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Apophatic Theology of God's Incomprehensible Trinitarianism as Seen by Vladimir N. Lossky

Abstract: The purpose of this text is to present the apophatic struggle with the incomprehensible mystery of God's trinitarianism by one of the most eminent Orthodox theologians of the 20th century, and a radical defender of the apophatic nature of Christian theology, Vladimir N. Lossky. It consists of six sections. The subject of the first will be the original facticity, the givenness of the Trinity. The second will examine the question of the monarchy of the Father as the Source of the Trinity. This will be followed by a look at the issue of the relationship between the Divine Persons and Trinitarian distinctions. The fourth section will look at the aporia *Filioque* and its significance in understanding the being of God and the influence it has played in the division of Christianity. The fifth section will attempt a critical dialogue with the presented aspects of Lossky's thought in the key of the hermeneutics of theological differences between the East and the West – this key will constitute the content of the sixth chapter-supplement. In conclusion, it will be articulated the contemplative and deifying character of apophatic theology, which aims at the unknowable and supra-conceptual, incomprehensible Trinity.

Keywords: Vladimir N. Lossky, Trinity, *Filioque*, apophaticism, Orthodoxy, Trinitology

The truth of God, who is Trinity and who has revealed Himself as such, is the basic content of the Good News that Christianity proclaims. Thus, the *Mysterium Trinitatis* constitutes the meaning and purpose of all existence, being the basis of the *mysterium theosis*, in which God reveals-donates Himself in His concreteness as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Trinity, while being the hermeneutical key to understanding created reality, itself remains incomprehensible as the antinomy of the Three Persons and one nature.

If the incomprehensible God reveals Himself as the Holy Trinity, if His incomprehensibility appears as the mystery of the Three Persons and One Nature, it is the Holy Spirit laying open to our contemplation the fullness of the Divine being. [...] This is the absolute stability, the end of all contemplation and of all ascents, and, at the same time, the principle of all theology, primal verity, initial datum from which all thought and all being take their origin. (Lossky 1976, 239)

It is the incomprehensible and unconditioned mystery of God in itself, of God as God. At the same time, despite its incomprehensibility, the revelation in God of a simultaneous and equally absolute unity and multiplicity-difference, as it were, spontaneously provokes the problem of the manner of their coexistence. What does the unity of the Divine nature in the Three distinct Persons consist in? What are the criteria for the differences of these Persons, what actually entitles us to distinguish the Divine Hypostases? What is it that makes the Divine Hypostases truly and absolutely, because divinely, distinct from and among themselves? What-who is each of the Hypostases in its otherness? In what relations do the Divine Hypostases remain in relation to each other? Is it possible to know-say anything at all about the incomprehensible trinitarian life of God? Whether, and to what extent, theology is possible in its patristic sense, that is, the attempt to think, know and express of the God of the Trinity *in se*?

The purpose of this text is to present the apophatic struggle with the incomprehensible mystery of God's trinitarianism by one of the most eminent Orthodox theologians of the 20th century, and a radical defender of the neopatristic apophatic nature of Christian theology, Vladimir N. Lossky (see Williams 1980; Chipitsyn 2019). We will approach this subject in four parts. First, we will look at the question of the monarchy of the first Person of the Godhead, and thus the Father as the Source of the Trinity. Then we will trace the issue of the relationship between the Divine Persons and the Trinitarian distinctions. Finally, we will analyse the aporia of the *Filioque* and its theological significance in the multidimensional division of the Christian East and West. Finally, we will critically evaluate Lossky's theological proposal on the above

issues, especially in view of the title question. In conclusion, it will be articulated the contemplative and deifying character of apophatic theology, which aims at the unknowable and supra-conceptual, incomprehensible Trinity, of which Lossky was a true lover. This, in turn, will allow a somehow more lenient look at his apophatic-theological radicalism.

Two more introductory remarks are necessary. Firstly, the methodology of this text is determined by the following methods: analytical-synthetic, which will allow us to analyse the title problem, and then present its relatively coherent and comprehensive image and critically draw final conclusions; hermeneutic, which will be necessary in the search for the proper interpretation of the sources studied, taking into account their multiple contexts; and finally comparative, which will find its application especially in fragments concerning comparisons between the theology of the Christian East and the West. It should be emphasized that these methods will often overlap and complement each other.

Secondly, the thought of Vladimir Lossky is still not very much known. In Poland, there is only one study devoted to the problems of his trinitarian theology, and this is in an indirect and sometimes rather introductory way. Hence, the numerous and sometimes extensive quotations from his works in our presentation seem fully justified, as they can constitute the beginning of direct contact with his texts and encourage a broader and more profound interest in his legacy, especially, though not exclusively, in the ecumenical context.

1. The Trinity as a Primordial Unconditioned Given

Lossky states that “Christian theology does not know an abstract divinity: God cannot be conceived outside of the three persons. [...] Thus, the Trinity is the initial mystery, the Holy of Holies of the Divine reality, the very life of the hidden God, of the living God” (Lossky 1978, 45–46). The Russian theologian (1976, 45) emphasises that

if the very foundation of created being is change transition from non-being to being, if the creation is contingent by nature,

the Trinity is an absolute stability. One would say, an absolute necessity of perfect being: and yet the idea of necessity is not proper to the Trinity, for It transcends the antinomy of what is necessary, and the contingent; entirely personal and entirely nature; liberty and necessity are one, or, rather, can have no place in God. There is no dependence in relation to created being on the part of the Trinity; no determination of what is called “the eternal procession of the Divine Persons” by the act of the creation of the world. Even though the created order did not exist, God would still be Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Ghost – for creation is an act of will: the procession of the Persons is an act “according to nature” (κατὰ φύσιν).

In wishing to attempt to say something about the inner life of God, it is therefore necessary to keep constantly in mind the secondary nature – epistemic, but above all ontic! – of all human categories of thought, since “all existence and all knowledge are posterior to the Trinity and find in It their base. [...] The Trinity is therefore not the result of a process, but a primordial given. It has Its principle only in this, not above it: nothing is superior to It” (Lossky 1978, 46–47).

In this context, it is understandable that the author of the *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* strongly opposes the tendencies and inspirations in capturing the *Mysterium Trinitatis* from the nineteenth-century Romantic traditions of German philosophy; after all, in God there is no inner process, no becoming, no “dialectic” or “tragedy in the Absolute,” overcome in the form of the evolution of divinity (cf. Lossky 1976, 45).¹ Lossky, aware of the risk of idolatry of God in the form of a theology of concepts (cf. 33–37, 40–43), emphasises the importance of poetry because

¹ Schelling’s views on the tragedy-fight within the Absolute, related to the creation of the world, are mainly contained in his work *Weltalter – Fragmente* (see Piórczyński 1999). Hegel’s Trinitology can partly be found in his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, however, it must not be abstracted from the totality of his thought – rather it should be seen against the background of the totality, centred around the idea of the self-development of the spirit (see, e.g., Splett 1965; Schlitt 1984; Greshake 2007, 136–41).

of its glorifying rather than explicative character, after all, insofar as man cannot embrace the Trinity, he is himself embraced by it and impelled to glorify it. Hence, the desire to speak of the Trinity apart from love and adoration, apart from the personal relationship available and given by faith, condemns our language to falsity (cf. Lossky 1978, 46; see 13–25). God as the absolute personal You is unobjectifiable (cf. 27), and the attempt to take an objective stance towards Him (in the sense of neutrality) results in indifference meaning incomprehension (cf. Lossky 1976, 12), since an “external” stance towards God is inaccessible (cf. Lossky 1978, 31) to the creation. That is why, Lossky notes, if we want to speak about God using concepts that from our perspective imply the idea of time, becoming, change, or intention such as origin, act, internal determination, and the same time being aware of the incompatibility and limitations of our language in relation to the mystery of Revelation, we must refer to apophatic theology in order to free ourselves from the limitations of these concepts and at the same time transform them into a basis for the contemplation of reality which to created reason is incomprehensible (cf. Lossky 1976, 45–46).² It results ultimately from the radical, infinite and

² “One must understand that the apophysis of Eastern theology is not borrowed from the philosophers. The God of the Christians is more transcendent than that of the philosophers. [...] For Christians, on the contrary, the break is radical between the living God – the Trinity – and the created world, as much in its intelligible modality as in its sensible modality. The Fathers have used the philosophical technique of negation in order to posit the transcendence, absolute this time, of the living God. The apophaticism of Orthodox theology is no technique of interiorization whereby one absorbs oneself into an absolute more or less «co-natural» with the Intellect. It is a prostration before the living God, radically ungraspable, unobjectifiable and unknowable, because He is personal, because He is the free plenitude of personal existence. Apophysis is the inscription in human language, in theological language, of the mystery of faith. For this unknowable God reveals Himself, and, because He transcends, in His free personal existence, His very essence, He can really make Himself a participator. «No one has ever seen God: His only Son, He Who is in the bosom of the Father has manifested Him to us» (John 1:18). This mystery of faith as personal encounter and ontological participation is the unique foundation of theological language, a language that apophysis opens to the silence of deification” (Lossky 1978, 24–25).

impassable difference between the Creator and the *ex nihilo* creation (see Płóciennik 2023b) called into existence in an absolutely free manner, about which, apart from (historical) revelation, nothing is known (cf. Lossky 1976, 32). A revelation that is apophatic insofar as it is Trinitarian and Trinitarian insofar as it is apophatic, after all the Trinity transcends Its revelation (cf. Lossky 1974a, 16–17)³ and such must of necessity also be the attempt to understand and apprehend it theologically.

