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A lecture delivered in 2006 by pope Benedict XVI at the University of Regensburg\(^1\) became famous because of a reference of the speaker to the allegedly different ways Christians and Muslims were supposed to view the duty of propagating religious faith. A passage from the Byzantine emperor (1391-1425) Manuel II Palaiologos’ (1350-1425) *Dialogue With a Certain Persian, Who Held the Office of Muterizes, in Ankara of Galatia* (Μανουήλ Παλαιολόγου διάλογος, ὃν ἐποιήσατο μετὰ τίνος Πέρσου τὴν ἄξιαν Μουτερίζη ἐν Ἁγκύρᾳ τῆς Γαλατίας) (*paulo ante* 1400\(^2\)) was quoted, where Muslims from their very appear-

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\(^2\) The discussion took place in the winter of 1390/91 or in the subsequent one (most probably, in December 1391) and was transformed into a literary piece in 1392/93 or, the latest, during the same decade of the century (on this see E. Trapp, *Manuel II. Palaiologos. Dialoge mit einem "Perser"* (“Wiener byzantinistische Studien”, II), Wien, 1966, p. 54*; ed. T. Khoury, *Manuel II Paléologue. Entretiens avec un musulman. 7e controverse. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes* (“Sources chrétiennes”, 115), Paris, 1966, pp. 23-28, esp. pp. 27-28).
ance on earth up to that time were accused of regarding violence against “non-believers” as a legitimate means of disseminating their faith. In contrast, it was held by an appeal to some of Palaiologos’ statements on the rational character of Christian morality (an appeal that also made Palaiologos’ text famous for a while), Christianity excluded violence against other religions from its mentality, partly because, having been blessedly cultivated from almost its very beginnings within a culture imbued with the «Hellenic (i.e. the Greek philosophical) spirit», accepted «reason» («λόγος») as a substantial criterion for judging the morality of human acts, religious behaviour included, and regarded God’s will and His commandments as e limine in conformity with reason.

It is not my intention, of course, to be entangled in any inter-religious discussion (which may have been the aim of the Pope’s reference to Manuel II, as the very date of the lecture suggests). Instead, I would like to comment on the validity of the scholarly material that formed the background to the way Palaiologos’ text was used in that lecture.

Presenting the Christian notion of God as having been positively influenced by the rational element of “Hellenic” thought and, therefore, as being, from this point of view, superior to the concept of God occurring in other, purely ‘Oriental’, religions, can in principle be argued on more solid, more evident and more recognizable grounds. One might, for example, refer to the direct and indirect contribution of Middle Platonism and Stoicism to the formation of the Patristic notion of God, or to the way Medieval Christian theology came to terms with...

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Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophical theology and offered a repertoire of highly elaborated answers to fundamental philosophical questions. As for showing Christianity’s aversion to religious violence, (Das Wesen des Christentums). Lectures Delivered in the University of Berlin during the Winter-Term 1899-1900. Translated by T.B. Saunders. Second Edition Revised, New York, 1908 (1901), Lecture XI, pp. 214-224; see also his Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, Band I, Tübingen, 1931, p. 20; cf. the monograph of E.P. Meijering: Die Hellenisierung des Christentums im Urteil Adolf von Harnack, Amsterdam, 1985, as well as E. Peroli’s remarks in his «Saggio integrativo» to: C. de Vogel, Platonismo e cristianesimo: antagonismo o comuni fondamenti? Introduzione G. Reale. Traduzione E. Peroli, Milano, 1993, pp. 107-110), which is explicitly rejected in the Pope’s lecture («“Der Vernunft…», in: Benedict XVI, Gott und die Vernunft... (cf. supra, n. 1), pp. 132-133; cf. J. Ratzinger (Benedict XVI), Glaube – Wahrheit – Toleranz. Das Christentum und die Weltreligionen, Freiburg / Basel / Wien, 2003 (2005), pp. 74-78). Incidentally, it should be added that, though Harnack’s conception of the relation between Christianity and Hellenism is nowadays all but at the peak of its influence (partly because Harnack was a Lutheran and partly because he stated the fact in a peculiar way), the fact remains that he contributed a good deal to the understanding of one of the peculiarities of Christian religion, i.e. its being strongly influenced by Greek philosophy and expressing itself at the theoretical level by creating a new speculative branch, namely, theology. Needless to say, however, great conceptions are often doomed to oblivion (ne dicam repudiation), if they clash with well-established bias. Even É. Gilson, who fervently stressed the Greek spirit of Christian thought (see next note), felt the need to explicitly warn his reader against mistaking his views as akin to those of Harnack (see É. Gilson, History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages, London, 1955 (1989), pp. 5-6).

This was the way É. Gilson conceived of the contribution of Christianity (especially of Western Medieval Christianity) to the history of philosophy (see, e.g., the first, second and last chapter of his breaking-through book L’esprit de la philosophie médiévale, Paris, 1932, pp. 1-44; 203-226). Gilson went as far as to say that Christian thinkers not only produced innovative answers to old questions but also introduced new problems into the history of philosophy (see, e.g., his God and Philosophy, Yale U.P., 1967 (1941), pp. 39-43). He also stressed that the Catholic (Scholastic) concept of the lumen naturale, in contrast with the principal trends of Protestantism, which
one might pick out some Patristic passages where religious and, more generally, ideological violence is emphatically repudiated, as a rule, in the name of the most fundamental Christian virtue, namely, love.\(^5\)

regarded human nature denigrated by original sin, contains an anthropology ideally apt for the development of philosophy (see especially his: Christianisme et philosophie, Paris, 1949, pp. 18-42; 75-104). Yet declared followers of Gilson’s historiography are not as many today as to allow for an easy appeal to it. Furthermore, positively presenting Western Medieval thought as the peak of Christian rationality comprises de facto what many Catholic historians of Medieval philosophy and theology have described as «the decline of Scholasticism» (see, e.g., G. Fritz / A. Michel, «Scolastique», in: Dictionnaire de théologie catholique 14/2, Paris, 1941, cols. 1691-1728; see esp. cols. 1709-1711: «Scolastique occidentale, la décadence»), i.e. the implicitly or explicitly anti-Thomist theology of John Duns Scotus and William Ockham (whose concept of the «potentia Dei absoluta» is explicitly repudiated in the Pope’s lecture, because it borders on ‘the’ Muslim doctrine of God as being as supreme as not to be bounded by any sort of rules, either rational or moral).

5 See, e.g., Gregory Nazianzen’s Oratio V (Contra Julianum imperatorem II), 37 (PG 35: 712C-713B) and John Chrysostom’s De Babyla contra Julianum et gentiles 13 (ed. M. Schatkin, Critical Edition of, and Introduction to, St. John Chrysostom’s “De sancto Babyla, contra Iulianum et gentiles” (Doct. Diss., Fordham University, 1967 = PG 50: 537). On the other hand, however, some opposite Patristic passages do exist, especially with regard to heretics; see, e.g., Cyril of Jerusalem’s Catecheses VI,20 and 36 (edd. W.C. Reischl / J. Rupp, Cyrilli Hierosolymorum archiepiscopi opera que supersunt omnia, Vol. I, München, 1848, repr. Hildesheim, 1967, pp. 182 and 202: «Hate all heretics… Hate those also who have ever been suspected in such matters…»; C.G. Browne / J.E. Swallow, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second Series. Translated into English with Prolegomena and Explanatory Notes. Volume 7: S. Cyril of Jerusalem, S. Gregory Nazianzen, New York, 1893, pp. 172; 179). These two conflicting traditions did coexist within Christianity (a collection of telling passages on both sides is available in the first part of the old but useful entry «Inquisition» by J. Blötzer in the Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. VIII, New York, 1910). Although neither the former nor the latter was introduced to the history of religious attitudes by Christians, there is, I think, no historically legitimate way to get rid of the one in preference to the other and present Christianity as by nature more tolerant
Finding out the *causa principalis* of overlooking all this well-known (and well-worn) material and using a specific passage from a Byzantine text dating from approximately 1400 as a means of extolling the allegedly «rational» and sober *mentalité* of Christianity and juxtaposing it with Islam⁶ lies beyond my scope. Instead, I would like to shed some
light on a *causa adjuvans* or *concomitans* of this choice, namely, the specific edition of Palaiologos’ text, that by T. Khoury. As I shall argue, Khoury’s comment on the passage in question in his fragmentary and provisional edition lacked some important evidence on Palaiologos’ sources; furthermore, it was dominated by some bias that lead the reader astray from doing justice to the sense of the text it was intended to explain.

1. Palaiologos’ arguments for the irrationality of religious violence

1.1. Content and sources

The passage in question forms part of Palaiologos’ attack on the quality of Mohammed as a «legislator» (i.e. as a founder of a religious id., «Islamic and Non-Islamic Origins of Mu’tazilite Ethical Rationalism», *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7, 1976, pp. 59-87).


moral code). This quality is ranked low, because Mohammed is deemed as heavily dependent upon Jewish (and, to some restricted extent, Christian) moral laws, to which he had only bad commands to add, such as killing for faith’s sake. Spreading faith by means of violence, Palaiologos strongly objects, is «utterly absurd» («ἀτοπώτατον») for two reasons:

\[ \text{ὅτι τε (1) Θεός οὐκ οἶδεν αἵμασι χαίρειν καὶ (2) τὸ μὴ σὺν λόγῳ ποιεῖν ἀλλότριον Θεοῦ.}^{10} \]

(first, because God has no taste for blood; and second, because acting irrationally is not in accordance with how God would like us to act).

The central idea of this argument also occurs in one of Palaiologos’ epistles, where Muslims are described as not only «βαρβαροὶ... καὶ ἄμαθεῖς» («barbaric and ignorant») but also «τρυφώντες αἵμασι καὶ σφαγαῖς» («delighted in bloodshed and massacre»).^{11}

1.1.1. 1st argument

The first argument must not be anachronistically mistaken for having a humanist air. In all probability, its direct source is Gregory Nazianzen’s well-known rhetorical question in his famous Oration XLV (In Sanctum Pascha), 22:

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10 Ed. E. Trapp, Manuel II. Palaiologos... (cf. supra, n. 2), p. 79,9-10 (= ed. T. Khoury, Manuel II Paléologue... (cf. supra, n. 2), p. 144,6-7).

11 Manuel II Palaiologos, Epistle XXXI, ll. 88-93 (ed. G.T. Dennis, The Letters of Manuel II Palaiologos (“Corpus fontium historiæ Byzantinæ. Series Washingtonensis”, 8), Washington, D.C., 1977, p. 85). In Byzantine theology, a trend of toleration of religious ‘otherness’ is discernible, whose main point is summarized by Theodoros Studites in his Epistle 455 (ed. G. Fatouros, Theodori Studitæ Epistulae, Vol. II (“Corpus fontium historiæ Byzantinæ. Series Berolinensis”, 31), Berlin, 1992, pp. 644-647 = PG 99: 1481C-1485D), who cites some relevant passages from John Chrysostom, pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite etc. This toleration, however, is not applied to the enemies of Christianity (who are supposed to be constantly repelled if attacking “the people of God”), but only to heretics. In this context it is said that «God was not delighted» («οὐκ ἢρέασθη Θεὸς»; Epistle 455, l. 86; ed. G. Fatouros, op. cit., p. 647 = PG 99: 1485D) in an act of suppression of some heretics by the secular branch of Byzantine theocracy in Studites’ time.
Pope Benedict XVI and Manuel II Palaiologos

Τίς ὁ λόγος Μονογενοῦς αἶμα τέρπειν Πατέρα...,\(^{12}\)

("On what principle would the blood of His Only-Begotten Son delight the Father...?"")\(^{13}\).

