

MOVEMENT AS A MODE OF BEING OF THE HOLY TRINITY IN NICHOLAS OF METHONE

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Abstract: TEREZIS, Christos Ath. *Movement as a Mode of Being of the Holy Trinity in Nicholas of Methone*. In this article, focusing on the work of Nicholas of Methone entitled *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology* (*Ανάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου*), I study the concept of movement as it appears in the metaphysical level of the Holy Trinity. My purpose is to show that the author preserves the philosophical meaning of the concept in question, but without getting out of the Christian frame. My study is divided into six particular sections. In the first one I attempt to approach Nicholas' thoughts on the movement as a mode of communication between the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. In the second one, I investigate his views on movement in the sense of distinction of the divine essence from the divine energies. In the third one, I examine his positions on how movement is distinct from change. In the fourth one, I approach some more particular aspects of the divine movement. In the fifth one, I attempt to see in comparison his opinion regarding metaphysical self-movement and natural self-movement together with their epistemological extensions. Finally, I discuss his thought on the double movement of the angels. The most important conclusion that I draw is that, when speaking of the metaphysical level, movement is for Nicholas the factor which distinguishes the divine transcendence from the divine creativity.

Keywords: *Nicholas of Methone, movement, Holy Trinity, divine essence, divine energies, metaphysical self-movement*

General Introduction

In the teachings of Christianity, the philosophical concept of “movement” is found both in the metaphysical level of the Holy Trinity as well as in the natural one of the produced beings and it expresses the active way of their existence. Regarding the first level, it is projected in such a way that it completely surpasses any static model of a blissful immobility and self-reference of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. The purpose is to point out the highest degree of their extreme activity, both in their relations with each other and in their productive tendency towards the created world, including both the immaterial and the material world. Certainly, the triune God is completely independent of the movement of matter which either falls or not to causality and operates in a way that, like the Aristotelian “*πρῶτο κινούν ἀκίνητον*” (first immovable mover), enables beings to acquire a formulated and functional way of being. From this point of view, Metaphysics is connected with Physics and thus any attempt to form an inactive metaphysical system with no communicative projections is excluded. On the other hand, “movement” is presented as a physical state which is connected, in the sense of a principle, with beings and their functions. It is also the power that, either as intervening in beings or as their inner state, contributes to their change or to their transition to a new field of being, sometimes natural and sometimes moral or cognitive. Essentially, however, this change, in its positive aspect, is not considered to be a change of the

beings but mainly the highlighting of the possibilities of their existence, that are of course being given totally by God (Maximus the Confessor 1857, 1032A-1116 D), where in our view a holistic Anthropology is elaborated (Evdokimov 1958).

In his work *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology* (Ἀνάπτυξις τῆς Θεολογικῆς Στοιχειώσεως Πρόκλου Πλατωνικοῦ Φιλοσόφου), the Christian thinker Nicholas of Methone (? – c.1165) (Angelou 1984¹) demonstrates specific approaches of the Eastern Christian Theology on the question of movement, in his attempt to overthrow the polytheistic ontological system of Proclus the Neoplatonist. In the following study we shall attempt to present his relevant views, but without insisting on his criticism of Proclus (Podskalsky 1976, 509-523; Robinson 2014, 67-72; Biriukov 2003, 181-188²). Our intention is to remain exclusively in his positions regardless of any critical intention he may have had, in order to understand an aspect of the Christian Ontology in detail. We believe that Nicholas preserves the philosophical meaning of the concept of “movement” without refuting at all its theological definition. He therefore applies to his reasoning a solid theoretical basis not only at the beginning but also in the articulation of his methodology. In the following study we shall investigate what is the position of movement in the divine transcendent level according to Nicholas.