Thus, in formulating the dogma of the Trinity, the apophatic character of patristic thought was able while distinguishing between nature and hypostases to preserve their mysterious equivalence. In the words of St. Maximus, “God is identically Monad and Triad.” This is the end of the endless way: the limit of the limitless ascent; the Incomprehensibility reveals Himself in the very fact of His being incomprehensible, for his incomprehensibility is rooted in the fact that God is not only Nature but also Three Persons; the incomprehensible Nature is incomprehensible inasmuch as it is the Nature of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; God, incomprehensible because Trinity yet manifesting Himself as Trinity. Here apophaticism finds its fulfilment in the revelation of the Holy Trinity as primordial fact, ultimate reality, first datum which cannot be deduced, explained or discovered by way of any other truth; for there is nothing which is prior to it. Apophatic thought, renouncing every support, finds its support in God, whose incomprehensibility appears as Trinity. Here thought gains a stability which cannot be shaken; theology finds its foundation; ignorance passes into knowledge. (Lossky 1976, 63–64; see Płóciennik 2023b)

³ On the understanding of Revelation in Lossky’s approach (see Płóciennik 2023d).

2. The Monarchy of the Father as the Source of the Trinity

In attempting to penetrate the depths of God (cf. 1 Cor 2:10), following in an attitude of apophatic worship, it must nevertheless be remembered that “the God of Christian theology is a concrete God, since unique divinity is at once common to the three hypostases and proper to each of them: to the Father as Source, to the Son as procreated, to the Spirit as proceeding from the Father” (Lossky 1978, 45). In the above statement by Lossky, there is an incredibly significant designation of the Father as Source. Does this not contradict everything we have said so far about the apophatic inadequacy of this type of category to express the mystery of the Trinity? And yet: “to the Father as Source” – in this statement is contained, as it were, *implicite* the whole truth of the trinitarian references of the Divine Persons. In other words: the question of trinitarian relations and distinctions, is ultimately founded and mainly focuses, in Lossky’s view, on the so-called “monarchy of the Father.” What exactly does the Russian understand by this “monarchy of the Father” and why is it so important? Well, Lossky explains that

It means that the very Source of Divinity is personal. The Father is Divinity, but precisely because He is the Father, He confers it in its fullness on the two other persons. The latter take their origin from the Father, μόνη ἀρχή, single principle, whence the term “monarchy,” the “Divinity-Source,” as Dionysius the Areopagite says of the Father. It is from this indeed that springs – in this that is rooted – the identical, unshared, but differently communicated divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The notion of monarchy therefore denotes in a single word the unity and the difference in God, starting from a personal principle. (Lossky 1978, 46)

It follows that Christian theology, despite distinguishing between the plane of the Persons and the plane of nature in God, is at the same time aware of their identity, and not elsewhere, but in the Person of the Father, Who, insofar as He is the Father, is also the Source of the Divinity and guarantor of the unity of the Godhead. “«A single God because a single Father», according to the saying

of the Greek Fathers. The Persons and Nature are, so to say, given at the same time, without the one being logically prior to the other. The Father – πηγαία ζεότης, Source of all Divinity within the Trinity – brings forth the Son and the Holy Spirit in conferring upon them His nature, which remains one and indivisible, identical in itself in the Three” (Lossky 1976, 58–59).

Let us put this wealth of content in order: following Greek patristic thought, Lossky maintains, “that the Principle of unity in the Trinity is the Person of the Father. As Principle of the other two Persons, the Father is at the same time the Source of the relations whence the Hypostases receive their distinctive characteristics. In causing the Persons to proceed, He lays down their relations of origin-generation and procession – in regard to the unique Principle of Godhead” (58). Thus, in the Hypostasis of the Father, two issues come together in their immanent simultaneity: the unity of the Trinity and, at the same time, its diversity, which we must consider separately because of the impossibility of viewing the Trinitarian antinomy simultaneously and at the same time somehow simultaneous, since they presuppose and condition each other.

As Lossky emphasises, for the Greek Fathers the unity of God’s nature is based on the Father as the only Source of the Persons: the Son and the Spirit, who receive the same nature from Him (cf. 59). Therefore, Athanasius Alexandrinus can even speak of an absolute monarchy, since the principle of the Godhead is one (*Contra Arianos, Oratio* IV, I; PG 26:468B). Lossky cites many quotations from the writings of the Fathers in confirmation of the centrality of the monarchy of the Father to Eastern theology (see Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Oratio* XLII; PG 36:476B; Ioannes Damascenus, *De fide orthodoxa*, I, 8; PG 94:821C–824B, 829B), while stressing that such a strong emphasis on the monarchy of the Father by Eastern theologians was related to the belief they presented and defended a more concrete and personal conception of the Trinity, because it was based on the Father as the Source of Divinity and the principle of the unity of the Three (cf. Lossky 1976, 62).⁴ But are we not, as it

⁴ “Die Betonung der Dreiheit der Personen vor ihrer Einheit im Wesen führt die orthodoxe Theologie in Anlehnung an die Theologie der großen Kappadokier

were, introducing here, through the back door, the subordinationism that has just been rejected and condemned? After all, such a strong emphasis on the primacy of the Father in the Trinity, moreover, the recognition in Him of the Source of Deity, seems to introduce a certain hierarchy in God. Both Lossky and the Fathers were aware of this problem; however, they firmly distinguished between a subordinationist and a Trinitarian understanding of monarchy. “[...] a principle can be perfect only if it is the principle of a reality equal to it” (Lossky 1978, 47). The Russian points out that the Fathers were fond of using the term “cause” in relation to the Father, understood, however, in an apophatic and analogical way. In created reality, causality generally indicates some kind of subordination, while in the order of being it indicates ontic inferiority. While it is theoretically possible for a cause to generate an effect equal to itself, objectively speaking this is impossible because of the temporal nature of creation – the cause is always temporally, even minimally, ahead of the effect, which gives it a certain ontic, though perhaps not measurable, superiority-advantage.

The Greek Fathers readily spoke of the “Father-cause,” but this is merely an analogical term whose deficiency the purifying use of apophaticism enables us to measure. In our experience,

auch dazu, die Einheit der Trinität personal zu begründen. Das entspricht dem orthodoxen Ansatz bei der Erfahrung und dem Erfahrbaren. Der Eine, Dreieinige Gott wird ja nicht als «Wesen», sondern als Vater, Sohn und Heiliger Geist erfahren. So begründet die an der Erfahrung und dem Erfahrbaren orientierte orthodoxe Theologie die Einheit Gottes nicht in der gemeinsamen ουσία (Wesen). Sondern die Einheit beruht in der Monarchie des Vaters” (Felmy 1990, 46). This is also a conception of the Trinity that corresponds to the biblical testimony, since the Bible presents a decidedly personalistic vision of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, moving to nature from the person/persons plane. Moreover, the biblical texts contain, as it were, *implicite* the truth of the Father’s monarchy – not only is the Father presented as the absolute origin and source of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and subsequently of the world, as well as the ultimate goal (cf. 1 Cor 15:24–28), but according to modern exegesis the Bible, with few exceptions, reserves the term God (*Theos*) for the Person of the Father (cf. Rahner 1958). In spite of the otherwise valid criticism in places, mainly in view of the radicalness of Rahner’s statements, his thesis with revisions, retains its validity.

the cause is superior to the effect. In God, on the contrary, the cause as fulfillment of personal love cannot produce inferior effects: it wishes them to be equal in dignity, and is therefore also the cause of their equality. Besides, in God there is no extrapolation of cause and effect, but causality within one and the same nature. [...] it is only the important image of an inexpressible communion. (Lossky 1978, 47)

What, then, does this monarchical causation of the Father consist in? “The Father would not be a true person if He were not this: *πρός*, towards, entirely turned towards other persons, entirely communicated to those whom He makes persons, therefore equals, by the wholeness of His love” (47). This turning of the Father “to” – “towards” – other Persons consists in that

[...] the Father is a total gift of His divinity to the Son and to the Spirit. Were He only monad, were He to identify with His essence instead of giving it, He would not fully be a person. That is why the God of the Old Testament is not the Father. Personal but closed upon Himself, He is all the more terrible for being able only to enter into a relationship with beings of another nature whence His “tyrannical” appearance. Between Him and Man there is no reciprocity. That is why St. Cyril of Alexandria considered that the name of Father is superior to that of God: for if God is such only for those who are not God, the Father is the Father in relation to the Son, Who is in no way inferior to Him. In the unfolding of the biblical monad, the name of Father reveals itself as an interior name of God. (Lossky 1978, 44)

The Father realises His paternal monarchy when “He confers His one nature upon the Son and upon the Holy Spirit alike, in whom it remains one and undivided, not distributed, while being differently conferred; for the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father is not identical with the generation of the Son by the same Father” (Lossky 1976, 60; see Gapińska 2019, 37). It is in the generation of the Son and the generation of the Spirit, the Father not only appears as the Personal Source of the unity of the Trinity, but at the same time

makes a distinction between the hypostases in the eternal movement of love (cf. Maximus Confessor, *Scholia in librum de Divinis Nominibus*, II, 3; PG 4:221A).

