

LEONTIUS OF BYZANTIUM: INTRODUCTION TO HIS METHODOLOGY, CHRISTIAN THOUGHT MEETS ARISTOTELIANISM

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Abstract

In this article, which considering the history of philosophy is an example of how Christianity meets Hellenism, we drew the following conclusions, relying on Leontius of Byzantium's treatise entitled *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos*:

A) Throughout the entire approach, the Christian thinker uses both the philosophical concepts –such as “hypostasis”, “nature”, “universal”, “atom”, “form”, “subject”– and the arguments derived from the theoretical field of Logic in order to explain Christian questions, mostly related with Metaphysics. He is actually quite an eclecticist and that is why we may not allege that he follows a particular philosopher or that he expresses and applies an authentic philosophical theory with internal terms of justification.

B) He attempts to implicitly show how necessary is both the syllogisms and the arguments to rely on particular methodological principles. There is a tendency in his work to define in clear terms his issues, mainly as regards how Logic is distinguished from Ontology, as well as how they combine one another. His theological direction, however, does not allow him to be completely consistent with the philosophical material that he uses. Either way, the goal of his research is not strictly philosophical.

C) Although he applies analytical elaboration and explanation of the philosophical concepts that he uses with great accuracy, he does not actually insist on them. This is probably because either he has already elaborated them in other works of his or because his readers were familiar with them. Nevertheless, he constitutes a clear example to understand what could be defined as Byzantine Logic, which is influenced by Aristotle, Porphyry and Proclus, although they are not mentioned in his texts.

Key-words: Leontius of Byzantium, Aristotle, Porphyry, Logic, Ontology, substance, hypostasis

Introduction

In the context of the Byzantine ecclesiastical and theological tradition, the question of what method should be followed in both research and teaching neither is stated as a systematic question nor is denoted as important for elaborating theoretical – mostly dogmatic– topics. Until the seventh century, it is quite difficult to find a single text in which the regulatively fundamental role or the appropriate function of the method in which both the syllogisms and the arguments are formed in a particular case is deliberately and in detail presented. The main reason why could be that the divine mystery, which is naturally superlative and apophatic, may not be described or founded on scientific or philosophical procedures. Nevertheless, it would be a paradox not to detect in the texts which are known for or at least attempt to present a sort of systematicity a strict or even moderate methodological pattern in their structure. In fact, in texts that deal with dogmatic questions, there seems to be an intention to use the appropriate method, in order the coherence of the arguments, in the sense of a transition from the former to the latter, as well as the strict inclusion of the concepts into syllogisms to be ensured. This can be mostly detected in texts related with heretical controversies. In these cases, there are references to extracts that either come from the Christian tradition or are associated with conceptual schemata derived from the Ancient Greek philosophy; or the final goal is a synthetic combination or a presentation of both of them. This is actually the phenomenon of eclecticism or encyclopedism, tendencies which have been systematically arisen since the age of Antiochus of Ascalon, the Principle of Academy (second and first centuries BC).¹ What should be used, to what extent and in what way depend each time on what the direction of the particular text to be written would be, that is, whether it will generally be an apologetic one or it aims at introducing a new dogmatic question. In this sense, every time a method appears in a Byzantine text, it is defined either by the author's theological questions, which actually appear as pre-theories, or by already formed and accepted by the philosophical tradition theories². In our view, this is exactly the detail, namely, the generally a priori one, on which the Byzantine epistemology relies.

In this short study, we attempt to approach the methodological question in Leontius of Byzantium (475-542). The basis of our research is his concise text entitled *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos*, one of the most important treatises for Christology, which

¹ Cf. Al. Kojève, *Essai d'une histoire raisonnée de la philosophie païenne*, III, Paris 1973, where Antiochus is compared to the greatest exponents of Neoplatonism, and mostly Proclus.

² Some good examples of how Greek philosophy is combined with Christian theology are Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's *De divinis nominibus* and John of Damascus' *Dialectica*. The latter uses in a more accurate way the philosophic material, especially when it comes to the field of the formal Logic.

takes into serious consideration the decisions of the fourth Ecumenical Council³. Following a sort of phenomenological approach, we actually pay little attention to the strict theological specifications and foundations of the text; instead, we focus on the syllogistic-apodictic and conceptual elements used in it. I.e., we mainly attempt to detect the philosophical material and present, as far as this is possible, in a critical way the consistency in which it is scientifically used, the way in which it is formed and its scientific reliability. It is important to stress that our goal is not to detect in detail the impact of the Platonic and Aristotelian theories on Leontius or whether there are similarities between him and the last Neoplatonist philosophers of the School of Athens⁴. Any comments made on these issues –which actually require another, more extensive study, which will take into account more treatises– aim to support the methodological question⁵. Three are the sub-chapters of the study, which starts from

³ It should be mentioned here that Leontius' contribution to Christology of the East lies in his doctrine of "henypostaton" (inexistent). However, if the question about the unconfused union of two natures-substances in one person is investigated together with the principle laid down by Aristotle that there can be no substance without hypostasis, it turns to be really difficult. Leontius works on exactly this basis, that is, how he will keep the distinction made by Aristotle between substance and hypostasis in accordance with the terms of the Council of Chalcedon. S. Rees' study entitled "Leontius of Byzantium and his defense of the Council of Chalcedon", *The Harvard Theological Review* 24/2 (1931), pp. 111-119, is particularly interesting for the whole discussion, not only because Rees makes an excellent historical presentation of the two sides –the defenders of the decisions of the fourth Council and their opponents– but also because he identifies Leontius' success in that he considers the term "henypostatic" incompatible with an accident or a particular quality-property, for it is associated with a complete nature. Regarding the main question of the treatise, namely the concept "henypostaton", S. Rees says that it has nothing to do with Aristotle's logic or psychology, but it is more like the Neoplatonic psychology, though it is not to be explicitly found there as well (pp. 112-113). Note that psychology, in both Neoplatonism and Christianity, is part of the metaphysics of immanence, which is considered to be an anthropological reflection of the divine providence. According to St. W. Need, the term appears for the first time in Leontius' texts [cf. "Language, Metaphor, and Chalcedon: A case of Theological Double Vision", *The Harvard Theological Review* 80/2 (1995), p. 249].

⁴ It is very likely that Leontius was influenced by Proclus (412-485), who lived before him. The terminology used by him shows that he had probably studied Porphyry's texts and especially his introduction to Aristotle's *Categoriae*. Cf. H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, Harvard 1956, 186. B. N. Tatakis, *Η Βυζαντινή Φιλοσοφία*, "Ετ. Νεοελλ. Πολιτ.", Athens 1977, pp. 81-83.

⁵ Concerning this questions raised and mostly the main doctrine analyzed in this treatise, D. Krausmüller, in his study "Making sense of the formula of Chalcedon: the Cappadocians and Aristotle in Leontius of Byzantium's 'Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos'", *Vigiliae Christianae* 65/5 (2011), pp. 484-513, strongly supports the idea that Leontius constructs his arguments by combining theology with philosophy in dialectical ascents, starting from the teaching of the Cappadocian Fathers about nature and hypostasis and making an Aristotelian approach of them. In this way, he avoids to reproduce, for he actually reinterprets. Therefore, not only he accepts particular natures-substances –while the Cappadocians contended that substances can

the principles set by Leontius for the general foundation of his thought, proceeds in his effort to combine Logic with Ontology, both independently and in relation, and ends with his general attempt to define the similarities between Philosophy and Theology on the basis of two terms, “substance” and “hypostasis”, which appear in both the above-mentioned theoretical systems.

