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ECCLESIAL DIMENSION IN THE EASTERN ORTHODOX
APPROPRIATION OF MODERN SCIENCE

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Introduction: theological commitment in the dialogue between theology and science

It is a sheer fact of history that the dialogue between theology and science became a common topic for academic discussions within the last 20-30 years. In view of the fact that scientific advance continues with the same intensity as in the 20th century one can ask a question on whether this dialogue has succeeded so far, i.e. did it achieve certain results which could have impact on both science and theology? The dialogue with theology has an impact in bioethical issues of the medical sciences and to some extent in ecology. However in a wider context one must admit that all discussions about whether science and theology are in conflict, or in a sort of “peaceful coexistence”, do not have serious existential implications: the problem remains and its ongoing presence points to something which is basic and unavoidable in the human condition.

The issue of existential implications of the dialogue becomes vitally important for theologians of the Eastern Orthodox faith who confess theology not as an academic and abstract discipline but as a mode of life and experience of God. Theology aims to change human life, to transfigure it, so that any involvement in theology, be it personal or conciliar, within the science-religion dialogue must raise this problem to the experiential and spiritual level. If this does not happen, then the “dialogue” degenerates towards an empty intellectual game of reshuffling theology and science in the plane of mundane consciousness. To achieve an existential status the dialogue must enquire into the very essence of the disintegration of the human spirit (which happened historically in many stages on the personal and conciliar level) which is manifested in the split of attitude to science and religion. It is this disintegration that constitutes an essential feature and a problem of the present human condition so that the dialogue between theology and science can be seen as contributing to an enquiry into this human condition. Then the dialogue becomes an existential objective which, as we argue, can be best formulated theologically. Correspondingly the “symmetry” between theology and science is broken from the very inception of this dialogue if it is to address existential questions. This asymmetry constitutes that dimension of the dialogue which we describe as its originary theological commitment.
Theological commitment as a movement beyond secular thinking

Contemporary science is historically rooted in the so-called modernity which has been responsible for dualisms such as the opposition between faith and reason, the dualisms which formed the grounds for excluding the divine and transcendent. It is modernity which is responsible for the claim that truth is based on universal reason, which tells us what reality is like. In this historical setting theology is forced in the dialogue with science following the rules of modernity but not its own intrinsic “logic” of communion with God. These rules effectively dictate that theology enters the dialogue of faith and reason along the lines of adopted secular standards of scientific or normative rationality assuming a particular notion of the knowing subject (as impersonal and disembodied collective subjectivity) which is sharply opposed to the premodern way of asserting truth through existential events associated with incarnate persons in the divine image. Seen theologically the secular standards of affirming truth have subjective aspirations in the sense that they themselves are based in certain ill-articulated myths and beliefs, so that they can affirm objective values and judge about divine transcendence only precariously. The dialogue between science and theology, as it takes place in the West, manifests that theology as its apostolic and patristic understanding as experience of God in communion.

The theological commitment being de facto a “premodern” trend in the midst of postmodernity puts modernity’s claim for the universality of truth under question (at least in what concerns the human sciences, including philosophy and theology), claiming that the modernity’s ways of appropriation of truth were in a certain deviation from the unified vision of the world which was based in the alliance between faith and knowledge both originating in communion with God. It is because of this that Christian theology in its Eastern Orthodox form, being faithful to the tradition dogmatically and liturgically, thus transcending all historical divisions, feels empowered to question the foundational premises of modern science and the ways of how its dialogue with theology is organised. Christian theology is given the right to use the language and critical methods developed within modern and postmodern philosophy, and other human sciences, in order to explicate those “faith-like commitments” which underlie modern science with its claims for truth and hence the imposed form of its dialogue with theology. If scientific claims for truth are seen as endowed with the certainty of beliefs, the dialogue between theology and science will rise to a different level, namely that the distinction and difference between theology and science will be seen as the differentiation of intentionalities and constituents of one and the same human subjectivity.

The sphere of operation of theological critical thinking is in all realms where the Church (ecclesial humanity) meets historical and cultural reality. Theology creatively and critically thinks of any emerging historical problem or theme following immutably the Church’s experience of God, that is, of eternity.¹ This is the context when the Church uses the notion of tradition. Since theology operates in the conditions of faith it acts as a critical

¹ In words of Fr. D. Stăniloae: „The very existence of the Church is an effect, continually renewed of the action of the Holy Spirit in creating communion” (D. Stăniloae, Theology and the Church, Crestwood, New York, 1980, p. 218) „The door of the infinite riches of the personal or interpersonal divine being has opened up before the reflections of Orthodox theology, and with it the prospects of an endless progress of the human spirit within the divine” (D. Stăniloae, Theology and the Church, p. 218.)
form of thought in that situation when a faithful has to react to a problem arising in the world at large. Here, since theology as a spiritual and intellectual activity is rooted in the experience of the Church (that is that of eternity), it always functions from above mass-religious consciousness, as well as “secular” consciousness which claims its freedom from any faith commitments; theology’s unceasing task is to provide a constant and constructive critique of these modes of consciousness.