Of course, Gregory’s statement is made in a Christological context; it aims at refuting a long since established dispensational doctrine (that of the devil’s “rights” over the lapsed human race and the consequent need for a “redemption” in the literal sense of the word). Still, there is a properly theological basis for this statement: God the Father cannot gain any delight from human blood, either of His Son (as is stated in Gregory’s sentence just quoted) or anybody at all (as Gregory holds in the sequel of this sentence\(^{14}\)). Furthermore, the verbal similarity between the two passages is striking; and it is more than probable that Palaiologos had read such a famous oration by one of the most favourite Fathers of the Church in Byzantium, many orations of whose were, indeed, used by him in this Dialogue.\(^{15}\)

Apart from this, another Christian theological text –this time a Latin one translated into Greek in Palaiologos’ time– seems to present itself as a parallel implicit source of Palaiologos’ argument: the Cur Deus homo (1095-98) of Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) ("the most influential soteriological work in the Roman Catholic Church") after St. Paul’s Epistles\(^{16}\), which was translated by Manuel Calecas (ob. 1410).

\(^{12}\) PG 36: 653B.


\(^{14}\) «...δὲς οὐδὲ τὸν Ἰσαὰκ ἔδέξατο παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς προσφερόμενον, ἀλλ’ ἀντιπλάξατο τὴν θυσίαν, κριὸν ἀντιδοῦς τοῦ λογικοῦ θύματος» (PG 36: 653B; "...who did not receive even Isaac, when he was being offered by his father, but changed the sacrifice, putting a ram in the place of the human victim?"); translation, slightly changed, by C.G. Browne / J.E. Swallow, ibid.).

\(^{15}\) Orations XXV, XXIX, XXX, XXXI, XXXVIII, XL, XLI, XLII, and XLIII (see the Index fontium in E. Trapp’s edition (Manuel II. Palaiologos... (cf. supra, n. 2), pp. 305-306).

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The translation is still unedited; since, however, I am preparing an edition of it, when I read Palaiologos’ text the relevant passage (from I,10) came to mind:

Θαυμαστῶν γὰρ εἰ οὕτως ὁ Θεὸς ἐπὶ δικαίου αἴματι τέρπεται ἃ τοῦτο δεῖται, ὡς μὴ τοῦ δικαίου τοῦτου (sc. Christ) σφαγέντος σὺν ἀν τῶν ἀνθρώπων φείσασθαι βουληθήναι ἃ δυνηθήναι.17

17 Vat. Gr. 609, f. 89r («Mirum enim est, si Deus sic delectatur aut eget sanguine innocentis, ut non nisi eo interfecto parercce velit aut possit nocentio»; ed. F.S. Schmitt, Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi opera omnia, Vol. II, Romæ / Edinburgi, 1946, p. 66,24-26). (My very study of Palaiologos’ text was the result of my research into the influence of Calecas’ translation of the Cur Deus homo on Late Byzantine literature, especially on its polemic-apologetic pieces.) Anselm’s passage sounds as an echo of Augustine’s De Trinitate XIII,11,15 (edd. W.J. Mountain / F. Glorie, Sancti Aurelii Augustini De Trinitate libri XV. Tomus II: libri XIII-XV (”CSEL”, LA), Turnholti, 1968, pp. 401-402). As has been recently shown, Anselm’s process in the Cur Deus homo follows the main patterns of Augustine’s De Trinitate XIII (see F. Van Fleteren, «Traces of Augustine’s De Trinitate XIII in Anselm’s Cur Deus Homo», in: P. Gilbert / H. Kohlenberger / E. Salmann (eds.), Cur Deus Homo. Roma, 21-23 maggio 1998 (”Studia Anselmiana”, 118), Rome, 1999, pp. 165-178; see. esp. 177). As is known, however, Anselm sets this idea in a context of his own, aimed at contrasting with Augustine’s subscription to the doctrine of the devil’s rights over the post-lapsarian human race (see, e.g., R.W. Southern, St. Anselm. A Portrait in a Landscape, Cambridge U.P., 1991, pp. 203-205; Saint Anselm and His Biographer: A Study of Monastic Life and Thought 1050 – c. 1130, Cambridge U.P., 1963, pp. 87; 357-361). Thanks to Maximus Planudes’ translation (1281), Augustine’s text was available to Palaiologos (edd. M. Paphathomopoulos / I. Tsavari / G. Rigotti, Ἀγούστινου Περὶ Τριάδος βιβλία πεντεκαίδεκα, ἀπερ ἐκ τῆς Λατίνων διαλέκτου εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα μετήνυμγε Μάξιμου ὁ Πλανούντης. Εἰσαγωγή, ἐλληνικὸ καὶ λατινικὸ κείμενο, γλωσσάριο, Vol. II, Athens, 1995, p. 735: «Ἄρα γὰρ ὄργιζόμενος ἦμιν ὁ Θεὸς καὶ Πατήρ εἶδε τὸν ὑπὲρ ἦμων τοῦ Ὑιοῦ αὐτοῦ θάνατον καὶ καταληκά ἦμιν; ... ὁ δὲ Πατήρ... μέχρι τοσοῦτον ἔτι ὑγρίζετο, ὡς εἰ μὴ ὁ Υἱὸς ὑπὲρ ἦμων ἀποθάνη, μὴ καταληκάνην;»), as to any Late Byzantine author, several of whom (from the late 13th century up to the very last years of the Byzantine era) were influenced by it, since he was regarded as one of the great Fathers of the golden age of Patristic thought (see
(«For it is a surprising supposition that God takes delight in, or is in need of, the blood of an innocent man, so as to be unwilling to or unable to spare the guilty except in the event that the innocent has been killed»).\textsuperscript{18}

Once more, the context is not exactly the same; yet the similarity between the Anselmian passage from Calecas’ translation and Palaiologos’ sentence under discussion is more than striking. And having access to Calecas’ translation was in principle just as easy for Palaiologos, since he had been taught by\textsuperscript{19} – and, later on, he had taken as a close collaborator of his\textsuperscript{20} – the intellectual whom the translator explicitly recognized as his mentor\textsuperscript{21}, i.e. Demetrios Cydones (1324/25 – 1397). Furthermore, Calecas had contacted Palaiologos through several letters.\textsuperscript{22} So it is not strange at all that Palaiologos seems to have used Calecas’ translation of Anselm’s \textit{Cur Deus homo} some times in his \textit{Dialogue}.\textsuperscript{23} And, in fact, he was not the first to do so. Apart from

\begin{itemize}
\item See, Manuel’s numerous and intimate letters to him (N° 3-5, 8, 10-12, 14, 16, 19-23, 25, 26, 29, 31, 36, and 64 (cf. G.T. Dennis, \textit{The Letters...} (cf. supra, n. 11), pp. xxxix-xl).
\item \textit{Epistles} 14; 20; 34; 39; 47; 71; 87 (ed. R.-J. Loenertz, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 186-187; 200-201; 213-216; 222-223; 233-234; 267-268; 303-304).
\end{itemize}
the life-long friend of Cydones, namely, Nicholas Cabasilas (1319/23 – post 1391), who in his masterpiece, the De vita in Christo, and in some of his Orations relied heavily on it.\(^{24}\) Emperor (1347-54) John VI Cantacouzenos (ca. 1292 – 1383) did the same when writing his Adversus
Judeos.\textsuperscript{25} No doubt, Manuel was familiar with Cantacouzenos’ works. Apart from the fact that Cantacouzenos was his grandfather, Manuel mentions explicitly John VI’s apologetic work against the Muslims\textsuperscript{26} in the Proœmium of his Dialogue\textsuperscript{27}. Apparently, the Cur Deus homo was attractive for any Christian author of apologetic works against Islam or Judaism; for it is a dialogue between its Christian author and one of his Christian disciples, Boso, who stands as the \textit{persona} of the «infidelis» (i.e. of a Jew or a Muslim) and refuses to be converted to Christianity unless strong, purely rational proofs for Christian dogmas (especially for Incarnation) are offered to him.

1.1.2. 2\textsuperscript{nd} argument

The second of Palaiologos’ arguments against religious violence seems to come from the Cur Deus homo (I,8), too. An idea permeating this text throughout is that God, be «His ways» as «incomprehensible» (Rom. 11,33) as they may, never acts irrationally:

\begin{quote}
'\(\text{H γὰρ τοῦ Θεοῦ θέλησις ἀλογος οὐκ ἐστὶ.}\)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{25} Ed. Ch. G. Soteropoulos, \textit{Ιωάννου ΣΤ’ Καντακουζηνοῦ Κατὰ Ἰουδαίων λόγοι ἐννέα τὸ πρῶτον νῦν ἐκδιδόμενοι. Εἰσαγωγή, κείμενον, σχόλια}, Athens, 1990 (text written probably in 1371/73; see Ch. G. Soteropoulos, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 15-16). Cf., e.g., John VI Cantacouzenos, \textit{Contra Judeos} IV,364-368 and VII,124-135 (ed. Ch. G. Soteropoulos, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 139-140 and 178) ad Cur Deus homo II,11 (\textit{Vat. Gr. 609}, ff. 101\textsuperscript{v}-102\textsuperscript{r}).

\textsuperscript{26} PG 154: 371-692.


\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Vat. Gr. 609}, f. 86\textsuperscript{r} («Voluntas namque Dei numquam est irrationabilis»; ed. F.S. Schmitt, \textit{Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi...} (cf. \textit{supra}, n. 17), p. 59,11). In so stating Anselm apparently implies the mature Scholastic distinction between “supra rationem” and “contra rationem”. However, as Hegel has rightly pointed out (G.W.F. Hegel, \textit{Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie. Dritter Band. Mit einem Vorwort von K.L. Michelet}, Stuttgart, 1928, pp. 162-169, esp. 163 and 169), this was not exactly what Anselm really meant; for, for him, all the \textit{rationes necessariae} are in principle
True, strictly speaking, Anselm is referring to the acts of God, whereas Palaiologos is primarily referring to human acts and their due conformity to divine law. Yet the emperor used a sentence more general than necessary for referring to human acts — a sentence that can be read as containing two propositions, a declared and an implied (but easy to grasp) one: i) human acts incompatible with reason are not approved by God (declaration); and ii) any act not being in accordance with reason does not fit with God’s nature; God’s commandments are, therefore, *e limine* reasonable (implication).

