even wisdom and confutes them by each other, thereby deliberately bewildering man and making him a blasphemer.”

“We should not distrust those things that everybody agrees they are just as true. By the fact that these things belong to the natural and non-perversed sentences and are known equally by all we must be convinced that they have been installed by God from the beginning in the human souls and that, consequently, they do not clash with the sentences we derive from the Scriptures. Or else we would assume that God deliberately combats by means of these sentences the sentences He Himself delivered to us through the Scriptures, thus colliding truth with truth, puzzling men and making them desperate as to the discovery of truth. Therefore, we must say and believe that the sentences produced by our reasoning after proper scrutiny, are compatible and concordant with the divine sentences. Moreover, the person who looks after truth will also assume

as true ‘what is accepted by every one or by the majority or by the most notable and illustrious persons’ 383 in theology 384.

Here Demetrios seems to reproduce closely – yet in a more optimistic tenor – two of Aquinas’ arguments for the compatibility of natural truths with the revealed ones in ‘Summa contra Gentiles’ I, 7 (“Ὅτι ἡ τῆς ἀποδείξεως ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἐναντιά τῇ τῆς χρυστιανικῆς πίστεως ἀλήθεια”), par. 3–4:

“Ἡ τῶν φύσεων γνωσιομονέων ἀρχῶν γνώσεως θεόθεν ἡμῖν ἐστιν ἐντεῦθεσα· τῆς γὰρ ἰδίας φύσεως καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ ὁ θεός ἐστι ποιητής. Τάς ἀρχῶν τοιῶν τάσσει καὶ ἢ θεία περιέχει σοφία. Ὑπὸ ἄρα ἐν τοῖς ἀρχῶν τάσσει ἐναντιών, πρὸς τὴν θείαν σοφίαν ἡ ἀγαθῶν ἄνωτέρων. Ὁ θεός ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστι. Τὰ τοῖς ἐν θείᾳ ἀποκάλυψις πίστει γνωσθέντα ὁ δυνάτων ἐναντία τῆς φυσικῆς εἶναι γνώσει. Ἑπι τοῖς ἐναντίαις ἀποδείξεων ὁ νοῦς συμποδίζεται, ὅστε μὴ δύνασθαι εἰς τὴν τῆς ἀληθείας κατανόησις προχωρεῖν. Ἐν τοῖς αὐτῶν ἐναντίαις γνώσεως ἡμῖν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐντεῦθεσα, ὁτι ἁν ἢ μὲ ἐμπόδιον ἡμῖν πρὸς τὴν γνώσιν τῆς ἀληθείας. Ὁ παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ εἶναι ἀδύνατον.” 385

True, Aquinas’ concern was not the same as that of Cydones. What Aquinas tried to establish is that philosophy, for all that it is unable to reach most of the revealed truths, nevertheless contradicts none of them, whereas Cydones’ intention was to legitimize the use of man’s natural cognitive powers in theology against theological scepticism or fideism. Still, the broadly optimistic air in the stance and arguments of both is obvious.

This argument has an important theological implication, namely, that the cognitive faculties of man before original sin are practically the same as afterwards. Original sin, in spite of the moral shortcomings it caused to our personal and social life, was incapable of changing man’s place in the hierarchy of beings and canceling or permanently perverting the functions of human nature386. “Ἡ φύσις διὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας μᾶλλον ἔφτασε κατὰ τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἔφεσαν ἡ κατὰ τὴν γνώσιν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ387. Thus, to Aquinas, sin, defined as perverted will, misdirects intellect; “desires influence beliefs”, and this is how error is caused388. In this respect, Byzantine Thomism exhibits some similarities with the Thomas-inspired (at least in part) epistemological optimism of early modern Europe, when the...

385 See Demetracopoulos, Plethon (nt. 3), 186–187.
386 Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, I, q. 94, a. 4 ad 1; P IIa2, q. 84, a. 3 ad 3; q. 85, a. 1 and 2.
range and the gravity of the consequences of Adam’s fall were much discussed. \(^{389}\). Mutatis mutandis, Grégoras’ and the Palamites’ pessimistic position prefigured the Protestant and Jansenist position (which was inspired by the Pauline aspect of Augustine’s conception of the original sin), whereas Demetrios Cydones, Nicholas Cabasilas, and Plethon, regardless of their different views as to how knowledge is obtained, prefigured the optimistic Cartesian stand, which was mainly based on Augustine’s Neoplatonic epistemology of the innate principles.