In so doing the above critique theology positions itself as a meta-discourse, that is, as that form of critical thinking about different modalities of social activity which expresses the word of God-Creator, and that which is not being bounded or exploited by some particular human activities as their “prophetic” voice, be it the socio-historical sciences transcendental philosophy. The critical function of theology with respect to other discourses never allows theology to slip into such a position that its scope and place will be determined by other discourses, for example by the science-religion dialogue with its demands to deal with some issues such as, for example, the question of origin of the universe in cosmology or origin of life in biology. In this sense theology can never be defined and positioned by secular reason and thus it does not accept the idea of a complete autonomy of that sphere of the worldly reality which is asserted through rational understanding.

One must not forget that theology, being critical with respect to various forms of thought is ecclesial theology, that is, it represents the voice of the Church. This implies in turn that in order to remain critical and encompassing with respect to other discourses the Church must remain independent in its voice and not adapted easily to the requirements of the secular reason, and, in particular, to the demands of the dialogue with science. But, as we mentioned before, the separation of faith and reason is the consequence of many other divisions in one and the same subjectivity, and this separation in turn divides, in this subjectivity, God and reality. It is this very division (diairesis) which St. Maximus the Confessor described as the moral tension between Creator and the created, and whose overcoming is the ultimate goal of the human ascent to God. If the tension between faith and reason is sought to be overcome along the lines of this patristic ideal, it is clear that it can be done only within a strong faith-commitment because the secular reason alone is incapable of attempting this mediation in a non-totalitarian and non-reductive way. If theology submits to the logic of the secular (for example, assuming a sort of scientific form) it would become one particular, although very special, among other modalities of human reality. Contrary to this, theology as experience of communion is life so that it encompasses all reality in which humanity is present; thus it is intrinsically present in all disclosures and manifestations of reality by human beings, so that all articulations are referred to and judged by the theological modality of life.

The theological commitment in the dialogue with science means the radical stance on science following from the objective requirement that the Church and its theology must draw a clear borderline between the dispassionate contemplation of what happens in

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2 This makes Christian theology flexible to any scientific developments without being assimilated by them. According to V. Lossky, Christian theology „...is able to accommodate itself very easily to any scientific theory of the universe, provided that this does not attempt to go beyond its own boundaries and begins impertinently to deny things which are outside its own field of vision” (V. Lossky, Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1957, p. 106). This accommodation means to remain critical to all scientific claims for monopoly of truth, that is to remain “meta-discourse".
modern science and Church’s involvement in it. The criteria of delimiters can be set in words of Jesus Christ: “What does anyone gain by winning the whole world at the cost of destroying himself?” (Lk. 9:25; Cf. Matt. 16:26). In modern terms it would sound like this: “What does humankind gain by exploring and subjecting the world to its utilitarian needs at the cost of loosing the sense of existence and humanity’s infinite tasks as linked to the transcendent?” Here not only dispassionate critique of a scientific secular mode of thinking is implied. The Christian imperative calls into question the ethical value of the pure secular science with its pretense of objectivity and neutrality, with its claim for the totalitarian truth of being, as if it is devoid of any religious connotations, faith assumptions and possibility of transcendence. It calls into question some gnostic ambitions of modern science to be the power which helps people to solve problems of this and other worlds. In these pretensions modern science denies not only theology’s right to predicate reality, but it denies also philosophy (as love of wisdom) for the uncertainty of its judgements. The scientific secular mind aspires not to philosophy, but to gnostis, that is, precise and demonstrable knowledge. Its aim is to keep silence about which cannot be spoken in terms of rubrics of reason. Theological commitment advocates the opposite in a sophisticated apophatic sense: one has no right to keep silent about things of which we cannot speak (using pure reason), for in this case we pass over in silence the essence of our existence. Yet one can talk about ultimate existential things only through metaphors and aberrations in being clear that the fullness of essential questions cannot be exhausted by the faculties of reason. When the precision of judgement becomes an absolute value so that all questions beyond this “precise gnosis” are abandoned, human being feels lost and deprived of its own existential anxieties. In this sense faith implied in the theological commitment never threatens science and philosophy: on the contrary it protects them from the all-pervasive pretensions of gnosis. Faith needs both philosophy and science because faith operates in the condition of incarnate humanity which seeks and asks for truth. Faith is critical to the same extent that philosophy and science is supposed to be. But faith is universal and encompasses all phenomena of human existence. The matter here is in faith within the Church, as that human space created by God for the fulfilment of mankind. Thus theological commitment as the movement “beyond secular reason” implies deepening and acquiring a new ecclesial experience of God.,

Theological commitment, exercised through employing and renewing the language of the Fathers, brings some novelty into philosophical language, thus providing the basis for describing the experience of transcendence removed by modernity and some trends in philosophy. In this sense the slogan of a neo-patristic synthesis “back to the Fathers”, or “to acquire the mind of the Fathers” implies not only the critique of modern theological thinking but of all forms of thought, including philosophy and science, which disregard transcendence and communion. By reinstating philosophical and scientific forms of thought to their proper status in transcendence and communion, the theological commitment incorporates them into ecclesial fullness thus advancing both theology and existential phenomenology on the grounds of their mutual reintegration in the same human spirit. In so doing the implied ideas of Patristic theological epistemology and anthropology advance of philosophy. Reciprocally the employment of philosophical achievements advances theology bringing it to a constructive engagement with modern culture.