3. Trinitary Relations and Distinctions

The reflection so far implies the question of what, then, are the begetting of the Son and the origin of the Spirit, resulting from the monarchy of the Father. What do they consist of? Moreover, what is the difference between them? How do birth and descent relate to the distinctiveness – “otherness” – of the Hypostases? What exactly is this move of the Father’s love that distinguishes Hypostases in birth and origin? What does the Hypostatic differentiation in the Trinity actually consist in what determines that each Hypostasis is precisely this and not another Hypostasis, and in a fully Divine, and therefore absolute and infinite, manner? (cf. Płóciennik 2023b, 726–28). Lossky points out that “the only characteristic of the hypostases which we can state to be exclusively proper to each, and which is never found in the others, by reason of their consubstantiality, is thus the relation of origin” (Lossky 1976, 54). This is because the said consubstantiality causes that

The Divine attributes relate to common nature: intelligence, will, love, peace concern the three hypostases together and cannot differentiate them. One cannot in an absolute way qualify each Hypostasis with a Divine name. We have said that personal uniqueness eludes every definition, that personhood can only be evoked in its relation with another. The only way to distinguish the hypostases will therefore be by making precise their relationships, and above all their relationship to the common Source of Divinity, to the “Divinity-Source” of the Father. “Not to be procreated, to be procreated, to proceed, characterize the Father, the Son and He Whom we call the Holy Spirit,” writes Gregory of Nazianzus. The innascibility of the Father without beginning (this is the basic idea of the monarchy of the Father, the full importance of which we will soon see), the generation of the Son

and the procession of the Holy Spirit – these are the relationships which allow us to distinguish the Persons. (Lossky 1978, 43)

In this seemingly clear and orderly statement, we deal with the epistemic pendulum of simultaneous discovery and concealment. “Nevertheless, this relation [the relation of origin, that is: birth and descent – note M. P.] must be understood in an apophatic sense. It is above all a negation, showing us that the Father is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit; that the Son is neither the Father nor the Spirit; that the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son” (Lossky 1976, 54). Apophaticism in relation to Trinitarian relations of origin points, according to our theologian, to two extremely important issues.

[...] the first is that these relationships indicate, but do not underlie the hypostatic diversity. Diversity is an absolute reality. It is rooted in the triple and primordial mystery of the Divine Persons, and our thought, which it precedes infinitely, cannot evoke it except in a negative way by declaring that the Father without beginning is neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit, that the procreated Son is neither the Holy Spirit nor the Father, that the Spirit proceeding from the Father is neither the Father nor the Son. (Lossky 1978, 43)

Lossky stresses that to view the Trinity through the prism of hypostatic differences conditioned-established by relations of origin, “otherwise to regard it would be to submit the Trinity to a category of Aristotelian logic, that of relation. Understood apophatically, the relation of origin describes the difference but nevertheless does not indicate the manner of the Divine processions” (Lossky 1976, 54–55).

We can easily find in these statements a reference to the Trinitarian model operating and dominating for some time in Western theology. The West sees in the origin of the Son and the Spirit from the Father, that is, in the begetting and the origin respectively, the constitutive nature of the hypostatic differences – the Son and the Spirit are different from the Father and from each other precisely

because of and within the relation of origin⁵ – the East sees this merely as a way of apophatic disclosure of the originally existing differences. This necessitated addressing the issue of the difference between the origin of the Son and the Spirit, and thus between birth and breath, which in essence, as a result of the identity of the “otherness” of the Persons with the relations of origin, was a question of the “otherness” and difference (between) the Son and Spirit. Initially, this “otherness” was sought within the framework of the so-called psychological science of the Trinity, which saw the birth of the Son in cognitive-intellectual terms and the breath of the Spirit in volitional terms.⁶ Ultimately, however, the difference between begetting and breathing, and thus between the Son and the Spirit, was identified by the West within the doctrine of the *Filioque*, whereas the Son proceeds only from the Father in the manner of begetting, the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son – from both as one principle in the manner of breath (see Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I, q.

⁵ “In view of the indisputable fact of the existence of a trinity in God, the question arises as to the real difference between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The New Testament revelation shows that the basis of this difference is the origin of the persons of God. There are two different origins: the origin of the Son (by begetting) and the origin of the Holy Spirit (by breathing)” (Szcurek 2003, 195).

⁶ The origins of attempts to understand origins in God in psychological terms are to be found in Augustine’s doctrine of the Trinity. The Bishop of Hippo, seeing in man the image of God, tried to bring the Divine *processiones* closer by analogy with the origins taking place in man’s spiritual life (Aurelius Augustinus, *De Trinitate*). To this question Augustine devoted practically the whole third part of his work, in which he tries to find the *vestigia trinitatis* in creation, see especially (IX–XV; PL 42:959–1098). On the psychological doctrine of the Trinity in the thought of Augustine (see Schmaus 1966). Lossky refers to these psychological attempts to render the Divine origins as follows: “[...] the tradition of the Eastern Church never designates the relationship between the Persons of the Trinity by the name of attributes. We never say, for example, that the Son proceeds by the mode of the intelligence and the Holy Spirit by the mode of the will. The Spirit can never be assimilated to the mutual love of the Father and the Son. The «trinitarian psychologism» of Augustine is viewed rather as an analogical image than as a positive theology expressing the relationship between the Persons” (Lossky 1976, 81). On the secondary nature of any attributes of God in relation to His apophatic Trinitarian essence (nature) in the context of the Palamic distinction of Persons, essence (nature) and energies in God adopted by Lossky (see 1976, 80–81).

36, a. 2),⁷ The East, on the other hand, while aware of the difference between begetting and originating, never undertook to establish it, considering both *processiones* to be equally unknowable in a spirit of radical apophaticism (see Ioannes Damascenus, *De fide orthodoxa*; PG 94:820A, 824A; Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Oratio XX*, II; PG 35:1077C; *Oratio XXXI – Theologica V*, 8; PG 36:141B). Moreover, Western Trinitarianism, as if in extension of the constitution of the hypostatic difference in the relations of origin, used a modified Aristotelian category of relations in describing the mutual references of the Divine Persons, reaching a peak, as it were, in Thomas's identification of the Hypostases of the Trinity with subsistent relations (cf. Thomas Aquinas, *STh I*, q. 29, a. 4, see also q. 40, especially a. 1–3).⁸

⁷ On the distinctiveness of the acts of birth and breath as personal acts of the Father, see Szczurek 1998–1999.

⁸ On the difficulties arising from the identification of the Divine Hypostases with self-contained relations within Western theology (see Sikora 2004, 48–52). A response to this article starting from Thomistic positions and defending them by M. Przanowski is given in the same issue of Theophilus (see Przanowski 2004) – a passage on the understanding of the Persons of the Trinity as self-contained relations (see 58–60). Some theologians in Anselm's of Canterbury statement in the conciliar *A Decree in Behalf of the Jacobites* (see Denzinger 1995, no. 703 – cited in accordance with the numbering), have seen the dogmatic sanctioning of the doctrine of the relational identity of the Divine Hypostases (cf. Szczurek 2003, 206), which, however, is not at all unarguable (cf. Granat 1962, 1:380; Congar 1983, 3:102n9). The prevalence of such an account in Western theology, regardless of its theological stature, provokes the question what is the point of this claim? Is it that this oppositional relationship establishes hypostatic differences or rather reveals them? The context in which the Anselmian thesis is mentioned in the Council document seems to point rather to the latter sense. Admittedly, the phrase falls there after the statement that: “The Father alone begot the Son of His own substance; the Son alone was begotten of the Father alone; the Holy Spirit alone proceeds at the same time from the Father and Son,” and thus after the exposition of the doctrine of origins in God, but it follows and, as it were, results from the differences between the Persons mentioned earlier in the document: “that the Father is not Son or Holy Spirit, that Son is not Father or Holy Spirit; that Holy Spirit is not Father or Son; but Father alone is Father, Son alone is Son, Holy Spirit alone is Holy Spirit.” Yes, in the introduction, the differences between the Persons are defined as relations of origin: “Father unborn, Son born of the Father, Holy Spirit proceeding from Father and Son,” which also seems to imply each time emphasizing the singularity

Secondly, Lossky states that

these relations are not relations of opposition as Latin theology affirms, but simple relations of diversity. They do not differentiate nature in persons, they confirm the absolute identity and the no less absolute diversity of the hypostases; and above all, in connection with each hypostasis, they are ternary, and can never result in the duality which is precisely implied by opposition. It is impossible indeed to fit one hypostasis into a dyad, impossible to evoke it without immediately causing the other two to rise up: the Father is such only in relation to the Son and the Spirit. As for the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit, they are in a certain way simultaneous, the one implying the other. (Lossky 1978, 43–44)

For confirmation of the opposing relationship of the Divine Persons to one another in Western theology, one need not look far – it is enough to refer again to the statement of the Council of Florence analysed above, where this opposing relationship is this time stated *explicitite*. Far more important, however, is the underlying assumption of the diadic nature of these opposing relations, as pointed out by Lossky. This has the effect of breaking up the trinitarian relations into two diads: Father – Son and Father and Son – Holy Spirit; in the case of the second diad, Father and Son are understood as one principle of the Spirit, hence the reference to a diad and not a triad. This is a consequence of the strong emphasis on the order of origin in God, seen precisely through the prism of these bilateral relationships. The begetting of the Son by the Father occurs logically

of these origins by adding to each Person by the manner of His origin, or causing origin in the case of the Father, However, there is still a long way to go from recognizing the relationship of origins as differentiating the Persons to recognizing them as identical with the Persons, and this is by no means a matter of obvious logical consequence, but a giant leap in thinking about the Trinity. At this point it is worth recalling a sentence by K. Rahner, who observes that: “Dabei geht die Kirchenlehre nicht auf die Frage ein, ob von den drei ursprünglicher gesagt werden soll, sie würden durch die «processio» oder durch die «relatio» konstituiert” (Rahner 1967, 364).