Finally, one of Palaiologos’ arguments against forced conversion is identical with Thomas Aquinas’ main argument against forcing men born in this or that religious community to become Christians. Palaiologos stresses that

\[ \text{ἡ πίστις ψυχῆς, οὗ σώματός ἐστι καρπός, καὶ δεῖ γε γλώττης ἁγαθῆς καὶ διανοίας ὅρθῆς τὸ πρός τὴν πίστιν ἐνάγοντι, οὐ βίας, οὐκ ἀπειλῆς, οὐ δάκνοντός τινος ἡ φρικώδους. ...Τὸ πείθειν ψυχὴν λογικὴν οὐ χειρός, οὐ μάστιγος, οὐδ’ οὕτινοισον ἐτέρου τῶν καὶ θάνατον ἀπειλοῦντον. Οὐκ ἀρα τίς ποτ’ ἀν φαίη, ἐθελοκακεῖν μὴ βουλόμενος, ἐπίταγμα ταῦτα εἶναι Θεοῦ.} \]

(Faith is a fruit not of body, but of soul; and he who would endeavour to lead somebody to faith needs skilfull language and right reasoning, not compulsion and threat… Convincing a rational soul is not a task to be carried out by means of hands and whip or by means of any other thing that may cause even death. Nobody, therefore, would ever claim —unless one is determined to speak wrongly— that such things are an order by God).

accessible to human reason, even though, for various reasons, it comes about that this or that man in this or that age of the development of Christianity fails to grasp many (or even most) of them (see the first lines of Anselm’s *Commendatio operis ad papam Urbanum II* (ed. F.S. Schmitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 39,2-40,12), where he justifies his very attempt at a rational approach to the mystery of Incarnation).

Likewise, Aquinas, while he regards even capital punishment as a legitimate means of defending faith against heresies and apostasy, in an article with the title «Should the infidels be compelled to the faith?» (in Demetrios Cydones’ translation, wherefrom Palaiologos could read Aquinas: «Εἴ τούτως (σε. τοὺς ἀπόστοτος) δεῖ βιάξεσθαι πρὸς τὴν πίστιν») states:

Τῶν ἀπίστων τινές [μέν] εἰσίν, οἳ μηδέποτε τὴν πίστιν ἐδέξαντο, ὡσπερ οἱ ἔθνικοι καὶ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι. Καὶ τούτοις οὐδαμῶς δεὶ πρὸς τὸ πιστεύειν βιὰν ἐπάγειν “τὸ γὰρ πιστεύειν τῆς θελήσεως ἐστὶν”.


32 Summa theologiae, IIa IIæ, qu. 10, art. 8.

33 IIa IIæ, 10,8, Resp.: «...Infidelium quidam sunt qui nunquam susceperunt fidem, sicut gentiles et Judaei. Et tales nullo modo sunt ad fidem compellendi, ut ipsi credant, quia credere voluntatis est» (G. Leontsinis / A. Glycophrydi-Leontsini (eds.), Δημητρίου Κυδώνη, Ὡῳμᾶ Άκουνάτου Σοῦμμα Θεολογική, ἔξελληνισθείσα, Vol. II,15 (“Corpus philosophorum Graecorum recentiorum”), Athens, 1976, p. 167,3-6). In this work (ibid., arg. 3) Palaiologos could also read an epitomizing of a relevant passage from Augustine: «"Αλλα δῶναται μὴ θέλων ὁ ἀνήρωπος, πιστεύειν δὲ μὴ θέλων ἀδόνατον» (Augustine, In Johannis Evangelium tractatus XXVI,2; PL 35: 1607: «Intrare quisquam ecclesiam potest nolens, accedere ad altare potest nolens, accipere Sacramentum potest nolens: credere non potest nisi volens. Si corpore crederetur, fieret in nolentibus: sed non corpore creditur. ... Sed nec debes vocare confitentem, quem judicas non credentem. Hoc est enim confiteri, dicere quod habes in corde; si autem aliud in corde habes, aliud dicas, loqueris, non confiteris»).

34a Editionis μέν (quod quonam modo insertum sit omnino nescio) eliminavi.

34b Ex editionis τούτων correxii (ἐπάγειν cum dativo personae) codicem Par. Gr. 1273 (f. 94-31) secutus.
(«Among unbelievers there are some who have never received the faith, such as heathens and Jews. These are by no means to be compelled, for “belief is voluntary”»).  

And he adds that the only acceptable motive for a Christian ruler to conquer a non-Christian territory is to defend, not expand Christianity and that, therefore, a Christian conqueror is not entitled to force non-believers to be converted:

...Pollékij oƒ pistôi toà Xristôu pólemon kata tà wv ápístovn kínovsin, súç ìna tòutòwv ánâgkáswsi déjassba tìn pístin (kai gàr kai níkìsantès aútwòs kai álìxmalòtouc labówntes oûdèn ëttovn ëp’ èkeínòis katalèîswsan, eì bòûlointo, pìsteúsai), álì ìna tòutòwv ánâgkáswsi tì tòv Xristôu pìstei mú ênòchleîn.  

(«Christ’s faithful often wage war on infidels, not indeed for the purpose of forcing them to believe, because even were they to conquer them and take them captive, they should still leave them free to believe or not, but for the purpose of stopping them obstructing the faith of Christ»).


37 Th. Gilby, ibid. (cf. supra, n. 35). As Ch. Dendrinos has shown («Co-operation and Friendship among Byzantine Scholars in the Circle of Manuel II Palaiologus (1391-1425) as Reflected in Their Autograph Manuscripts», http://www.mml.cam.ac.uk/greek/grammarofmedievalgreek/unlocking/Dendrinos.pdf), Palaiologos was a close friend of Macarios Makres (1382-1431), with whom he co-operated for the composition of some of his writings. Now, as is known, Makres had used Aquinas in his anti-Islamic polemics (A. Argyriou, Macaire Makrès et la polémique contre l’Islam (“Studi e Testi”, 314), Città del Vaticano, 1986, pp. 86-94 and 309-326; cf. H.C. Barbour, The Byzantine...
1.2. Reason-based vs. revelation-based morality: an assessment of T. Khoury’s approach to Palaiologos’ arguments

1.2.1. The apparently ‘rational’ character of Christian morality in Dialogue VII

The conclusion therefore presents itself that accounting for the theological grounds of Palaiologos’ anti-violence statement in terms of his being «nourri de la philosophie grecque», as T. Khoury suggested four decades ago following, in all probability, an obsolete remark by C.B. Hase, is not only vague (which philosophical trend are we presumably

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T. Khoury, Manuel II Paléologue... (cf. supra, n. 2), p. 144, note 1.

From Hase’s old preface to the earliest (partial) edition of Palaiologos’ text («Notice d’un ouvrage...» (cf. supra, n. 8), col. 123): «il fait voir que le christianisme enseigne à cultiver sa raison, à modérer ses désirs, à vaincre ses passions, à persuader avec douceur...» (with regard to the content of the 7th discussion). — Incidentally, E. Trapp’s suggestion (Manuel II. Palaiologos... (cf. supra, n. 2), p. 79, ad ll. 5 sqq.; cf. K. Förstel, Manuel II. Palaiologos... (cf. supra, n. 27), p. 376, note 5) to see in a passage from Demetrios Cydones’ translation of Riccoldo da Montecroce’s (1243-1320) Contra legem Saracenorum (6; PG 154: 1068A) as well as in a passage from John VI Cantacouzenos’ Contra Mahometem apologia (IV,4-5; PG 154: 544A-D) the source of Palaiologos’ passage holds true for some other points of the entire paragraph of Palaiologos’ text, but not for the specific one under discussion. Apart from this suggestion, the most close passage from Cydones’ translation to that of Palaiologos is the following: «Αλλά ἄτοπον φονεύεσθαι διὰ τὸ μὴ δύνασθαι [sc. τὰ ὀρθὰ φρονεῖν] ὡς καὶ δυναμένους οὐ προσήκον ἦν ἀναγκάζεσθαι, διὰ τὸ μὴ ἀρέσκειν τῷ Θεῷ τὴν κατηγαγοσμένην λατρείαν» (Contra legem Saracenorum 8; PG 154: 1080C). Contra T.
meant to think of as having influenced him?\textsuperscript{40} and inaccurate (even in Palaiologan times, ancient Greek philosophy was less influential on Byzantine authors than Christian religion and theology) but also misleading. Rather, a Church Father of the 4\textsuperscript{th} century well-known in the Byzantine world\textsuperscript{41} and a prominent theologian of the 11\textsuperscript{th} century, Khoury, who estimates that «Manuel... se defend de lui [sc. Riccoldo] faire des emprunts directs quelque peu importants», because he did not share his tutor’s admiration for «Western theology» (who, nevertheless, kindly sent him this translation along with a covering letter; see T. Khoury, \textit{Manuel II Paléologue...} (cf. \textit{supra}, n. 2), p. 16; ed. R.-J. Loenertz, \textit{Démétrius Cydonès. Correspondance. Vol. II} (“Studi e Testi”, 208), Città del Vaticano, 1960, pp. 258-259; cf. J.-M. Merigoux, «L’ouvrage d’un frère Prêcheur florentin en Orient à la fin du XIII\textsuperscript{e} siècle: le \textit{Contra legem Sarracenorum} de Riccoldo da Monte di Croce», in: \textit{Memorie Domenicane}, Pistoia, 1986, pp. 1-144, esp. 52) and does not point out any case of Palaiologos’ dependence on Riccoldo at all, E. Trapp (\textit{op. cit.}, p. 305, s.v. «Cydones») has shown that Palaiologos had read and used this translation (see E. Voordeckers, «Les \textit{Entretiens avec un Perse} de l’empereur Manuel Paléologue (à propos de deux éditions récentes)», \textit{Byzantion} 36/1, 1966, pp. 311-317, esp. pp. 316-317), and so we can be sure that he knew this passage. Its similarity, however, with Palaiologos’ passage is not as close as to suggest that the former was the source of the latter. – Riccoldo’s original text was edited by J.-M. Merigoux (\textit{art. cit.;} cf. id., «Riccoldo da Monte di Croce», in: \textit{Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique} 13, Paris, 1988, cols. 554-556). The Latin text that accompanies Cydones’ translation in PG 154 is a Renaissance translation of Cydones’ version by Bartholomæus Picenus de Montearduo, which accompanied the Greek translation in its \textit{editio princeps} (Basel, 1543) (see the dedicatory epistle of Bartholomæus in PG 154: 1035-1036; cf. P. Mandonnet, «Fra Ricoldo de Monte Croce, pélerin en Terre sainte et missionnaire en Orient», \textit{Revue Biblique} 2, 1893, pp. 44-61, 182-202 and 584-607, esp. pp. 597-600; A. Dondaine, «Ricoldiana. Notes sur les œuvres de Riccoldo da Montecroce», \textit{Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum} 37, 1967, pp. 119-179, esp. p. 145).

\textsuperscript{40} Cf. Khoury’s vague description of the revival of the Byzantine’s interest in «Hellenism» in the Introduction to his edition (\textit{Manuel II Paléologue...} (cf. \textit{supra}, n. 2), pp. 13-16; 17).

\textsuperscript{41} See G. Podskalsky, \textit{Theologie und Philosophie in Byanz. Der Streit um die theologische Methodik in der späthistorischen Geistesgeschichte} (14./15.
both of whose texts were available to our author, suffice for that. Even Anselm’s high appraisal of the *ratio* and his correlate idea of using it as an apt means for establishing Christian dogmas had not, of course, as a *causa principalis* any conditioning by Greek philosophy whatsoever; this appraisal was for him the basis of the methodological axiom (*sola ratione*) of his own apologetic strategy against the «non-believers» («infideles») of his time (atheists, Jews and Muslims included).

1.2.2. The strikingly ‘revelational’ character of Christian morality in Dialogue VIII

Regardless, however, of the non-philosophical character of Anselm’s apologetic programme, it has been plausibly argued that his conception of the principles of morality stands as an exceptional Medieval case of elaboration of a deontological moral theory, which was the result of seriously thinking about the old Socratic question of whether an action of cult is good because it conforms with God’s will or *vice versa*, and that Anselm argued for the latter. Was Palaiologos aware of the fact that, borrowing Anselm’s idea of the intrinsic rationality of God’s acts and commands, he declared *de facto* an adherence to a specific theory of the principles of morality? No. Such an optimistic reading of his passage under discussion collapses in view

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Jh.), seine systematischen Grundlagen und seine historische Entwicklung, München, 1977, p. 60.