3. Third Episode: Plethon’s methodological drawings on ‘Thomas paganus’

3.1. Plethon’s epistemological optimism

The greatest disciple of Demetrios Cydones, Plethon, preached the excellence of the nature of man as such. Plethon produced a pure version of Cydones’ predilection for ‘Hellenism’. He did not focus on the strong yet vague declarations of the value of human reason such as those presented by Isocrates and Philo of Alexandria (cf. supra, pp. 48–51). Instead, he stressed and vindicated this value against the challenge of ‘ratio’ by the traditional alliance of Christianity with scepticism. As we will immediately see, to do so, he took refuge in a (Pseudo-) Platonic declaration of the effectiveness of reasoning.

From the outset of his major work, the ‘Laws’, which he did not hesitate to call “κτήμα ευ αἰεί” \(^{390}\), it is obvious to the reader that Plethon purports to lay out an all-embracing philosophical program, extending from epistemology to political theory. Still, before starting arguing for his program, he feels it necessary to clear the ground of the virus of scepticism, which can potentially affect and subvert any philosophical doctrine, including his own \(^{391}\). Plethon was highly sensitive on this issue both in general and specific terms. On the one hand, he attacked philosophical scepticism. On the other, as the terminology of his description of scepticism shows, “the real, i.e. historical, target of his anti-sceptical polemics was the sceptically-based Christian fideism: of some major Byzantine thinkers and some major Fathers of the Church, which went back to the sceptically-tenored


\(^{391}\) In his description of scepticism, Plethon latently yet directly and accurately uses Sextus Empiricus; see Demetracopoulos, Plethon (nt. 3), 85–86; 102–103; id., Georgios Gemistos-Plethon’s (nt. 5), 312–315.
religious Platonism of Philo of Alexandria. His focus on the Christian alliance with scepticism can be explained in terms of his belief that his destiny on earth was to inaugurate a new age of true philosophy, which was to overcome the dark of the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian age.

Still, Plethon did not believe that truth was totally eclipsed under the domain of these religions; for, some Christian intellectuals “had borrowed some heathen eternal truths from the *rivii integri et illimes* of the *prica theologia*”, including the conviction that truth is attainable for man.

Nicholas Cabasilas might be one of them. Byzantines very rarely refer straightforwardly to the radical ignorance proclaimed by scepticism. Nicholas had attacked Gregoras’ Philo-based Platonico-sceptical epistemology from an Aristotelian standpoint. By contrast, Plethon combated pure scepticism and relativism as well as the alliance between Christian fideism and philosophical scepticism on the basis of a purely cataphatic, optimist Platonic epistemology. Still, Cabasilas and Plethon were the only Byzantine intellectuals who seriously took pains in discussing and refuting scepticism, referring explicitly to the issue of whether man possesses a criterion of truth (cf. the title of Cabasilas’ ‘*Contra Pyrrhonem*’: ‘[…] περὶ τῶν κριτηρίων τῆς ἀληθείας […]’, cf. supra, p. 5) so as to be declared “judge” (Plethon: “κριτής”) on all things and capable of reaching “truth” (Plethon: “Ἀλήθεια” and “Ἀλήθεια”; cf. the passage quoted below).

Plethon, in the course of his refutation of scepticism, attacks those who claim that man, by virtue of his ontological rank, is not able (“ἀξίασ”) to make judgments on anything, especially the divine things:

“Ἀλήθεια δὲ δὴ ἐκεῖνο [...]. ἐπιτόδον σουμπτέον, [...] οὐδ' ὀτιοῦν ἂν εἶναι ἀληθεῖαν, ὡς ἀνθρώπον οὐκ ἔχειν γε ὡς [1] κριτὴν οὐδ' ὀτιοῦν. [...] Οὐ μὴν οὖν ἐκεῖνο ὑπολογιστέον {2a}, δὲ αὐτοὺς πινεῖς, ὡς, ἐὰν περὶ ὀτιοῦν τῶν ἄλλων ἡμῖν ἢ τῆς ἀληθείας κατάληψις, ἄλλ' οὖν ὡς περὶ τῶν θεῶν ἀνθρώποις οὐκ προσέχει διασοκείτων πραγμάτων {2b}, ὡς οὖν ἡ ἐνεργείας σοφίας {396} οὗτον περὶ αὐτῶν ἐτε ἥρεττον ἢ καθ' ἐμᾶς {3}, οὖν ἃν αὐτοῖς τὰς φιλίαν τούτο ἐπιτηδεύοναι, περιεγείρεθαι τε ἡ καὶ πολυπαραγεῖοντεν {4} τὰ αὐτῶν.”

Plethon’s wording suggests that he intended to justify the following (Ps.-)Platonic programmatic declaration of the theological epistemology that should be fearlessly embraced by “Greeks”:

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392 Demetracopoulos, The Problems (nt. 390), 41; 46–48.
394 Id., Plethon (nt. 3), 305.
395 Id., Nicholas Cabasilas’ (nt. 12), 111–127; 311–314.
396 Xenophanes, D–K, B34.