The title of the study makes clear that we basically attempt to make some suggestions, which in future could be reconstructed. We attempt to show how some parts of an open to new approaches text are methodologically structured and we examine whether it could be in general applied or enriched in the future.

A] General principles of the syllogisms

According to Leontius, truth, regardless of the way in which it is expressed, is –or should be– the most desirable thing for human beings. Specifically, two are the aspects of the truth that are here stressed: truth as an authentic reflection or as a precise theoretical expression of reality is different from rhetorical or verbal expressions of speech. In fact, it is pointed out that truth is beyond anything else and stands independent from how it is particularly expressed. Therefore, it is indirectly suggested that simple expressive means should be extensively used, in order, first of all, the true state of the world to be accurately described and, secondly, thought and attributes to avoid unnecessary verbosity and redundancy⁶.

This is actually confirmed by Leontius’ following judgments about the content and the structure of the external reality. In order to understand these judgements, it should be mentioned that according to the Christian teaching truth has been already revealed to human beings by both the natural Revelation –for instance, the creation of the world– and the supernatural divine Revelation –for instance, the incarnation of the divine Logos⁷. In this sense, the Christian truth has to be approached and expressed

be only ‘common’– but he also introduces a third component besides the two sets of natural and hypostatic idioms, an infinite substrate in which both sets of idioms –the divine and the human ones– inhere. This was a theory that the Cappadocians had explicitly denied. According to Krausmüller, this sort of reconstruction was quite necessary, since Leontius had to defend the doctrine of Chalcedon against the Nestorians and the Monophysites and to prove that the Aristotelian theory about the two concepts, which for the sixth-century theologians was a true reflection of the order of beings, was not violated (p. 513). Note though that at least Gregory of Nyssa accepted particular substances.

⁶ Cf. *Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos* (hereafter *Nest. et Eut.*), P.G.86a, 1276 A: «Ὡσανεὶ τοῦτου ἐσπουδασμένου ἡμῖν κάλλος ἀσκεῖν ὀνομάτων, ἀλλ’ οὐ τὸ τῆς ἀληθείας χρυσοῦν ὄντως πρόσωπον ἐποπτεύειν, ἧς οὐδὲν ἐρασμιώτερον, κἂν τὸ τῆς λέξεως εὐπρεπὲς καὶ φαιδρὸν μὴ προσῆ». Here Leontius possibly criticizes both the heretics and Proclus, in the texts of whose language is one of the basic goals. In his view, the beauty of the language should not be more important than finding the truth, which, according to his own word, truly shines.

⁷ About the natural and supernatural Revelations cf. for instance D. Stalinoae, *Ο Θεός, ο κόσμος και ο άνθρωπος* (trans. in Greek by K. Coman and G. Papaethimiou), “Armos”, Athens 1990,

in a different way from that of Philosophy and Science, in which truth is constantly under investigation. Due to the dialectical development of knowledge, any theory can be actually disproved or at least is approached with skepticism. Following obviously this Christian principle, Leontius contends that considering reality as both a kind of undivided universal and a theophany results in a complete understanding of it, which requires just a few explanations, so that the entire theory to be founded on another complementary basis. This sort of approach shows the dialectical relationship of a researcher with the divine projections. Therefore, he points out that the human mind divides things, in order to analyze their parts and gain clearer scientific knowledge of them as a whole. In this scientific way, the whole is distinguished from its parts. In his view, this never-ending process definitely raises questions on whether and to what extent such an analytical attempt could provide true theoretical conclusions⁸.

On this basis, it seems that the Christian thinker accepts first of all that the entire world has generally the character of unity and that it is ontologically simple. This, however, does not imply that it has no internal variety, since, according to the Christian Cosmology, the created world may not be approached in the terms of a simplistic monism⁹. He probably means that the created world has not originally resulted from the composition of the elements of an autonomously activated matter, but from God's demiurgic energy, which, although it is constantly undivided, is exemplified by its endless manifestations, obviously after the composition of the material elements. Note that these manifestations do not affect at all the original unity of the divine energy; they just reflect in many ways its simple dynamism. However, Leontius'

pp. 25-76.

⁸ Cf. *Nest. et Eut.*, P.G. 86a, 1296 B-C, «Ὅτι τῶν πραγμάτων ἡ ἀπλή και καθ' ὅλου ἐπιβολὴ ἔννοιας ἡμῖν ὀλοσχερῆ και ἀτράνωτον ἐμποιεῖ. Ἡ δὲ τούτων κατ' ἐπίνοιαν διαίρεσις εἰς ἀκριβῆ γνῶσιν ἡμᾶς ἄγει τῶν ἐξ ὧν συνεστήκασιν. Καὶ ταύτης ἔνεκεν τὴν τοῦ ὅλου εἰς τὰ μέρη διάκρισιν ποιούμεθα. Τὸ δὲ εἰς τὰ μέρη τῶν μερῶν μετὰ τὴν πρώτην διαίρεσιν πειρᾶσθαι τέμνειν καταγέλαστον. Οὐ γὰρ μέχρι τούτου ἴστησιν, ἀλλ' ἐπ' ἄπειρον ἐκτείνει τὴν θεωρίαν». It should be mentioned that until the verb «ποιούμεθα» Leontius makes a description and denotes that he accepts the first separation performed by the human mind. Subsequently, he makes some negative or skeptical judgments about science and he suggests that research should not ignore the first Christian doctrine that God is the only Demiurge. Cf. B. N. Tatakis, *H Βυζαντινὴ Φιλοσοφία*, pp. 76-77. It seems that here Leontius has a different opinion from that expressed by Aristotle in the first book of his *Politica* (1252a): «Τὸ σύνθετον μέχρι τῶν ἀσυνθέτων ἀνάγκη διαίρειν. Ταῦτα γὰρ ἐλάχιστα μόρια τοῦ παντός». Nevertheless, this statement does not mean that he could not accept the principle related to the procedures that take place for the production of the world, at least after some exemplifications.

9 In the fourth century, Basil of Caesarea (the Great) and Gregory of Nyssa had elaborated the question on the endless forms of the natural world. About the Orthodox Cosmology, cf. for instance Vl. Lossky, *Théologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient*, 1960, pp. 87-108.

remarks have nothing to do with this divine energy pluralism, which should not be considered as different from its inner ontological completely united self-founded nature. On the contrary, it is a synthetic one, for it provides to the created beings and natural phenomena harmony, functionality and coherence; in other words, it is about particular expressions of its unity. In our view, the Christian thinker's true intention is to show that the separation of the world in parts is a subsequent state compared to what originally this world was and –this is crucial– takes place due to the investigations and the needs of science, which aims at specialized theoretical knowledge. The fact actually that the separation of the parts never ends indicates that he implicitly accepts the existence of elementary particles –using the term in a retroactive way– or at least minimal molecules or atoms, which constantly make new combinations. And that is how the compositions with which human mind comes in touch arise. Having in mind some indirect conceptual and verbal expressions, it is possible that here a sort of scientific agnosticism is suggested, or, in a more theological manner, apophatism, in the sense that the universe is infinite and scientifically incomprehensible, at least according to the scientific knowledge of that age.