1. Movement as a way of communication between the Persons of the Holy Trinity

A basic point of the teaching of Eastern Christianity is the dynamic way which is added to all the presences and activities of the Holy Trinity. In other words, it is assumed that any static state must be excluded by the divine, an aspect that presupposes that the way of its existence is formed by energy, as functions, references and relations. These relevancies are presented both within the Holy Trinity and in its various-infinite manifestations and presentations. Therefore, on the one hand, movement is an internal way of life for the Holy Trinity regarding the so-called dialectical way of its inner development. Specifically, Father moves from the absolute unity of the “monad” and contributes, with the birth of the Son, to the development of duality and furthermore, with the procession of the Holy Spirit, to the Trinity. This movement of developments does not lead in any way to situations of substantial change and ontological alterations. The opposite would introduce the change-variability and would include the divine in the operating conditions of creation. Everything is done is self-evidently characterised by the integrity of unity and it declares the reciprocity between the divine Persons, as an eternal dynamic projection of their relations (Angelou 1984, 29.27-30; Cf. Gregory the Theologian, *Λόγος* 29, (*Oratio* 29), 76B; Lossky, 1967³). From a cognitive point of view, it is inscribed in what is defined as apophatic and superlative theology. In other words, it is a hyper-essential movement and therefore not known by the human consciousness, nor described by any categorical or conceptual system (Dionysius the Areopagite 1857a, 997A-1048B; Semmelroth 1950, 209-234. On a historical and systematic approach of this discussion Hochstaffl 1976).

The above statements are essential in order to understand, to the extent possible, the particular ways of the divine’s manifestation so as not to confuse them with each other, both in their projection processes as well as in their results. According to Nicholas, therefore, within the intra-Trinitarian

¹ It is a critical edition of Angelou who has also composed an introduction on Nicholas’ life and works.

² About the criticism of Nicholas on Proclus.

³ Lossky also analyses how human beings are asked to repeat in their relationships consciously and in their own way the relationships which are developed within the Holy Trinity.

relations there is an essential fertility and movement, performed in a transcendent way: «Καὶ εἰ τρία τοῦτο (sc. τὸ θεῖον ἔν) φαιμέν διὰ τὴν ὑπερουσίως οὐσιώδη γονιμότητά τε καὶ κίνησιν» (Angelou 1984, 29.24-25)⁴. Due to the fact that this way cannot be approached by the human sensible experience and mental processing, it can be understood, to some extent, from the point of view of the identity of the divine essence, which is easily susceptible to the divine hypostatic-personal distinctions. That is, it is an ontological equivalence and indistinguishability, which are not abolished by distinctions already a priori of the divine hypostases. Therefore, the birth of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father are ontologically different from that of the fruitful imitation of the Holy Trinity through which the immaterial and natural beings of the created world are produced (Lossky 1944, 131-169). However, it is not about a difference that is defined by space or time but by purely ontological qualities. In the case of angels and physical beings, a new existence emerges without a pre-existing general ontological substratum, a condition of production that is not found in the Holy Trinity (Angelou 1984, 32.10). Certainly, all these do not lead to the conclusion that the divine essence has an ontological priority over the divine Persons, excluding at the same time the opposite too. In the Holy Trinity neither hierarchies and definitions nor polytheism are developed.

2. Movement in the sense of distinction of the divine essence from the divine energies

It is necessary, however, to address the whole question of cosmic development through divine movements under the terms of the famous theory of Eastern Christianity about the distinction – and not the separation – between the divine essence and the divine energies. It is basically about highlighting the difference between the separated-unparticipated and the dynamic-participated aspect of the Holy Trinity (Gregory Palamas 1966b, 96.1-136.2). Accordingly, Nicholas notes against this theory that the divine moves through its actions in a creative and predictive way. The result of this movement is for the beings to be produced (beginning of intervention) as well as to be maintained and corrected in a harmonious way (care of operation). As for its essence, however, it remains immovable and in a permanent state in itself. Thus, the unalterable and irreversible of its deepest ontological core is ensured: «Κινουμένης (sc. τῆς παντελείου Τριάδος) δημιουργικῶς τε καὶ προνοητικῶς εἰς τὴν αὐτῶν (sc. τῶν παραγομένων) παραγωγὴν καὶ συντήρησιν καὶ ἐξτακτον ὑπαρξιν, οὐσιωδῶς δὲ μενούσης ἐν ἑαυτῇ ἀκινήτου τε καὶ ἀναλλοιώτου» (Angelou 1984, 33.26-28)⁵. If we examine the issue in its final implication, we can argue that with this last position, regarding the immutability, any version of the diffusion of the divine substance is avoided and obviously pantheism too. Created beings are ontologically other than the Holy Trinity and their existence is related in its capacity as a cause only to the projections of the divine energies. It should be noted that this relationship also operates under conditions of otherness, thus excluding