Apparently, the “Greeks” referred to by Ps.-Plato are the pre-philosophical ones399, whose mythical views of man and his potential were succinctly expressed by poets such as Simonides and Epicharmus as testified to yet opposed by Aristotle and testified and subscribed to by Plutarch. Plethon not only reproduced Aristotle’s reference to and refutation of the pre-philosophical Greek attitude towards the problem of the cognoscibility of the divine400 (which was directly based on the Ps.-Platonic passage just quoted401) but also the ipsissima verba of Aristotle’s analysis of Simonides’ verse: “ἀνὴρ δ’ οὐκ ἄξιον [1] μή οὐ ζητῶν τὴν καθ’ αὐτὸν ἐπιστήμην”402, which contains a direct reference to the human dignity. This web of passages can, therefore, safely be regarded as well known to Plethon. So we can legitimately assume that Pletho, when writing the above lines, saw himself as preaching true theological epistemology to the medieval Greeks, whose mind was captivated by the Christian myths, as (Ps.-) Plato had preached theological optimism against the ancient Greek mythical demotion of man in contradistinction with the ill-conceived superiority of the gods. In doing so, Plethon dissociated himself from the religion-based apophatic trend of antiquity and the Middle Ages in order to philosophically restore the ‘dignitas hominis’ by stressing man’s power to reach truth on every matter, including the matters divine403.

This assumption seems to be corroborated by the fact that Plethon’s passage also looks like an implicit philosophical critique of the following passage from the corpus dionysiacum, which is a succinct statement of Christian apophaticism with a belittling of the cognitive potential of man: “[…] αὐτὴ τῶν θεῶν θεωμέν ἢ άξιότη διάταξε, τὰ μὲν υπὲρ ἡμᾶς [3] ἀποφάσκομαι πολυπραγμονένην [4] καὶ οὐς υπὲρ ἀξίω [1] καὶ οὐς ἀνέστεικα […]”404. Apparently, Plethon regarded the sceptical and the Greek Patristic and Byzantine repudiation of the cognitive powers of man405 as an attack on the very ‘dignitas hominis’, rightly held high, in his view, in

398 Ps.-Plato, Epinomis 988A–B. This passage, along with the Ps.-Dionysian one which follows, are to be added to the list of the implicit quotations in this fundamental Plethonic passage offered in: Demetracopoulos, Plethon (nt. 3), 100–107; id., Georgios Gemistos-Plethon’s (nt. 3), 316; 314–320.
399 See Jaeger, Aristotle (nt. 212), 164.
400 Demetracopoulos, Plethon (nt. 3), 100–102.
401 Jaeger, Aristotle (nt. 212), 164, note 1.
403 Demetracopoulos, Plethon (nt. 3), 105.
405 The wording of Plethon’s description of the view that man is unable to know God is both Xenophanean and Christian (Demetracopoulos, Plethon (nt. 3), 102–104; id., Georgios Gemistos-Plethon’s (nt. 3), 314–315; 317–320).
the optimistic ‘Hellenic’ philosophy, which did not distinguish between divine things accessible and divine things inaccessible to man.

Now what is equally important is that, as we have seen (pp. 29–30), Plethon’s defence of the power of syllogisms to provide humans with correct conclusions was based on Aquinas’ and Demetrios Cydones’ description of the proper theological methodology. Further, Plethon’s emphasis on man’s ability to reach the truths divine and his connection of this ability with human dignity (or man’s rank in the hierarchy of beings) occurs in Aquinas: “Ad ‘modum et dignitatem’ hominis pertinent quod ad divina elevetur, ex hoc ipso quod ‘homo factus est ad imaginem Dei’ (Gen. 1:26).”407 Remarkably, it is not Ps.-Dionysius but Aquinas who speaks of the rank or worth or dignity of man, assigning humankind a specific place of the universe as ordered by what Ps.-Dionysius described as “universal justice”.

Moreover, in the ‘Summa contra Gentiles’ I, 5,5, Plethon could find an expressed rejection of the view that man can by nature find out only truths regarding his own level:

“Καὶ τοῦτο δὲ χρήσιμον ἐκ τῶν λόγων ἀνακύπτει τῷ Φιλοσόφῳ, ὧς ἐν τῷ δεκάτῳ τῶν ‘Ηθηκῶν’ ἐπιτιμῶν Σομονήδη πείθοντει τινὰ τῆς μὲν τῶν θείων γνώσεως ἐμβλητὴν, τῶν δὲ νοῶν τοῖς ἀνθρωπίνοις πρόκεισθαι ἄσχετον καὶ λέγοντες διὰν ἀποκτεῖναι τὸν ἀνθρωπον καὶ θητὴ τὸν θείων, φημί οἰκεῖεν τὸν ἀνθρωπον ἐκείνου ‘ὅσον οἷον τὸ πρὸς τὰ ἑθόντα ἐξινθέν’.”408

Besides, in Aquinas’ ‘Summa theologicae’, one could find an explicit declaration of human dignity: “μεγάλης ἥξιας ἔστιν ἐν λογικῇ ὑφεστάναι φύσις”410. Although this is not directly reflected in any of Plethon’s phrases, to him, man’s place and task in the universe ranks high411. For this task to be carried out, “a cataphatic and optimistic metaphysics”, which “totally excludes the ‘via negativa’”412, was necessary.