3 G. Florovsky, „Patristic Theology and The Ethos of the Orthodox Church”, in: Aspects of Church History, Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, 4; Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1975, p. 21.
A pneumatological dimension in a synthesis of theology and science

Then the challenge of a neo-patristic synthesis of theology and science is not to treat some contemporary scientific views by using the ideas of the Fathers, but to bring science into the heart of theology, whose proper place is in the Church for which theology is her voice. Science, involved in dialogue with theology, will have to become a different way of expressing the Christian perception of being, contained in the formula of the Sinaite revelation “I am Who I am” (Exod. 3.14). Christians contemplate being as being of Someone; there is no impersonal being at all, for if there is no personal origin, there is no being at all. This implies that the universe of beings, as opposed to non-being, exists only in that one, who can affirm: “I am Who I am”. Science if it wants to be involved in the dialogue with theology must become capable of contemplating the universe as inherent in the person of God, so that mathematical constructions are to lose their meaning as outward and impersonal objectifications made by human subjectivity, and, on the contrary, express the presence of the image of the Person of God in the world revealed to the created humanity. But this requires a radical metanoia which implies, first of all, that human beings will treat themselves not as impersonal physico-biological creatures but as those agencies in the universe who possess in their inner essence the image of the Personal God, the image of Christ and the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit and who through their communion with God establish harmony and the sense of life. Science can become existential only if human beings, who are creators of science, affirm themselves as being the center of hypostatic existence through the intensity of a particular instance and through the events of communion with the Personal God of Christian faith; God “reveals himself by the light of a knowledge which is not a meaning or concept, but a name and a person, Jesus Christ”⁴. By entering our dialogue with the hypostasis of Christ we also begin to comprehend the matter of the world which is the realization of the command of God “Let there be light”. It is through this light of Christ present in the world and sustaining our existence, as well as in the light of knowledge, that science becomes possible at all. Thus understood, science can be reinstated to its proper status in communion with God – Jesus Christ;⁵ or saying the same in a different way, “the truth of the world is for the Church is inseparable from the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of God inseparable from the person of Christ, and the person of Christ from the command of the Word at the beginning of time and in the depths of our hearts, inseparable from the light of the knowledge which raises us to life, to our adoption by God.”⁶

The treatment of science as a mode of the human condition opens a way to a dialogue between science and theology which is different in comparison with its existing forms which attempt to “find” God through science. Even if scientific theories are used to point towards God by means of negative affirmations of the created, the only thing which would be achieved along this way of “theologising” is still the inability of the discursive mind to deal with the living God of faith. But this “silence of mind” of a philosopher-theologian, although it approaches to the “boundaries” of God’s vision as if it is exercised through mystical life, does not always constitute the fulfilment of the contemplation of God in the ascetic and mystical sense. This is another reason why, if science is placed into the context

⁴ C. YANNARAS, Elements of Faith, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998 p. 41. (Emphasis added.)
⁵ J. ZIZIOULAS, Being as Communion, Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997 p. 120; A. NESTERUK, Light from the East, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, p. 2.
⁶ C. YANNARAS, Elements of Faith, p. 42 (emphasis added).
of academic, philosophical theologising, the fullness of the dialogue with theologia, as mystical experience of God, will not be achieved.\textsuperscript{7}

One can conjecture that any scientifico-philosophical ascension to God, if it pretends to find the true and living God of Christian faith, should be complemented by ascetic experience and purification of the heart, which is capable of making a distinction between the glimpse of God as it is present in the natural light of human mind and the True and Uncreated Light of God who can say “I am Who I am”. If one wants to use science in order to “find” God, one should see behind scientific abstractions about the world the presence of that intellectual and spiritual force in humanity which is capable of making the world the “object” of investigation in which the traces of the Divine can be found through the presence of the Divine image in all human intellectual articulations of the world.

It is in this sense that science and scientific activity in general are to be approached not from the point of view of analysing the content of its theories, but rather by “deconstructing” its concepts in order to analyse the structures of human consciousness whose intentional correlates are interpreted as the objective world. Correspondingly, an objective in such an approach is to reveal a human integrating capacity to sustain the presence of the Divine image in it and convey this image to the world. It is because of the presence of the Divine image that human subjectivity does not create a chaotic image of reality, it contains in itself a kind of grace of shaping this reality harmoniously and beautifully. The coherence of the world as it appears through conscious articulation in human subjectivity is a contingent fact, but this contingency is of Divine origin; it is present as a gift of grace to be in co-ordination with the whole world and able to express this co-ordination by making the world inherent in the hypostasis of humanity.

