

1. Project Outline

The project proposes to critically examine some key aspects of traditional doctrines of Christian (Orthodox) theism and theology related to divine and human personhood in the light of contemporary analytic theology and philosophy. At the same time it aims at promoting a first endeavor of deep and serious interdisciplinary engagement and cooperation among analytic philosophers and Orthodox theologians, a reality that was unforeseen in earlier times. Christian theory of personhood as it has been developed during especially the 20th century by eminent thinkers both on the level of ontology-theology and anthropology provides the modern discussion with the necessary resources in order to critically reflect on the possible value and limits of these theological views of divine and human personhood. At the same time it calls for a consideration of the value of complementary analytical philosophical approaches to the subject for theological research and *vice versa*.

Thus an attempt will be made in this project to discuss creatively the dominant theories about the Trinity, namely the “social theory” which claims that each of the three Trinitarian persons has a separate consciousness, and the so – called “anti-social” theory which claims quite the opposite. As regards Christology, although there is no any profound or rather deep division among analytic philosophers, yet there is a great variety of views about the extent to which the divine and human properties could belong to one individual (namely the person of Jesus Christ). At the same time the two extreme views in the analytic philosophy tradition about ordinary humans will be also taken into account in the light of Orthodox theology, that is the view that human persons are just complicated physical organisms, and the view that they are essentially souls. The first view is often called “physicalism,” and the latter view “substance dualism,” while one could define a third intermediate view, called “property dualism”.

The main purpose then of this critical discussion is to explore whether the dominant orthodox Christian understanding of the personhood of God is anthropomorphic by virtue of searching for the inner logic of the basic doctrines of Christian theism, such as Trinitarian theology, Christology, anthropology. It is commonly asserted - by both thinkers and ordinary people - that an increasing number of Christian theologians

argue that an understanding of God as person (or personal) (as it is the case with the classic model of Christian theism) risks the danger of being too anthropomorphic, to an extent of perceiving God as a supreme being, which exceeds the (created) limitations that characterize humans. At the same time, however, there are many Western scholars, secular or not, as well as most of the ordinary people who, albeit open-minded to religious issues, find the concept of an impersonal being at least problematic from a Christian standpoint. Then the following critical question emerges: Does a Christian theory of personhood in the light of Orthodox tradition and modern Orthodox theological thought provide the necessary means of addressing the various philosophical and theological reservations in the context of the modern discussion as well as the worries expressed by contemporary scholars or ordinary believers? Eminent and worldwide recognized Christian and secular scholars (theologians and philosophers) will be invited to contribute by virtue of their special field of expertise (analytic philosophy and theology, orthodox dogmatic theology etc.), to a deep exploration of the logical coherence or inconsistency of the basic doctrines of Christian theism, the positive as well as negative dynamic of the various perceptions of personhood, a critical evaluation of the diverse current hermeneutical theories etc.

2. **General Contours**

An analytic-theological approach of (Christian) theistic doctrines:

- a. *Trinitarian theology*. This topic includes a variety of the following questions:
 - Faith, experience, natural Reason, and Revelation: Is there any logic in Orthodox dogma?
 - Is the Trinitarian doctrine of Christian theism logically coherent?
 - How could be both three distinct divine persons yet one God;
 - A critical evaluation of various models for solving this logical inconsistency: social theory, unitary view, relative identity theory, liturgical, Trinitarian, collective mind;
 - In what sense God is considered as a person; what is the meaning of divine personhood in Orthodox theology from an analytic perspective? Is it an analogy or metaphor? Is it possible to correlate an apophatic with a kataphatic approach? What about the antinomic theological language (as it

was articulated for instance by the eminent Russian 20th c. theologians and thinkers Vl. Lossky, P. Florensky);