(not temporally) prior to the origin of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, which is logically (not temporally) conditioned by this begetting. Both the Fourth Lateran Council and the aforementioned Council of Florence seem to confirm this dual diadicity in the Trinity (see Denzinger 1995, no. 428, 703).⁹ The Russian notes that, despite the preservation of the logical order of origins set by the monarchy of the Father, for Eastern theology, the relations of each Hypostasis are triadic. Each of the Persons is always and simultaneously related to the other two, hence all relations in the Trinity can be described as *Patreque Filioque Spirituque*, since in God everything is triple.¹⁰

In spite of the reservations made at the beginning of this paragraph about the apophatic character of Divine origins, and thus the inadequacy of human categories of thought, mainly due to their temporal-spatial limitations, to convey their mysteriousness,

⁹ It is interesting that both the one and the other councils emphasize with such emphasis the logical independence of these diads (or rather the independence of the first diad from the second) precisely by adding the word 'alone' to the individual members of these diads.

¹⁰ "The Greek Fathers cannot share this formal principle [this is about the possibility of distinguishing the Son from the Spirit only within the *Filioque* – note M. P.]. They do not, moreover, analyse the interrelation between the Persons of God in logical concepts of opposite relations. Contemplating one of the three Persons leads them inevitably to the two Others. Opposition: Father – Son, permitted on the logical plane, proves inadequate on the triadological plane, for example, because it removes the Holy Spirit to the side. In the Eastern view of the Trinity, a binary approximation to the Trinity is inappropriate, for the fusion of unity with triadicity should still prevail: any property in God is personal or natural and pertains to one or three Persons respectively. [...] It is true that by His name the Father has been revealed to us as the Father of the only Son, through whom salvation comes to us. However, His mode of existence as a Source Person at the same time induces a wholly voluntary, complete and loving gift in relation to the Spirit, so that there is no concrete Fatherhood without the breath of the Spirit. Thus the Father cannot be reduced to His mere relation of fatherhood to the Son. The relationship does not define the Person, but reveals it" (Stavrou 2000, 403). By the way, the radical identification of the Father with the relation of paternity contrasted with the equally radical identification of the Son with the relation of sonship, means that the Holy Spirit not only does not participate in the "constitution" of the Father and the Son, but rather appears as a kind of superaddition in relation to the Father and the Son, which adds nothing to their hypostatic being, since even without him they would be what they are, that is, Father and Son in their paternal and filial opposition.

the question arises, as it were, spontaneously about a certain motivation for these origins in God, about a specific impulse underlying them. What actually makes the Father, as the Source of the Divine, wish to grant his Divine nature to the Son in giving birth to him and to the Holy Spirit in his origin from the Father? More radically: could the Trinity not be a Trinity, which is to say, is it conceivable – with all the paradoxicality of this formulation – that the Father alone without the Son and the Spirit would be God?¹¹ Lossky is aware of this kind of difficulty and tries in all seriousness to answer it. He strongly emphasises that God is the Trinity and would be the Trinity regardless of the existence of creation, because creation exists by virtue of an act of God's will, and the origins of the Persons are located at the level of God's nature; they are acts according to nature. God is and cannot not be the Trinity, being God and being the Trinity are identical. But God-Trinity did not have to "be" the Creator, and therefore creation did not have to exist (cf. Lossky 1976, 45). Thus Lossky, following Athanasius the Great and especially John of Damascus, distinguishes between

the work of nature, which is generation and procession, and the work of will, which is the creation of the world. The work of nature, moreover, is not a work in the proper sense, but the very being of God, for God is, by His nature, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. [...] Just as the trinitarian existence is not the result of an act of will, it is impossible to see here the process of an internal necessity. One must therefore carefully distinguish the causality of the Father – which locates the three hypostases in their absolute diversity, though without the possibility of establishing any order between them – from its revelation or manifestation. The Spirit leads us, through the Son, to the Father,

¹¹ In his work *Contra Errores Graecorum*, Thomas Aquinas addresses this problem in the question: "Quomodo intelligitur quod pater neque filio neque spiritu sancto indiget ad sui perfectionem." Such an ambiguous expression is found by Thomas in Athanasius' texts, although they are in fact rather some pseudo-Athanasian texts, indicating his orthodox hermeneutic (cf. I, 7). It is worth recalling at this point Balthasar's statement: "Die Natur Gottes ist es, Trinität zu sein" (von Balthasar 1987, 3:49).

where we discover the unity of the three. The Father, according to the terminology of St. Basil, reveals Himself through the Son in the Spirit. Here is affirmed a process, an order from which issues that of the three names: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Lossky 1978, 47–48).

To sum up, The Son is not begotten by the will of the Father, and the same applies to the origin of the Holy Spirit, because the will is an attribute of nature, which means that it is common to the Three Persons. The Father cannot be thought of without the Son or the Holy Spirit, because He is the Father with the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the Trinity there is neither action in the sense of change nor inaction in the sense of passivity. God is simply always the Trinity (cf. 46).

4. The Issue of the Filioque

We must finally take up the aporia within which we are dealing with a kind of resume of thinking about the Trinity, and which, from a religious point of view, is, according to Lossky, the only important cause in the whole chain of events that led to the division of the Christian East and West (cf. Lossky 1976, 13).¹² The issue is the possibility of distinguishing two origins in God: the begetting

¹² This thesis, perhaps acceptable as part of an abstract dogmatics detached from its historical rooting in the life of the Church – but would it then still be a dogmatics of the Christian faith? – is unfortunately devoid of a historical-dogmatic basis. Let us note that, despite the presence of the *Filioque* in various forms – including liturgical and theological – in the West long before the schism, since almost the fifth century, moreover, despite the first objections in the East by John of Damascus, despite the criticism of the *Filioque* by Phocius, whose anti-*Filioquist* argumentation became a paradigm for Trinitarian reflection of the East in polemic with the West, who called it outright heresy and the work of the devil, and the short-lived so-called Phocian schism, unity was not definitively broken and continued despite the differences - or rather within them! Yes, it cannot be ruled out that in the end the *Filioque* also contributed to the schism to a certain extent, moreover that some divergences arose on its extension, however, to reduce the whole after all sin of the schism of Christianity to the problem of the *Filioque* and its consequences is a great exaggeration. Hence, Lossky's position remains, in our opinion, problematic on this issue.

of the Son and the origin of the Spirit, which, as we have already mentioned, the West solved by the *Filioque*,¹³ hence the whole issue basically boils down to a different understanding of the origin of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ The East, as we have also already pointed out,

¹³ Despite possible reservations, Augustine should most likely be considered the founder of the *Filioque* on the level of patristic “theology.” This position corresponds, moreover, with the perception of Augustine’s theology in the East, who is charged there, among other things, with introducing the *Filioque*, considering him “only” a blessed and not a saint – on the place and evaluation of the person of Augustine and his theological legacy (see, e.g., Rose 2007; Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou 2020; Paprocki 2010). Interestingly, Lossky himself, a radical anti-*Filioquist*, devoted one of his articles to Augustine, in addition finding in him elements of the negative theology so dear to himself and the Eastern Church as a whole (see Lossky 1954). Augustine proposed the *Filioque* in an anti-Arian context for an even clearer indication of the Son’s co-eternity with the Father – the Son has from the Father all that the Father has from the Son, except for being the Father, and so also that the Holy Spirit proceeds from him as well as proceeds from the Father, though not in the same way as from the Father. The *Filioque* is subsumed in the pseudo-Athanasian creed *Quicumque*, and also appeared in the creeds of the Spanish synods of VI and VII centuries. It was promoted strongly in the kingdom of Charlemagne. In 1014, the *Filioque* was officially included in the Mass *Credo* by Pope Benedict VIII. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) speaks of the origin of the Holy Spirit “[...] and the Holy Spirit equally from both; without beginning, always, and without end” (Denzinger 1995, no. 428), while the formal dogmatisation of the formula *Filioque* was made by the Second Council of Lyons (1274) (cf. no. 460). In turn, the Council of Florence (1439–1444) reiterated and further defined this dogmatic pronouncement (cf. no. 691). Of course, this is not an exhaustive account of the history of the dogmatic question of the Holy Spirit in the West, (which has been in – at times stronger, at other times weaker – confrontation and tension with the East, but all the while within the framework of a single – in diversity – the orthodoxy of one undivided Church), but only a cursory and simplistic outline of its more important stages.