This grace points towards something which is beyond the immanence of consciousness embedded in the world, that beyond from “where” the link between consciousness and what it tackles as an object of its intention and thematicization, is effectively actualised. The propensities of knowledge which allow one to reveal the beauty and harmony in creation are in us but not from us. Human beings experience knowledge as a particular existential mode through the presence of the light of Christ in their consciousness.\textsuperscript{8} In this case whatever

\textsuperscript{7} In this respect Fr. Sophrony (Sakharov) writes: “Many theologians of the philosophical type, remaining essentially rationalists, rise to supra-rational or, rather supra-logical spheres of thought, but these spheres are not yet the Divine world: they lie within the confines of human-created nature and as such are within reach of the understanding in the natural order of things. These mental visions cannot, it is true, be circumscribed within the framework of formal logic, since they go beyond into the domain of meta-logical and antinomial reasoning, yet for all that they are still the result of the activity of the reason. The overcoming of discursive thinking is proof of high intellectual culture but it is not yet ‘true faith’ and real divine vision. People in this category, who often possess outstanding capacities for rational reflection, come to realise that the laws of human thought are of limited validity, and that it is impossible to encircle the whole universe within the steel hoops of logical syllogisms. This enables them to arrive at a supra-mental contemplation, but what they then contemplate is still merely beauty created in God’s image. Since those who enter for the first time into the sphere of the ‘silence of mind’ experience a certain mystic awe, they mistake their contemplation for mystical communion with the Divine. The mind, it is true, here passes beyond the frontiers of time and space, and it is this that gives it a sense of grasping eternal wisdom. This is as far as human reason can go along the path of natural development. At these bounds where ‘day and night come to an end’ man contemplates a light, which is, however, not the True Light in which there is no darkness, but the natural light peculiar to the mind of man created in God’s image.” Archimandrite SOPHONY (Sakharov), The Monk of Mount Athos, London & Oxford: Mowbrays, 1973, p. 101-2 (emphasis added).

\textsuperscript{8} St. Maximus the Confessor expressed this thought by saying that in spite of the fact that “God transcends all the power and strength of the mind and leaves no kind of trace for the mind to experience”, the
the human mind asserts as “nature” or “the world” by its created constitution contains the light of Christ: patristic writers asserted that nature receives its meaning, purpose and end in Christ.

It is then not difficult to realise that if subjectivity withdraws (willingly or unwillingly) from this grace (the Divine image), the whole harmony of the world collapses into the chaos of meaningless sense impressions and imaginations. Theology, contrary to many modern scientific abstractions about other worlds, is always concerned with our world, where the grace of the Spirit is available. This is the reason why, from a theological point of view, any speculation about a universe without human beings constitutes no more than a speculation about the universe without grace and, as such, is devoid of any theological content and meaning. It can form no more than a pointer towards possible intelligible worlds whose existential meaning is not clear.

In view of what has been discussed so far one can affirm that the performance of mediation between theology and science is possible by the way of disclosing the presence of the natural light of human mind in scientific theories by “reversing” their content to the structures of human subjectivity, which, exhibits the presence of “grace” through its ability to be the dative of manifestation and nominative of disclosure. But having detected the presence of this natural light of the human mind as an ultimate ground of knowledge, the engagement of theology with science is still to take place; for the cessation of naïve empirical thinking and acquisition of the apophatic convictions about inaccessibility of God through the natural attitude only prepares the ground for entering the next, more challenging stage, in search for the personal God-Christ. This search is based on the personal experience of and the direct participation in God through prayer and liturgy, that is communion of the Holy Spirit in the Church, which, brings us to a different (in comparison with a scientific) stance on the human condition in the world. Here the transcendental subjectivity reveals itself through personal and ecclesial forms of the intentional participation in God through the Church’s mind and with the help of the Holy Spirit. It is through this ecclesial dimension that the mode of the natural light, that is, the personal presence of Christ in every human being can be articulated.

By revealing the presence of the natural light of the human mind behind of all objectifications in scientific theories, these theories receive their existential interpretation through which their relationship to theology will be magnified. But this treatment will implicitly

light of Christ, his “white garments teach, in a divinity fitting way, at one and the same time both the magnificence that lies in creatures proportionately to the logoi according to which they have come into being and the mysterious revelation found in the understanding of the words of Holy Scripture, so that the written power in the Spirit and the wisdom and knowledge manifested together in creatures are displayed together for the knowledge of God.” (Ambigua, 10:31a, PG 1060C-D [ET: A. LOUTH, Maximus the Confessor, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 128]) As we point out below, the meaning of what Maximus says is that the natural revelation about God which is in a characteristic way encoded in human creatures is always accompanied by the “mysterious revelation” (supernatural revelation), without which the natural light in human mind, or the natural projection of the light of Christ, is not complete if it is taken in isolation.

9 In words of V. Lossky, “the mysteries of the divine economy are thus unfurled on earth, and that is why the Bible wants to bind us to the earth, [... it forbids us to lose ourselves in cosmic immensities (which our fallen nature cannot grasp anyway, except in their aspect of disintegration), [...] it wants to win us from usurpation of fallen angels and bind us to God alone. [...] In our falliness we cannot even place our world amidst these spiritual immensities.” (V. Lossky, Orthodox Theology, Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997, p. 64)
accept and reject something in these theories. The logic of this choice must be faithful to the Orthodoxy of the Church, but it also must survive accusations in old-fashioned fideism which postmodern thinkers can raise. But this implies that any theological perception of science and its modern context must resign itself to the fact that science is functioning in modern society regardless of its good or bad. The function of theology in this case is to make articulate those spiritual intentions which drive humanity in its scientific and technological advance, as well as the extent to which these intentions diversify from, or are akin to, that which theology advocates about the place of humanity in the universe and its mediation between creation and God.