42 To confine myself to just one of the illuminating studies of this topic, see J. Gauss, «Anselm von Canterbury. Zur Begegnung und Auseinandersezung der Religionen», *Sæculum* 17, 1966, pp. 277-363.


of several explicit statements that occur elsewhere in his text. Rather unfortunately for anybody reading the passage on the basis of Khoury’s partial edition of Palaiologos’ work (only the 7th discussion – out of 26 of the work is available in it\textsuperscript{45}), these statements occur in some of the other discussions. In the concluding part of the preceding one, that is just a few pages before the passage in question, Palaiologos makes a declaration that, according to Khoury’s sharp distinction between reason-based Christian morality and revelation-based irrational Muslim morality, should be regarded as falling under the latter rubrique:

\begin{quote}
Ἀνθρώπων γὰρ τι δοκούντων πράττειν ἀδέμιταν καὶ τῶν ὀρθῶν λογισμῶν ἀλλότριον, εἰ μὲν θεοθεν τοῦτό ἀυτοῦ ἐστιν ἐπιτεταχμένον, ἀριθμὸς ἀγαθὸν, ἀγαθὸς δὲ καὶ ὁ πράττων, μῆτε θυμῷ νικώμενος μῆτε ἐπιθυμία δουλεύων, ἀλλὰ τῶν προστηταχοτὶ Θεῷ. ... Οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν, οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκεῖθεν (sc. from God) οὐδὲ ὑστόν, ὅ γε μὴ σφόδρα καλὸν, οὐδὲ Θεὸν προστάγμασιν ὑπηρετείν καὶ μὴ πράττειν ὀσία πάντων ἑνεκα, κἂν δὲν πάσαν καταστρέψαι τὴν γῆν, κἂν ἀποσφάξαι ἄπαντας καὶ ταύτῃ γε τὰς χεῖρας αἰμάξαι. Εἰ δὲ τὸ πράγμα μὲν οὐ καλὸν καθ’ ἑαυτὸ φαίνοιτο, ἡμῖν δὲ τέως ἀμφισβητήσιμον γένοιτο, πότερον θεοθέν ἔχων ὁ ποιῶν τούτῳ ταχύτατον ἢ οὐκ ἐκοθὲν κινούμενος ποιεῖ, εἰ μὲν τοῦ ποιῶτος βίου θεοφιλῆς καὶ ἄμεμπτος, οὐ δὲ κλονεῖθαι τούς λογισμούς, οἴτινες τούτων <τοιούτων>\textsuperscript{46} ἐπίσταντο· εἰ δὲ μοχθηρός ἐστὶ φανερῶς, τὴν ἐναντίαν πάντως περὶ αὐτοῦ πάντες ψήφον ἐξοίσουσι. Κακὸν γὰρ δὴ πεπραγμένον, οἶς ὁ βίος ὄλος ἄνοσίας, πᾶς ἂν νομισθεῖ καλὸν καὶ θεοφιλῆς;\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quote}

(In the case that some people seem to do something immoral and alien to the dictates of right reasoning, if what they do has been commanded to them by God, then it is plainly good, and its doer as well, since he is paying service not to his own anger or desire [i.e. to the two irrational faculties of his soul],

\textsuperscript{45} Of course, the Pope was not alone in having taken just a hasty glance at the passage under discussion and overlooked the rest of Palaiologos’ work; in the Byzantine section of the library of the Department of Ancient Literature of the University of Cologne, where it came out that I read this work for the last time, I found the copy of Khoury’s edition cut only at the pages of the passages rendered famous by the pope’s lecture.

\textsuperscript{46} Pronomen conjiciendo addidi, ut sensui sententiae integritatem præbeam. Pronomen ob similitudinem suam pronomini præposito a scribis omissum esse et ideo decidisse potest.

\textsuperscript{47} Ed. E. Trapp, Manuel II. Palaiologos… (cf. supra, n. 2), pp. 74,29-75,2 (the arguments ends up to 75,7 without any further clarification).
but to God, Who commanded him to do so. ... Nothing, absolutely nothing at all springs from God without being for certain nothing but good; and there is no way to act nefariously by serving God’s commands, whatever the command may be – even to destroy the earth in its entirety, even to slaughter everybody on it and thus put one’s hands in the midst of blood. In the case, however, that the act under examination appears, considered per se, not good, we must immediately scrutinize whether he who executes the [really or allegedly divine] command has really received an order from God or he does so sua sponte; and if there results that his life is one that pleases God and is irreproachable, we need not shake our thoughts, according to which he is indeed ordered by God to do what he does; if, on the contrary, there results that he is plainly an evil man, all will definitely vote for the contrary.\(^{48}\) For how an evil deed acted by some whose lifes are full of impious acts would be deemed good and pleasant to God?).

To establish this position, Palaiologos sets forth the instances of Samuel’s cold-blood killing of an enemy of Israel\(^ {49}\) and Osee’s copulation and marriage with a prostitute\(^ {50}\) as actions that, though intrinsically bad, turned into good because they were God-ordained and done by such eminently moral men as the prophets of the Old Testament. Let us recall that this was Muterizes’\(^{51}\) line of argumentation for the morality of some intrinsically bad actions of Mohammed in the 6\(^{th}\) discussion.\(^ {52}\)

\(^{48}\) I.e. that he is not really authorized by God to break a generally established moral rule, but he in fact wants to break it on his own profit.

\(^{49}\) I Reg. 15,32-33.

\(^{50}\) Os. 1,2-8; 3,1-3. Cf. Thomas Aquinas’ comment on Osee’s action: «…quod homo facit ex voluntate Dei, eius præcepto obediens, non est contra rationem rectam, quamvis videatur esse contra communem ordinem rationis» (\textit{Summa theologiae} II\(^{a}\) II\(^{æ}\), 154,2 ad 2). In Cydones’ translation, available to Palaiologos, the passage reads: «...Óper ἀν ὁ ἀνθρωπός κατὰ τὴν ἐντολὴν καὶ τὴν θέλησιν ποιήσει [ἀν ποιήσῃ!] τοῦ Θεοῦ, οὐκ ἔστιν ἐναντίον τῷ ὀρθῷ λόγῳ, εἰ καὶ πολλάκις δοκεῖ ἐναντίον εἶναι τῇ κοινῇ τάξει τοῦ νόμου» (cod. Par. Gr. 1237, f. 217’).


The reason why Palaiologos adopts this position must be examined in the context of its formulation. The passage just cited is Palaiologos’ improved version of the statement of the same idea by his Muslim interlocutor, who, in order to defend the morality of Mohammed against Palaiologos’ long list of every sort of awful and base acts Mohammed has been reported to have committed,\(^{53}\) claimed that «an act should be judged as good or bad not on the basis of its nature but according to the intention of the person who commits it».\(^{54}\) Palaiologos had no reason to object to this shift of the basis for judging morality; after all, the shift was profitable for him, too, since the typically immoral acts of many persons of the Old Testament “holy history” can be justified only by laying emphasis on the motive putting behind them (e.g., one’s wish to obey God). As for the issue at stake, Palaiologos says that, if one focuses on Mohammed’s case, one will realise that the evil deeds exceed so blatantly the good ones that nobody would pass him for a man of good intentions and thus release him from the accusation of having perpetrated grave crimes against others’ lives, honour, property etc. as well as having insulted his own dignity.

In contrast, in the 7\(^{th}\) discussion, a rationalist-objectivist ethical doctrine of how good and evil should be defined is set forth, which, as it served well Manuel’s current purpose, namely, repudiating the “holy war” of the Muslims, is promptly appealed to. The fact that Manuel, in so doing, stands at odds with what he himself had admitted in the former discussion does not trouble him at all. Rather, he loves flattering himself for never missing the line of the discussion\(^{55}\) and accuses his interlocutor from time to time of proving unable to do the same.\(^{56}\) And,


\(^{55}\) Ed. E. Trapp, *op. cit.*, p. 75,14 et al.

\(^{56}\) See, e.g., his bitter remark: «Οὐδὲ γὰρ λεληθῶς πάντως εὐρίσκῃ ἄλλοτε ἄλλοτε ἄλλοτε ποι φερόμενος, ὅποι ἂν ἀγάγο τὸ ἰέμα τού τότε λόγου» («You are obviously seen to move in different directions at different times, namely to the direction the stream of our discussion happens each time to follow») (ed. E. Trapp, *Manuel II. Palaiologos...* (cf. *supra*, n. 2), p. 73,35-36; cf. pp. 74,4-8; 75,1-3). It is, therefore, difficult to share E. Voordecker’s flattering assessment: «Le ton engagé, qui anime son exposé sans nuire son objectivité...»
what is equally astonishing, the Muslim adversary fails to object to this policy by pointing out Manuel’s obviously opportunistic way mode of discussion.

Apparently, therefore, Manuel II Palaiologos had not formed any clear idea regarding the intrinsic moral value of human acts such as coercing others to convert and, in case of refusal, killing them. After all, Palaiologos was a man of deeds (even though a cultivated one), not an intellectual, still less a theologian or a philosopher devoted to the study of the principles of morality and their application to everyday life. If only because of this, his text cannot be regarded as representing ‘the’ Christian stand towards “holy war”, still less an elaborated one, based on the “Greek” taste for “reason” and clearly differentiating itself from a non-“Greek” one (in particular, that of the Muslim religion). Before sweetly succumbing to the temptation of drawing an attractive conclusion with regard to the essence of an author’s thought, one must needs dedicate oneself to at least two boring tasks; i) reading texts in their entirety and ii) detecting as many citations or allusions latently but significantly present in the author’s texts as possible. In this respect, Byzantine texts, both lengthy and full of connotations unnoticed as yet as they are, represent a slippery ground for a reader impatient to grasp their quintessence; such a policy unavoidably results in not paying the due attention to what has


True, he can aptly be described as «by nature poetic, studious, reflective… a man of letters at heart» (J. Chrysostomides, Manuel II Palæologus... (cf. supra, n. 19), p. 12); yet these qualities fall short of making him an intellectual. Especially the analysis of his argument offered here casts doubt on H.-G. Beck’s description of Palaiologos as «one of the best Byzantine theologians» (Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinische Reich, München, p. 748).

Cf. T. Khoury’s reservation: «Seule la publication de l’ouvrage en entier nous permettra de nous rendre compte dans quelle mésure... Manuel a amplifié certains arguments, remanié des parties ou des débats entiers pour avantager ses propres raisonnements. ... En attendant [une édition complète], nous ne pourrons émettre que des jugements partiels et forcement provisoires» (Manuel II Paléologue... (cf. supra, n. 2), p. 27).
been actually laid down on the paper one is looking at when reading a text.\textsuperscript{59}

Apart from this, the allegedly “rationalist” air of Christian morality is not always so clear as not to be mingled with “theistic subjectivism”. Anselm himself, who stated that «God’s will is never irrational», did so not to encourage an unconditioned rational research into God’s will but to justify exactly the opposite. In Calecas’ translation:

\begin{quote}
\'Αρκε\v{e}ν ᾨ\v{m}ίν δε\v{e}ϊ πρός λόγον τήν αὐτοῦ (sc. God’s) θέλησιν, ἐπειδήν τι ποιή, εἰ καὶ συνιέναι μὴ δυνάμεθα, διατί οὕτω βούλεται.\textsuperscript{60}
\end{quote}

(«When God does something, ‘the will of God’ ought to be sufficient explanation for us, even if we do not see why it is His will».\textsuperscript{61})

After all, the “Greek” elements of Christianity, however numerous and important they may be, can in no way provide sufficient grounds for obscuring the fact that Christianity is not a philosophy, but a revelational religion.