¹⁴ Because of the neo-Palamic character of Lossky’s theology, the question of the origin of the Holy Spirit is with him inextricably linked to the concept of grace, understood in terms of Divine energies (see Paprocki 2001, 69–81). Lossky himself expressed this in the following words: “It is never possible to understand a spirituality if one does not take into account the dogma in which it is rooted. We must accept facts as they are, and not seek to explain the difference between eastern and western spirituality on racial or cultural grounds when a greater issue, a dogmatic issue, is at stake. Neither may we say that the questions of the procession of the Holy Spirit or of the nature of grace have no great importance in the scheme of Christian

has remained much more restrained towards this problem, not seeking to flesh out the differences between the Divine origins, but keeping their difference within the apophatic mystery. Lossky concludes that

indeed, if the relations of origin – to be unbegotten, begotten and proceeding which cause us to distinguish the Three Hypostases, lead our thought to the sole Source of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, to the *πηγαία ζεότης*, to the Father, Source of Divinity, they do not establish a separate relation between the Son and the Holy Spirit. These two persons are distinguished by the different mode of their origin: the Son is begotten, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. This is sufficient to distinguish them. (Lossky 1976, 55)

In order to understand the importance that this different distribution of accents, leading in essence to different conceptions of the Trinity, has had in history and still has today, it is necessary to look a little closer at the assumptions and foundations from which both conceptions grew. This will also allow, at least in part, “to understand what the East desired to safeguard in protesting against the western formula” (56), but also what guided the West in introducing this formula, for as our theologian points out “conditioned, as it may well have been, by various factors, this dogmatic choice was – for the one party as for the other – a spiritual commitment, a conscious taking of sides in a matter of faith” (13). As it turned out, these commitments unfortunately had the force of a schism, of which, according to Lossky, the sole and primary dogmatic cause was precisely the question of the *Filioque* (cf. 56). Western Trinitology, most often wanting Three Persons, most often started from their common nature, while Greek – emphasizing the monarchy of the Father – went in the opposite direction – from

doctrine, which remains more or less identical among Roman Catholics and among Orthodox. In dogmas so fundamental as these it is this «more or less» which is important, for it imparts a different emphasis to all doctrine, presents it in another light; in other words, gives place to another spirituality” (Lossky 1976, 22).

Persons to nature. It was a path starting from the concrete, based on the testimony of Holy Scripture and the baptismal formula, in which the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are successively invoked. On this path, according to Lossky, thought does not risk going astray (cf. 56).¹⁵

However, as Lossky emphasises, both approaches or paths were equally valid, provided that the first did not assume the superiority of nature over Persons, and the second did not assume the superiority of Persons over nature. The Fathers, indeed, used two synonyms: οὐσία and ὑπόστασις, in order to articulate the distinction between nature and Persons, but did not grant primacy to either of them. Just as Persons or a Person do not exist without nature; alike nature, even in a purely logical order, does not exist outside the Three Persons, nor earlier than them. Violation of this antinomy between nature and Persons – completely identical and completely different, leads either to Sabalian unitarianism, and thus towards the God of philosophers, or towards tritheism (cf. 56–57). In the Western *Filioque*, the East saw precisely the disruption of this antinomian balance between Persons and Nature in favour of one Divine being.¹⁶

¹⁵ The orthodox thinker recalls in this context the famous statement by Th. Régnon according to whom “«Latin philosophy first considers the nature in itself and proceeds to the agent; Greek philosophy first considers the agent and afterwards passes through it to find the nature. The Latins think of personality as a mode of nature; the Greeks think of nature as the content of the person»” (de Régnon 1892, 1:433, quoted in Lossky 1976, 57–58). “Allerdings verstand de Régnon selbst die beiden Strömungen eher als komplementär, wohl wissend, daß beide sowohl in Ost wie in West mit verschiedenem Gewicht vertreten wurden und werden. Das heißt: es gibt zwar beide «Pole», doch so, daß oft ein und derselbe Theologe in seiner trinitarischen Konzeption sowohl Elemente der griechischen wie der lateinischen Position heranzieht. Auf sehr viel ausgeprägtere Weise sind dagegen auf Ost und West bezogen die beiden einander gegenläufigen Gefahren des Subordinatianismus und des Modalismus” (Greshake 2007, 71–72).

¹⁶ It should be stressed that Lossky’s remarks in relation to Western Trinitarianism refer mainly to its form and state within classical scholastic theology, especially in the period from about the ninth century onwards, when the beginning of the disputes over the *Filioque* between East and West is dated, as Lossky himself fairly points out (cf. Lossky 1976, 56). By the way, it would be worth considering whether and to what extent they apply to the present state of Western Trinitarian thought. In this context, one might point to the work of A. Laats, juxtaposing Trinitarian doctrine

The Greeks saw in the formula of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son a tendency to stress the unity of nature at the expense of the real distinction between the persons. The relationships of origin which do not bring the Son and the Spirit back directly to the unique source, to the Father – the one as begotten, the other as proceeding – become a system of relationships within the one essence: something logically posterior to the essence. Indeed, according to the western conception the Father and the Son cause the Holy Spirit to proceed, inasmuch as they represent the one nature; while the Holy Spirit, who, for western theologians, becomes “the bond between the Father and the Son,” stands for a natural unity between the first two persons. The hypostatic characteristics (paternity, generation, procession), find themselves more or less swallowed up in the nature or essence which, differentiated by relationships – to the Son as Father, to the Holy Spirit as Father and Son – becomes the principle of unity within the Trinity. The relationships, instead of being characteristics of the hypostases, are identified with them. As St. Thomas was later to write: “Persona est relatio,” inner relationship of the essence which it diversifies. (Lossky 1976, 57)¹⁷

as seen in Eastern and Western theology by way of example, or better, with particular reference, to the thought of K. Barth and V. Lossky – interestingly Barth, a Calvinist, was a strong defender of the *Filioque* (see Laats 1999).

¹⁷ In this one can see the basic argument of Eastern Trinitarianism, based on the Cappadocian synthesis and refined by Phocian: “[...] the Divine Persons are distinguished by incommunicable personal properties: The Father is unbegotten or without beginning (*ἀναρχος*), the Son is begotten, and the Spirit proceeds (*ἐκπορευόμενος*) from the Father. The Father is the only source and cause of the Son and the Spirit. The origin (*ἐκπόρευσις*) signifies the coming of the Spirit into Divine existence. [...] Thus all property in God is either natural – and then common to the three Persons – or personal and pertaining exclusively to one Person. There is no other possibility. If, therefore, the origin of the Spirit is attributed to the Father and the Son as a single principle (basis), we then have the property of a common nature, which cannot be deprived of the Spirit: For it would have to come eternally from itself, which is clearly absurd. Moreover, [...] if the Son were the source of the Spirit in the same way as the Father, then either he would be distinct from the Father and we would have two Trinitarian sources, i.e., ditheism, or he would be one with the Father in the breath, and then the Father and the Son would be no different: and hence we have semi-Sabellianism” (Stavrou 2000, 400–401). Felmy

This statement by Lossky alone could undoubtedly become the subject of many a study, but we will try to analyse it in a few brief, albeit germane, remarks, due to the limitations of our work. Essentially, these appear to be the two most significant: defending the apophatic character of the Trinity against rationalistic attempts of Western theology and the truth about the difference of Divine Persons (see Obolevitch 2014, 195–200).

First, according to Lossky, the *Filioque* acquaints the Trinitarian Source of the Father as the cause of the simultaneous unity and diversity of the Hypostases in favour of a primary unity of essence, only secondarily differentiated by relations: “For the West, the relations diversified the primordial unity. For the East, they signified at one and the same time the diversity and the unity, because they had reference to the Father who is principle, as well as recapitulation (συγκεφαλαίωσις), of the Trinity” (Lossky 1976, 58). Lossky sees the danger in this, which he refers to as the “philosophy of essence,” because, in his opinion, when the common nature takes first place in the concept of the Trinitarian dogma, a certain philosophy of essence comes to the fore, overshadowing, pushing to the background, if not to say marginalizing the religious reality of the Trinity, whereas for the Eastern Church all talk about God always concerns the concrete, “The God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob; the God of Jesus Christ.” It is always the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Ghost (cf. 64).¹⁸ Moreover, he states that the West, in order to save itself, as it were, from pure Theocentrism, which would be in danger

cites an argument, formulated by Phocius, which, in his opinion, Western Trinitarianism is still unable to reject today: “[...] wenn der Sohn erst damit als Gottgleich anerkannt wird, daß der Heilige Geist auch aus Ihm hervorgeht a reference to the anti-Arian context of the explication of the *Filioque* within «theology» [note – M. P.], wie verhält es sich dann mit dem Heiligen Geist? Warum wird der Sohn dann nicht wie aus dem Vater so auch aus dem Geist geboren? Hingegen wird durch das *Filioque* der Geist der Natur des Vaters fernergerückt als der Sohn, damit wird seine Gottheit im Sinne der Häresie des Makedonios gemindert” (Felmy 1990, 54). Whatever else may be said, the arguments cited by both authors are of the highest degree of difficulty. They are implicitly or explicitly contained in Lossky’s theology, since they represent the heritage of the tradition he represents.

¹⁸ The Russian quotes the following words of de Régnon on this point: “«It would seem that in our time the dogma of the Divine Unity had, as it were, absorbed

under the conditions of its theology centred more on essence than on persons, with some form of impersonal apophaticism of the Divine nothingness preceding the Trinity, became Christocentric, and therefore particularly focused on the person of Christ, Who in His humanity reveals the essence of God (cf. 64–65). In addition, Lossky believes, it is as a result of the overemphasis of the Divine essence in relation to the Divine Persons

the idea of beatitude has acquired in the West a slightly intellectual emphasis, presenting itself in the guise of a vision of the essence of God. [...] In the tradition of the Eastern Church there is no place for a theology, and even less for a mysticism, of the Divine essence. The goal of Orthodox spirituality, the blessedness of the Kingdom of Heaven, is not the vision of the essence, but, above all, a participation in the Divine life of the Holy Trinity; the deified state of the co-heirs of the Divine nature, gods created after the uncreated God, possessing by grace all that the Holy Trinity possesses by nature. (Lossky 1976, 64–65)¹⁹

the dogma of the Trinity of which one only speaks as a memory»” (de Régnon 1892, 1:365, quoted in Lossky 1976, 64n1).