Then the tradition should constitute itself as an interplay between theology and science and it is in this constitution that a neo-patristic synthesis of theology and science will reveal itself. One is tempted to repeat the question: how can this be achieved; how can the tradition, preserve itself through appropriation of historical novelities, which seem to be in total disjunction with what the tradition asserts, as an indispensable core of its historic functioning. Here the analogy with the phenomenological approach to history comes to mind. For phenomenology history manifests the life of consciousness, so that the very idea that the world is articulated through human consciousness means, by definition, that the world is articulated from within human history. But history is understood here as a constitutive process of the human ratio and not only as sediment of dead facts and ideas. History is the context of all articulations of the world. Christianity adds to this that history is not only the context of Christian faith which was initiated two thousand years ago; rather it is the constant permeation of all meanings and actions of Christian civilisation through the action of the Holy Spirit who transfers to this history some teleological (eschatological) intentionality. This implies that consciousness as such, being incarnate in history, is driven, in its open-ended unfolding through history, by the Holy Spirit, so that an appeal to the Fathers of the Church (made in the beginning of the 20th century) is not an accident of historical development of theology, but rather is the necessity which originates in depths of intentions and will of the Holy Spirit which are revealed to the mind of the Church and its theologians. If, in our pursuit for a synthesis of theology and science we follow the ways and logic of the Holy Spirit, we realise that the methodology of this synthesis does not exist a-priori. It will reveal itself only through the living engagement of theology and science under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that is, community of the Spirit, the Church. But this living engagement must manifest that the dialogue between theology and science is not some artificial subject introduced in the interdisciplinary academic and ecclesial context, but a necessity following from the will of the Holy Spirit acting upon civilisation and contemplated as an incessant urge to reintegrate the broken created spirit of humanity. Indeed the Spirit always teaches us that he is the One who is present behind all dispensations and gifts available to humanity (I Cor. 12:4). Theology and science are these gifts of the same Spirit, so that there is an intrinsic unity of theology and science as two different modes of human subjectivity which is animated by the Spirit. This entails that to contrapose science to theology, appears to be a sheer fallacy of that consciousness which pretends to convince itself that in science it does not need any grace from God in order to co-ordinate itself with the whole world. If someone’s mind is deprived of grace and cannot see the presence of God in the world, it can exalt science to the level of ultimate and grace-independent truth. However, the power of the Holy Spirit, through which the natural light of the human mind is latently present in all human beings, is always ready to reveal itself if this mind is willing to recognise that whatever science is treating as its objective reference is deeply inherent in the immediacy of
existential events. Humanity, being in the world through living in it, and, thus, being contained by the world, holds the world in front of itself by integrating all its structural levels in a single consciousness. That is why by being a part of nature, which science describes as an independent from its inward existence in human insight, humanity paradoxically contains nature inwardly through fusion of knowledge and insight. This is the paradox which makes humanity distinctively different from any other forms of biological existence, and through this paradox, that the Holy Spirit provides humanity with the move towards the transcendent, not only of the images of the empirical, visible world, but of the transcendent ground of consciousness, the transcendence which is not abstract, but living and ontological. This transcendence does not imply any disregard or disrespect of science and of those empirical and intelligible realities it deals with. The objective of transcending is to relate scientific ideas about reality to the wholeness of conscious being in the world, the wholeness, whose meaning can only be attempted to be understood with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

Knowledge and ecclesial wisdom

Some aspects of modern science, on being critically assessed, reveal the presence of contradictions arising from science’s pretension for independence and freedom of research. Humanity, exercising its freedom of exploiting and subjugating nature to its utilitarian needs, thus forgetting about the sacramental and thanksgiving attitude to nature, becomes a tragic hostage of this freedom to “explore” resulting in the ecological crisis and political instabilities caused by abuses of technological achievements. The alleged freedom of exploration of nature as being devoid of theological and teleological ground and reflection leads to its own self-negation by reducing humanity to mere hermeneutics of biological survival and depriving it of its dignity and theo-centeredness. The freedom of person from spiritual authority effectively eliminates personhood as the issue reducing humanity to no more than a futile consubstantiality of the material and thus disintegrating community into dispersed biological applications endowed with the function consumption. Contrary to this, Christianity affirms freedom by placing human beings in the centre of all questioning and articulations of the world, by implying that human dignity does not simply follow the logic of science which positions humanity as a thing among other things, but refers to that invisible origin by whose will humanity strives to fulfil its destiny.