⁴ We need to mention that according to the Christian teaching the concept of triad does not refer to numbering but to a dynamic mode of being as projection (Lossky 1944, 43-44).

⁵ We could contend that at this point there is an analogous approach with that which is found in the first two hypotheses of Plato's *Parmenides* as they are interpreted in a Christian way by Dionysius the Areopagite and in a Neoplatonic way by Proclus (Corsini 1962). This is a crucial study for this topic, which presents analyses for other questions as well, which have to do with the differences and similarities between Christianity and Neoplatonism.

pantheism here as well. The divine energies combine with each other in a special way, unknown to man, and produce beings as new ontological data (Gregory Palamas 1966a, 137.1-163.16)⁶. These lead with epistemological validity to some conclusions. According to Nicholas, any movement of the substance, exclusively at the limits of the divine level, takes place as a point of reference for the intra-triadic relations of the Persons, while according to its reference to the created world it is immovable and therefore reducible to something else and incompatible with something else. Thus, what we would legitimately support is that on behalf of the Father only bringing forth (προαγωγή) of similar beings arises - and not production (παραγωγή) - or, more precisely, of identical beings since the term “similar” refers to essentially different hypostases. This form of production excludes the hierarchy of ranks between the divine hypostases as well as the parameter of their ontological - and even more of their temporal - succession. Christian monotheism makes inactive and excludes even the most basic suspicion regarding the submission of a divine hypostases to another. As far as the issue of productive manifestations is concerned, in the process of the creation of beings there is no possibility of bringing forth but rather of production. It is not about an emanation of the divine essence. The energy mode of production is perceived in a sense that God raises beings to ‘existence’ from the state of their previous non-existence without his essence undergoing even the slightest alteration and without granting any of its so-called core elements. «Ἀκίνητον ἐν ἑαυτῷ μένον τὸ ἐν τὰ μὲν ἐκ τῆς οἰκειᾶς οὐσίας προάγει ὁμοια, μᾶλλον δὲ ταῦτὰ κατὰ φύσιν ἑαυτῷ (καὶ τοῦτο γὰρ μένειν ἐν ἑαυτῷ ἐστὶ), τὰ δὲ παράγει ἐκ μὴ ὄντων κινούμενον δημιουργικῶς καὶ μηδὲν αὐτὸ εἰς τὴν οἰκειᾶν οὐσίαν πάσχον» (Angelou 1984, 35.5-8). According to the text, it is clear that the divine movement in its external projections is inextricably linked to the divine energy or is the promoting factor for its manifestation.

3. Terms of distinction between movement and change

Nicholas’s two remarks, expressed in a rather careful way, enable us to place the specialisations of movement in the necessary conceptual framework. First, the Christian thinker considers it to be a sophisticated reasoning, that is, if we accept that the movement less and the immutable are ontologically identical. And this distinction is based on the fact that their opposites, movement and change, are not identical but every change is considered to be some form of movement (relative and conditionally descriptive with concepts) but he does not consider every movement to be a change (since movement is relevant and has no exclusive content, which means that sometimes is ontologically identified with change). In a similar way, therefore, every unchangeable is immovable and not every immovable is unchangeable (Angelou 1984, 156.17-21)⁷. In our opinion, the differences between the divine and the cosmic are indicated here, in terms of their functions. First of all, it is already a given that in no case do we have the legitimacy to claim that just because God moves, he is subject to the terms of change. Also, regarding his essence, his immutability is directly related to its immobility, although this connection on its own is not such as to ensure divine unchangeability. This is a situation that goes beyond any conceptual definition. Nevertheless, in the case of sensible beings, we cannot accept that their immobility leads them necessarily to their unchangeability. And the reasoning for this is based on two reasons. First: even if they are immobile in their natural physical state, by what criteria would they exclude the possibility of accepting an external movement and suffering the consequences.