This optimistic view of man accords with Plethon’s view of the apparent rationality of some animals, described by him by means of some of the examples commonly used in antiquity (bees, ants, spiders)413. To him, this sort of rationality is not superior to human reason, since in most matters it falls short of man’s achievements. Likewise, it is not even equal to it, since it is restricted to very few,

406 Ps.-Dionysius Areopagite, De divinis nominibus VIII,7 (nt. 404), 204,5–7.
407 Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologicae, IIa IIae, q. 175, a. 1 ad 2.
408 Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1177b31–33; cf. Metaphysics, 982b30–32.
409 Translation by Demetrios Cydones (1354); see Demetracopoulos, Plethon (nt. 3), 101; 183.
410 Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologicae, I, q. 29, a. 3 ad 2; translation by Demetrios Cydones, cod. Var. gr. 1924, fol. 238v, 19–20.
413 In all probability, Plethon’s reproduction of these examples (Laws II,26 [nt. 396], 80,3–5) derives from Plutarch’s ‘De sollertia animalium’ 981B7, 967D5 and 966E9.
and always the same, activities. Still, it would be wrong to take it as inferior to human reason; for its never failing perfection cannot be reached by man's deliberation and thought. This means that, to all appearances, this sort of rationality does not belong to the animals themselves; as a matter of fact, it comes from the mind of the “soul of the heaven”. So, Plethon, instead of paralleling the human mind with the animal one so as to demote the former, parallels the rationality of the animal behaviour with some insentient activities such as that of the creeping plants or even magnets and ascribes all these phenomena, including animal behaviour, to the “soul of the heaven”\(^\text{414}\). In so doing, Plethon secured a good position for human reason against those late Byzantine thinkers who repudiated it.

3.2. Plethon elitist: the ‘*humana conditio*’

Yet, interestingly enough, Plethon also adopted Aquinas’ (Maimonidean in origin, albeit partially different in tone) doctrine of the ‘*causae erroris*’\(^\text{415}\) thereby drastically relativising the actual effectiveness of the average person’s activation of their minds and establishing the right of a minority of sages to rule the ignorant mass in terms of their having access to knowledge\(^\text{416}\). Plethon held an elitist, totalitarian view of the possibility of man to gain knowledge, exert morality and reach a sane political situation. After all, this accorded with his declared predilection for Plato. Thus, both of the tasks pertaining to the ‘*ratio*’ as described above (pp. 29–30) are explicitly supposed to be carried out not by the ‘*profanum vulgus*’ but by the sages. This idea, for all its partly Thomistic basis, is not found in Demetrios Cydones’ views of man’s ability to reach truth.

‘Thomas Byzantinus’ entered the Byzantine world with the development of two broad trends: ‘Hellenically-’ and spiritually-orientated forms of Christianity, which are traditionally called ‘humanism’ and ‘Palamism’. ‘Thomas Byzantinus’ contributed to making explicit a central issue debated by these trends, i.e. the ‘dignity of man’. Thomas’ doctrine represents a ‘via media’ with regard to this issue and its epistemological potential. By including both traditional Christian fideism and the high 13th-century scholastic admiration of reason, it could in principle reinforce both camps. Yet, Thomas’ view of human nature emphasized its fundamentally composite character, which he deemed to be damaged by original sin only insofar as morality was concerned. Combined with the technique of the Latin *quaestio*, which produced deep admiration in his Byzantine readers

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\(^{414}\) George Gemistos – Plethon, Laws II,26 (nt. 397), 80,5–81,12.


\(^{416}\) Demetracopoulos, Plethon (nt. 3), 90–96; id., Georgios Gemistos-Plethon’s (nt. 3), 321–323.
almost akin to a culture shock, this made him appear to support the high dignity of
man and his cognitive powers. The result was that the ‘Thomas Byzantinus’,
was thought compatible – fairly or not – with the humanists rather than the Pala-
mites, save for the specific issue of the metaphysical distinction between God’s
‘essence’ and ‘energies’. He was therefore seen to correspond perfectly with
ancient Greek philosophy, which in turn fitted with the ‘Hellenic’ aspect of the
humanist trend.