The epistemological detail that is not so clear is whether the separations performed by a scientist truly correspond and in what terms to the external reality. That is to say, what does the mind is able to detect and in what sense does it tend to make a separation? Note here that according to the human scientific capabilities of that age, the natural science could not make any separations; only mathematics could. The actual question here, perhaps the most difficult one in the field of Epistemology, is whether there is a structural connection between thought and being. In our view, although Leontius' text is quite general, the idea that science attempts to avoid simplistic monism is not sufficient for making general comments. In this part of the text, however, Leontius does not seem to stress the Christian scientific principle that unity includes multiplicity. This is a position quite explicit in the Christian tradition, according to which unity is kept exactly as such, regardless of its countless projections. According to the Christian theory about the divine energies, there could be a holistic approach of the world, in the context of which their endless compositional demiurgic presences appear. The Christian thinker would obviously agree with that, for this is part of the tradition that he follows. He probably means that the original material seeds make successively endless compositions, every time in a particular proportion and with the ability to recompose. Leontius' criticism is exercised against the fact that scientific research never comes to an end, and that is because he intends to show that it is pointless to use it when aiming at a complete and final expression of the truth. The question is whether he rejects science and philosophy or he just points out the priorities and boundaries which human mind has to establish in the light of a provable realism. What follows can give an answer, even though not completely sufficient.

Attempting to follow a rather conservative Christian approach, Leontius contends that these theoretical separations are not compatible with the content of the Gospel. They move in a clearly different direction and they could be considered as skeptical

approaches of those who never feel satisfied by their conclusions or extensively detailed analyses. By this clear as to its critical goals remark, there appears an explicit distinction between the Christian Words and Philosophy or Science when it comes to their issues, questions and theoretical interests¹⁰. It could be even said that it is implicitly suggested to the Christians that science or even philosophy do not essentially give meaning to their existence, at least in the cases at which it is considered that this is the only or the most important scientific and cognitional goal. Nevertheless, in the next sub-chapter, a different atmosphere appears, since the Christian thinker deals with important philosophical questions that relate with systematic research.

B] An attempt to define Logic and Ontology

According to Leontius, when human being attempts to define in a logical sense things, he should not take into account the time or the place in which they appear. For, a definition describes a thing in the current circumstances, not in the later ones, which, among other things, are to some extent unpredictable. In fact, it is also suggested that neither the past circumstances should be taken into consideration, since the thing being defined has exceeded them or even abolished them. Therefore, both the substance and the properties of those beings that have been generated cannot be described with a particular definition, for they never remain in the same state; they constantly develop and change. Their hypostatic differentiation follows the general principle that all created beings, which are subject to the terms and conditions of becoming, corrupt or at least change and, exactly as such, reveal their properties in a particular way¹¹. Taking into

¹⁰ Cf. *Nest. et Eut.*, P.G. 86a, 1297 B: «Ἡ τῶν μερῶν εἰς τὰ μέρη ὑποδιαίρεσις, οὐ δογματικῆς ἐστὶ συντομίας, οὐδὲ τοῦ συντετημημένου κατὰ τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον λόγου, ἀλλὰ σκεπτικῆς θεωρίας, καὶ περιττῆς τοῖς πολλοῖς καὶ δυσλήπτου τεχνολογίας». In order to understand the general spirit of this extract, it is necessary to quote the previous one, where both the similarities of the parts and their role in the existential salvation are described: «Ἡ μὲν τῶν μερῶν ὁμολογία γνῶρισμα τυγχάνει τῆς τοῦ ὄλου σωτηρίας». What is here stressed is the intervention of the divine peace, which brings into a relation all the parts of the natural world, which contribute to the formation of an ingrained cosmic reason. Cf. Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, P.G.3, 948 D-953 B. On the Christian Words, cf. for instance R. Roques, *Structures théologiques de la Gnose à Richard de Saint-Victor*, "Universitaires de France", 1962.

¹¹ Cf. *Nest. et Eut.*, P.G. 86a, 1281 D-1284 A: Πᾶς ὄρος τοῦ νῦν πράγματος ἐστὶν ὄρος, οὐ τοῦ ὕστερον ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἀποβησομένου. Ἡ οὕτω γ' ἂν οὐδὲν τῶν ἐν γενέσει δέξαιτ' ἂν ὄρον τοῦ ὅπερ ἐστίν, ἐπεὶ μηδὲ μένει. Ἀλλὰ μεταβάλλει πάντα εἰς πάντα τὰ ἐν γενέσει καὶ φθορᾷ». Cf. B. N. Tatakis, *Η Βυζαντινὴ Φιλοσοφία*, pp. 77-78. Plato contends something similar in his dialogue *Cratylus* (439b-440d), where he says that human is not capable of unchanged knowledge, for things constantly change: «Ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδ' ἂν γνωσθεῖ γέ ὑπ' οὐδενός. Ἄμα γὰρ ἂν ἐπιόντος τοῦ γνωσομένου ἄλλο καὶ ἄλλοιον γίγνοιτο, ὥστε οὐκ ἂν γνωσθεῖ ἔτι ὁποῖόν γε τί ἐστιν ἢ πῶς ἔχον». The discussion about generation and corruption leads in Aristotle's views described in *De generatione et corruptione*. In order this quote to make sense, it is necessary to investigate whether Leontius thinks that there is an original state of matter, which is the substrate that

account this theory, the Christian theologian can clearly be considered as an exponent of the natural and logical relativism, which is completely compatible with the provable realism in relation to what actually takes place. So, it is not possible to express a final definition but only partial and successive definitions of the current appearances of a being in the sense of a particular substance. This could be actually considered as nominalism in the context of a hypostasis, in the sense of its exemplified presences as transitions to something new that did not exist before. This transitional sense indicates that human mind has to stand in a dynamic readiness before the information derived from the sensible world, so that any definition would not turn into a universal and intertemporal or commonly applied theoretical description. It could be even said that thought, considering both its capabilities and expressions, has to be constantly able to renew; what is more, it has no a priori inner preconditions to form or to be self-formed by strict concepts independent from the external data. When it comes to the cognitive products, it basically follows external mental constants or variables and that is why it relies on a consistent sensory empiricism. In this sense, Logic follows Ontology (in the cosmological sense), which makes clear that a consistent cognitive procedure is kept or at least is indirectly suggested, which first of all relies on the information provided by particular sensible images. By extension, permanent inflexible concepts are totally invalid. The only thing that could be assumed at this point, which also brings to the fore a new approach of the relevant Platonic views and mostly what is said in *Theaetetus*, is that human being can give a final definition exclusively for God, who is unalterable and unchanged. This is, however, an assumption that faces the boundaries set by the Christian apophatic and superlative theologies, which human mind can never exceed. It becomes, however, clear –in economic terms– that God is originally capable of defining himself, which that does not hold true for the created beings. Finally, it should be mentioned that the text itself does not provide enough evidence on whether Leontius considers that the natural world develops-changes as a whole or this is a dynamocratic condition that develops only in a microcosmic scale.

Following Logic, Leontius contends that it is a logical incorrectness to attribute predicates to the properties rather than their bodies or to the relationships as relationships rather than the things that relate to one another or develop relationships. In his view, the correct thing is that attributes indicate either the natural state of those

both the cosmological developments and the natural elements come from. Another question is whether he accepts that qualities-properties exist independently from or exclusively in their “subject”, that is, matter. Note that these positions are compatible with the Christian teaching and they are mostly found at the end of the treatise, where Leontius elaborates the question of unions and distinctions that take place in the natural world. Making some conceptual changes, we would say that Leontius would not oppose Aristotle’s view that it is not matter that changes but actually its forms (*De generatione et corruptione*, 319b-320a). The Christian thinker says: *Τὰ μὲν ἀλλοιωτικά ἀλλήλων καὶ μεταβλητικά, ἐκ πολυειδῶν καὶ ἑτεροειῶν συνεστῶτα, οὐδὲν τῶν ἐν τῇ συνθέσει ἀποσῶζει ἀκραφινὰς μετὰ τὴν συνθέσιν*», introducing in this way many forms in a hypostasis that is under formation.

things which hold particular properties or how things, exactly as particular things, relate to one another¹². He also says that if we examine the variety of the relationships, we will discover that they change and that is why they develop between similar or dissimilar things. In this context, similar things differentiate according to those elements that connect each one of them with the things which are dissimilar to them. Conversely, they relate to each other according to the elements that make them different from the things which are dissimilar to them. In spite of these multiple similarities and differences, similar things are different in number, but they are connected under one definition, which, in the sense of both a logical inclusion and a theoretical reflection of what actually exists, distinguishes them from dissimilar things¹³.