- b. *Chalcedonian Christology*: This topic explores the following questions:
- Is there any logical consistency of the doctrine?
 - How is it possible for a person to possess predicates that usually attributed only to God?
 - Is it logically consistent to argue for a person as a bearer of both divine and human nature simultaneously? How can one and the same person have ever been fully human and fully divine?
 - A critical overview and evaluation of different classic (Church Dogmatic Tradition) and modern theories (analytic philosophy-theology) of interpretation.
- c. *Anthropology*: This topic approaches the following issues:
- A critical approach of the theory of relative identity in the light of the Orthodox relational theological tradition;
 - The human being in question: Individual Self, Relative identity, physicalism, substance dualism, and property dualism or hypostatic and ecstatic personhood; Are human persons just complicated physical organisms, or mainly essentially souls or a personal wholeness (Maximus the Confessor, Gregory Palamas, etc.)
 - Is the very being of personhood identified with pure relation? The concept of *Imago Dei* as a mere analogy or metaphor?
- d. The *relationship* between analytic philosophy and Orthodoxy. Is it legitimate and valuable or a crude blasphemy? A theological and philosophical evaluation.

PROGRAM

Project

Analytic Theology Cluster Initiative: “Concepts of God”

General Theme of the applying project

“Is the Christian understanding of the personhood of God too anthropomorphic? An Orthodox contribution”

1. **October, 22 2016:** *Speaker: Dr. Nikolaos Asproulis* (Volos Academy for Theological Studies): *‘Causal Trinitarianism’: A solution to the ‘logical problem of the Trinity’?*
2. **November, 5 2016:** *Speaker: Emeritus Professor Dr. Richard Swinburne* (Oxford University): *The Social Theory of the Trinity*
3. **December, 10, 2016:** *Speaker: Dr. Michalis Filippou:* *The Doctrine of Trinity and the Metaphysics of Material Constitution*
4. **February, 4 or 11, 2017:** **Rev. Dr. Dimitrios Bathrellos** (The Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies in Cambridge): *The Theology of Enoypostaton, the Overcoming of the Ambiguities of Chalcedon, and the ‘Redefinition’ of Hypostasis*
5. **March, 11, 2017:** *Speaker: Emeritus Professor Dr. William Hasker* (Huntington University): *A Compositional Christology*
6. **April 22, 2017:** *Speaker: Professor Dr. Stelios Virvidakis* (University of Athens): *Personhood, immortality and resurrection*
7. **May 20 or 27, 2017:** *Speaker: Professor Dr. Terrence Cuneo* (University of Vermont): *Analytic philosophy and Eastern theology*
8. **June 17 or 24, 2017:** *External Speaker I: Metropolitan John Zizioulas of Pergamon:* *The relationship between analytic philosophy and Orthodoxy. Is it legitimate and valuable or a crude blasphemy? A theological point of view.*

July 2017: A *workshop* with the participation of graduate Students (University of Athens) and young (PhD students, or PostDoc) Scholars interesting in analytic philosophy and theology.

August 2017: -

9. September, 23, 2017: *Speaker: Professor Dr. Bryan Leftow* (University of Oxford) *Trinitarian Theology* (title to be confirmed)

10. October, 14 or 21, 2017: *Speaker: Professor Dr. Byron Kaldis* (Hellenic Open University): *Anthropology*

11. December 9, or 16, 2017: *Speaker: Rev. Issidoros Katsos* (University of Cambridge): *What does it mean to be 'human' and how to say it? The conundrum of the Imago Dei tradition of the Eastern Church Fathers*

12. January, 20, 2018: *External Speaker II: Professor Emeritus Dr. John Cottingham* (University of Reading): *The relationship between analytic philosophy and Orthodoxy. Is it legitimate and valuable or a crude blasphemy? A philosophical point of view*

February 2018: A *Concluding Seminar* discussing the overall merits from analytic philosophy and theology for the Orthodox Tradition and a meeting evaluating and summarizing the work and goals achieved by the research project with the participation of the most of the Cluster Group members as well as scholars interesting in analytic philosophy or philosophy and theology in general.