The theological commitment in the dialogue with science sees the split between faith and reason, or the split of intentionalities in one and the same human subjectivity, as the loss of perception of the centrality of human person in the dialogue: therefore the dialogue with science has to naturally follow theology which “has to do with existential needs of the human person. Owing to the advance of technology and science, there is growing concern about the respect of human dignity and freedom in our time. Theology must treat as a priority the meaning of the person”\(^{10}\). While reasserting personhood as the uniting mode of

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\(^{10}\) Metr. John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, „The Contribution of Western Orthodox Theology“, THE MESSENGER, Journal of the Episcopal Vicariate of Great Britain and Ireland, N 6, May 2008, pp. 42-3. In accord with this Fr. D. Staniloae writes: “Man today is not content to be just a consumer of the products and distractions provided by technology; he demands to be a man of ever closer relationship with his fellow men, and consequently a man who, in a manner much more acute bow than before, lives out his obligation to find those ways and means which will assure that these relationships do not become painful and inimical, but instead remain friendly and responsible. These ways and means can only be discovered however by experience, by
articulation and exploration of the world and God, one must not be naïve in order to understand how different this personal knowledge of the world and God can be in physical or social reality. Personhood, or personal mode of existence, implies not only radical otherness with respect to the substance of the world, but also radical communion with this substance, which, in particular, is realized in human communities as the living chain of interpersonal relationships. Communion here incorporates much more than a simple sharing of living space and exercising love, empathy and compassion with respect to fellow-neighbors. It implies an element of corporate responsibility for persons as community in a particular environment which is conditioned not only by simple social norms, economic interests of a particular group, or purely by the instinct of survival. Communion of persons assumes a certain reference of the source of their existential otherness in the Divine. It is through this reference that the collective responsibility is linked to the concept of wisdom, as distinct from that of knowledge.\footnote{11}

In early Patristic times wisdom meant that knowledge was inconceivable without being referred to the source of its facticity in God.\footnote{12} Reason was sanctified by the spiritual intellect as that link between man and God which made wisdom accessible to human grasp.\footnote{13} It is important to stress, however, that the presence of Wisdom in human communities coming into contact with those higher realities that man thirsts for in order to escape the deadly monotony of purely material distractions\footnote{10} (Theology and the Church, p. 217.)

\footnote{11} It is often implied that scientific advance takes place in a stream of wisdom: science makes human life better and longer, it gives knowledge and conquers ignorance. But this scientific wisdom does not address the issue of existence: in its success in answering the question "What is the universe?", it does not answer the question "Why is the universe?". Scientific wisdom operates in the limits of the pre-given which is accessible to the discursive mind. In a way, scientific wisdom is tacitly embedded in a wisdom of another kind, that is, the wisdom of being which is affirmed through the very fact of our existence in the universe; and it is the understanding of this ultimate existential wisdom that became a major preoccupation of Christian theology since its early Patristic period.

\footnote{12} Knowledge can rather be connoted with created wisdom which in turn is paralleled with philosophy, or reason. In this case the wisdom of the Church, that is divine wisdom, contrary to created wisdom, represents a saving knowledge to which all mundane activities such as science and philosophy contribute and cooperate. But by cooperating in attainment of truth the wisdom of the sciences and philosophy never exhausts this truth because they are contingent upon this truth existentially: they contain a glimpse of the divine wisdom through the sheer fact that science and philosophy exist. The sciences and philosophies aspire to this wisdom, but in themselves can never attain it within their own boundaries, i.e. without communion with God, which itself sanctifies all sorts of created wisdom.

\footnote{13} St. Augustine of Hippo articulated wisdom as the link-piece between creation and God by making a distinction between the uncreated and created wisdom, as it appears to the human spirit (On the Trinity, XII, 14.22). St. Augustine insists that in spite of the fact that both the word of wisdom and knowledge are given by the same Spirit (1 Cor. 12,8) they are distinct (On the Trinity XII, 15.25). And wisdom in this context as being created is dependent upon something else which originates beyond creation. Here he makes an analogy with the light which gives origin to illumination which is caught by the human grasp. But human grasp, being the manifestation of the created wisdom, itself depends on the uncreated light through which the natural light of human mind as made in the divine image is seen. Even if the human mind is capable of articulating things in the universe because of the inherent coordination between the world and mind originating from the image of God, it does not immediately imply that this mind is wise by itself through the natural capacity which is granted to it at the moment of its creation (Confessions 12.15). The human mind can become wise if it makes an ecstatic transcendence in faith when the natural light present in this mind will be brought to communion with the supreme Light in which the supreme wisdom of the very existence will be revealed. And it is only through communion as participation that the supreme Wisdom can be revealed and all forms of created wisdom can be sanctified. But this also implies that it is through man's communion with God that the link between God and the world, i.e. the ultimate sense of existence is hypostatised and revealed to humanity as wisdom. This conclusion points sufficiently enough to the demarcation between what can be called wisdom of knowledge and wisdom of communion; it is only through the latter that the former can be assessed and sanctified.
was secured not through particular visionaries and spiritually advanced persons, but on
the level of corporate participation in it which originated in the charismatic nature of the
Church and its Councils. This is what is described in Eastern theology either by using such
words as “catholicity” (universality) or in a particular Slavonic Orthodox usage “sobornost”
(conciliarity). One of the features of catholicity is to establish decisions about what is good
and right for men not on the grounds of what is good for this of that individual but what is
good for all humanity in its entirety including past, present and future generations: thus
catholicity in its essence refers to the fullness of humanity understood eschatologically.