¹² Cf. *Nest. et Eut.*, P.G. 86a, 1258 D: «Τὸ ἰδίωμα κατηγοροῦντες ἀντὶ τοῦ ἐν ᾧ τὸ ἰδίωμα. Καὶ τὴν σχέσιν τὴν πρὸς ἄλληλα, ἀντὶ τῶν ἐν οἷς αὐτὴ κατηγορεῖται. Τῶν γὰρ ὀνομάτων, τὰ μὲν τῆς φύσεως τῶν ὑποκειμένων ἐστὶ δηλωτικά, τὰ δὲ τῆς σχέσεως τῶν πραγμάτων ἔστι γνωριστικά». The terms used here clearly give priority to the substance, which defines both the properties and its sensible forms. Note though that the nature of a thing indicates or, in other words, clearly projects its own ontological state, while the relationships are only cognitively approached, that is to say, they follow the procedures to be performed by the thinking subjects. Cf. Aristotle, *Categoriae*, 2a.31-34: Τὸ λευκὸν ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ ὄν τῷ σώματι κατηγορεῖται τοῦ ὑποκειμένου –λευκὸν γὰρ σῶμα λέγεται– ὁ δὲ λόγος τοῦ λευκοῦ οὐδέποτε κατὰ τοῦ σώματος κατηγορηθήσεται». Note also that this sort of comparison to the Aristotelian text needs special attention. Following the general context, it is easy to understand that for Aristotle whiteness relates with white color only within a body. The process of acquiring a hypostasis takes place exclusively in a subject, so, the attributes are analogous. Therefore, combining the two thinkers, it arises that a white body develops first of all a relationship in it, in the context of which white lies in the body (ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ) and turns into an attribute for it (καθ' ὑποκειμένου). Secondly, the white develops relationships with any other thing not as whiteness but exactly as such –or in any other condition it could be found. This could be considered as a form of nominalism, in the sense that it is stressed that the white is part of the nature of a body. The natural-scientific or biological question is how a body becomes white. Synonymy is here a fact, but the context denotes the first Aristotelian substance. Realism appears in a quite intense way. The schema “genus-difference”, which is part of both Ontology and Logic, is appropriate for approaching the whole theory. J. M. Le Bland has remarkably mentioned that this distinction refers to the Platonic method of “separation”, which also includes definition, as it appears for instance in *Phaedo*, 102b-105b (cf. «Aristotle of Definition», *Articles on Aristotle*, 3 *Metaphysics*, “Duckworth”, 1979, pp. 63-79).

¹³ Cf. *Nest. et Eut.*, P.G. 86a, 1288 A: «Τῷ μὲρ γὰρ ἀριθμῷ πρὸς ἑαυτὰ διακρινόμενα (sc. τὰ ὁμοειδῆ) τῷ δὲ ὄρω πρὸς ἑαυτὰ συναπτόμενα, τῶν ἑτεροειδῶν διακέκρται». The usage of the term “διάκρισις” shows that there are no separations or vertical divisions in the world. The most appropriate is to refer to differentiations of the hypostatic fields, which exclude the possibility of inflexible identities. Emphasis is given on the particulars, which are placed in general categories. It is interesting for both what is here said and what follows to quote E. Husserl's thoughts about the difference between similarity and identity: “Each exact likeness relates to a Species, under which the objects compared, are subsumed: this Species is not, and cannot be, merely ‘alike’ in the two cases, if the worst of infinite regresses is not to become inevitable (....) If two things are

Relying on what has been discussed, three are the conclusions: a) Leontius does not accept, or, at least, he appears unable to prove the true existence of the universal concepts, which refer to common properties, or, in a more moderate way, he is skeptical as to whether they indicate an hypostatic autonomy of these properties –originally in the metaphysical plane and, subsequently, in the natural world– when they are being compared to or when they are categorically related with the beings that carry them. For instance, it is correct to use the term “equal” but not “equality”, “good” but not “goodness”. In this sense, in the ontological plane these properties are not hypostatic states independent from the substance, but forms –actually connected with each other– in which it manifests. That is why they should be considered as substantial properties and not just as properties. The whole discussion can be included in the debate between realism and nominalism. Excluding the possibility the properties to be independent, the possibilities an attribute to be realistic and the concepts to be inherent in human mind are also excluded, at least implicitly. It should be mentioned though that these restrictions have nothing to do with the autonomous existence and presence or determination of the divine energies in their creative projection by the divine substance. The metaphysical objectivity of these issues is unquestionable for the Christians. The whole discussion is about the sensible world and how it should be epistemologically approached.

b) Extending the previous conclusion, it follows that a definition in the sense of a composition made by the mind –by abstraction– includes only similar things. According to what has been already discussed, it should be considered as a concise logical analysis that refers, first of all, to substances and, secondly, to properties that are also considered to be substantial. This finds support on the fact that we speak about similarity rather than identity, which is associated exclusively with sources or origins¹⁴.

‘alike’ as regards form, then the Form-Species in question is the identical element (...) ‘A likeness’ is the relation of objects falling under one and the same Species” (cf. *The Shorter Logical Investigations*, trans. by J. N Findlay, “Routledge”, London-New York, p. 138). The Platonic basis is quite clear, provided that Species is something objective and that it is subject to metaphysical realism. Still, the question is whether Leontius accepts the Platonic Forms or remains consistent with nominalism. The text leads in that he does not insist on such a metaphysical realism, possibly due to the human cognitive incapability of conceiving the existence and function of the Forms. Note though that in a following explanation, he says that «πάντα τὰ ὄντα συνήπται ἀλλήλοις ταῖς καθ’ ὅλου κοινότησι, καὶ πόλιν διήρηται ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων τοῖς εἰδοποιοῖς διαφοραῖς», where the reference to both the first and second Aristotelian substances is quite clear. Cf. for instance *Metaphysica*, Z6 and Z11. Also, P. Aubenque, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote*, “P.U.F”, Paris 1991, pp. 405-409.