⁶ We need here to mention that Gregory Palamas’ works are interesting not only from a systematic point of view but also from a historical one, regardless of the topic discussed each time.

⁷ At this point it becomes clear that the meaning of the terms depends on the ontological level which they describe.

Secondly, as natural in their state of being they do not have substantial autonomy, they are neither self-determined nor do they shape themselves. As hetero-determined, they are in fact subject to alteration, modification, change of their state of being as well as transformation in general (Lossky 1944, 87-107).

4. Particular aspects of the divine movement

Nicholas' second point refers to the qualitative characteristics of the divine movement. He clarifies that the concept and the results of the active movement should not be connected exclusively, and with the standard analogy of term by term, with their counterparts of production. Due to the fact that movement does not work mechanistically even under the terms of a rigid determinism, but rather is directly related to the will and expediency of the moving being, it is connected to the processes of transformation and change that are clearly characterised by an optional mode of operation. This means that there is a strong possibility for a qualitative -or any other- change of intervention, and that existence is not only what is provided to a being but also the precondition for a specific way of its presence and function. This activation and specialisation are connected, while the Holy Trinity creatively intervenes with gradations-differentiations in terms of movement, and that of course occurs in terms of all the other properties provided. Thus, the fact that God makes some beings self-moved, some hetero-moved and others immovable is due to his will and his pre-eternal plans, which define specific conditions for configurations. It should be noted that these optional factors concerning the process of their manifestation, but not their results, remain unexplored by human intellectual activity. Therefore, God is driven by clear personal facts and not by some necessity that his essence would set, he does not remain infertile while, on the other hand, his property of being immovable is obviously different than that of the soulless beings. «Τὸ δὲ κινεῖν οὐ τὸ παράγειν μόνον δηλοῦν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ μεταποιεῖν καὶ μετασκευάζειν κατὰ τὴν τοῦ κινουῦντος βούλησιν, εἶναι δὲ τὸ πάντα παράγον, τὰ αὐτοκίνητα, τὰ ἑτεροκίνητα, τὰ ἀκίνητα, καὶ δημιουργικῶς ὑφιστάν καὶ ὑποστάντα τηροῦν ἐστῶτα καὶ κινουῦν, ὅτε βούλεται, τὸ ἐν αὐτό, τὴν μίαν πάντων ἀρχὴν καὶ αἰτίαν, τὴν παρ' ἡμῶν σεβομένην τριάδα (τριάδα μὲν ὡς μὴ ἄγονον μένη τὸ ἐν μὴδ' ἀκίνητον ὡς τὰ παντάπασιν ἄψυχα» (Angelou 1984, 36.5-11.)⁸. In our opinion, whenever divine immobility is mentioned, it would not be pointless if we argued that it is connected with the stability and the perpetuity of both its essence and actions. More generally: it is about a specific dialectic based on the possibility of a perpetual productive explosion by constantly regenerated (or overfilled) ontological cores that ensure the stability of the created world.

