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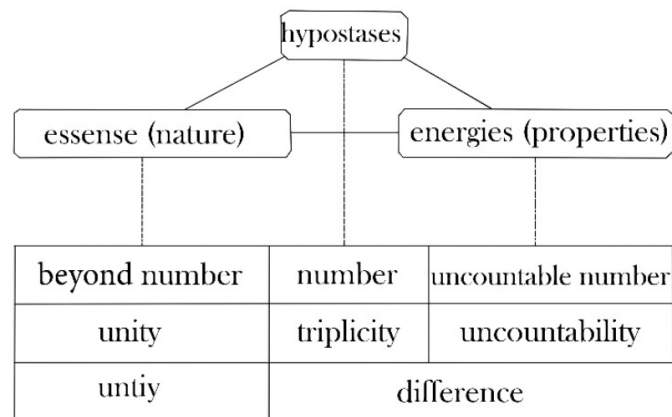
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NEILOS KABASILAS'S *RULE OF THEOLOGY* AND THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE LIGHT AND WARMTH OF FIRE IN NEILOS KABASILAS AND GREGORY PALAMAS

I review the central propositions of Neilos Kabasilas's 'Rule of Theology' and analyze the pre-history of a theme of the distinction between the warmth and light of fire (the sun) in Palamite theology. This analogy meant to clarify the distinction between the divine essence and energies, as well as between the energies themselves.

Terminologically, Neilos distinguishes, on the one hand, between the category of distinction (difference, διάκρισις), which is applicable to realities that are not identical with one another but coexist indivisibly from each other (this, according to Neilos, is the mode of coexistence of the hypostases, essence and energies in the Deity), and, on the other hand, the category of separation (division, διάρρηξις), pointing, evidently, at those things that can exist separately from one another. Additionally, Neilos combines this language with the language of *conceptual* and *real*. In order to emphasize the inseparability, even in distinction, of things that are not identical, he speaks of a *conceptual* distinction and a *real* unity (both in relation to the distinction of essence and energies, as well as of the energies among themselves).

We can suggest the following diagram to represent the correlation between "essence", "hypostasis" and "energy" ("property"), on the one hand, and, on the other, the other categories utilized by Neilos' in Rule of Theology:



In speaking of a conceptual distinction between essence and energies in God, Kabasilas follows a trajectory traced in several anti-Palamite writers, as well as in many Palamites. The latter, as suggested by John Demetracopoulos, endeavored in the course of their polemics to soften somewhat the emphasis of Gregory Palamas on the distinction between essence and energies in God, in order to deny the accusation of polytheism from the side of the anti-Palamites. Nevertheless, I do not agree with the interpretation of Demetracopoulos that the formulation of conceptual distinction between the divine essence and energies refers to a *merely mental* distinction. We can say that the doctrine of a conceptual distinction between the divine essence and energies is in particular the fruit of Western Scholastic influence.

It seems to me that in his treatise Neilos teaches that the distinction between essence and energies in God is an actual one, and is only *comprehended* conceptually. This is attested, in particular, by his oft-stated thesis of the *non-identity* of essence and energies. The theme of a conceptual distinction appears in his work for polemic reasons, and it does not contradict the traditional Palamite doctrine of an actual, and not merely mental, distinction in God, which Neilos develops in his treatise. In my view, therefore, Neilos's description of a conceptual distinction in the divine essence and energies should be understood in such a way that it points to the presence *in the human mind* of their actual *difference*.

Neilos uses this distinction to illustrate the principle of a distinction without division, which exists, according to the Palamite doctrine that he defends, between the essence, hypostases and energies of the Deity. The immediate meaning of the analogy of light and warmth in the *Rule of Theology* consists in the illustration of real unity and conceptual distinction between the essence and energies of the Deity, as well as between the energies as such. Relying on this analogy, Neilos speaks about the real unity in the sense of unity of light and warmth in relation to their essence, fire, and about conceptual distinction in the sense of reciprocal distinction between warmth and light, as well between warmth, light, and their common source of existence, fire. Here the distinct contexts are mixed: one, the strictly Palamite context, another, the context of the Areopagitic corpus, and another, the likely Thomistic influence.

If we bear in mind that the analogy of light and warmth was used by Gregory Palamas to distinguish *two kinds* of divine energies, we can conclude that *warmth*, in the analogy of Neilos as in Palamas, corresponds to the *creative energies of God*, whereas light corresponds to the *deifying energies*. Implicit in Neilos's account, then, is the same problem encountered earlier in Gregory Palamas: a distinction (without division) between the creative and deifying energies of God.

Neilos states that the activity of warming is a function of time, while light illumines those who are able to perceive it immediately and timelessly. If we bring this into correlation with the fact that Gregory Palamas uses sensible light as an analogue for the divine light of Tabor, we can see in Neilos an allusion to the concept of light in Palamas. Indeed, for Palamas, when the sensible light appears, it simultaneously activates the vision of those who have the faculty of sight. As well as the archetype of sensible light, the Light of Tabor is understood to be timeless, and is perceived by intellective sensation, or the eye of the soul. Like Palamas, Neilos Kabasilas also describes a case in which something that is unable to perceive the light emitted by fire perceives only the fire's warmth. In this way he illustrates the distinction (without division) between the two most important forces of fire: its ability to shine and its ability to warm, which do not exist separately from one another.

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