¹⁹ The view portraying eternal life in terms of an intuitively intellectual *visio beatifica* is found in the official pronouncements of the Western Church for the first time in the Constitution *Benedictus Deus* of Pope Benedict XII of 1336 (see Denzinger 1995, no. 530). It is significant, by the way, that a century later, at the Union Council of Florence, there is no mention of viewing the Divine Being but the Trinity (see no. 693) – this passage is cited in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (cf. LG 49). On the understanding of the *visio beatifica* within classical Western theology (see Ziółkowski 1946). Interestingly, the understanding of eternal life in terms of an intellectual vision of the Divine Being remained fundamentally alien to Western mysticism, which saw in eternal bliss rather a personal participation in the inner life of the Trinity – through participation in the Holy Spirit in the one Sonship of Christ as sons of the Father, which, despite the use of other linguistic categories, was similar to the *theosis* of the Eastern Church. P. Nikolski’s work (2006), is recommendable in this regard – the author, an Orthodox theologian, seeks to show the convergence of Western, moreover, based on scholastic theology, mysticism of John of the Cross with Orthodox mysticism, especially as regards the theme of the unifying knowledge of God and the divinizing union with Him in the mystery of the Trinity (see 45–97).

The Eastern understanding of eternal life as divinely sharing in the life of the Trinity is, of course, not devoid of a cognitive-intellectual dimension, but, as we have already mentioned, it is understood within the fundamental dimension of *communio* and subordinated to it – directed towards it.²⁰ In short: the shift in emphasis from the personal unity (and at the same time diversity) of the Trinity, which the Father establishes in his monarchy towards a unity of being, leads, according to Lossky, to the replacement of the concrete and living God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Jesus Christ – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – into the God of philosophers, and theology into religious philosophy. For Eastern theology, this is unthinkable, since the Trinity, which is the basis of all theology, moreover, belonging to the field called by the Fathers as *par excellence* “theology,” is the basis and hermeneutical key of all thinking, leading in its mysteriousness beyond and above philosophical ways of thinking (see Lossky 1974b, 80, 89).²¹

Secondly, Lossky states, as if extending the previous comment,

the Word and the Spirit, [...] are inseparable in their showing forth of the Father and are yet ineffably distinct, as two persons proceeding from the same Father. If, in conformity to the Latin formula, we introduce here a new relation of origin, making the Holy Spirit to proceed from the Father and from the Son; the monarchy of the Father, this personal relation creating the unity at the same time as the trinity, gives place to another conception

²⁰ Man (and angel) comes to know God in order to unite more deeply with Him and never vice versa – cognition is not and can never be an end in itself. Moreover, authentic cognition is only possible within the framework of union – ontology always precedes epistemology, which does not exist without it and only leads to it! This is, moreover, in line with the Semitic-Biblical understanding of “cognition” as taking place within the framework of a direct relationship, as a certain form of coexistence (see Corbon and Vanhoye 1970, 199–204). Lossky devoted a separate study to the subject of seeing God in Eastern theology (1983) – the first edition was published in French in 1962, thus after Lossky’s death.

²¹ Y. Congar, briefly but eloquently, commented on these accusations by Lossky that Western theology had made such a far-reaching philosophising of God. Congar wrote: “Surely this is going too far!” (Congar 1983, 3:77n5).

– that of the one substance in which the relations intervene to establish the distinction of persons, and in which the hypostasis of the Holy Spirit is no more than a reciprocal bond between the Father and the Son. Once the different emphasis of the two Trinitarian doctrines has been perceived, it will be understood why the East has always defended the ineffable, apophatic character of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father, unique Source of the persons, against a more rational doctrine which, in making of the Father and the Son a common principle of the Holy Spirit, places the common nature above the persons; a doctrine which tends to weaken the hypostases by confounding the persons of Father and Son in the natural act of spiration, and in making of the Holy Spirit a connection between the two. (Lossky 1976, 61–62)

It should be noted that in the case of the question of the origin of the Holy Spirit, the different understanding in the East and in the West of the relationship between “theology” and “economy” comes to light, and thus between the trinitarian life of God and his revelation from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit, which would undoubtedly merit a separate study (see Kupiec 1985, 269–71). Let us only emphasise here that, for Eastern theology, the economic action of the Trinity is the result of the will and not of nature, and is therefore relative and not necessary, hence it does not necessarily correspond in everything and *de facto* does not correspond to the being of the immanent Trinity – this by no means indicates that we are dealing with two Trinities. Yes, God reveals Himself as He is in Himself, but this does not mean that from His revelation one is allowed to go directly and directly to His innermost being, forgetting and, as it were, ignoring the entire revelatory context, with its limitations. God reveals Himself fully, while always transcending His revelation.²²

²² Thus, insofar as the East acknowledged the Son’s mediation of the origin of the Spirit using the formula that “the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son” (also “together with the Son”), from the point of view of the West complementary to the formula “from the Father and the Son *ab utroque*” (“from the Father

The Parisian theologian's remark is very important here, on the confusion of the plane of nature and persons within the *Filioque* – and even bilaterally, that is, both in the Father and the Son as the single principle of origin of the Spirit, and in the Spirit as the bond of the Father and the Son. After all, if the Father and the Son together – as one principle – give origin to the Spirit, then, after all, what they have in common is one Divine nature: what, then, is the principle of the Spirit – the Persons of the Father and Son or the Divine nature? Conversely, if the Spirit is the bond of the Father and the Son, then what they have in common is the common nature: what, then, is the Spirit-the Person or the *quasi*-personified Divine nature?²³ Nor does the difficulty seem to be solved by saying that the Father is *the principium non de principio* for the Holy Spirit, while the Son *the principium de principio*, since, after all, the distinction is still made within a certain Western primordially/superiority of essence before/above the Divine Persons.²⁴ As Congar notes: “Criticism

through the Son emphasized more strongly the *principalitater* of the Hypostasis of the Father – the complementarity of these formulas on the level of “theology” was confirmed by the Council of Florence in *Decree for the Greeks* (cf. Denzinger 1995, no. 691), referred it to the plane of “economy,” distinguishing the hypostatic origin of the Spirit from the Father, referred to by the word *ekpóreusis* (cf. John 15:25), from the economic origin-possession from the Father through the Son. Thus, the East also recognised the complementarity of *Filioque* and *per Filium*, but with the difference that on the plane of “economy” (see Liszka 2003). In the case of Lossky's theology, the matter becomes more complicated, since he considers the “economy” through the prism of Divine energies, admittedly descending from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit, but it is not the Spirit descending through the Son, but the energies common to the Trinity, hence it is at least problematic for him to accept the *Filioque*, if only in the *per Filium* version, also within the framework of the economy. In short: Lossky's views with regard to the origin of the Holy Spirit must be placed and read within a neo-Palamic, or overall Byzantine, version of the relationship between “theology” and “economy.”

²³ Awareness of this difficulty is found among others in Thomas Aquinas. The Angelic Doctor, while stating that love is the Holy Spirit's own name, since He is the *vinculum amoris* of the Father and the Son, was at the same time aware that love is also an attribute of God's essence, uniting the Three Persons (cf., *STH* I, q. 37; see also Sikora 2004, 47–48 and Przanowski 2004, 56–58).

²⁴ This statement used in *A Decree in Behalf of the Jacobites* (cf. Denzinger 1995, no. 704), has its roots in the trinitarianism of Augustine (see *De Trinitate*, XV 17,

by the Latins has never seriously disturbed the Eastern Christians, who have always steadfastly refused to regard the application of our rules of logic to the mystery of God as legitimate. In the West, however, we have always been conscious of the principle that, in God, everything is common, apart from what is distinguished by an opposition in relationship. I have already pointed out that this principle is not defined article of faith. It does however, express a very acute sense of consubstantiality within the Trinity” (Congar 1983, 3:202).

5. In Critical Dialogue with Lossky

It is worth concluding with some critical questions and remarks in relation to the presented apophatic theology of God’s incomprehensible trinitarianism as seen by Lossky.

Firstly, the question arises as to whether, however, this constant emphasis by Eastern theology, and by Lossky too, on the monarchy of the Father, is not burdened by the opposite one-sidedness to the “one-sidedness of essence” in the West, namely, an overemphasis on the Divine Hypostases at the expense of the one nature?²⁵ Lossky is aware of such a danger, yet he believes that Orthodox thought manages to avoid it and to maintain the balance of the antinomic tension of the *Mysterium Trinitatis* between Persons and Nature (cf. Lossky 1976, 62–63), since “in fact, as we have seen, if the persons exist it is precisely because they have the one nature;

29; PL 42:1081). Szymusiak comments on this passage as follows: “Here, however, Augustine refers to the Greek tradition by saying «principaliter», primarily. Latin doctrine would become more and more prominent in scholastic theology. The 12th Universal Council (Lateran IV, 1215) will explicitly say «pariter ab utroque», equally from the Two; the XIVth Universal Council (Lyons II, 1274) will still add «tamquam ex uno principio», as if from the One (Dz. 460)” [Św. Augustyn, *O Trójcy*, 437n29]. From an Orthodox perspective, however, this is within the Trinitarian conception, which “shows the Trinity in God rather than God in the Trinity” (see Paprocki, 2010).