Specifying the way of movement of the Holy Trinity, Nicholas first notes that by being the only source of the produced cosmos, it is not completely immobile but operates as the cause of every fertile state and every movement. Here we face the affirmative aspect of Theological Ontology, according to which God is the absolute precondition for the formation of the archetypes that make the reduction of created beings into existence possible. In other words, he provides the core substrata from which every possibility for fertile manifestations emerges, which are also completely independent of what will be produced; thus, they are not subject to necessity (Maximus the Confessor 2857, 1032 A-1036 C; Tatakis 2007, 81-91). Bringing the issue to theological epistemology and to the field of the formation of names, the question also receives a theoretical content and is formulated with certain conceptual formats. The triune God

⁸ Regarding the volitional content of the requirements of the creation of the created world, cf. Maximus the Confessor 1857, 1069 A-1101 C, where there is also reference to the concept of "movement" as associated with the divine will-energy.

is therefore considered to be legally characterised as fertility per se and as the only, primary and per se “self-moving”. This categorical attribution does not only express a theoretical construction, but arises from a consistent theological realism, which is fully adopted by Eastern Christianity. At the same time, through its elaboration one also aims to exclude the version that the negative-apophatic names for the Holy Trinity indicate deficits, deprivations and absences. And it would be completely inappropriate to claim that God lacks the highest values. However, this is where apophatic theology is introduced, which defines not only the infinite differences of God from beings but also the inherent inability of human consciousness to be elevated to the divine realm with cognitive validity (Lossky 1962). From these binding conditions we are led to superlative theology, according to which the Holy Trinity, as absolute superiority, possesses every quality in a completely different – and indeed indefinable – way than it exists and functions in created beings (George Pachymeres 1857, 612d-613b; Roques 1957, 97-112; Vanneste 1961, 401-415). And on the subject that concerns us we have to note the following: in the context of Christian Monotheism, if God were exclusively immobile, from which other ontological principles would he inherit the terms of his movement towards the physical world? Other impulsive forces would be required and obviously superior to God-or at least equivalent– a version that is inappropriate, both because it suggests polytheism as well as metaphysical causal pluralism, while it also leads to the perpetual search for new mobility principles. «Πάλιν ἔστι μὲν τὸ ἐν, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἄγονον οὐδὲ πάμπαν ἀκίνητον, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸ τὸ πάσης αἰτίου γονιμότητος καὶ κινήσεως, διὸ καὶ τὸ καθ’ αὐτὸ γόνιμον καὶ τὸ μόνον καὶ πρῶτιστον αὐτοκίνητον, ἵνα μὴ τῶν ἐξ αὐτοῦ καλλίστων ἀποστερηθῆται. Εἰ γὰρ ἄγονον, πόθεν τοῖς ἄλλοις ἢ γονιμότης, καὶ εἰ ἀκίνητον, πόθεν ἢ κίνησις; Ἡ γὰρ ἄλλο τι δοτέον εἶναι τὸ τούτων αἰτίου καὶ οὕτως οὐχ ἐν ἅν εἴη τὸ πάντων αἰτίου, καὶ εἰ τὸ πάντων αἰτίου ἐν καὶ γόνιμον, αὐτὸ καὶ αὐτοκίνητον ἀνάγκη εἶναι» (Angelou 1984, 5.3-10)⁹. The ontological conclusion that eventually emerges is that Nicholas, utilising the theory of divine energies here as well, promotes an extremely creative conception of the Holy Trinity regarding the multiplicity of its movements, a version that he finally presents in its multilevel – and exclusively in its particularity – immanence in the entire created world.

All these make clear that in the area of created beings no absolute state of self-movement can be detected. Movement at this point, even in its highest manifestations, is considered as a gift of God. According to this indisputable fact Nicholas makes some clarifications. In his estimation, therefore, any essential identification of the hetero-moved with the moving is a logical error and ontologically unreasonable. In order to express the reasoning correctly, however, it is necessary to first rule out the possibility that the Holy Trinity could exist as a hetero-moved. The possibility of such a redefinition would lead to polytheism. Obviously, the only thing we can categorically attribute to God is that as self-moved he is moving, in the sense of the reflexive form of the verb and not in the passive one. Or, in more accurate terms, he is moving in the self-active sense. We must also exclude the identity of the non hetero-moved with the motionless. The non hetero-moved has a wider field of applications or represents more existential fields than the simply immovable and is subdivided into the self-moved and that which is completely motionless. This second subdivision is valid only in “μηδαμῆ μηδαμῶς ὄν” which basically refers to the absence of existence and function. That is to say, this is a negative state by deprivation. On the other hand, bodies are completely hetero-moved, while to a certain degree of self-movement is possessed by the incorporeal essences, that is, the angelic orders (Angelou 1984, 20.7-15; Gersh 1978, 243-251). Their self-movement, however, does not only indicate a distinct characteristic of manifestation but is also connected with an inner state of moral expediency, the self-determining power. This relation of the exterior with the interior operates and is based on the fact that the incorporeal participate, in the form of the reception of