An epistemological and hence ethical individualism is inevitable in the conditions
when the picture of the world is presented as a correlate of impersonal and anonymous
subjectivity, so that the atomization of humanity takes place on the ground of their
differentiation as corporeal units in space and time. This atomization results in that every
human person is free to achieve its own goals by using their potential and capacity to the ut-
imate limit. It is this feature of modern society which leads to incredible scientific discoveries
and advances in technology: human scientists feel free to explore and study whatever they
want and how they want, and, while discovering this or that potential in nature, to develop
it to its extreme use and exploitation without correlating the results of this usage with other
aspect of human life. What happens is that the ethical individualism in knowledge, as
freedom from the corporate morality of humanity as the whole, leads to the individualization
and atomization of potentialities of nature, when every newly discovered phenomenon is
brought by free human will to its limiting use as a source of power, that is to its humanly-
seen teleological end. One can see consequences of such an approach to exploration of new
physical forces in a contemporary ecological crisis when the unlimited usage of energetic
capacities discovered in the 20th century applied to some particular individualistic goals can
threaten the existence of the entire planet, thus potentially annihilating those agencies who,

implies in turn that all attempts of attaining wisdom will lead to the necessity of ecclesial experience as that
medium in which communion becomes effective through the action of the Holy Spirit.

14 Church Councils were gatherings of bishops, not of academics, so that the Councils were liturgical
events through which Church affirmed its truth. This brings an eschatological dimension to wisdom, because,
since Irenaeus of Lyons the Eucharist was considered as a sacrament which changes man in a way such that
he attains ecclesial dimension of his existence, as the life in the “world to come”. It means that the Eucharist as
a principle of truth and ontological affirmation of the Church’s existence is possible only as an eschatological
move toward fulfillment not of a particular, individual mode, of sanctification but rather as participation in
building the Body of Christ, that is the Church. This participation, seen from the eschatological perspective,
manifests the ontological affirmation of Church’s reality, not only on the visible historical scene, but also as
life in the Kingdom of God.

15 In Russian religious thought the unity of humanity through the Church was denoted by a special word
“sobornost” which meant, on the one hand, that all human beings belong to the same Church, which in its
particular empirical incarnation was presented by a “sobor” (that is, a “cathedral”), and, on the other, that all
people are living through the council (for which the same Russian word “sobor” is used) with each other. St.
Maximus the Confessor articulates this thought by saying that the Holy Church forms the image of God and
that all human beings who constitute its Body are united in a non-trivial ecclesial sense (Mystagogy 1), forming
thus an ecclesial microcosm.

16 The intuition of fullness encompasses all possible generations of human beings who will ever live in
the idea of fulfilment of pleroma of humanity, that is of the fullness of the “body” of humanity in Christ. St.
Gregory of Nyssa argues that when the Holy Scripture says ‘God created man according to His image and
likeness’, it does mean ‘...the entire plenitude of humanity was included by God of all, by His power of fore-
knowledge, as it were in one body...The whole race was spoken of as one man... Our whole nature, then,
extending from the first to the last, is, so to say, one image of Him Who is.’ Cf. GREGORY OF NYSSA, On the
in virtue of their freedom, unleashed knowledge forgetting about *wisdom* which always teaches that knowledge assumes faith and loving relationship with what is known, and does not consider it as the source of power.

Conciliarity, in its depth, appeals to such a morality whose subject is not a single person, or a particular political group, but all humanity. The gift of finding the ultimate common background for human intelligence in the sphere of abstract transcendentality was granted to many visionaries and deep thinkers. However it did not prevent the atomising tendencies in human communities, remaining thus no more than a philosophical pointer towards some common truth of humanity, but not reaching the truth of its unity in full. What was missing in all such findings is the *charismatic* and *eucharistic* dimension of this truth as present and manifested in the Church. This gives another dimension to the notion of “sobornost”: it is only through being in Church, that is being in council (“sobor”) with all people, and being under the veil of the Holy Spirit, that it is possible to know truly. The reality of the Church, its tradition as the continuity of the historical revelation of God in the World, as well as constant presence of the Holy Spirit in Church’s liturgy, forms the conditions for the ultimate *transcendental* and *multi-hypostatic* “subject” to show its own presence in the conditions of its empirical absence. It is through the wisdom of this “subject” that all outward articulations of the world possess truth, understood in ecclesial and hence eucharistic sense, as truth of life. If humanity is brought into existence in order to realize its ecclesial function by building the picture of the universe together with the universal Church, its destiny is to take care of the universe being the priest of creation by bringing creation through mediations between its divisions back to union with God. The whole history of the universe, seen previously only through secular eyes and displayed as a natural process, will transform consequently (as renewed articulation (metanoia) in the renewed hypostasis of humanity) towards its ecclesial mode.

By relating humanity to Christ, whose hypostasis, after the Pentecost, was transmitted to the Church, theology implicitly affirms that the Christ-event as central for our comprehension of the possibility of knowledge of the entire universe has some cosmological significance. Then one can conjecture that the development of the universe has, theologically speaking, a drastically different meaning before the Incarnation of the Logos on Earth, and, after it. It was necessary for the universe to be in a state of constructive development in order to sustain life on Earth and to allow God to condescend to us and to assume human flesh in order to initiate the new stage of salvation history. Thus after the Incarnation man, having realised its ecclesial standing, becomes fully responsible for the fate of the universe.