¹⁴ Aristotelian tradition has thoroughly dealt with this issue, and especially with how participation takes place. Note though that each theory defines the content of the concept differently. Cf. the following comment of Alexander of Aphrodisias: «...καὶ τῶν ἀφ’ ἑνὸς καὶ πρὸς ἓν ἔστιν ἐπιστήμη. Τρόπον δέ τινα καὶ ταῦτα πρὸς μίαν φύσιν τὴν ἀναφορὰν ἔχοντα καθ’ ἓν λέγεται, καθ’ ὅσον ἐν πᾶσι πως αὐτοῖς ὁράται ἢ φύσις αὐτῆ, ἀφ’ ἧς καὶ δι’ ἣν οὕτως καλεῖται, εἰ καὶ

Thus, a definition describes living beings as formed bodies –or material beings with properties and functions– rather than the property of a living being. Living beings are similar, in the sense that they hold the property of a living being in a particular way, which does not appear to be necessarily ontologically superior or prior to them. Otherwise, their identity could be defined –although this sort of identity is not true– by their common originally unchanged property of living being. Obviously, this is a different version for what a definition is compared to the former one, so, we need to pay special attention to what the Christian thinker actually means. In the former case, it was about describing a particular substance, while here it is about a universal property, the forms of which appear in a common sense. This is a gnoseological and logical approach that apparently Leontius does not adopt –at least completely–, for it excludes the particular on which he insists.

c) The special relationships that develop between similar and dissimilar things reflect the multi-potentiality of the external world, in the sense that it exists and functions in many ways. This depends on the mutuality or, at least, the composition of different elements or beings according to a general planning that obviously the Christians accept. Once again, there are no further explanations –except some theological ones– about what is the nature of these somehow sources that relate one another. Note that Leontius attempts to give an explanation in the last part of his work about “unions” and “distinctions”. There is, however, a reality that develops in flexible terms and which does not follow a strict and inflexible automatic determinism. That is to say, when it comes to the relationships, the priority is given to the process of change. Under these circumstances, natural randomness, namely what is unpredictable and undefined, gains a potentiality, without the current order and harmony provided by God to be affected at all by this vagueness.

Besides the definition, attributes also refer to things, not though in the same logical and analytical sense. Attempting to describe the relationship “substance-attribute” Leontius uses as an example the flesh. He points out that, if flesh is in a natural state, it should have an attribute that would describe exactly this natural appearance of it.

μη ὁμοίως καὶ ἐπίσης αὐτῆς πάντα μετέχει» (*In Aristotelis metaphysica commentaria*, C.A.G., I, 243.33-244.3). Although the passage refers to “μη ὁμοίως”, we believe that the common source of both the being and the attribute does not change, regardless of how it is participated by an effect. So, according to our direction, we consider that “μη ὁμοίως” includes “ὁμοίως”, for otherwise a complete dissimilarity or even otherness would arise. If that was the case, the whole discussion about a common single source would overturn, especially in the sense of it being an important factor that contributes to the process of attributing. Cf. for instance, J. Fr. Courtine, *Les catégories de l'être*, “P.U.F”, Paris 2003, pp. 206-207. It should be mentioned that Alexander comments mostly on the extract Δ6, 1016b.31-35 of Aristotle’s *Metaphysica*, which is interesting for this article for the following reasons: κατ’ ἀριθμὸν ἓν are the beings the matter of which is one and b) κατ’ εἶδος ἓν are the beings the reason of which is one, where “reason” raises the question about whether it is considered as something objective or it is just the basis of a definition.

After receiving an attribute, it becomes clear that it has come into existence. On the other hand, if there is no attribute for its nature, it is proved that it has no hypostasis or nature¹⁵. In this direction, the criterion to decide whether an entity has nature and hypostasis is whether there is an attribute for it, in the sense of a descriptive signifier. Something with no attribute actually does not exist, or at least it has not yet become sensible. Note that it is not clear, here too, if this holds true for similar beings or just one being. In any case, speaking of flesh, it is not clear whether it is meant one with no qualities or an already formed. The one with no qualities, provided that it has become sensible, can receive an attribute that would denote its existence but not its hypostasis, for –sensible– hypostasis concerns just a formed one. Probably, the Byzantine thinker connects hypostasis as a particular substance with the form, which is considered that it takes some place in a strictly particular way. Speaking of flesh he probably means matter, the common substrate for differentiations that contribute to the formation of the bodies.

Leontius' argument here is simple and self-evident, for he points out that only that which can be proved by experience receives an attribute. What is more, according to the relationship between nature and hypostasis, an attribute should describe not only that something simply exists, but also that it exists in a particular way. It indicates both the general state or the “universal” and the particular. In this case, the question of the attributes arises. It is not always possible an attribute to indicate at the same time both the general and the particular. For instance, the attribute “living being” indicates a general state, i.e., that a particular being exists as a living organism and nothing more. The fact that it also refers to –or includes– the state of being, for being is a more general category than that of living, is obvious. On the other hand, the attribute “lion”, although it is strictly particular, includes more than one particular state. Therefore, it

¹⁵ Cf. *Nest. et Eut.*, P.G. 86a, 1276 C: «Καὶ ἐστὶ λοιπὸν περὶ τῆς σαρκὸς τὸ ζητούμενον, εἰ μὴ καὶ αὕτη τὴν φύσιν ἔχουσα τὴν ἰδίαν, ἀξιοῦται καὶ τῆς κλήσεως. Καὶ ταύτης γε τυχοῦσα, ἔχει καὶ τὴν ὑπόστασιν.» Ἡ μὴ ἔχουσα, τὴν ὑπόστασιν καὶ τὴν φύσιν προσαπωλέσει». Although realism is here preserved, nominalism also appears as necessary, in the sense, which completes what is said in the main text, that there is a flesh with form, which, as a particular hypostasis, receives an attribute. The question arises when it comes to the “nature”. We believe that Leontius considers it as capable of receiving hypostases, provided that it has been created by God. So, if there is no such process, neither nature pre-exists. By definition, nature is actually potential hypostases or proceeds in producing new hypostases. Taking into account other texts of Leontius as well, hypostasis is similar to nature, in the sense that it possesses as many idioms as the nature does. It is, however, different from nature, since every hypostasis owns particular properties, which the nature, as a common reality, does not possess. Therefore, there are particular natural hypostases, which possess the properties of the nature of which they are part and differ due to their hypostatic particularities. By extension, human mind is not capable of detecting and attributing something that does not exist. For the history of philosophy, it would be quite interesting to compare Leontius' positions to his contemporary Damascius the Neoplatonist's views found in the first book of *De principiis*, where he elaborates the theory about the matter without qualities and the bodies with qualities, i.e., the sensible things.

indicates that: a being exists, it is a living being and it possesses through its particular characteristics all the former universals as a lion. The fact that it is not possible to give at the same time two attributes in a thing proves either that we are incapable of conceiving a general category or that this particular entity to which we give an attribute does not exist. Note though that this does not hold true in a universal scale, but the case might also be as follows: in a particular –actually strictly specific– time we approach in a sensible-mental way a sensibly conceived individual being, in order, first of all, to perceive it and, subsequently, to include it theoretically into the appropriate general categories. In some cases the two procedures connect with each other in the sense of an automatic succession. Another question, however, arises: what comes first to the human mind, the concept “lion” or the concept “living being”? It is quite difficult to give an answer, at least with the available information. It should be mentioned though that the whole discussion does not give priority to the realism of the attribute; it just points out the epistemological importance of it when it comes to empirically identifiable descriptions. Once a thing exists by itself or by its causes as a formed being and it can be conceived by human thought (percept-mental elaboration), it can also receive an attribute. In this sense, an attribute is clearly determined by something else. Furthermore, an attribute works as a mode of connection between the thinking subject and the object, in the sense of the relation signifier-signified. How an attribute is formed by human mind is not examined by Leontius. Either way, this is quite a difficult question, especially regarding the mental procedures that take place.