²⁵ This is the accusation made against Lossky, but also against Zizioulas, by R.J. Woźniak, showing the personalist preference in their trinitarianism, as it were, on the opposite shore to the Western modalist tendencies in the theology of Barth and Rahner (see Woźniak 2008, 279n34; see Obolevitch 2014, 201–2).

their very procession consists in receiving their common nature from the Father” (63). On receiving the nature that is always possessed by them: the origins in God take place in eternity *per modum operari* – there never existed a giving origin of the Father without originating the Son and the Spirit, hence it is precisely apophatic origins that reveal hypostatic differences rather than establish them. In short: “This is why the East has always opposed the formula of *Filioque* which seems to impair the monarchy of the Father [...]” (58), after all, within this framework, according to Lossky, he saw a danger that was, as it were, holistic, namely, the loss of the absolutely Other God of Christian revelation, making Himself known to man and the world in the divinising radicality of His antinomically trine being: the God of Jesus Christ – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in favour of a philosophical *ens summum*, after all, by weakening the monarchy of the Father, it was necessary, in his view, “either one is forced to destroy the unity by acknowledging two principles of Godhead, or one must ground the unity primarily on the common nature, which thus overshadows the persons and transforms them into relations within the unity of the essence” (58).²⁶ In any case, the objection to treating the Father as the Divine Person *par excellence*, further invoked by Lossky, seems significant, despite the Russian’s attempts to weaken it (see 63).

Secondly, it is worth considering whether we are really dealing with such a far-reaching opposition of Trinitarian concepts between East and West, and whether it is really so radically centred around

²⁶ Yes, it is possible to reduce the argument about the *Filioque* in Lossky’s view merely to an apologia for the monarchy of the Father, opposing the introduction of two sources of Divine origins (cf. Felmy 1990, 49–50), or to oppose the abolition of the antinomy of Hypostasis and Nature by seeing in the Spirit, as coming from the Father and the Son *ab utroque*, even the personification of the Divine nature, but it seems that in Lossky’s theology these gain their meaning within the totality of his Trinitarian antinomian vision. By the way, the contemporary Western trinitarian proposals of K. Barth and K. Rahner, despite their undoubtedly valuable insights, have also not escaped these “impersonal” categories of thinking about the Trinity, leading to the consideration of the Persons in terms of different variants of nature, hence the accusations of modalistic tendencies against the aforementioned theologians have been formulated from far and wide.

the issue of the *Filioque* as Lossky would like to see? We have tried, within the framework of the *Filioque* issue, rather to refer to and try to understand the position of the Orthodox theologian, perhaps reinforcing it at times, trying to think as if from his position, however, it certainly calls for some critical remarks, after all, it is by no means as unambiguous as it may seem, not to mention whether it is always right. Without attempting to offer a comprehensive critique, let us merely indicate the directions in which it could go.²⁷ Certainly, Lossky's interpretation of Western Trinitarianism should be reconsidered, for despite many accurate statements and pointing out the difficulties of Latin thought, it seems to be closed to its way of experiencing and understanding the mystery of the Trinity. Despite all this, Lossky seems to have failed to go beyond the narrow medieval opposition of *Filioquism* – *monopatrism* when considering the problem of the origin of the Holy Spirit.²⁸ Moreover, the Russian seems to be inconsistent when it comes to a troistic account of the Divine relations of origin – yes, they are troistic in his view, but always from the perspective of the Father. Shouldn't the consistent speaking of the troistic character of the relations

²⁷ A critical analysis of Lossky's theology is made by R. Williams (1975) in his work (see Plóciennik 2023a).

²⁸ It is interesting to note that Lossky allowed for the possibility of accepting the doctrine of the *Filioque*, properly interpreted in the spirit of the eternal Divine energies, within early Byzantine Christian theology as distinct from *Filioquism*; however, in his view, the form in which the *Filioque* was presented at the Councils of Lyon and Florence, already precluded such an interpretation and the East's emphasis on the Latin *Filioque* would have to be based on a recognition of the absurdity of the Byzantine tradition. By the way, Lossky sees the possibility of reconciliation on the *Filioque* issue as well, provided that the West recognises the Byzantine tradition as an authentic expression of the tradition of the Fathers and not merely an "absurd innovation." The Greeks would then remain faithful to Greek theology and the Latins to the Latin, they could jointly profess a Catholic, in the sense of a universal, belief in the Trinity (cf. Lossky 1974b, 95–96). In reading these words, one should keep Lossky's neo-Palamic theology of the Divine energies constantly in mind, for it is within this framework that he speaks of the possibility of acceptance – that of the pre-Union Councils, as well as that of the contemporary *Filioque*. What is meant here, however, is not the Hypostatic *Filioque* of the Spirit, but the about the *Filioque* of the Divine energies, possibly the non-Hypostatic *Filioque* of the Spirit in the manner/frame of the Divine energies.

of origin result in the fact that one would have to conclude that the Father also proceeds from the Son and the Spirit, and, adopting a modified version of the *Filioque*, recognise its complementarity with the *Spirituque*?²⁹ More, R.J. Woźniak, referring to Papanikolau's study, accuses Lossky of being inconsistent about his self – imposed radical apophaticism – “it is not, Wozniak writes, faithfully adhered to (he means the theory of Divine relations based on the monarchy of the Father, strongly developed by Lossky)” (Woźniak 2008, 285n49; together with the literature given there). In addition, the weak point of Lossky's thought on the *Filioque* is its ahistorically dogmatic nature that, in a sense, leads to *petitio principii* within the adopted system of thought, which does not mean that Lossky was uncritical towards his position, even treating it quasi-ideologically.³⁰

6. Hermeneutical Bracket and Supplement

At this point we must make a certain hermeneutical bracket and supplement, which could just as well have been placed in the initial stages of our reflection,³¹ thus defining their further perspective and perhaps allowing us to avoid raising certain issues in this or that way. However, we decided to place them in the part devoted to the critical dialogue with Lossky and in the form of the conclusion of this part, which thus takes the form of a kind of a summary, and at the same time shows the fundamental decisions governing Lossky's thought in the area of his theology that interests us, influencing not only this or that approach to the title issue, but also the attitude and assessment of theology, including Western

²⁹ Interestingly, the proposal of a complementary view of the *Filioque* together with the *Spirituque* was put forward by another contemporary Orthodox theologian P. Evdokimov (1969, 71–72). A similar thought can be found in some Western theologians, e.g., F.-X. Durrwell or L. Boff.

³⁰ Congar writes that towards the end of his life Lossky became less tenacious in his anti-*Filioquism*, then with a note of sadness, he adds that he sadly left the school behind (cf. Congar 1983, 3:xv–xvi).

³¹ Such an introduction is another text on the apophatic Trinitarian theology of Lossky (see Plóciennik 2023b), especially the reflections contained there on the apophatic terminology of the Trinitarian dogma (722–28).

Trinitology, based on other fundamental decisions. These decisions concern the understanding of the “Divine Person/Hypostasis,”³² which appears to be key in the context of the Trinitarianism of God, and especially in the context of the critical remarks formulated by us above concerning the issue of the Father’s monarchy and the issue of the *Filioque*.

Firstly, Lossky strongly emphasises that the Divine Hypostasis should not be understood in the way of an individual, an entity that belongs to a genus, constituting its part, but as a unique, infinitely different and unique way of containing-being the fullness, and thus the whole nature of God, which means that each Hypostasis is in fullness – the whole God as to nature. This does not at all mean any separation or subordination between the Hypostases, but is precisely the condition of Their mutual openness to each other since They share without limitation the Divine nature, which in Each of them remains undivided (cf. Lossky 1978, 41–42). This in turn means that the Hypostasis is not subject to objectification and conceptualization, since all the attributes or features by which we could characterize it as repeatable and summable³³ are located at the level of nature. The mystery and uniqueness, the total “otherness” of a person is independent of any context (in the case of a human person: cosmic, social or individual), and therefore of that which can express an individual-unit of a given nature, but not a person. A person is irreducible to nature. This means that a person cannot be determined or, even less defined, but only shown, met in personal, mutual contact (cf. 42–43). Lossky is convinced that “for the Fathers, indeed, personhood is freedom in relation to nature: it eludes all conditioning, be it psychological or moral” (42).³⁴

³² Both texts should therefore be treated as complementary. We use these concepts interchangeably, bearing in mind their complicated history and the disputes surrounding them, also concerning linguistic and cultural conditions.

³³ On the inadequacy and apophatic nature of numerical categories in relation to God (see Płóciennik 2023b, 720–22).

³⁴ “This irreducibility cannot be understood expressed except in the relation of the Three Hypostases who, strictly speaking, are not «three» but «Three-Unity». In speaking of three hypostases, we are already making an improper abstraction: if we wanted to generalize and make a *concept* of the «divine hypostasis», we would

This is connected with the second incredibly important issue: since Persons, due to their irreducibility to nature with its attributes, cannot be characterized by them, “that personhood can only be evoked in its relation with another. The only way to distinguish the hypostases will therefore be by making precise their relationships, and above all their relationship to the common Source of divinity, to the «Divinity-Source» of the Father” (43). The above-mentioned primacy of the Person over nature comes to the fore here very strongly – the specific freedom of the Person in relation to nature, referred to the Person of the Father, as the personal Source of Divinity (and secondarily the Source of creation), which is the basic meaning of the idea of the monarchy of the Father (cf. 46). The absolute foundation-source is not impersonal nature, but the Person-Father (cf. Zizioulas 1985, 40) in relation to the Son and the Spirit. “According to the theology of the Christian East, the Person of the Father has no significance outside the Most Holy Trinity, that is, outside the relations with the Son and the Holy Spirit, because the Father is always the Father of someone. The multiplicity (three) and interdependence of the Divine Persons were explained by the Cappadocian Fathers within the framework of the new ontology they developed, the essential premise of which was the fact that the Father is never isolated from the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Most Holy Trinity is therefore a community of Persons (Greek *koinonia tōn hagiōn*, Latin *communio personarum*)” (Gapińska 2019, 37). The relations (Greek *schesis*) between the Persons of the Trinity: the unbegottenness of the Father, the begetting of the Son and

have to say that the only common definition possible would be the impossibility of any common definition of the three hypostases. They are alike in the fact that they are dissimilar; or, rather, to go beyond the relative idea of resemblance, which is out of place here, one must say that the absolute character of their difference implies an absolute identity. Beyond this one cannot speak of hypostases of Tri-Unity. Just as the Three is not an arithmetic number but indicates in the Triade of pure difference – a Triad which remains equal to the Monad – an infinite passage beyond the dyad of opposition, so the hypostasis as much, inasmuch as it is irreducible to the οὐσία, is no longer conceptual expression but a sign which is introduced into the domain of the non-generalizable, pointing out the radically personal character of the God of Christian revelation” (Lossky 1974c, 113).

the origin of the Spirit can, according to Lossky, be considered only in an apophatic way, because: 1) the relations signify, show hypostatic differences, but do not condition or establish them; 2) these relations have the character of a distinction, indicating the absolute and infinite identity of the Hypostases and the absolute and infinite difference of the Hypostases, and not oppositions, which means that they cannot be reduced to bilateral relations, because the relations (for) each Hypostasis are threefold (cf. Lossky 1978, 43–44).