2. A “Greek” argument of Palaiologos’ Muslim interlocutor for the irrationality of religious violence: the “Sceptical” way

2.1. “Dogmatic” vs. “Sceptical” Use of Reason

Another remark relevant to the allegedly distinctive rationality of the Christian conception of God as well as of Christian morality is in order. Using “reason” to resolve any theoretical disagreement or elaborate a \textit{modus vivendi} in spite of unresolved disagreement

\textsuperscript{59} Even worse, old texts appealed to for modern purposes are as a rule read through the distorting glasses of the biases to which the reader happens to be committed. And possessing a high official position makes it even less probable for somebody that he spells out any word that would really reflect the meaning of the text appealed to; such positions call more for suiting the spirit of the age than aiming at historical accuracy.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Vat. gr. 614, f. 86v} («Sufficere nobis debet ad rationem voluntas Dei cum aliquid facit, licet non videamus cur velit»; ed. F.S. Schmitt, \textit{Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi}... (cf. \textit{supra}, n. 17), p. 59,10-11).

\textsuperscript{61} B. Davies / G.R. Evans, \textit{Anselm of Canterbury}... (cf. \textit{supra}, n. 18), p. 274.
is ambiguous. It can be meant either as aiming at proving some propositions conclusively and presenting them henceforth as beliefs to be held firmly, or as what K.R. Popper called «the unended quest»,\(^{62}\) that is modestly attempting to come closer to the truth (or moving, as far as possible, away from error) regarding this or that particular issue, without any strong commitment to this or that view. This distinction corresponds to the well-known difference between what was called in Hellenistic philosophy the “Dogmatic” and the “Sceptical” way of doing philosophy.\(^{63}\) The Pope concluded his lecture by inviting the members of the various non-Christian religions and civilizations to participate in a universal seeking after truth by means of «reason». Which of these two uses of reason did he have in mind? I got the impression that he had the former. After all, it would be quite unexpected for a leader of an established institutional religion to exhort people to get involved in a quest for truth on the basis of \textit{sola ratio}, as if Christian revelation had never existed at all.\(^{64}\) Had he used, however, the full edition of Manuel

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\(^{64}\) Actually, this is what Anselm did in the 11\textsuperscript{th} century («remoto Christo»; \textit{Cur Deus homo}, Præfatio; ed. F.S. Schmitt, \textit{Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi...} (cf. supra, n. 17), p. 42,12; cf. R. Roques, \textit{Anselme de Cantorbéry. Pourquoi Dieu s’est fait homme. Texte latin, introduction, traduction, notes et bibliographie (“Sources chrétiennes”, 91), Paris, 1963, pp. 65-91; 174-179). But this was done in an age when Christianity was still striving for her faith to be granted a strong and officially established authority in Europe and had to overcome the intense opposition by Jewish and Muslim theological challenges and objections, which gave rise to the sophisticated apologetic response by Anselm. A millennium later, the place of institutional Christianity in the net of international and inter-religious relations allows for avoiding such a concession to the same enemy. See also note 73.
II Palaiologos’ text by E. Trapp, in the next Discussion –the 8th– he would have met with an excellent allegorical description of the latter way of using “reason” reported by the anonymous interlocutor of the Christian emperor, which by nature privileges mutual understanding more than reasoning understood in the former way does:

- Λίαν ἀληθές μοι δοκεῖ τὸ παρ’ ῥήμιν θρυλοῦμενον ἐκ τῶν Περσῶν τε καὶ Μῆδων καὶ Ἀσσυρίων τὴν ἄρχην εἰληφὼς, ἀτε σοφατέρων ἦμων ὄντων εἰκείν. Τί τούτο; Ἔρω γε πάντως. Φασὶ μηδένα σαφῶς ἐπίστασθαι, εἰ υγιεῖς τὸ σέβας αὐτῷ παντάπασιν ἢν τυχχανεν καὶ τοῦ τῶν ἀλλων ὑπέρκειται νομίζει μὲν γὰρ ἐκαστὸς ὡς ἄρα μόνος αὐτὸς τὸν χρυσόν κατέχει κιόνα, Θεὸς δὲ μόνος οἴδε τάληθες, ἀνθρωποὶ δὲ πάντες δόξαις ἀμφιβόλοις στηριζόμεθα.

- Καὶ τίς γε νῦν, ἔφη, ὦ κύων; Βούλει περὶ τούτου φράσεῖν καθαρωτέρον ἢ μέχρι τούτου στήσεις τὸν λόγον;

- Τῶν ἡμετέρον, ἔφη, δογμάτων καὶ παραδόσεων οὐδ’ ὦ, τιούν σοι παραυποκρύψαι βουλήσομαι, μανθάνειν γε ἄξιοντί. Βουλομαί γε.

- Οὐκοῦν μάνθανε. Ἡστορίηται παρ’ ῥήμιν γεγονέναι βασιλέα διαφερόντως ἁγαθὸν καὶ σοφότατον καὶ πάντ’ ἔκεινα κεκτήσθαι, δι’ ὅν ἄν γένοιτο βασιλεῖ, δηλήσαντι μόνον, πάσης ἐξῆς κρατῆσαι τῆς γῆς. Καὶ τούτον τῆς οἰκουμένης κρατῆσαντα καὶ δείξαντα τοῖς ἔργοις τὸν ἀρχοντα τὴν ἀπάντον πρὸς ἀλλήλους ὁμόνοιαν μηδενὸς ἀλλάτεθαί ἐχρήν γὰρ πάντως αὐτῷ χρησαμένῳ τῇ δυνάμει καὶ τὴν ἑπείκειαν ἐνδείξασθαι. Ὡρῶντα τοίνυ περίτερον σχεδὸν πάντας σχιζομένους εἰς πλεῖστα μέρη δογμάτων ἕνεκα διαφόρων καὶ πολεμοῦντας ἀλλήλους καὶ φθειρομένους τῇ διαστάσει καὶ τῷ πολέμῳ, τούτον αὐτῷ οὐκ ἄνεχεσθαι.

Τοισαρών εἰρήνην τοῖς ἐκασταχοῦ γῆς ἀνθρώποις βουλόμενον ἐξευρηκέασι σοφὸν τι δράσας αὐτῶν ἐμπάντον δεῖμεν καταστῆσαν τοῖς ἀρχιτέκτοσι σκοτεινῶν καὶ ἀφεγγὴν οἱ παραπάν παντοδαποῦς ται κίνονας ἐνδῶν εἶχοντα καὶ τινὰ τοῦ χρυσοῦν ἐν μέσοις αὐτοῖς; εἶτα πίστεως ἀφ’ ἐκάστης ἔνα ως αὐτῶν ἔλθεν, ἀμα δὲ πάντας συναθροισθέντας εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὸν ἀνρόνα καὶ ζητήσαν τὸν χρυσὸν ἐκείνον κίνονα καὶ ὅτι ἄκαστος περιλάβοι (ὄπηρχον δὲ τοῖς τὸν ἀριθμὸν τοῖς γε ἀνθρώποις οἶκονες), τούτον δὴ διακατέχειν ἀρπὶ ἐδότα ως τιμῶν αὐτῷ καὶ δωρεῶν τὸν μεγίστον αίτιον ἔσται, εἰ χρυσοῦς εἴη κίον.

Καὶ δὴ τὸν διατεταγμένων πέρας λαβόντος καὶ νομίζοντος ἐκάστου τὸν πολυλυμενον ἐχεῖν κίονα, φῶτον πληρωθήναι τὸν ὁίκον κέλευσαι τὸν βασιλέα, ὡς ἀπελαθήναι τελέως τὸ σκότος, ἀπελαθήναι δὲ σῦν αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν τῶν πολλῶν ἀπάτην, ως μήτ’ ἐκείνοι φωτὶ κραθήναι

65 Ex editionis τὸν conject.

66 Ex editionis δὲ correxi.


...μήτε ταύτην ἀντιστήναι τοῖς φανεροῖς. Τῶν οὖν φῶτων εἰσκομισθέντων μόνος ὁ χρυσός πάντας ἐξέπληττε τῇ παρ’ ἕαυτοῦ ἀστραπῇ. Τούτων δὲ οὗτοι γεγονόταν ὁ μὲν φανείς τοῦ ζητουμένου πᾶσιν ἐπιτυχίας πομπεῶν ἡν κροτούμενος, χρυσῷ στεφάνῳ τιμώμενος, οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι γνώντες ἔπαθτημεν ὑπανεχώρουν κατηχησμένοι.

Τοιαύθ’ ὑπὲρ εἰρήνης καὶ ὑμονοίας τῆς ἡμετέρας τῷ βασιλεὶ κατεσκεύαστό τε καὶ πεπραγμάτευτο ἡμεῖς δὲ ἐσμέν ἐν διαφοράς ἐτὶ καὶ θηριώδεις μάχαις οὕτων ἦττον ἡ πρίν, εἰ δὲ βούλει γε, καὶ χείροσιν ἡ πρίν. Οὗτος ὁ σοφὸς καὶ ἀγαθὸς βασιλεύς, οἷς γε κατέπραξεν, ἔδειε νυκτὶ τὸν βίον ἐοικότα τὸν ἐνταυθῷ καὶ ἡμᾶς μηδὲν ἐπισταμένου ἀκριβῶς περὶ τῶν θείων πραγμάτων ἡμεῖς δὲ περὶ τούτων ἰσχυριζόμεθ’ οὕτως ἐπίστασθαι, διόπερ καὶ περὶ τῶν οἴκων κειμένων καὶ φαινόμενων. Οὕτω πάντων κατεκράτησε τὸ τε μέγα φρονεῖν ἐκαστόν καὶ ἀμείνῳ γε τῶν ἀλλῶν εἶναι ἑαυτὸν δοξάζειν. Καίτοι πῶς ἂν κάλλιον εἶχε διδάξαει μετριάζειν ἄπαντας καὶ μηδένας τῶν ἐτεροδόξων κατηπάρεσας θαρ-ροῦντας σφίσιν αὐτοῖς καὶ τοῖς αὐτῶν λογισμοῖς ὑπὲρ τῶν δογμάτων τῆς πίστεως ἦ τουτοί τῳ δράματι: ὁ οὐ καὶ δαιμόνες πείθομαι, εἴτε πεπράχθαι σοι φαίνεται εἴτε πεπλάθαι ὑπὸ τινων. Τίς γὰρ πάντων ἐπίσταται, εἰ τῷ ὅρθῳ καὶ ἀληθεστάτῳ λόγῳ παντάπασιν ἔπεται καὶ οὐ διαμαρτάνει καθ’ ὅ,τι οὖν, πιστεύον μὲν εἰς Θεόν (ὡς ἂν καὶ πάντες ἀπλῶς), εἰς ὃν δὲ πάντων οὔχ ἐώρακεν οὖν ἐγνόκεν ἀκριβῶς; Πῶς γὰρ ἂν καὶ γνοίησαν λαβών τοῦ ὑπὲρ πάσαν καταλήψιν; Πῶς δὲ ἂν καὶ νοῦς περιγραπτός τῶν ἄπεριγραπτον περιλάβοι; Καλὸν ἄρα μὴ προσπετεῖς τοὺς λογισμοὺς ἔχειν, ἀλλὰ ἠσχύναν ἄγειν καὶ τὴν λαμπάδα περιμένειν ἐκείνην τὴν ἄσβεστον τε καὶ ἀπαυστόν, ἢ τοῖς πάντων ὀφθαλμοῖς τὰ νῦν ἀμφιγνοούμενα δείξει τοσοῦτον κρείττον καὶ καθαρότερον ἢ νῦν ἡμῖν δοξάζεται, ὅσον γε καὶ προὔχειν προσήκει κόσμου θνητοῦ τὸν ἀθάνατον.67