⁹ This reasoning is formed through the dialectical encounter of the opposites. Cf. Gersh 1978, 229-243.

gifts, in the first self-moved and self-existent reality, that is, in the Holy Trinity. But the reception must be done consciously in order to exclude or at least further limit the mechanistic reactions. «Τῆς αὐτοκινήσιας, ἣν ἡμεῖς φαμεν αὐτεξουσιότητα, μετέχουσαι ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης αὐτοκινήτου καὶ αὐθυπάρκτου οὐσίας» (Angelou 1984, 20.15-17).¹⁰

Following his reasoning, Nicholas argues that Holy Trinity's movement introduces furthermore the parameter of hierarchy into the produced beings. Specifically, the causal principle of Creation, moving creatively and driven not by a natural and without deviations necessity but by its exaggerated goodness, produces the whole of beings, making some of them self-moved but not in an absolute degree- and others hetero-moved (Angelou 1984, 20.18-20). The Christian thinker even clarifies that movement either as an external impulse or manifestation, or as an internal state is in any case analogous to the ontological field or to the existence of the moving. «Ἀνάλογον δὲ πάντως ρητέον τοῖς κινουμένοις τὴν κίνησιν» (Angelou 1984, 20.20-21)¹¹. It is about an obvious correlation of the essence with its functional modes of its expression or with its energy states. Thus, movement is natural in the realm of physical beings while in the metaphysical world it is transcendent (Angelou 1984, 20-21-22). And with this new reasoning it becomes clear that the system of movement does not only refer to immaterial and material beings but also to the divine metaphysical activity. Therefore, any aspect of Parmenidean immobility that would introduce an unbridgeable gap between these two worlds is excluded, whatever the consequences of such a position may have been for the realisation of cosmological processes. Divine movement, as a functional property of divine energy, makes such a gap non-existent and is the mediating factor for the transition from metaphysics to the natural realm.

5. Metaphysical self-movement – Natural self-movement and their epistemological extensions

Accordingly, discussing the differences between the ontological levels, Nicholas elaborates on another aspect of the movement, that is, its branching from the transcendent area of the Holy Trinity to the lowest sensible beings. First, he repeats that in the transcendent deity we distinguish two levels, the immovable and the moving. Generally speaking and specifying the case of that which has movement, he points out that it appears in two ways, that of the self-moved and the hetero-moved. This distinction basically differentiates, in terms of its function, the metaphysical from the natural realm. On the other hand, he mentions that the term “immovable” refers to two diametrically opposed forms of existence. It is the one that is superior to any movement and the one that which is inferior, that is, it is characterised by the terms of deprivation (Angelou 1984, 20.23-32). It is obvious here that the reference to the first existential state is a reminder of superlative theology, according to which the Holy Trinity, not reflected in any affirmative or apophatic term, possesses in an absolutely superior way all qualities held by created beings. Given the fact that the material cosmos is totally dependent on metaphysical archetypes, the Holy Trinity provides some beings with remaining and others with movement (Angelou 1984, 21.18). Therefore, how would it be possible to provide them if it did not possess them already? These differentiated gifts are made according to certain divine reasons, which function as “destinations” of what will be

¹⁰ Gregory the Theologian 1857, 76b. On the concept of the “self-determining power” in Christianity more Tatakis 2007, 195-211; Benakis 1985, 163-177.