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37 The assertion of human existence as ecclesial existence received a symbolic interpretation in St. Maximus the Confessor who interpreted the entire universe as the universal Church (*Mystagogy* 2). If one takes into account another parable of Maximus, that is of similarity between man and the universe (*Mystagogy* 7), then one can in the same way infer that there is analogy between man and Church, so that in some sense the Divine image in human beings is essentially the image of the universal Church. Maximus develops this theme in *Mystagogy* 5.

38 St. Maximus the Confessor gave a metaphorical expression of this transformation in *Mystagogy* 7. In analogy with Maximus, for Gregory of Nyssa the fulfilment of *pleroma* of humanity will be accompanied by cessation of that time which we experience as temporal flow of physical events and by cessation of procreation, that is effectively by cessation of the biological function of human beings as we understand it today (St. GREGORY OF NYSSA, *On the Making of Man* 22). But this will imply that human nature will experience a change which will lead to a change of the embodiment constitution which determines intentional consciousness at present.
Humanity then can only be understood in the context of the promise of God for its salvation as constituting the locus point of the meeting of God and His creation, as the mediating agency, which is supposed to bring the whole universe through its genuine knowledge to new creation. The wisdom of what he have just discussed is formed by what the Church is left with after the resurrection and ascension of Christ, the wisdom which we know through the Church tradition and its ever experienced liturgical epiclesis. In the same way as through Liturgy Christians experience an eschatological presence of Christ, the ecclesial wisdom in the knowledge of the universe through science discloses to men the presence of the hypostasis of Christ (although in its empirical absence). This wisdom reinstates the existing split between the ecclesial and scientific intentionality in studying the universe to their eucharistic unity, that is unity in communion with God, revealing thus the work of scientists as a para-eucharistic work.¹⁹

Here the wisdom of Christian Church makes itself clearly distinct from philosophical and scientific knowledge as being natural predispositions of the human reason since ancient times. The ancient Hellenistic world, as well as all philosophies and sciences which followed its intellectual pattern, did not feel the modes of gratitude and thanksgiving as a beginning of thought. If for the ancient thought there was nobody who had to be thanked, for the modern thought it has always been a fight against the transcendent who might be thanked. The absence of the eucharistic intentionality in philosophical and scientific vision of the world results in a desire for unlimited and unconstrained possession of knowledge of things in order to use them for some particular utilitarian goals. Because the possession of things, even in their abstract knowledge, destroys a loving relationship to them, the intentionality of thanksgiving ceases to function as the gratitude for the every fact of existence of those things in creation which are supposed to be loved. To acquire back that eucharistic intentionality in knowledge one requires to exercise metanoia when abstract knowledge and ideas become manifestation of that image which supposes to disclose that One who stands in communion with the human spirit and who makes it possible to see behind scientific proofs a certain witness of the One. This metanoia represents a mode of ecclesial reality; ‘thus, it is the Church as eucharistic mystery which gives us knowledge of a universe which was created to become a eucharist.’²⁰ The universe acquires the sense of sacrament thus being a correlate of the eucharistic intentionality of humanity. The Christian Church as carrying and sustaining this intentionality reveals itself as that ultimate multhypostatic subject which unfolds the universe in the state of communion and loving relationship. It is in the wisdom of the Christian Church that all atomising and individualistic tendencies of the human reason are subjected to a certain restraint and regulation for the welfare of the whole world.

Then it is not difficult to realize that that wisdom, exercised through communion, can deal either with the question of knowledge’s usage, or, what is more radical, with the question of whether this or that particular knowledge must be obtained at all. A certain person can be “wise” in using new knowledge, but the freedom of scientific research and information cannot guarantee that another one will use this knowledge with caution. One

¹⁹ Cf. J. Zizioulas, Being as Communion, p. 120; A. Nisteruk, Light from the East, p. 2; The Universe as Communion, London. T&T Clark, 2008, p. 217.
can anticipate an obvious objection to this thesis from those who defend the freedom of reason from any delimiters which do not follow the pattern of free thinking itself. Ecclesial and conciliatory wisdom sees in this unrestrained freedom a certain danger of not being conform to demands of other people, nature and God himself. In its potential freedom to perform free thinking human beings are prone to lose any moral guidance based in understanding of sheer givenness of life by God. When free thinking in its technological implications threatens the very fact of life, definitely one sees here a certain contradiction between thus realized freedom and moral obligations to preserve this life as a gift.

Finally one can see that the recovery of the lost personhood in the dialogue between theology and science forms only a necessary condition for this dialogue to be justified. Since the presence of persons behind scientific knowledge does not preclude its misuse, theology enters the relationship with science at a different, ethical level, bringing knowledge under the guidance of wisdom embedded in the human condition but realized in eucharistic communities. Thus the ecclesial dimension of the dialogue receives its further specification as the articulation of a thanksgiving intentionality in scientific research, the intentionality which once again positions humanity in the center of this dialogue.