67 Ed. E. Trapp, Manuel II. Palaiologos... (cf. supra, n. 2), pp. 102,42-104,10. Cf. op. cit., pp. 106,30-107,3 (from the 9th Dialogue): «Καὶ ὁ πρεσβύτης ἐπὶ τούτοις βαρὺ ἀναστενάξας καὶ περιδικροὺς γενόμενος δδὲ πῃ ἡ ἐφη - ε Ἀρ' ἐστὶ τῶν ἐνδεχομένων (τὰ γὰρ αὕτα πάλιν ἐρώτο) ὄντων τῶν ἀνθρώπων βέβαιον παντάπασιν εἶναι περὶ τὴν πίστιν, καὶ ως ὁ νόμος αὐτῷ τῶν ἀλλῶν πάντων προὔχον ἐστὶ καὶ μόνος ἀληθείας κανῶν καὶ ὄδος καὶ γέφυρα καὶ κλίμας ως ἐπος εἰπεῖν καὶ πάντα τα τοιαῦτα, οἷς γε μόνος ἔνεστι τῶν ἐν συρανοῖς τυχεῖν ἀγαθῶν; Ακούω μὲν γὰρ σου λέγωντος τούτο, καὶ μέντοι καὶ πιθανοῖς αὐτῷ βεβοηθήσασι λόγοις, πολλοὶ δὲ τέως δεῖ πεισθῆναι, ως ἔνι τούτ’ εἰδέναι σαφῶς, πράγμα μὴ βλεπόμενον μηδὲ γινωσκόμενον καθαρὸς πρὸ τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης, ἢ δὴ πάντα δείξει γυμνὰ μηδὲν προβλήματι καλυπτόμενα. Τότε εἰσόμεθα τάληθες, τα δε ταυτῆς τῆς ἡμέρας ἀπαντα
(– Muterizes: ‘I think that a legend that originates from Persians, Medians and Assyrians (nations wiser than us) and nowadays circulates in our country, speaks the truth. What truth? I shall tell you immediately. It suggests that nobody knows clearly if his own religious convictions are absolutely sane and superior to the convictions held by others. Each person thinks that he is the only one to have grasped the ‘golden column’; as a matter of fact, however, only God knows truth, whereas all of us, human beings, rely upon doubtful opinions.’

– Palaiologos: ‘And what is this column? Would you like to speak more clearly or are you going to put a full stop here?’

– Muterizes: ‘It is not my intention to hide from you not even the slightest of our doctrines and traditions, if you express your wish to learn about them.’

– Palaiologos: ‘Definitely I wish.’

– Muterizes: ‘So keep learning. The legend runs that once upon a time a king appeared in our nation, who was unusually good and extremely wise; he possessed all those qualities by means of which a king could, should he just like to, absolutely dominate the entire earth. This king, indeed, dominated all the earth and showed by means of his deeds who the ruler was. Nothing, however, was for him as precious as universal concordance; for, after having shown his power, he wanted to show his genuine interest for the welfare of his subjects as well. So he could not stand seeing almost all being separated into innumerable sects because of holding different religious beliefs, fighting against each other and being killed because of their discord and conflicts. Willing, therefore, to establish peace in every place on earth for the good of all people, he conceived of a wise plan. He ordered his architects to construct a huge guest-house, absolutely dark [i.e. without any entrance of natural light, such as windows] and completely lacking lights [i.e. without any source of artificial light, such as firebrands], put inside some columns, each of them made of any material whatsoever, and place somewhere amidst them a golden one. Then he ordered that one person from each religious faith come to him. When everybody arrived at his palace, they were all ordered to enter the guest-room and search for the golden column; the rule was that everybody had to grasp firmly the

σκότος πρὸς τὴν ἀνέσπερον ἐκείνην παρατιθέμενα καὶ τῶν ὑπνούντων οὗ τοσοῦτον οἱ ἑγρηγορότες διεννηχασίν, ὅσον οἱ τῆς καταστάσεως ἐκείνης τετυχηκότες τῶν τὴν ἑπικήρον σάρκα τίνδε περικειμένων’».

68 «Ἀνδρών» (or «ἀνδρεών») was reported to be decorated with silver and golden pieces (see, e.g., Plutarch’s Alcibiades IV,5; ed. K. Ziegler, Plutarchus. Vitæ parallelae. Vol. I, fasc. 2, “Teubner”, Lipsiæ, 1964, p. 230,25-26; Philostratus,
[first] column he would meet (columns were equal in number to men) and feel sure that his column would prove for him the cause of the greatest honours and gifts, if it should be the golden one.

So, everything was done according to the King’s ordains; and each of the men thought that it was he who was holding the much-praised golden column. The king ordered that the building be full of light, so that the darkness ran away and, along with it, the deception of the most [of the participants in the play] (since neither darkness can coexist with light nor deception can resist obviousness). The lights were brought; and the golden column alone struck the eyes of everybody with the splendor it was radiating. After this, the person who, to the testimony of everybody’s eyes, found what he was looking for, celebrated a triumph when applauded and glorified with a golden crown, whereas the others realized that they had failed and started moving away and leaving the building in pure shame.

This is what our king had once upon a time done because of his interest in peace and concordance; yet we, for our own part, are still in a state of discordance and brutal battles in no less degree than earlier, or rather more than ever. Through this act the wise and good king showed that this life is like the darkness of night and that we actually know nothing concrete of things divine. And yet we claim that we know them in the same way we claim to know the things abiding in our houses and being obvious to us; as a result, the state of things established itself such that each human being is full of pride and takes himself to be superior to those who differ from him. In fact, however, how else could the king teach [his subjects] better that everybody must be modest and that no religious group should be so confident of itself and its own way of reasoning about the doctrines of faith as to raise itself above another that happens to be attached to a different doctrine, than through this play? I may guess that this play gained your admiration, whether you think of it as having actually taken place or not. For who of the entire population on earth knows for sure that he follows without even the slightest error whatsoever the right and absolutely true reasoning and that he commits no error at all, since the case is that he (rightly, of course) believes in God, as everybody believes in some sort of God, but he has neither definitely seen nor exactly known what is God he believes in? In fact, how could we clearly know Him, Who lies beyond any comprehension, or how could a finite mind grasp and contain an infinite being? It would be therefore advisable not to make any audacious and risky estimations, but be wise and wait for the inextinguishable and everlasting torch, which will render for everybody

the things now disputed over as better and clearer than we now see them as the world of immortality is by nature superior to that of mortality ’).

2.2. The affinities of Muterizes’ argument to Greek Scepticism

The central epistemological idea of this passage from Palaiologos’ text occurs in some well-known ancient Greek philosophical texts. The earliest of them is the famous fragment B34 of Xenophanes:

\[ \text{Καὶ τὸ μὲν οὖν σαφὴς οὗ τὶς ἀνὴρ ἵδεν οὐδὲ τὶς ἔσται εἰδὼς ὁμὶρθεὶν τε καὶ ἃσσα λέγειν περὶ πάντων· εἰ γὰρ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα τύχοι τετελεσμένοι εἰπὼν, αὐτὸς ὁμώς σὺκ οἰδε· δόκοις δ’ ἐπὶ πᾶσι τέτυκται.69 }\]

(«And of course the clear and certain truth no man has seen nor will there be anyone who knows about the gods and what I say about the entire world. For even if, in the best case, one happened to speak just of what has been brought to pass, still he himself would not know. But opinion is allotted to all».70)

Apart from the obvious identity of the doctrine stated in the two texts, the verbal similarities are extremely striking:

1) ἄνθρωποι (103,5); ἄνθρωποι (103,19); ἄνδρων (103,23) / ἀνὴρ (in latent but clear contrast with God71) (l. 1);


71 Cf. Muterizes’ statement: «Θεὸς δὲ μόνος οἴδε τάληθές» (ed. E. Trapp, Manuel II. Palaiologos... (cf. supra, n. 2), p. 103,5). Obviously, in the Persian allegory the king personifies God, Who alone is supposed to know the truth
2) μηδένα (103,3); μηδένας (103,42) / οὖ τις (l. 1); οὐδὲ τις (l. 1);
3) σαφῶς (103,3; cf. 106,39) / σαφῆς (l. 1);
4) ἐπίστασθαι (103,3; 103,39) or εἰδέναι (106,39) / ἵδεν (l. 1); εἰδέναι (ll. 2; 4);
5) περὶ τῶν θείων πραγμάτων (103,38) (cf. 102,40: περὶ τὸ σέβας; 103,3: τὸ σέβας) / ἀμφὶ θεῶν (l. 2);
6) ἐπιτυχῆς (103,32) / τύχοι τετελεσμένοι (l. 3) (to attain); and
7) δόξαι ἀμφιβολοὶ (103,5-6) / δόκος (l. 4).

What is more striking is that in the most detailed analysis of Xenophanes’ fragment, that by the Greek Sceptical philosopher Sextus Empiricus (ca. 200 a.D.), an allegory very close to the Persian one reported by Palaiologos as having been narrated to him by his interlocutor occurs:

"Ὡςπερ γὰρ εἰ ἐν ζωφερῷ οἰκήματι καὶ πολλὰ ἔχοντι κειμένα ὑποθοιμεθά τινος χρυσόν ζητοῦντας, ὑποπεσεῖται διότι ἐκάστος μὲν τούτων λαβόμενος τινὸς τῶν ἐν τῷ οἰκήματι κειμένων οἴησε τὸν χρυσὸν δεδράχθαι, οὐδεὶς δὲ αὐτῶν ἔσται τετελεσμένος ὅτι τῷ χρυσῷ περίπεσε, κἂν μάλιστα τύχῃ τούτῳ περίπεπτωκῷ, δὲν καὶ εἰς τούτοιν τὸν κόσμον ὃςπερ τίνα μέγαν οἰκὸν παρῆλθε πλῆθος φιλοσόφων ἐπὶ τὴν τῆς ἀληθείας ζήτησιν, ἢς τὸν λαβόμενον εἰκὸς ἐστὶν ἀπίστευν ὅτι εὐστόχησεν."

and meant to render it patent for the entire humankind in the light of the life to come.