¹¹ At this point, the organic connection of movement with its particular bodies, of which it is an essential predicate, is clear (Aristotle 1957, Γ, 200b35: «Οὐκ ἔστι δε τις κίνησις παρὰ τὰ πράγματα».) So, movement has a special character and in this sense is always a mode of expression of a being but not of the entire world, but without this nominalist approach constituting its general cosmological presence.

produced. But the “what” and “how” of these divine reasons, that is, their ontological nature and their creative function, are factors that cannot be explained by the human consciousness and this is the reason they remain unutterable (Angelou 1984, 21.18-20). Our points, therefore, describe and categorise the created beings that move and fall under the sensory experience. Therefore, we face the apophatic theological realism, which leads consistently to the epistemological distinctions that correspond to its fields. The method of analogy can be barely applied, as there are no obvious relations between the created movement and the uncreated movement (Lossky 1930, 279-309)¹². It is basically excluded in terms of “εἶναι” (is) and applies only in the ways of existence.

6. The double movement of the angels

One of the key concepts of Eastern Christianity is its persistence in operation, that is, in taking initiatives by the created beings. Each entity is considered to have been assigned a specific mission, which it is asked to carry out. Indicative, and even par excellence, case of application of this rule is that of the angelic orders which play an intermediate or mediating role between the metaphysical and the natural realm¹³. According to Nicholas, this contributes to the fact that angels have a double reference movement. On the one hand, as created and, therefore, not as completely perfect beings, they move upwards towards the Holy Trinity, in order to expand themselves for the better and to ensure a more divine way of being for their existence. On the other hand, they have a downward movement, that is, they turn to people and thus serve the divine providence and transmit the content of the divine will. In fact, the specificity of their condition is such that we do not characterise them as motive only on the basis of certain qualities of their nature but mainly on the basis of their conscience and intention. «Οἱ δὲ ἄγγελοι καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἄναπτες κινουῦνται πρὸς τὸ θεϊότερον ἀνατεινόμενοι καὶ πρὸς τὸ κάταντες τῇ θεῖα προνοίᾳ διακονούμενοι καὶ ὅλως εἰ καὶ μὴ κατὰ φύσιν ἀλλὰ κατὰ προαίρεσιν κινητοὶ εἰσιν» (Angelou 1984, 149.18-21). The Christian theologian also notes that because angels were created before the sensible beings, their movement is supernatural and possesses the properties of eternity. According to the specific presence of this hyper-empirical characterisation, two details emerge. First of all, angels are not subject to the processes and changes of the world of becoming and retain their nature with no change. In other words, there are no ontic movement conditions of transition from the former to the latter. Second, they show a perpetuity and unchangeability in the general constants of their movements. So, they are constantly manifested with the double movement mentioned before and obviously specialise in its content depending on the new situations that appear each time or depending on the new missions assigned to them. Mostly they are in a state of immobility in projecting both the way in which they participate not only in the infinity of divine goodness but also in the good idiom of their behavior (Angelou 1984, 149.26-28). In fact, in a next section, Nicholas mentions that angelic orders, as holy intellects, have a movement that turns towards the right actions. Moreover, he points out that by their choice they add a moral character, which adds excellent intentional qualities to their existence, on the basis of which they constitute the opposite force against the demons (Angelou 1984, 150.31-151.1).

¹² For a systematic approach of the concept of movement according to the Christian teaching (Gersh 1978, 243-251).

¹³ On Christian Angelology see Dionysius the Areopagite 1857b, 164d-321a, a work that has been commented by Roques 1970; Roques, 1983, 135-169 and Gersh 1978, 167-175.

Conclusion

According to Nicholas of Methone – and more broadly according to Christian thought – movement is a way of expressing the dynamic state of the Holy Trinity. Although the situation to which it refers is more appropriate for the natural world, it is transferred by Nicholas to the metaphysical (universe) and contributes to the formation of the ontological archetypes of the sensible world. It contributes to the distinction between divine transcendence and divine creativity, however, leading to either divisions or hierarchies of the divine world. The self-founding divine unity and eternity are not violated and with the movement they reveal their infinite inner wealth, in a personal, energetic and intentional way.

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