In another part of his work, the Christian thinker becomes more specific about attributes. He says that in order a natural thing to receive an attribute, three are the requirements. The first one is to be a form. An example is living being, for it describes a general property, which is henypostatic in particular beings. The second one is to be part of a particular common form. An example is human, who is also a living being. The ontological question here is in what sense both a form and something which participates in a form are natures or hold the idiom of nature? Does this indicate that Leontius accepts Aristotle’s second substance as well? If so, what is the relation to the first one? By extension, does the “universal” actually exist or does it result from a logical abstraction or is it a common concept? Obviously, it is necessary to deal with the question about what is our perspective: realism or nominalism. It is possible that in this case a form is a common and true property found in similar things, which constitutes its –or a– natural unique state. It is also important to keep in mind any piece of information about definition that has been already discussed. The third requirement according to Leontius is the case at which a being comes from a confusion of dissimilar parts, which as both a third one –actually a mixed one– and a new development is also dissimilar as to its sources. Note, however, that this confusion should not be considered as a sort of unordered mixture, but –at least in Christianity and Neoplatonism, which have a teleological prospect– as a logical combination with specific proportions and quality, since a dissimilar thing participates in both these requirements, which though do not preserve their ontological authenticity and purity in it. This kind of change or

transformation is due to the fact that they have developed their communicative or attractive capabilities, by which they mix in order something new to be produced. Once again, the process or the changes that take place for this communication are not described, obviously because it was not possible to be scientifically explained in that age. Instead, it is described where they take place. They are mixed under the hypostatic terms –which change in order something new to be produced– of the resulting mixed. Note that this mixture affects the ontological quality of the mixed. Exactly because the mixed is the third one that resulted from other factors and it is neither self-generated nor functionally self-sufficient, and since it does not originally hold the properties of its causes, it is described as a fake nature¹⁶. In conclusion, the Christian thinker stresses that, regardless of how a particular nature as a specific hypostasis is defined or formed, it can receive an attribute, exactly because it has come into existence –as possessing a general ontological property– and it has been formed –as possessing a particular one. Attributing appears as a dynamic and pluralistic process-performance, since it follows the variety and development of the world, which appears in many compositional forms and functions in many ways.

It is important to mention that since Plato's texts, an important philosophical question had been how a "universal" relates to the particulars¹⁷. This actually crucial for Ontology, Epistemology and Ethics relationship, which is included in the field of formal Logic, is investigated by Leontius as well. The Christian thinker says that, according to those who elaborate logical concepts and relationships, particulars communicate with "universals", while "universals" are attributed as predicates to the particulars. By transforming the terms, he explains that individuals communicate naturally with their form, while "universals" communicate with the parts by means of the attribute that they receive. In this sense, a part receives the attribute of the universal. For instance, a particular human natural hypostasis represents in a particular way the whole human species. And since no being of this species has different substance, reasonably the individuals receive the attribute of the common form. Leontius eventually concludes that no man is different from the universal man¹⁸.

¹⁶ Cf. *Nest. et Eut.*, P.G. 86a, 1292 B. The most important sentence is: «τοῦ αὐτοῦ εἶδους μετέχειν», which probably indicates genus, which is considered to be true and which does not originally include the effect, for the effect has resulted by multiple participations. Nevertheless, it is an extract that clearly involves realism, which results from the participation of the particular to the general, which is considered to be a circumincession.

¹⁷ Plato investigates the question both morally (first dialogues, for instance *Laches*, *Charmides*) and ontologically (later dialogues, for instance *Parmenides*, *Philebus*), with the priority being given to epistemology according to what is said mostly in *Theaetetus*.

¹⁸ Cf. *Nest. et Eut.*, P.G. 86a, 1289 D: «Καθὼς οἱ τὰ λογικὰ σκέμματα διακρίνοντες παραδιδάσκει, τὰ μὲν ἐπὶ μέρους κοινωνεῖ τοῖς καθ' ὅλου, τὰ δὲ καθ' ὅλου κατηγορεῖται κατὰ τῶν ἐπὶ μέρους. Καὶ τῶν μὲν ἀτόμων, κοινωνία ἐστὶ πρὸς τὸ εἶδος κατὰ τὴν φύσιν. Τῶν δὲ καθόλου κοινωνία πρὸς τὰ μέρη κατὰ τὴν κλήσιν. Τῇ τοῦ ὅλου προσηγορία τὸ μέρος καλεῖν οὐ παρητησάμεθα». Note that the term "προσηγορία" mostly refers to the order of the definitions, which in the

The following can be drawn from what has been discussed: First of all, provided that we accept the relation of the whole with the particular –or the genus with the species– in the sense of a succession, the latter undoubtedly receives attributes from the former. The question here is as follows: when considering a particular human being, what is the “universal”? Is it the human form or the properties for instance of living being and logical being? Furthermore, the view that every individual is not different from the universal man is problematic, for there appears a gap. It is not clear whether universal man ontologically actually exists (Platonism) or whether it is just an attribute or a common concept (Aristotelianism). In other words, is this an ontological or a logical relationship? It goes without saying that if the relationship is a logical one, “universal man” actually does not exist. Here the question is not only about the objective existence, for, at least at first, a true and, by extension, logical contradiction arises. For what reason the parts participate by nature in their forms or “universals”, by which they only get attributes? Why the first relationship appears to be ontological, while the second is a relationship of attributes? Definitely, it has to do with the starting point. Do “universals” actually exist? The only thing we could suppose is that the naturally similar individual things may be included in a general theoretical or logical whole, by which they get an attribute. In other words, due to their common origin, they form by means of a logical abstraction a category, in which they are theoretically included and from which they receive a common attribute. So, an attribute is indirectly defined by the nature, in the sense of how it is defined by the particular features of the similar things; taking also into account what has been discussed, it seems that the Christian thinker means that it has to be related to genus categories. Theoretically, the problem is that there is no clear explanation about whether this is realism, nominalism or even a combination of them. Supposing that realism is a requirement, some of the questions get an answer. It should be considered that “universals”, except from the attributes,

context of formal Logic are separated so that their differences to be clear. In this passage, realism clearly combines with nominalism, with the “nature” being the original integral condition, which defines all the procedures that associate with how the effects appear. However, some problems arise here, which are elaborated in the main text. Oliv. Boulnois’ comments on the relationship of the universal with the particular in Aristotle can also fit here: «Pour Aristote, l’universel est en effet de l’ordre du discours. Il est simplement le témoignage de l’extrême économie du langage: un même mot peut être prédiqué d’une pluralité de choses (καθ’ ὅλου: à propos d’une totalité) (...) La pauvreté de l’universel fait en même temps sa puissance: c’est en lui que nous saisissons le divers dans une limite, que nous parvenons à la connaissance (...) L’universel est objet de science, car il est, dans le langage, la limite connaissable du multiple inconnaissable: il est le langage lui-même, saisi comme limite. Et puisque le genre est l’universalité maximale que peut attendre un discours rigoureux –la généralité n’étant autre que l’extension du genre–, les sciences sont sciences d’un genre unique. L’universalité n’est pas ailleurs que dans l’attribution, elle n’est autre qu’une place dans le discours: l’universel désigne le terme qui est attribué à divers sujets existants. Il n’est donc que le prédicat unique d’une multiplicité, et ne peut ainsi jamais être sujet» [«Réelles intentions: nature commune et universaux selon Dums Scot», *Revue de Métaphysique de Morale* 97 (1992), p. 4].

provide to the particulars their natural composition as well. Otherwise, how would it be possible an attribute without a natural reality? Nominalism would suggest that the only nature to be proved is that of the particulars, the communication of some of them is the source for the formation of the appropriate “universal” as an attribute itself or as the source of this attribute. Another remark, however, tends to a sort of nominalist realism: Οὐδ’ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἀτελῶν ἐστι μερῶν, κατὰ γε τὸν τοῦ εἶναι θατέρου λόγον, εἰ καὶ ὡς πρὸς ὅρον τοῦ ὅλου ἀνθρώπου, τὸν τοῦ ὅλου τὰ μέρη λόγον, ὡς ὅλου οὐκ ἐπιδέχεται». The question is still whether a “universal” is identified with the “form” or the former is logical and the latter ontological. Although that would be an approach in accordance with the syntactical-grammatical order, it would actually raise questions about which are the ontological boundaries.