Sextus Empiricus, Adversus Mathematicos VII,49-54 (ed. H. Mutschmann, Sexti Empirici opera. Vol. II Adversus dogmaticos libros quinque (Adversus mathematicos VII-XI) continens, “Teubner”, Lipsiæ, 1914, p. 13). A list of common words and phrases can be offered for these passages, too: 1) ἀνδρῶν σκοτεινῶς καὶ ἄφεγγῆς (103,20-21; cf. 106,5: σκότω βαθεῖ) / ζωφερῶν οἶκημα (VII,52,1); 2) χρυσοῦς κίον (103,5; 103,21-22; 103,31) / χρυσός (VII,52,2-5 ter); 3) δὲν ἂν ἐκάστος περιλάβοι (103,24) / ἐκάστος τούτων λαβόμενος (VII,52,3); 4) νομίζοντος ἐκάστου... ἐξειν... (103,27) / ἐκάστος... οἴησεται... δεδράχθαι (VII,52,3-4); 5) ἐπιτυχῆς (103,32) / εὐστόχησεν (VII,52,9). All these common elements, however, can be explained in terms of the fact that two roughtly similar stories are expected to be told by means of similar words (cf. also the parable of the “precious pearl” of Timothy I in n. 73); and it is the content similarity that really interests here. – Incidentally, Mutereses’ «ἀνδρῶν σκοτεινῶς καὶ ἄφεγγῆς» and Sextus’ «ζωφερῶν οἶκημα» remind us strongly of the «κατάγειος οἶκημας σπηλαιώδης» of Plato’s famous cave allegory (Republic VII; 514A sqq.). Needless to say, the central point of this
(«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 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».)


Translation (slightly modified) by R.G. Bury (Sextus Empiricus... II... (cf. supra, n. 70), p. 27). Another simile, close to that, is offered in Sextus’ Adversus Mathematicos VIII,325 (ed. H. Mutschmann, Sexti Empirici opera. Vol. II... (cf. supra, n. 72), pp. 177-178). Strikingly enough, a similar simile (“the precious pearl”) was produced by the Nestorian Patriarch of Syria Timothy I (778-823) in a discussion of his (held in Bagdad in 781/782) with the caliph (775-785) Al-Mahdi. According to the Syriac reproduction of the simile by Timothy himself, «in this world all of us are as in a dark house, who search in the middle of the night. If at night and in a dark house a precious pearl happens to fall in the midst of people, and all become aware
2.3. The affinities of Muterizes’ legend with Oriental tolerance

At the same time with Hellenistic philosophy, some Oriental intellectual trends close to Scepticism and a subsequent version of tolerance, appeared. It may be that Muterizes’ story reflects the way Ashoka, the famous Mauryan king (ca. 268-239 B.C.) of India, ruled. In the edicts of Ashoka, a Buddhist convert fervently encouraging religious tolerance, one reads:

of its existence, every one would strive to pick up the pearl, which will not fall to the lot of all, but to the lot of one only, while one will get hold of the pearl itself, another one of a piece of glass, a third one of a stone or of a bit of earth, but everyone will be happy and proud that he is the real possessor of the pearl. When, however, night and darkness disappear, and light and day arise, then every one of those men who had believed that they had the pearl, would extend and stretch the hand towards the light, which alone can show what everyone has in hand. He who possesses the pearl will rejoice and be happy and pleased with it, while those who hand in hand pieces of glass and bits of stone only will weep and be sad, and will sigh and shed tears. In the same way we children of men are in this perishable world as in darkness. The pearl of the true faith fell in the midst of all of us, and it is undoubtedly in the hand of one of us, while all of us believe that we possess the precious object. In the world to come, however, the darkness of mortality passes, and the fog of ignorance dissolves, since it is the true and real light to which the fog of ignorance is absolutely foreign. In it the possessors of the pearl will rejoice, be happy and pleased, and the possessors of mere pieces of stone will weep, sigh, and shed tears, as we said above» (edition and translation by A. Mingana, «Timothy’s Apology for Christianity», in: Woodbrook Studies. Christian Documents in Syriac, Arabic, and Garshuni, Vol. II, Cambridge, 1928, pp. 88-89; cf. K.-J. Kuschel, “L’ebreo, il cristiano e il musulmano s’incontrano?”. “Nathan il saggio” di Lessing (“Jud, Christ und Muselmann vereinigt?”). Lessings “Nathan der Weise”, Düsseldorf, 2004). Traduzione di C. Danna, Brescia, 2006, pp. 212-215). J. van Ess (Die Erkenntnislehre des Adul’addin al-Ici. Übersetzung und Kommentar des ersten Buches seiner Mawaqif, Wiesbaden, 1966, p. 227) has noticed the affinity of this simile with the Ancient Greek Scepticism.
Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, honors both ascetics and the householders of all religions, and he honors them with gifts and honors of various kinds. But Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, does not value gifts and honors as much as he values this – that there should be growth in the essentials of all religions. Growth in essentials can be done in different ways, but all of them have as their root restraint in speech, that is, not praising one’s own religion, or condemning the religion of others without good cause. And if there is cause for criticism, it should be done in a mild way. But it is better to honor other religions for this reason. By so doing, one’s own religion benefits, and so do other religions, while doing otherwise harms one’s own religion and the religion of others. Whoever praises his own religion, due to excessive devotion, and condemns others with the thought “Let me glorify my own religion”, only harms his own religion. Therefore contact between religions is good. One should listen to and respect the doctrines professed by others. Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, desires that all should be well-learned in the good doctrines of other religions.\textsuperscript{74}

This is pretty close to Muterizes’ words:

Each person thinks that he is the only one to have grasped the ‘golden column’… We claim that we know things divine… Each human being is full of pride and takes himself to be superior to those who differ from him. … The king taught… that everybody must be modest and that no religious group should be so confident of itself and its own way of reasoning about the doctrines of faith as to raise itself above another that happens to be attached to a different doctrine...

Further, the report reproduced by Muterizes that the king «dominated all the earth» may be just a remote reflection of the way the inhabitants of his vast empire (most parts of India; Nepal; Pakistan; Afghanistan) felt their being ruled by him; since he had united so many and great regions under his control, he looked like ruling everywhere. Besides, some of the tales of Ashoka describe him as «a king… who reigned over the whole world»\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{74} Rock Edicts, XII; translation by S. Dhammika, \textit{The Edicts of King Ashoka. An English Rendering}, Kandy (Sri Lanka), 1993, p. 8 (also available in: http://cs.colostate.edu/~malaiya/ashoka.pdf).

\textsuperscript{75} P.O. Skjærvø, «Asoka, Mauryan emperor of India (ca. 272-231 B.C.)», Part III («The Legend of Asoka in Khotanese»); http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v2f7/v2f7a094.html.
Further, the legendary king’s strong aversion to the separation of his subjects «into innumerable sects because of holding different religious beliefs», which resulted for them in «fighting against each other and being killed because of their discord and conflicts» and his inclination to «universal concordance» is very close to Ashoka’s fostering of universal religious tolerance and understanding. Even the legendary king’s two phases of ruling (conquest of people and demonstration of force vs. fervent interest in the peoples’ well-doing and demonstration of goodness) matches with Ashoka’s transition from the phase of his cruel conquest of Kalinga to his ‘illuminated’ way of exerting power over all his subjects.

Further, one can compare the following words from the Rock Edict XII (l. 8):

Πρέπει δὲ ἀλλήλους θαυμάζειν καὶ τὰ ἀλλήλων διδάγματα παραδέχεσθαι

with Muterizes’ words:

"Ο [sc. the legend of the golden column and its moral] σε καὶ θαυμάζειν πείθομαι,

which looks like a kind exhortation to Palaiologos to take, at least for a while, a positive attitude to what he is told. Muterizes himself declares that the reason why he was involved in a discussion with Manuel was not «ἔρις», i.e. a desire to defeat his interlocutor’s religious convictions, but his «love of learning and hearing» the others’ views («τῷ φιλομαθῆς τε καὶ φιλήκοος ἔνναν»). Palaiologos presents him as being excited by what was convincingly presented to him as the truth of Christianity («πολὺς μὲν ἦν θαυμάζων τὰ λεγόμενα καὶ... ἤδετο μανθάνων τάληθῆ»).
In addition, Muterizes’ willingness to teach Palaiologos a doctrine of his own tradition, expressed in the following words:

“Τῶν ἡμετέρων”, ἐφή, “δογμάτων καὶ παραδόσεων οὐδ’ ὁ, τιοῦ σοι παραποκρύψαι βουλήσομαι, μανθάνειν γε ἀξιούντι”\(^{80}\),

though apparently being a conventional expression of good manners, looks also like an application of Ashoka’s exhortation that religious men should be eager to communicate their own religious doctrines with each other:

Ταῦτα δὲ ποιοῦντες [sc. τὰ ἀλλήλων διδάγματα παραδέχεσθαι] πολυμαθέστεροι ἔσονται, παραδιδόντες ἀλλήλοις ὅσα ἐκαστος αὐτῶν ἐπίσταται.\(^{81}\)

(«Those acting in this way [i.e. not being reluctant to listen to somebody expounding a different religious doctrine] will become better educated, providing for each other as much as each knows»\(^{82}\)).

Palaiologos,\(^{83}\) for his own part, a strong adherent to the spirit of the traditional Christian polemical writings on the vera religio, felt strangely when seeing his interlocutor not feeling obliged to abandon his own faith for another. Yet Muterizes, in accordance with the spirit of Ashoka’s edicts as well as with the relativism suggested by the legend of the ‘golden column’, could pretty well declare that, although he held his own religion to be the best, he could not hold this conviction as absolutely certain and that this is the case with all religious beliefs.\(^{84}\)

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\(^{81}\) Rock Edicts XII, ll. 9-10 (ed. É. Benveniste, *ibid.* (cf. supra, n. 76).


\(^{84}\) «Τὸ ἡμετέρον τοῦτο σέβας (sc. Muslim faith) κρεῖττον μὲν πάντων εἶναι δοξάζω, βεβαιάν δὲ παντάπασιν ἔχειν τὴν δόξαν οὐ δόναι. Ἡγούμαι μέντοι καὶ όμοις ταῦτα πάσχειν ἐμοὶ…» (Dialogue IX; ed. E. Trapp, *op. cit.*, pp. 118,40-119,2). If M. Balivet’s identification of Muterizes with Haci Bayram Veli («Le sufi et le basileus…»; cf. *supra*, n. 51) is to be taken for true, the Muterizes was a Sufi, and the Sufi normally «adopted a liberal and tolerant attitude toward non-Muslims» (J. Frembgen, *Derwische. Gelehrt Sufismus*, Köln, 1993, p. 16), since they believed that, according to Muhammad, «many
is close to the Sceptical attitude towards religion as stated by Sextus Empiricus.\(^{85}\) The Sceptical philosopher, he says, does not revolt against the religious views of his society, but adheres to them without any ideological commitment («ἀδοξάστως»). In this sense, an apparent discrepancy between Ashoka’s spirit and Muterizes’ “Golden column” can be

are the ways of God, as numerous as men’s souls» (I. Shagrir, «The Parable of the Three Rings: a Revision of Its History», *Journal of Medieval History* 23/2, 199, pp. 163-177, esp. pp. 168-169; cf. K.-J. Kuschel, “L’ebreo, il cristiano e il musulmano”… (cf. supra, n. 73), pp. 138-139; 220). It is, therefore, not surprising at all that the Muterizes reproduced the legend of the “Golden Column” and fervently adopted its moral.