It is from this decision, based on the thought of the Greek Fathers, especially the Cappadocians, regarding the understanding of the “Divine Person,” that Lossky’s opposition to the Trinitological decisions of Western theology arises to a large extent, which does not change the fact that his presentation of it is often tendentious (see Obolevitch 2014, 259–60). Let us make a few reflections in this context. It seems that the two dominant understandings of the person in the West are connected with the thought of Boethius and Augustine of Hippo (cf. Piotrowski 2007, 134–49). The first, with his definition of the person as *rationalis naturae individua substantia*, sees it as an individual way of being of nature, but in a way subordinating individuality to nature as its manifestation. Additionally, this nature is specified by a specific feature: rationality. Thus, ultimately, the person receives a double specification in Boethius: from the side of nature, i.e. as an individual way of being of the universal, and from the side of a clearly articulated attribute of this nature, i.e. rationality. In Augustine, on the other hand, we are dealing with, on the one hand, an attempt to approach the Trinitarian nature of God along a psychological line, i.e. specific attributes or personal acts (such as memory, reason, will) and with a far-reaching identification of the person with his relationality, so that the person actually turns out to be a relation (Latin *relatio*) within one Divine nature, and in addition an opposing relation: Father – Son, Father and Son – Holy Spirit.

It is against this background that Augustine’s understanding of the Spirit as the *vinculum amoris* of the Father and the Son, inextricably linked with West, in order to save itself, as it were, from pure thinking, becomes understandable. In this approach, the Spirit becomes, in a sense, the personified relationality of God

the Trinity, which from the Eastern perspective, including Lossky's, leads to the depersonalization of the Spirit – Western thought was aware of such a risk, but what the East considered depersonalization, the West understood as the personal specificity of the Spirit – as the “Wir in Person” of the Father and the Son, using the formulation of H. Mühlen (1963), or the personified *communio* of the Father and the Son – following J. Ratzinger (1974), which, with all their problematic nature, seem to reflect the main intuition of Western Trinitology.³⁵ The above reflections are definitely insufficient and would require significant deepening, but nevertheless they allow us to orient ourselves in the differences in the decisions and distribution of emphases of the Eastern and Western Trinitologies (cf. Piotrowski 2007, 263–77). Nevertheless, the accusation repeatedly raised by Lossky seems to be unjustified, or at least problematic and requiring greater nuance, concerning, on the one hand, reducing Western Trinitology to some form of theology of the apersonal essence-nature of God (see Emery 1998),³⁶ and on the other hand, introducing the apophatic approach in favour of philosophical speculation,³⁷ which does not mean that it is completely without foundation, especially in relation to some late modern versions of Western

³⁵ Let us add that the Augustinian, and to some extent Boethian, understanding of the person (taking into account the thought of Richard of St. Victor with his *persona divina est divinae naturae incommunicabilis existentia*) was brought to its peak in Thomas's presentation of the person as *relatio subsistens* (cf. Piotrowski 2007, 173–74, 183–85).

³⁶ It should be emphasized that even in the model based on the unity of the Divine nature, which dominates in Western theology, the awareness of the “primacy” of the Father was always present and preserved, and we can also find approaches that are definitely embedded in an optics similar to that based on the idea of the monarchy of the Father (see Woźniak 2007). It is worth paying attention to contemporary attempts to combine these models, or to find a more inclusive model, taking into account the strengths of each of them and eliminating their one-sided limitations (cf. Manikowski 2018, 55–176).

³⁷ Augustine's struggles with the concept of person, which he relates to the Trinity solely in order not to remain silent, have a decidedly apophatic character (see *De Trinitate* V, IX, 10; PL 42:918), while the apophatic approach permeates and constitutes the entire theology of Thomas Aquinas, and thus also, and perhaps especially, his Trinitology (see Humbrecht 1994).

school theology. Our above formulated critical-dialogical remarks regarding Lossky should not be treated as final, but at the same time, too weakened, after all, they can be a starting point for further in-depth analyses of Trinitology in an ecumenical key, which also applies to this hermeneutical framework and supplement.

Conclusion

It should be strongly emphasized, however, that while defending the dogmatic truths that arise from and reflect, in his opinion, the directness of the Eastern experience as the basic *locus* of theological topic, and wanting to remain faithful to it, Lossky was aware of the fact that every unified knowledge of the Triune, despite its – in the understanding of the neo-Palamite model – pneumatically-energetically given Trinitarian truth character, is always on a path that will never end. This path, of course, leads apophatically infinitely “into” this pneumatically-energetically given and made present Trinitarian truth, and not beyond it, which results from the revelatory character of apophaticism, which immerses us more and more in divinization “into the depths” of the infinite Triune God. She is like “[...] the love of the bride in the Song of Songs: she stretches out her hands towards the lock, she seeks Him who cannot be grasped, she calls Him to whom she cannot achieve ... she attains to Him in the perception that the union is endless, the ascent without limit” (Lossky 1976, 35), there will be no end to learning about the mystery of the Trinitarian antinomy in its unknowability.³⁸

Looking at Lossky’s theology through the prism of its constant being on the way with the Trinity and in the Trinity towards ever greater theopoietic unity with the incomprehensible Trinity allows us

³⁸ This eschatological “endless” transcending of the unknowable by cognition towards an even greater unknowability applies in particular, according to Lossky’s consistently treated thought, to any attempt to specify the Trinitarian antinomy within its Trinitarian antinomy – the Three Hypostases and One Nature, and therefore equally the monarchy of the Father and the *Filioque*, as well as the anti-*Filioquist* position, hence Woźniak’s accusation, seems to be in this context as much hit and miss at the same time, as consistent and inconsistent at the same time in his apophaticism towards the Trinitarian antinomy Lossky is.

to perceive and evaluate his radicalism, including the anti-*Filioquist* one, in a slightly different way, and to see in him a man-theologian in love with the mystery of *Trinitatis*, and in this a critical context also towards its own theology, which is not the Trinity, but only points to and towards it, transcending and fulfilling itself in it. Apophatic theology culminates neither in the human concept of Trinity nor in agnosticism, but in the divinizing contemplation and adoration, in the personal relationship of faith with unknowable and supra-conceptual, incomprehensible Trinity (cf. Lossky 1976, 42–44; Lossky 1978, 46; see Płóciennik 2023a, 151–56). Lossky was aware that the full truth about the Divine Trinity, i.e., the proper “theology” (also in the dimension of eternal life), is available (primarily) not in church dogmas or theological reflection, not even in a mystical experience, but in the only mystagogue of the Trinity – the Holy Spirit, making It apophatically present in the Divine energies. Or rather, in and through the “economy” from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit in the manner of Divine energies.

Apofatyczna teologia niepojętej trynitarności Boga w ujęciu Włodzimierza N. Łosskiego

Abstrakt: Celem niniejszego tekstu jest przedstawienie apofatycznych zmagania z niepojętym misterium intranitarości Boga w pismach jednego z najwybitniejszych teologów prawosławnych XX wieku, a zarazem radykalnego obrońcy apofatyczności chrześcijańskiej teologii – Włodzimierza N. Łosskiego. Składa się on z sześciu odstępów. Przedmiotem pierwszej będzie pierwotna faktyczność, „daność” Trójcy. W drugiej zostanie przeanalizowana kwestia monarchii Ojca jako Źródła Trójcy. Następnie przyjrzymy się problematyce relacji między Osobami Boskimi i wewnątrztrynitarnym rozróżnieniem. Czwartą część poświęcona zostanie aporii *Filioque* i jej znaczeniu w rozumieniu bytu Boga oraz wpływowi jaki odegrała w podziale chrześcijaństwa. Piąty fragment będzie stanowił próbę krytycznego dialogu z zaprezentowanymi aspektami myśli Łosskiego w kluczu hermeneutyki różnic teologicznych między Wschodem a Zachodem – klucz ów będzie stanowił treść szóstego rozdziału – suplementu. W podsumowaniu zostanie wyartykułowany kontemplacyjny i przebóstwiający charakter teologii apofatycznej, ukierunkowanej na niepoznawalną i ponadkonceptualną, niepojętą Trójcę.

Słowa kluczowe: W.N. Łoski, Trójca, *Filioque*, apofatyzm, prawosławie, trynitologia

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