Another thing that has been already mentioned by Leontius is that any reasoning should start from the definition of the concepts to be used. Only under this condition, we can deal with any sort of problems arisen by the interpretation or the combination of the concepts¹⁹. What is stressed here is that there should be a common starting point and a common reference for those who investigate the same thing, in order to form their argumentation in a reliable way. Theoretical procedures require common strict epistemological boundaries and that means that individual theoretical attempts cannot be considered to be objective. This actually could lead in idealistic approaches. Note that idealism, as a mode of revealing the mental procedures over reality concerning the accuracy of the attributes, serves neither realism nor nominalism.

C) “Substance” and “Hypostasis” – An attempt to combine Theology with Philosophy

The main question, however, which covers all the rest and for Leontius is the most important in Christian teaching, is what the exact meanings of the terms “hypostasis” and “substance” are. First of all, he stresses that hypostasis (ὑπόστασις) is different from henypostatic (ἐνυπόστατον). Similarly, substance (οὐσία) is different from substantial (ἐνούσιον). For instance, the term “hypostasis” indicates any particular man, while “henypostatic” means the human substance, which, according to the terminology, can be approached in a realistic way. Note also that Maximus the Confessor’s latter definition is also a realistic one: «Ἐνυπόστατόν ἐστι τὸ κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν, κοινὸν, ἤγουν τὸ εἶδος, τὸ ἐν τοῖς ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ἀτόμοις πραγματικῶς ὑφιστάμενον καὶ οὐκ ἐπινοία ψιλῆ θεωρούμενον. Ἄλλως, ἢ πάλιν, ἐνυπόστατόν ἐστι τὸ ἄλλω διαφόρῳ κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν εἰς ἐνὸς σύστασιν προσώπου καὶ μιᾶς γένεσιν ὑποστάσεων συγκείμενόν τε καὶ συνυφιστάμενον καὶ οὐδαμῶς καθ’ αὐτὸ γνωριζόμενον»²⁰. Furthermore, hypostasis describes the boundaries of a person with distinctive properties, i.e., the particular way in which someone exists, which is unique. Henypostatic indicates a natural and

¹⁹ Cf. *Nest. et Eut.*, P.G. 86a, 1273 A. Cf. B. N. Tatakis, *Η Βυζαντινή Φιλοσοφία*, p. 77.

²⁰ Cf. *Opuscula theologica et polemica ad Marinum*, P.G. 91, 149 B-C.

original ontological state, which definitely is not an accident. This difference is due to the fact that an accident exists because of another already existent reality, namely, it is neither originally nor subsequently ontologically self-constituted. The Christian thinker mentions that both the substantial properties –those which exist by nature and arise gradually, for they are ontologically necessary for the production of a new hypostasis– and the non-substantial ones –obviously those which are not required–are accidents, which are neither substances nor do they have the capability of producing other substances. They can come into existence within a hypostasis, but they necessarily relate with a substance, as for instance a color relates with a body or science with soul. Therefore, according to Leontius’ comments, it is clear that there is no body without form –or, we could also say, without color. On the contrary, it is not acceptable that a form is a body. For, the form exists in a body, which excludes its separate existence. So, since it comes into existence together with a body, it is a natural original and necessary idiom of it²¹. What is more, the fact that a body becomes a particular hypostasis is due to the color and form, which are neither substances nor hypostases. On the face of it, Plato’s metaphysical realism in its immanent presence does not appear to be an option here, in the sense that it is not approachable by human mind.

Explaining his theory, Leontius says that suggesting that there is no nature (or substance) without hypostasis is true. On the other hand, it is false that the thing which is not without hypostasis –that is, that which is able to contribute to the formation of a hypostasis– is hypostasis. It goes without saying that there could not be a nature-substance without hypostasis, but a nature-substance is not a hypostasis. A hypostasis, however, is also a nature. Their difference lies on that nature is defined as being, while hypostasis is somehow an independent special being, apparently in the sense that it is something special when being compared to other hypostases. Nature reflects the general form, while hypostasis the particular one. In this sense, speaking of a hypostasis, we mean a unique form, which, although it has common characteristics with the rest – obviously similar hypostases–, it is able to be defined as something strictly particular²². The Christian thinker also mentions that the things with the same substance, that is,

²¹ Cf. *Nest. et Eut.*, P.G. 86a, 1276 D-1277 D. Cf. Aristotle, *Categoriae*, 1a.21-29: «...τὸ τι λευκὸν ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ μὲν ἔστι τῷ σώματι, ἅπαν γὰρ χρῶμα ἐν σώματι...». Once again, this is the pair “ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ”-“καθ’ ὑποκειμένου”, with the inexistence turning into an attribute. If we actually investigated the “τι λευκόν” as a particular expression of “λευκόν”, it would arise that a part of white appears in a special way in a particular hypostasis, the most appropriate one. It goes without saying that the relationship of science with the soul is different, for it is something potential that has not been yet manifested. For a systematic approach of the “accident”, which probably Leontius had in mind, cf. Porphyry, *In Aristotelis Categoriae commentarium*, 71.19-76.8.

²² Cf. *Nest. et Eut.*, P.G. 86a, 1280 A: «ἢ μὲν γὰρ φύσις τὸν τοῦ εἶναι λόγον ἐπιδέχεται. Ἡ δὲ ὑπόστασις καὶ τὸν τοῦ καθ’ ἑαυτὸν εἶναι». Cf. Ch. Yannaras, *Τὸ πρόσωπο καὶ ὁ ἔρωσ*, “Dromos”, Athens 1987, pp. 45-46, who says that the fact that hypostases are particular defines their otherness, or more accurately, difference, which does not affect their similarity.

those which have a common purpose, are parts of the same nature. The distinction made here is quite important for both the ontological variety and its range. Specifically, he contends that hypostases are also those which are naturally similar, but different in number or those which are composed by different natures, which combine one another in order to proceed in synthetic productions within a particular hypostasis. He also explains that two or more hypostases participate in being, not though in the sense that one completes the substance of the other's. This holds true only in the case of the particular substances and anything that is related to them in a substantial way, namely the qualities²³. Taking into account both these differences and similarities, we come to the conclusion that the original universal conditions, both in themselves and after they have been combined in the terms of a special co-operation, can be defined as natures-substances in a new ontological reality, which is considered to be a hypostasis. Leontius actually stresses that a substance or a nature in a hypostasis is not considered to be in an original state but in a relation. Note that he uses two participles, one for each nature: «συγκειμένης» and «συμπεφυκυίας», with the latter resulting in realistic nominalism.

Considering what has been discussed to this point, it follows first of all that by excluding the possibility the qualities as internal or substantial accidents to be substances, Aristotle's second substance is probably excluded as well. In this case, substance, as a particular "universal", appears to be the subject, the basis and the body of the qualities-attributes. Therefore, here too, the possibility that the general and abstract concepts might truly exist, actually decreases and realism loses its stability. Secondly, it should be mentioned that it is not clear whether there is a clear difference between the terms "substance" and "nature". It is highly possible that substance means something already formed, while nature refers to a natural ontological state, capable by definition of making combinations and formations, which are originally potential. Note, though, that maybe these are just two different ways in which a reality exists. Either way, regardless of whether we refer to nature or substance, it is always about an ontological state that potentially can –or, more correctly, tends to– acquire or form –after co-operating with some others, just the necessary ones– a hypostasis.