\(^{85}\) *Pyrrhonian Outlines* I,23-24: «Τοῖς φαινομένοις οὖν προσέχοντες κατὰ τὴν βιωτικὴν τήρησιν ἀδοξάστως βιοῦμεν… Ἐσικε δὲ αὐτὴ ἡ βιωτικὴ τήρησις τετραμερής εἶναι… ἐν παραδόσει νόμον τε καὶ ἕθων… Ἐθῶν δὲ καὶ νόμων παραδόσει, καθ’ ἣν τὸ μὲν εὐσεβεῖν παραλαμβάνομεν βιωτικῶς ὡς ἀγαθόν, τὸ δὲ ἀσεβεῖν ὡς φαύλον… Ταύτα δὲ πάντα φαμὲν ἀδοξάστως» (ed. I. Mau post H. Mutschmann, *Sexti Empirici opera. Vol. I*… (cf. supra, n. 63), p. 23) («Adhering, then, to appearances we live in accordance with the normal rules of life, undogmatically… And it would seem that this regulation of life is fourfold… [The fourth and last aspect of this regulation regards] … the tradition of laws and customs… …Tradition of customs and laws, that whereby we regard piety in the conduct of life as good, but impiety as evil… But we make all these statements undogmatically»; translation by R.G. Bury, *Sextus Empiricus in Four Volumes with an English Translation. I: Pyrrhonian Outlines* (“Loeb Classical Library”), Harvard U.P., 1993 (\(^{1993}\)), p. 17); *Adversus Mathematicos* IX,49: «Τάχα γὰρ ἀσφαλέστερος παρὰ τοὺς ὡς ἔτέρως φιλοσοφῶντας εὐρεθήσεται ὁ σκεπτικὸς, κατὰ μὲν τὰ πάτρια ἔθη καὶ τοὺς νόμους λέγων εἶναι θεοὺς καὶ πάν τὸ εἰς τὴν τούτων θρησκείαν καὶ εὐσεβεῖαν συντείνον ποιῶν, τὸ δ’ ὅσον ἐπὶ τῇ φιλοσόφῳ ζητήσει μηδὲν προπετευόμενος» (ed. H. Mutschmann, *Sexti Empirici opera. Vol. II*… (cf. supra, n. 72), p. 224) («For perchance the Sceptic, as compared with philosophers of other views, will be found in a safer position, since in conformity with his ancestral customs and laws, he declares that the gods exist, and performs everything which contributes to their worship and veneration, but so far as regards philosophic investigation, declines to commit himself rashly»; translation by R.G. Bury, *Sextus Empiricus… Against the Physicists. Against the Ethicists* (“Loeb Classical Library”), Harvard U.P., 1987 (\(^{1936}\)), pp. 27-29).
bridged; the religious toleration promoted by the former by means of
mutual understanding can be based on Scepticism or relativism or ac-
cepting the limits of human knowledge.86

2.3. Manuel II Palaiologos’ clumsy rejection
of Muterizes’ argument

As one can easily guess, Manuel absolutely scorned the message
of the legend of the ‘golden column’. On what grounds did he do so?
Oddly enough, he did so in terms of its being just a legend – although the
intention of his interlocutor, who put it forward, was not to make Manuel
believe in it as a historical fact (according to Manuel’s very report,
Muterizes was quite clear on that)87 but just to warn him against being
intellectually proud, even when reason seems to justify absolutely one’s
beliefs against those held by others. Manuel goes so far as to distrust the
honesty of the declaration of his interlocutor’s intention. He prefaces
Muterizes’ exposition of the Persian legend by stating that the Muslim
set forth a tale («μυθολογία») in order to relativize religious doctrines
en bloc and gain from this the profit of presenting the well-founded on
reason Christianity as having no more likelihood to be true than any

86 If M. Balivet’s identification of Muterizes with Haci Bayram Velî («Le su-
fi et le basileus…»; cf. supra, n. 51) is to be taken for true, Palaiologos’
interlocutor was a «docteur de la loi islamique» and «fin lettré» (art. cit., pp.
27-28). Thus having access to ancient and contemporary laws was for him
quite possible. Still, the evidence produced in § 2.3 is not intended to suggest
that the hero of Muterizes’ tale is Ashoka or to establish a direct dependence
of Muterizes’ words on Ashoka’s Greek edict in Kandahar or even that the
moral of Muterizes’ tale can be fully reduced to this edict; showing the
affinities between the two is enough for my argument. Besides, I. Shagrir’s
interesting survey of the Oriental antecedents to the famous parable of the
“three rings” in G.E. Lessing’s Nathan der Weise («The Parable of the Three
Rings…») (cf. supra, n. 84), Timothy I’s allegory (cf. supra, n. 73) included
(art. cit., pp. 167-168), does not contain any parable close to Muterizes’ tale.
Specialists to Oriental religions and civilizations may hopefully shed some
light on its provenance.

other set of religious beliefs. Likewise, after Muterizes’ narration, Manuel accuses both the unknown creator of this «fiction» («πλάσμα») and Muterizes himself, who adhered to it, of lacking «real» – that is unshakable – faith and trying (consciously?) to achieve some consolation for this defect of theirs by making the members of other religious groups cast doubt on their convictions, too. Admittedly, it was not so kind on Manuel’s part to latently but clearly depict his interlocutor in the colours the malicious tail-cut fox is depicted in a well-known Aesopean tale.

And, directly relevant to the present point, Manuel did not combat the “relativist” use of ratio from the viewpoint of the “Dogmatic” use of it, i.e. by trying to reach certainty through sound and coherent theories, but from the standpoint of religious faith, the most important ingredient of which is for him an a priori certainty, which admits of neither increase in view of any rational argument for its content nor decrease in the case that a rational counter-argument appears. Had Palaiologos been shaped by «Greek philosophy», as T. Khoury stated (see supra, n. 38), he would not have replied to Muterizes’ tale in this typically unphilosophical and fideist way. At last resort, “myth” (μύθος) has been explicitly recognized as a means of expressing philosophical truths as legitimate as “reason” (λόγος) in Plato’s writings.

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88 Ed. E. Trapp, op. cit., p. 102,39-42. For sure, this does not render justice to the spirit of Muterizes’ words. Since he was a Sufi (cf. supra, n. 84), his reproduction of the legend of the “Golden Column” was not a stratagem; it resulted from a genuinely tolerant view of the others’ religions.


91 See, e.g., the well-known passage from Plato’s Protagoras 320C2-4: «Protagoras: ΄Αλλ’, ὃ Σώκρατες... πότερον ὑμίν... μῦθον λέγων ἐπιδείξω ἢ λόγῳ διεξελθόν;». 
3. Conclusion

3.1. Rationality

Construing the Christiano-Islamic debate laid down by Manuel II Palaiologos as one between an intrinsically rational and an intrinsically irrational faith would be utterly misleading. The relation of reason with Christian faith as presented in this discussion falls under a Christian Motiv deriving from a Jew, Philo of Alexandria, and being well-known since the early 2nd century — *philosophia ancilla theologiae*. To put it more concretely (indeed, one has to, since the *ancilla* has been used by her *domina* in a lot of different services), Manuel was not an adherent to any kind or version of “reasonableness of Christianity” or “Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft” *avant la lettre*; he just took refuge in an external and opportunistic use of reason to put down the moral part of Muslim faith and establish the superiority of Christianity before the eyes of an official representative of the Muslim faith. For such a use of reason some apt terms have been long since established in scholarship, which have no philosophic connotations at all — ‘apologetics’, or, if one would like, ‘religious polemics’. This

92 In some respect, any theologian eager to point out some instances of synthesis of Christianity with “reason” might find a lot (and, for sure, more fine than Manuel II Palaiologos’) among the Reformant (i.e. non-Catholic) Christianity of the Modern era, such as John Locke and Jean Leclerc. Let us remind, for example, the former’s statement that «Reason must be our last judge and guide in everything», religion explicitly included (*An Essay concerning Human Understanding* IV,19,14; ed. A.C. Fraser, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding, Complete and Unabridged*, by John Locke, Vol. II, New York, 1959, pp. 438-439) or the latter’s claim that «…quidquid est Fidei, id sola Ratione niti…» (*Logica sive ars Ratiocinandi* II,10,9; in: J. Clericus, *Opera Philosophica in Quatuor Volumina Digesta. Editio tertia auctior et emendator*, Amsterdam, 1704, p. 112). Needless to say, however, such fervent but “deviant” Christians (let us remind that Locke’s *Essay*, in its French translation, figured in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* up to 1948; see, e.g., http://www.cvm.qc.ca/gconti/905/BABEL/ Index%20Librorum%Prohibitorum-1948.htm) could no way find a place in the pope’s lecture (cf. Benedict XVI, «Der Vernunft…», in: *Gott und die Vernunft*... (cf. *supra*, n. 1), pp. 131-132).
genre has nothing to do with “Hellenism”; it was introduced (along with many other) into the history of literature by Christians.

3.2. Toleration

Likewise, construing (on the basis either of the above false contrast or of any thing whatsoever) this debate as one between an intrinsically tolerant and an intrinsically intolerant religion would be completely misleading. For Muterizès, let alone once during his long discussions with his host in Ankara, Palaiologos, and in striking contrast with the rigid religious patriotism of the Byzantine emperor, left room for his

93 Another possibility for promoting a positively coloured Christian-Islamic dialogue occurred to some Muslim authors who explicitly accept “reason” as the only proper arbiter for solving religious disagreements, such as al-Châsimî. I quote from the classical work of W.T. Arnold, Preaching in Islam. A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith. 2nd Edition, Revised and Enlarged, London, 1913, p. 433: «Therefore bring forward all the arguments you wish and say whatever you please and speak your mind freely. Now that you are safe and free to say whatever you please, appoint some arbitrator who will impartially judge between us and lean only towards the truth and be free from the empery of passion: and that arbitrator shall be reason… Whereby I have dealt justly with you and have given you full security and am ready to accept whatever decision reason may give for me or against me. For “there is no compulsion in religion” (Coran 2:256; see N.J. Dawood, The Koran with a Parallel Arabic Text. Translated with Notes, London, 2000, p. 41) and I have only invited you to accept our faith willingly and of your own accord» (cited also by G.F. Hourani, Reason and Tradition in Islamic Ethics, Cambridge U.P., 1985, pp. 15-97; cf. id., «Islamic and Non-Islamic Origins of Mu’tazilite Ethical Rationalism», International Journal of Middle East Studies 7, 1976, pp. 59-87, esp. p. 86). Another pope, the famous “reformator” Gregory VII, in a spirit not ‘rationalist’ but ‘ecumenist’ (to use an anachronism), in an epistle of his (dating from 1076) to the Maure prince Anzour, went so far as to recognize a wide ground of common beliefs between Christians and Muslims: «Hanc denique bonitatem creator omnium Deus, sine quo nihil boni facere imo nec cogitare possumus, cordi tuo inspiravit, ipse, “qui illuminat omnem hominem venientem in hunc mundum” (Joh. 1,9) in hac intentione mentem tuam illuminavit. Nam omnipotentens Deus, “qui omnes homines vult
religion not to be the only and absolute truth about God and the related matters but just some result of the humble human efforts to find gold in darkness. In so doing, he obviously went more steps in the way of mutual religious understanding than his Christian interlocutor was both formed and prepared to do.\footnote{My sincere thanks to Dr. Vasileios Syros (Helsinki) and Andrew Holiday (M.Sc.; Patras) for their remarks on the last version of my article, as well as to Dr. David Wirmer (Cologne) for our discussions on tolerance and intolerance in Islam.}