Similarly, Leontius contends that all beings are united under the common properties of the "universal" and separate due to their specific differences. In this case, a typical logical distinction between the genera and the species is required. Species have some common properties, but they also differ due to some others which are strictly particular and unique²⁴. This is a general schema of similarities and differences,

²³ Cf. *Nest. et Eut.*, P.G. 86a, 1280 A-B. For a systematic approach of the terms used here, cf. M. Farantos, *Χριστολογία. Το ενυπόστατον*, Athens 1972, pp. 52-63, who explains that henypostatic is inexistent and that nature and substance are not something abstract and indefinite, such as the form is. It exists in a particular and special way, like hypostasis, but not in a self-constituted way.

²⁴ Cf. *Nest. et Eut.*, P.G. 86a, 1301 D: «Πάντα τὰ ὄντα συνήπται ἀλλήλοις ταῖς καθ' ὅλου κοινότησι, καὶ πάλιν διήρηται ἀπ' ἀλλήλων ταῖς εἰδοποιοῖς διαφοραῖς». The term "εἰδοποιοῖς διαφορά" is

since genera receive many forms in particular ontological planes, while the differences, either they are general or particular, are countless. It should be also mentioned that both the Neoplatonic and Christian theories on unions and distinctions can be placed in this direction, for they show the modes in which both the elements and the beings exist, both the similarities and the differences between them²⁵. Either way, Leontius manages to support the view that the world is dynamical and pluralistic and that, regardless of the countless exemplifications successively arisen, both its natural unity and functional harmony are actually kept.

Conclusions

According to what has been discussed, the conclusions are the following:

1. Leontius constantly uses the philosophical concepts and the arguments derived from the theoretical field of Logic to explicitly express and define Christian dogmatic questions. He is actually quite an eclecticist and that is why we may not allege that he follows a particular philosopher or that he expresses and applies an authentic philosophical theory. His Aristotelianism is quite clear, even after the intervention of the relevant tradition that was formed upon the works of the philosopher from Stagira²⁶.

2. He attempts to show, in a direct way, how necessary is to establish syllogisms and

philosophically particularly interesting, for it means the final difference which does not refer to something else. Taking for instance into account human being, there is a clear difference between him as a “logical being” and him as “accepting mind and science”, where the latter is considered the εἰδοποιός-final difference between him and the rest of the beings, as well as between him and the rest of the human beings, for the “ἐπιστήμης δεκτικόν” is true only in some cases. A question here is whether the expression “ταῖς καθ’ ὅλου κοινότησι” leads to matter as a general substrate with capabilities of constant differentiations or the archetypal “universals”. The first version would result in that each body has its own matter –which works due to the presence of the archetypal Forms– in a unique way and needs no interventions in order to connect with it. This is a crucial ontological-cosmological question raised by Leontius in the context of his theory about unions and distinctions, which is a quite extensive theory that needs another study, for, apart from anything else, it has to be investigated in relation to the Aristotelian tradition, for instance Alexander of Aphrodisias, Asclepius, and Ammonius Hermiae, who mainly focus on the extract 1037b.30-1038a.4 of *Metaphysica*, which is very important for definitions.

²⁵ About the theory of “unions-distinctions” in Neoplatonism, cf. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem*, 742.24-760.17; Damascius, *De principiis*, II, 1.1-46-8. About the Christian version of the theory, cf. for instance, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, P.G. 3, 636 C-652 A. For Maximus the Confessor, cf. M. Töröner, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St. Maximus the Confessor*, “Oxford University Press”, 2007.

²⁶ About the philosophical sources of Leontius of Byzantium, cf. B. N. Tatakis, *Christian Philosophy in the Patristic and Byzantine tradition*, “Orthodox Research Institute”, 2007, pp. 196-197 and 238-239.

arguments on particular methodological principles, such as for instance separation is. In his work, there appears a tendency to define clearly the issues, in order both to connect them and distinguish them on the basis of the reasoning used. His theological direction, however, does not allow him to be completely consistent with the philosophical material that he uses. He includes it in the general theory in which he adopts or in the particular questions that interested Christianity at that age. So, once again it results that he tends to eclecticism.

3. He does not always insist on an analytical elaboration and explanation of the philosophical concepts. This is probably because either he has already elaborated them in other works of his or because his readers already knew them. Either way, both of them are true at a time in which theology was quite systematic and was benefiting from the philosophical past, which was introduced in the Christian world by Alexandria and Cappadocia.

Finally, we will attempt to provide a definition of method, which we believe is in accordance with Leontius' relevant views: "Method is the process by which we select elements from our philosophical material, in order to make reliable our theological argumentation. These elements are neither elaborated in a logical way nor do they follow the principles of the theoretical field in which they were originally expressed. They are included in a new perspective, which is defined by the principles of another field, in which they are included not by nature but by accident". From this point, John of Damascus' and Arethas of Caesarea's impressive performances are quite important in order to gain a better understanding of how formal Logic is involved in the Christian theory.

Epilogue

The former discussion leads us in that Leontius is strictly neither a nominalist nor a realist. Depending on his goal, he follows one or the other direction or sometimes he even makes a combination of them, involving in this way Platonism as well. In subsequent terms, we could consider him as compromising or moderate, without this resulting in that he suggests conventional solutions. During the mediaeval period, this topic was elaborated and was a part of the general debate about "universals". The most objective proposal of that debate was "conceptual realism". A particularly systematic presentation of the entire discussion appears in J. Jolivet's study entitled «Trois variations médiévales sur l'universel et l'individu: Roscelin, Abélard, Gilbert de la Portée», *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 97 (1992), pp. 110-155, who says the following, which are also appropriate, at least to a point, for what has been already discussed: «L'arbre de Porphyre figure "la nature des choses" qui fonde la nécessité de toute proposition nécessaire, indépendamment de l'existence des êtres singuliers. Dans la situation réelle il revient à la logique d'analyser les impositions des noms et à la physique de contrôler si la nature des choses les vérifie; ces deux tâches sont nécessaires l'une, à l'autre, mais leur finalité commune est dans la logique, puisque c'est elle qui a la charge des raisonnements. Celle-ci doit plus spécifiquement veiller

à restreindre chaque nom à sa signification sans admettre que rationnel équivaille à animal rationnel, ou animé à corps animé; ni que “tout ce à quoi un nom (vox) est imposé soit signifié par ce nom”, par exemple homme par animal; en effet “les mots (vocalia) ne signifient pas ce qu’ils nomment (nominant) mais ce qu’ils désignent de façon définie”. Nous avons déjà rencontré ce principe et nous voyons comment Abélard se sépare de Roscelin, si la logique de celui-ci a bien le sens que nous lui avons donné. Refusant le réalisme, Abélard ne veut admettre de choses qu’individuelles; d’autre part, attentif aux mots et à leurs rapports en grammarien autant qu’en lecteur de la *logica vetus*, il voit dans le langage l’interface entre l’intellect et les natures des choses et le lieu où peut se loger cette non-différence qu’il admet dans la signification des universaux alors qu’il nie que les individus “nommés” y fondent quelque identité réelle. De là une oscillation qui, tout autant que sa réflexion analysée ailleurs sur la sémantique et la syntaxe, le porte tantôt du côté du nominalisme et tantôt vers une forme de platonisme» (p. 141). Leontius, who follows consistent empiricism as well, makes some descriptions, of the produced beings, which are actually considered to be the results of his conceptions, and expresses only general comments on the universals.